



Empowering Minority Voices: Female Leadership Dynamics in Islamic Philanthropy Institution and Religious Outreach Movement

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ABSTRACT

Women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions continues to face various structural and cultural challenges, despite having great potential for social transformation. These challenges include limited representation in leadership positions, cultural barriers, and complexities in aligning traditional and modern management approaches. This study analyzes the dynamics of women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions, focusing on role transformation, adaptation strategies, and the impact of dual roles as institutional leaders and socio-religious activists. This qualitative research employs a single case study design at BAZNAS Sleman Regency, using in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis during July 2024. Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach with method triangulation to ensure findings' credibility. Women's leadership demonstrated effectiveness in improving institutional performance, evidenced by a 16.7% increase in zakat collection from 9.6 Billion to 11.2 Billion within a year. The integrative leadership model combining institutional roles and socio-religious activism proved effective in the context of Islamic philanthropy. The success of women's leadership in Islamic philanthropy depends on the ability to integrate traditional values with modern management and develop adaptation strategies suitable to local socio-cultural contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of women's leadership in religious organizations and Islamic philanthropy has become an increasingly prominent phenomenon in recent decades (Halliday et al., 2021; Hodges, 2017; Peus et al., 2015; Shaya & Abu Khait, 2017). This paradigm shift marks an important transformation in contemporary Muslim society, particularly in Indonesia as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world (Jones, 2006; Nurlatifah et al., 2022). Nevertheless, women's representation in leadership positions within Islamic philanthropic institutions still faces significant structural and cultural challenges.

Women's involvement in leadership positions in Indonesia remains limited, despite an increase in women's representation in legislative institutions. The Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA), I Gusti Ayu Bintang Darmawati, highlighted that although the percentage of women's representation in parliament has increased in each period, the affirmative quota of 30 percent mandated by law has not been fulfilled. In executive positions, only 24 regions or approximately 4% of the total regions in Indonesia are led by women. A similar situation occurs at the village level, where only 5% of villages are led by female village heads (Biro Hukum dan Humas KPPPA, 2023).

The Minister of PPPA emphasized the importance of women's leadership, which provides a different nuance compared to male leadership. Women leaders tend to be more empathetic, detail-oriented, and possess different perspectives in handling problems. Despite the fact that many women have competencies equal to or even exceeding those of men, they often have limited opportunities to occupy leadership positions (Biro Hukum dan Humas KPPPA, 2023)..

In the context of Islamic philanthropic institutions, the challenges faced by women leaders become more complex. Haneen et al. (2024), Lissitsa et al. (2023) and Tseer et al. (2025) identified structural and cultural barriers that not only stem from gender-biased interpretations of religious texts but also from strong social expectations regarding women's traditional roles. Socio-cultural factors and religious interpretations often become additional obstacles for women to achieve leadership positions in Islamic philanthropic institutions.

The limited involvement of women in leadership roles in Indonesia, particularly in Islamic philanthropic institutions, highlights the need for concerted efforts to address the structural and cultural barriers that hinder women's advancement. Promoting gender-sensitive interpretations of religious texts, challenging traditional gender roles, and creating an enabling environment for women's leadership are crucial steps towards achieving gender equality and empowering women to fulfill their potential as leaders in various spheres of society.

Previous research has shown that women's leadership has unique characteristics and potential to drive positive organizational change. Pattni et al., (2017), Raišienė et al. (2021), Takano (2005) and Zhou (2023) underline that women's leadership style tends to be more collaborative and inclusive. This is reinforced by Bakar (2024) findings showing that women leaders in Islamic philanthropic institutions have a

more holistic approach in managing community empowerment programs. Meanwhile, Ben Jaafar & Bodolica (2024) and Marcia (2005) found that the presence of women leaders in Islamic philanthropic organizations contributes to increased effectiveness of programs targeted at women's and family empowerment.

Although these studies have provided valuable insights, significant gaps remain in our understanding of the specific dynamics of women's leadership in the context of Islamic philanthropic institutions in Indonesia. Bowles (2012), Chroni et al. (2021), and Lawless et al. (2022) highlights that the majority of existing research still focuses on structural barriers, while aspects of agency and adaptation strategies of women leaders have not been adequately explored. This gap becomes increasingly relevant given the strategic role of Islamic philanthropic institutions in Indonesia's socio-economic development.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach that combines the analysis of women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions with their role as agents of social change through religious activism. Ezzani et al. (2023) and Jamilatun et al. (2024) emphasizes the importance of understanding the intersection between formal and informal leadership roles played by women in socio-religious contexts. This research fills this gap by exploring how women leaders at BAZNAS Sleman Regency not only perform administrative roles but also act as agents of social transformation through religious outreach activities.

The purpose of this research is to analyze in depth the dynamics of women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions, with a specific focus on adaptation and negotiation strategies they use in facing structural and cultural challenges. Hasan Emon & Nisa Nipa (2024) and Hassan & Salma Binti Abdul Latiff (2009) argues that better understanding of these strategies is important for developing more effective approaches in supporting women's leadership in the Islamic philanthropy sector.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to developing a more nuanced understanding of women leaders' dual roles in the context of Islamic philanthropy and religious activism. The research findings are expected to provide valuable insights for the development of policies and programs that support women's leadership in religious and philanthropic organizations. Furthermore, this research also contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection between gender, religion, and leadership in contemporary Muslim society.

Using the case study of BAZNAS Sleman Regency, this research not only provides theoretical understanding about the dynamics of women's leadership in a specific context but also provides practical insights about strategies that can be adopted to increase participation and effectiveness of women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions. This becomes increasingly important given the strategic role of Islamic philanthropic institutions in Indonesia's social and economic development.

2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with a single case study design focusing on women's leadership at BAZNAS Sleman Regency (Elkatawneh, 2016). The qualitative approach was chosen for its ability to reveal in-depth understanding of

research subjects' experiences and perspectives within specific socio-cultural contexts. A single case study was used to enable deep exploration of women's leadership dynamics in Islamic philanthropic institutions and their role as religious outreach activists.

The theoretical framework of this research is built upon several complementary theories. Feminist Leadership Theory is used to analyze specific characteristics of women's leadership and its influence on organizations. Gender Development Theory provides an analytical lens to understand women's roles in community and organizational development. Meanwhile, Power Theory helps unravel power dynamics affecting women's positions as leaders. Gender Identity Theory is used to analyze how gender identity shapes women leaders' behavior and decision-making. Finally, Transformational Leadership Theory helps understand how women's leadership can become a catalyst for change in organizations and society.

Data collection was conducted through three main methods: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation study (Yaminah et al., 2023). Observation was carried out through direct observation of the main research subject, Khayatun Listingatil Masruroh as the leader of BAZNAS Sleman. This observation focused on leadership style, interactions with staff and stakeholders, and the implementation of her dual role as institutional leader and religious outreach activist. The observation period was conducted during July 2024, allowing researchers to observe leadership dynamics in various contexts and situations.

In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach, allowing flexibility in exploring themes that emerged during interviews while maintaining focus on research objectives. The main interview was conducted with Khayatun Listingatil Masruroh, focusing on her experience as a woman leader in an Islamic philanthropic institution, challenges faced, adaptation strategies developed, and her role as a religious outreach activist. Interviews were conducted in multiple sessions to allow deep exploration of various aspects of her leadership.

Documentation study included analysis of organizational documents, performance reports, and materials related to religious outreach programs. BAZNAS Sleman Regency's performance data showed significant increase in zakat collection from 9.6 Billion in 2022 to 11.2 Billion in 2023, providing concrete evidence about the effectiveness of women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions.

Data analysis was conducted iteratively using a thematic analysis approach. This process involved coding data to identify main themes emerging from observations, interviews, and documentation. These themes were then organized into broader categories to understand patterns and relationships between themes. To ensure findings' credibility, this research used method triangulation by comparing data from various sources and data collection methods.

Ethical considerations became a primary concern in this research, especially given the sensitivity of gender and leadership themes in religious contexts. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained according to agreements with participants. Researchers also considered their

positionality as researchers and its potential impact on the research process and data interpretation.

The limitation of this research lies in its focus on a single case study, which although allowing for in-depth analysis, may limit findings' generalization. However, the richness of data and in-depth analysis generated provides valuable insights about women's leadership dynamics in the specific context of Islamic philanthropic institutions in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transformation of Roles and Adaptation of Women's Leadership in BAZNAS

The leadership transformation at BAZNAS Sleman Regency marks a significant paradigm shift in Islamic philanthropic institution governance. When Khayatun Listingatil Masruroh took the leadership position in October 2022, this transition not only represented structural change but also reflected evolution in understanding leadership within Islamic philanthropic institutions' context. Hughes & Siddiqui (2024), Koehrsen (2021) and Raja & Riaz (2024) identifies that leadership transition in Islamic philanthropic institutions often becomes a critical momentum determining the organization's subsequent development direction.

In her adaptation process, Masruroh developed a unique leadership style by integrating traditional feminine values with modern management principles. This approach aligns with Baroudi (2022) and Werbner (2018) findings showing that women leaders in Islamic philanthropic institutions tend to adopt transformational leadership styles combining empathy with professionalism. This is evident in how Masruroh manages BAZNAS by prioritizing open communication and collaborative approaches while maintaining high professional standards.

The effectiveness of this leadership approach is proven by significant improvements in institutional performance. Data shows an increase in zakat collection from 9.6 Billion in 2022 to 11.2 Billion in 2023. Manongsong & Ghosh (2021) Shanafelt & Noseworthy (2017) and Subramanian et al. (2024) affirms that such performance improvements are often linked to women leaders' ability to build trust and optimize organizational resource potential. Masruroh achieved this through implementing effective communication strategies and more transparent management systems.

A key aspect of Masruroh's leadership transformation is her development of inclusive communication strategies. Dirie et al. (2024), Sheikhi et al. (2021) and Tagorda & Magno (2023) notes that women leaders in Islamic philanthropic institutions often face challenges in bridging communication gaps between various stakeholders. In this context, Masruroh developed a multi-level approach enabling effective communication with muzaki, mustahik, and internal staff. This strategy involves using various communication platforms and adapting communication styles according to different audience characteristics.

In decision-making, Masruroh implements a collaborative approach involving various parties in the deliberation process. Abu-Nimer (2000) and Dell'Aguzzo & Sigillò (2017) underlines the importance of this approach in Islamic philanthropic institutions' context, where leadership legitimacy often depends on consensus-

building ability. Through this approach, Masruroh not only succeeded in building strong internal support but also improved decision quality through consideration of various perspectives.

Interestingly notable is how Masruroh successfully integrated Islamic values with modern management practices in her leadership. Shu et al. (2022) suggests that such synthesis is key to women's leadership success in Islamic philanthropic institutions. Masruroh demonstrated this through implementing transparency and accountability principles aligned with Islamic values while adopting contemporary management practices in program and resource management.

Masruroh's leadership adaptation is also reflected in her approach to staff capacity development. Through structured training and mentoring programs, she successfully built a more competent and confident team. This approach not only improved institutional operational effectiveness but also created a more inclusive work environment supporting professional development for all team members.

The transformation brought by Masruroh's leadership also impacted society's perception of women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions. Her success in improving BAZNAS performance counters negative stereotypes about women's leadership capacity and paves the way for more women to take similar leadership roles in the future.

Through this combination of strategic adaptations, Masruroh not only successfully overcame leadership transition challenges but also brought positive renewal in BAZNAS Sleman Regency's governance. Her success offers a leadership model that can become a reference for women's leadership development in Islamic philanthropic institutions in Indonesia.

Negotiation Strategies in Addressing Structural and Cultural Barriers

The challenges faced by women leaders in Islamic philanthropic institutions are not merely technical-managerial but also encompass complex structural and cultural barriers. In BAZNAS Sleman Regency's context, Khayatun Listingatil Masruroh developed a series of effective negotiation strategies to overcome these barriers. Riaz et al. (2017) and Sarumi et al. (2019) identifies that structural barriers in Islamic philanthropic institutions are often rooted in organizational systems and practices long dominated by masculine perspectives.

One of the main structural barriers faced was the deprioritization of issues raised by women leaders. Masruroh encountered situations where problems she identified were often considered "minor issues" and received inadequate attention. In addressing this situation, she developed what Baba et al. (2021) and Patriotta et al. (2011) terms "progressive legitimacy" - building credibility gradually through concrete and measurable achievements. This strategy proved effective when her success in increasing zakat collection provided stronger legitimacy for her ideas and initiatives.

In addressing cultural challenges, particularly persistent gender stereotypes, Masruroh adopted what Asai & Olsno (2004) and Kumpfer et al. (2002) identifies as a "culturally-sensitive adaptation" approach. She did not frontally oppose existing

cultural values but used a more subtle approach by demonstrating how women's leadership can strengthen, rather than threaten, positive values in society. For example, she successfully demonstrated how gender sensitivity in BAZNAS programs actually enhanced program effectiveness in achieving social and religious objectives.

Network development and strategic alliances became key components in Masruroh's negotiation strategy. Bernardo & May (1981), King et al. (2004) and Malach-Pines et al. (2009) emphasizes the importance of building cross-gender and cross-generational coalitions in facing resistance to women's leadership. Masruroh actively built relationships with various stakeholders, including religious figures, community leaders, and social activists. This network not only provided political support but also strengthened her leadership legitimacy in society's eyes.

In overcoming internal resistance, Masruroh developed what Kalsbeek & Zucker, (2013) calls a "reframing strategy." She successfully reframed women's leadership issues not as gender conflicts but as efforts to optimize talent and competence for institutional advancement. This approach proved effective in minimizing resistance and building support from various parties within the organization.

Notably interesting is how Masruroh used her dual role as BAZNAS leader and religious counselor to strengthen her negotiation position. Cole (2008), Weldon (2006) and Yep & Mutua (2016) notes that such role intersectionality can become a source of strength in structural and cultural negotiations. Masruroh utilized the religious counseling platform to discuss gender and leadership issues from a religious perspective while demonstrating her leadership competence through BAZNAS performance.

In facing systemic challenges, Masruroh developed what Koreh et al. (2019) identifies as "gradual institutional transformation." Rather than implementing radical changes, she chose to introduce changes gradually through a series of well-planned policies and programs. This approach enabled organizational transformation without generating counterproductive resistance.

Masruroh's negotiation strategy also included active efforts in building leadership capacity of other women in the organization. This aligns with what Candelarie (2023) terms "inclusive leadership regeneration strategy." By preparing the next generation of women leaders, Masruroh not only strengthened her current negotiation position but also built foundations for sustainable women's leadership in the future.

The success of Masruroh's negotiation strategies is reflected not only in organizational performance achievements but also in changes in stakeholder perceptions and attitudes toward women's leadership. This experience offers valuable lessons about how women leaders can effectively overcome structural and cultural barriers in Islamic philanthropic institutions' context while maintaining their leadership integrity and effectiveness.

Impact of Dual Roles: Synergy of Institutional Leadership and Socio-Religious Activism

In-depth analysis of Khayatun Listingatil Masruroh's dual role as BAZNAS leader and religious counselor reveals unique dynamics that enrich her leadership effectiveness. This dual role creates synergy strengthening her position both as an institutional leader and as an agent of social change. Altinay et al. (2016) and Surya et al. (2021) highlights that such role integration can create multiplier effects in community empowerment contexts.

As BAZNAS leader, Masruroh integrates religious counselor perspectives in managing philanthropy programs. This approach enables BAZNAS to develop programs more responsive to community needs, particularly women's needs. Maier et al. (2004) and Tyndale (2017) notes that deep understanding of socio-religious dynamics obtained through counseling activities gives philanthropic institution leaders advantages in designing and implementing effective empowerment programs.

Masruroh's socio-religious activism as a religious counselor strengthens her legitimacy as BAZNAS leader. Usman et al. (2022) identifies that credibility in religious matters often becomes a key factor in building community trust toward Islamic philanthropic institution leaders. Through her role as religious counselor, Masruroh successfully built extensive social networks and community trust strengthening her position as BAZNAS leader.

In balancing these dual roles, Masruroh developed effective time and energy management strategies. Gallivan (2001) emphasizes the importance of balance in performing dual roles to avoid burnout and ensure effectiveness in both areas. Masruroh achieved this by strategically integrating both roles, for example using religious counseling forums to socialize BAZNAS programs and vice versa.

The impact of these dual roles on community acceptance is highly significant. Johnson et al. (2006) observes that combining formal and informal leadership roles can strengthen a woman leader's social legitimacy. In Masruroh's case, her role as religious counselor helped overcome cultural resistance to women's leadership by demonstrating her competence in religious matters.

Contribution to women's empowerment becomes one of the most tangible impacts of this dual role synergy. Jacobs & Ramanathan (2020) and Saaida (2023) notes that leadership models integrating institutional roles and social activism can become effective catalysts for social change. Through BAZNAS programs and counseling activities, Masruroh successfully created new spaces for women's participation and empowerment in society.

Interestingly notable is how these dual roles contribute to developing a more inclusive leadership model. Programs developed under Masruroh's leadership show high sensitivity to various groups' needs in society, including women, children, and other vulnerable groups. This aligns with what Ben Jaafar & Bodolica, (2024) identifies as characteristics of transformative leadership in Islamic philanthropy contexts.

These dual roles also enable Masruroh to build bridges between formal institutions and informal networks in society. Through counseling activities, she can identify community needs and potential that might be missed in formal institutional approaches. This information is then used to develop more targeted and sustainable BAZNAS programs.

Weaving the Common Thread: Transformation, Adaptation, and Impact of Women's Leadership in Islamic Philanthropy

In an evolving leadership landscape, Khayatun Listingatil Masruroh's story at BAZNAS Sleman Regency becomes a mirror reflecting the complexity and dynamics of women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions. Jacobs & Ramanathan (2020) affirms that to comprehend this phenomenon holistically, we need to see how aspects of role transformation, adaptation strategies, and dual role impacts are woven into one robust and meaningful fabric.

Like a remarkable metamorphosis, Masruroh's leadership transformation has proven that feminine values can harmoniously synergize with modern management principles. The surge in zakat collection from 9.6 Billion to 11.2 Billion in a year is not merely numbers - it is tangible evidence that women's leadership can bring significant change when given space to develop.

In facing structural and cultural challenges, Masruroh demonstrated the astuteness of a leader who understands the importance of context. Kumpfer et al. (2002) highlights how her "culturally-sensitive" approach successfully transformed perceptions about women's leadership from a threat into a strengthening force for community values. This is an art of adaptation requiring not only intelligence but also high social intuition and sensitivity.

Masruroh's leadership uniqueness becomes more apparent in her dual role as BAZNAS leader and religious counselor. The synergy of these roles creates stronger resonance in society. Imagine an orchestra where the conductor not only leads performances but also teaches music - this illustrates how Masruroh harmonizes her institutional role and socio-religious activism.

The success of Masruroh's integrative leadership model has paved the way for new narratives about women's leadership in Islamic contexts. This is not merely about leading an institution but about transforming paradigms and opening doors for the next generation of women leaders. Interestingly, these three aspects of leadership – transformation, adaptation, and dual roles – work together in a dynamic and mutually reinforcing way. This synergy forms a positive cycle, where each element strengthens the others, leading to a resilient and sustainable leadership model.

Interview data reveals that Masruroh's success key lies in her ability to combine various leadership dimensions. Like an artist skilled at mixing colors, she uses her perspective as a religious counselor to enrich philanthropy programs, while her legitimacy as BAZNAS leader adds weight to her dakwah role. Egel & Fry (2017) calls this a "holistic leadership model" - an approach integrating head, heart, and hands in leadership.

These findings carry important implications for the future of women's leadership in Islamic philanthropy. Chandler (2008) suggests that this integrative leadership model can become a blueprint for developing the next generation of women leaders. More than just inspiration, this is tangible evidence that women's leadership can bring sustainable positive change in complex socio-religious contexts.

The weaving of transformation, adaptation strategies, and dual role impacts in Masruroh's leadership demonstrates the potential of women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions. Her experience offers valuable lessons about how women leaders can effectively navigate complex challenges while maintaining authenticity and creating meaningful social impact.

This research contributes to broader discussions about gender, leadership, and social change in Islamic contexts. The findings suggest that successful women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions requires not only technical competence but also cultural intelligence and the ability to integrate various roles effectively.

4. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions, particularly at BAZNAS Sleman Regency, has created an effective and transformative leadership model. Through in-depth analysis of Khayatun Listingatil Masruroh's leadership, this research reveals three key aspects of success: transformation of leadership roles integrating feminine values with modern management, culturally-sensitive adaptation strategies in facing structural and cultural challenges, and positive impact of dual roles as institutional leader and socio-religious activist.

The significant increase in zakat collection from 9.6 Billion to 11.2 Billion within a year proves this leadership model's effectiveness. This success is not limited to financial achievements but also includes transformation of society's perception toward women's leadership and development of more inclusive empowerment programs.

This research contributes to leadership theory development in Islamic philanthropy contexts and provides a practical model for future women's leadership development. These findings affirm the importance of providing space and support for women's leadership in Islamic philanthropic institutions while considering existing socio-cultural and religious contexts.

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