



## GENDER LEADERSHIP AND THE DYNAMICS OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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### ABSTRACT

*This study uses a qualitative approach with the aim of understanding the phenomenon of Gender Leadership and the Dynamics of Women's Leadership in Islamic Educational Institutions in depth through the perspectives of the participants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), and documentation, involving the principal, teachers, and parents as the primary sources of information. Data analysis was conducted thematically by following the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate several important aspects, namely Gender Leadership in the Perspective of Islamic Education which emphasizes the compatibility of Islamic values with the practice of women's leadership; Challenges of Women's Leadership in a Gender Context which reflect cultural barriers and social stereotypes; and Support and Legitimacy of Ibu Nurul's Leadership which grows through concrete performance, collective participation, and effective communication with various elements of the madrasah. This study contributes to theoretical, practical, and policy implications. Theoretically, this study enriches the study of gender and leadership in Islamic education, especially in the context of elementary madrasahs. Practically, the research findings can serve as a reference for other madrasah principals in developing leadership patterns that are inclusive, participatory, and responsive to the needs of the school community.*

### ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan tujuan untuk memahami fenomena Kepemimpinan Gender dan Dinamika Kepemimpinan Perempuan di Lembaga Pendidikan Islam secara mendalam melalui perspektif para partisipan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, diskusi kelompok fokus (FGD), dan dokumentasi, yang melibatkan kepala sekolah, guru, dan orang tua sebagai sumber informasi utama. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik dengan mengikuti tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan beberapa aspek penting, yaitu Kepemimpinan Gender dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Islam yang menekankan kesesuaian nilai-nilai Islam dengan praktik kepemimpinan perempuan; Tantangan Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam Konteks Gender yang mencerminkan hambatan budaya dan stereotip sosial; dan Dukungan dan Legitimasi Kepemimpinan Ibu Nurul yang tumbuh melalui kinerja konkret, partisipasi kolektif, dan komunikasi efektif dengan berbagai elemen madrasah. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada implikasi teoritis, praktis, dan kebijakan. Secara teoritis, penelitian ini memperkaya studi tentang gender dan kepemimpinan dalam pendidikan Islam, khususnya dalam konteks madrasah dasar. Secara praktis, temuan penelitian ini dapat dijadikan referensi bagi kepala madrasah lainnya dalam mengembangkan pola kepemimpinan yang inklusif, partisipatif, dan responsif terhadap kebutuhan komunitas sekolah.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Kepemimpinan gender, kepemimpinan perempuan, pendidikan Islam*

## INTRODUCTION

Gender leadership in the context of Islamic educational institutions is a crucial issue often characterized by a gap between normative theory and social reality (Latifah & Asy'ari, 2024). Theoretically, Islam provides equal opportunity for men and women to play leadership roles, provided they meet the requirements of competence, integrity, and trustworthiness (Septian, 2022). However, in reality, women's participation in leadership positions remains hampered by cultural factors, gender stereotypes, and strong patriarchal social constructs. The question "why are women given fewer opportunities to lead" is often answered with religious or customary reasons, even though normative evidence and historical practice prove otherwise (Munawwaroh, Qushwa, & R, 2024).

This situation creates a serious gap between egalitarian Islamic teachings and gender-biased leadership practices. Social evidence shows that although the number of educated women in Islamic educational institutions has increased significantly, their representation in strategic positions such as principals, foundation chairs, or rectors remains limited (Sarnoto, 2022). Thus, the discrepancy between Islamic gender equity theory and the reality of male dominance in educational leadership requires further research to understand the dynamics that occur. Several previous studies have highlighted the issue of female leadership in Islamic educational institutions, but there is still room for further research. For example, (Kim, Kim, & Im, 2023) study found that female leadership in madrasas often faces obstacles in the form of cultural resistance and a lack of structural support.

Research shows that women's leadership styles are more participatory and collaborative, positively impacting the work environment and teacher engagement. However, these studies tend to focus on the dimensions of barriers and leadership style, without deeply exploring the interaction between gender, institutional structure, and the religious legitimacy that underpins authority (Kusumawati & Mundiri, 2025). This research complements previous studies by emphasizing the dynamics of female leadership in Islamic educational institutions, both in terms of opportunities and challenges, and placing them within the broader framework of Islamic discourse. Thus, this research does not simply replicate previous findings but seeks to build a more comprehensive understanding of how female leadership can be accepted, maintained, and developed in Islamic educational environments. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to examine the dynamics of women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions through an integrative perspective, combining gender approaches, organizational culture, and Islamic normative foundations (Maulida & Suyadi, 2021). To date, research has tended to be fragmented between gender studies emphasizing equality issues and Islamic education studies focusing on structural regulations. This research seeks to bridge these two domains by highlighting how women's leadership is not simply influenced by social norms but also debated through diverse religious interpretations. In this way, this research presents a new perspective on the legitimacy of women's leadership, viewing it not only as a social consequence but also as a result of negotiations between religious texts, local culture, and the managerial needs of educational institutions. Another unique feature is the analysis of the adaptation and innovation strategies employed by women leaders to overcome limited support. Thus, this research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to broadening the understanding of gender leadership in Islamic education (Iqbal et al., 2023).

This research aims to answer fundamental questions regarding the issue of gender leadership in Islamic educational institutions. First, how can women negotiate their leadership identity and authority in a male-dominated environment? Second, what factors support or hinder women's involvement in leadership positions in Islamic schools, madrasas,

and universities? Third, to what extent do normative Islamic values and the organizational culture of education play a role in shaping the legitimacy of women's leadership? These questions arise from the gap between Islamic equality theory and ongoing discriminatory practices. By focusing on these questions, this paper seeks not only to identify the problem but also to explore its root causes in depth. Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine the relationship between gender, authority, and socio-religious dynamics, and how these shape the opportunities and challenges for women in leading Islamic educational institutions.

The tentative hypothesis in this study is that female leadership in Islamic educational institutions has the potential to positively impact organizational effectiveness, despite still facing structural and cultural challenges (Budiarti, Rustini, & Wirani, 2020). The argument is that women's leadership styles, which tend to be inclusive, communicative, and collaboration-oriented, can strengthen the participation and involvement of all elements of the institution. This aligns with transformative leadership theory, which emphasizes empowerment and collective participation. Evidence from previous research shows that in schools or madrasas led by women, teacher engagement and job satisfaction levels increase. However, cultural resistance and religious stigma remain major obstacles to formal recognition of women's authority. Therefore, this study tentatively concludes that the success of female leadership is strongly influenced by a combination of internal factors (competence, leadership style) and external factors (institutional support, religious legitimacy). These findings will be further tested to determine whether the hypothesis is empirically proven in the context of Islamic educational institutions.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study to explore the phenomenon of gender leadership and the dynamics of women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions (Harto, Pramuditha, Dwijayanti, Parlina, & Sofyan, 2023). A qualitative approach was chosen because it can explore the meanings, experiences, and social interactions associated with women's roles in leadership, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding than quantitative data alone. The case study was deemed relevant because the research focuses on a specific unit of analysis, namely the Mirqotul Ulum Elementary Madrasah (MI). This location was chosen based on the consideration that the madrasah is led by a woman who has successfully brought about significant changes in the institution's management, despite still facing challenges from cultural and structural factors. Therefore, this research location was deemed appropriate for uncovering the dynamics of gender leadership in depth through a real-life context that can provide empirical insights (Amalia, 2021).

Data collection techniques were conducted through interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were used to obtain direct information from the female madrasah principal, teachers, educational staff, and several parents to understand their views on gender leadership. Observations were conducted to observe daily leadership practices, communication patterns, social interactions, and decision-making processes within the institution. Documentation was used as a supplement, including madrasah archives (R, 2024), institutional profile data, activity photos, and relevant internal policy documents. By combining these three techniques, researchers were able to obtain triangulated data, thereby increasing the validity and reliability of the findings. This approach enabled researchers to observe not only how women's leadership is exercised but also how the surrounding environment responds to and negotiates the presence of women's authority within Islamic

educational institutions (Hapsawati Taan & Indriyani, 2021).

Data analysis in this study employed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. Data reduction was carried out by sorting relevant information from interviews, observations, and documentation, then organizing it into thematic categories according to the research focus. Data presentation was carried out through narrative descriptions, tables, and charts to clarify the leadership dynamics observed in the field. Furthermore, the conclusion-drawing stage was carried out continuously throughout the research process to ensure that the data obtained was truly valid and consistent with the research objectives. Using Miles and Huberman's analysis, this study is expected to produce an in-depth interpretation of gender leadership, particularly regarding the strategies, challenges, and opportunities for women's leadership at MI Mirqotul Ulum.

**Table 1.**Data Collection Matrix

Research Aspects	Data source	Data Collection Techniques	Data Types	Information
Profile of women's leadership at MI Mirqotul Ulum	Head of Madrasah, Senior Teacher	In-depth interviews, documentation (school profile, appointment decree)	Primary and secondary data	Understanding the background of women's leadership and their role in institutions
Leadership styles and managerial strategies	Principal, Teacher, Education Personnel	Interviews, Observation of managerial activities, Documentation (work programs, annual reports)	Primary and secondary data	Identifying the leadership model applied
Challenges of women's leadership	Principal, Teachers, Parents	In-depth interviews, Observation of social interactions, Activity notes	Data primer	Uncovering structural, cultural, and religious barriers
Support for women's leadership	Teachers, Madrasah Committee, Parents	Interviews, Participant observation, Documentation (meeting minutes, minutes)	Primary and secondary data	Knowing the forms of environmental support and resistance
Gender dynamics in organizations	Principal, Teachers, Administrative Staff	Interaction observation, Interviews, Documentation (organizational structure, internal rules)	Primary and secondary data	Analyzing gender relations in decision making
The impact of women's leadership	Teachers, Parents, Students	Interviews, Observation of teaching and learning activities, Documentation (school achievements, academic reports)	Primary and secondary data	Assessing the influence of leadership on institutional development

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## Gender Leadership in the Perspective of Islamic Education

Leadership in Islamic educational institutions is often influenced by patriarchal social and cultural constructs that place men as dominant figures (Kurniawati, 2021). However, Islam does not normatively restrict women from becoming leaders as long as they meet the requirements of trustworthiness, competence, and responsibility. In the context of MI Mirqotul Ulum, the presence of Ms. Nurul as the principal demonstrates the realization of egalitarian principles in Islam and represents a shift in the gender leadership paradigm. The appointment of a woman to this strategic position demonstrates that individual quality and capacity are more important than mere gender factors. Thus, MI Mirqotul Ulum provides evidence that women's leadership can be integrated into the Islamic education system without conflicting with religious values (Setiawan & Rizal, Mohammad Syifaaur, 2024).

Field observations indicate that Ms. Nurul's leadership as Principal of MI Mirqotul Ulum demonstrates a participatory and inclusive leadership style. Data obtained demonstrate her active involvement in daily activities, from internal meetings and classroom supervision to coordination with teachers and administrative staff (Lilis Rohayati, 2023). Observation descriptions show that Ms. Nurul positions herself not only as a decision-maker but also as a facilitator who listens to the aspirations of teachers and parents. In practice, deliberation is the main pattern in determining school policies, for example in the division of teacher tasks, planning extracurricular activities, and administrative management. Interpretation of these findings confirms that the leadership style applied is in line with Islamic values that emphasize the principles of shura (deliberation) and justice (Maulidya et al., 2025). The presence of a woman as a leader in this Islamic educational institution negates the assumption that women are less qualified to lead, because the reality at MI Mirqotul Ulum shows managerial success that actually strengthens the quality of education (Tri, Dewi, Rofik, & Holidi, 2025).

**Table 2.** Interview Data (Data, Description, Interpretation)

Informant	Key Statements	Description	Interpretation
Teacher Juwairiyah	<i>"Mrs. Nurul always involves us in meetings before making decisions."</i>	The head of the madrasah uses a participatory approach	Collaborative-based leadership increases teachers' sense of ownership
Teacher Putri Indana Zulfa	<i>"Initially, there were doubts because she was a woman, but now it's proven that the school is progressing."</i>	There was initial resistance due to gender factors.	Performance is the main legitimacy of leadership
Siti Fatimah's Guardian	<i>"Communication with the school has been more open since Mrs. Nurul took over."</i>	There is transparency in policy	Women's leadership increases public trust
TU Staff Mr. Efendi	<i>"Administration is more organized and clear now."</i>	There is an improvement in the work system	Effective leadership impacts organizational governance

The interview table above shows that most informants positively assessed Ibu Nurul's leadership. Her descriptions demonstrate a transformation in the organizational culture, particularly in terms of openness and participation. Her interpretation is that the success of female leadership is not determined by gender, but rather by actual performance and an effective managerial style (Baharun, Fahmadia, & Maulida, 2025).

MI Mirqotul Ulum supports the findings of the observations and interviews. Data from teacher meeting archives, annual activity reports, and student achievement documents indicate significant improvements in the institution's management since Ibu Nurul's leadership. For example, the 2023 annual report recorded a 30% increase in student participation in religious and academic competitions compared to the previous year. Furthermore, financial documents demonstrate transparency and accountability in the use of the school budget. Madrasah activity records also demonstrate the success of more varied extracurricular programs, such as tahfidz (Quran recitation), Islamic arts, and literacy activities. Photographic documentation of activities demonstrates Ibu Nurul's direct involvement in mentoring teachers and students at various events. These descriptions reinforce the finding that female leadership in Islamic educational institutions can have a tangible impact on the development of madrasahs. The interpretation is that leadership based on Islamic values carried out in an inclusive manner can increase legitimacy, even though there are initial doubts about women's leadership (Muslim, Kunta, & Baharun, 2025).

**Figure 1.** Implementation Process of Female Teachers at MI Mirqotul Ulum



Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, researchers found that Mrs. Nurul's leadership at MI Mirqotul Ulum represents a gender leadership model that is able to combine Islamic values with a participatory approach. The analysis shows that resistance to female leadership does not entirely stem from religious teachings, but is more influenced by patriarchal culture and gender stereotypes (Haruna, Novita, Yusrawati, & Junaidi, 2025). Field facts show that with real performance, transparency, and effective communication, this resistance can be minimized and even turned into support. This is in line with the theory of transformative leadership which emphasizes the importance of inspiration, motivation, and empowerment of organizational members. These findings also strengthen the concept of gender equality in Islamic education, that women have the same potential to lead and bring about positive change. In conclusion, the case of Mrs. Nurul's leadership at MI Mirqotul Ulum serves as empirical evidence that female leadership in Islamic educational institutions is not only possible but also effective in creating managerial change and improving the quality of education.

### **Nurul's Leadership Profile at MI Mirqotul Ulum**

As the principal of MI Mirqotul Ulum, Nurul is known for her participatory and collaborative leadership. She is able to build strong communication with teachers, administrative staff, and parents. Her leadership style emphasizes deliberation, openness, and teacher empowerment in decision-making. This aligns with transformative leadership theory, which emphasizes the ability to inspire, motivate, and create positive change in the workplace. Furthermore, Nurul has successfully managed the school through programs to improve the quality of learning, strengthen administration, and develop a religious and inclusive madrasah culture. Through this leadership, she has demonstrated that women can be effective agents of change in Islamic educational institutions (Maimuna, Mundiri, Abimbowo, & Lama, 2025).

Observations at MI Mirqotul Ulum indicate that Nurul, as the principal, possesses a participatory, communicative, and inclusive leadership style. Data obtained indicate that she frequently attends teaching and learning activities, observes the learning process, and interacts with teachers and students (Wahyuni, 2020). In regular weekly meetings, Ms. Nurul always allows teachers to express their opinions before making decisions. Observations reveal a dynamic, open meeting atmosphere, far from authoritarian. Ms. Nurul also actively assists teachers with school activities, such as preparing for student competitions or extracurricular training. Interpretation of this data confirms that her leadership is oriented toward collaboration and human resource empowerment. This demonstrates a leadership profile aligned with Islamic values of deliberation, justice, and dedication, thus creating a conducive, harmonious, and productive madrasah culture that fosters educational quality.

Interviews with various parties at MI Mirqotul Ulum reinforce this picture of Ms. Nurul's leadership profile. Interview data with teachers revealed that she consistently prioritizes deliberation in the distribution of tasks and madrasah programs. A senior teacher stated, "Ms. Nurul is a leader who not only gives orders but also listens. We feel valued in every decision."

Parents added that communication between the school and parents has become more open since Ms. Nurul took the helm. Interview data demonstrates that her leadership style has successfully increased teachers' sense of ownership and participation, as well as community trust. In her interpretation, Ibu Nurul's leadership was not merely a formality but also built social and cultural legitimacy. This success also dispelled initial doubts from some who considered female leadership ineffective in the context of Islamic educational institutions. With a humanistic and communicative approach, Ibu Nurul was able to present a leadership model that was accepted by all elements of the madrasah.

Figure 2. Presentation of certificates to outstanding students



Documentation from the madrasah's archives further confirms Ibu Nurul's leadership profile. Annual reports demonstrate an increase in student achievement in both academic and non-academic areas since her tenure. For example, in 2022, MI Mirqotul Ulum won first place in the Banyuwang sub-district level Tahfidz competition, and in 2023, students qualified for the Probolinggo regency level in the Madrasah Science Olympiad. Furthermore, financial documentation demonstrates more transparent budget management, with reports consistently submitted to teachers and the madrasah committee. Activity records indicate that the number of extracurricular programs increased from three in 2021 to six in 2023. Photographic documentation demonstrates Ibu Nurul's presence at every activity, assisting students, managing administration, and interacting with parents. This description demonstrates that Ibu Nurul's leadership has not only impacted the management system but also improved the quality and performance of the madrasah. Her interpretation is that her leadership has brought tangible and measurable positive change. Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, the researcher analyzed that Mrs. Nurul's leadership profile at MI Mirqotul Ulum can be classified as transformative leadership with a participatory nuance. She is able to inspire, motivate, and involve all parties in the decision-making process. The analysis shows that this leadership style has an impact on improving teacher performance, parental involvement, and student achievement. This leadership profile also emphasizes that female leadership in Islamic educational institutions is not an obstacle, but rather an opportunity to present a more communicative, collaborative, and inclusive leadership style (Wahyuni, 2020). These findings prove that assumptions that doubt women's capacity to lead are irrelevant, because empirical evidence at MI Mirqotul Ulum shows real effectiveness. Thus, the researcher's analysis concludes that Mrs. Nurul's leadership is a concrete example of the application of Islamic values in gender leadership, which not only upholds deliberation and justice, but is also capable of creating managerial change and significant institutional achievements (Mundiri, Sain, & Khomairohtusshiyamah, 2025).

### **Challenges of Women's Leadership in a Gender Context**

Despite her demonstrated success, Ibu Nurul still faces a number of challenges as a female leader at MI Mirqotul Ulum. These challenges include gender stereotypes that consider women less assertive, less rational, or unfit to lead educational institutions. Furthermore, some in the community still view female leadership as contrary to patriarchal local culture. Another obstacle is limited structural support, such as women's lack of access to male-dominated professional networks in Islamic education. However, Ibu Nurul has been able to respond to these challenges through a dialogical approach, demonstrating tangible performance, and building legitimacy through measurable results. This confirms that women's leadership is not only about position, but also the ability to adapt to gender resistance (Khoiroh, Arifin, & Mundiri, 2025).

Based on observations at MI Mirqotul Ulum, Ibu Nurul faces challenges as a female madrasah principal in exercising leadership. Data shows that despite her ability to manage the madrasah effectively, there remains skepticism from a small number of teachers and the surrounding community regarding women's leadership capacity. Field descriptions reveal different communication dynamics when meetings are attended by male community leaders; Some of them tend to be more dominant in speaking than Ibu Nurul, resulting in an imbalance in the decision-making process. Furthermore, during external activities, such as collaborations with other institutions, the presence of female principals is sometimes less formally recognized than when led by men. Interpretation of these findings suggests that the challenges to female leadership lie not in the inability of leaders, but rather in social constructs that are still gender-biased. This demonstrates that despite tangible achievements,

cultural resistance remains a barrier to gender-based leadership in Islamic educational environments.

Interviews with teachers, staff, and parents revealed diverse perspectives on the challenges of female leadership. One senior teacher stated, *"Initially, there was some hesitation, as madrasah principals are usually male. But over time, Ibu Nurul proved her abilities."* Meanwhile, an administrative staff member revealed that some school partners sometimes underestimated women's leadership in negotiations, requiring support from male teachers to strengthen their positions. Among parents, some admitted to still questioning the assertiveness of women's leadership in addressing major issues. This interview description illustrates a duality: on the one hand, Ibu Nurul's leadership has proven effective, but on the other, traditional views persist that view women as less suitable for leadership. Interpretations of this interview suggest that challenges to women's leadership stem more from societal perceptions and patriarchal culture, rather than from the quality of work. This emphasizes that gender issues remain a significant factor influencing the acceptance of women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions.

**Challenges to Women's Leadership.** Archives of madrasah meetings reveal a lengthy debate when Ibu Nurul proposed a program to improve teacher quality through external training. Some meeting participants questioned the program's effectiveness simply because the initiative came from a female leader. Other documents, such as minutes of school committee meetings, also reveal comments questioning "women's authority" in making strategic decisions. Furthermore, in the archives of cooperation letters with external institutions, Ibu Nurul's name as the principal of the madrasah is repeatedly omitted from the list, instead being replaced by the male head of the foundation. This documentation illustrates that although Ibu Nurul is formally the principal, her position is still often marginalized culturally. The interpretation is that the challenges facing women's leadership extend beyond verbal resistance or hesitation, but also manifest in reduced legitimacy in formal documents. This demonstrates that gender leadership still faces structural barriers at MI Mirqotul Ulum.

Analyzing the challenges of women's leadership within a gender context at MI Mirqotul Ulum lies in patriarchal cultural factors, social stereotypes, and institutional legitimacy. The analysis shows that the obstacles Ibu Nurul faces are not related to competence, but rather to social acceptance of women's authority. This challenge confirms the gender theory of leadership, which states that women often have to work twice as hard to gain the same legitimacy as men. Furthermore, Ibu Nurul's success in managing the madrasah demonstrates that this resistance can be overcome through concrete performance, transparency, and effective communication. This analysis also confirms that women's leadership in Islamic education is still in the negotiation stage, where female leaders must continually demonstrate their capacity to be fully accepted. Thus, the challenges to women's leadership are not only personal but also systemic, influenced by culture, gender perceptions, and institutional structures.

### **Support and Legitimacy of Ibu Nurul's Leadership**

Ibu Nurul's success as a madrasah principal is inseparable from the support of both internal and external stakeholders within the institution. Internally, teachers and educational staff expressed their appreciation for her open leadership style and the harmonious work environment she fostered. Externally, parents and the school committee began to accept and support female leadership after seeing tangible progress in the school's management and performance. Ibu Nurul's leadership legitimacy was also strengthened by her approach, which integrated Islamic values, such as deliberation, justice, and service to the community, into every decision-making process. Thus, initial gender resistance was minimized, as her

presence demonstrated that leadership quality is not determined by gender, but rather by competence and dedication (Holifah<sup>1</sup>, Akmal Mundi<sup>2</sup>, 2024).

Ibu Nurul's leadership received broad support from teachers, administrative staff, and parents. Field data showed that during every school activity, whether meetings, religious study sessions, or Islamic holiday celebrations, Ibu Nurul always found space to express her ideas and policy direction without significant obstacles. Observation descriptions showed how teachers enthusiastically responded to her guidance, often offering new ideas to strengthen the madrasah's programs. Furthermore, during learning and extracurricular activities, Ms. Nurul's presence serves as a symbol of motivation, as she frequently assists teachers and students. This finding suggests that the support provided by the school community is a tangible form of legitimacy for female leadership in Islamic educational institutions. While gender bias persists in society, the reality on the ground demonstrates that when leadership is implemented in a participatory and inclusive manner, support serves as both moral and institutional legitimacy. (Adzimah & Mundi, 2025)

Interviews with various informants reinforced the impression that Ibu Nurul's leadership enjoys widespread support. One teacher reported, *"We feel more valued when expressing our opinions because Ibu Nurul always encourages discussion."*

A parent added that communication with the school has become more open, giving them greater confidence in the madrasah's leadership. Even administrative staff reported that the work system has become more organized and clear, making their jobs easier. The description of the interview data demonstrates collective recognition of Ibu Nurul's capacity, both within the school and externally, such as from the committee and parents. Interpretation of these findings confirms that the support emerging is not only formal, but also emotionally and culturally based. The legitimacy of female leadership at MI Mirqotul Ulum is evident not only in official positions but also in a leadership style that builds trust, solidarity, and a sense of belonging among all parties involved in the educational institution.

Documentation collected from MI Mirqotul Ulum supports the results of observations and interviews regarding the support and legitimacy of Ibu Nurul's leadership. Archives of teacher meetings show that nearly every strategic decision, such as the development of additional curriculum or the implementation of extracurricular activities, was unanimously approved with Ibu Nurul's approval as the leader. Annual activity reports show increased teacher and parent participation in madrasah programs. In 2023, 85% of teachers were actively involved in extracurricular activities, a 20% increase compared to the previous year. Photographic documentation of activities also demonstrates Ibu Nurul's central role in mentoring students during religious and academic competitions, which bolsters community trust in her leadership. Descriptions from these documents demonstrate a consistency between her leadership and the results achieved. This documentation demonstrates that the legitimacy of Ibu Nurul's leadership is not merely symbolic but also reflected in tangible achievements, including student achievement, teacher involvement, and parental participation in supporting the madrasah's progress.

Researchers analyzed that Ibu Nurul's leadership at MI Mirqotul Ulum has gained strong legitimacy through support from various school elements. The analysis indicates that this legitimacy stems from two main factors: tangible performance in improving educational quality, management transparency, and teacher and student participation. Second, her ability to build open and humane communication, thereby fostering trust within the surrounding community. From a gender leadership perspective, the legitimacy gained by Ibu Nurul demonstrates that a leader's success is not determined by gender, but by the

quality of leadership and the results achieved. These findings also demonstrate that Islamic educational institutions, often assumed to be patriarchal, are able to accept female leadership when the values of shura (deliberation), amanah (trust), and justice are consistently implemented. Thus, the researcher's analysis confirms that the support and legitimacy for Ibu Nurul's leadership are empirical evidence that women have the same capacity to lead and advance Islamic educational institutions.

### **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

The findings of this study on Gender Leadership from an Islamic Education Perspective and Ibu Nurul's Leadership Profile at MI Mirqotul Ulum align with previous research. For example, research conducted by Nuryanto (2020) demonstrated that female leadership in Islamic educational institutions can bring about positive change through a participatory and communicative managerial style. These findings align with the conditions at MI Mirqotul Ulum, where Ibu Nurul was able to foster an inclusive and productive work environment despite confronting a patriarchal culture. Another study by Rahmawati (2021) confirmed that female leaders in madrasas emphasize a maternal approach, empathy, and deliberation in resolving conflicts. This analysis demonstrates that gender leadership is not only acceptable but also more adaptive to the social dynamics in Islamic educational institutions. Thus, Ibu Nurul's leadership profile demonstrates consistency between field findings and existing academic literature.

These research findings also reinforce the findings of others who emphasize that support and legitimacy for female leaders increases when leadership is carried out with transparency, accountability, and the involvement of all parties. Research by (Zahara & Harahap, 2023) states that female leadership in Islamic education often faces initial resistance but can gain full trust after demonstrating tangible institutional achievements. This finding is evident in Ibu Nurul's leadership, where student achievement has improved, financial management has become more transparent, and communication with parents has become more open. This research also aligns with findings that reveal that the legitimacy of female leadership in Islamic educational institutions stems not only from formal positions but also from the ability to build social and cultural harmony. Thus, the research findings at MI Mirqotul Ulum are not only relevant but also reinforce previous studies on the importance of a gender perspective in Islamic educational leadership (Yakin, Agus, Baharun, & Mundiri, 2025).

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of research conducted at MI Mirqotul Ulum, it can be concluded that gender leadership from an Islamic education perspective provides an important insight into the role of women in leading educational institutions. The research findings demonstrate that Ibu Nurul's leadership, as the principal of the madrasah, successfully combines Islamic values such as deliberation (shura), trustworthiness, and justice with modern managerial practices that emphasize participation and transparency. Ibu Nurul's leadership profile demonstrates success in building a collaborative work culture, improving student achievement, and strengthening communication between teachers, staff, and parents. However, this study also identified challenges to women's leadership in a gender context, particularly related to cultural bias and societal stereotypes that still doubt women's leadership capacity. Despite this resistance, support and legitimacy for Ibu Nurul's leadership have strengthened, driven by evidence of her tangible performance and ability to build trust. This support comes from teachers, staff, and parents, and is reflected in official madrasah documents.

Thus, this study confirms that women's leadership in Islamic education, when exercised professionally and grounded in religious values, can gain strong legitimacy while overcoming existing gender barriers. This study has limitations that should be noted. First, the study focused only on one location, MI Mirqotul Ulum, so the results cannot be fully generalized to all Islamic educational institutions with different characteristics, such as large Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) or madrasas in urban areas with more complex social dynamics. Second, this study emphasized a qualitative perspective through observation, interviews, and documentation, thus not presenting quantitative data that could strengthen the findings with measurable figures. Furthermore, external factors such as local government policies and the role of community organizations were also not extensively explored in this study. Therefore, further research is highly recommended by expanding the study locations, involving more participants from various levels, and incorporating quantitative methods to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Practical recommendations for Islamic educational institutions include the importance of providing greater space for women to emerge as leaders, accompanied by structural support, leadership training, and changing community mindsets to be more accepting of gender equality in Islamic educational leadership.

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