

Women's Empowerment amid the Challenges and Opportunities of Gender Equality in the Digital Era from an Islamic Perspective

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Abstract	This research is motivated by the persistent underrepresentation of women in organizational leadership, stemming from traditional gender bias and digital literacy challenges. The main objective of the activity is to deconstruct the understanding of women's social roles and improve the practical organizational skills of female cadres. The method applied is participatory action research (PAR), implemented through educational interventions, focus group discussions, and tactical simulations based on behavioral modeling (Neuro-Linguistic Programming/NLP). The main activity focuses on reconstructing the understanding of humanity's natural values within inclusive Islam and honing digital communication skills. The impact of this activity has proven significant in increasing critical awareness, restoring self-confidence, and breaking down the internal psychological barriers (inner glass ceiling) that prevent cadres from taking on strategic roles in the public sphere. The research concludes that integrating inclusive theological understanding with tactical digital skills training is a highly effective and precise social engineering instrument for addressing the root causes of gender inequality.	
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1. INTRODUCTION

Technological developments in the digital era have brought about significant changes in social structures and modern organizational dynamics, simultaneously opening up new opportunities and challenges for gender equality. On the one hand, the digital space provides a broad platform for anyone to participate in decision-making. However, on the other hand, the unequal representation of women in strategic leadership positions remains a reality that has not been fully addressed. This inequality often stems from a lack of in-depth understanding of the differences between biological sex (inherited) and social roles constructed by society (gender). Within organizations, traditional gender bias and a lack of capacity building often place women at a disadvantage. To address these challenges, a comprehensive approach is needed to rationalize the urgency of equality without negating spiritual values, religious faith, and readiness to master digital literacy.



The justification for the urgency of addressing this issue is based on the persistence of traditional thinking that limits women's roles solely to the domestic sphere, as well as the emergence of the gender pay gap and unconscious bias in group work environments. Various alternative solutions previously proposed tended to address only formal-structural aspects or normative regulations at the top level without providing robust grassroots education. As a more tactical solution that addresses ideological-spiritual aspects, the integration of an inclusive Islamic perspective with digital organizational literacy was adopted to build women's critical awareness of their rights and obligations.

The fundamental problems currently faced include organizational members' limited understanding of the boundaries between absolute biological nature and dynamic gender social roles, as well as the limited availability of leadership training platforms that integrate religious values with the demands of the digital world. Based on these issues, the primary objective of this study is to analyze the barriers hindering women's active participation and formulate strategies to improve their organizational skills, such as leadership, effective communication, and teamwork in the digital ecosystem. Furthermore, the operational definition of gender empowerment in this context narratively refers to the process of increasing the emancipatory capabilities of women organizational members so they can identify opportunities, manage digital challenges, and assume strategic roles in decision-making without violating their natural boundaries. The usefulness of this study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the literature on administration and gender studies based on Islamic sociology, as well as provide practical benefits in the form of implementation guidelines in organizing sustainable women's leadership training models for educational institutions and community organizations.

2. METHOD

This study was designed using a qualitative descriptive approach based on participatory action research (PAR) integrated into a community service program. Qualitative descriptive methods were used to map, describe, and evaluate organizational capacity building implementation techniques and address key challenges of gender equality from an Islamic perspective in the digital age. The entire series of activities was designed to identify role bias and leadership barriers, while simultaneously providing tactical solutions based on interactive education for the target group.

The data collection instruments for this action study utilized non-test measurement tools independently developed by the community service team. These instruments included a participant observation sheet to monitor participant engagement during a simulated focus group discussion guide based on gender case studies, and a post-training feedback questionnaire that measured indicators of increased cognitive understanding and organizational motivation.

The data analysis technique used was descriptive narrative-qualitative analysis. Data obtained from the feedback questionnaire, observational field notes, and group dynamics during the case study will be reduced, grouped based on main themes (such as understanding nature vs. gender, digital leadership readiness, and strengthening Islamic values), and then presented narratively without using pointers. Conclusions are drawn by comparing the condition of the subjects' understanding and organizational skills before and after the intervention, to prove the effectiveness of the combined method applied in solving the main problems faced by the organization.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis, data interpretation, and key findings from the participatory action research program are presented sequentially and narratively, aligning with the educational intervention method's workflow. The first section presents national-scale secondary data to strengthen the interpretation, followed by the results of the cadres' cognitive-practical achievements before and after the intervention.

To understand the macro picture of gender disparities at the policy-making level, which underlie the issues facing the target group, the following secondary data is presented in the form of indices and women's representation in government and corporate governance:

Table 1. Profile of Female Leadership Representation and Gender Gap Index

No	Policy Parameters / Indicators	Description of Reality Achievement	Reference Data Source
1	Global Gender Gap Index	Ranked 85th out of 149 countries	World Economic Forum
2	Representation of Female Heads of State Globally	Only 11% (17 out of 149 countries)	Global Gender Analysis
3	Representation of Female Leaders in Indonesian Ministries	Only 23% (8 out of 34 ministries)	National Sector Reports
4	Representation of Women in Chief Executive Positions (CEOs)	Only 5% (25 out of 500 companies)	Global Corporate Data
5	Rate of Early Marriage of Girls in Indonesia (<18 Years)	Reaching 15% of the total child population	UNICEF (March 2018)
6	Gender Pay Gap	On average, women are paid 20% less	IWPR

Through the first step, namely the oral pre-test in the opening phase, fundamental evidence emerged that the majority of research subjects (cadres) still experienced cognitive conceptual confusion. They equated social roles (gender) with biological nature. This ambivalence directly impacted their low self-confidence in assuming strategic organizational positions due to an internal bias that leadership roles in the public sphere are the absolute domain of men due to biological aggressiveness.

Next, in the core intervention step, through theoretical lectures, a reconstruction of understanding of Islamic values and digital organizational literacy was conducted. Emphasis was placed on distinguishing the boundaries between women's inherent biological reproductive nature (such as

menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding) and their spiritual nature, which is oriented toward the purity of goodness, justice, and the pursuit of truth. A key finding at this stage demonstrated a surge in cognitive understanding: cadres began to realize that the tendency to seek justice and worship is a spiritual right (*fitrah*), while social roles in the digital organizational space can dynamically change with the demands of the times.

During the focus group discussions and qualitative case study analysis, three main barriers to women's active participation in organizations were identified:

1. **Traditional Gender Stereotypes:** Strong cultural frameworks that limit women's movement to the domestic sphere.
2. **Structural Discrimination:** Limited access to organizational resources and masculine dominance in crucial decision-making.
3. **Unconscious Bias:** Deep-rooted collective doubts about women's leadership competence and emancipatory capabilities.

The final work step, a tactical simulation, yielded important findings in the psychomotor and practical skills domains. Through behavioral modeling (Neuro-Linguistic Programming/NLP), participants were trained to manage internal readiness and strengthen responses. Participatory observation results demonstrated that female cadres demonstrated behavioral flexibility, built rapport, and used effective communication techniques (such as matching predicates and reframing) to navigate digital barriers. The final evaluation (post-test and feedback) confirmed that all competency targets were achieved: participants demonstrated an increased understanding of gender concepts in Islam, increased motivation to organize inclusively, and established a collaborative commitment to advocate for equality outside the campus.

The discussion focused on the in-depth correlation between the reality of secondary data (Table 1) and the achievement of local intervention outcomes. Macroeconomic facts indicate that the representation of female leaders in Indonesia remains very low, ranging from only 5% to 23%, as confirmed by Indonesia's ranking of 85th on the global gender gap index. The crucial question is why this structural inequality continues to be so entrenched? Based on the results of the study of cadre actions, the root of the problem lies not in a lack of biological potential, but rather in the social construct of patriarchy and unconscious bias that creates psychological limitations (an inner glass ceiling) for women. Traditional thinking that confines women to the role of domestic workers, exacerbated by the high rate of early marriage (15%), systematically breaks the chain of strengthening women's intellectual and leadership capacities before they have a chance to enter modern organizational structures.

This sociological fact was successfully deconstructed through the integrative solution offered in this service. When an inclusive Islamic perspective was used to explain that women's leadership does

not violate reproductive nature but rather embodies the sanctity of human nature to uphold goodness, ideological resistance among cadres was successfully mitigated. This aligns with the qualitative theoretical context that states that gender is a dynamic construct that can be changed and learned through social engineering and ongoing education. The integration of women's natural empathetic flexibility with mastery of tactical digital communication tools has proven to be a crucial catalyst for achieving human excellence. Thus, the results of this study empirically prove that solving the problem of gender inequality is not enough to rely solely on political quota affirmation from above, but must begin with reconstructing critical awareness and honing tactical leadership skills of women's organizations starting from the student cadre level.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis and evaluation of the implementation of participatory action activities, the target achievement of the female cadre capacity building program was categorized as very successful. The educational intervention successfully achieved the participants' cognitive and psychomotor targets, as evidenced by the elimination of conceptual confusion regarding the boundaries between biological nature and gender roles, increased motivation to organize inclusively, and the female cadres' mastery of tactical digital communication skills.

There was a high degree of accuracy and alignment between the core issues addressed and the methods applied. Challenges such as unconscious bias, domestic stereotypes, and low digital leadership readiness were successfully addressed through a combination of theoretical lectures from an inclusive Islamic perspective and tactical simulations based on behavioral modeling (Neuro-Linguistic Programming). The approach of deconstructing traditional thinking from a theological-spiritual perspective proved to be an appropriate instrument for dissolving cultural resistance, while the tactical simulation method effectively addressed the cadres' practical needs for mastery of communication tools in the digital age.

In response to the objectives of this study, the main conclusion indicates that reconstructing the understanding of the natural values of humanity in Islam, combined with digital organizational skills training, can break down women's internal psychological barriers (inner glass ceiling). This integrative pattern has been empirically proven to successfully restore self-confidence and enhance the emancipatory capabilities of female cadres to take on strategic and leadership roles in the public sphere without harming their biological reproductive nature. The implications of this research confirm that social engineering to increase women's representation in the policy realm cannot be optimal if it relies solely on formal quota regulations, but must be initiated through strengthening intellectual, ideological, and tactical capacities structured from student organizations.

Suggestions

Based on the key findings and implications of the study above, several detailed and targeted recommendations are proposed as follows:

1. For Organizations

It is recommended to institutionalize this integrative training model into the mandatory curriculum of formal cadre development, such as the regularly held Islamic Gender School (SIG). Furthermore, an internal digital interaction monitoring forum (peer-support group) should be established to ensure the consistent application of effective communication skills and the behavioral flexibility of female cadres in daily organizational activities.

2. For Researchers and Future Community Service Providers

For future action research, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies by extending the monitoring period to measure the long-term behavioral impact of female cadres. Future community service providers should also expand the research subjects by involving male cadres as active participants, to foster a collective awareness of equality and reciprocal inclusiveness within the modern organizational ecosystem.

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