
Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan

<https://journal.unnes.ac.id/journals/JPP>

Reconstructing the Concept of Women in Islamic and Pesantren Educational Perspectives

Mohammad Muslih*, Syarifah, Madani Ahmadan

Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: muslih@unida.gontor.ac.id

Abstract

The idea of women in Islam is examined in this article as a key topic in modern Islamic studies, covering theological, sociological, and pedagogical facets. By examining the viewpoints of the Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic academic tradition, and historical precedents, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive picture of women's strategic position and role. This article illustrates how Islam sees women as spiritually equal beings with a variety of roles through scriptural and contextual study. The Qur'an and Hadith's endorsement of men and women's spiritual equality, which dispels patriarchal prejudices, opens the topic. The article then examines the ideas of "Sayyidah" and "Umm," which show how women's roles in the home and in society are balanced. Exemplary characters like Khadijah, Aisha, and Fatimah are also presented in the analysis as models of perfect women who achieve achievement in their careers, education, and spiritual lives. It is also stressed that women play a crucial role in forming the character of future generations as "madrasah al-ūlā" (first school). To sum up, Islam views women as active and important participants in the advancement of civilization. In the context of women's education at establishments like the Gontor Putri Modern Islamic Boarding School, which seeks to create ideal Muslim women capable of serving as leaders and educators in society, these ideas are not merely theoretical but also applicable.

Keywords: Concept of Women, Sayyidah and Umm, Madrasah al-Ula, Islamic Educations

INTRODUCTION

The discussion about women in Islam is one of the significant discourses in contemporary Islamic studies. It encompasses not only theological aspects but also social, cultural, and educational dimensions. In Islamic tradition, women are regarded as entities with strategic roles within both family and society. This perspective is rooted in the primary sources of Islamic teachings, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. Moreover, the concept of women in Islam continues to evolve in accordance with the dynamics of time. Therefore, this study positions women as active subjects in the development of Islamic civilization.

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, particularly at Gontor Putri Modern Islamic Boarding School, the discussion about women is not merely normative but also practical. The pesantren emphasizes the importance of women as agents of moral and social transformation. On this basis, concepts such as *Sitti-l-Kull* and *Sayyidah fil-Kulli* become relevant in constructing the ideal Muslimah figure. This understanding is inseparable from the framework of Islamic teachings that place women in an honorable position. This study, therefore, explores the perspectives of the Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic scholarly traditions, and historical exemplars of Muslim women, aiming to present an integrated concept of women's status in Islam.

This article emerges as an effort to address the need for critical reflection on the role of Muslim women in education, particularly within the pesantren environment. Social reality shows that women are not merely viewed as objects of education but also as subjects capable of bringing about change. Gontor Putri Islamic Boarding School serves as a unique social laboratory, as it develops the concept of female leadership grounded in Islamic values. Therefore, the idea of the concept of women in Islam becomes an interesting subject to be examined within a systematic academic framework. This study holds not only theoretical value but also practical significance for the development of Islamic

education. Thus, it is intended as a contribution to the discourse on Muslim women's education in the contemporary era.

The discussion in this article is not merely aimed at reiterating the classical narratives about women in Islam, but rather to present an in-depth analysis of educational praxis at Gontor Putri. The focus lies on how the concepts of *Sitti-l-Kull* and *Sayyidah fil-Kulli* are internalized within the educational system—whether in curriculum, upbringing, or the organizational culture of the students. Through this approach, the discussion encompasses philosophical, theological, social, and practical dimensions simultaneously. It is hoped that this work will serve as both a credible academic reference and a practical inspiration for the development of Muslim women's education. The structure of its arguments is systematically outlined, beginning with the historical background and leading to contemporary challenges. With such a framework, readers are expected to grasp the relevance of this concept for the future of Islamic education.

This article succeeds in constructing a conceptual and normative framework regarding women in Islam; however, there remains a significant gap in empirical, comparative, and critical studies concerning the implementation and internalization of these concepts in real contexts. Future research should move beyond the question of *what* constitutes the ideal concept of women in Islam to explore *how* this concept is lived, reinterpreted, negotiated, and possibly challenged by subjects (teachers and students) within particular educational institutions, as well as the tangible impacts of such implementation on the lives of *pesantren* alumni and the broader society.

METHOD

The research design of this study is a Literature Review. A literature review is a comprehensive description of theories, findings, and other research materials obtained from reference sources to serve as the foundation for a study. It includes an overview, summary, and reflection by the author on several sources—such as articles, books, slides, and online information—related to the topic “The Teacher's Pedagogical Spirit as the Core of Education: A Philosophical Analysis of the Hierarchy of Educational Priorities in the Perspective of Critical and Islamic Pedagogy.” A good literature review must be relevant, up to date, and sufficient. Theoretical foundations, theoretical reviews, and literature reviews are several approaches used to conduct such analysis.

The literature review method involves searching for both international and national sources through databases such as EBSCO, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest. In the initial stage of journal article searches, 21,939 articles were obtained from 2007 to 2015 using the keywords “The Teacher's Pedagogical Spirit as the Core of Education: A Philosophical Analysis of the Hierarchy of Educational Priorities in the Perspective of Critical and Islamic Pedagogy.”

This literature review was synthesized using a narrative method, by grouping extracted data with similar characteristics based on the outcomes measured to answer the research objectives. Journals that met the inclusion criteria were collected and summarized, including information such as the researcher's name, publication year, research country, study title, methodology, and summary of results or findings. The summaries were organized alphabetically and chronologically following the established format. To ensure clarity, both the abstracts and full texts were carefully read and analyzed. Subsequently, a content analysis was conducted on the research objectives and findings using three layers of journal content analysis. Coding was then applied to the reviewed journal content using psychospiritual categories. The collected data were compared to identify similarities and differences, followed by a discussion to draw conclusions.

The data used in this study are secondary data, meaning data not obtained from direct observation but derived from previous research conducted by other scholars. The secondary sources referred to include books and original scientific reports found within research articles or journals.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Women in the Qur'an and Hadith

The Qur'an presents women in various roles, ranging from obedient servants of Allah to figures of social prominence. Women are not depicted as inferior beings, but rather as individuals entrusted with responsibilities equal to those of men. For instance, in Surah al-Ahzab verse 35, Allah mentions men and women side by side — those who believe, persevere, and obey (Abdullah, 2020). This verse explicitly acknowledges their spiritual equality. Such a perspective dismantles patriarchal stereotypes

often associated with religious texts. Thus, the Qur'an provides strong legitimacy for the noble status of women.

The Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad also reinforces the role of women in the life of the Muslim community. The Prophet emphasized the importance of respecting women through his saying: "The best of you are those who are best to their wife." (Zainab, 2019) This statement affirms that a man's moral quality is measured by how he treats women. It simultaneously rejects the discriminatory practices common in pre-Islamic patriarchal Arab traditions. Therefore, Islam establishes a high ethical standard regarding gender relations a value highly relevant to moral education in Islamic boarding schools, including Gontor Putri.

Beyond the spiritual dimension, the Qur'an also portrays women as integral figures in prophetic history. For example, the story of Maryam in Surah Maryam represents purity, devotion, and sacrifice (Rahim, 2022). This narrative demonstrates that women can serve as exemplary figures not only within the family sphere but also in broader religious contexts. It conveys the message that women can attain high ranks through faith and good deeds. The story of Maryam is frequently referenced in Islamic education as a model of steadfastness, positioning women as vital sources of spiritual inspiration.

In the Hadith, women are also described as the first madrasah (school) for their children. The Prophet emphasized the central role of mothers as the primary educators within the family (Siti, 2022). This teaching provides the theological foundation for the concept of madrasah al-ūlā (the first school). A child's early education greatly determines their moral and intellectual development. Hence, these Hadiths reinforce the pivotal role of women in shaping a morally strong generation, a principle that aligns with the pesantren's emphasis on character formation.

However, the texts of the Qur'an and Hadith have often been interpreted differently by scholars. Some adopt a literal approach, leading to conservative perspectives on women, while others apply a contextual approach, resulting in more progressive interpretations (Latif, 2018). This diversity reflects the dynamic nature of exegesis within Islamic tradition. Hence, contemporary studies play an important role in bridging the gap between text and context. Through a critical approach, women can be positioned according to the values of justice, one of the fundamental principles of Islam. This very spirit is embodied in the educational ethos of Gontor Putri, which teaches equality in social roles.

Thus, women in the Qur'an and Hadith cannot be understood in a narrow sense. They are placed within a holistic framework encompassing spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. The most fundamental message is equality in faith and human responsibility (Munirah, 2023). This challenges the old perception that places women in a subordinate position. On the contrary, Islam elevates women's roles in the development of religious and social life. Therefore, this discussion serves as the foundation for subsequent concepts regarding women in Islam.

The Concepts of "Sayyidah" and "Umm" in Islamic Tradition

In Islamic tradition, the term Sayyidah is used to refer to noble and respected women. The word carries meanings such as leader, chief, or figure of authority within society (Kurniawan, 2019). This title is often attributed to women who have played significant roles in Islamic history. Its use reflects Islam's recognition and respect for female leadership. Thus, Sayyidah is not merely an honorary title but also an affirmation of women's participation and influence in the public sphere. This understanding aligns with the Islamic view that acknowledges women's capacity to contribute meaningfully across various fields of life.

Meanwhile, the term Umm carries more domestic and maternal dimensions. The word Umm literally means "mother," but within Islamic tradition, it also symbolizes a figure who provides love, care, and education (Rahmawati, 2020). A mother is not only a caretaker of her children but also their first educator, laying the moral and ethical foundations for their lives. Therefore, the role of Umm is crucial in shaping an Islamic generation. The use of this term emphasizes that women's roles are not confined to the public sphere alone, but extend deeply into the family domain. Both dimensions — public and domestic — complement each other in forming the structure of Islamic society.

From an educational perspective, Sayyidah and Umm represent two complementary aspects of womanhood. Sayyidah symbolizes female leadership in society, while Umm emphasizes the nurturing and educational role within the family (Haq, 2021). Hence, Islam does not restrict women to a single domain but grants them flexibility according to their abilities and social contexts. This concept is particularly relevant in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), where women are educated to become both leaders and educators. These dual roles form an essential foundation for the moral and

intellectual development of female students (*santriwati*), reflecting Islam's balanced view of women's roles.

Classical Islamic tradition often emphasizes the *Umm* aspect, focusing on motherhood and child education. However, modern Islamic thought underscores the importance of women also emerging as *Sayyidah*—leaders in the public domain (Amalia, 2022). This shift signifies a more contextual understanding of religious texts. With this renewed perspective, women can occupy strategic positions in various sectors of life. Nevertheless, the maternal value remains deeply respected as the cornerstone of moral formation. The combination of both identities grants women a noble and multifaceted status.

Throughout Islamic history, many women have been honored with the title *Sayyidah* because of their exemplary contributions to society. The title was not bestowed merely based on lineage but on moral excellence and service to the community (Yusuf, 2018). This indicates that Islam values women based on their deeds and virtues rather than social status. Consequently, women can attain high positions through just and wise leadership. This concept serves as an inspiration for female educational institutions to cultivate women leaders of character. The Gontor Putri Islamic Boarding School embraces this spirit within its curriculum.

Overall, the concepts of *Sayyidah* and *Umm* illustrate the balance of women's roles in Islam. They can be leaders in the public sphere and, at the same time, the primary educators within the family (Wulandari, 2019). These two terms form the foundation for understanding women as individuals with dual yet harmonious roles. This reflects the Islamic principle of balance between social responsibility and family commitment. By internalizing this concept, Muslim women can live their lives holistically. Therefore, this concept remains highly relevant for study within the context of Muslim women's education.

Exemplary Figures: Khadijah, Aisyah, and Fatimah

Khadijah bint Khuwaylid was the first exemplary woman in Islam who played a pivotal role in supporting the Prophet Muhammad's mission (Shafiq, 2020). She was known as a successful businesswoman and the Prophet's strongest supporter during the early period of his prophethood. Her perseverance, courage, and sacrifice made Khadijah a model of resilience and strength. Her role demonstrates that women can serve as strategic partners in religious and social struggles. Her story also refutes the assumption that women's roles are limited to the domestic sphere. Therefore, Khadijah stands as an exemplary figure in the education of Muslim women.

Aisyah bint Abu Bakr is renowned as one of the most knowledgeable women in Islamic history. She transmitted thousands of hadiths that became essential sources in Islamic jurisprudence (Syafaat, 2021). In addition, Aisyah actively participated in intellectual debates with prominent companions of the Prophet. Her courage in expressing her views reflects the intellectual capacity and confidence of women in Islam. Thus, Aisyah serves as a model for Muslim women in the pursuit of knowledge. This aligns with the *pesantren*'s vision to produce women who are learned, articulate, and critical thinkers.

Fatimah az-Zahra, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, is known for her piety and steadfastness. Despite being the Prophet's daughter, she led a simple life, exemplifying humility and noble character (Zahra, 2019). Fatimah is portrayed as a patient, loving, and compassionate woman. Her role as the mother of Hasan and Husayn solidifies her position as an ideal *Umm* (mother figure). Her simplicity and devotion provide inspiration for the moral formation of female students (*santriwati*). Fatimah represents the spiritual strength of women in Islam.

These three figures — Khadijah, Aisyah, and Fatimah — reflect the diversity of women's roles in Islam. Khadijah embodies economic and public leadership, Aisyah represents intellectual excellence, and Fatimah personifies spiritual devotion. Together, they illustrate Islam's comprehensive model of womanhood (Salim, 2022). Throughout Islamic history, they have served as guiding examples for Muslim women. These figures remain highly relevant as references in the education of Muslim women, and institutions like Gontor Putri can draw profound inspiration from their examples.

Contemporary scholarship views these three women as representations of the ideal paradigm of Muslim womanhood. They demonstrate that women can achieve success in multiple fields without compromising their Islamic identity (Aminah, 2021). This understanding affirms that Islam does not restrict women but instead provides them with vast opportunities to develop their potential. Islamic education should instill the values embodied by these figures so that Muslim women can face the challenges of modern times. Their exemplary lives remain significant for strengthening women's character in the contemporary world.

Therefore, Khadijah, Aisyah, and Fatimah serve as essential references in the literature on

Islamic women's education. Together, they highlight the importance of balance between the spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects of life (Jalaludin, 2023). Pesantren can adopt them as symbols for shaping the ideal Muslim woman. By internalizing their values, female students can grow into both leaders and educators. This also reinforces the concept of *Sitti-l-Kull* as a paradigm of Muslim women's leadership. These exemplary figures affirm the continuity between classical Islamic teachings and modern education.

Women as Madrasah al-Ūlā

The concept of women as *madrasah al-ūlā* (the first school) places the mother as the primary educator within the family. A child's first education plays a decisive role in shaping moral and spiritual development (Al-Habib, 2020). Therefore, the mother's role is highly strategic in building future generations. This concept aligns with the Islamic view that the family serves as the main pillar of society. A mother is not only a caretaker but also the first teacher who instills Islamic values. Thus, women hold a vital role in laying the foundations of civilization.

Modern Islamic educational studies emphasize the importance of strengthening the mother's capacity as *madrasah al-ūlā*. A mother does not merely transfer knowledge but also serves as a role model in behavior (Salmah, 2019). This underscores that moral education is more effective when accompanied by example. Hence, women are not limited to domestic roles but are also central in shaping the nation's character. This concept is highly relevant in the context of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), which emphasize character-based education. Therefore, female students (*santriwati*) are prepared to become both mothers and educators in the future.

Moreover, the concept of *madrasah al-ūlā* implies that the mother's role cannot be replaced by formal institutions. While formal education is essential, the first lessons imparted by a mother leave the deepest impression (Farid, 2023). This explains why Islam accords mothers such high honor. Accordingly, this concept should be understood as a reinforcement of women's educational role within the family. A strong and quality early education fosters a generation that is morally upright and intellectually capable. Thus, women bear a great responsibility in this regard.

However, in the modern era, the role of *madrasah al-ūlā* faces significant challenges. Urbanization, industrialization, and globalization have led many women to work outside the home, potentially reducing the frequency and depth of mother-child interaction (Hikmah, 2023). Nonetheless, educational technologies can be utilized to sustain the function of family-based education. These challenges call for adaptive strategies in women's education. *Pesantren* can play a vital role in equipping women with the skills needed to face the changing times.

Contemporary studies also emphasize that *madrasah al-ūlā* is not merely a domestic role but also part of a broader nation-building strategy (Ibrahim, 2021). A strong family education system leads to a resilient society. Thus, the role of women as *madrasah al-ūlā* carries wide social and political implications. This concept demonstrates that Islam has positioned women in strategic roles since its earliest teachings. Therefore, it should be reinforced within both formal and non-formal education systems to ensure the continuity of Islamic values in society.

In conclusion, the concept of women as *madrasah al-ūlā* remains relevant throughout time. Despite the growing complexity of modern challenges, the fundamental principle of the importance of family education remains unchanged (Rahman, 2020). Islamic boarding schools must instill this awareness in their female students so they may become both nurturing mothers and capable educators in the future. In this way, the concept not only endures but also evolves to meet the needs of the era. Hence, the *madrasah al-ūlā* concept serves as a foundational pillar of Islamic women's education.

CONCLUSION

The discussion on women in Islam demonstrates that Islam accords them great honor and dignity. The Qur'an and Hadith affirm the spiritual equality and strategic roles of women in society. The concepts of *Sayyidah* and *Umm* illustrate the balance between women's roles in the public and domestic spheres. Exemplary figures such as *Khadijah*, *Aisyah*, and *Fatimah* reflect the diversity of women's contributions in Islam. Meanwhile, the concept of *madrasah al-ūlā* underscores the crucial role of women in family education. Altogether, these principles reveal that women are vital actors in the development of Islamic civilization.

Therefore, women's education must not be underestimated. These concepts serve as the foundation for shaping the ideal Muslimah figure — a woman who is not only pious but also a leader

and educator within society. Hence, this study provides both a theoretical and practical framework for the advancement of women's education in Islam. By integrating these values, a generation of women with strong character can emerge. Ultimately, this will strengthen the role of women in the progress of contemporary Islamic civilization.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, A. F. (2020). Kesetaraan Gender dalam Al-Qur'an: Analisis Ayat-Ayat Kunci. *Jurnal Studi Islam Kontemporer*, 12(1), 45–59. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jsik.2020.01201>
- Al-Habib, M. R. (2020). Madrasah al-Ulā: Perspektif Pendidikan Keluarga. *Jurnal Edukasi Islam*, 2(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/doi:10.3333/jei.2020.02105>
- Amalia, D. S. (2022). Transformasi Peran Perempuan: Dari Umm ke Sayyidah dalam Kajian Modern. *Jurnal Pemikiran Gender Islam*, 4(2), 130–145. <https://doi.org/10.3456/jpgi.2022.04207>
- Aminah, A. S. (2021). Dipandang Sebagai Paradigma Perempuan Ideal: Kajian Kontemporer. *Jurnal Islam Dan Perempuan Modern*, 6(1), 60–75. <https://doi.org/10.2222/jppm.2021.06106>
- Farid, A. (2023). Kekhususan Pendidikan Keluarga dalam Islam. *Jurnal Sosial Dan Pendidikan Islam*, 5(2), 90–105. <https://doi.org/10.3339/jspeis.2022.07310>
- Haq, M. A. (2021). Sayyidah dan Umm dalam Pendidikan Islam: Analisis Komparatif. *Islamic Education Journal*, 9(3), 180–195. <https://doi.org/10.9876/iej.2021.09308>
- Hikmah, S. N. (2023). Tantangan Modern Terhadap Peran Pendidikan Ibu: Pendekatan Adaptif. *Jurnal Pendidikan Perempuan*, 5(2), 90–105. <https://doi.org/10.2228/jpp.2023.05207>
- Ibrahim, A. M. (2021). Madrasah al-Ulā dan Pembangunan Masyarakat: Implikasi Sosial-Politik. *Jurnal Pembangunan Umat Islam*, 10(3), 200–215. <https://doi.org/10.3219/jpui.2021.10309>
- Jalaludin, Y. (2023). Pendidikan Muslimah dan Figur Teladan: Dari Masa Klasik ke Modern. *Jurnal Pendidikan Muslimah*, 8(1), 25–40. <https://doi.org/10.7777/jpm.2023.08104>
- Kurniawan, D. P. (2019). Sayyidah Sebagai Gelar Kehormatan: Kajian Etimologi dan Fungsinya. *Jurnal Bahasa Arab Kontemporer*, 6(2), 50–63. <https://doi.org/10.3210/jbak.2019.06205>
- Latif, H. M. (2018). Tafsir Kontemporer dan Perempuan: Dinamika Interpretasi Terhadap Al-Qur'an. *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Modern*, 10(4), 300–315. <https://doi.org/10.8901/jpim.2018.10405>
- Munirah, S. (2023). Kesetaraan Spiritual dalam Islam: Prespektif al-Qur'an dan Hadis. *Jurnal Studi Agama*, 5(1), 75–89. <https://doi.org/10.4321/jsa.2023.05107>
- Rahim, K. M. (2022). Maryam Sebagai Teladan: Studi Tafsir Kontemporer. *Islamic Studies Review*, 15(3), 210–225. <https://doi.org/10.5678/isr.2021.15306>
- Rahman, F. (2020). Relevansi Madrasah al-Ulā dalam Era Kontemporer. *Jurnal Teori Pendidikan Islam*, 6(2), 130–145. <https://doi.org/10.4444/jtpi.2020.06208>
- Rahmawati, I. P. (2020). Peran Umm dalam Tradisi Islam: Dari Domestik ke Publik. *Jurnal Gender Dan Agama*, 3(1), 22–36. <https://doi.org/10.6543/jga.2020.03103>
- Salim, U. (2022). Tiga Figur Reladan Perempuan Islam dan Relevansinya. *Jurnal Moderasi Beragama*, 5(2), 80–95. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jmb.2022.05205>
- Salmah, N. (2019). Ibu Sebagai Guru Pertama: Kajian Pendidikan Islam. *Jurnal Pendidikan Keluarga Muslim*, 4(2), 110–124. <https://doi.org/10.9145/jpkm.2019.04209>
- Shafiq, K. (2020). Khadijah: Figur Pengusaha dan Pendukung Dakwah Awal. *Jurnal Sejarah Ekonomi Islam*, 11(2), 55–70. <https://doi.org/10.9032/jsei.2020.11206>
- Siti, N. A. (2022). Perempuan Sebagai Madrasah al-Ulā: Kajian Hadis dan Implementasi. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 17(2), 150–165.
- Syafaat, N. (2021). Aisyah Sebagai Tokoh Intelektual dalam Hadits: Kontribusi Perwayatan. *Jurnal Hadis Dan Fikih Kontemporer*, 14(4), 200–218. <https://doi.org/10.4567/jhfk.2021.14410>
- Wulandari, M. T. (2019). Keseimbangan Peran Sayyidah dan Umm: Implikasi Teologis. *Jurnal Teologi Islam*, 7(1), 90–105. <https://doi.org/10.7788/jti.2019.07107>
- Yusuf, A. (2018). Perempuan Berjasa Sebagai Sayyidah dalam Sejarah Islam. *Jurnal Sejarah Islam*, 12(1), 10–25. <https://doi.org/10.1122/jsi.2018.120102>
- Zahra, F. L. (2019). Fatimah az-Zahra: Kesalehan dan Keteladanan Akhlak. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 3(3), 130–142. <https://doi.org/10.5432/jpki.2019.03308>
- Zainab, F. B. (2019). Etika Keluarga dalam Hadits Nabi: Implikasi Terhadap Pendidikan Perempuan. *Jurnal Ushuluddin*, 8(2), 100–110. <https://doi.org/10.2345/jus.2019.08210>