

# Women's Leadership in Indonesian Islamic Educational Institutions: A Systematic Literature Review

Maulidiya<sup>1</sup>, Tri Wahyudi Ramdhan<sup>1</sup>, Mufaizin<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>STAI Darul-Hikmah Bangkalan, Indonesia

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – This study aims to examine women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia through a systematic literature review. It focuses on synthesizing previously fragmented and context-specific research to provide a more coherent understanding across institutional settings and sociocultural contexts.

**Methods** – This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine patterns of women's leadership and gender dynamics in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Using the PRISMA framework, this review analyzes 30 peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2025. The analysis employs thematic synthesis to identify patterns in leadership models, structural dynamics, and institutional outcomes.

**Findings** – The findings reveal that women's leadership is multidimensional, encompassing religious-charismatic, managerial-professional, and emerging digital forms. The findings indicate that while structural barriers such as patriarchal norms and institutional hierarchies remain significant, they are not absolute. Women leaders actively negotiate these constraints through adaptive and context-sensitive strategies. As a result, leadership should be understood as a dynamic process shaped by the interplay between structure and agency.

**Research Implications** – This research contributes a structured synthesis that serves as a basis for more context-sensitive research and policy development, offering a clearer framework for understanding female leadership within the landscape of Islamic education.

 OPEN ACCESS

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 24-03-2026

Revised: 09-04-2026

Accepted: 10-04-2026

## KEYWORDS

women's leadership, gender equality, islamic education, madrasah, pesantren, systematic literature review

## Corresponding Author:

**Maulidiya**

STAI Darul-Hikmah Bangkalan, Indonesia

Email: 202293011059@darul-hikmah.com

## Introduction

The issue of gender equality in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia has increasingly attracted scholarly attention, particularly in relation to leadership practices and institutional governance. In recent years, the focus of discussion has gradually shifted from predominantly theological and normative debates toward more empirical inquiries into how gender is negotiated within organizational structures such as madrasah and pesantren (Umami, 2020; Werdiningsih & Natsir, 2020). This shift reflects a broader concern with the interaction between formal policy frameworks such as gender mainstreaming in education and deeply embedded sociocultural norms that continue to shape institutional practices (Isnaini et al., 2021; Aisyah & Junaedi, 2024). A growing body of literature has examined women's leadership within these institutions, highlighting diverse contextual dynamics. Several studies document the persistence of seniority-based authority and customary norms influencing leadership roles in regions such as Aceh Sakdiah et al. (2024) while others emphasize the influence of patriarchal cultural structures on decision-making processes in areas such as South Sulawesi (Fatmawati, 2024). In addition, recent scholarship points to the emergence of new forms of authority exercised by women through digital platforms, suggesting a reconfiguration of traditional boundaries of religious and institutional influence (Norlaila et al., 2025; Uyuni et al., 2025). These studies indicate that women's leadership is not a uniform phenomenon, but one that is shaped by varying institutional settings and sociocultural environments.

However, despite this growing body of research, existing studies remain fragmented and have not yet produced a coherent synthesis of key patterns across contexts. Three specific gaps can be identified. First, there is a lack of systematic classification of women's leadership models across different types of Islamic educational institutions, particularly between madrasah and pesantren contexts. Second, limited attention has been given to how structural barriers such as patriarchal norms, institutional regulations, and spatial segregation interact with enabling factors, and how women leaders negotiate these conditions in practice (Fatmawati, 2024; Munawaroh, 2023). Third, there is insufficient synthesis linking women's leadership practices to institutional outcomes, including managerial effectiveness, organizational culture, and the implementation of gender-responsive curricula (Kunaepi et al., 2024); (Latifah & Asy'ari, 2024). As a result, existing literature provides rich case-based insights, but falls short of offering an integrated analytical framework.

To address these gaps, this study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, guided by an institutional and sociocultural perspective. This review seeks to answer three key questions: (1) What models of women's leadership emerge within Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia? (2) What structural barriers and enabling factors influence these leadership practices, and how are they negotiated across different contexts? and (3) How do these leadership practices relate to institutional outcomes,

particularly in terms of managerial effectiveness, organizational culture, and gender-responsive curriculum implementation?

By moving beyond descriptive accounts toward analytical synthesis, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature in two main ways. First, it provides a structured mapping of leadership patterns and contextual variations across Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Second, it offers a more systematic linkage between gender, leadership practices, and institutional performance, thereby contributing to ongoing discussions on inclusive and gender-responsive educational governance.

## Methods

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine patterns of women's leadership and gender dynamics in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. The SLR approach was selected to enable a structured and transparent synthesis of existing research findings, particularly in a field characterized by diverse institutional contexts and sociocultural variations. The review process followed the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure a clear and traceable procedure in identifying, screening, and selecting relevant studies Musfah (2017) In addition, the review protocol was guided by the PICOC framework (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome, Context) to maintain consistency in defining the scope of analysis (Kitchenham, B., & Charters, 2007)

Based on the research gaps identified in previous studies, this review was guided by four research questions focusing on leadership models, structural dynamics, institutional outcomes, and research gaps. These questions were formulated to support a systematic mapping and analytical synthesis of the literature rather than a purely descriptive review.

**Table 1.** Research Questions and Analytical Focus

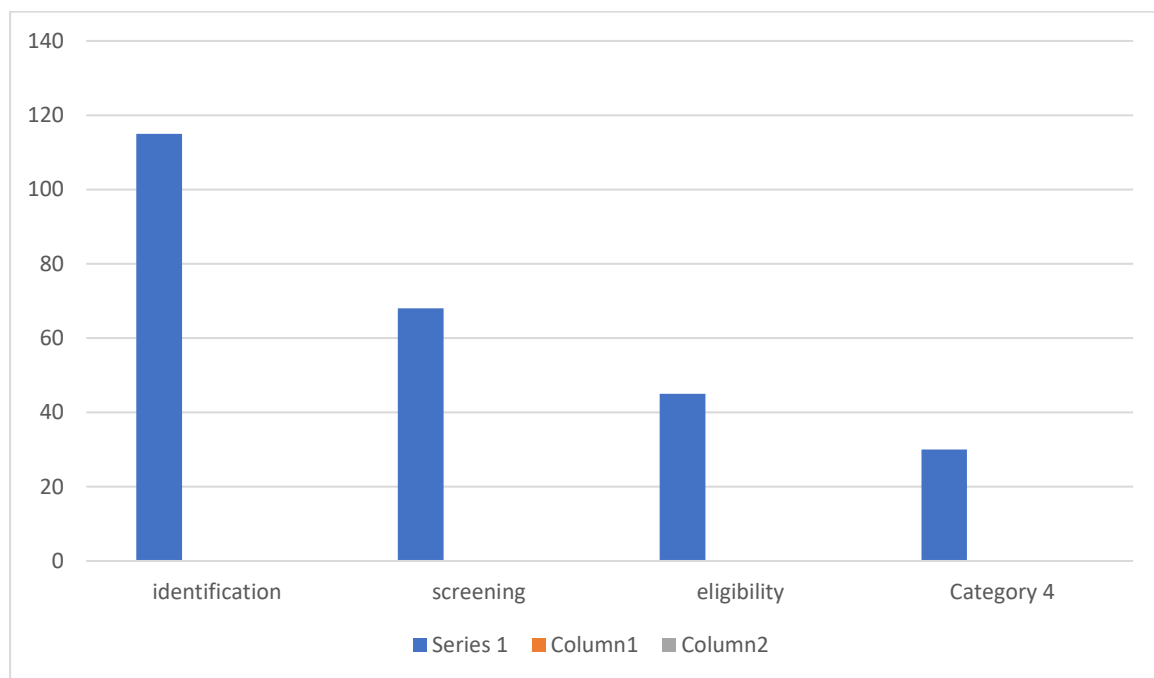
Research Question	Analytical Focus
RQ1	Models of women's leadership
RQ2	Structural barriers and enabling factors
RQ3	Institutional outcomes and effectiveness
RQ4	Research gaps and future directions

The literature search was conducted using Google Scholar and SINTA databases with the assistance of Publish or Perish software. These databases were selected to ensure both broad coverage and contextual relevance to Indonesian Islamic educational studies. To improve the comprehensiveness of the search, Boolean search strings were expanded as follows:

("women leadership" OR "female leadership" OR "women leaders")AND ("Islamic education" OR "madrasah" OR "pesantren" OR "Islamic boarding school")AND ("gender equality" OR "gender-responsive" OR "gender mainstreaming")

The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 in English or Indonesian. This period was selected to capture recent developments in leadership and gender discourse, particularly in relation to digital transformation and post-pandemic educational changes.

The study selection process followed four stages based on the PRISMA framework. In the identification stage, 115 articles were initially retrieved. After removing duplicate records, the screening stage was conducted by evaluating titles and abstracts for relevance. In the eligibility stage, full-text articles were assessed using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Finally, 30 articles were included in the synthesis. The detailed selection process is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Study Selection (PRISMA Framework)

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined using the PICOC framework to ensure the relevance and consistency of selected studies. Only empirical journal articles focusing on women's leadership and gender-responsive practices in Islamic educational institutions were included. Grey literature, such as theses, dissertations, and non-peer-reviewed sources, was excluded to maintain methodological rigor.

**Table 2.** Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Component	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Population	Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia	Non-relevant institutions
Intervention	Women's leadership and gender-responsive practices	General gender issues
Outcome	Leadership patterns, barriers, institutional outcomes	Non-empirical studies
Context	Peer-reviewed articles (2020–2025)	Grey literature
Language	English and Indonesian	Other languages

To ensure the credibility of the synthesis, all selected studies were subjected to a quality appraisal process. Each article was evaluated based on five criteria: clarity of objectives, appropriateness of research design, transparency of data collection, validity of analysis, and relevance to the research questions. Studies that did not meet minimum quality standards were excluded from the synthesis. This step was conducted to reduce bias and improve the reliability of findings (Kitchenham, B., & Charters, 2007).

Data extraction was conducted using a structured matrix that included key information such as authors, publication year, research context, institutional setting, methodology, and main findings. The analysis employed thematic synthesis, involving three stages: open coding, grouping codes into descriptive themes, and developing analytical themes aligned with the research questions (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Through this approach, findings from different study designs were integrated into a coherent analytical framework, enabling the identification of dominant patterns, contextual variations, and relationships between leadership practices and institutional outcomes

The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 in English or Indonesian. This timeframe was selected to capture recent developments in gender discourse and leadership practices in Islamic education.

The study selection process followed four stages based on the PRISMA framework. A total of 115 articles were identified in the initial search. After removing duplicates, titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Full-text articles were then assessed using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. As a result, 30 articles were selected for final synthesis.

To ensure transparency and traceability, the selected studies were systematically mapped based on authorship, research focus, and publication source. This mapping provides an overview of the distribution of topics and contexts within the reviewed literature, as presented in Table 2.

## Result

This collection of literature from 2016 to 2025 records a major transformation in the discourse on gender equality and women's leadership in the Indonesian Islamic education ecosystem. The research narrative begins with the laying of a strong philosophical and theological foundation, where the concept of *Mubà* (reciprocity) and the reinterpretation of religious texts are the main instruments to break down the stigma of patriarchy (Aisyah & Junaedi, 2024; Werdiningsih & Natsir, 2020). Researchers such as Ratnasari (2016) and Umami (2020) emphasized that gender mainstreaming in Islamic education is not just a trend of modernity, but an urgent need to create a more equitable and inclusive learning system.

Entering the realm of institutional practice, female figures such as Bu Nyai in Java or Sitti Raihanun in NTB emerged as pioneers who bridged traditional religious authority with the educational feminism movement (Fatmawati, 2024; Lalu Gede Muhammad Zainuddin Astani et al., 2024). At the managerial level, the effectiveness of women's leadership has been proven to have a positive impact on the quality of services and governance in madrasahs and Islamic elementary schools through a more collaborative and communicative approach (Kunaepi et al., 2024; Latifah & Asy'ari, 2024; Sumadi&nurteti, 2024). Even in crisis conditions such as the Covid-19 pandemic, women leaders show resilience and strong performance in maintaining the sustainability of institutions Salamah et al. (2024) However, this literary narrative also critically reveals the dark side in the form of persistent structural barriers. The Glass Ceiling phenomenon or "glass ceiling" remains a real challenge that limits women's involvement in bureaucracy and strategic decision-making (Munawaroh, 2023; Suharti, 2021). These barriers are often exacerbated by rigid local cultural norms, as seen in the challenges faced by female principals in certain areas or restrictions on the movement space of female teachers (Azzahra et al., 2025; Sakdiah et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the adaptation of strategies carried out by women continues to develop, including through the strengthening of identity in literary works and the internalization of gender values in the pesantren curriculum (Irfan et al., 2023; Sutrisno & Salsabela, 2023).

Finally, the latest literature (2025) marks a new chapter with the emergence of digital leadership among female scholars. Women's religious authority is no longer confined to the walls of pesantren or madrasahs, but rather expands through digital networks to make a more massive social contribution (Norlaila et al., 2025; Uyuni et al., 2025). Overall, the synthesis of these 30 sources shows that women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions is a dynamic entity constantly negotiating between traditions, managerial competence, and technological advances in order to realize a more qualified institutional transformation (Ainul Yaqin & Sholihah, 2025; Hadi, 2023).

A total of 30 articles were included in the final synthesis, representing studies conducted across various Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, including madrasah, pesantren, and Islamic higher education settings. The reviewed studies employed diverse methodological approaches, with a predominance of qualitative designs alongside several quantitative and mixed-method studies. Geographically, the literature shows a concentration in regions such as Java, Aceh, and South Sulawesi, indicating that research coverage remains uneven. In addition, recent studies increasingly incorporate digital contexts, reflecting a shift in how women's leadership is articulated and exercised in contemporary Islamic education (Fatmawati, 2024; Norlaila et al., 2025; Sakdiah et al., 2024). The synthesis identifies that women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions is not homogeneous, but instead manifests in several dominant patterns. First, leadership is often grounded in religious and moral authority, particularly in pesantren contexts, where figures such as Mrs. Nyai and women ulama derive legitimacy from their religious knowledge and social recognition. This form of leadership emphasizes moral influence, spiritual guidance, and community trust (Fatmawati, 2024; Lalu Gede Muhammad Zainuddin Astani et al., 2024; Uyuni et al., 2025). Second, a managerial-professional model emerges in more formal educational settings such as madrasah and Islamic schools. In this context, women leaders demonstrate leadership through administrative competence, strategic planning, and quality-oriented management practices. Studies show that women in leadership positions contribute to institutional development through structured management and service improvement (Ainul Yaqin & Sholihah, 2025; Kunaepi et al., 2024; Latifah & Asy'ari, 2024).

Third, recent literature points to the emergence of a transformative-digital leadership model, where women extend their influence beyond institutional boundaries through digital platforms. This development reflects a shift from localized authority toward more network-based forms of leadership, enabling broader participation in religious and educational discourse (Norlaila et al., 2025; Uyuni et al., 2025). These findings indicate that women's leadership is multidimensional and shaped by the interaction between religious legitimacy, managerial capacity, and adaptive responses to technological change.

The literature consistently shows that women's leadership operates within a complex structure of constraints and opportunities. One of the most prominent barriers is the persistence of patriarchal cultural norms, which often limit women's access to leadership roles and strategic decision-making processes (Fatmawati, 2024; Sakdiah et al., 2024). In addition, institutional constraints such as seniority-based systems and gendered role divisions further restrict women's authority within educational organizations (Azzahra et al., 2025; Munawaroh, 2023). In some contexts, particularly in pesantren, spatial and functional segregation also limits women's participation in broader institutional governance.

Despite these constraints, the literature also identifies several enabling factors that support women's leadership. These include religious legitimacy, educational background, and institutional support networks, which collectively strengthen women's capacity to occupy leadership roles (Hadi, 2023; Isnaini et al., 2021). Importantly, women leaders are not positioned as passive actors within these structures. Instead, they actively negotiate constraints through various strategies, including adapting leadership styles to local sociocultural expectations, building collaborative networks, and utilizing religious discourse such as gender-equitable interpretations to legitimize their roles (Siagian, 2023; Werdiningsih & Natsir, 2020). These patterns suggest that leadership is continuously constructed through negotiation rather than determined solely by structural conditions.

The synthesis indicates that women's leadership is associated with several institutional outcomes, although the extent and consistency of these impacts vary across contexts. In terms of managerial effectiveness, studies report improvements in organizational management, including better coordination, service delivery, and institutional performance (Ainul Yaqin & Sholihah, 2025; Kunaepi et al., 2024).

In addition, women's leadership is often linked to the development of more inclusive organizational cultures, characterized by participatory decision-making, empathetic leadership styles, and stronger internal communication (Hadi, 2023; Isnaini et al., 2021). These cultural shifts contribute to more collaborative and supportive institutional environments.

Furthermore, several studies highlight the role of women leaders in promoting gender-responsive practices, particularly in curriculum development and educational policy. The integration of gender values in learning processes reflects a broader effort to align institutional practices with principles of equality and inclusivity (Umami, 2020; Werdiningsih & Natsir, 2020). However, the literature also suggests that these outcomes are context-dependent, as the effectiveness of leadership is influenced by institutional type, sociocultural conditions, and available resources.

Despite the increasing number of studies on women's leadership in Islamic education, several gaps remain evident. First, the geographical distribution of research is still limited, with most studies concentrated in specific regions, while frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged (3T) areas remain underexplored. Second, there is a lack of longitudinal research examining the long-term impact of women's leadership on institutional development and alumni outcomes. Third, few studies provide a systematic linkage between leadership practices and measurable institutional performance indicators, limiting the ability to assess effectiveness in a more rigorous manner. Finally, methodological limitations are also apparent, as most studies rely on qualitative approaches, indicating the need for more diverse research designs, including mixed-method and comparative studies.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia is characterized by multidimensional patterns, shaped by sociocultural contexts, and continuously negotiated through adaptive strategies. While leadership is associated with positive institutional outcomes, its impact remains uneven and context-dependent, highlighting the need for more systematic and comprehensive research in this field.

## Discussion

### 1. RQ1: Models of Women's Leadership

The findings of this study reveal that the model of women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia has shifted from a traditional single model to a multidimensional form. Critically, this phenomenon shows that the legitimacy of women's leadership no longer relies solely on one pillar of authority, but is the result of a cross between religious-charismatic, managerial-professional, and transformative-digital aspects. The emergence of these dimensions signals an effort to deconstruct the domestic role of women, where their leadership is now recognized as a blend of moral integrity and technical competence relevant to the demands of the times.

In the context of traditional institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, the religious-charismatic leadership style remains the main foundation. This authority is rooted in the genealogy (*nasab*) and mastery of religious science that provides moral credibility in the eyes of students and the wider community. This is in line with the findings of Fatmawati et al. (2024) and Lalu Gede Muhammad Zainuddin Astani et al. (2024) which emphasize the central role of *bu nyai* and female scholars in shaping educational and social discourse. Analytically, however, this charismatic leadership is not just a biological inheritance, but rather a form of "symbolic capital" that women use to negotiate their influence in the midst of the dominance of patriarchal structures that often limit their public space for movement.

Along with the formalization of Islamic education into madrassas or high schools, new challenges have arisen that demand a shift towards managerial-professionalism. The study found that religious legitimacy alone is no longer sufficient to maintain institutional effectiveness in global competition. Women's leadership is now increasingly assessed based on strategic capabilities, accountable institutional governance, and systematic planning (Kunaepi et al., 2024; Latifah & Asy'ari, 2024). This shows a process of professionalization in which women leaders are forced or consciously choose to adopt modern management standards to ensure the sustainability of their institutions, while breaking the stigma that women's leadership is only emotional and less strategic.

The most progressive transformation is found in the emergence of digital leadership. This dimension marks the end of an era in which leadership authority was limited only to the physical boundaries of the institution. Through online engagement,

female leaders are able to expand their influence beyond classrooms and boarding schools, reaching a global audience through social media platforms (Norlaila et al., 2025) (Uyuni et al., 2025). Critically, this digital leadership serves as an emancipation tool that allows women to spread inclusive and gender-responsive values without always having to constantly clash directly with structural hierarchies in the real world. This evolution proves that women's leadership in Islamic education is a dynamic entity that is constantly negotiating with traditions, institutional demands, and technological advancements.

## **2. RQ2: Structural Barriers, Enabling Factors, and Negotiation Strategies**

The findings of this study confirm that women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia operates in a space fraught with tensions between structural barriers and agency opportunities. Critically, a major persistent obstacle is the persistence of patriarchal norms internalized in organizational culture, where leadership is often constructed as a masculine domain. Munawaroh (2023) and Sakdiah et al. (2024) emphasized that gender-based role divisions and rigid institutional hierarchies continue to limit women's access to top decision-making positions. The "*glass ceiling*" phenomenon is not just an administrative problem, but a manifestation of a cultural tradition that subtly domesticates the role of women, even when they have academic qualifications equal to or higher than their male counterparts.

Although the structural barriers seem so massive, this research analytically shows that female leaders are not passive actors who are subject to circumstances. Instead, they demonstrate a strong agency through a variety of clever negotiation strategies to break through those boundaries. One of the most prominent strategies is the alignment of leadership practices with local socio-cultural expectations. By not clashing head-on with tradition, these women leaders engage in "subtle subversion" where they continue to carry out their leadership functions firmly but are wrapped in the values of politeness and local wisdom. This proves that the effectiveness of women's leadership often depends on their ability to balance formal authority and cultural acceptance.

Furthermore, the use of inclusive religious discourses, such as the concept of *mubà* (equality of relations), is a crucial instrument in legitimizing their role. Siagian (2023) and Werdiningsih and Natsir (2020) highlight how women leaders reinterpret religious texts to break down theological justifications that are often used to restrict women. By building a narrative that leadership is a humanitarian responsibility (*caliphate fil ardh*) that is not limited to gender, they have succeeded in creating a new space of legitimacy that conservatives find difficult to sue. This strategy shows that religious intellectuals are the main weapon for women in reclaiming public spaces in Islamic educational institutions.

Finally, the formation of collaborative networks emerged as a strategic *enabling factor*. Collectivity among fellow women leaders, both through formal associations and informal circles, serves as a support system for sharing resources, information, and

political protection. These negotiations show that leadership is not only determined by structural limitations, but is constantly shaped through individual interactions and agency. Critically, these findings challenge the theory of structural determinism; women's leadership in Indonesia is a dynamic process in which obstacles are the catalyst for the birth of a more resilient, adaptive, and transformative leadership model.

### **3. RQ3: Institutional Outcomes and Effectiveness**

The findings of this study show that women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions not only impacts administrative changes, but also fundamentally changes institutional performance. Critically, the presence of women in strategic positions is often positively correlated with increased managerial effectiveness and the creation of a healthier organizational culture. In contrast to traditional leadership models that tend to be hierarchical, female leaders tend to prioritize a more inclusive and participatory approach. Hadi (2023) and Isnaini et al. (2021) emphasize that this leadership style builds a more open communication space, which in turn triggers a collaborative decision-making process and increases staff loyalty and educational community engagement.

Furthermore, an analysis of leadership effectiveness revealed a significant improvement in the quality of services and institutional governance. In the context of Islamic madrassas and colleges, female leaders often demonstrate greater rigor in operational management and financial accountability. The findings from (Ainul Yaqin & Sholihah, 2025) and (Kunaepi et al., 2024).

Reinforce the argument that the professionalism brought by women leaders contributes to the achievement of better accreditation standards and curriculum modernization. This proves that women's involvement in leadership is not just the fulfillment of gender quotas, but a functional need to increase the competitiveness of institutions in the midst of the demands of globalization of education.

Critically, this study also highlights the vital role of women leaders as catalysts in the implementation of gender-responsive policies. Institutions led by women tend to be more sensitive to issues such as student protection, the provision of gender-friendly facilities, and the mainstreaming of women's perspectives in teaching materials. This success creates a safer and more equitable educational environment, which in the long term helps to break the chain of gender discrimination in society. However, this impact is not without challenges; The success of these gender initiatives often depends on how much support it receives from the surrounding masculine power structures, so its effectiveness remains negotiable.

While there are many positive trends, this study provides a critical note that these institutional outcomes are non-uniform and highly context-dependent. The effectiveness of women's leadership is strongly influenced by the type of institution (traditional vs. formal), the local cultural environment, and the availability of resources. In institutions

with high conservatism, the impact of transformation may be slower than in more progressive institutions. Therefore, the general claim of institutional transformation must be addressed with caution; The effectiveness of women's leadership must be understood within the framework of specific socio-cultural conditions. This confirms that leadership success is the result of the complex interaction between the leader's individual agency and the ecosystem in which he or she resides.

#### **4. RQ4: Research Gaps and Future Directions**

An analysis of the current literature reveals that although interest in women's leadership in Islamic education continues to increase, the existing research map is still highly fragmented and geographically concentrated. Most studies still focus on urban areas or large educational centers on the island of Java, thus ignoring the dynamics of women's leadership in disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost (3T) areas. This geographical gap causes our understanding of women's leadership to be urbanly biased and under-represented by Indonesia's vast sociocultural diversity. In fact, the challenges faced by women leaders in remote areas may be much more complex, involving infrastructure limitations and more rigid customary norms, which require special attention in future research.

In addition to the problem of geographical distribution, there is a significant methodological weakness, namely the lack of longitudinal research that is able to capture changes in the long term. The majority of current studies are *snapshot* or cross-sectional, which only capture the dynamics of leadership at a specific point in time. As a result, the long-term impact of women's leadership styles on institutional development and alumni success has not been clearly mapped. Future research needs to shift to longer-term study designs to understand how women's leadership sustainability influences organizational regeneration and how the gender-responsive values they instill transform into a permanent institutional culture.

Furthermore, there is a huge gap in the integration between leadership practices and measurable institutional performance indicators. There is still a lot of literature that is still descriptive-qualitative without connecting it with empirical data on the performance of schools or madrasas. There is an urgent need to diversify research methodologies, including the use of mixed-methods and more rigorous comparative studies. By combining qualitative narratives about women's agency with quantitative data on organizational effectiveness, researchers can provide a stronger and evidence-based argument about women's real contributions to advancing the quality of Islamic education at the national level.

Overall, the findings of this review confirm that women's leadership should be understood as a dynamic and contextually deeply embedded process. This leadership is shaped by the interplay between religious legitimacy, managerial competence, and

sociocultural barriers that are constantly negotiated through adaptive strategies. The study makes an important contribution by offering a more structured analytical framework, integrating leadership models with structural dynamics and institutional outcomes. By going beyond a single, fragmented case study, this research provides a more coherent foundation for understanding how women's leadership operates and evolves in Indonesia's complex Islamic education landscape.

## Conclusion

This study shows that women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia is multidimensional and context-dependent, combining religious legitimacy, managerial competence, and emerging digital engagement. These forms of leadership do not operate in isolation, but develop through interaction with institutional structures and sociocultural conditions.

The findings indicate that while structural barriers such as patriarchal norms and institutional hierarchies remain significant, they are not absolute. Women leaders actively negotiate these constraints through adaptive and context-sensitive strategies. As a result, leadership should be understood as a dynamic process shaped by the interplay between structure and agency.

In terms of implications, this study suggests that strengthening women's leadership requires more than formal policy support. Institutional efforts need to consider sociocultural contexts, organizational support systems, and leadership capacity development. At the same time, the study highlights the need for more systematic research, particularly in underrepresented regions and in studies linking leadership practices to measurable institutional outcomes. Overall, women's leadership in Islamic education is not a linear transformation, but a gradual and negotiated process, shaped by ongoing interaction between tradition and change.

## References

- Ainul Yaqin, M., & Sholihah, I. H. (2025a). Transforming Women's Leadership in Improving Service Quality in Islamic Boarding Schools. *Managere: Indonesian Journal of Educational Management*, 7(1), 49–58. <https://doi.org/10.52627/managere.v7i1.728>
- Aisyah, N. H., & Junaedi, M. (2024). Philosophical Foundation and Urgency of Gender-Equal Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia. *HUMANISMA: Journal of Gender Studies*, 8(2), 138-150.
- Azzahra, D. N., Mahfudha, G., Agustin, O., Nurmalinda, N., Aslamiah, A., & Cinantya, C. (2025). Peran Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini. *MARAS: Jurnal Penelitian Multidisiplin*, 3(2), 723–732. <https://doi.org/10.60126/maras.v3i2.1019>
- Fatmawati, Amir, R., Alamsyah, A., & Ilham, M. (2024). Transformation of Women's

- Leadership in Pesantren from Fiqh Siyāsah Perspective: Social Dynamics in the Patriarchal Culture of South Sulawesi. *Samarah*, 8(3), 1800–1817. <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhc.v8i3.18647>
- Fatmawati, F. (2024). Konsep Gender Perspektif Hukum Islam. *Islamic Law: Jurnal Siyasa*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.53429/iljs.v9i2.984>
- Isnaini, R. L., Hanum, F., & Prasajo, L. D. (2021). Quality management development through gender equality based leadership in Nahdlatul Ulama Universities. *Qualitative Report*, 26(11), 3374–3391. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4877>
- Kunaepi, A., Isnaini, Y., Nasikhin, N., & Panaemalae, A. (2024). The Role of Women's Leadership In Islamic Elementary Schools: A Gender Perspective Study. *Muwazah*, 16(2), 281–306. <https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v16i2.8650>
- Lalu Gede Muhammad Zainuddin Astani, Ulyan Nasri, Fahrurrozi, & Muhammad Thohri. (2024). Sitti Raihanun Zainuddin Abdul Madjid, Female Scholar of the 21st Century: Pioneer in Gender Transformation and Islamic Education in Lombok-West Nusa Tenggara. *Edukasia Islamika*, 9(1), 41–60. <https://doi.org/10.28918/jei.v9i1.7079>
- Latifah, H., & Asy'ari, H. (2024). Peran Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam Pengembangan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam. *Thawalib: Jurnal Kependidikan Islam*, 5(2), 463–472.
- Norlaila, Nuryadin, & Yaqin, H. (2025). norlaila. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, 9(2), 261–273. <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v9i2.99>
- Sakdiah, Srimulyani, E., Gade, S., Akmal, S., & Furqan, M. (2024). Challenges Of Female Principals In Madrasah Leadership In Banda Aceh: A Gender Analysis. *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, 24(1), 178–197. <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v24i1.19021>
- Salamah, S., Suriagiri, S., Nur Effendi, M., & Mudhiah, M. (2024). Women Leadership Performance in Learning Management at Private Madrasah Ibtidaiyah during the Covid-19 Pandemic in South Kalimantan. *Nidhomul Haq : Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 9(1), 150–164. <https://doi.org/10.31538/ndh.v9i1.4494>
- Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 8, 1–10.
- Werdiningsih, W., & Natsir, A. (2020a). Gender Equality and Equity with Mubadalah Concept and Its Implementation in Islamic Education. *ADDIN*, 14(2), 305. <https://doi.org/10.21043/addin.v14i2.7179>
- Werdiningsih, W., & Natsir, A. (2020b). Gender Equality and Equity with Mubadalah Concept and Its Implementation in Islamic Education. *ADDIN*, 14(2), 305. <https://doi.org/10.21043/addin.v14i2.7179>