



## Women's Leadership: Between Religious Texts and Gender Equality

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the interpretation of women's leadership from the perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as its relevance to the discourse of gender equality in leadership. This study uses a library research approach, examining religious texts and gender equality theories related to women's leadership. The study's results indicate that religious texts, both the Qur'an and Hadith, provide interpretations that allow women to hold leadership positions. Meanwhile, from a gender equality perspective, the selection of leaders does not depend on gender but on individual ability. This study concludes that there are no theological barriers for women in leadership positions, and the discourse on gender equality supports the importance of capacity and ability as benchmarks in leadership. This research reinforces theological and gender-based arguments about women's leadership, encourages dialogue between religious thought and gender justice, and is relevant in an evolving social and cultural context, supporting social reform and awareness of gender equality.

### Kata Kunci

Kepemimpinan  
Perempuan;  
Teks-teks Agama;  
Kesetaraan Gender

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis interpretasi kepemimpinan perempuan dalam perspektif Al-Qur'an dan Hadis, serta relevansinya dengan wacana kesetaraan gender dalam kepemimpinan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kepustakaan (library research), dengan mengkaji teks-teks agama dan teori-teori kesetaraan gender terkait kepemimpinan perempuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa teks-teks agama, baik Al-Qur'an maupun Hadis, memberikan interpretasi yang memungkinkan bagi perempuan untuk memegang jabatan kepemimpinan. Sementara itu, dalam perspektif kesetaraan gender, pemilihan pemimpin tidak bergantung pada jenis kelamin, tetapi pada kemampuan individu. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa tidak ada hambatan teologis bagi perempuan dalam memegang jabatan kepemimpinan, dan wacana kesetaraan gender mendukung pentingnya kapasitas dan kemampuan sebagai tolak ukur dalam kepemimpinan. Penelitian ini memperkuat argumen teologis dan berbasis gender tentang kepemimpinan perempuan, mendorong dialog antara pemikiran agama dan keadilan gender, serta relevan dalam konteks sosial dan budaya yang berkembang, mendukung reformasi sosial dan kesadaran akan kesetaraan gender.

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## INTRODUCTION

The issue of women's leadership in Islam continues to spark debate, particularly when religious discourse is confronted with demands for gender equality in modern society. In many Muslim communities, men still hold leadership roles, often justified by references to religious texts from the Qur'an and Hadith (Umar, 2014). However, numerous alternative interpretations and historical evidence indicate that women also possess the capacity and legitimacy to lead (Rohmatullah, 2017).

Abu Bakrah narrates one frequently cited hadith used to reject female leadership: "A nation that entrusts its affairs to a woman will never prosper" (Sahih Bukhari). Many contemporary scholars criticize the absolute application of this hadith without considering its historical context. This narration was a response to specific political conditions of the time, not a universal normative prohibition against women's leadership (Hasan & Rohmah, 2022). In contrast, the Qur'an presents the figure of Queen Bilqis in Surah An-Naml (verses 20–44) as a wise, consultative, and strategic leader. This story can be read as a recognition of female leadership capacity, although traditionalist scholars often marginalize such interpretations (Robikah, 2021).

Muslim women today are increasingly taking on leadership roles across social, educational, and religious sectors. Meisa and Ansari (2021) found that most women active in Islamic organizations possess strong leadership potential, including moral integrity, emotional intelligence, and religious knowledge. However, they continue to face obstacles such as biased interpretations and patriarchal social structure (Mala, 2022).

Moreover, Islamic feminism has emerged as a response to the dominance of patriarchal interpretations. This approach does not reject religious texts but instead advocates for rereading them through the lens of justice, context, and egalitarian principles central to Islamic teachings (Yusdani & Arfaizar, 2022). This approach is a critical bridge between religious normativity and modern gender equality.

Although the issue of women's leadership has been widely discussed, both from religious perspectives and gender studies, there remains a gap in approaches that integrate the two fairly and proportionally. Most classical literature emphasizes textual interpretations that tend to be patriarchal, while gender studies often overlook the theological nuances that remain significant references within Muslim communities. This has led to a dichotomy between religious authority and the demands of gender equality, ultimately hindering women's participation in strategic leadership roles. Therefore, an analysis that does not merely oppose these two approaches but instead seeks an argumentative and contextual point of convergence is needed.

This research is necessary because it examines the relationship between religious texts, notably the Qur'an and Hadith, and the discourse on gender equality in the context of women's leadership. By analyzing interpretations of women's leadership in religion, this research highlights that there are no theological barriers to women holding leadership positions and that individual ability is more important than gender in selecting leaders. This research provides a strong theological foundation to support women's participation in leadership. It encourages dialogue between religious thought and principles of gender justice, which is highly relevant in an evolving socio-cultural context, making an essential contribution to women's empowerment in various sectors.

This research uses a contextual and interpretative approach to re-examine the understanding of women's leadership from the perspective of religious texts, notably the Qur'an and Hadith. It also seeks to explore the concept of gender equality in women's leadership roles to find a meeting point between religious values and the principles of gender justice (Selvira, 2024). Through a comprehensive analysis, this study strives to develop theological and gender-based arguments that mutually reinforce the legitimacy of women's participation in leadership roles. Furthermore, this research is expected to offer an inclusive and constructive framework that opens up space for a more open dialogue between religious thought and the discourse on equality within an evolving socio-cultural context.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach utilizing the library research method, chosen for its effectiveness in gathering comprehensive and relevant information from various literature sources. The library research method is particularly suitable for examining the nuanced intersection of women's leadership and religious texts and exploring the concept of gender equality within these contexts. By relying on both primary and secondary sources, this approach allows for a thorough examination of the subject matter from various angles.

The research subjects encompass primary religious texts, such as the Qur'an and Hadith, which serve as foundational sources for understanding Islamic teachings on leadership. Additionally, secondary literature is incorporated, including classical Islamic thought, modern interpretations, academic journals, and scholarly works that discuss the broader concepts of gender equality and leadership in both religious and societal contexts. These sources provide a well-rounded perspective on how leadership is understood in religious texts and how this relates to contemporary gender equality discussions.

The data collection process involved systematically identifying, selecting, and documenting literature that directly pertains to the research questions. This process involved searching through various materials, including books, academic articles, peer-reviewed journals, and religious texts, carefully chosen for their relevance and academic credibility. The aim was to gather a comprehensive body of literature that accurately represents the diversity of views on women's leadership in religious and gender equality frameworks.

Once the data was collected, it was analyzed using content analysis, focusing on descriptive-analytical and hermeneutic approaches. The descriptive-analytical approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the content, while the hermeneutic method facilitated the interpretation of the texts within their social, historical, and theological contexts. This approach enabled the researcher to uncover underlying meanings and interpretations of women's leadership in religious texts, allowing for a deeper understanding of the relationship between religious teachings and modern gender equality perspectives. Combining these analytical methods provides a holistic view of how women's leadership is framed and understood in religious and contemporary gender discourse.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

Religious texts, in general, allow women. The citation of verse al-Nisa 34 as evidence for the group arguing that women's leadership is not permissible seems inappropriate; the verse above talks about male leadership in the household context. The story of Queen Bilqis and verse at-Taubah 71 shows the permissibility of a woman to lead. The hadith narrated by Abu Bakrah about the failure of women's leadership can be understood conditionally through the asbabul wurud of the hadith. The Prophet uttered the hadith in a historical context where women did not receive the same educational rights as men. As for the current condition of equal rights received by women and men, it is permissible for leadership to be handed over to women if they have *leadership abilities*.

Regarding gender, academics theoretically acknowledge that women have the same leadership potential as men. However, several studies show that the percentage of women holding strategic positions in government or private institutions is still small compared to men. This is due to the strong stereotype in society that portrays men as being assertive and dominant while women are associated with being loving and nurturing. The feminine side of women is a strong consideration when handing over strategic positions to women; of course, this can hinder women's career development.

## Discussion

### 1. Contextual *tafsir* and *syarah* of Hadith

The theory of contextual interpretation emphasizes the importance of understanding religious texts (such as the Qur'an and Hadith) not in a literal and isolated manner but by considering the historical, social, and cultural context in which the texts were revealed (Hasbiyallah, 2018). Modern exegetes such as Fazlur Rahman and Amina Wadud have developed a hermeneutic approach that is more inclusive and gender-just. In this approach, the values of justice, public good (*maslahah*), and equality serve as foundational principles in interpreting Islamic teachings, including in matters of women's leadership (Ramadhan, 2024) (Amir, 2022). Contextual interpretation allows for the reinterpretation of traditionally understood verses through a patriarchal lens, making them more aligned with the universal values of Islam.

Amina Wadud (1999) is one of the most prominent figures in Islamic and gender studies who offers a Qur'anic interpretive approach based on the principles of justice and gender equality. In her influential work *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, Wadud developed a contextual-feminist *tafsir* approach, which seeks to reread the sacred text from a female perspective within a social justice framework. Wadud rejects the traditional, literalist, and ahistorical methods of interpretation, which she argues are often shaped by the patriarchal culture in which classical exegetes lived. She emphasizes that the Qur'an should be interpreted by considering the historical context of its revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*), the linguistic structure of the text, and universal Islamic values such as justice and consultation (*shura*) (Wadud, 2009).

Contextual understanding of Hadith is an approach that emphasizes the importance of interpreting the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad about the social, cultural, and historical context in which they were spoken (Channa AW, 2011). This approach is grounded in the awareness that some Hadiths were not intended as universal normative rulings but rather as responses to specific conditions and needs of Arab society at that time (Helmy, 2020). The contextual approach does not reject Hadith, but instead reexamines their purpose and scope of application in a more just and rational manner. As such, this approach opens the door for a more inclusive interpretation that aligns with the Islamic principles of justice, including in support of women's roles in leadership.

### 2. Gender Equality

This theory is based on the principle that all human beings, regardless of gender, have equal rights and opportunities in various aspects of life, including leadership. In this context, gender is not viewed as a biological destiny but as a social construct that can be changed and reexamined (Anggoro, 2019). Figures such as Marry Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, and contemporary Muslim scholars like Fatima Mernissi and Amina Wadud have shown that gender inequality is often caused more by social and cultural interpretations of texts rather than by the texts themselves (Mahfud et al., 2015).

By combining these two approaches, this study aims to build a bridge between religious authority and the values of gender justice. A more just and gender-sensitive theological understanding is expected to remove discriminatory boundaries against women, especially in strategic roles such as leadership.

### 3. Quran Verses About Women's Leadership

The issue of women's leadership is often associated with one of the verses of the Qur'an, which states that men are leaders of women, namely in the letter al-Nisa' verse 34.

اَلرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ

Meaning: "Men are leaders of women because Allah has made some of them (men) excel others (women), and because they (men) spend part of their wealth (QS. An-Nisa: 34).

*Al-rijalu qawwamuna 'alanisa'* (men are leaders for women) is the main argument for those who argue that leadership is in the hands of men. However, there are also quite a few commentators who argue that the verse applies in the family sphere because the continuation of the verse states that men

become leaders because of the wealth they have accumulated (Balgis, 2022). This opinion is also supported by the asbabun nuzul of this verse, as mentioned in the previous discussion.

Muhammad Abduh in *Tafsir al-Manar* does not make male leadership absolute over women because this verse does not use "because Allah has given advantages to men", but instead uses "because Allah has given some of them superiority over others" (Abdih, n.d.). This is also in line with Quraish Shihab's view that the verse above speaks of male leadership in the context of the household (Shihab, 2002).

One verse that is often associated with women's political rights is Surah al-Taubah verse 71.

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

Meaning; "And those who believe, men and women, some of them (are) helpers for others. They enjoin (do) what is right, forbid what is evil, perform prayers, pay zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah will give them mercy; Verily Allah is Mighty, Most Wise " (QS. At- Taubah: 71).

The Surah of al-Nisa' verse 124 also explains that Allah SWT has created men and women with the same ability to do good deeds in various aspects of life; they will also get the same results and rewards.

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْلَ صِلَاحٍ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا

Meaning: "Whoever does pious deeds, whether male or female, and he is a believer, then they will enter heaven, and they will not be wronged even in the slightest " (QS. An Nisa: 124).

The verses above show the permissibility of women's participation with men in following the development of society so that each of them can see and express their thoughts in various areas of life; they are both ordered to do what is *ma'ruf* and forbid what is *munkar*. If the verse *al-rijalu qawwamuna 'ala nissa'* is used as evidence that absolute leadership is in the hands of men so that women do not have the right to enter the world of politics, then this view, according to Quraish Shihab is not in line with the verse above (Shihab, 2002)

In Islam, there is also a deliberation system in deciding a problem, as explained in the letter a sy - Shura verse 38.

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

Meaning: "And those who respond to their Lord and establish prayer, and their affair is decided by consultation among themselves, and they provide for part of the sustenance we give to them ." (QS. Ash-Shura: 38)

Shura is one of the principles of managing the fields of communal life according to the Qur'an, including political life, in the sense that every citizen in their communal life must always hold deliberations. This verse is also used as a basis to prove the existence of political rights for every man and woman, as stated by Quraish Shihab ((Shihab, 2002). From the verses above, it is clear that Islam has a concept of gender justice and does not discriminate against women.

The Quran once told about the success of a people led by a wise Queen, Queen Balqis, who became the head of government in the kingdom of Saba. She is described as a ruler who succeeded in bringing her people to physical and spiritual health so that the land of Saba was known to have vast land and a population that could cultivate its earth's wealth. Therefore, they had a vast trade network, so their people felt welfare and prosperity (Robikah, 2021).

The wealth and greatness of the land of Saba under the reign of Queen Balqis were reported by the hoopoe bird to Prophet Solomon, as stated in the letter al-Naml verse 23.

شَاءَ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ

Meaning: "Surely I found a woman who ruled over them, and she was blessed with everything and had a great throne." (An-Naml: 23).

Queen Balqis is known as a wise, wise and democratic leader. So, he received support from officials and the people. Even though the decision was in his hands, he did not forget to consult first and ask for the opinion of the country's officials (Rizki et al., 2020). This was seen when he wanted to answer Prophet Sulaiman's letter regarding changes in belief, as reported by the Koran in Surah al-Naml verse 32.

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى تَشْهَدُون

Meaning: "He (Balqis) said, "O dignitaries, give me consideration in my (this) matter; I never decide a matter before you are in (my) assembly."

Surah al-Naml, which contains the story of Queen Balqis, was delivered by Rasulullah Saw to the people gathering in Mecca (Mernissi, 1991). The inclusion of the story of Queen Balqis in the Koran is certainly not just a fairy tale from the past but a real story. It contains lessons about the ability of women to lead a superpower country described in the Koran.

The Prophet Muhammad SAW also once trusted a woman to provide temporary security guarantees to polytheists, namely Umm Hani. In addition, Aisyah, the wife of the Prophet SAW, led the war directly against Ali ibn Abi Thalib, who at that time held the position of head of state (Mernissi, 1991). When Umar ibn al-Khattab served as caliph, he appointed a woman named al-Syiffa as the financial supervisor in the market of the city of Medina; her authority encompassed all those who carried out activities there, both men and women. She was the one who upheld justice and prevented evil (Akbar et al., 2024).

The historical facts above show that women can also hold leadership positions and successfully bring the country and its people to economic success and political stability. It is not easy to find women with good leadership *skills* like the figures above. However, if there are, they also have the same opportunities as men.

However, several things are worth considering when handing over leadership to women. To lead a country, a leader must be truly total regarding time, thoughts, risks, and responsibilities. They must be willing to be busy with their activities, such as attending meetings on various occasions, going on business trips, and so on, which, of course, are difficult for a woman to do because it cannot be forgotten that a woman is a housewife in her family, has the main task of serving her husband and children. As mentioned above, women, from a psychological perspective, have soft and sensitive feelings that support their function in educating and raising children. A mother is a cool breeze that blows comfort and affection to all family members. Mothers are very influential in forming good and healthy children physically and mentally. This job is a noble job for a woman.

A woman has the possibility and opportunity to become a leader, to be involved in politics, and to work inside or outside the home. However, there needs to be guarantees that protect the future of her family and household. She can carry out her leadership well and does not neglect her primary duties in the family.

#### 4. Hadith About Women's Leadership

Hadith about the prohibition of Women's leadership narrated by Abu Bakrah. In *the al-Sittah pole*, this hadith is narrated by Bukhari, Turmudzi, and Nasa'i, who are qualified hadith authentic according to Al-Albani. The following text is from the book of *Sahih Bukhari*.

عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ قَالَ لَقَدْ نَفَعَنِي اللَّهُ بِكَلِمَةٍ سَمِعْتُهَا مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَيَّامَ الْجَمَلِ بَعْدَ مَا كِدْتُ أَنْ أَلْحَقَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْجَمَلِ فَأَقَاتِلَ مَعَهُمْ قَالَ لَمَّا بَلَغَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّ أَهْلَ فَارِسَ قَدْ مَلَكَوْا عَلَيْهِمْ بِنْتُ كِسْرَى قَالَ لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَوْ أَمَرَهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ.

From Abu Bakrah, he said, "Indeed, Allah SWT has benefited me with the words that I heard from the Messenger of Allah. Then, I conveyed to them on the day of the Jamal war after I refused to fight with them when it was conveyed to the Messenger of Allah that the Persians had appointed Princess

Kisra as leader. Then the Messenger of Allah said, "A people who hand over their affairs to women will not succeed." (HR. Bukhari).

The meaning of this hadith textually suggests that women do not have the right to serve as community leaders. Al-Syaukani, in explaining this hadith, said women are not allowed to be leaders because they cannot lead (Al-Asqalani, 2015). So, according to the author, several things need to be observed regarding the text of this hadith, such as the social conditions that were developing at the time the hadith was narrated and the correlation between the meaning of the hadith and the content of the Qur'an.

As stated in the hadith above, the hadith about the prohibition of female leadership was uttered by the Prophet SAW. When he heard that the Persian state handed over its leadership to a woman, namely Buran binti Syairawaihi bin Kisra bin Barwaiz, she was appointed queen of Persia after her brother was killed during the war (Faridah et al., 2022).

In the 9th year of H., handing over leadership to women was unusual and against tradition. Women were not trusted to take care of public issues because their insight and knowledge were relatively lacking and not as capable as men, and in the eyes of society at that time, women were seen as inferior creatures. Moreover, at that time, the Persian kingdom was on the verge of destruction; even though there was a possibility to hand over leadership to a skilled general who might be able to defeat and stop them from defeat, the royal family did not know the system of deliberation and did not respect opinions. They handed over leadership to a young woman who knew nothing about government and the ins and outs of warfare.

In this historical condition, the Prophet SAW said that handing over leadership to women would not be successful. How could it be successful if the leader himself did not know anything about leadership? Departing from the basic assumption that when the Prophet SAW said it could not be separated from the situation and conditions surrounding society at that time. So by using the historical sociological approach, according to Said Agil Husain al-Munawar (Al-Munawar et al., 2001), it is permissible for a woman to become a leader as long as she has good leadership skills and her society can accept her as a leader. The same thing was also expressed by al-Ghazali (Al-Ghazali, 1989) when studying this hadith; he emphasized that the most essential thing in appointing someone as a leader is the person who has the most ability among his people.

## 5. Leadership in Gender Perspective

The number of existing women in Indonesia is still minimal compared to the leader of leaders. Even several circles look at the presence of a leader, Women, as a problem alone (Suhada, 2019). However, women also have equal rights to men, especially in leadership positions. However, in practice, there are still Lots of stereotypes that assume that when a Woman becomes a leader, He will outdo men.

The stereotype of women as housewives means they do not need to get higher education and have a career outside the home. This stigma also influences the minimal presence of women in the workforce. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report states that only 22.10% of companies have female representatives in managerial positions in Indonesia. In 2022, women will hold 33.08% of managerial positions in government, public, and private companies. This number is less than men.

Negative views on women have caused some to fail to become leaders, including in legislative elections. The involvement of women as legislative candidates is merely to fulfil the requirement that political parties include at least 30 per cent of female candidates in the nomination list (Rahim, 2016).

This study, conducted by the University of Buffalo School of Management, analyzed 136 cases involving 19,000 respondents over the past 59 years. Researchers concluded that gender inequality has decreased in recent decades, but that does not mean it has completely disappeared. "The main reason behind the persistence of gender inequality is social pressure that causes differences in characteristics between women and men ." Researchers emphasize that men are assertive and dominant, while women

are associated with loving and nurturing. The attitude of more vocal men who often express their opinions in work meetings is considered a criterion for leadership.

Meanwhile, the feminine nature of women makes them less often seen as leaders. This assumption is what hinders women in their careers. Women also have the same potential to become leaders.

According to Morgan and Rahim (2016), the characteristics of a leader lie in the ability to identify the needs of subordinates or the group being led so that they can provide targeted coaching and services. Group members can feel the sound effects of their leader. Thus, the standard in determining a leader does not lie in gender alone but in looking at the abilities and characteristics of the leader himself (leadership).

Women have the potential to be leaders in an organization under two conditions. First, I need the ability and skills to carry out leadership effectively. Second, the organization's need for a leader is determined by the leadership style possessed by women. The right solution to help women obtain the same rights as men is to provide them with learning through leadership training for women, seminars, workshops, and others.

Leadership of women from a gender perspective highlights how women's roles and positions within leadership structures are influenced by social and cultural constructions related to gender identity. From this viewpoint, leadership is about individual ability and how norms, stereotypes, and gender-based discrimination limit women's access and participation in strategic positions. The gender perspective emphasizes the importance of equality and fairness in distributing leadership opportunities, recognizing that women have the same capacity and competence as men. However, obstacles such as patriarchy, institutional bias, and social expectations often become significant barriers that prevent women from fully taking on leadership roles (Suhada, 2019). Therefore, a gender-based approach encourages social reforms and policies that can eliminate inequality and support the development of women's leadership more inclusively and sustainably.

Furthermore, the gender perspective on leadership also highlights the need for cultural and social structural transformation, which traditionally positions men as dominant figures in leadership roles. Women often face a double burden: fulfilling traditional roles as household caretakers while proving their competence in professional or public domains. This creates high social pressure and necessitates systemic support such as affirmative policies, leadership training specifically for women, and gender-friendly work environments. With a gender-sensitive approach, organizations and institutions can create climates that enable women to thrive and contribute optimally in decision-making processes. Additionally, gender diversity in leadership brings new, innovative, and inclusive perspectives that ultimately enhance policy quality and organizational effectiveness.

An Arabic poem reads:

لا تأنيث لإسم الشمس عيب ولا تذكير فخر للهل, لو كانت النساء لسيدة عائشة لفضلن النساء علي الرجال .

Meaning: "It is not a disgrace for the name of the sun *to be muannas* (female), and it is not a disgrace for the name of the moon *to be muzakkar* (male) if only women were like *Sayyidah* Aisha. Indeed, they are better than men."

Adopting a gender perspective on women's leadership is essential for addressing the systemic barriers historically limiting women's participation in leadership roles. It calls for a shift in policies, cultural attitudes, and institutional practices to create a more equitable environment. Empowering women to lead is not merely a matter of fairness but also a strategic imperative that enriches organizations and societies by bringing diverse viewpoints and inclusive solutions. Therefore, advancing women's leadership through a gender-sensitive approach contributes significantly to achieving social justice, organizational excellence, and sustainable development.



## CONCLUSION

This study highlights that while traditional patriarchal interpretations often constrain women's leadership in Islam, the religious texts themselves do not explicitly prohibit such leadership. A key example is the hadith of Abu Bakrah, commonly used to argue against female leadership. This hadith, however, is rooted in a specific historical and political context that does not provide a universal, normative basis for rejecting female leadership. In contrast, the Qur'an offers positive portrayals of female leadership, such as the story of Queen Bilqis, who is depicted as a wise and strategic leader. Her story underscores the importance of competence over gender in the Islamic view of leadership, suggesting that the ability to lead is not inherently tied to one's gender but rather to one's qualifications and abilities.

Moreover, the study emphasizes the growing potential of contemporary Muslim women to assume leadership roles across various sectors, including education, religious institutions, and social organizations. Despite this potential, significant barriers persist, including entrenched patriarchal cultural norms, biased interpretations of religious texts, and institutional resistance to female leadership. These challenges limit the full participation of women in leadership roles, particularly in traditionally male-dominated spaces. The study underscores the importance of addressing these structural obstacles to create opportunities for women to exercise leadership in all areas of society while fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment for future generations.

The study further explores the role of Islamic feminism and contextual hermeneutics in offering alternative, gender-just interpretations of religious texts. This approach does not reject Islamic values but aims to illuminate the core principles of justice, equality, and public welfare embedded within Islamic teachings. By reinterpreting religious texts through these lenses, it becomes possible to create a more inclusive understanding of women's leadership in Islam that aligns with the religion's foundational values. Therefore, the study calls for a reconstruction of the understanding of women's leadership in Islam to open equal spaces for women in both public and religious leadership without departing from the normative framework of Islam itself.

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