

Wahdah Islamiyah Women's Da'wah: Analysis Of Authority And Gender Representation

¹Nurul Fadilah, ²Suparto

^{1,2} UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta

fdlhnurul81@gmail.com , suparto@uinjkt.ac.id

Abstract

This article discusses women's da'wah in the Wahdah Islamiyah organization: an analysis of authority and gender representation. Given women's active involvement in da'wah and educational activities through the *Wahdah Muslimah* institution, women are not merely placed as recipients of da'wah messages, but as subjects who help design and implement da'wah strategies at various levels. Furthermore, to analyze how women are represented in terms of gender, using a qualitative approach and library study methods, Max Weber's theory of religious authority and gender representation can show that Wahdah Islamiyah women play an important role in Islamic da'wah and education through the Wahdah Muslimah institution, with the ability to balance domestic and public roles as part of spiritual guidance and social empowerment. They build religious authority through three forms of legitimacy according to Max Weber, namely traditional legitimacy rooted in Salafi values, charismatic legitimacy arising from scholarship and exemplary behavior, and legal-rational legitimacy obtained through positions and formal cadre systems. The three combine to form a hybrid authority that provides space for women to be recognized without violating the patriarchal structure. From a gender representation perspective, Wahdah Islamiyah shapes the ideal image of Muslim women who are pious, knowledgeable, obedient, and active, with symbols of piety such as the sharia-compliant hijab and polite behavior. Although their movement is still limited by religious norms, Wahdah women have successfully negotiated their identity within the patriarchal system, demonstrating that women's da'wah can be a vehicle for empowerment that is in harmony with Islamic values and modern social needs.

Keywords: Wahdah Islamiyah, Religious Authority, Gender Representation

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini yaitu untuk menganalisis peran dakwah perempuan dalam organisasi Wahdah Islamiyah, untuk menganalisis bagaimana perempuan membangun otoritas keagamaan, dan untuk menganalisis bagaimana representasi gender perempuan. Metode penelitian yang digunakan yaitu pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka (library research). Dengan menggunakan teori Otoritas Keagamaan Max Weber dan Representasi Gender. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa perempuan Wahdah Islamiyah memegang peran penting

dalam dakwah dan pendidikan Islam melalui lembaga Muslimah Wahdah, dengan kemampuan menyeimbangkan peran domestik dan publik sebagai bagian dari pembinaan spiritual dan pemberdayaan sosial. Mereka membangun otoritas keagamaan melalui tiga bentuk legitimasi menurut Max Weber, yaitu tradisional yang berakar pada nilai Salafi, karismatik yang muncul dari keilmuan dan keteladanan, serta legal-rasional yang diperoleh melalui jabatan dan sistem kaderisasi formal. Ketiganya berpadu membentuk otoritas hibrid yang memberi ruang bagi perempuan untuk diakui tanpa melanggar struktur patriarkal. Dari perspektif representasi gender, Wahdah Islamiyah membentuk citra ideal perempuan Muslim yang salehah, berilmu, patuh, dan aktif, dengan simbol-simbol kesalehan seperti jilbab syar'i dan perilaku santun. Meskipun ruang gerak mereka tetap dibatasi oleh norma keagamaan, perempuan Wahdah berhasil menegosiasikan identitasnya di tengah sistem patriarkal, menunjukkan bahwa dakwah perempuan dapat menjadi wadah pemberdayaan yang selaras dengan nilai-nilai Islam dan kebutuhan sosial modern.

Kata Kunci: Wahdah Islamiyah, Religious Authority, Gender Representation

Introduction

Wahdah Islamiyah is one of the Islamic organizations that has experienced growth in the last two decades. Founded in Makassar, this organization has grown into an influential da'wah movement, especially in Eastern Indonesia.¹ Ideologically, this organization is rooted in the Salafi tradition, which emphasizes the purification of faith and the practice of Islamic teachings based on classical sources. However, Wahdah Islamiyah presents a more moderate style compared to other Salafi groups, by opening space for social da'wah, modern education, and community work.² This approach has made Wahdah Islamiyah known not only as a religious movement, but also as an instrument of social transformation oriented towards moral, family, and community development.³

One of the interesting characteristics of this organization's dynamics is the active involvement of women in da'wah and educational activities. Through the *Muslimah Wahdah* institution, women are not merely placed as recipients of da'wah messages, but as subjects who participate in designing and implementing da'wah strategies at various levels.⁴ This institution serves as a forum for training female cadres, organizing socio-religious activities, and promoting da'wah within families and communities. The activities of Wahdah Islamiyah women are not only centered in the domestic sphere, but also extend to public spaces such as educational institutions, social communities, and even digital spaces.⁵

¹ (Jurdi et al., 2024)

² Abbas et al., 2022)

³ umriani et al., 2025)

⁴ (Jurdi et al., 2024)

⁵ (Elfrianto & Bahfiarti, 2022)

This development marks a paradigm shift in how women in Salafi circles interpret their religious roles. In the Salafi tradition, which is commonly associated with patriarchal authority structures, leadership and religious interpretation are generally dominated by men.⁶ However, the phenomenon of Wahdah Islamiyah female da'wah shows a process of negotiation and adaptation to a broader social context.⁷ Female *da'iyah* (preachers) seek to build religious authority through their knowledge, social networks, and organizational legitimacy. This authority is not always interpreted as formal leadership, but rather as symbolic and cultural recognition of their capacity as conveyors of religious truth within the framework of Salafi ideology.⁸

The presence of women as da'wah practitioners in the Wahdah Islamiyah environment also has important representational significance. Gender representation in da'wah practices not only speaks to the social role of women, but also to how the organization constructs the ideal image of Muslim women within the framework of its Islamic values.⁹ Wahdah Islamiyah women are portrayed as pious, knowledgeable, active, and committed to their families and da'wah. However, on the other hand, this image is still framed by gender norms that emphasize the difference in roles between men and women.¹⁰ This is where an epistemological tension arises between a hierarchical ideology of purification and social practices that demand the active participation of women in the public sphere.

Studies on the dynamics of women in the Islamic movement in Indonesia have been conducted extensively, both in the context of organizations such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and other *revivalist Islamic* groups. Previous research by¹¹ shows that Indonesian Muslim women now play a role not only in domestic da'wah activities, but also on social media and in Islamic educational institutions. Another study¹², specifically examines the role of women in the

⁶ (Zainuddin & Kadir, 2013)

⁷ (Abbas et al., 2022)

⁸ Luthfi Hardi and Suparto, "Transformasi Sosial Umat Islam Di Kota Makassar Terhadap Kegiatan Sosial Dari Gerakan Dakwah Wahdah Islamiyah," *Mutiara: Multidisciplinary Scientific Journal* 2, no. 12 (2021): 169.

⁹ Ahmad Zaenuri et al., "Wahdah Islamiyah And the Shift In Religious Education Affiliations Among Urban Muslim Communities In South Sulawesi And Gorontalo," *Jurnal Penelitian* 21, no. 2 (2024): 233–44, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v21i2.8849>.

¹⁰ Rusli Rusli, "Wahdah Islamiyyah Palu: On Contemporary Islamic Legal Issues In The Internet," *HUNafa: Jurnal Studia Islamika* 14, no. 2 (2017): 233, <https://doi.org/10.24239/jsi.v14i2.489.233-251>.

¹¹ Samsuddin et al., "The Cadre Development Model of Wahdah Islamiyah Preachers: An Analysis of the Integration of Formal and Non-Formal Education," *Abdurrauf Journal Of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 3 (2025): 237, <https://doi.org/10.58824/arjis.v4i3.448>.

¹² Chris Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia," *Citizenship Studies* 22, no. 2 (2018): 208–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2018.1445488>.

Muslimah Wahdah institution, the women's wing of the Wahdah Islamiyah organization. The author finds that women's involvement in Wahdah's da'wah structure is not merely complementary but an integral part of the organization's strategy to expand its da'wah base in urban communities. Furthermore¹³, discusses how women in the Indonesian Salafi community construct religious authority amid the dominance of male interpretations. Previous research has not specifically examined the role of Wahdah Islamiyah women in da'wah: a study of authority and gender representation.

Based on this background, this study attempts to fill the gap in research by focusing its analysis on three main questions. 1) What is the role of women in Wahdah Islamiyah's da'wah (proselytizing) activities? 2) How do Wahdah Islamiyah women build religious authority within the organizational structure? 3) How does the gender representation of Wahdah Islamiyah women appear in da'wah practices? By answering these questions, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the study of Islam and gender, as well as broaden the understanding of the dynamics of women's roles in contemporary religious movements in Indonesia.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a *library research* method¹⁴, which involves examining various relevant written sources to understand the role and representation of women in Wahdah Islamiyah's da'wah. This method was chosen because the focus of the research was not on collecting field data, but on analyzing ideas, texts, and documents that describe the dynamics of religious authority and gender construction within the organization.¹⁵ Data was obtained from books, scientific journals, articles, academic works, and official Wahdah Islamiyah documents, both printed and online, which were then analyzed based on their relevance and credibility. This study uses Max Weber's theory of Religious Authority and Gender Representation to interpret the data conceptually and critically. Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation and literature review, while data analysis used descriptive-qualitative methods with a content analysis approach to find patterns and meanings behind the narratives and discourses developed in the literature. Through this method, the study produced a deep understanding of how Wahdah Islamiyah women build religious authority and are

¹³ Dian Adi Perdana and Arianto S Panambang, "Potret Dakwah Islam Di Indonesia: Strategi Dakwah Pada Organisasi Wahdah Islamiyah Di Kota Gorontalo," *Fikri: Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya* 4, no. 2 (2019): 245, <https://journal.iaimnumetrolampung.ac.id/index.php/jf/article/view/639%0Ahttps://journal.iaimnumetrolampung.ac.id/index.php/jf/article/download/639/472>.

¹⁴ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2020).

¹⁵ Fita Fathurokhmah, *Metode Penelitian Komunikasi Kualitatif*, ed. Diajeng Ragil Pangesturi, 1st ed. (Jakarta: PT Bumi Aksara, 2024).

represented in da'wah practices based on the social constructs and religious values that surround them.

Results and Discussion

The Early History of Wahdah Islamiyah (WI)

Wahdah Islamiyah (WI) is an Islamic social organization based on the Qur'an and Sunnah with an approach of Manhaj Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah (As-Salaf Ash-Shalih). Officially, WI was established on April 14, 2002 (1 Shafar 1423 H), but its origins date back to the mid-1980s in Makassar through the activities of Muhammadiyah student da'wah centered at the Ta'mirul Mosque.¹⁶ The early founders, many of whom were inspired by the figure of KH. Fathul Mu'in Dg. Magading, felt that Muhammadiyah at that time was too moderate and lacked prominence in spreading Islam. Internal criticism of the weak spirit of da'wah led this young group to separate and establish the Fathul Mu'in Foundation (YFM) on June 18, 1988. This step was intended to continue a more independent da'wah movement, focusing on community development, social welfare, and Islamic education.¹⁷

As its missionary activities grew and the number of cadres increased, YFM transformed into the Wahdah Islamiyah Foundation (YWI) in 1998.¹⁸ This name change reflected a spirit of unity and an effort to avoid individual cults. During this phase, the Wahdah movement affirmed its religious ideology based on the understanding of salafus shalih by emphasizing the importance of purifying faith, cadre discipline, and systematic da'wah methods through small halaqaahs.¹⁹ In the context of education, WI developed a structured cadre system by fostering students, Campus Da'wah Institutions (LDK), and Islamic study groups (KKI).²⁰ These efforts were reinforced by the establishment of formal educational institutions, ranging from Islamic boarding schools and elementary schools to universities such as the Makassar College of Islamic and Arabic Studies (STIBA), which became a center for the cadre system of young scholars and preachers.

¹⁶ Samsuddin, Iskandar, and Mariyanto Nurshamsul, "Pendidikan Kader Da'i Ormas Wahdah Islamiyah Melalui Halaqah Tarbiyah," *Ta'dibuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (2020): 283, <https://doi.org/10.32832/tadibuna.v9i2.3527>.

¹⁷ Suriati, "Pola Komunikasi Dakwah Wahdah Islamiyah Di Kabupaten Sinjai, Sulawesi Selatan," *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)* 6, no. 1 (2020): 81–95, <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v6i1.927>.

¹⁸ Hasanah Widyaiswara and Uswatun Madya, "'Jamaah' As a Communication Symbol of Da'wah of Wahdah Islamiyah Group," *Palakka: Media and Islamic Communication* 1, no. 2 (2020): 2746–4687.

¹⁹ Aditia M Yusup and Mariyanto Nur Shamsul, "Model Pendidikan Kaderisasi Da' i Di Wahdah Islamiyah Dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Islam," *Ta'dibuna : Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 14, no. 2 (2025): 190–207, <https://doi.org/10.32832/tadibuna.v14i2.19760>.

²⁰ Ahmad Fauz and Almunauwar Bin Rusli, "Partisipasi Pendidikan Wahdah Islamiyah Demokratisasi Masyarakat Muslim Indonesia Dalam Sistem," *Journal of Islamic Education: The Teacher of Civilization* 5, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, <https://jurnal.usk.ac.id/JSU/article/view/40251>.

In the 1990s, Wahdah Islamiyah grew rapidly after a number of its cadres received scholarships from the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council (DDII) to continue their studies at the Islamic University of Madinah and Islamic institutions in the Middle East.²¹ Upon their return to Indonesia, they introduced a more systematic Salafi method of da'wah, emphasizing a balance between spiritual (ruhiyah), intellectual (tsaqafiyah), and physical (jasadiyah) aspects.²² After the fall of the New Order regime (1998), Wahdah Islamiyah became active in the socio-political dynamics of Islam in South Sulawesi, including through the Committee for the Preparation of the Enforcement of Islamic Law (KPSSI).²³ Although the efforts to formalize Sharia law were unsuccessful, this experience expanded WI's network and opened up opportunities for collaboration with various Islamic organizations and government institutions.

Entering the 21st century, WI transformed into a national Islamic organization with hundreds of branches throughout Indonesia. Good relations with the government, especially since the era of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla, have strengthened Wahdah's position as a strategic partner of the state in the fields of da'wah, social welfare, and education.²⁴ Various social programs have been implemented, such as community development, health services, economic empowerment of the people, and integrated Islamic education. WI has formulated its vision to become an Islamic organization that contributes to the revival of Islamic civilization in Indonesia, with the slogan "Knowledge, Action, Da'wah, and Tarbiyah." Through its gentle, systematic, and knowledge-based da'wah spirit, Wahdah Islamiyah is now recognized as one of the modern Islamic organizations that emphasizes community development, unity, and the strengthening of national morality.²⁵

The Role of Women in Wahdah Islamiyah's Da'wah

Women in the Wahdah Islamiyah organization play a central role in da'wah activities through the Muslimah Wahdah (MW) institution, which was formed in the

²¹ Wakhid Sugiyarto, "Al-Wahdah Al Islamiyah: Radikaliame Dan Komitmen Kebangsaan," *Harmoni* 12, no. 1 (2013): 86–100,

<https://jurnalharmoni.kemenag.go.id/index.php/harmoni/article/view/196>.

²² Budiman, "Program Halaqah Tarbiyah Dpd Wahdah Islamiyah Takalar," *Dahzain Nur : Jurnal Pendidikan, Keislaman Dan Kemasyarakatan* 14, no. 2 (2024): 107–16, <https://doi.org/10.69834/dn.v14i2.249>.

²³ Asep Muhamad Iqbal, "Cyber-Activism and the Islamic Salafi Movement in Indonesia" (Murdoch University, 2017).

²⁴ Zaenuri et al., "Wahdah Islamiyah And the Shift In Religious Education Affiliations Among Urban Muslim Communities In South Sulawesi And Gorontalo."

²⁵ Jurdi, Aksa, and Syarif, "Pembentukan Gerakan Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah 1985-1991: Perspektif."

mid-1980s.²⁶ The daiyah (female preachers) are not only the objects of da'wah, but also active subjects who design and implement da'wah strategies at various levels of society.²⁷ The organizational structure of Muslimah Wahdah has an organized hierarchy from the central level to branches and sub-branches, with divisions covering education, da'wah, social, and economic fields. This structure allows WI women to have autonomy in designing da'wah programs that suit the needs of the women's community, while remaining in coordination with the central leadership of Wahdah Islamiyah.²⁸ A strict cadre system through halaqah tarbiyah is the backbone of the formation of competent daiyah, where each member undergoes a tiered training process from mutarabbiyah (student) to murabbi (mentor) to daiyah who are able to preach independently.²⁹

The concrete forms of Wahdah Islamiyah women's da'wah activities cover a broad spectrum, from micro to macro activities. *First*, at the micro level: Personal da'wah is carried out through a one-on-one mentoring system between murabbiyah and mutarabbiyah, where intensive guidance is provided on spiritual, intellectual, and moral aspects. Halaqah tarbiyah is the main forum for group da'wah, where a small group of female students (usually 5-10 people) meet regularly to study basic books such as Tauhid, Fiqh, and Sirah Nabawiyah.³⁰

Second, at the meso level: Regular recitations at mosques and communities serve as a medium for preaching that reaches housewives and young women.³¹ And third, at the macro level: Senior female preachers appear in large-scale preaching events, Islamic seminars, and even as speakers at various public forums. Interestingly, WI women are also highly adaptive to digital technology developments, utilizing social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp groups to disseminate da'wah content, hold online discussions, and build virtual communities that transcend geographical boundaries.³²

²⁶ Nurul Fadilah, "Peran Lembaga Dakwah Dalam Mengembangkan Potensi Mahasiswa Di Jurusan Manajemen Dakwah," *Mudabbir: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 3, no. 2 (2022): 390.

²⁷ Jurdi, Aksa, and Syarif, "Pembentukan Gerakan Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah 1985-1991: Perspektif."

²⁸ Miftakhuddin, "Peran Komunikasi Dalam Kepemimpinan Dakwah Islam," *An-Nida': Jurnal Prodi Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* IX, no. September 2020 (2021): 88–106.

²⁹ Widia Permatasari, "Strategi Dakwah Karimah Remaja Masjid Raya Mujahidin Pontianak," *J-MD: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 3, no. 2 (2022): 15, <https://doi.org/10.24260/j-md.v3i2.1000>.

³⁰ A Zaenuri, Lahaji Lahaji, and H Yusuf, "The Role Social Media in Forming Religious Identity of Veiled Female Students in Higher Education (Study on Veiled Students Phenomena at College in Gorontalo)," in *AICIS*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.1-10-2019.2291684>.

³¹ Arisnaini, "Implementasi Tarbiyah Halaqah Pada Wahdah Islamiyah Dalam Membentuk Akhlak Pemuda Muslim Di Banda Aceh," *Serambi Tarbawi* 9, no. 1 (2021): 93, <https://doi.org/10.32672/tarbawi.v9i1.5056>.

³² Darwis, "Peranan Tarbiyah Halakah Pada Wahdah Islamiyah, Lembaga Dakwah Kampus Al-Insyirah, Dan Forum Komunikasi Mahasiswa Islam Al-Balagh Dalam Membentuk Akhlak Pemuda Muslim Di Watampone," *Jurnal Al-Qayyimah* 2, no. 2 (2020): 112,

The difference in the role of women's da'wah between the domestic and public spheres reflects the complex negotiation between Salafi ideology and contemporary social realities. 1). In the domestic sphere, WI women are encouraged to be the first madrasah for their children, to apply Islamic education from an early age, and to be role models of piety within the family. The role of a wife who supports her husband in his da'wah activities is also a priority, based on the concept that "behind the success of a dai is a pious wife who supports him"³³; 2). However, in the public sphere, WI women are also active as teachers in integrated Islamic schools, managers of early childhood education institutions, coordinators of social programs, and even drivers of the sharia economy through community-based cooperatives and MSMEs.³⁴

This division of roles is not dichotomous, but rather complementary. Women are required to succeed in both spheres at the same time, which in practice often creates a double burden. However, for Wahdah Muslim women activists, this duality of roles is seen as a form of total devotion to da'wah: building a strong Muslim generation through the family (domestic sphere) while expanding the basis of da'wah through public activities.³⁵

The special da'wah strategy developed by Wahdah Islamiyah women demonstrates a deep understanding of the psychology and needs of contemporary Muslim women. A family-based approach is the main strategy, where da'wah does not begin with rigid doctrinal lectures, but rather through the cultivation of warm and personal relationships.³⁶ The "Sekolah Ibu" (School for Mothers) program is one innovation that has attracted many participants, with a curriculum that covers Islamic parenting, household management, reproductive health from a sharia perspective, and practical skills such as cooking and entrepreneurship³⁷. For teenagers, the youth tarbiyah program is designed with a more contextual approach, discussing issues such as healthy socializing, social media from an Islamic perspective, and preparation for becoming adult Muslim women. Another effective strategy is utilizing social gatherings like arisan, PKK mothers' study groups, and local community activities as

<https://doi.org/10.30863/aqym.v2i2.656>.

³³ Muhammad Khairil, "Wahdah Islamiyah's Counter-Radicalism Strategy Through The New Media Network in Da'wah Development Of Palu City," *Al-Ulum* 18, no. 2 (2018): 417, <https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v18i2.610>.

³⁴ Emma Baulch and Alila Pramiyanti, "Hijabers on Instagram: Using Visual Social Media to Construct the Ideal Muslim Woman," *Social Media and Society* 4, no. 4 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118800308>.

³⁵ D I Maluku et al., "Dakwah Abdul Gani Kasuba Dalam Membangun Damai Di Maluku Utara Tahun 1999-2000," *Islamic Communication Journal* 5, no. 1 (2020): 100.

³⁶ Ilyas Supena, "Transforming Da'wah Strategies during the Pandemic: Addressing Religious Community Resistance to Health Protocols," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 44, no. 1 (2024): 72, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v44.1.22050>.

³⁷ Arisnaini, "Implementasi Tarbiyah Halaqah Pada Wahdah Islamiyah Dalam Membentuk Akhlak Pemuda Muslim Di Banda Aceh."

entry points to gradually and non-forcefully introduce Salafi Islamic values.³⁸

The impact of Wahdah Islamiyah's women's da'wah activities can be seen from the organization's geographical expansion and socio-religious transformation in various regions, especially in Eastern Indonesia. Many women from professional and academic circles who initially lived a nominal religious life underwent a transformation into da'wah activists after joining the Wahdah Muslimah halaqah.³⁹ This phenomenon of re-Islamization shows that women's da'wah is effective in reaching segments of society that are difficult for male da'wah activists to access, especially educated young mothers who are looking for a model of piety that is compatible with modern urban life.⁴⁰ This success can also be seen in the growth of Islamic educational institutions managed by Wahdah Islamiyah, from early childhood education to universities, where women are the backbone both as educators and administrators.

Wahdah Islamiyah Women's Religious Authority

The involvement of women in Wahdah Islamiyah's da'wah shows an interesting change in the pattern of religious authority, which has long been dominated by men. They are not only complementary to the organization's activities, but also appear as figures who are trusted to convey religious values in the community.⁴¹ This phenomenon shows the long process of how women build trust and recognition within a patriarchal structure. To see how this process occurs, Max Weber's theory of religious authority is used because it is able to explain the sources of legitimacy that make a person recognized as an authority figure, whether sourced from tradition, personal charisma, or institutional rules.⁴² Through this framework, the discussion will explore how Wahdah Islamiyah women negotiate their roles between the boundaries of tradition and the needs of modernity in da'wah, as well as how they gain recognition as figures with religious authority within their organization.⁴³

³⁸ Jurdi, Aksa, and Syarif, "Pembentukan Gerakan Muslimah Wahdah Islamiyah 1985-1991: Perspektif."

³⁹ Jumriani, Rusdianto, and Gani, "Media Sosial Dan Personal Branding Kader Wahdah Islamiyah Kota Palopo."

⁴⁰ Nurul Fadilah and Baharudin Ardani, "Persepsi Atas Relevansi Dan Prospek Karir Manajemen Dakwah : Studi Kasus Mahasiswa Magister Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta," *Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah UIN Sunan Kalijaga* 10, no. 2 (2024): 76.

⁴¹ Nurul Fadilah, Muhammad Yakub, and Muhammad Firdaus, "Integrasi Prinsip Syariah Compliance Dan Manajemen Risiko Keuangan Pada Lembaga Keuangan Syariah Di Indonesia," *Balanca : Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Islam* 7, no. 1 (2025): 23–46.

⁴² Leni Franken and Centre Pieter Gillis, "Islamic Religious Education in Belgian State Schools: A Post-Secular Perspective," *Journal of Beliefs and Values : Studies in Religion and Education* 39, no. 2 (2018): 132–43.

⁴³ Syamsuar Hamka, "Descriptive Analysis of The Integrative Curriculum of SMP Islam Terpadu Wahdah Islamiyah Makassar," *JURNAL 12 WAIHERU* 9, no. 1 (2023): 28.

1. **Traditional authority**

Authority within the Wahdah Islamiyah community stems from adherence to values and structures that are deeply rooted in Salafi ideology. Within this community, Wahdah Muslim women continue to recognize the role of male scholars as the primary authority figures and position themselves in accordance with roles that are considered natural, such as raising families, educating children, and conveying Islamic values among women. However, this position does not make them passive. Rather, through the tarbiyah process they undergo, Wahdah women utilize this traditional space as a source of moral legitimacy. They act as guardians of family and community piety, which makes them respected by their surroundings. Therefore, traditional authority is not a limitation, but rather a starting point for building social trust in the sphere of da'wah, which has traditionally been dominated by men.⁴⁴

2. **Charismatic authority**

This authority stems from the personal and spiritual strength of the female preachers. Many Wahdah Muslim women cadres have studied religion at STIBA Makassar or are active in intensive tarbiyah halaqah, so they are known for their depth of knowledge, exemplary morals, and heartfelt preaching. This charisma does not come from positions or formal structures, but rather from the knowledge of and their sincerity in preaching. In Weber's view, this type of authority is personal and capable of moving others emotionally and intellectually. Therefore, female preachers are often regarded as moral references by the community, sometimes even more respected than those who hold structural positions in organizations.⁴⁵

3. **Legal-rational authority**

This can be seen from the Wahdah Muslim Women's organization system, which is quite neat and institutionalized. This structure provides space for women to obtain formal legitimacy, for example through positions such as coordinator of da'wah, head of the education division, or teacher in the coaching program. The tiered cadre mechanism from mutarabbiyah to daiyah shows that authority is no longer based on age or gender, but on ability, knowledge, and responsibility for da'wah. This pattern shows a shift from traditional authority to a more rational and professional form.⁴⁶

From these three forms of authority, it can be seen that Wahdah Islamiyah women build their religious influence through a long process of negotiation between traditional values and an ever-changing social reality. They do not seek to fight the

⁴⁴ Baulch and Pramianti, "Hijabers on Instagram: Using Visual Social Media to Construct the Ideal Muslim Woman."

⁴⁵ Jajang Jahroni, "THE NARRATIVES OF ISLAMIC SCHOOL STUDENTS: Contesting Salafism in a Saudi-Wahabi Educational Institutions in Contemporary Jakarta," *Ulumuna* 24, no. 1 (2020): 77–104.

⁴⁶ Khairil, "Wahdah Islamiyah's Counter-Radicalism Strategy Through The New Media Network in Da'wah Development Of Palu City."

patriarchal system, but rather negotiate it by demonstrating competence, dedication, and integrity. From Weber's perspective, this strategy reveals the emergence of a hybrid form of religious authority in which tradition, charisma, and rationality are combined so that Wahdah women are able to assert themselves as an important part of the da'wah movement, both as teachers of doctrine and as moral supporters within their community.

The limits of women's authority are usually set in specific areas and targets of da'wah, such as women, children, and families. However, behind these limitations, recognition of their authority emerges through two channels: formally through positions in the Wahdah Muslimah structure, and socially through the community's trust in their integrity and knowledge.⁴⁷ In fact, some senior female preachers have earned the respect of male figures for their active role in educating and guiding the community. Thus, the legitimacy of Wahdah Islamiyah women is formed not because of structural power, but because of their knowledge, commitment to preaching, and ability to maintain a balance between traditional values and public roles.⁴⁸

Gender Representation in Da'wah Practices

Gender representation in Wahdah Islamiyah's women's da'wah practices reflects how Muslim women's identities and roles are shaped, understood, and presented through religious activities.⁴⁹ In the context of gender representation theory, the meaning of "ideal woman" is not natural, but is shaped by language, symbols, and social practices that take place within the organization. Through this process, Wahdah Islamiyah not only conveys religious values, but also constructs an image of what a good Muslim woman should be like, how she should act, and in which spaces she should appear.⁵⁰ Therefore, Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of gender representation is a leading pioneer of representation theory in cultural studies, used to examine how constructions of meaning about women emerge, are reinforced, and negotiated in Wahdah's Muslim women's da'wah.

1. **The construction of the image of women** shows how organizations shape the ideal image of Muslim women. In Wahdah Islamiyah's da'wah, the ideal image of women is that of pious, knowledgeable, and obedient to religious teachings. This character is not only understood as a moral requirement, but also as a social identity that is reinforced through tarbiyah, halaqah, and cadre development activities. Through the repetition of these values, Wahdah Islamiyah seeks to create

⁴⁷ Chaplin, "Salafi Islamic Piety as Civic Activism: Wahdah Islamiyah and Differentiated Citizenship in Indonesia."

⁴⁸ Shamsul and Mariyanto, "Efektivitas Metode Talaqqi Pada Halaqah Tarbiyah Di Wahdah Islamiyah Sulawesi Tenggara Dan Analisis Metode Talaqqi Dalam Kitab," *Sang Pencerah* 7, no. 1 (2021): 27.

⁴⁹ Hardi and Suparto, "Transformasi Sosial Umat Islam Di Kota Makassar Terhadap Kegiatan Sosial Dari Gerakan Dakwah Wahdah Islamiyah."

⁵⁰ Nurul Fadilah et al., "Habib Ja'far's Digital Da'wah Strategy on Youtube: Inspiring Through the Log In Theme," *Busyro* 6, no. 2 (2025): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.55352/5ppwgg38>.

behavioral standards for Muslim women who want to be considered ideal. Women who are active in da'wah while still carrying out their domestic responsibilities as wives and mothers are considered a reflection of the balance between personal piety and social responsibility. In this context, the representation of Muslim women is not merely following a predetermined role, but also becoming a moral symbol for the wider community.⁵¹

2. **The social narrative** shows how the language of preaching and cadre development is used to construct a specific discourse on the role of women. Wahdah Islamiyah positions women as figures with dual roles: on the one hand as guardians of family harmony, and on the other as educators and social activists. Through lectures, tarbiyah modules, and cadre training, the organization instills the narrative that women's social activities are not a form of rebellion against nature, but rather a manifestation of a Muslim woman's moral responsibility to the ummah. This narrative subtly balances the demands of traditional piety and public involvement, allowing women to be active in society without being considered in violation of religious norms. Within this framework, the language of da'wah becomes the main tool in shaping gender awareness that is submissive to Islamic values but still provides space for women's participation.⁵²
3. **Visual symbols and cultural expressions** illustrate how Wahdah women express their identity in public spaces. The wearing of the syar'i headscarf, loose clothing, and gentle communication style are strong visual representations of the organization's piety and moral identity. These symbols not only serve as a form of obedience to Sharia law, but also as a distinguishing feature between Wahdah Muslim women and other Muslim women outside their community. In every public activity, the way of dressing and behaving becomes a statement of values that affirms Wahdah's position as a women's movement that adheres to Islamic norms. On the other hand, these symbols also become a tool of moral legitimacy, because through an outward appearance that is in accordance with religious guidance, Wahdah women gain social trust and are recognized as the ideal representation of modern Muslim women who still uphold traditional values.⁵³
4. **The tension surrounding gender roles** highlights the dynamic between empowerment and restriction experienced by Wahdah women. The organization provides ample space for women to engage in da'wah, education, and social activities, but still limits their authority to the female sphere. They can become teachers, lecturers, or field leaders, but cannot occupy the highest leadership positions in the organizational structure, which are filled by male scholars. This tension shows that gender representation in Wahdah Islamiyah is not singular in that it

⁵¹ Widayaiswara and Madya, "'Jamaah' As a Communication Symbol of Da'wah of Wahdah Islamiyah Group."

⁵² Yusup and Shamsul, "Model Pendidikan Kaderisasi Da'wah di Wahdah Islamiyah Dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Islam."

⁵³ Dwi Budiman Assiroji, "Konsep Komunikasi Kepemimpinan Dakwah Dalam Menghadapi Generasi Digital," *Jurnal Da'wah: Risalah Merintis, Da'wah Melanjutkan* 4, no. 01 (2021): 57–69, <https://doi.org/10.38214/jurnaldawahstidnatsir.v4i01.90>.

Based on this analysis, it can be understood that gender representation in Wahdah Islamiyah's female da'wah practices shows how religious and cultural values come together to shape the ideal image of Muslim women. Through image construction, social narratives, visual symbols, and tension of meaning, Wahdah Islamiyah has succeeded in presenting a model of women who are active and knowledgeable, but still adhere to the religious boundaries they believe in. This representation not only strengthens the role of women in da'wah, but also shows how they negotiate their identity between the demands of tradition and ever-evolving social change.

This study concludes that Wahdah Islamiyah women play an important role in promoting Islamic preaching and education, not merely as complements, but as active subjects who design and implement preaching strategies in various social spheres. Through the *Wahdah Muslimah* institution, they are able to balance their domestic and public roles by making preaching activities a means of spiritual guidance and social empowerment. In terms of religious authority, Wahdah women build legitimacy through three forms of authority as described by Max Weber: traditional authority derived from Salafi values and patriarchal structures; charismatic authority arising from personal knowledge and exemplary behavior; and legal-rational authority obtained through formal positions and organizational cadre systems. The three combine to form a hybrid authority that allows women to gain moral and social recognition without opposing the existing system. Meanwhile, through gender representation theory, this study shows that Wahdah Islamiyah shapes the ideal image of Muslim women as pious, knowledgeable, obedient, and active, with symbols such as the syar'i hijab, polite behavior, and narratives about the natural role of women that continue to be reproduced in da'wah activities. Despite limitations in a patriarchal structure, Wahdah Islamiyah women successfully negotiate their identity by combining traditional piety and modern social participation. Thus, women's da'wah in Wahdah Islamiyah is proof that conservative religious ideology can adapt to the needs of the times, presenting a new form of leadership and representation of Muslim women who are knowledgeable, influential, and remain grounded in Islamic values.

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