

## LEADERSHIP MODEL OF FEMALE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS PERSPECTIVE INTERPRETATION OF QUR'ANIC LEADERSHIP VERSES

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### Abstract

*The role of women as school principals often clashes with the habits of society that consider the position of top leader only suitable for men. In fact, a complete understanding of religious teachings never limits this. This study uses a comprehensive literature review to dissect and examine various sources of writing related to the variety of women's leadership in the lens of the Qur'an. The results of the study show that the coveted female leadership style prioritizes the path of deliberation, intellect, and an approach to compassion, as exemplified by Ratu Balqis. The main condition of the position of leader in the Qur'an fully emphasizes self-ability, honesty, and courage to do justice, not at all on gender. In the field, female leaders have proven to be resilient in organizing school affairs neatly and creating a supportive learning atmosphere. In conclusion, the biggest obstacle to women's leadership does not come from religious prohibitions, but from outdated and rigid societal customs. The success of female school principals today is clear evidence that Islamic teachings really uphold the value of justice, while slowly collapsing the narrow views that have been limiting women's movement space in the realm of education.*

**Keyword:** *Women's Leadership, School Principals, Qur'an Interpretation, Justice, Deliberation*

### Abstrak

*Peran perempuan sebagai kepala sekolah sering kali berbenturan dengan kebiasaan masyarakat yang menganggap kedudukan pemimpin puncak hanya layak untuk laki-laki. Padahal, pemahaman ajaran agama yang utuh tidak pernah membatasi hal tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan ulasan kepustakaan secara menyeluruh untuk membedah dan mengkaji berbagai sumber tulisan terkait ragam kepemimpinan perempuan dalam kaca mata Al-Qur'an. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa corak kepemimpinan perempuan yang didambakan sangat mengedepankan jalan musyawarah, kecerdasan akal, serta pendekatan kasih sayang, sebagaimana dicontohkan oleh Ratu Balqis. Syarat utama kedudukan pemimpin dalam Al-Qur'an sepenuhnya menitikberatkan pada kemampuan diri, kejujuran, dan keberanian berbuat adil, sama sekali bukan pada jenis kelamin. Di lapangan, pemimpin perempuan terbukti tangguh menata urusan sekolah dengan rapi dan menciptakan suasana belajar yang saling mendukung. Kesimpulannya, halangan terbesar kepemimpinan perempuan bukan berasal dari larangan agama, melainkan dari adat kebiasaan masyarakat yang sudah usang dan kaku. Keberhasilan kepala sekolah perempuan pada masa kini menjadi bukti nyata bahwa ajaran Islam sungguh menjunjung tinggi nilai keadilan, sekaligus secara perlahan meruntuhkan pandangan sempit yang selama ini membatasi ruang gerak perempuan di ranah pendidikan.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Kepemimpinan Perempuan, Kepala Sekolah, Tafsir Al-Qur'an, Keadilan, Musyawarah*



## INTRODUCTION

The inequality of gender representation in the realm of educational leadership is still a persistent global challenge to this day (Del Carmen Meza-Mejia, Villarreal-García, and Ortega-Barba 2023; Wood et al. 2025). Although quantitatively the number of female educators dominates the teacher population at various levels of education, where UNESCO data often shows figures above 60-70% for the primary and secondary levels, the proportion of women serving as principals remains much lower (Bush 2021). This phenomenon shows that there are invisible barriers that prevent women from reaching top decision-making positions. Socioculturally, the effectiveness of women's leadership often clashes with patriarchal traditions and strong tribalistic sentiments. A culture of tribalism often wraps around or manipulates interpretations of religious texts to limit women's space for movement in the public sector, creating a double standard that hinders the acceleration of their careers (Bhaskar and Kaushik 2022). Often, barriers for women arise from a biased interpretation of the concept of *qanwamah* that merely skims the surface of the text, thereby giving rise to a misconception of male dominance. Conversely, the *maqasidi* perspective offers a consensus on the meaning that the essence of leadership is professionalism and the common good, positioning men and women as strategic partners based on their respective capacities (Sutrisno et al. 2025).

In the review, women's agency theory and transformational leadership practices, the success of women's progressive mobility in areas of religious autonomy into authoritative entities that manage social change still clash with institutions with systemic and cultural barriers that limit women's ultimate authority (Murphy 2022; Tamim, Isti'ana, and Suslina 2024; Herr 2018; Zion-Waldoks 2015; Burke 2012; Lomotey 2025). In the realm of textual-classical interpretations that tend to be partial and ignore *asbabun nuzul*, it is often absolute to understand gender bias in certain verses. On the other hand, progressive *mufasir* reconstructs meaning through the approach of *mubadalah* (reciprocity) and *maudhu'i tafsir* (thematic) (Khasanah, Ichwan, and Pratama 2025; Fitriyah and Rahman 2024; Ilafi and Nurrohim 2025). Through this complete and contextual reading, it is evident that the main leadership terms in the Qur'an, such as *caliph* (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 30) and *ulil amri* (Q.S. An-Nisa: 59), do not refer to a specific gender. The legitimacy of leadership in the Qur'an is placed entirely on capacity, integrity, and the ability to uphold justice, so that the position of women as school principals has a very solid theological footing (Rosyidi, Amru, and Islami 2025; Marziah, Hanif, and Fisa 2025; Surya et al. 2025; Amaliah and Munawaroh 2023; Islamiyah, Mubin, and Sholeh 2024).

Although the theme of women's leadership has been extensively studied, much of the previous research has tended to be fragmented so that it focused on purely theological aspects or purely managerial aspects separately. Research conducted by Nielsen (2019) in-depth discusses women's authority in the public space through the interpretation of leadership verses, but often stops at textual debates without touching on managerial realities on the ground (Nielsen 2019). Then, research conducted by Ghundol and Muthanna (2025) that focuses on sociocultural barriers, which captures how patriarchal norms and social constructions hinder women's careers in educational institutions, but lacks integrative theological solutions as a form of resistance to these narratives (Ghundol and Muthanna 2025). In addition, research by Haiqal et al. (2025) on professional leadership in the digital age, which emphasizes technical competence and technological adaptation, but often ignores the foundation of religious values that is the main identity of Islamic educational institutions (Haiqal et al. 2025). This issue of fragmentation actually stems from how interpretations of the Qur'an are often invoked to restrict women's freedom of action, particularly when domestic roles are pitted against career ambitions (Rahayu and Nurrohim 2022). Interestingly, the established nature of this traditional narrative has begun to waver since Artificial Intelligence has been able to dissect patterns of linguistic bias in classical interpretations (Ilafi and

Nurrohim 2024), reinforced by feminist hermeneutical arguments that leadership in the Qur'an is fundamentally about social justice, not about perpetuating patriarchal power (Afari et al. 2025). The problem is, we still face a significant gap: there is no leadership model that can truly marry the noble values of the Qur'an with the demands of adaptive professionalism required of school principals in the field. This is the gap that this research aims to bridge. Through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), this study seeks to synthesize existing literature to develop a model of women's leadership that not only has an inclusive theological foundation but also possesses concrete professional standards to address the complexities of contemporary Islamic educational governance. However, the real gap of the mapping is the absence of a leadership model that comprehensively unites the depth of Qur'anic interpretation with the demands of modern and adaptive school principal professionalism. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to synthesize literature that reconnects sacred texts with real managerial practices. Through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, this study formulated a leadership model for female principals that not only stands on inclusive theological legitimacy, but also has strong indicators of professionalism to answer the challenges of Islamic education governance in the contemporary era.

Integrating religious texts with managerial practices is not merely a matter of adhering to formal rules; it is an epistemological process of instilling the value of "*Hikmah*" into the very fabric of educational leadership. Within this framework, leadership transcends mere administrative tasks, evolving into a meaningful process of character development. Here, "*Hikmah*" serves as the fundamental principle guiding leaders to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong in every decision made (Nurrohim and Nursidik 2019). However, professional skills are only half the story. For a female school principal to be truly effective, she needs a solid balance between mental well-being and a strong religious character, these are the true tools for navigating the complex social dynamics in a school (Nurrohim 2016). This model must also embody the identity of Islamic institutions, where matters such as dress codes and conduct are not merely formalities, but reflections of moderation and integrity (Nurrohim and Jannah 2020). By bridging these prophetic values with mental health and professional standards, we can build a leadership model for women that is theologically sound and highly resilient in the face of modern challenges.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer three main questions: first, how to interpret the verses of women's leadership in the Qur'an; second, what are the characteristics and leadership style of female school principals in the field today; and third, how to form an ideal leadership model that is able to integrate religious values with the demands of modern professionalism. Through a systematic literature review, it is hoped that this research can make a theoretical contribution to the development of inclusive and professional Islamic education management.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative paradigm with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach (Butler, Hall, and Copnell 2016; Licenco, Člankov, and Turk 2021). The SLR approach was adopted to formulate a leadership model of female principals that comprehensively integrates the depth of Qur'anic interpretation with the demands of modern managerial professionalism. This systematic literature review was conducted to make a theoretical contribution to the development of inclusive and professional Islamic education management. The literature search was conducted through the Scopus database, which was chosen because of its authority and reputation in providing articles of reputable scientific journals, particularly in the social sciences and humanities.

Data extraction is done using Boolean operators to precisely filter articles to match the research topic. The search string criteria used are as follows:

( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( female leadership ) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ( islamic interpretation ) ) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SRCTYPE , "j" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( OA , "all" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Female Leadership" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Pesantren" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Leadership" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Women" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Gender Justice" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Gender" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Islam" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Gender Equality" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Gender Equality" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Female Leaders" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Islamic Higher Education" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Islamic Feminism" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "SOCI" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "ARTS" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) )

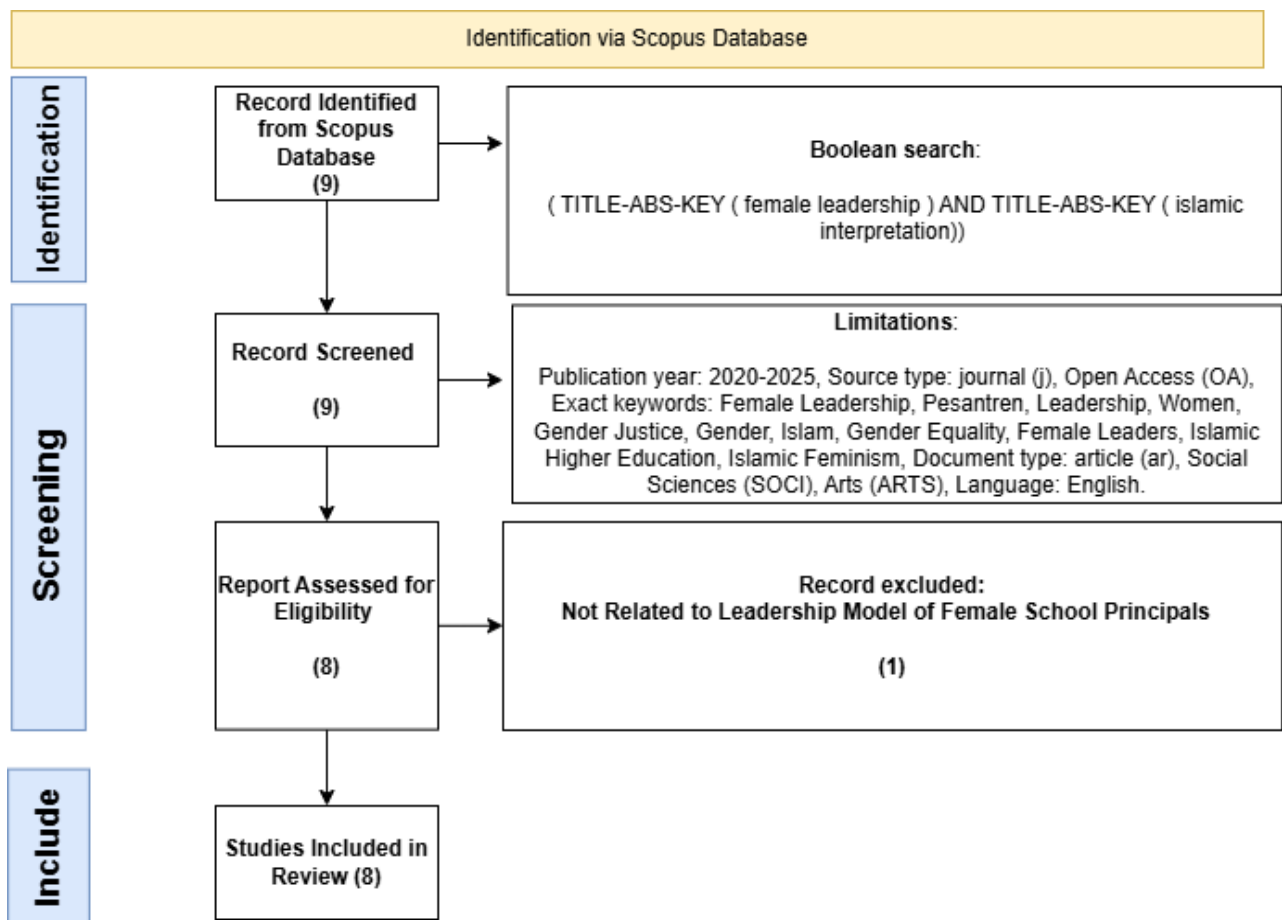


Figure 1: PRISMA Diagram

The above criteria strictly limit searches to only primary research articles published in journals (j) with Open Access (all) status to ensure data accessibility and transparency. Area subjects are restricted purely to social sciences (SOCI) and arts/humanities (ARTS), using English (English), with a publication time span between 2020 to 2025 (PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2026) to ensure that the literature reviewed represents the most up-to-date discourse on women's leadership in the contemporary era. Based on the initial search query, 9 articles were found that were relevant to the keyword. The articles were then screened using strict inclusion criteria that had been set in the database system, thus reducing the number to 8 articles.

Furthermore, the eight articles went through an in-depth qualitative screening stage to ensure absolute conformity with the research focus, namely the synthesis between inclusive theological legitimacy and indicators of the principal's professionalism. The final screening results confirmed that all 8 articles really met the criteria (eligible) and were very relevant to the topic of discussion. Each selected article is then comprehensively evaluated based on methodological quality, validity of arguments, and contribution in answering the problem of Islamic education governance.

This research is guided by the PRISMA protocol to ensure transparency at every stage of literature search, selection, and analysis. The data source was extracted from the Scopus database using a Boolean operator that specifically combines the keywords women's leadership and Islamic interpretation. Data analysis was carried out using qualitative synthesis to formulate a leadership model that unites theological legitimacy with modern managerial practice. To ensure the accuracy of the results, bias is handled in layers: selection bias is prevented by setting standard search criteria directly in the system from the beginning; publication bias is suppressed by only taking literature from journals that have gone through peer review; and the subjectivity bias of the researcher was avoided by locking the extraction of pure data on the variables of leadership interpretation and professionalism indicators without including personal assumptions (Wang, Zhai, and Shahzad 2025; Bhattacharya and Singh 2025; Page et al. 2021).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### FINDINGS

This section presents a general overview of all the literature that has been collected and screened. Overall, this study reviewed eight primary articles deemed most relevant to the main topic, namely the role of female leaders in educational environments and the religious perspectives underlying it. These papers were published by various prominent academic platforms focusing on religious studies, educational management, and societal structures, such as the Asian Journal of Islamic Studies and the Journal of Business Ethics. The discussions in these selected manuscripts broadly highlight how women carry out their primary roles, the cultural obstacles that hinder their steps, and the foundational sacred verses that strengthen their positions. This collection of literature serves as a strong initial foundation to observe the extent of scholars' current attention to women's leadership today.

Table 1. Main Data

Authors	Title	Year	Journal	Country	Author Affiliation	Subject or Educational Level
Farjana Mahbuba & Sumaiya Rabeya	Female Leadership in Muslim Societies: Theological and Socio-Cultural Debates in Contemporary Literature	2023	Australian Journal of Islamic Studies	Global (Studi Literatur)	International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)	Kepemimpinan Publik & Teologi (Umum)

Tamer Koburtay, Tala Abuhussein, & Yusuf M. Sidani	Implications of Religion, Culture and Legislation for Gender Equality at Work: Qualitative Insights from Jordan	2023	Journal of Business Ethics	Yordania (Jordan)	American University of Beirut & Jordan University of Science and Technology	Sektor Profesional (Industri Perhotelan)
Nur Syamsiah & Siti Aisyah	Gender Justice in Islamic Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Age	2025	International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research	Indonesia	Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Alauddin Makassar	Perguruan Tinggi Islam (Islamic Higher Education)
Pınar Melis Yelsalı Parmaksız	The Paradox of the AKP's Gender Regime: Gender Identity of Religious Women in Türkiye	2025	Social Politics	Türkiye	Ankara University	Sosiologi Politik & Identitas Gender (Perempuan Religius)
Evi Muafiah, Lutfiana Dwi Mayasari, Anis Hidayatul Imtihanah, & Bustanul Yuliani	Gendered Pesantren in Contemporary Indonesia: Female Agency, Institution, and Everyday Lives	2024	Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies (QIJIS)	Indonesia	IAIN Ponorogo, Jawa Timur	Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Tradisional (Pesantren)
Sanaa F. Abbas & Maisaa Ali Rawabdeh	Female Competencies from the Narratives of the Qur'an: Queen of Sheba's Crisis Management Style as a Leadership Model	2022	Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies (QIJIS)	Yordania (Jordan)	Al-Balqa Applied University	Tafsir Al-Qur'an & Manajemen Krisis (Studi Naratif)

Basri, Rita Sari, Muhammad Nazar, & Andhika Jaya Putra	Acehnese Women's Move in Academic Leadership in 2020	2022	Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun	Indonesia	Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Langsa, Aceh	Kepemimpinan Akademik (Pendidikan Tinggi)
Tamer Koburtay, Tala Abuhussein, & Yusuf M. Sidani	Women Leadership, Culture, and Islam: Female Voices from Jordan	2023	Journal of Business Ethics	Yordania (Jordan)	American University of Beirut (Lebanon)	Kepemimpinan Profesional & Manajemen

In addition, other journals such as *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, and *Sustainability* are also notable, reflecting the diverse academic spaces in which the issues of women's leadership and role equity are being addressed. The authors of these papers are affiliated with universities around the world, with a notable presence from institutions in Indonesia, Jordan, Turkey, Bangladesh, and the UK. This global distribution of authors indicates the widespread concern and shared interest in women's leadership, especially in the context of directing educational pathways. Specifically, the affiliations are centered on well-established universities, demonstrating the institutional support and research dedication to these issues (Koburtay, Syed, and Haloub 2020; Abbas and Rawabdeh 2022; Mahbuba and Rabeya 2023; Muafiah et al. 2024; Syamsiah et al. 2025; Koburtay, Abuhussein, and Sidani 2023; Parmaksız 2025; Basri et al. 2022).

The studies presented in the table span a variety of educational contexts, with a focus on schools, universities, and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). For example, Evi Muafiah et al. (2024) focus their study on the role of women within the Indonesian *pesantren* environment, while Hasan Basri et al. (2022) target women's leadership moves in higher education in Aceh (Basri et al. 2022; Muafiah et al. 2024). Similarly, Tamer Koburtay and Jawad Syed (2023) explore how culture and religious understanding influence female leaders' voices in Jordan. The diverse range of subjects covered illustrates how women's leadership and the effort to break through societal boundaries are highly relevant and embedded across different educational environments and levels (Koburtay, Abuhussein, and Sidani 2023).

In terms of publication trends, the majority of the articles were published between 2022 and 2025, reflecting a recent surge in research addressing the various barriers for female leaders and the importance of equity in education. These years show a clear, marked increase in publications. This rising trend in research is likely in response to growing societal awareness regarding the importance of role equality in the modern era. Regarding the geographical spread, countries such as Indonesia and Jordan are prominently represented, indicating a tangible global effort to elevate women's roles. These studies reflect the shared recognition of the importance of female leaders' presence, with each region tackling the issue in contextually relevant ways.

Table 2. City and Number of Publication

City	Number of Publication
Amman, Yordania	2
Ponorogo, Indonesia	1
Makassar, Indonesia	1
Langsa (Aceh), Indonesia	1
Ankara, Türkiye	1

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	1
Beirut, Lebanon	1

### 1. Interpretation of the verses of women's leadership in the Qur'an

The discourse on the interpretation of women's leadership is firmly polarized. Classical mufasirs such as Ibn Kathir and Al-Razi rigidly rejected women's authority in the public sphere. This rejection is rooted in the textual reading of Surah An-Nisa: 34 about *Qanwamun* and Surah Al-Baqarah: 228 related to the excess of male degrees. This conservative argument is further locked by the hadith narrated by Abu Bakrah regarding the prediction of the failure of a nation if led by women (Mahbuba and Rabeya 2023). As an antithesis, contemporary mufasir dismantles this patriarchal bias. The Qur'an is proven to never prohibit women's leadership, but rather measures the worthiness of a person purely from his piety (Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 13). Mandate *Caliph* (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 30) and partnership of the affairs of the ummah (Q.S. Qaf: 21) are distributed equally regardless of gender. The operational requirements of leaders such as obedience (Q.S. An-Nisa: 59) and deliberation (Q.S. Ash-Shura: 38) are also universal. In addition, the validity of the prohibition postulate from Abu Bakrah's hadith was successfully broken; the historical context is purely a specific satire on the collapse of the Persian dynasty of the time, not a law that applies forever (Mahbuba and Rabeya 2023).

This inclusive interpretation is empirically validated. In Aceh, which is thick with patrilineal culture, the involvement of women as leaders of academic institutions and Islamic boarding schools ("*me, I'm going to you*") is actually widely accepted by the community as long as it is in harmony with the sharia. This sociological fact confirms that the construction of male dominance is incapable of hindering women's access to higher education and to execute authority in top managerial positions (Basri et al. 2022). The Qur'an unanimously recognizes the capacity of women's leadership through the historical track record of Queen Bilqis (Surah An-Naml). This figure is represented as tangible evidence that women are allowed to hold the highest power in a country, are able to lead democratically (shura), and successfully resolve political crises without any sacred text blaming their position as rulers (Abbas & Rawabdeh, 2022). In line with this, a strict analysis of Surah An-Nisa verse 34 confirms that the use of the word *rijal* in it emphasizes professionalism and one's ability to lead, not a standard rule that limits leadership rights exclusively to the male sex (*penis*) (Abbas & Rawabdeh, 2022).

The obstacles for women to appear in the public space do not come from religious texts at all, but purely from the product of biased interpretation and are trapped in patriarchal culture. Verses that are often distorted to corner women, such as Surah An-Nisa verse 34 about *Nusyuz* (disobedience), actually brought down to respond to and break the past Arab tradition of normalizing violence against women. If dissected contextually, the main message of the verse is to provide physical protection for women, not to legalize male domination or force women to remain in the domestic sphere. The foundation of this justice rests on the teaching that men and women are created from the same element (*nafsi*) and both carry out their duties as God's representatives (*Caliph*) on earth with a fully equal position (Muafiah et al. 2024).

The literature synthesis confirms that the marginalization of women in leadership does not originate from the text of the Qur'an, but from the cultural bias of patriarchy and tribalism that infiltrates the interpretation of classical jurisprudence (Syamsiah et al. 2025; Koburtay, Abuhusein, and Sidani 2023). Progressive mufasir emphatically deconstructs this masculine bias by restoring the reading to the ontological equality of human creation from the same entity (Q.S.

An-Nisa: 1), as well as the affirmation that a person's worthiness is purely judged by the quality of piety (Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 13), not gender (Koburtay, Abuhussein, and Sidani 2023). The Qur'an also guarantees equal compensation and recognition of women's hard work and professional achievements in the public sphere (Q.S. An-Nahl: 97; Ali 'Imran: 195) (Koburtay, Abuhussein, and Sidani 2023; Koburtay, Syed, and Haloub 2020).

The sharpest theological deconstructions are directed at the terms *Qiwamah* which has historically been often distorted to deny female leadership authority. Through the lens of gender-conscious Islamic feminism, the concept is reconstructed as a function of protection, protection, and service (*servicing and protecting*), is not a manifestation of men's absolute power over women's affairs (Koburtay, Abuhussein, and Sidani 2023; Parmaksız 2025).

The narrative of the prohibition of women's leadership (such as the rigid interpretation of the hadith) has been broken by historical facts about the track record of public leadership in the early Islamic era. Facts such as Khadijah's managerial success in business, the appointment of Ash-Shifaa bint Abdullah as market supervisor by Caliph Umar, and Aisha's great political, medical, and rhetorical authority, are indisputable evidence that women are allowed to occupy decision-making positions (Koburtay, Abuhussein, and Sidani 2023; Koburtay, Syed, and Haloub 2020; Syamsiah et al. 2025; Parmaksız 2025). Thus, the Islamic theological framework actually provides full space for a model of women's leadership that rests on the principle of justice (*'adl*), managerial excellence (*Courtesy*), and relational reciprocity (*Squirt*) (Syamsiah et al. 2025).

## 2. Characteristics and Leadership Styles of Current Female Principals

Women's leadership style in the realm of education today is more about embracing and inviting progress together, rather than just concentrating orders from above. They prefer to encourage their members and organize the affairs of the institution neatly (Basri et al. 2022). In leading, they rely heavily on emotional maturity, cooperation, and trying to create a comfortable work atmosphere. For them, position is not a tool to oppress others, but a way to bring goodness and re-align religious teachings that have often been misinterpreted by habits that are more male-favored (Mahbuba and Rabeya 2023; Koburtay, Abuhussein, and Sidani 2023).

When it comes to making decisions, these women leaders prioritize the path of deliberation. Like the example of Queen Balqis in the Qur'an, they highly respect their ranks by exchanging ideas and not imposing their own will. They use intelligence, prudence, and gentleness when dealing with complex problems, in order to avoid harsh actions (Abbas and Rawabdeh 2022). In addition, they must also be smart to carry themselves so that religious teachings that uphold justice can be in line with the customs and order of the local community which sometimes still limits women's steps when working (Koburtay, Syed, and Haloub 2020).

Care and affection are also very inherent characteristics of women's leadership. They are present as a good example, are firm but still flexible, and always rely on the Creator in carrying out their duties (Muafiah et al. 2024). In today's times, they also dare to take advantage of the advancement of today's tools (technology) to spread the values of justice in the place of learning, even though they are still often hindered by old habits and rules that are difficult to change (Syamsiah et al. 2025). In maintaining their roles, they adjust themselves as devout religious women, but remain firm and good at getting around various societal views that often do not benefit their position (Parmaksız 2025).

## 3. Form the Ideal Female Principal Leadership Model

The coveted form of women's leadership is leadership that is based on intelligence, reason, and willingness to listen to the opinions of others. As exemplified by Queen Balqis in the Qur'an, a good leader does not decide matters alone, but always invites his staff to consult to find the most peaceful and safe solution to disputes (Abbas and Rawabdeh 2022). In addition, the main measure of a leader's worthiness in religious views is not seen at all from his gender, but from the level of piety and his ability to do justice in carrying out his mandate with full responsibility (Mahbuba and Rabeya 2023). This correct understanding of religion is very important to straighten out the wrong assumptions in society that often limit women due to hereditary habits that are more in favor of men (Koburtay, Abuhussein, and Sidani 2023).

In the school environment or place of learning, this form of ideal leadership can also be seen from the resilience and spirit of never giving up. A good female leader is able to manage her life in a balanced way between family affairs at home and work responsibilities at school (Basri et al. 2022). They must also have the ingenuity to harmonize religious teachings that uphold justice with the local cultural order, so that their role can be well accepted without having to clash violently with the surrounding customs (Koburtay, Syed, and Haloub 2020). On their journey, they are required to remain firm in displaying their identity as obedient religious women, as well as being tough to face various views of society that sometimes still doubt their abilities as leaders (Parmaksız 2025).

More than just managing school affairs, a complete female leadership model presents a nurturing atmosphere full of tenderness like a mother. Instead of using punishment or coercion, they prefer a compassionate approach to nurture students' ethics, create a comfortable and supportive learning environment (Muafiah et al. 2024). At the same time, the ideal female leader today must also be responsive to the progress of the times. They are expected to be able to take advantage of today's equipment and the ease of communication facilities to spread the values of justice in the learning environment, although these steps to advance the quality of education are often still constrained by obstacles in the form of old rules that have not fully sided with women's leadership (Syamsiah et al. 2025).

## DISCUSSION

Based on existing findings, the ideal female leadership model prioritizes the path of deliberation, intellect, and a compassionate approach. This is in line with the picture of Queen Balqis' leadership in the Qur'an (Isenman and Sinclair 2025; Papadakou and Sternberg 2025; Tiwari 2025; Mahrif et al. 2025; Lanier 2025; Tobías 2025; Rosbrook 2025; Abbas and Rawabdeh 2022). This leadership pattern has a very strong religious foothold if we look at the content of the Qur'an in its entirety and comprehensively based on its theme. If so far the old understanding of the interpretation that is rigid and piecemeal without looking at the background of the descent of the verse often gives rise to views that corner women, the new understanding that prioritizes reciprocal relationships (reciprocity) actually proves the opposite (Zulpiana, Hamnah, and Maulana 2024; Mawarda and Masruhan 2025; Islamiyah, Mubin, and Sholeh 2024; Surya et al. 2025; Rosyidi, Amru, and Islami 2025). The term the main position in the Qur'an, such as God's representative on earth (*Caliph* in Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 30) and the holders of affairs (*Ulil Amri* in Q.S. An-Nisa: 59), does not at all point to a particular gender. The legitimate requirements of leadership are entirely focused on self-ability, honesty, and courage to uphold justice (Mahbuba and Rabeya 2023).

The strength of this religious foundation is manifested in the form of women's fighting power and their leadership style that brings real change in the field. Instead of leading with an iron fist, women have proven to be able to manage educational institutions neatly, empower all members, and create a supportive learning environment (Ancheta 2025; Santhi. 2025; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and Van

Engen 2003; Paustian-Underdahl et al. 2024; Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, and Woehr 2014; Mashele and Alagidede 2022; Jusuf, Narimawati, and Sarwono 2025; Basri et al. 2022; Muafiah et al. 2024). However, women's steps forward to take a leading role in these institutions steeped in religious values have not always gone smoothly. Often, the ideals of this change must clash with obstacles in the form of institutional standards and hereditary habits in society that are reluctant to give top positions to women (Mardhiyah et al. 2025; Lomotey 2025; Syamsiah et al. 2025).

It was at this point that the toughness of the female principal was tested. They are required to have the ingenuity to align the truth of religious teachings that actually uphold justice with the habits of the surrounding community who sometimes still doubt their abilities (Chen et al. 2024; Fiyul 2025; Kahardani et al. 2025; Koburtay, Abuhussein, and Sidani 2023; Koburtay, Syed, and Haloub 2020). Women leaders must be smart to carry themselves to maintain their authority as devout religious believers, but not give up on the environmental order that has not fully sided with their leadership (Parmaksız 2025). Thus, the success of women's leadership is not only measured by how well they manage schools, but by how resilient they prove that the teachings of Islam are always in line with justice for all, both men and women.

The leadership of female principals has a very strong religious foundation in the Qur'an, which emphasizes self-worth and justice regardless of gender. Through a leadership style that prioritizes deliberation and compassion, women have proven to be able to manage educational institutions neatly and create a supportive learning environment. Although their steps are often hindered by the rigid rules of institutions and customs, the resilience of women leaders in aligning just religious values with the challenges of the surrounding culture is clear evidence that leadership is a mandate for every human being who has integrity and capacity.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the leadership of female school principals has a very solid foundation in the Qur'an. The main benchmarks of a leader are ability, honesty, and courage to do justice, not their gender. Through deliberation and a compassionate approach, women have proven to be effective in bringing progress and creating a supportive learning environment at school. The toughest challenge for women's leadership does not come from religious prohibitions, but from the outdated habits of society and institutional rules that are still reluctant to accept women in top positions. Therefore, the presence of female school principals today carries a much bigger task than just regulating the course of education. They are proof of life who struggle with real work to show that the teachings of Islam truly glorify justice for all parties, while at the same time slowly tearing down the narrow views that have been limiting women's space for movement.

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