

Women's Leadership, Sharia Law, and Society 5.0: A Review of Istibsyaroh's Thoughts

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the leadership philosophy of Istibsyaroh, a prominent female figure in Pesantren (Islamic Boarding Schools) from Jombang, East Java, and its relevance in addressing leadership challenges in the Society 5.0 era. The issue of female leadership in this context remains a topic of debate, particularly concerning gender equality, the interpretation of Sharia law, and adaptation to modern technological advancements. Employing a qualitative approach and a descriptive-analytical method, this study examines literature encompassing Istibsyaroh's works, insights, and contributions, as well as the concept of female leadership within Sharia law and Society 5.0. The analysis reveals the interconnection between the qualifications of an ideal leader in the Society 5.0 era, Islamic perspectives on female leadership, and Istibsyaroh's thoughts. The findings indicate that Istibsyaroh asserts women's right to hold political positions, provided they adhere to Islamic law, as there is no explicit evidence prohibiting female leadership in politics and governance. Through a critical review of thematic Quranic exegesis (*tafsir mawdū'i*) regarding scholars' differing views on women's political rights and leadership, it can be concluded that Islam accommodates women's participation in political leadership. Istibsyaroh's leadership philosophy offers a model that emphasizes the synergy between Islamic values, gender justice, and adaptive skills in technology and global dynamics. This model making it relevant for addressing the complex leadership challenges of the Society 5.0 era.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pemikiran kepemimpinan Istibsyaroh, seorang tokoh perempuan Pesantren dari Jombang, Jawa Timur serta relevansinya dalam menjawab tantangan kepemimpinan di era Society 5.0. Isu kepemimpinan perempuan dalam konteks ini masih menjadi perdebatan, terutama terkait keadilan gender, interpretasi hukum syariah, dan adaptasi terhadap perkembangan teknologi modern. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode deskriptif-analitis, penelitian ini mengkaji literatur yang mencakup karya, wawasan, dan kontribusi Istibsyaroh, serta konsep kepemimpinan perempuan dalam hukum syariah dan Society 5.0. Analisis ini mengungkap keterkaitan antara kualifikasi pemimpin ideal di era Society 5.0, perspektif Islam tentang kepemimpinan perempuan, dan pemikiran Istibsyaroh. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Istibsyaroh menegaskan hak perempuan untuk menduduki jabatan politik selama berpegang teguh pada syariat Islam, karena tidak ada dalil eksplisit yang melarang kepemimpinan perempuan di bidang politik dan pemerintahan. Dari tinjauan kritis terhadap kajian *tafsir mawdū'i* (tematik) mengenai perbedaan pandangan ulama tentang hak-hak politik perempuan, dapat disimpulkan bahwa Islam memberikan ruang bagi perempuan untuk berperan dalam kepemimpinan politik. Pemikiran kepemimpinan Istibsyaroh menawarkan model yang menekankan sinergi antara nilai-nilai keislaman, keadilan gender, serta keterampilan adaptif terhadap teknologi dan dinamika global. Model kepemimpinan ini menjadikannya relevan untuk menghadapi tantangan kepemimpinan di era society 5.0.

Keywords:

Women's Leadership; Sharia Law; Istibsyaroh's Thought; Society 5.0; Islamic Leadership

Kata kunci:

Kepemimpinan Perempuan; Hukum Syariah; Pemikiran Istibsyaroh; Masyarakat 5.0; Kepemimpinan Islam

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Introduction

The era of Society 5.0, often referred to as the super-smart society, has ushered in significant changes across various aspects of life, including the leadership paradigm. Traditional hierarchical leadership, which tends to be authoritarian, is beginning to evolve into a more inclusive and collaborative approach to address the complexities of this era. According to Klein, technology and data are essential components of modern leadership,¹ enabling faster and more accurate decision-making. In Indonesia, this transformation necessitates a balance between local values and global developments. Social evidence indicates that women leaders continue to face substantial challenges due to entrenched gender stereotypes within society.² The representation of women in strategic positions, such as in the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), remains significantly below the ideal threshold and fails to meet the mandated 30% quota.³ This underscores the importance of recognizing gender equity in leadership, as the quality and capacity of leadership are determined not by gender but by individual competence.

In the Islamic context, the discourse surrounding women's leadership is often contentious, particularly when it intersects with cultural values and social norms. While some scholars, such as M. Quraish Shihab, acknowledge women's capacity to assume leadership roles in certain contexts,⁴ many conservative perspectives continue to challenge this notion. In Indonesia, a deeply entrenched patriarchal culture frequently hinders women's access to leadership positions. For instance, during the 2019 General Election, despite a higher number of female voters compared to male voters, women's representation remained disproportionately low.⁵ The leadership philosophy of Istibsyaroh, a prominent female figure from a pesantren in Jombang, offers a compelling perspective by integrating Islamic values, local culture, and global demands. Her approach demonstrates that women's leadership can effectively address the challenges of the Society 5.0 era through strategies that emphasize collaboration, adaptation, and innovation.

Through this research, the author examines the significance of Istibsyaroh's leadership philosophy, a prominent female figure in the pesantren community who has made substantial contributions to women's empowerment in society. Istibsyaroh's

¹ Müge Klein, "Leadership Characteristics in the Era of Digital Transformation," 2020.

² Naznin Tabassum and Bhabani Shankar Nayak, "Gender Stereotypes and Their Impact on Women's Career Progressions from a Managerial Perspective," *IIM Kozhikode Society & Management Review* 10, no. 2 (2021): 192-208.

³ Andini Rahayu, Irza Setiawan, and Agus Sya'bani Arlan, "Implementation Of The Bill Number 10 Of 2008 On General Election Process (Case Study of Fulfillment of 30% Women's Quota in Politics at the Hulu Sungai Utara Regency DPRD)," *Journal of Public Policy* 1, no. 4 (2024): 738-48.

⁴ Erlies Erviena, "Women's Leadership in the Qur'an: Reinterpretation of M. Quraish Shihab's Thought on the Concept of Al-Qawwāmah with the Perspective of Qirā'ahmubādalah" (PTIQ Institute Jakarta, 2021).

⁵ Dessy Ramadhany and Dian Eka Rahmawati, "Women Candidates' Capital and Patriarchal Politics in Indonesian General Elections: Women's Representation in the 2019 General Election in Sleman Regency," *JISPO Journal of Social and Political Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2020): 39-62.



leadership distinguishes itself from that of many other female leaders who are often constrained by the stereotypes of patriarchal culture, as she integrates principles of justice, diversity, and religious values into every aspect of her leadership. This study presents a novel perspective, as, despite the extensive discourse on women's leadership in social and political studies, few studies have explored pesantren-based models of women's leadership, particularly those that merge local and religious viewpoints. Istibsyaroh not only champions women's empowerment but also encourages women to actively participate in decision-making processes, both within the pesantren community and in the broader society. Her success in balancing religious values with social dynamics in the modern era demonstrates that pesantren-based women's leadership is highly relevant in addressing the challenges of leadership in the Society 5.0 era.⁶

The gap in this research lies in the limited studies that connect Women's leadership with pesantren-based leadership models in the midst of rapid technological development and social change. Therefore, this research is important to fill the void by analyzing how Istibsyaroh's leadership thinking can make a relevant contribution to current leadership challenges, as well as explore universal values that can be an inspiration for today's leadership paradigm. Her role in building collective awareness of the importance of inclusivity teaches that women have great potential to become significant agents of change. In addition, Istibsyaroh's dedication in fostering pesantren-based communities shows that Women's leadership can contribute to the creation of social harmony in the midst of existing diversity. She not only focuses on empowering women but also strengthens collaboration between groups to create a more just and tolerant social order. Her contribution is relevant to the challenges of the modern era, where social conflicts often arise due to a lack of understanding of diversity.⁷

The inspiration from Istibsyaroh's leadership works provides a strong impetus for the younger generation to be actively involved in building an inclusive and equitable society, which not only prioritizes social equality but also pays attention to religious values. Istibsyaroh's leadership reflects Islamic principles that emphasize justice, diversity, and the preservation of the rights of every individual, especially women, in a dynamic social context. In every step of her leadership, Istibsyaroh succeeded in integrating Islamic teachings on fair leadership based on the common good, making her leadership model relevant to global demands without losing its solid cultural and religious roots. The values championed by Istibsyaroh, such as openness to change and respect for moral principles in Islam, are important reflections in formulating a vision of leadership that is able to answer global challenges in the

⁶ Linda Yuli Yani, Siti Aimah, and Andi Setiawan, "Revitalizing Pesantren Leadership: A Study of Women's Role in Islamic Education Transformation," *El-Idare: Journal of Islamic Education Management* 11, no. 1 (2025): 1-12.

⁷ Dwi Mariyono and Masykuri Masykuri, "Kiprah Pesantren: Solution to Social Conflict and Ethics of a Multicultural Nation," *Journal on Education* 5, no. 4 (2023): 12052-65.



modern era. Thus, the leadership promoted by Istibsyaroh shows that a modern leadership model can emerge and develop without neglecting the religious fundamentals that are its main foundation.

The purpose of writing this article is to describe Istibsyaroh's leadership thinking as a female pesantren figure in responding to leadership challenges in the Society 5.0 era, as well as exploring the relevance of local and cultural values in building an inclusive, adaptive, and equitable leadership model. This article was prepared using a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method based on library research. The research process was conducted systematically through the stages of reading, reviewing, and recording relevant literature to collect valid information and in accordance with the subject matter.⁸ The information collected was then selected and synthesized into a structured theoretical framework to produce a comprehensive analysis. This approach not only aims to review the literature in depth but also to build a solid theoretical foundation as a basis for discussion and analysis of the topic⁹. The choice of a qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the concepts discussed, going beyond mere surface descriptions, while the descriptive-analytical method facilitates the identification of patterns, themes, and relationships between literature to strengthen the clarity and coherence of the argumentation¹⁰. By critically analyzing credible sources, this article seeks to present a fair and balanced perspective and bridge gaps or contradictions that may be found in previous studies. Moreover, the researcher also dug up information through informants at one of the Islamic religious colleges in Jombang, which had previously been led directly by him. Thus, this research is expected to contribute new insights that enrich readers' understanding as well as become a reliable reference for the development of further research

This article highlights the broader implications of Women's leadership in pesantren-based communities and its relevance in addressing contemporary challenges in the Society 5.0 era. The leadership exemplified by Istibsyaroh presents a transformative paradigm that combines local values with global demands, offering an integrative approach capable of addressing the complexities of modern leadership. Practically, Istibsyaroh's strategy includes strengthening the role of women in strategic decision-making in pesantren so that the values of gender justice can be concretely applied in a faith-based educational environment. In addition, her efforts in encouraging curriculum updates based on progressive Islamic values are an important step in educational reform, ensuring Women's involvement not only in the learning process but also in the formulation of educational policies. Thus, Istibsyaroh's leadership not only had a significant social impact but also provided a practical model for other women leaders in addressing contemporary challenges. Her thinking

⁸ Andrew Booth et al., "A Systematic Approach to Successful Literature Reviews," 2021.

⁹ Maggi Savin-Baden and Claire Major, *Qualitative Research: An Essential Guide to Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 2023).

¹⁰ Weng Marc Lim, "What is Qualitative Research? An Overview and Guide," *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 2024, 14413582241264620.

emphasizes the importance of inclusive leadership that embraces diversity, strengthens social cohesion, and empowers women while respecting religious sharia.¹¹ This perspective not only breaks patriarchal norms but also redefines leadership discourse by emphasizing collaboration, justice, and social harmony. By grounding her leadership in cultural and religious principles, Istibsyaroh demonstrates that women's advancement in leadership does not require a departure from traditional values but rather a strategic reinterpretation of those values to meet the evolving needs of society.¹²

The implications of this research extend to academia, encouraging further exploration of women's leadership models that are rooted in local contexts while remaining universally relevant. This research contributes to the formation of a new generation of leaders capable of integrating local cultural values with modern innovations,¹³ resulting in a leadership model that is adaptive, inclusive, and oriented toward a visionary future. This aligns with global demands for leaders who can confront social challenges while upholding ethical integrity and cultural sensitivity.¹⁴ This approach not only addresses the need for leaders with cultural awareness and ethical principles but also provides a relevant framework for tackling social challenges in the contemporary era. By linking these findings to the research objective—describing the relevance of women's leadership values within the context of pesantren communities—this article aims to enrich the academic discourse on women's leadership in Indonesia. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to inspire policymakers, educators, and academics to advocate for education reform and gender justice. Through this exploration, Istibsyaroh's leadership values and strategies serve as a crucial foundation for redefining a relevant and sustainable leadership concept.

Results and Discussion

Leadership Challenges in the Era of Society 5.0

The Society 5.0 era marks fundamental changes in various aspects of life, with technology as a central element that affects the way humans think, work, and interact.¹⁵ Technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and big data have changed the expectations of leaders,¹⁶ who are now required to be able to

¹¹ Muhammad Nadeem, "Distributed Leadership in the Context of Education: A Catalyst for School Improvement," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 9 (2024): 100835.

¹² Adrianna J Kezar, *Rethinking Leadership in Complex, Multicultural, and Global Environments: New Concepts and Models for Higher Education* (Taylor & Francis, 2023).

¹³ Muhammad Aji Suprayitno and Agoes Moh Moefad, "The Role of Integrated Islamic Education in the Formation of Character and Social Skills of Muslim Young Generation in the Era of Globalization," *JIIP-Scientific Journal of Education Science* 7, no. 2 (2024): 1763-70.

¹⁴ Louis W Fry and Eleftheria Egel, "Global Leadership for Sustainability," *Sustainability* 13, no. 11 (2021): 6360.

¹⁵ Loso Judijanto et al., *Digital Literacy in the Era of Society 5.0: A Smart Guide to Facing Digital Transformation* (PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2024).

¹⁶ Sonal Pathak and Vijender Kumar Solanki, "Impact of Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence on Human Resource Development," *Further Advances in Internet of Things in Biomedical and Cyber Physical Systems*, 2021, 239-67.



integrate technology in decision-making and manage complexity and uncertainty. In this context, leadership requires not only the ability to think critically, creatively, and adaptively but also the courage to make decisions that are inclusive and data-driven.¹⁷ Leadership competencies, writing and language skills, and furthermore, mastery of information and communication technology¹⁸. Leadership challenges in the Society 5.0 era include the ability to lead in an increasingly connected and technologically complex environment¹⁹. Another challenge is how to utilize technological innovation to answer social problems, such as inequality in access to education, community empowerment, and improving people's quality of life. This era also brings great opportunities for women, including in the Islamic context, to expand their contributions by utilizing technology as a means of fighting for justice and equality.

From an Islamic Women's leadership perspective, technology becomes an instrument that allows them to overcome traditional barriers while strengthening their position in the public sphere²⁰. The digital paradigm shift opens opportunities for women leaders to utilize technological platforms to build global connections, expand influence in local communities, and apply Islamic values in solving contemporary challenges. For example, the utilization of technology in improving pesantren-based education shows how technology can be a bridge between local traditions and global demands. With a transformative approach, women leaders can demonstrate the relevance of Islamic values in building inclusive and equitable leadership while providing inspiration for the redefinition of leadership in the era of Society 5.0.

This role reflects the potential of technology as a tool that supports women in creating meaningful social change in line with religious values and the needs of the times. In this case, Istibsyaroh, a female pesantren leader and cleric, demonstrates how Islamic values can be integrated with technological innovation to lead a pesantren-based community. Her strategies include developing education, increasing community involvement, and responding to global challenges without abandoning cultural and religious roots. This approach illustrates a new paradigm in Women's leadership that is adaptive, insightful, and based on spiritual values. However, the challenges and opportunities in this era of Society 5.0 require leaders, including women in the Islamic context, to not only adapt to technology but also make it a tool to strengthen integrity, cultural sensitivity, and a more inclusive and equitable social mission.

¹⁷ Mujamil Qomar. *Actual Issues of Islamic Education: Management, Scientific Criticism and Research in the Era of Society 5.0*. Malang: Madani, 2023.

¹⁸ Imtinan, Nurhana Fakhriyah. "Leadership Style in Facing the Era of Society 5.0." *Journal of Islamic Education* Vol. 11 No. 2, 2021: 194.

¹⁹ Dimitris Mourtzis, John Angelopoulos, and Nikos Panopoulos, "Literature Review on Challenges and Opportunities of the Transition from Industry 4.0 to Society 5.0," *Energies* 15, no. 17 (2022): 6276.

²⁰ Marianne Coleman, "Women Leaders in the Workplace: Perceptions of Career Barriers, Facilitators and Change," *Irish Educational Studies* 39, no. 2 (2020): 233-53.

Women's Leadership in Islamic Perspective

In Islam, leadership has a deep dimension as a mandate that is not only worldly oriented but also ukhrawi.²¹ The concept of the leader as a representative of the people who are tasked with continuing the message of the Prophet SAW. places the values of benefit at the core of leadership. However, in the context of Society 5.0, this meaning needs to be expanded to include new challenges and opportunities faced by women leaders. Technological advancements in this era not only affect decision-making patterns but also create new expectations for women leaders in terms of integrating spiritual values with technological innovation.²² The challenges faced include not only long-standing gender barriers but also how women lead in an increasingly digitally connected and technologically complex environment. In this regard, Islam provides flexible room for interpretation based on ijihad, enabling women to play a transformative role without losing sight of the values of Shariah. The digital paradigm shift in the Society 5.0 era also opens up new opportunities for women in Islamic leadership. Technology provides access to educational resources, global social networks, and innovation, which can strengthen the role of women as adaptive and responsive leaders.²³ Thus, Women's leadership in Islam in the era of Society 5.0 is an integrative leadership model that can answer the demands of the times without losing the substance of Islamic morals.

Some of the verses that serve as arguments regarding women's leadership in Islam are as follows:²⁴

a. QS. An-Naml: 23

إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُنْمَ وَأُوْتِيْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ

I found (there) a woman Ruling over them and provided With every requisite; and she Has a magnificent throne. (QS. An-Naml [27]:23).

This verse shows that during the time of the prophets, there were female leaders. In this context, such as Queen Bilqis, who ruled the country of Saba'. This is clear evidence that reinforces that in the Qur'anic perspective, Women's leadership is also possible.

b. QS. An-Nisa: 34

²¹ Kunzita Ladiana Manzil and M Imamul Muttaqin, "Leadership in Islamic Education (Definition, Characteristics of Prophet's Leadership, Characteristics of Islamic Education Leadership, and Its Success)," *Journal of National Multidisciplinary Research* 1, no. 7 (2024): 734-43.

²² Nur Efendi and Muh Ibnu Sholeh, "Social Dynamics in the Decision-Making Process in Islamic Education Management," *Attanwir: Journal of Islam and Education* 14, no. 2 (2023): 45-67.

²³ Muhammad Salman Chughtai et al., "Role of Adaptive Leadership in Learning Organizations to Boost Organizational Innovations with Change Self-Efficacy," *Current Psychology* 43, no. 33 (2024): 27262-81.

²⁴ Al-Qur'an, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf. *Al-Qur'an Ministry of Religious Affairs*. 2022. <https://quran.kemenag.go.id/> (accessed June 11, 2024).



الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصِّلْحُ ثُقِّلَتْ حَفِظُهُ
لِلْعَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ بِهِ الَّتِي تَحَافُونَ نُشُورُهُنَّ فَعَظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطْعَنُكُمْ فَلَا تَبْعُدُوهُنَّ
عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيرًا

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because God has given the one more (strength) than the other and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct admonish them (first) (next) refuse to share their beds (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience seek not against them means (of annoyance): for God is Most High Great (above you all). (QS. An-Nisa' [4]: 34).

In the verse above, it is explained that men are protectors of women because Allah SWT. has exceeded some of them (men) over others (women). However, this does not mean that women do not get their rightful position. Because within certain limits, it is women who play an important role, for example in domestic leadership (household), support system in family discussions, and in educating their offspring. Women also have the capacity to provide peace and tranquility. Even the Prophet Muhammad SAW. also explained that the position of women (mothers) is so noble that it is three times that of men (fathers). The famous hadith that "Heaven is under the soles of the mother's feet" is also one of the arguments that strengthen the position of women in Islam.

c. QS. An-Nisa: 58

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْدُوا الْأَمْنِيَّةَ إِلَى أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعُدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعَمَا يَعْظُمُ بِهِمْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

Allah doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when ye judge between man and man that ye judge with justice: verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! for God is He who heareth and seeth all things. (QS. An-Nisā' [4]: 58).

The verse emphasizes the basic principles of Islam in terms of leadership, including Women's leadership. Through this verse, it can be understood that Allah SWT. commands every leader to deliver the mandate to the best of their ability and determine the law fairly as a form of ultimate responsibility. In addition, this verse also explains that in Islam, there is no explicit prohibition for women to take on leadership roles, as long as they meet the qualifications and adhere to Islamic moral and ethical values, such as integrity and justice. This verse reminds us that good leadership is based on the principles taught by Allah SWT, thus providing the best guidance for mankind. In other words, since this



verse does not contain language that prohibits or mentions a specific gender, men and women have equal opportunities to become leaders.

d. QS. At-Taubah: 71

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ
الزَّكُوَةَ وَيُطْعِمُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ﷺ لِوَلِيَّ سَيِّدِهِمُ اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

The Believers, men And women, are protectors, One of another: they enjoin What is just, and forbid What is evil: they observe Regular prayers, practice Regular charity, and obey God and His Apostle. On them will God pour His mercy: for God Is Exalted in power, Wise. (QS. At-Taubah [9]:71).

In the verse, it can be understood that every believer, both men and women, has the same responsibility in amar ma'ruf (inviting to goodness), nahi mungkar (preventing evil), establishing prayer, paying zakat, and obeying Allah and His Messenger. This reflects the concept of equality in Islam so that women can also play an active and significant role in leadership. In the context of Women's leadership, this verse emphasizes that women are also capable and expected to play a role in guiding and leading the community toward obedience to religious values and worship practices. By carrying out the duty of amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar, as well as showing obedience to Allah as leaders, women can also get mercy. Simply put, this verse shows that in the Islamic perspective, leadership is not limited by gender but by commitment and loyalty to religious teachings.

e. QS. Al-Baqarah: 228

... وَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَوَلِلرِجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

... And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them and God is Exalted in Power Wise. (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 228).

According to the author, this verse has the same meaning as QS. An-Nisa: 34 which has been explained previously, that men have advantages over women. However, there is still a balance between men and women in the implementation of rights and obligations, according to their respective natures.

After referring to the main source of law in Islam, understanding the context of Women's leadership needs to be reviewed from the perspective of hadith. From the author's analysis after reading some related literature, it can be said that there are two views that explain how the prophetic traditions that serve as the basis for prohibiting or permitting the practice of leadership for women. In this regard, the first view interprets the traditions as literally affirming Women's limited role in political or religious leadership, while the second view highlights the historical context and universal principles in Islam that support gender equality in leadership according to their respective needs and qualifications.

The first view interprets that based on the hadith, Islam prohibits (limits) the leadership of a woman. The hadith on which it is based is as follows:

"Abi Bakrah said: Allah benefited me at the time of the battle of Jamal, with one sentence that I heard from the Messenger (SAW) after I was about to join the camel troops to fight with them". Abu Bakrah said: "When news reached the Apostle (SAW) that the Persians had crowned the daughter of Kisra as king, the Apostle (SAW) said: *"There will be no prosperity for a people who leave their affairs to women"* (HR. Bukhari).

When reading the wording of the hadith, it literally appears that there is a statement that leads to the restriction or prohibition of Women's leadership in government. The majority of ushul scholars see this as a consideration based on the rule that 'the generality of the text takes precedence over the specificity of the cause'. In this case, Yusuf Qardhawy explained that the hadith is sahih because it was narrated by Abu Bakrah, who was later quoted by Bukhari. Meanwhile, the hadith narrated by Bukhari is included in the sahih hadith.²⁵ Meanwhile, in terms of *matan*, there are those who interpret it contextually and textually. A textual understanding would conclude that it is forbidden for a woman to be the head of state. Contextually, the hadith relates to the appointment of a Persian woman as leader, even though there were many worthy candidates around her, simply because the laws of the kingdom required it.

This contextual understanding closely scrutinizes the hadith's *asbabul wurud* (context of hadith revelation) and its context, both specific and general. In this context, the reason for the appointment of Princess Kisra, the king of Persia, who at that time ascended the throne as the holder of the reins of government, and regarding the inability of Buron bint Shuwaraih to lead the Persian kingdom, the Prophet said in his capacity as the head of government and the leader of the state, not as an apostle. Furthermore, in terms of transmission, this hadith actually belongs to the Ahad type of hadith and thus does not reach the level of mutawatir.

In terms of the narrator, Abu Bakrah, who collected the Hadith after Aisha's defeat in the battle of Jamal, the Hadith had been buried for 25,000 years from his memory in a different situation and context. The Hadith did not exist before the battle of Jamal, at which time Aisha (the Prophet's wife) was the leader of the army, and many Companions followed her. At that time, none of the Companions objected to Aisha's leadership as a woman. Even Abu Bakrah participated, and there was no indication of defection or anything like that. If Abu Bakrah had believed that the Prophet forbade women from being leaders, he would have immediately left Aisha's ranks when he remembered the hadith. This shows that female leadership (in this case, Aisha) was acceptable to the leading Companions.²⁶

²⁵ Dewi Kurnia Putri. "Women's Leadership in the Perspective of the Quran and Hadith." *Journal of Ummah Studies and Development*, 2023: 180.

²⁶ Istibsyaroh. "Women's Political Rights: A Study of *Tafsir Mawdu'i*." *Sipakalebbi' Journal* Volume 1 Number 2, 2014: 248.



Next is the second view, which interprets that based on the hadith, Islam permits the leadership of a woman. Among the traditions on which this is based are the following:

حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، حَدَّثَنِي مَالِكُ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ دِينَارٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ . رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا . أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ ... وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ رَوِيجَهَا وَوَلَدِهِ وَهِيَ مَسْؤُلَةٌ عَنْهُمْ،

7138. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: "... a woman is the guardian of her husband's house and her children and is responsible for them,"²⁷ (Sahih al-Bukhari: 7138).

The hadith clearly states that women are leaders in their household affairs, with the phrase "guarding their homes, property and families". This means that although men are the leaders of the family, the role of women cannot be underestimated.

Today, there are still assumptions that basically position women at a marginal point, in the sense that women are considered "less intelligent" than men. Whereas both have the ability to utilize their minds well, it's just that the proportion and tendency to use both, the "mind" and "feelings" of men and women are different. This difference should be a complementary blend, not a comparison to be contrasted. This tendency is not a deficiency but rather a differentiator from men, so it becomes a special characteristic for women whose nature is to use more feelings. In the researcher's view, as long as a woman has integrity and competence, it is not impossible for her to take on a leadership role.

Although the proportion of Women's feelings tends to dominate, women are also capable of moving and thinking quickly like men. This is evident from the history of the Hudaibiyah agreement, which bears witness to the intelligence and agility of women. In this case, the holder of a strategic position who played a major role in the Hudaibiyah agreement was Ummu Salamah. Based on historical records, when the Hudaibiyah agreement was signed and ratified, the contents of the agreement had made the Muslims angry because it was considered to prevent them from completing tawaf. They did not understand the wisdom implied by the agreement, which was a signal of the victory of Islam and the expansion of Islamic territory to the land of Mecca.

At the treaty of Hudaibiyah, the Prophet ordered his people to slaughter an animal and perform an abstinence, but one of his people did not do so, which led the Prophet to meet Umm Salamah bint Abi Umayyah (his wife) in anger. In this situation, Umm Salamah then said: "*What happened to you, O Messenger of Allah?*" The Prophet did not answer. Umm Salamah finally continued to ask about what made him reluctant to say it, until finally the Prophet said: "*The Muslims have become extinct, they do not heed my orders, I ordered them to slaughter animals and cut their hair, but they did not carry it out*". Umu Salamah replied: "*O Messenger of Allah! Do not reproach them, because they are*

²⁷ Shahih Bukhari 7138. <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:7138>. Accessed on December 13, 2024.



experiencing a dilemma due to the contents of the agreement that holds back the acquisition of a victory that could have been achieved, O Messenger of Allah, come out and do not say a word, slaughter your animals and worship Allah!”. Finally, the Prophet carried out his wife's advice, and then the Muslims slaughtered the sacrificial animal and exited as the Prophet had done. In this context, it is clear that the Prophet had taken the advice of his wife (Umm Salamah) to resolve a complicated issue. If Women's opinions were indeed considered very disproportionate and Women's minds were not comparable to men's minds, implicitly of course the Prophet in this case would not carry out Umm Salamah's advice. But in reality, the opposite was true.

Thus, based on the review of some literature that explains the traditions related to the discussion, the author can conclude that in terms of the perspective of the traditions on Women's leadership, it is basically divided into two, namely from the textualist and contextualist groups. In this case, the textualist group clearly prohibits women from becoming leaders. While the contextualist group gives freedom to a woman to lead, even in the public sphere.²⁸

Based on the Qur'anic and Hadith arguments explained earlier, the scholars, especially the Imams of the four madhhabs, expressed the following views: First, Imam Ahmad, Imam Malik, and Imam Shafi'i are of the opinion that women are not entitled to be leaders, even in a more limited scope. Because after all, being a leader, whether with broad or limited powers, is essentially the same and the only difference is the area of power. Secondly, Imam Abu Hanifah was of the opinion that women can be rulers in matters of property. He argued that when women are allowed to give testimony in matters of property, it means that decision-making in that field should also be allowed. In principle, according to Imam Abu Hanifah, any person who has the credibility to mediate disputes or disputes between people, (regardless of gender, whether male or female) then the decision is valid and valid, except for matters that have been decided by ijma', namely the issue of great leadership (al-imamah al-kubra). By considering the understanding of the normativity of the classical scholars and some modern scholars, the historical reality of the emergence of Islamic sultans in history, then supported by the physical and psychological conditions of women above, a woman can become a leader in various sectors, as long as it does not violate sharia law.

Istibsyaroh's Thoughts on Women's Leadership

Istibsyaroh's thoughts on the role of women in Indonesian politics can be understood by placing them in the historical context of Women's struggles in Indonesia, which have taken place since the era of the national movement. Women played an important role in politics, such as through the Indonesian Women's Congress in 1928, which demanded the right to education and public participation²⁹. However, women

²⁸ Firdaus. “Women's Leadership in Hadith Perspective: A Study of Hadith Criticism with a Socio-Historical-Contextual Approach.” *Journal of Imtiyaz* Vol 6 No 2, 2022: 111.

²⁹ Budi Sujati and Ilfa Harfiatul Haq, “Women's Movement in Java (1912-1941),” *Ishlah: Journal of Ushuluddin, Adab and Dakwah Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2020): 16-31.

continue to face complex structural challenges, such as the dominance of patriarchal culture, limited access to political education, and barriers to representation in strategic institutions. In this context, pesantren as Istibsyaroh's social background has a significant role in shaping her thinking³⁰. Pesantren, although often considered a traditional institution, also functions as a learning space that is adaptive to social issues.³¹ Istibsyaroh grew up in an environment that not only instilled religious values but also taught the importance of social contribution, including opening up space for women to be involved in societal change. This shows how pesantren are able to influence a mindset that supports the active role of women in politics contextually and relevant to social dynamics in Indonesia.

Prof. Istibsyaroh is one of the Indonesian female scholars whose work is very inspiring. This tough woman, whose full name is Prof. Hj. Istibsyaroh, BA, S.H., M.A. is a Professor of Tafsir and a postgraduate lecturer at the Faculty of Shari'ah UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya as well as having served as Chair of the Senate of the Tarbiyah al-Urwatul Wutsqo College in Jombang. In addition to carrying out his role as an active scholar and academic, he is also a reliable politician and is interested in issues related to "Gender and Women's Leadership". This is reflected in her works such as the books 'Women's Rights in Gender Relations' and 'Women in Politics: An Argument for Women's Equal Political Rights'; then the journal '*Women's Political Rights in Mawdu'i Tafsir Studies*', research on 'Gender in the Perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith', and others. She also has a track record of extraordinary achievements, as evidenced by the many organizations or institutions she has led and the awards she has received on a regional, national, and international scale, such as the National MTQ Champion, National Judge of MHQ and Tafsir Al-Qur'an, Satya Lencana Karya 30 Years from the President of the Republic of Indonesia, the best academic graduate-S3 Cumlaude, Woman International Award 2011, Indonesian Most Popular 2012, The Best Mother Award 2012, Woman of The Year 2018, and so on.³² Istibsyaroh was born on September 19, 1954 and died on August 07, 2024, or 02 Safar 1446 Hijri

In relation to Women's leadership, Istibsyaroh argues that women have the right to hold political positions (the context of leadership) as long as they remain subject to the laws of Islamic law because there is no text that explicitly (*sarih*) prohibits Women's leadership in politics and government.³³ Furthermore, he emphasized that Women's right to politics is a *shar'i* right so even though women did not exercise this right in the past, it does not mean that women today are not allowed and are not capable, but because there is no urgent need to practice or even compete with men in the past. Thus,

³⁰ Rola Pola Anto et al., "Women, Society, and Patriarchal Culture," *Tahta Media Publisher*, 2023.

³¹ Ria Ratna Ningtyas and Abdul Khobir, "Pesantren and the Birth of Religious Moderation Discourse in Indonesia," *Sumbula: Journal of Religious, Social and Cultural Studies* 10, no. 1 (2025): 156-76.

³² Novitasari, Hotimah. *Thesis Istibsyaroh's Thoughts on Women's Leadership in the Perspective of Qirā'ah Mubādalah*. Surabaya, July 7, 2022.

³³ Istibsyaroh. "Women's Political Rights: A Study of *Tafsir Mawdu'i*." *Sipakalebbi' Journal* Volume 1 Number 2, 2014: 246.

Women's political rights are not unrecognized, but rather a right that is demanded and considered very urgent. According to her, Women's leadership can start with how she gets her rights first³⁴. In this context, Istibsyaroh argues that the active role of women in politics is not only a recognized shar'i right but also an urgent need in realizing a more inclusive and equitable government. She views that equal political rights between men and women not only emphasize the principle of equality before the law but also refer to the great potential women have in making a positive contribution to the progress of society. After women get their rights, capacity building and adequate support from the community and existing institutions are the next steps.

According to Istibsyaroh, Women's rights can be classified into two, namely Women's personal rights and Women's socio-political rights. Her thinking is actually much influenced by her experience as an academic who lives in a pesantren environment. In Istibsyaroh's view, the main capital that must be owned by a leader is character, skills, adequate capacity (qualified) and the most important thing is morals. Fundamental things such as strong beliefs, full confidence, and high integrity need to be owned by every leader, regardless of gender, both men and women. In addition to internal qualities such as high integrity, women today must be empowered. Empowerment here means the fulfillment of their personal rights without the involvement of others as the determinant in it.

Istibsyaroh defines Women's personal rights with several things, namely the right to education, the right to inheritance, the right to veil, and the right in marriage³⁵. This view can be interpreted as an affirmation that for women, the right to education is very important to broaden their horizons and independence in various fields of life. Next, fair and equal inheritance rights are seen as the basis for ensuring social and economic justice for women in society. She also considers it important to protect the right to wear the hijab as an expression of religious freedom. And, in the context of marriage, Istibsyaroh emphasized the need for rights that protect women from discrimination and exploitation and promote gender justice. Meanwhile, socio-political rights for women, in her view, are rights related to behavior in society, such as human rights, the right to work, the right to a witness, and the right to politics. In the author's view, the socio-political rights for women that Istibsyaroh refers to are more about the main foundation in ensuring Women's participation in social and political life. For her, these rights do not only involve legal protection, but also enable women to contribute fully to the development of society. In other words, these rights include the right to work, the right to be a witness to ensure justice, and the right to participate in political activities as equal citizens. Istibsyaroh believes that by upholding these rights, women can more freely explore their potential and play an active role in shaping a more inclusive and equitable future.

³⁴ Novitasari, Hotimah. *Getting to Know Professor Istibsyaroh*. May 3, 2024. <https://mubadalah.id/mengenal-lebih-dekat-dengan-profesor-istibsyaroh/> (accessed June 12, 2024).

³⁵ Novitasari, Hotimah. *Ibid*, accessed June 12, 2024.

Istibsyaroh criticizes the right to politics for women by analyzing the study of Mawdu'i tafsir. In this context, she highlights two things, namely the views on opinions that allow and prohibit women in politics, by examining the interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith. Among the results of her analysis is the interpretation of QS. An-Nisa: 34 which is interpreted functionally, that is, men are responsible for the family because they provide maintenance, meaning that men play a role in providing maintenance. However, nowadays, there is a shift where the provider of nafaqah is the wife or woman; of course, it becomes another problem, so women whose natures resemble men act like men and provide nafaqah, meaning that women are responsible for the family. This is supported by data that in the last 30 years, the results of remapping conducted by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment show that 60% of Indonesian women have to support themselves and their families.³⁶ She also criticized the issue of witnesses and testimony by two men or one man and two women in terms of financial contracts.

Evidence that women have the power and ability to lead is found in the Qur'an regarding the story of Hajar (mother of Prophet Ismail AS), mother of Prophet Moses AS, and Maryam (mother of Prophet Isa AS). This evidence shows that women can overcome problems, even in a broad scope, such as problems in a country, so that Women's leadership is not limited to domestic issues (household) only. Based on her critical review, it can be concluded that there are no verses or hadiths that prohibit women from being active in politics as well as becoming leaders. On the contrary, the Qur'an and hadith indicate the permissibility of women to actively pursue this world. In other words, Islam provides space for women to enter politics and become leaders.

The principles of Istibsyaroh's leadership thinking have been practically applied in the scope around her. As in her leadership period as head of the College of Tarbiyah al-Urwatul Wutsqo Jombang, for example. On this campus, the leadership system is very structured, and leadership positions are not always required to be male, so there is a balance. Even to the realm of students. On his campus, there are two student presidents, namely those who oversee male and female students. In this context, the student president is the leader of male students, and the female student president is the leader of female students. Lectures between male and female classes are separate, but there is still coordination.

Istibsyaroh's thoughts on the role of women in Islamic politics can be compared to the ideas of figures such as Amina Wadud, Fatima Mernissi, and Zainah Anwar, who are known to fight for Women's rights within an Islamic framework. Amina Wadud, for example, focuses more on a hermeneutics-based interpretation approach that recontextualizes gender-related Qur'anic verses³⁷ while Fatima Mernissi uses historical-sociological analysis to explore how patriarchal structures developed in

³⁶ Istibsyaroh. "Women's Political Rights: A Study of Tafsir Mawdu'i." *Sipakalebbi' Journal* Volume 1 Number 2, 2014: 248.

³⁷ Azriel Muhammad, "Amina Wadud's Hermeneutic Concept of Gender Equality" (UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, 2023).



Islamic history.³⁸ Zainah Anwar, through the Sisters in Islam movement, utilizes a policy-based advocacy approach and community empowerment to create awareness about gender justice in Islamic law.³⁹ Compared to these figures, Istibsyaroh offers an approach that integrates pesantren values as a moral and cultural base, with a focus on strengthening the role of women through inclusive and locally-based religious education. In the context of interpretation, Istibsyaroh seems to highlight the collaboration between classical texts and Indonesian socio-political reality, in contrast to traditional scholars who are more bound to textual interpretation or contemporary scholars who tend to rely on academic-theoretical approaches. Thus, Istibsyaroh's approach is unique because it seeks to formulate contextual solutions without letting go of the roots of the pesantren tradition that has become her identity.

Leaders, ideally, are able to integrate technological innovations in making the right decisions; so that it is based on competence and does not look at gender. Meanwhile, in the Islamic perspective, when viewed from the arguments of the Qur'an and hadith, the scholars have different views. In this case, some scholars interpret textually and view Women's leadership as not allowed or having certain limitations, and others interpret contextually and allow Women's leadership on the basis of consideration of *asbābun nuzūl* (context of Quranic revelation) verse and *asbābul wurūd* (context of hadith revelation) matan hadith, as well as the absence of arguments that explicitly prohibit women from politics and becoming leaders. Istibsyaroh's thinking is more towards the view of the second Ulama, where women in the current era have the capacity to become leaders as long as they do not violate Islamic law.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that Istibsyaroh's leadership philosophy as a female scholar is relevant across both time and space. By emphasizing the empowerment of women and society, her ideas provide a framework rooted in the values of justice, diversity, and Islamic principles to address contemporary challenges. This perspective not only contributes to the understanding of women's political rights but also offers a contextualized approach to integrating Islamic tradition with modern social needs. Istibsyaroh demonstrates that leadership grounded in Islamic values can foster the development of a more inclusive and equitable society while remaining true to cultural and religious roots.

From an Islamic perspective, Istibsyaroh interprets women's leadership through a thematic Quranic exegesis approach (*tafsīr mawdū'i*), emphasizing the importance of understanding the social and political context. She argues that there is no explicit text in the Qur'an or Hadith that prohibits women from holding leadership positions, provided they adhere to the principles of Islamic law. Her perspective positions

³⁸ Ratna Wijayanti et al., "Fatima Mernissi's Gender Thought on the Role of Women," *Muwazah* 10, no. 1 (2018): 58-68.

³⁹ Shelia Nair, "Challenging the Mullahs: Islam, Politics and Women's Activism, Interview with Zainah Anwar," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9, no. 2 (2007): 240-48.



women as individuals entitled to full personal and socio-political rights. In this regard, Istibsyaroh successfully creates harmony between Islamic principles and the spirit of emancipation, offering a progressive alternative to the more traditional views of the ulama. Her ideas lay a foundation for the development of policies that support women's participation in politics and leadership, particularly in contemporary Muslim societies.

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