

The Role of the Aisiyyah Organisation in the Ponjong Branch in Gender Equality in the Field of Islamic Education for Women

Titis Wahyu Muji Lestari

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta
24204011002@student.uin-suka.ac.id

Sangkot Sirait

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta
sangkot.sirait@uin-suka.ac.id

Resti Okvani Kartika

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta
Okvaniresti510@gmail.com

Moh. Ferdi Hasan

Universitas Al-Falah As-Sunniah
Moh.ferdihasan@uas.ac.id

Hervi Madadina Siswanto

Central South University, China
243519049@csu.edu.cn

Abstract: This study aims to reveal the role of the ‘Aisiyyah Ponjong Branch organisation in promoting women’s emancipation in the field of Islamic education. The Muhammadiyah women’s organisation, ‘Aisiyyah, consistently empowers women through various educational, social, economic, and da’wah programs. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with observation, interviews, and documentation of the administrators of the Ponjong Branch of ‘Aisiyyah. The qualitative-descriptive approach with observation, interviews, and documentation of the administrators of the Ponjong Branch of ‘Aisiyyah was used as the research data collection technique. The results of the study show that ‘Aisiyyah Ponjong actively manages early childhood education institutions, provides teacher training, and is involved in health, legal, and economic counselling. In addition, they also carry out digital-based da’wah and collaborate with other organisations to expand their influence. The obstacles include limited time and funds, as well as low community participation in da’wah activities. However, creative solutions such as flexible working hours agreed upon by management, the use of technology for da’wah, and the organisation’s economic independence have been implemented to overcome these obstacles. These efforts have made the Ponjong Branch of ‘Aisiyyah a centre of significant change in creating gender equality through Islamic education.

Keywords: *Aisiyyah Organisation, Gender Equality, Islamic Education*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap peran organisasi ‘Aisiyyah Cabang Ponjong dalam mendorong emansipasi wanita di bidang pendidikan Islam. Kedudukan organisasi perempuan Muhammadiyah, ‘Aisiyyah secara konsisten memberdayakan perempuan melalui berbagai program pendidikan, sosial, ekonomi, dan dakwah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-deskriptif dengan metode observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi terhadap pengurus ‘Aisiyyah Cabang Ponjong. Pendekatan kualitatif-deskriptif dengan metode observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi terhadap pengurus ‘Aisiyyah Cabang Ponjong sebagai teknik

pengumpulan data penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 'Aisyiyah Ponjong aktif mengelola lembaga pendidikan anak usia dini, memberikan pelatihan guru, serta terlibat dalam penyuluhan kesehatan, hukum, dan ekonomi. Selain itu, mereka juga menjalankan dakwah berbasis digital dan menjalin kolaborasi lintas organisasi untuk memperluas pengaruhnya. Kendala yang dihadapi meliputi keterbatasan waktu, dana, serta rendahnya partisipasi masyarakat dalam kegiatan dakwah. Namun, solusi kreatif seperti fleksibilitas waktu yang sesuai kesepakatan pengurus, pemanfaatan teknologi sebagai sarana dakwah, dan kemandirian ekonomi organisasi telah diterapkan untuk mengatasi hambatan tersebut. Keseluruhan upaya ini menjadikan 'Aisyiyah Cabang Ponjong sebagai pusat perubahan yang signifikan dalam menciptakan kesetaraan gender melalui pendidikan Islam

Kata Kunci: *Organisasi Aisyiyah, Emansipasi Wanita, Pendidikan Islam.*

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a religion that greatly values the dignity of women, a respect that no other tribe or religion, including ancient civilisations before Islam, has ever given. Women are creatures of God, gifted with gentleness and emotional sensitivity. It is this gentleness and sensitivity that enable women to become figures who teach love and compassion, something that may be difficult for men to achieve.¹ Women are endowed with gentleness and kindness, which create a sense of comfort and security for their children, making them more ready to receive education optimally.² That is why women should have equal rights, including in education, as a foundation for themselves and to teach others.

In the context of Islam in Indonesia, women's emancipation does not only mean women's involvement in the public sphere, but also the struggle to obtain equal rights in education and to contribute actively to society. One organisation that consistently fights for women's emancipation in the field of Islamic education is 'Aisyiyah, an autonomous women's organisation within Muhammadiyah. The founder of the Aisyiyah organisation was Nyai Siti Walidah, the wife of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of the Muhammadiyah movement.³ Siti Walidah was a Muslim woman who fought for women's equality and played an essential role in advancing women's rights, especially within the Aisyiyah organisation and in the Kauman neighbourhood of Yogyakarta.

¹ Nicky Estu Putu Muchtar Khoirul Muthrofin, "PENDIDIKAN PEREMPUAN: Kajian Sejarah Yang Terabaikan," *Lentera Pendidikan : Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan* 11, no. 1 (2008): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.24252/lp.2008v11n1a1>.

² Sahrul Ramadhan Nurul Izati Mardiah, Luthfiah Anwar Sadat, Ihlas Yayuk Kusumawati, "Analisis Pergerakan Pendidikan Perempuan Serta Kiprah Siti Walidah Di Aisyiyah," *Tajdid: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman Dan Keanusiaan*, n.d., 60–74, www.ajas.uoanbar.edu.iq.

³ Syifa Ulha Aldira, Aguswan Aguswan, and Rosniati Hakim, "Siti Walidah's Thoughts on the Concept of Feminism and Its Relevance to Islamic Education," *Ruhama : Islamic Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2024): 23–36, <https://doi.org/10.31869/ruhama.v7i1.5418>.

Siti Walidah's passion is expressed through the management of educational institutions, training, and social activities, all aimed at strengthening women's role in building a progressive Islamic society. Siti Walidah has laid the foundation for the struggle for women's equal rights in Islam. The strong message she conveyed to her students was that women should not have a small or weak spirit, but rather a strong one, like that of a warrior princess. This message deeply touched the hearts of women, emphasising that they should not be considered weak simply because society views them as having only a role in the home.

In accordance with Muhammadiyah Decree No. 1/66, the organisation founded by Siti Waidah, 'Aisyiyah, was established as an autonomous organisation within Muhammadiyah to achieve its objectives.⁴ Ortom is part of the Muhammadiyah Organisation, established by the Muhammadiyah Central Leadership, which grants authority and roles to women to maintain the organisation's unity. Therefore, Aisyiyah's organisational structure is similar to that of Muhammadiyah, comprising two types: vertical and horizontal. The vertical structure includes leadership at the branch, regional, and central levels. Meanwhile, the horizontal structure covers various charitable activities carried out by 'Aisyiyah.⁵ In accordance with Aisyiyah's organisational structure, each level of leadership has its own program tailored to its specific conditions. One example is the leadership of the Ponjong branch of Aisyiyah, which promotes a gender paradigm that encourages women to be active outside the domestic sphere, including in da'wah, education, social affairs, and health.

The Aisyiyah movement at various levels certainly has its own programs and roles at the branch level. For example, in Ponjong, it has demonstrated a real commitment to empowering women through various educational programs. The existence of academic institutions such as the Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal (ABA) kindergarten in Ponjong, which the Aisyiyah Foundation manages, is concrete evidence of this organisation's role in providing access to early childhood education for children, especially girls, while also serving as a space for capacity building for mothers and female educators in the region. In addition, 'Aisyiyah is also active in social activities and the management of orphanages, which not only provide protection for girls but also instill Islamic

⁴ Ph. D. Ro'fah, *Posisi Dan Jatidiri 'Aisyiyah Perubahan Dan Perkembangan 1917-1998* (Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah, 2016).

⁵ Ph. D Ro'fah, *Posisi Dan Jatidiri 'Aisyiyah* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Suara Muhammadiyah, 2016).

values, independence, and optimism in their lives.⁶ Through these various initiatives, the Ponjong Branch of ‘Aisiyiah plays an essential role in promoting women’s emancipation in the field of Islamic education, while also serving as a role model for women’s movements at the local and national levels.

The author uses several literature reviews as references to ensure this research has a meaningful impact across various elements. Therefore, the author feels it is necessary to present the state of the art by describing several relevant prior studies.

First, a journal titled “Aisiyiah’s Struggle in the Social and Educational Fields in Yogyakarta from 1917 to 1945”.⁷ The study’s results show that Aisiyiah is a religious-based women’s organisation within the Muhammadiyah organisation. Muhammadiyah’s values are a consequence of the shahada pledge that is implemented in all aspects of life. These values are embodied in various institutions engaged in education, social, religious, and health fields, in accordance with human needs. The impact is evident through progress, improvement, renewal, and equal access to education for women. As a result, women now have greater opportunities to enjoy educational services.

Second, a journal titled “Siti Walidah: Pioneer of Women’s Emancipation and Education in Muhammadiyah”.⁸ This study reveals that through her active role in the ‘Aisiyiah organisation, Siti Walidah contributed to the advancement of women’s education, rejected discriminatory practices such as forced marriage, and initiated various social and economic empowerment programs. In addition, her contributions are evident in the establishment of educational institutions such as the ‘Aisiyiah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten and ‘Aisiyiah University.

Third, a journal titled “The Role of Siti Walidah in Women’s Empowerment through Education in the Muhammadiyah Environment”.⁹ This study shows that Siti Walidah held progressive views on the importance of women’s education. The impact of the education movement led by Siti Walidah

⁶ Kurniawan Ricky Alviano, “Sejarah Amal Usaha Bidang Pendidikan Dan Kesejahteraan Sosial Aisiyiah Daerah Padang Pariaman (1965-1970),” *HISTORIA: Jurnal Program Studi Pendidikan Sejarah* 11, no. 1 (2023): 49, <https://doi.org/10.24127/hj.v11i1.6861>.

⁷ Crisna Dewi, Y.B Jurahman, and Subaryana, “Perjuangan Aisiyiah Dalam Bidang Sosial Dan Pendidikan Di Yogyakarta Tahun 1917-1945,” *RINONTJE: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Penelitian Sejarah* 2, no. 2 (2021): 34–45.

⁸ Astika Nurul Hidayah Syahla Sri Dhiya Ulhaq, Alvira Fitriani, Najwa Qholivia Putri, Dzulfikar Rafi, Hanafiah, Lila Nur Az Zhro, “Siti Walidah: Pelopor Emansipasi Dan Pendidikan Perempuan Dalam Muhammadiyah” 2, no. November 1912 (2025).

⁹ Fatimah, St. Nurhayati Ali, and Aryanti Puspita Sari, “Peran Siti Walidah Dalam Pemberdayaan Perempuan Melalui Pendidikan Di Lingkungan Muhammadiyah,” *Sulawesi Tenggara Educational* 5, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54297/seduj.v5i1.1118>.

extended beyond equipping women with knowledge. In addition, Siti Walidah opened up access for women to various social and economic opportunities. Thus, Siti Walidah contributed significantly to the history of women's empowerment education in Indonesia.

In the context of previous research, this study has a distinguishing feature: it explores in greater depth the role of Aisyiyah Ponjong in women's emancipation, particularly in Islamic education. Through this study, we hope to understand the role of the Aisyiyah organisation in advancing women's rights within the development of Islamic teaching. This research is essential because the role of women has not received sufficient attention in the narrative of Islamic education in Indonesia. By emphasising the role of women in the Aisyiyah organisation, we can deepen our understanding of their contributions to educating the nation's future generations, especially in developing Islamic education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Gender Equality

Gender equality is generally understood as equality between people based on sex. Webster's New World Dictionary defines gender as "the apparent disparity between men and women in values and behaviour," meaning that gender refers to differences in values and behaviour. Linda L Lindsey, in Yogi Habi Sidiq et al., states that all community decisions that involve designating someone as male or female fall within the realm of gender.¹⁰

In general, gender is divided into two categories: gender and sex. The word gender comes from the English word *gen*, which is understood in Indonesian as gender. According to Fakhri, sex refers to the biological distinction between male and female, such as males having testicles (testicles) and producing sperm. In contrast, females have reproductive organs such as the uterus, vagina, and breasts for breastfeeding.¹¹ This is inherent in humans according to their respective roles or functions, referred to as nature or something that Allah SWT has determined.

Meanwhile, gender is a trait inherent to men and women that is socially constructed due to cultural, religious, and political influences. It is not a natural trait inherent to a particular sex, but rather a trait anyone can play. Gender

¹⁰ Yogi Hasbi Sidiq and M. Erihadiana, "Gender Dalam Pandangan Islam," *JIIIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 5, no. 3 (2022): 875–82, <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v5i3.502>.

¹¹ Eti Nurhayati Umi Azizaturrosyidah, Muhammad Faiz Amalia, Siti Fatimah, "Konsep Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *Tsamratul Fikri | Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, no. 1 (2020): 31, <https://doi.org/10.36667/tf.v14i1.375>.

differences can change at any time and are conditional, such as society's justification of weak women and strong men, to the extent that domestic affairs are constantly played out by women who are always seen as taking care of the kitchen, the well, and the bed. Meanwhile, men are given freedom in the public sphere.¹² This is where gender inequality stems from, as it is caused by an unfair division of roles, leading to discrimination and certain stereotypes against women.

Starting from social reality, many have spoken out about female justice fighters, feminists. This struggle first began in Western society and received a massive response from Eastern societies, especially Muslim societies. The majority of Muslim feminist fighters, both from abroad and within the country (Indonesia), such as Fatima Mernis,¹³ Aminah Wadud,¹⁴ and Zaitunah Subhan.¹⁵ They agree that gender inequality stems from certain social foundations influenced by cultural factors and interpretations of religious scriptures.

It is undeniable that religion plays a role in maintaining this dominance through the interpretation of religious texts, reinforced by theological legitimacy, as a form of justification for teachings considered to represent God's will. Thus, it is clear that interpretive texts originating in patriarchal traditions and cultures have become stigmas that are embraced and perpetuated by society from generation to generation.¹⁶ Therefore, throughout human history, women have been discriminated against and even exploited, socially, culturally, politically, and economically.

Gender equality can be achieved by reconstructing social, cultural, and theological understandings that are more equitable towards women. It is necessary to change society's perspective that gender role differences are not natural, but rather the result of social constructs that can be changed. This awareness forms the basis for creating balanced relationships between men and

¹² Wahyuddin Naro, "Artikulasi Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Pendidikan (Perspektif Islam)," *Jurnal Diskursus Islam* 3 (2015): 311–28.

¹³ Andri Sutrisno and Dina Salsabela, "Konsep Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Fatima Mernis," *Sophist: Jurnal Sosial Politik Kajian Islam Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2023): 225–41, <https://doi.org/10.20414/sophist.v4i2.73>.

¹⁴ Diana Khotibi, "Penafsiran Zaitunah Subhan Dan Aminah Wadud Tentang Kebebasan Perempuan," *MUSHAF: Jurnal Tafsir Berwawasan Keindonesiaan* 1, no. 1 (2020): 109–44, <https://doi.org/10.33650/mushaf.v1i1.1345>.

¹⁵ Khotibi.

¹⁶ Tri Soesantari et al., "Developing Reading Access: Study of The Liberal Feminist Movement of Aisyiyah in East Java," *International Journal of Information, Diversity and Inclusion* 7, no. 1–2 (2023): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.33137/ijidi.v7i1/2.39284>.

women, so that both have equal opportunities in various areas of life and are free from discrimination and injustice.

The Position of the Aisiyyah Organisation on Gender Equality

The 'Aisiyyah organisation has a very strategic position in fighting for gender equality in Indonesia. Its main objective is to raise public awareness, especially among women, of the issues that led to the establishment of this organisation. It is committed to promoting the view that Islam elevates the status of women through religious, educational, and social approaches.¹⁷

The position of 'Aisiyyah in the context of gender equality is also evident in the progressive orientation of its movement¹⁸. In "Aisiyyah Organisational Communication in Realising the 'True Islamic Society" (ASPIKOM Journal), it is explained that 'Aisiyyah carries out effective organisational communication to spread the values of justice and equality. Through persuasive communication grounded in the value of *habumminannas* (interpersonal relationships), this organisation has expanded its influence across various levels of society while strengthening women's role as agents of social change.

In addition,¹⁹ in her article "Aisiyyah and Its Role in Improving the Status of Women" (Kaganga Journal), she emphasises that 'Aisiyyah plays an essential role in changing society's paradigm regarding women. Once considered to have only domestic roles, women in the 'Aisiyyah community are now able to take on roles in education, health, law and human rights, and economics. 'Aisiyyah actively contributes to improving the quality of life of women and their families.

In the field of education, research²⁰ in "Aisiyyah's Concept of Early Childhood Education" (Journal of Islamic Civilisation and Business), it is explained that Aisiyyah educational institutions, from early childhood education to higher education, not only provide access to education for women but also instill values of equality, social responsibility, and Islamic leadership. This shows

¹⁷ Ro'fah, *Posisi Dan Jatidiri 'Aisiyyah*.

¹⁸ Adhianty Nurjanah et al., "Aisiyyah Organizational Communication in Realizing the True Islamic Society," *Jurnal ASPIKOM* 7, no. 1 (2022): 142, <https://doi.org/10.24329/aspiKOM.v7i1.895>.

¹⁹ Remiswal Remiswal, Suryadi Fajri, and Rahmadina Putri, "Aisiyyah Dan Peranannya Dalam Meningkatkan Derajat Kaum Perempuan," *Kaganga: Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah Dan Riset Sosial Humaniora* 4, no. 1 (2021): 71–77, <https://doi.org/10.31539/kaganga.v4i1.2341>.

²⁰ Muh Arbiansyah a Nur Sumarti, Abuddin Nata, Adian Husaini, Maemunah Sa'diyah, "Aisiyyah's Concept of Early Childhood Education," *Journal of Indonesian Culture and Beliefs (JICB)* 2, no. 1 (2023): 49–60, <https://journal.formosapublisher.org/index.php/jicb>.

that, from Aisiyyah's perspective, the struggle for gender equality is rooted in education as a tool for social transformation.

In addition, research²¹ entitled "Study of the Liberal Feminist Movement of Aisiyyah in East Java" (JSTOR) shows that Aisiyyah's struggle for gender equality shares similar values with the liberal feminist movement, even though it is framed within an Islamic perspective. This struggle emphasises women's freedom to think, work, and participate in public spaces with dignity, without imitating Western patterns.

Thus, 'Aisiyyah's position on gender equality is not merely as a supporting organisation of Muhammadiyah, but as a pioneer of the Islamic women's movement that promotes justice and balance between men and women. The concept of equality that Aisiyyah fights for is not confrontational but collaborative, as men and women are positioned as equal partners in realising a civilised Islamic society.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a case study approach to observe and play a direct role.²² This approach was used to analyse data and gain an in-depth understanding of organisational phenomena in women's emancipation within Islamic education. The analysis process was carried out in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The subjects of this study were the administrators of the Aisiyyah organisation, comprising the chairperson, vice chairperson, and cadre division of the Ponjong branch of Aisiyyah. The research data were collected using qualitative methods, with the research approach aimed at understanding social phenomena, experiences, and meanings from participants' perspectives.²³

The selection of this location was based on the consideration that Aisyah Cabang Ponjong is one of Muhammadiyah's women's organisations, firmly committed to advancing women's emancipation through Islamic education. The organisation's active involvement in programs such as early childhood education management, teacher training, social advocacy, and digital da'wah makes it an interesting subject for further research. Additionally, the uniqueness of the programs implemented by Aisiyyah Ponjong, particularly in education, makes this organisation a worthy focus of study.

²¹ Soesantari et al., "Developing Reading Access: Study of The Liberal Feminist Movement of Aisiyyah in East Java."

²² Aisyah Mutia Dawis et al., *Pengantar Metodologi Penelitian*, 2023.

²³ Sirajuddin Saleh, "Penerbit Pustaka Ramadhan, Bandung," *Analisis Data Kualitatif 1* (2017): 180, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/228075212.pdf>.

This research was conducted for approximately two weeks, from April 8 to April 26, 2025. This period was used to prepare research instruments, collect data through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyse the data. Data collection was carried out in stages according to the informants' availability, given that most were active administrators in the Ponjong Branch of Aisyiyah and also busy in other fields, such as education and social activities. The interview process lasted approximately 37 minutes and 39 seconds per informant, with data collection conducted at each informant's residence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

History of the Aisyiyah Organisation

On November 18, 1912, the Muhammadiyah organisation was founded in Yogyakarta by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, along with several of his students and members of Budi Utomo, to establish a permanent educational institution.²⁴ This movement was significant in promoting reforms across education, social welfare, health, and science. Muhammadiyah is a modernist Islamic movement that emphasises the importance of renewal, or *tajdid*, in understanding Islamic teachings so that they align with the times. One result is the emergence of scientists who have successfully combined Islamic principles with modern science, producing progressive ideas aimed at advancing humanity (Nizar, 2008).

One of the most influential Muhammadiyah scientists was Hj. Siti Walidah, better known as Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, is the wife of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan.²⁵ Siti Walidah had a deep concern for Islamic education, especially among women. She played a leading role in raising women's awareness of the importance of education, especially for women, at a time when access to education for women was limited. One of the founders of the Aisyiyah organisation, Nyai Siti Walidah, played an essential role in awakening Indonesian women. Because of this movement, women came to be considered equal to men in social life.²⁶

Before the official establishment of the Aisyiyah Organisation, the embryo of Aisyiyah had already grown through a women's study group called

²⁴ Errin Ainun Nisa, "Pandangan Dan Peran Organisasi Aisyiyah Terhadap Pendidikan Di Indonesia Tahun 1914-1923," *Warisan: Journal of History and Cultural Heritage* 3, no. 2 (2022): 51–57, <https://doi.org/10.34007/warisan.v3i2.1516>.

²⁵ Syahla Sri Dhiya Ulhaq, Alvira Fitriani, Najwa Qholivia Putri, Dzulfikar Rafi, Hanafiah, Lila Nur Az Zhro, "Siti Walidah: Pelopor Emansipasi Dan Pendidikan Perempuan Dalam Muhammadiyah."

²⁶ Lilis Ma'rufah and Hasep Saputra, "Implementasi Hak Dan Kewajiban Wanita Karir Aparatur Sipil Kantor Kementerian Agama Kota Lubuklinggau (Analisis Sosio-Normatif)," *Hutanasyah: Jurnal Hukum Tata Negara (Siyasah Syar'iyah)* 1, no. 1 (2022): 26–40.

Sapa Tresna (Sopo Tresno), which was formed in 1914 in Kauman, Yogyakarta. This study group served as a forum for women, including batik workers and young girls, to learn about religion and general knowledge. KH Ahmad Dahlan encouraged women, especially the younger generation, not only to be skilled in household matters but also to obtain formal and religious education equal to that of men. In 1917, through deliberations with Muhammadiyah leaders, it was decided to establish a women's organisation named "Aisyiyah," inspired by the name of the Prophet Muhammad's wife, Aisha bint Abu Bakr, who was known for her intelligence and broad knowledge. From the beginning, Aisyiyah focused on education, da'wah, and social movements. Among the most important were the establishment of Frobelschool in 1919, the first kindergarten founded by the Indonesian people, and the movement to eradicate illiteracy that began in 1923.²⁷

Aisyiyah has also been actively publishing the magazine "Suara Aisyiyah" since 1926 as a medium of communication and consolidation among its members. In its development, Aisyiyah has become a pioneer of the women's movement in Indonesia, fighting for women's rights, expanding access to education, and playing a role in health and family economics. The organisation has also been a member of the Indonesian Women's Congress (Kowani) since 1928.²⁸ Today, Aisyiyah has grown into the largest Islamic women's organisation in Indonesia, with a network spanning all provinces. Through various educational, missionary, social, and economic programs, Aisyiyah remains committed to empowering women and advancing the nation.

Aisyiyah's View on Gender Equality in Islam

Limitations in the division of roles and responsibilities occur amid the strong influence of patriarchal culture in Indonesia, where men are often considered to have a higher position than women. In families, men usually have greater control over budgets and work structures, limiting women's access to public spaces. However, Muhammadiyah figures, both men and women, are crucial to solving social problems and conducting research. Muhammadiyah teaches critical thinking, broadens horizons, and encourages social change through its educational institutions and da'wah activities. They demonstrate that Islam supports progress, equality, and justice with a spirit of renewal (tajdid).

²⁷ Ro'fah, *Posisi Dan Jatidiri 'Aisyiyah*.

²⁸ Ro'fah.

Women are also actively involved in da'wah, both as students and teachers.²⁹ Therefore, the role of women across sectors is also crucial to the nation.

Gender equality in Islam holds that men and women have equal status, without superiority or subordination, and that each has the same potential, functions, and roles in social and religious life. Aisyiyah views gender equality as vital for women, especially in the public sphere, without neglecting women's nature, which is more dominant in the domestic sphere. This organisation rejects discrimination against women and emphasises the importance of men supporting women in reducing their burdens, including household chores.³⁰ Therefore, both internal and external tasks are not gender-specific and should foster a sense of shared responsibility.

As an autonomous women's organisation within Muhammadiyah, Aisyiyah now plays a vital role in advancing women's empowerment. This organisation pays particular attention to issues affecting women and children, including reproductive health and women's capacity-building. In addition, Aisyiyah is actively involved in advocacy to advance women's rights and child protection, thereby helping create a safer, more supportive environment for women. Furthermore, Aisyiyah carries out various initiatives focused on education, the economy, and health. This organisation highlights multiple issues faced by women in social organisations.³¹ They remain steadfast in fulfilling their traditional family roles, even though they face various real and often complex problems.

Aisyiyah women consistently demonstrate courage and determination in fighting for their rights. They have successfully overcome various difficulties and performed their dual roles with strong support from their families and communities. They exist to encourage the next generation to fight for gender equality and social justice. The roles of Aisyiyah women in household life and the public sphere demonstrate the importance and value of women's dual roles in society. Through inclusive and sustainable struggles, they not only change women's lives but also enhance our understanding of what it means to be a woman.

²⁹ Ulfi Andrian Sari Aniek Rahmaniah, Emy Susanti, Dwi Windyastuti Budi Hendrarti, "The Indonesian Journal of the Social Sciences The Movement of Muhammadiyah Women : Religious Values , Culture , and Gender Equality" 13, no. 1 (2025).

³⁰ Afandi, "Aisyiyah: Islam Dan Muhammadiyah Setara Dalam Memandang Kaum Laki-Laki Dan Perempuan," 2025, <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2022/06/aisyiyah-islam-dan-muhammadiyah-setara-dalam-memandang-kaum-laki-laki-dan-perempuan/>.

³¹ Misrah Nisa Hanum Harahap, "Perencanaan Pengurus Aisyiyah Dalam Mensosialisasikan Regulasi KDRT Di Kota Medan," *QULUBANA: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 5, no. 1 (2024): 204–19, <https://doi.org/10.54396/qlb.v5i1.1268>.

The Role of Aisyiyah Ponjong Branch in Islamic Education and Emancipation

One concrete form of Aisyiyah's struggle is seen in its literacy movement and efforts to eradicate ignorance. In 1923, Aisyiyah launched its first illiteracy eradication program, which included teaching Arabic and Latin script. This activity involved young women and homemakers who studied together to increase their knowledge and strengthen women's participation in public spaces.³² Then, for the first time, Aisyiyah started a literacy program in 1923, teaching students Arabic and Latin letters. To increase knowledge and improve women's participation in public spaces, this activity involved young women and homemakers who studied together.³³ In 1926, Aisyiyah began publishing an organisational magazine, *Suara Aisyiyah*, first in Javanese. This magazine enabled Aisyiyah to publicise its various programs and activities, including strengthening its internal structure. Aisyiyah succeeded in expanding its role in supporting education, especially for women, alongside its leaders.³⁴

Through several interviews and literature reviews, the Ponjong Branch of Aisyiyah has played an essential role in the development of Islamic education in the Ponjong subdistrict, Gunungkidul:

a) Aisyah Education

As part of the Muhammadiyah women's organisation, Aisyiyah not only focuses on women's empowerment but is also active in education, particularly Islamic education aimed at shaping students' character and faith. In the context of Islamic education, according to observation data on April 8, 2025, the Ponjong Branch of Aisyiyah fully manages educational institutions such as the Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten -Kanak Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal (TK ABA) and Early Childhood Education (PAUD), which serve as training centres for early childhood with an Islamic values approach. The education provided emphasises the development of children's spiritual, moral, and social aspects, as well as the strengthening of Pancasila values, in line with students who are faithful, devout, and have noble character. Learning activities at TK ABA include introducing religious values through prayer and good character, and

³² Syahla Sri Dhiya Ulhaq, Alvira Fitriani, Najwa Qholivia Putri, Dzulfikar Rafi, Hanafiah, Lila Nur Az Zhro, "Siti Walidah : Pelopor Emansipasi Dan Pendidikan Perempuan Dalam Muhammadiyah."

³³ Syahla Sri Dhiya Ulhaq, Alvira Fitriani, Najwa Qholivia Putri, Dzulfikar Rafi, Hanafiah, Lila Nur Az Zhro.

³⁴ Ro'fah, *Posisi Dan Jatidiri 'Aisyiyah*.

fostering the holistic development of children's motor and literacy skills.³⁵ The teachers at this kindergarten are female members of Aisyiyah who are encouraged to become professional, Islamic, and technologically adaptive educators. Beyond early childhood education, Aisyiyah also has programs to improve the quality of teachers and education cadres.

b) Health and Social Activities

In the health and social sectors, Aisyiyah has outreach programs on nutrition, stunting, and reproductive health.³⁶ Aisyiyah cadres actively engage with the community, particularly young women and mothers, to educate them about the importance of family health. Meanwhile, in social activities, Aisyiyah participates in disaster awareness programs, disaster response training, and community activities such as gymnastics and cultural arts, as evidenced by the programs it has developed.

c) Legal Service through the Legal and Human Rights Council

On the other hand, Aisyiyah is also involved in legal services through the Legal and Human Rights Council, which provides advocacy and legal education to women, especially ahead of elections and on issues related to the protection of women's rights.³⁷ As the elections approached, the Aisyiyah organisation intensified its efforts to provide training and guidance to eligible students at vocational schools. Aisyiyah collaborated with Bawaslu to conduct voting training at several vocational schools.

d) Economic Improvement Activities

Through the Economic Council, Aisyiyah encourages women to be active in entrepreneurship.³⁸ Programs such as the Aisyiyah Entrepreneurship School (SWA) provide training in home-based businesses, including the production of local foods such as purple cassava onde-onde and herbal candies. These activities not only boost family incomes but also expand women's roles in the local economy.

e) Improving the quality of teachers in Aisyiyah Education

³⁵ Ricky Alviano, "Sejarah Amal Usaha Bidang Pendidikan Dan Kesejahteraan Sosial Aisyiyah Daerah Padang Pariaman (1965-1970)."

³⁶ Nurul Izati Mardiah, Luthfiah Anwar Sadat, Ihlas Yayuk Kusumawati, "Analisis Pergerakan Pendidikan Perempuan Serta Kiprah Siti Walidah Di Aisyiyah."

³⁷ Nurul Izati Mardiah, Luthfiah Anwar Sadat, Ihlas Yayuk Kusumawati.

³⁸ Ika Purwanti et al., "Peran Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja (Studi Kasus Amal Usaha Muhammadiyah Kabupaten Lamongan)," *Jurnal Anterior* 21, no. 2 (2020): 20–29, <http://journal.umpalangkaraya.ac.id/index.php/anterior%0AOL>.

To improve the quality of Aisiyyah education, the primary focus is, of course, on the educators. In addition, the Ponjong Branch of Aisiyyah also contributes to the training and strengthening of educators' competencies through training activities organised by the Gunungkidul Regional Leadership of Aisiyyah. This aims to improve the quality of Islamic education so that it meets the needs of the times and produces a generation with excellent character and noble morals. Aisiyyah has received this very well, as educators are required to be digitally literate, as befits the times.

In implementing early childhood education, Aisiyyah also has programs to improve the quality of teachers and education cadres. This training includes strengthening religious material such as prayers and Iqra' readings, as well as teaching and communication skills with children, capacity building, and mastery of information technology, all of which are essential parts of their agenda. Teachers are equipped with 21st-century skills to address global challenges and the digitisation of education.³⁹ Aisiyyah realises that teachers are the spearhead in producing an excellent and moderate Islamic generation.

Teacher quality is also a significant concern. Through Paudasmen, Aisiyyah organises regular training sessions, curriculum workshops, digital training, and syawalan to foster ukhuwah (brotherhood) and improve educators' competencies. Teacher development programs are held every month, making Aisiyyah a model for values-based education management.

f) Learning Methods

The learning methods used by Aisiyyah prioritise an active, Islamic values-based approach. Teachers are trained to integrate religious values, morals, and worship practices into the learning process. In addition, Aisiyyah is open to innovations in learning using digital media, social media, and technology as teaching aids. Kindergartens under Aisiyyah not only provide educational facilities but also progressively implement the Merdeka Curriculum method, even before the policy was officially announced. Aisiyyah's learning method emphasises freedom, creativity, and Islamic values, including memorising the Qur'an and hadith, performing daily prayers, and performing the dhuhur prayer.

g) Courses and Training

Beyond early childhood education, Aisiyyah also has programs to improve the quality of teachers and education cadres. Skills training, capacity building, and mastery of information technology are essential to their agenda.

³⁹ Sitaman Said, "Peran Teknologi Sebagai Media Pembelajaran Di Era Abad 21," *Jurnal PenKoMi: Kajian Pendidikan & Ekonomi*, 6, no. 2 (2023): 194–202, <https://jurnal.stkipbima.ac.id/index.php/PK/article/view/1300/713>.

Teachers are equipped with 21st-century skills to address global challenges and the digitisation of education. Aisyiyah realises that teachers are at the forefront of producing a generation of Muslims who are excellent and moderate.

In support of gender equality, Aisyiyah runs various courses and training programs for women, including business skills training, legal counselling, and youth development, through its autonomous organisation, Nasyiatul Aisyiyah. The goal is for women to become more economically and intellectually independent. Through education, health, law, social, and religious outreach, Aisyiyah not only produces a high-quality generation but also strengthens women's position as pillars of the nation and religion, enabling them to contribute to their families and communities.

h) Collaboration between Organisations

Aisyiyah's collaboration is also key to its success. The Ponjong Branch of Aisyiyah actively collaborates with local governments, KUA, community organisations, and other educational institutions. In various activities such as children's competitions, election training, and disaster education, Aisyiyah involves multiple parties as judges, resource persons, and facilitators, making these activities inclusive and highly impactful. They collaborate with various parties, including local governments, social institutions such as LazisMu and PKU Muhammadiyah, and other organisations such as IPHI and Wanita Islam. Through this collaboration, Aisyiyah not only strengthens its role in education but also ensures that women have access to social services, training, and economic assistance.

i) Preaching and Da'wah

In facing the challenges of the times, Aisyiyah has also developed a program to digitise Islamic preaching and outreach. Through its tabligh and syi'ar divisions, it produces educational and Islamic content in the form of posters, quotes, and preaching materials, which are shared via WhatsApp and other social media platforms. This has become an effective means of spreading the values of Islam as a blessing for all creation while bringing the younger generation closer to Islam.

Therefore, the Ponjong Branch of Aisyiyah plays an active role in developing Islamic education that focuses not only on academic aspects but also on the formation of strong Islamic character and personality through formal educational institutions and various community empowerment programs. With a comprehensive and community-based strategy, the Ponjong Branch of Aisyiyah continues to be a driving force for women's emancipation through Islamic education and social empowerment. They not only fight for women's rights to

learn and lead, but also prove that women can be agents of change in their families, communities, and nation.

Aisiyah's Challenge in Fighting for Women's Emancipation through Education

As a career woman who not only devotes herself to her home but also spreads her wings through the Aisiyah organisation, it is certainly not easy for women to balance time for themselves, their families, their work, and even their involvement in organisations and social activities.⁴⁰ This also poses a personal challenge to women's roles. The challenges faced by Aisiyah women also extend to the broader community, as they must deal with social issues such as early marriage, labour exploitation of women, and wage inequality between men and women.

In dealing with an organisation, there are undoubtedly many challenges to face, both internally and externally. As is well known, the Aisiyah organisation is mainly comprised of married women. Therefore, there are many challenges to face. This was expressed by one of the respondents, Mrs Umi Fadhillah:

The main challenge is time. Some members of the Aisiyah Ponjong organisation hold positions at other institutions, including teachers, principals, and supervisors. It isn't easy to find the time, especially now that the government has extended teaching hours until the afternoon. Meanwhile, weekends are already taken up with family events or Aisiyah events, for example, in the region or above. Then there is the issue of time and funds, if the funds come from us (Interview 26, April 2025).

Referring to the interview, Aisiyah faces not only time constraints but also funding issues. As is well known, the organisation's operational funds are obtained from contributions made by members at regular meetings, and there are several internal and external donors within the organisation to enhance its quality.

In line with the funds obtained, there is a connection to intensive education within the scope of Aisiyah, as many kindergarten teachers have not received government allowances and depend on meagre salaries from the

⁴⁰ Siti Syamsiyatun, "Redefining Manhood and Womanhood: Insights from the Oldest Indonesian Muslim Women Organization, 'Aisiyah,'" *Studia Islamika* 29, no. 3 (2023): 547–73, <https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v29i3.23455>.

foundation.⁴¹ This situation can affect their motivation and continuity in serving. In addition, the number of educators, especially male teachers at Aisyiyah kindergartens, remains very low, even though teacher diversity is essential for creating a balanced learning environment.

Another challenge is the low participation in independent da'wah activities within Aisyiyah, which involve only internal female members and often face obstacles to participation. Religious lectures or spiritual strengthening activities attended only by Aisyiyah members tend to attract few participants. Conversely, events involving other elements, such as Muhammadiyah, NU, and local communities, tend to receive a wider response.⁴² This shows the importance of an inclusive, cross-organisational approach in Aisyiyah's da'wah activities for advancing the organisation by building synergy with other organisations, and of not being dependent on specific figures who play active, highly dedicated roles. This is because when a central figure is unable to attend or is no longer active, the organisation's activities are hampered.

As discussed earlier, when organising a gathering or similar event, it is not uncommon to encounter obstacles along the way. However, as the process runs quickly, all members participate in carrying out their responsibilities, thereby developing critical thinking skills to overcome these challenges.

Aisyiyah's Solution to the Challenge of Fighting for Women's Emancipation in Education

Aisyiyah's journey as a women's organisation engaged in da'wah, education, social, and community activities has certainly not been without challenges.⁴³ However, in the spirit of determination and cooperation, various solutions have been and continue to be developed to ensure that the struggle continues. As career women who not only devote themselves to their homes but also spread their wings through the Aisyiyah organisation, it is certainly not easy for women to balance their time among themselves, their families, their work, and their involvement in organisations and social activities. To overcome this, Aisyiyah needs to implement a flexible and efficient work system.

The schedule of activities is adjusted to the conditions of the majority of members, such as evening or weekend meetings, and tasks are divided

⁴¹ Sulis Setianingsih et al., "Aisyiyah: Peran Dan Dinamikanya Dalam Pengembangan Pendidikan Anak Di Banjarmasin Hingga Tahun 2014," *PAKIS (Publikasi Berkala Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial)* 1, no. 1 (2021): 52–61, <https://doi.org/10.20527/pakis.v1i1.3188>.

⁴² Rizky Septiansyah et al., "Peran Organisasi Otonom Muhammadiyah Dalam Pemberdayaan Perempuan Di Kota Tangerang," *Student Research Journal* 2, no. 4 (2024): 324–31.

⁴³ Aldira, Aguswan, and Hakim, "Siti Walidah's Thoughts on the Concept of Feminism and Its Relevance to Islamic Education."

collectively to avoid burdening any one individual. In addition, the use of technology is a practical solution for efficiency, such as using digital media in meetings, discussions, and the delivery of religious material. Of course, this is not easy at first because it requires significant adjustment. However, it becomes easier when there is a shared pattern and goal, with mutual understanding of the organisation's progress.

Running an organisation to keep it alive by embracing many people is certainly a shared responsibility that cannot be debated. Therefore, in running it, many things need to be achieved by holding several activities outlined in monthly or annual programs in accordance with the agreement.⁴⁴ However, running these programs indeed incurs high operational costs, but this does not dampen Aisiyyah members' enthusiasm to continue their activities. Creative initiatives, such as Aisiyyah-labelled donation bottles collected during regular meetings, are simple yet effective solutions. In addition, the organisation can form small business units or cooperatives, or engage in productive waqf management to support long-term finances. Strategic partnerships with government agencies, philanthropic institutions, and donors must also be maintained to support Aisiyyah's various flagship programs.

In line with funds that serve as intermediaries for teachers' welfare, especially Aisiyyah kindergarten teachers who have not received government subsidies, efforts are being made to establish a solidarity fund from civil servant teachers and internal donors.⁴⁵ In addition, Aisiyyah encourages the certification and competency development of teachers so they are eligible to receive official government allowances. This is also accompanied by advocacy to the Education Office to ensure that the presence of Aisiyyah teachers receives greater attention in regional policies (reference). In addition, Aisiyyah plays a role in teachers' welfare by allocating a small portion of civil servants' salaries to honorary teachers.

As is well known, the management of Aisiyyah kindergartens is predominantly female. Still, the Aisiyyah organisation does not rule out the possibility of providing opportunities for men to become involved in management and to participate in Aisiyyah education.⁴⁶ In line with this, we also

⁴⁴ Ricky Alviano, "Sejarah Amal Usaha Bidang Pendidikan Dan Kesejahteraan Sosial Aisiyyah Daerah Padang Pariaman (1965-1970)."

⁴⁵ Imroatul Istiqomah and Maria Ulfa, "Da'wa Model Based on Brand Community Value: Qaryah Thayibah Implementation for Villages Fostered by 'Aisiyyah Ponorogo," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 17, no. 2 (2021): Layouting, <https://doi.org/10.18196/afkaruna.v17i2.10225>.

⁴⁶ Iswantir Rosi Afriyani, "Perjalanan Sejarah Paud Kelompok Bermain (Kb) Aisiyyah I Dari Asal-Usul Hingga Transformasinya Dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini" 10 (2025): 221–33.

build relationships with other organisations to support collaborative activities, such as establishing religious study groups or preaching tailored to current issues, to attract broader participation.⁴⁷ Digital platforms can be used to spread the message so that everyone can easily access it. This is based on the results of an interview conducted with Umi Fadillah, chairperson of the Aisyiyah Organisation, namely:

For Aisyiyah, this collaboration with Muhammadiyah is now integrated. For example, Sunday morning services are integrated. As a result, many in Ponjong are managed by Muhammadiyah, namely two in Al Murtaadlo, managed by PCM, and the Subardi mosque, managed by PRA (Muhammadiyah Branch). Religious lectures for men or women alone do not attract many participants, so they are combined from Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah (Interview, April 26, 2025).

Thus, in this case, the Aisyiyah organisation has indirectly engaged in internal collaboration, as the Aisyiyah mass organisation cooperates with the Muhammadiyah mass organisation to address challenges to advancing women's emancipation in education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the Ponjong Branch of the 'Aisyiyah Organisation plays a strategic role in promoting women's emancipation, particularly through Islamic education. Through the management of early childhood education institutions, teacher training, economic empowerment programs, health education, legal advocacy, and digital da'wah, Aisyiyah not only opens up access to education for women but also strengthens their position in social and religious life. Despite constraints such as limited time, resources, and community involvement, Aisyiyah can provide creative, collaborative solutions that strengthen the organisation's independence. Aisyiyah's struggle and contribution are clear evidence that women have great potential as agents of change in the development of an advanced Islamic society. The active role of the Ponjong Branch of Aisyiyah also serves as an example for women's movements at the local and national levels in achieving gender equality through inclusive and sustainable Islamic education.

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