Women's Leadership in the Indonesian Constitutional System and Islamic Law

Erwin Syahruddin[1], Adi Nur Rohman[2]
Universitas Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya[1,2]
Email: erwin.syahruddin@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id,[1] adi.nur@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id[2]

Abstract:

This research elaborates on the power politics prevailing in Indonesia regarding women's leadership in the public sphere in Indonesia. Without realizing it, the patriarchal culture that lives in society makes women marginalized so that women are often neglected, including their rights in public leadership. This research utilizes a phenomenological approach to give meaning to the phenomenon of women's leadership in the public sphere. In addition, the legislative approach is also presented to capture and analyze regulations that open and close access for women in the public sphere. This article concludes that a woman is someone who has the right to organize and influence or organize society to achieve the goals of a country. The existence of several regulations in Indonesia that open space for women to take part in public leadership makes Indonesia an egalitarian country that provides equal and balanced rights for men and women to occupy strategic positions in the public sphere. This research found that women have the right to leadership in the public sphere just like men. Likewise, in the discourse of Islamic law, leadership is not monopolized by men but women can fill it as well as men.

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini mengelaborasi politik kekuasaan yang berlaku di Indonesia terkait kepemimpinan perempuan di ranah publik di Indonesia. Tanpa disadari, budaya patriarki yang hidup di masyarakat menjadikan perempuan termarginalkan sehingga perempuan seringkali terabaikan hak-haknya termasuk hak dalam kepemimpinan publik. Penelitian ini menginstrumentasikan pendekatan fenomenologi yang hendak memberikan makna terhadap fenomena kepemimpinan perempuan di ranah publik. Disamping itu, pendekatan perundang-undangan juga dihadirkan guna memotret dan menganalisis peraturan-peraturan yang membuka dan menutup akses bagi perempuan di ranah publik. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa perempuan adalah seseorang yang berhak untuk mengatur dan mempengaruhi atau mengatur masyarakat untuk mencapai tujuan suatu negara. Adanya beberapa peraturan di Indonesia yang membuka ruang bagi perempuan untuk andil dalam kepemimpinan publik menjadikan Indonesia sebagai negara egaliter yang memberikan hak yang sama dan seimbang bagi laki-laki dan perempuan untuk menduduki posisi strategis di ranah publik. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa perempuan memiliki hak kepemimpinan di ruang publik seperti halnya laki-laki. Begitupun dalam diskursus hukum Islam, kepemimpinan tidak dimonopoli kaum laki-laki namun perempuan bisa mengisinya juga sebaimana laki-laki.

A. Introduction

In a democratic nation, the participation of both women and men in policy formulation and decision-making processes is crucial for achieving societal balance and justice at all levels.[1] Consequently, Indonesia upholds the principle of gender equality, affirming that women and men possess equal rights in social, professional, governmental, and political spheres. Although women are often perceived as inferior to men[2], they nonetheless share equal rights and obligations within the state.

To institutionalize this principle, affirmative action has been implemented in political parties, mandating at least 30% female representation in both party establishment and leadership structures at the national level.[3] This requirement, enshrined in Law No. 2 of 2008 and its revision, Law No. 2 of 2011 concerning Political Parties, significantly enhances women's political legitimacy and facilitates their growing influence in political affairs.

Politics can be understood as an endeavor to establish broadly accepted rules aimed at fostering harmonious communal life.[4] According to Rod Hague, politics involves the mechanisms through which groups make binding collective decisions by reconciling internal differences.[5] Andrew Heywood similarly defines politics as a societal activity oriented toward the formulation, maintenance, and amendment of general rules that govern collective life—an inherently conflict-prone yet cooperative process.[6]

Power is intrinsically linked to leadership and politics. It encompasses the capacity to command and influence decisions that affect others' actions, either directly or indirectly.[7] Scholars have offered various definitions of power: Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan view it as a relationship in which one party determines another's actions toward their own goals.[8] Barbara Goodwin describes it as the capacity to compel individuals to act contrary to

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[1] Tanti Setia Ningrum, et al, "Analisis Yuridis Keterwakilan Perempuan dalam Pengisian Keanggotaan Parlemen dalam Perspektif Hukum Tata Negata Indonesia", *Jurnal Krisna Law* 2, no. 1 (2020).

[2] Erskine, F. *The Origin of Species and the science of female inferiority". In Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species*. (England: Manchester University Press, 2024).

[3] Ningrum, et al, "Analisis Yuridis Keterwakilan Perempuan ..."

[4] Garner, R., Ferdinand, P., & Lawson, S. *Introduction to politics* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[5] McCormick, John, Rod Hague, and Martin Harrop. *Comparative government and politics: an introduction.* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

[6] Andrew Heywood., *Politcs* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997).

[7] Usman, Usman, "Kekuasaan Dalam Tradisi Pemikiran Politik Islam: Refleksi Atas Pemikiran Politik Islam", *Al-Daulah : Jurnal Hukum Pidana dan Ketatanegaraan* 6, no. 2 (2018): 345-357

[8] Miriam Budiardjo, *Dasar-Dasar Ilmu Politik* (Jakarta: Penerbit PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2007).

their preferences.[9] Meanwhile Talcott Parsons considers power the ability to enforce binding obligations within a collective organizational system, legitimized by collective goals and enforceable through sanctions if necessary.[10]

Thus, power can be exercised by any competent individual capable of influencing others. With the progression of time and increasing societal demands, women have been compelled to participate more actively in public life. Despite persistent gender-based discrimination, the Gender Equality Law (Law No. 1 of 2017) acknowledges women's equal rights across various sectors. Eagly and Johnson's analysis of leadership styles revealed gender-based differences, with men exhibiting a masculine leadership style and women adopting a more democratic and feminine approach. They concluded that women demonstrate more democratic leadership tendencies within organizational settings.[11]

According to Melliana, in matters of leadership, women are still frequently juxtaposed with men, often considered unfit to occupy positions of power. As a result, public roles that should be equally accessible to women appear to remain largely monopolized by men. Women, instead, are often confined to reproductive roles, such as that of homemakers. This marginalization has become a driving force behind women's growing aspiration to participate and engage in the public sphere. Consequently, they demand equal rights with men, including access to knowledge, skills, and higher education, in order to compete for leadership positions that have traditionally been dominated by men.[12]

Among the public sectors that women have begun to penetrate, the political arena is particularly noteworthy and significant. It is noteworthy because, historically, women's involvement in practical politics has been minimal; it is significant because women's participation in politics can substantially influence policymaking, particularly concerning women's broader societal roles.[13] Nevertheless, in recent years, an increasing number of women have emerged as leaders across various fields, contributing to transformative developments in national progress.

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[9] Budiardjo, *Dasar-Dasar Ilmu Politik…*

[10] Budiardjo.

[11] Alice H. Eagly and Blair T. Johnson, Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-Analysis", *Psychological Bulletin* 108, no. 2 (1990): 233-256.

[12] Dalila Aulya Putri, "Gaya Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam Pelayanan Publik di Kelurahan Pasar Pagi Kecamatan Samarinda Kota", *Ejournal Ilmu Pemerintahan* 7, no. 1 (2019): 297-310.

[13] Alfi Nursyifa, et al, "Partisipasi Perempuan Dalam Politik", *Jurnal Ilmu Politik dan Pemerintahan* 9, no. 1 (2023): 15-25.

The rising participation of women in leadership roles in Indonesia is evident from the growing number of female regional heads, legislative members, and even ministers. Like their male counterparts, women play vital roles in national development. The distinctive leadership style of women, which often contrasts with that of men, has become a compelling topic in political and state discourse.

As a country with a Muslim-majority population, it is pertinent to question how female leadership is viewed through the lens of Islamic law. This inquiry is particularly important because Islamic law in Indonesia constitutes a significant material source in the formation of national legal frameworks. The presence of women in top leadership positions within the public sphere is a subject that continues to generate considerable scholarly interest, particularly when analyzed from both constitutional and Islamic legal perspectives.

This study aims to examine women's leadership through the lens of Indonesian legal regulations that serve as its formal basis. Furthermore, the findings are compared with the perspectives of Islamic law by presenting views from classical jurists (fuqahā') and contemporary Islamic legal scholars. In doing so, the research seeks to contribute to the discourse on the legitimacy of women's leadership in the public domain, particularly in the Indonesian context.

B. Method

This study examines the issue of women's leadership from multiple perspectives—namely, political, regulatory, and Islamic. It adopts a qualitative research design utilizing both a legal-political approach and an Islamic legal perspective. The data for this study were collected through library research (literature review) using documentary methods to gather both primary and secondary legal materials. The collected data and legal references were analyzed using descriptive-analytical techniques, aiming to construct a conceptual framework that contributes constructively to the discourse on women's leadership. This research employs the theory of legal change as an analytical tool to respond to the evolving social dynamics and debates surrounding women's leadership in the public sphere. By applying this theoretical lens, the study aspires to uncover meaningful insights and produce findings that address the challenges and legitimacy of female leadership in Indonesia's public sector.

C. Result

This article found that women are positioned as legitimate subjects of leadership in political power—meaning that a woman holds the right to organize, influence, and govern society to realize national objectives. In the discourse of Islamic law, the majority of classical scholars (fuqahā') agree that women are not permitted to occupy the position of al-khilāfah al-ʿāmmah (universal caliphate) or al-imāmah al-ʿuẓmā (supreme leadership). In contrast, contemporary scholars and jurists who support the permissibility of women's leadership in the modern nation-state context argue that today's political entities resemble al-khilāfah al-khāṣṣah (limited or localized authority), not the universal caliphate envisioned by early jurists. According to modern Islamic scholars, leadership is not monopolized by men but women can fill it as well as men.

D. Analysis and Discussion

1. Women's Leadership: Concepts and Characteristics

Leadership has been defined in various ways. Some view it as the act of influencing others, while others regard it as the process of directing individuals toward achieving specific goals.[14] Several expert definitions of leadership include:[15] Stephen P. Robbins defines leadership as the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of goals. Richard L. Daft describes leadership as the capacity to influence people in order to accomplish organizational objectives. G.R. Terry and L.W. Rue characterize leadership as the ability to guide followers to work cooperatively with trust and diligence in fulfilling the tasks assigned by their leader

In the Qur'an, leadership is discussed in several verses using various terms. One such term appears in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:30), which uses the word khalīfah:

> *"And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a khalīfah (successor).' They said, 'Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?' Allah said, 'Indeed, I know that which you do not know.'"*

According to Quraisy Shihab, the word khalīfah is derived from the root khalfa, meaning "behind." He interprets it as referring to a "successor," someone who comes after and takes on a role from behind. In this view, a leader is akin to a shepherd who positions

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himself at the rear, watching over and guiding his flock.[16] Another term used to describe leadership can be found in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:124), in which Allah refers to leadership using the word imām:

> *"And [mention] when Abraham was tested by his Lord with commands and prohibitions, and he fulfilled them. Allah said, 'Indeed, I will make you an imām (leader) for the people.' [Abraham] said, 'And of my descendants?' Allah said, 'My covenant does not include the wrongdoers.'"*

Quraisy Shihab elaborates that the term imām implies one who provides support and serves as a role model. A true leader is someone who guides their people toward well-being and happiness. Moreover, an imām must exemplify moral integrity and set a positive example for their followers.[17]

From the various definitions presented above, it can be concluded that leadership arises in particular situations where an individual influences the behavior of others, whether individually or collectively. From an Islamic perspective, leadership entails caring for and serving others—subordinates, communities, and society at large—so they may grow, develop, and prosper.[18]

For women, politics is a crucial instrument for expressing their demands and advocating for justice and equality, particularly regarding their right to equal treatment under the law, in political processes, and within the state and society.[19] Numerous studies suggest that women possess distinct strengths. In addition to fulfilling their biological roles as mothers—bearing, giving birth to, nursing, and nurturing children with affection—women often demonstrate greater resilience, self-sacrifice, endurance, diligence, and patience than men.[20]

The key characteristics of women's leadership include:[21]

a. Persuasive Capability: Female leaders are generally more persuasive than their male counterparts. They tend to be more ambitious, and their ability to elicit agreement

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[16] M. Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Alquran, (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2006).

[17] M. Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Misbah.

[18] Sukatin, "Kepemimpinan dalam Islam".

[19] I Wayan Budiarta, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam Sistem Kekerabatan Purusa: Legitimasi Sejarah atas Kepemimpinan Politik Perempuan", *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Sosial* 8, no. 2 (2022): 23-33.

[20] Husain Hamka, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam Era Modern", *Jurnal Al-Qalam* 19, no. 1 (2012): 107-116.

[21] Annisa Fitriani, "Gaya Kepemimpinan Perempuan", *Jurnal TAPI* 11, no. 2 (2015): 1-24.

from others contributes to their sense of satisfaction and ego. However, even when asserting their views, their social, feminine, and empathetic traits remain intact.

b. Responding to Criticism: Female leaders often do not have "thick skin" to the same degree as men, meaning they are still affected by rejection and criticism. Nonetheless, their high levels of courage, empathy, adaptability, and sociability allow them to recover quickly, learn from mistakes, and move forward with a positive attitude, embodying the spirit of "I will prove myself."

c. Teamwork Orientation: Outstanding female leaders tend to employ a comprehensive leadership style when solving problems and making decisions. They are typically more flexible, considerate, and supportive of their teams. However, in areas requiring precision and decisiveness, there remains room for learning from male approaches.

d. Natural Leaders: Successful female leaders often possess strong charisma—just like their male counterparts. They are persuasive, confident, highly motivated, and energetic in pursuing their tasks.

e. Risk-Taking Behavior: Rather than remaining within safe boundaries, female leaders are increasingly willing to break rules and take risks, much like men. They pay close attention to detail, are willing to explore beyond organizational limits, and do not always conform to structural constraints such as formal rules and corporate policies.

When referring to the Qur'an, one of the most frequently cited verses concerning women's political rights is found in Surah At-Tawbah (9:71), where Allah says:

> *"The believing men and believing women are allies (awliyā') of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, establish prayer, give zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger. It is they upon whom Allah will have mercy. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise."*

This verse clearly conveys that both men and women share equal portions and responsibilities in carrying out daily life tasks. It also affirms the mutual roles and duties assigned to both genders. The general implication of this verse demonstrates that the right to leadership is not exclusive to men; rather, it can also be fulfilled by women.

2. The Status of Women and Legal Transformation

In Western legal discourse, the genealogy of law is categorized into four functions: (1) law as a goal, (2) law as an instrument, (3) law as a barrier, and (4) law as reflexive-initiation. From this, it can be understood that law functions as a driving force in the life of a nation-state and in shaping the relationship between the government and its citizens. The supremacy

of law holds substantive meaning only when its enforcement is based on the principle of equality before the law and underpinned by justice.[22]

On the other hand, social change is an inevitable condition that evolves alongside historical and societal development. These changes affect all aspects of societal life, including social norms, organizational behavior, and social interaction. In response, legal reform becomes necessary to ensure order and the smooth transition of such transformations.[23]

The dynamics of social change have also influenced the roles and status of women in society. From the perspective of Western feminism, women have often been relegated to the domestic sphere, considered marginal and limited in scope, while the public domain has been portrayed as the arena of male self-actualization.[24]

The current profile of Indonesian women reflects a dilemmatic position. On one hand, they are expected to participate in all societal sectors; on the other hand, there is pressure for them not to neglect their "natural" roles as women. This dilemma is most acutely experienced by career women—those who feel called to dedicate their talents and expertise to the progress of the nation, yet are simultaneously burdened by the prevailing societal notion that women must prioritize family service above all else.

In many developing countries, the number of women in authoritative political positions remains low, and this imbalance is stark when compared to men. Such conditions reflect what is commonly referred to as gender inequality in political relations. Male dominance in political structures is the result of preexisting gendered power dynamics. The division of labor, socially constructed along gender lines, has implications for both the public and political arenas: the public sphere remains male-dominated, while women are confined to the domestic domain with limited political access.

This social construction, embedded in culture, tradition, and customary values, has long contributed to the creation of a deeply unequal social order. Male values are elevated and deemed superior, while female values are often subordinated and marginalized under the influence of power structures.

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[22] Sadi Is, M. *Pengantar Ilmu Hukum*. (Jakarta: Prenada Media Group, 2015).

[23] Moh. Anas Kholish and Ilham Fitra Ulumuddin, "Supremasi Hukum Dan Perubahan Sosial: Sebuah Tinjauan Hukum Barat Dan Hukum Islam, *Peradaban Journal of Law and Scociety 1,* no. 1, (2022): 47-59.

[24] Djilzaran Nurul Suhada, "Feminisme dalam Dinamika Perjuangan Kesetaraan Gender di Indonesia" *Indonesian Journal of Sociology, Education and Development 3,* no. 1, 2021: 15-27.

Discussions on leadership include various definitions. Miftah Thoha defines leadership as the activity of influencing others' behavior or the art of directing human attitudes, either individually or collectively. Tannenbaum and Massarik describe leadership as a process or function in the form of a governing role. Similarly, Frigon states that "leadership is the art and science of getting others to perform and achieve a vision."[25] In summary, leadership can be defined as the ability and skill of an individual to mobilize a group of people toward achieving a predetermined goal.

Women's leadership in social relations is not a fixed or rigid prohibition. In Islamic history, Aisha bint Abu Bakr actively participated in social and political life with the permission of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and none of the Prophet's companions later objected to her involvement. Furthermore, the Qur'an immortalizes the image of an ideal woman with political autonomy—Queen Balqis, ruler of Sheba, described as a woman endowed with great power. Surah Al-Naml (27:23) recounts:

> *"Indeed, I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given everything and she has a magnificent throne."*

3. Women's Leadership: A Constitutional and Islamic Legal Perspective

Power politics within the political realm serves to support and uphold the implementation of political decisions in society. The logical connection between politics and power implies that any discussion of politics necessarily involves the exercise of power. Andrew Heywood defines politics as the activity by which a nation aims to create, preserve, and amend general rules that govern its life—an activity that inherently involves both conflict and cooperation.[26]

Political participation is not the exclusive domain of politicians, government officials, or bureaucrats; it is the right and responsibility of all citizens. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection continuously seeks to enhance women's political participation. One of the concrete efforts includes the implementation of the zipper system as mandated by Article 55, Paragraph 2 of Law No. 10/2008, requiring that every three candidates must include at least one woman. Moreover, Indonesia has already witnessed

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[25] Syamsu Q. Badu & Novianty Djafri, *Kepemimpinan dan Perilaku Organisasi* (Gorontalo: Penerbit Ideas Publishing, 2017).

[26] Yudi Kurniawan, *Proses Politik Dalam Wacana Pemekaran Provinsi Madura* (Malang: Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, 2017).

women taking on leadership roles such as President, Ministers, and other strategic positions, thereby affirming that women are capable of leading.[27]

To ensure just and proportional gender equality, women must be able to implement deliberative democracy. Quantitatively, women's representation in parliament has improved since Indonesia's Reform Era. The data shows progress: 9% in 1999, increasing to 11.3% in 2004, and rising significantly to 17.9% in the 2009 elections, specifically in the House of Representatives (DPR RI).[28]

In theory, deliberative democracy emphasizes the role of the public sphere as the locus of intersubjective communication, considered a fundamental component of democratic life. It prioritizes the substance of democracy—"governance by the governed"—achieved through communicative processes rather than merely fulfilling procedural standards such as elections, political parties, media institutions, and the separation of powers, which often neglect the essence of democratic values.[29] Literature on deliberative democracy commonly emphasizes that its spirit—also known as deliberative politics—lies in making democracy more meaningful.

Specifically, deliberative politics highlights how public-political decisions are made between election cycles, not just during them. [30] This aspect is vital in local political contexts in Indonesia, where it helps bridge the gap between policymakers and the people. It is particularly relevant in diverse regions, both geographically and in terms of human resources.[31]

According to Jürgen Habermas, deliberative democracy sees public participation as the lifeblood of development planning, and as a moral discourse that must be tested in a rational public arena. Therefore, consensus-building in public planning processes necessarily involves dialogue, discussion, and even intense debate in public forums—something entirely consistent with Indonesia's own tradition of musyawarah (deliberation). Habermas's concept of deliberative democracy aligns closely with the Pancasila democratic model, where

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[27] C. Priadi Pasaribu, *Perempuan dan Partisipasi Politik* (Jambi: Universitas Jambi, 2021).

[28] Wahidah Zein Siregar, "Representasi Perempuan di DPR, DPD, MPR, dan DPRD 2009-2014: Komposisi, Peran dan Tantangan Perempuan Parlemen," *Jurnal Pemilu dan Keterwakilan* 18, no. 4 (2013): 23-41.

[29] Fahrul Muzaqqi, "Politik Deliberatif dalam Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan: Analisis Structures and Meaning atas PP RI No. 28/ 2008", *Jurnal Konstitusi* 10, no. 1 (2013): 89-115.

[30] Fahrul Muzaqqi, "Politik Deliberatif dalam Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan…"

[31] Fahrul Muzaqqi, …

permusyawaratan (deliberative consensus) is deeply rooted in cultural and political norms.[32] In its practical implementation, deliberative democracy is inherently participatory, involving multiple stakeholders in the decision-making process to achieve shared objectives.

In democratic practice, participation is often hindered by a range of factors, both internal and external in nature—namely, structural, cultural, and technical obstacles. Women, in particular, face several specific challenges that limit their participation, especially in political leadership:[33]

a. Political Barriers: Institutional political models, predominantly designed and dominated by men, have created a masculine political culture that often alienates women and discourages their engagement.

b. Ideological Barriers: One of the most persistent ideological constraints is the narrative that "when a woman becomes a politician, she ceases to be a mother." Such rhetoric delegitimizes women's public roles by framing them as incompatible with their familial responsibilities.

c. Socio-Economic Barriers: Socio-economic conditions significantly influence the recruitment of members into socio-political organizations. These barriers are evident in both emerging democracies and mature democratic systems, where economic inequality continues to limit women's access to political participation[34]

These obstacles are rooted in patriarchal structures and cultural norms, which have, over an extended period, shaped collective societal thought and behavior. These beliefs—especially prevalent in rural communities or among populations with limited educational access—have become internalized as collective "truths." Although women's groups consistently engage in participatory development efforts, their interests are frequently overlooked. In many cases, women's labor is merely instrumentalized to implement programs conceived without their input or benefit.[35]

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[32] Frans Bapa Tokan, dkk, "Partisipasi Politk Perempuan (Studi tentang Relasi Kuasa dan Akses Perempuan dalam Pembangunan Desa di Desa Watoone Kabupaten Flores Timur)" *Jurnal Caraka Prabu* 4, no. 2 (2020): 206-225.

[33] Apple, M. W., Biesta, G., Bright, D., Giroux, H. A., Heffernan, A., McLaren, P., Riddle, S., & Yeatman, A. *"Reflections on Contemporary Challenges and Possibilities For Democracy and Education". Journal of Educational Administration and History* 54, no. 3 (2022): 245-262

[34] Frans Bapa Tokan, dkk, "Partisipasi Politk Perempuan...

[35] Frans Bapa Tokan, dkk, "Partisipasi Politk Perempuan....

The Qur'anic preservation of the story of Queen Balqis, the ruler of the Sabaean kingdom during the time of Prophet Solomon (Sulaiman), serves as an important indicator that Islam, from its foundational texts, acknowledges the legitimacy of female leadership in the public sphere. In other words, this Qur'anic narrative implicitly affirms that women are permitted to hold leadership positions, including that of head of state.[36]

4. The Debate on Women's Leadership in Islamic Jurisprudence

The question of women's leadership has long been a subject of debate among Islamic legal scholars. A central point of contention originates from a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), narrated by Abu Bakrah, which states: *"A people who entrust their leadership to a woman will never prosper." (Narrated by Muslim).* This hadith has been widely cited by classical jurists (fuqahā'), including scholars from the four major Sunni schools of thought, as a basis for the position that the role of imam (head of state) must be held by a man and cannot be occupied by a woman. According to this view, a woman is not permitted to lead men in matters of general leadership (al-imāmah al-ʿāmmah).[37]

Imam Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī held that male superiority over females arises from multiple aspects—some based on observable qualities and others rooted in Sharīʿah rulings. These include responsibilities such as leading prayer (imāmah al-ṣughrā), holding the caliphate (imāmah al-kubrā), calling to prayer (adhān), and participation in jihad.[38]

A frequently referenced verse in leadership discourse is Surah An-Nisā' (4:34):

"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given one more strength than the other, and because they support them from their wealth."

Regarding the interpretation of this verse, classical exegetes offer differing views on whether it implies that women are forbidden from holding leadership roles. In Tafsīr al-Kabīr, Imam al-Rāzī argues that women are not eligible for leadership positions because men possess superior knowledge ('ilm) and greater physical strength (qudrah).[39] This argument is echoed by al-Zamakhsharī, who states that men surpass women in terms of intellect ('aql), decisiveness (ḥazm), willpower ('azm), and physical ability (qudrah).[40]

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[36] Husain Hamka, *Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam Era Modern* (Makassar: Universitas Hasanuddin, 2016).

[37] Yusuf Qardhawi, *Fatwa-fatwa Kontemporer*. Jilid 1 (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 1999).

[38] Muhammad Ar-Razi, *Mafatihul Ghaib*, (Beirut: Darul Ihya` At-Turats Arabi, nd).

[39] Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir*, Juz X (Teheran: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, nd).

[40] Al-Zamakhsyari, *Tafsir al-Kasysyaf*, Juz I (Mesir: Isa al-Bab al-Halabi wa Syirkah, nd).

However, Quraisy Shihab offers an alternative interpretation. He asserts that the verse refers specifically to the domestic context—namely, the relationship between husband and wife.[41] He emphasizes that the subsequent part of the verse discusses the dynamics of family and household life, suggesting that the verse does not constitute a general prohibition against women's public leadership

Based on this understanding, women's leadership in the public sphere is permissible as long as the woman possesses the necessary competence and capacity. This is consistent with historical examples, such as the leadership role of Sayyidah Aisha in early Islamic society. Therefore, provided that the leadership role does not pertain to household authority and the woman is qualified and sincere in her intentions, Islam does not prohibit women from holding leadership positions in public life

E. Conclusion

Leadership is the activity of influencing others in order to achieve intended goals. Politics, on the other hand, is a national activity aimed at formulating, maintaining, and amending general rules that govern societal life—a process inherently marked by both conflict and cooperation. Power, in this context, is the ability to influence individuals or groups to act according to the will of the powerholder. Therefore, anyone who assumes leadership within a political power structure inevitably operates based on principles of cooperation, while also navigating inevitable conflict dynamics. Within this framework, women are positioned as legitimate subjects of leadership in political power—meaning that a woman holds the right to organize, influence, and govern society to realize national objectives.

In the discourse of Islamic law, the majority of classical scholars (fuqahā') agree that women are not permitted to occupy the position of al-khilāfah al-ʿāmmah (universal caliphate) or al-imāmah al-ʿuẓmā (supreme leadership). However, this position is not without interpretative nuance. Classical scholars understood al-khilāfah al-ʿāmmah as referring to a unified Islamic polity that encompasses the entire Muslim world. In contrast, contemporary scholars and jurists who support the permissibility of women's leadership in the modern nation-state context argue that today's political entities resemble al-khilāfah al-khāṣṣah (limited or localized authority), not the universal caliphate envisioned by early jurists. As such, they

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[41] M. Qurays Syihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1996).

contend that women may assume leadership positions in public domains—provided they meet the necessary qualifications and do not neglect their primary obligations.

F. Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

G. Acknowledgement

The author has no acknowledgments to declare.

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I. Author Biographies

Erwin Syahruddin is a lecturer at Universitas Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya. His research, mostly, focused on the theme of constitutional and state administrative law.

Adi Nur Rohman is an Associate Professor at Universitas Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya. His research, mostly, focused on the theme of Islamic law, Islamic economic law and religious court.