

GENDER EQUALITY AND SDGs: PERCEPTION OF THE MANAGEMENT OF PENGURUS JAMI'IIYAH PEREMPUAN PENGASUH PESANTREN DAN MUBALIGHOH (JPPPM) IN PEMALANG REGENCY AS AN EFFORT TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

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Abstract. This study analyzes the perceptions of the administrators of the *Jami'iyah Perempuan Pengasuh Pesantren dan Mubalighoh* (JPPPM) in Pemalang regency regarding the phenomenon of sexual violence within Islamic schools, also known as *Pesantren*. Pemalang regency was chosen due to its large number of Islamic schools (boarding and non-boarding) and the ongoing issue of sexual violence within them, necessitating preventive measures and interventions from the administrators. The urgency of this study is to identify an ideal model of female caregivers and female educators in Islamic schools in Pemalang. This research aims to support efforts to prevent sexual violence and promote gender equality in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Qualitative method was used to analyze the perceptions and roles of the JPPPM administrators through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with informants such as Bu Nyai (wives of Islamic Boarding School's administrators); female Islamic boarding school leaders, Preachers/Mubalighoh, female teachers/Ustadzah, and the extended family members of Islamic school's owners. The results indicate that female parenting styles are pretty effective and necessary in preventing sexual violence within Islamic schools. The JPPPM in Pemalang is considered adequate due to the social attributes associated with females, such as nurturing, caring, patience, and diligence in guiding students. The majority of respondents believe that the instillation of Islamic values and character taught in Islamic schools supports the prevention of sexual violence within the school environment.

Keywords: Perception, Gender Equality, Sustainable Development Goals/SDGs, JPPPM, Pemalang

1. Introduction

This research is conducted in Pemalang Regency, Central Java Province. Pemalang is a regency situated in the highlands at the foot of Mount Slamet, covering an area of 1,115.30 square kilometers [9]. Pemalang Regency has 14 sub-districts and 223 villages/sub-districts. It borders the Java Sea to the north, Purbalingga Regency to the south, Tegal Regency to the west, and Pekalongan Regency to the east. Its working-age population works as laborers, office workers, service workers, agricultural workers, civil servants, and domestic workers [9]. Pemalang Regency is also a popular educational destination for Islamic boarding school students (santri), as evidenced by data from jateng.bps.go.id, which indicates that in 2023, Pemalang Regency was among the top 10 regencies in Central Java with the largest number of Islamic boarding school students (Santri), Islamic religious teachers (Kyai) and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) [5]. In 2023, there were 29,347 students, 283 Kyai or Ustadz, and 164 Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) across Pemalang Regency. This number is significant for research due to several reports that relate to traditional, feudal educational practices in Islamic boarding schools, which may potentially involve sexual harassment against both female

and male students. Aranditio in a Kompas's report stated that from January to June 2024, 101 cases of sexual violence occurred against children from 8 different cases, where 5 of these cases of violence occurred in Islamic boarding schools [1]. Aranditio's report stated that 72% of the perpetrators were men, and the remaining 28% were committed by male students [1]. One of the worst cases was the case of sexual harassment against 13 female students by the main caretaker of an Islamic boarding school in Bandung, where the harassment had been going on since 2016 but was only revealed in 2021. The Indonesian National Commission on Violence Against Women has issued a press release regarding the above case, confirming that it was proven that "The case of sexual violence against 13 female students is part of the iceberg phenomenon related to sexual violence in religious-based educational institutions and boarding schools. The case itself has been going on since 2016 and was only revealed in 2021. Nine babies were born as a result of the sexual violence [11]."

This study analyzes the perceptions of the administrators of the Jami'iyah Perempuan Pengasuh Pesantren dan Mubalighoh (JPPPM) in Pemalang Regency regarding the phenomenon of sexual violence within the Islamic boarding school environment. Women's roles in Islamic boarding schools are not as significant as those of men, such as Ustadz and Kyai. Yet, cases of sexual violence predominantly target female students. The Kyai figure in Islamic boarding schools is considered central because he directly regulates and resolves issues, thereby marginalizing the role of Bu Nyai (the wife of the Islamic boarding school caretaker) [15]. Islamic boarding schools have yet to reach a definitive consensus on the issue of gender equality. Some Islamic boarding schools reject the idea of gender equality, while others embrace it. In her research, Puji Laksono classified three perspectives of female students regarding gender construction. First, modernist female students believe that all jobs are ideal for both men and women. This group does not object to role reversal between men and women. Second, traditionalist-modern female students believe that not all jobs are ideal for men or women. Still, this group does not object to role reversal between men and women as long as it is within certain limits. Third, the traditionalist female students believe that jobs for men are more masculine, while jobs for women are more ideally feminine [22]. This group disagrees with the concept of role reversal between men and women. JPPPM in Pemalang Regency has a significant opportunity to change perceptions of gender equality within Islamic boarding schools. This association of female caretakers, wives of caretakers, and female preachers regularly holds meetings specifically for women in Islamic (boarding and nonboarding) schools around Pemalang. The most frequent spiritual and religious activities include reciting salawat together to celebrate Santri Day, holding lectures, and reading the Quran together [14]. Meanwhile, non-spiritual religious activities are still minimal.

The role of the Jami'iyah Perempuan Pengasuh Pesantren dan Mubalighoh (JPPPM) in Pemalang Regency can be understood from the perspective of women's strategic role in creating an inclusive and safe environment for all elements within the pesantren. Pesantrens are not only inhabited by male students but also by female students from diverse backgrounds, ages, and educational levels. In Pemalang Regency, where the pesantren tradition remains very strong, women's involvement in care and education makes a significant contribution to creating a safe environment and supporting the prevention of sexual violence and the spread of values of gender equality. Therefore, a model of women's involvement in educational care in pesantren in Pemalang is crucial to break the chain of sexual violence, which is a threat to both traditional and non-traditional pesantren.

This research analyzes and identifies the ideal model for women's educational role involvement to achieve one of the SDGs, gender equality. This research involves members of the JPPPM in Pemalang Regency, including Bu Nyai (the women's religious leaders), wives of pesantren caregivers, female pesantren caregivers, female Islamic teachers (ustadzah), female

students (santriwati), and female pesantren administrators, in efforts to prevent sexual violence within the pesantren environment. This will help achieve the ultimate goal of gender equality: providing a safe environment for women to carry out activities within the pesantren.

1.1. Gender Equality as an SDG Achievement from a Feminist Perspective

Gender inequality remains a major issue in national development, particularly in developing countries, due to deeply rooted patriarchal systems in society [4]. The UN includes gender equality as its fifth Sustainable Development Goal, emphasizing women's empowerment and the elimination of gender-based violence as human rights [18]. Gender equality entails providing equal access to opportunities, resources, authority, and work capacity for all individuals, regardless of their gender [3]. A feminist perspective is crucial to complement this concept, highlighting how power relations, social structures, and patriarchal cultures influence global political dynamics, including human security and protection from gender-based violence [20].

In this research, it is important to introduce a new approach from a feminist perspective, namely, Islamic feminism. Islamic feminism is an ideology and movement rooted in Islamic teachings and traditions, emphasizing humanistic and inclusive principles, as well as the *maqasid shari'ah* (the objectives of Sharia), to eliminate gender inequality in society [13]. This movement aims to ensure that women and society in general are free from discrimination, exploitation, and violence stemming from gender-biased religious understandings and patriarchal systems. Islamic feminist efforts include promoting the values of justice, critical analysis, reinterpretation, and internalization, while considering the context of Islamic teachings [23].

One key point in the Islamic feminist approach concerns the role of women as leaders. Many views on female leadership in the public sphere still contain misogynistic elements. Women are often considered unsuitable for leadership because they are considered weak, emotional, and unable to make firm decisions. This view is often based on hadith and Quranic verses interpreted textually, rather than contextually. Islamic feminism emphasizes that the Quran promotes the principle of deliberation (*shura*) involving both men and women in decision-making. The Quran even notes the role of women in politics, such as women's allegiance during the Prophet's time and the story of the wise and peaceful leadership of the Queen of Saba. In other words, women in this approach are considered capable of being wise and practical leaders [13]. In achieving the SDGs, several studies have highlighted the significant role women play. Alzubaidi underscores in her research the crucial role of Jordanian women in realizing the SDGs, particularly in education [2]. She believes that education is a crucial factor in empowering women and addressing gender inequality. Mothers and female teachers play a crucial role in developing the education and skills of female students, as well as in enhancing their social status. This is reaffirmed by Harsha Dhar and Shashirekha, who emphasize the importance of women's education, as it can change cultures and traditions that disadvantage women [7].

1.2. Sexual Violence in Islamic Boarding Schools

Sexual violence is now not only limited to public spaces but also extends into the academic realm, including Islamic educational institutions. As institutions that should be safe havens for education, Islamic boarding schools are not entirely free from the risk of sexual violence. Islamic boarding schools, which play a crucial role in shaping the morals and character of the younger generation through religious education, face the reality that cases of sexual violence still occur within some of their institutions. Ironically, many cases go unreported or unaddressed due to social stigma and concerns about the negative impact on the institution's reputation [17]. Rahman and Maulana stated that sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools can take the form of verbal harassment, non-consensual touching, physical sexual violence, online harassment,

grooming, power-based violence, sexual exploitation, ritualistic violence, and stigma and fear that hinder reporting [17]. Culture and religious values play a significant role in shaping the norms prevailing in Islamic boarding schools. The implemented value system often serves as the basis for addressing internal issues, including sexual violence. Unfortunately, these norms can create bias; on the one hand, they can protect students, but on the other hand, they can create social pressure that prevents victims from reporting [6].

According to Suryana et al., despite various prevention efforts, most Islamic boarding schools still face obstacles in providing effective protection mechanisms [19]. These obstacles are caused by several factors, such as a lack of comprehensive sexual education, minimal awareness of students' rights, and cultural influences that hinder the process of reporting cases of sexual violence.

In the context of sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools, the role of leadership, particularly the kyai (Islamic religious leader), is a key element in handling these cases. Pebriaisyah et al. argue that a kyai's attitude and response to cases of sexual violence significantly influence whether the case is reported and how it is handled [24]. Kyais who support transparency and reporting can create a safer pesantren environment for students, enabling the pesantren to function as an educational institution free from sexual violence while reinforcing religious values that respect human dignity. Oktaviani et al. demonstrated on-the-ground evidence that several religious teachers (Ustadz), religious leaders (Kyai), and religious leaders (Gus) were involved in acts of sexual violence [16]. The hierarchical structure between Ustadz, Kyai, or Gus and students often places students in a subordinate, vulnerable position, making it difficult for them to refuse or resist such acts. This suggests that power relations within Islamic boarding schools are a contributing factor to students' vulnerability to sexual violence.

2. Methods

This research used a qualitative approach to understand the phenomena experienced by the research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, and actions, holistically and through descriptive means in the form of words and language in a specific, natural context [25]. The focus of this qualitative approach is to seek and study the meaning conveyed by the participants regarding the problems and issues in the research [21]. Meanwhile, this type of research is descriptive research.

Hadari Nawawi provides the following definition of descriptive research: "Descriptive research can be interpreted as a problem-solving procedure investigated by describing/illustrating the current state of the research subject/object (a person, institution, society, etc.) based on apparent facts or as they are. Descriptive research aims to discover existing facts [26]." However, by utilizing the concept of gender as discussed in the literature review section, the discovery of facts is framed with indicators of the given idea of gender.

The data used in this study comprises primary and secondary data. Primary data is information collected from various stakeholders regarding their perceptions, efforts, and insights on the topic. The data collection techniques employed in this study consisted of three activities: 1) In-depth interviews, which involve individual dialogue with informants or respondents; 2) Focus Group Discussions involving selected informants and the research team; 3) Secondary data collection in the form of news, reports, and policy documents related to the research theme. The data is analyzed by the triangulation method, in which researchers classify all collected data from in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and secondary data sources. The next step is data reduction to reduce redundancy of data, organize, and setting the relevant data, and the third step is making a conclusive analysis based on data and researcher's interpretation on them. The in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and secondary data

collection were all conducted between March and October 2025, and the interviewees were Bu Nyai, Ustadzah, and Mubalighoh, who are members of JPPPM Pemalang.

3. Results And Discussion

3.1. The Role of Women in Islamic Boarding School (*Pesantren*)

The study identifies the *Jami'iyah Perempuan Pengasuh Pesantren dan Mubalighoh* (JPPPM) as a landmark collective movement advancing women's leadership within Indonesia's Islamic boarding school system, according to JPPPM Chairperson Ustadzah Nyai Hannik Maftukhah, a female religious leader and wife of an Islamic Boarding School Administrator. JPPPM was initiated by four founders from Central Java and Yogyakarta, and within five years, the movement was expanded to several continents. She stated, "We began with four women; now our network reaches Europe, Africa, and Asia (H. Maftukhah, personal interview, July 2, 2025)." This expansion reflects a mature institutional capacity and long-term intellectual strength of female *pesantren* leadership. Furthermore, Azra (in Damopolii) wrote that "maintaining traditional Islamic institutional thinking will only prolong the misery of the helplessness of Muslims in facing the progress of the modern world [27]." Thus, the global expansion of this approach leads to significant transformations in education, enabling effective and sustainable management.

Historically, women in *pesantren* were portrayed as domestic supporters. Our interviews with them, however, reveal multidimensional responsibilities in education, administration, finance, and social outreach. Bu Nyai Hannik Maftukhah emphasized, "Without Bu Nyai, *pesantren* would not function and succeed (H. Maftukhah, personal interview, July 2, 2025)." Her comment underlies that female caregivers sustain both the spiritual and operational core of *pesantren* life. JPPPM grounds women's identity in three classical Islamic concepts, including: (1) *al-ummu madrasatul ula*, which means the mother as the first educator; (2) *juz' al-mutimm al-faidah*, which means the partner who completes her husband's virtue; and (3) *al-mar'atu imad al-bilad*, which means the women as the pillar of the nation (H. Maftukhah, personal interview, July 2, 2025). These principles frame equality not as rivalry but as a complementary partnership rooted in Qur'anic justice ('*adl*) and compassion (*rahmah*). Moreover, the concepts of justice ('*adl*) and compassion (*rahmah*) also serve as essential foundations for the implementation of multiculturalism [30]. This will posit how the role of women is adaptable in managing the variety of students' backgrounds in *pesantren*.

JPPPM serves as an umbrella that connects existing women's networks, such as Muslimat Nahdlatul Ulama, Fatayat Nahdlatul Ulama, and RMI (Rabithah Ma'ahid Islamiyyah) Nahdlatul Ulama. Muslimat Nahdlatul Ulama is known as the first NU women's organization, was a form of revival of NU women at that time, even though they were under the NU tradition with its patriarchal culture; the women rose up and put forward ideas regarding the need for women to organize [28]. Fatayat Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is a socio-religious organization comprising young Muslim women who adhere to the principles of *Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah*, a Sunni Islamic theological tradition [29]. Meanwhile, RMI NU, also known as Rabithah Ma'ahid Islamiyyah Nahdlatul Ulama, is an institution tasked with implementing NU policies in the development of Islamic boarding schools and religious education. This is stipulated in the NU bylaws (ART) Chapter V, Article 17, Paragraph 6, Letter c, and the results of the 34th NU Congress in 2021 in Lampung [40]. Through *triwulan* (tri-annual) assemblies, members exchange strategies for both religious and managerial aspects of Islamic education. These findings affirm that gender equality in Indonesian Islam grows organically from within faith communities (nonviolence) rather than from external ideological pressure.

3.2. Gender Equality and Leadership Perception

Respondents demonstrate a nuanced understanding of gender equality, characterized by equitable access combined with recognition of biological differences. Ustadzah Waqiyatul

Millah, caretaker of MISS Hadirul Ulum Pesantren (Pemalang), explained, “Men and Women are equal in education and work, but the Creator gives us differences that men have physical strength and women give birth. Equality means fairness, not sameness (M. Waqiyatul, personal interview, July 28, 2025).” Her reasoning represents the pesantren epistemology of balance (*tawazun*), which means justice through proportionality. *Tawazun* also encompasses a balance between various aspects such as justice, tolerance, worship, and social relations, which collectively form the ethical and moral foundation in Islamic teachings [31]. From the SDGs, Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, it is evident that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world [32].

Leadership is evaluated based on competence, not gender. Waqiyatul Millah asserted, “If a woman is capable, she can lead a pesantren. Even Aisyah RA once led troops (M. Waqiyatul, personal interview, July 28, 2025).” This recalls Musdah Mulia’s formulation of Islamic feminism as praxis: authority derived from moral capability and knowledge, not sex [13]. Likewise, Ning Dina Arvia Arina Zulva, JPPPM Vice Chair, noted that “Women are equal partners in education and community service; Islam entrusts stewardship (*Khilafah*) to both genders (Z. Ning Dina A.A., personal interview, July 2, 2025).”

Empirically, many pesantren have adopted dual leadership structures, appointing both male and female *lurah pondok* (student leaders) to manage daily discipline. Ning Dina explained, “Now there are male and female dorm heads. It trains them to share responsibility (Z. Ning Dina A.A., personal interview, July 2, 2025).” Such reforms translate theological equality into administrative practice. From a theoretical perspective, this confirms Tickner’s argument that inclusive security and governance emerge when women’s ethical perspectives complement masculine hierarchies [20]. There is strong collaboration in daily life, which translates into positive application in education, not only as a passive student but also as a young leader at a basic level. JPPPM’s leadership model transforms the perception of authority from one of domination to one of service (*khidmah*), thereby aligning Islamic ethics with contemporary gender discourse.

3.3. Preventive Efforts against Sexual Violence

All informants acknowledged the existence of misconduct in educational settings but emphasized its rarity within pesantren. Ustadzah Nyai Hannik estimated, “Sexual violence cases are under ten percent; bullying may reach twenty percent, mostly verbal (H. Maftukhah, personal interview, July 2, 2025).” Although statistically limited, JPPPM treats each case as a breach of moral trust. Their preventive framework rests on *rahmah* (compassion) and *ta’dib* (moral cultivation). Ning Dina clarified, “Punishment – what we call *ta’zir* (corrective measure) is not revenge. We educate through kindness (Z. Ning Dina A.A., personal interview, July 2, 2025).” Disciplinary actions such as memorizing Qur’anic verses or cleaning communal spaces function as restorative rather than punitive measures. This pedagogy operationalizes the *maqasid asy-syari’ah* principle of protecting human dignity (*hifz al-‘ird*). *Al Maqasid al-Shari’ah* has many definitions; it can be understood as the primary objectives and purposes inherent in Islamic law, both general and specific, which are directed towards obedience and worship of Allah Almighty, as well as attaining human well-being in both this world and the hereafter [33].

Moral instruction is reinforced through classical texts such as *Akhlaq al-Banat* and *Fiqh al-Nisa*, which define ethical boundaries for gender interactions. Ustadzah Millah remarked, “Even accidental touch invalidates ablution; students learn early about respect (M. Waqiyatul, personal interview, July 28, 2025).” Preventive awareness, therefore, grows from religious literacy, not fear of regulation. Institutionally, pesantren apply a multi-tier reporting mechanism divided into dormitory supervisor, complex coordinator, main administrator, and caretaker

(pengasuh). “If the case is severe, parents are called,” said Millah. This hierarchy ensures accountability, confidentiality, and prompt response. At the organizational level, JPPPM’s Dewan Pakar (Expert Council) offers counselling, legal advice, and coordination with Komnas Perempuan (National Commission on Violence against Women). The arrangement exemplifies gender-sensitive governance embedded within Islamic institutions.

3.4. Child-Friendly and Compassionate Education

Another recurring theme is the pursuit of a pesantren ramah anak, which is a child-friendly environment free from verbal and physical violence. Ustadzah Millah explained, “Harsh words are forbidden; pointing fingers in anger is already bullying (M. Waqiyatul, personal interview, July 28, 2025).” Violations are corrected through constructive ta’zir such as Qur’an recitation, community service, or increased study duties. The aim is moral reflection, not humiliation. Teachers are expected to model empathy. “If teachers, especially women, are gentle, students imitate them,” Millah noted. The data highlight what Alzubaidi terms ‘nurturing leadership’ and ‘transformation through care’ [2]. Female educators internalize rahmah as pedagogy, cultivating emotional literacy alongside academic discipline.

Digital discipline also plays a role in protection. “A gadget is like a knife; it depends on who uses it,” Millah warned. Device use is restricted to academic needs under supervision. This preventive rule curbs exposure to pornography and cyber-bullying, aligning with national child-protection guidelines. Indonesia also faces a serious challenge as being ranked 4th in the world for online child pornography cases [34]. In an effort to safeguard children from the adverse effects of electronic system utilization, the government has promulgated a new regulation, namely Government Regulation No. 17/2025 on the Governance of Electronic Systems in Child Protection [35].

Gender interaction in Pesantren follows ethical codes. Students of both sexes share classrooms under supervision, seated separately but engaged equally. Ning Dina justified the method: “If boys and girls never meet, they won’t learn boundaries. Supervised interaction teaches respect (Z. Ning Dina A.A., personal interview, July 2, 2025).” The approach blends adab (Islamic etiquette) with experiential learning, illustrating how pesantren adapt to social change without compromising religious ethics.

Collectively, these practices realize SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by embedding protection and participation within faith-based schooling. The process of internationalization for their students demonstrates that religious schools can adapt to universal values through their management. SDG 4 emphasizes the importance of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, as well as promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all [36]. Additionally, SDG 5 emphasizes achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls [37]. The pesantren model demonstrates that moral education and gender sensitivity are not opposites, but rather mutually reinforcing.

3.5. Discussion: Integrating Islamic Feminist Values

The findings of this research reveal that the JPPPM’s praxis embodies what Hesova defines as “feminism in Islam,” a hybrid sphere where religious and emancipatory projects converge without antagonism [38]. Rather than adopting secular feminist rhetoric that often detaches itself from faith-based legitimacy, JPPPM members articulate equality through Islamic ethics of “adl” (justice) and “rahmah” (compassion), reflecting an indigenous gender paradigm that does not reject religiosity but rather reclaim it as the foundation of liberation. This approach is aligned with Margot Badran’s notion of “Islamic Feminism” as a feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm that seeks justice and rights for both women and men through Qur’anic principles,” bridging moral consciousness and gender justice [39].

Unlike secular feminist activism, which has historically prioritized civic participation, JPPPM’s framework internalizes gender equality through theological reinterpretation and

community praxis. This synthesis illustrates what Hesova identifies as a “continuum” between secular and Islamic feminisms, where secular concepts such as rights, gender, and agency are absorbed and recontextualized within Islamic moral reasoning [38]. By doing so, JPPPM transforms feminism from a perceived Western import into a spiritually grounded ethical project “*ijtihad al-jins*”, legitimized within *pesantren* epistemology.

Ustadzah Nyai Hannik’s metaphor of women as “pillars of the nation” mirrors Tickner’s theory of relational security, where nurturing ethics sustain social stability [20]. The *pesantren*’s compassion-based governance substantiates Mulia’s thesis that gender justice is achievable when theological reasoning guides institutional reform [13]. Alzubaidi’s research on women’s education as social transformation also resonates with JPPPM’s agenda, which is education as the axis of empowerment [2].

JPPPM’s transnational presence underscores the global relevance of Indonesian Islamic womanhood. Its branches in Europe, Africa, and Asia operate as soft-power channels projecting an image of Islam grounded in peace, inclusivity, and equality.

Besides that, it also facilitates a space for Indonesian Muslims around the world to gather together in a reinforcing community. Collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan) reinforces policy coherence between faith institutions and state gender strategies. The organization’s *rahmah*-based education system, its female leadership, and its collaboration with national institutions reflect a gender mainstreaming model that is culturally legitimate, faith-driven, and socially transformative.

Conceptually, JPPPM redefines equality as “partnership within piety”. Bu Nyai Hannik expressed, “We don’t need to shout about equality; by uniting and working, equality shows itself (H. Maftukhah, personal interview, July 2, 2025).” This statement encapsulates a theologically collective progress over confrontation. Equality becomes visible through participation and competence, not ideological contestation. The preventive and educational mechanisms outlined above display that Islamic institutions can internalize gender equity without eroding tradition and sacred values. JPPPM’s *Rahmah*-based education model provides a framework for faith-driven gender mainstreaming, which achieves SDG targets through indigenous values. By translating compassion into governance, *pesantren* women reconstruct moral authority as a shared human capacity. The JPPPM experience validates the proposition that sustainable gender reform depends on “cultural legitimacy”. External interventions often face resistance, but reforms articulated through Qur’anic hermeneutics gain acceptance. In this sense, JPPPM represents a “third way,” neither secularization nor conservatism, but rather contextual modernization rooted in faith.

4. Conclusion

This research concludes that the *Jami’iyyah Perempuan Pengasuh Pesantren dan Mubalighoh* (JPPPM) in Pemalang Regency represents a transformative model of women’s leadership in Islamic education, embedding principles of gender equality within the framework of Islamic ethics and values. The organization’s role transcends traditional domestic boundaries and redefines the presence of women in *pesantren*, not merely as caretakers, but as moral, intellectual, and administrative agents. Through a faith-based approach grounded in *Rahmah* (compassion), *‘adl* (justice), *ta’dib* (moral cultivation), and *tawazun* (balance), JPPPM successfully integrates theological reasoning with gender-sensitive governance, producing a comprehensive mechanism for both education and protection in Islamic schools.

The findings indicate that JPPPM’s preventive efforts against sexual violence are rooted in a restorative and educational framework rather than a punitive one. Through moral instruction, gender ethics, and compassion discipline, JPPPM ensures that *pesantren* remain safe spaces for students’ emotional, spiritual, and physical growth. The organization operationalizes the

maqasid asy-syari'ah principle of hifz al-'ird (protection of human dignity), providing a sustainable approach to preventing gender-based violence in Islamic institutions. Female leaders, such as Bu Nyai (female pesantren leaders), Ustadzah, and Mubalighoh, play a crucial role in developing child-friendly, inclusive environments that align with the SDGs. The pesantren under their supervision implement gender sensitive regulations and policies, including multi-tier reporting mechanisms, digital protection, and ethical interaction codes, as well as branches across continents, all of which demonstrate the institutional maturity of Islamic educational spaces under female leadership. From a feminist theoretical perspective, this research affirms that gender equality can be realized within a faith-based paradigm without adopting secular or antagonistic/extremist narratives. The principles of the Qur'an guide JPPPM's pursuit of justice and equality in its management. This form of feminism is both emancipatory and devotional, reclaiming religious legitimacy as the foundation. The JPPPM experience serves as a replicable model for integrating gender equality into Islamic schools, confirming that empowerment through compassion is an ideal strategic endeavor.

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