

# Gendered Construction of Religious Authority in Islamic Education Textbooks under Indonesia's *Merdeka* Curriculum: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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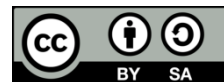
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## ABSTRACT

This study examines gender bias in elementary school Islamic Religious Education (IRE) textbooks under Indonesia's *Merdeka* Curriculum. Although gender representation in textbooks has been widely studied, research integrating Critical Discourse Analysis with Islamic feminist perspectives in the context of religious education remains limited. This study aims to identify forms of gender bias, analyze the discursive strategies that reproduce them, and interpret their implications for the construction of religious authority. The research employed qualitative document analysis using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Data were collected from 214 textual units and 96 visual illustrations in elementary-level IRE textbooks, complemented by semi-structured interviews with four Islamic education teachers in Pulang Pisau Regency, Central Kalimantan. The analysis focused on actor representation, distribution of social roles, grammatical structures, and the construction of religious leadership. The findings reveal a significant gender imbalance. Men appear as 61.7% of the main subjects and dominate 78.8% of religious leadership roles. Male characters are more frequently associated with active grammatical structures (68.2%), while women appear more often in passive constructions and domestic activities (67.8%). These patterns contribute to what this study conceptualizes as the masculinization of religious authority, where religious leadership and moral authority are discursively associated with male figures. Teacher interviews indicate awareness of this imbalance, although textbooks still strongly influence students' perceptions of gender roles. The findings highlight the need for gender-responsive revisions of religious education materials to promote more inclusive representations.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender equality in education remains a major concern in global academic discourse and public policy. The Global Education Monitoring Report published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization notes that although access to education for girls has improved significantly over the last 25 years, gender stereotypes and unequal representation in learning materials remain structural problems [1]. Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), gender-equitable education involves not only equal access but also the transformation of curricula, pedagogical practices, and learning cultures [2]. Textbooks, therefore, play a strategic role because they function as key pedagogical instruments that shape students' understanding of social roles and gender relations [3], [4].

From the perspective of social reproduction, educational institutions may legitimize existing power structures through symbolic mechanisms that appear neutral [5]. Textbooks are not merely tools for transmitting knowledge but also ideological artifacts that communicate values, norms, and social hierarchies to students from an early age. The representation of actors, the distribution of roles, lexical choices, and visual illustrations can influence the formation of gender habitus and shape students' perceptions of authority and social roles [6], [7]. Consequently, gender bias in textbooks is closely linked to the reproduction of unequal power relations within the education system.

Numerous international studies show that women are still underrepresented in educational materials and are more frequently portrayed in domestic or subordinate roles, while men are depicted in public and leadership positions [8], [9]. A cross-national study by Blumberg [3] demonstrates that gender bias in textbooks is a systemic pattern found across various cultural contexts. Other research also indicates that unequal representation in textbooks can influence students' academic aspirations and perceptions of professional possibilities from an early age [4]. Recent studies further confirm that elementary-level textbooks often reproduce traditional gender stereotypes through patterns of character appearance and role distribution [10]. Research by [11], [12], and [13] shows that increasing the number of female characters does not necessarily improve the quality of gender representation, as women often remain confined to supportive or domestic roles.

However, most of these studies focus primarily on descriptive analyses of representation frequency and role distribution. Such approaches often overlook how language structures, narrative strategies, and discursive mechanisms contribute to the reproduction of gender hierarchies. In the context of religious education, this limitation becomes even more significant because religious texts are frequently treated as neutral reflections of normative teachings, rather than as discursive constructions shaped by social and institutional contexts.

Studies in different contexts also reveal similar patterns. Research in Pakistan shows systemic gender bias in ESL textbooks [14], while a study in Oman finds that Islamic education textbooks tend to portray men as primary religious authorities [15]. In Indonesia, several studies report that male figures dominate Islamic Religious Education textbooks [16], [17]. Other research indicates that visual and narrative strategies in Islamic religious education teaching materials implicitly reproduce gender hierarchies despite using seemingly neutral

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language [18]. Nevertheless, existing studies rarely examine how linguistic structures, discursive strategies, and theological legitimacy interact simultaneously in shaping representations of religious authority in textbooks. This limitation creates an analytical gap, particularly in the context of elementary school Islamic education under the *Merdeka* Curriculum.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a useful framework for examining this issue because it conceptualizes language as a social practice closely linked to power relations and ideology [6], [7]. Through this perspective, texts can be analyzed not only at the linguistic level but also within broader discursive and social contexts. Feminist approaches to discourse analysis have been widely used to reveal hidden gender ideologies in educational materials [19], [20], [21]. However, in studies of religious education, discourse analysis often stops at ideological critique without engaging with the theological frameworks that provide normative legitimacy for the texts.

The Indonesian *Merdeka* Curriculum emphasizes learner-centred learning, character development, and the cultivation of the Pancasila Student Profile, which promotes social justice and respect for diversity. Normatively, these principles align with the broader agenda of gender equality. Nevertheless, curriculum reform alone does not automatically eliminate bias in teaching materials [3], [8], [14]. As a result, there remains a gap between policy commitments to equality and the actual representation of gender roles in textbooks used in classrooms.

To address this issue, this study incorporates the perspective of Islamic feminism. Islamic feminist scholarship emphasizes that the principles of justice (*al-'adl*) and moral equality are fundamental values in Islamic teachings [22]. Scholars argue that the subordination of women in many Muslim societies often stems from patriarchal interpretations developed within specific historical contexts rather than from the normative teachings of the Al-Qur'an itself [23]. Islamic feminism, therefore, seeks to reconstruct religious knowledge in ways that are consistent with principles of justice and equality [24]. Despite its relevance, this perspective is rarely used as an analytical framework for examining the discursive construction of gender in religious education materials.

Based on these considerations, this study identifies a clear research gap. Existing research tends to focus on representation frequency and role distribution, while relatively few studies analyse how discursive strategies and theological legitimacy simultaneously shape gender constructions in Islamic education textbooks. Furthermore, the integration of Critical Discourse Analysis, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, and Islamic feminist hermeneutics remains underdeveloped in the study of religious education materials. Addressing this gap is important for understanding how gendered meanings are produced, legitimized, and reproduced within state-supported religious education.

Therefore, this study examines gender representation and the construction of religious authority in elementary school Islamic education textbooks under Indonesia's *Merdeka* Curriculum. It introduces the concept of the masculinization of religious authority, referring to the discursive process through which religious leadership and moral authority are systematically associated with male figures in educational texts. Based on this framework, this research addresses the following questions: How are gender roles represented in elementary

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school Islamic education textbooks under the *Merdeka* Curriculum? What discursive strategies construct religious authority in these textbooks? How can these representations be interpreted through the perspective of Islamic feminist hermeneutics?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to identify patterns of gender bias in Islamic education textbooks, analyse the discursive mechanisms that reproduce these patterns, and interpret their implications through an Islamic feminist perspective. The study contributes theoretically by integrating Critical Discourse Analysis [6], [7], feminist discourse approaches [21], [20], and Islamic feminist scholarship [22], [23], [24] to examine the construction of gender and religious authority in educational discourse. In practice, the findings are expected to provide insights into the development of more inclusive and gender-responsive religious education materials.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the construction and reproduction of gender bias in Islamic Religious Education textbooks for elementary schools under the *Merdeka* Curriculum. CDA was selected because it conceptualizes language as a social practice closely related to power relations and ideology [6], [7]. From this perspective, textbooks function not only as teaching materials but also as discursive spaces where social meanings and authority structures are constructed and reproduced [25].

The primary data consisted of Islamic Education and Ethics textbooks for elementary schools under the *Merdeka* Curriculum, officially published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia through the Electronic School Book (BSE) platform. The analysed textbooks include the fourth-grade edition (First Edition 2022), the fifth-grade edition (First Edition 2022), and the sixth-grade edition (First Edition 2023). These books were purposively selected because they are official national textbooks implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum and contain diverse textual forms, such as narratives, dialogues, and visual illustrations, that enable a comprehensive analysis of gender representation. The focus on grades IV-VI was based on the importance of this stage in the development of students' social and normative understanding.

The unit of analysis was determined through meaning segmentation rather than page or paragraph boundaries. Each segment of text or illustration representing male or female actors was treated as a separate discursive unit. In total, the study analysed 214 textual units and 96 visual illustrations, including narratives, dialogues, depictions of activities, and representations of religious leadership and social roles. Data collection was conducted through documentation and repeated close reading of the textbooks. The analysis began with open coding to identify patterns of gender representation. Coding categories included actor representation based on gender, distribution of domestic and public roles, character attributes (active/passive and leader/follower), grammatical structures indicating agency, and references to religious authority. These categories were developed based on previous studies of gender representation in textbooks [3], [8], [9] and the theory of symbolic reproduction, which explains how masculine domination is reproduced through institutional practices [5].

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The coding process was conducted in three stages. First, open coding identified recurring patterns in textual and visual data. Second, axial coding grouped these patterns into broader analytical categories such as constructions of religious leadership and symbolic subordination. Third, the coded data were interpreted within the CDA framework. To enhance reliability, part of the data was independently coded by two researchers, who then compared their codes to reach categorical agreement through discussion. The coding process was documented through analytical notes and audit trails.

In addition to document analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four elementary school Islamic Religious Education teachers in Pulang Pisau District, Central Kalimantan. Participants were selected purposively based on three criteria: actively using the *Merdeka* Curriculum textbooks for at least one year, having more than five years of teaching experience, and willingness to participate in discussions on gender issues in religious education. Interview data were analysed using thematic analysis, including transcription, coding, theme identification, and interpretation of teachers' perspectives on gender representation and religious authority in textbooks. The interview findings served as contextual insights to enrich the discourse analysis rather than for statistical generalization [26].

The final analysis followed Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model [6], [7]. The first dimension, text analysis, examined lexical choices, grammatical structures, and agency constructions in representing male and female actors. The second dimension, discursive practice, analysed how textbooks construct meanings and patterns of representation. The third dimension, social practice, interpreted these discourses within the broader context of Indonesian education policy and socio-religious norms. At the interpretive stage, the findings were examined through the lens of Islamic feminism to distinguish between normative Islamic principles of justice and equality and patriarchal interpretations historically embedded in religious discourse, as discussed by [22] and [27], as well as in contemporary Islamic feminist scholarship [24]. This integration allows gender bias to be analysed not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as an epistemological issue in the construction of religious knowledge.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. All participants provided informed consent before the interviews and were informed of the research's purpose. Participants' identities were anonymized to ensure confidentiality, and the data were used solely for academic purposes. The credibility of the research was strengthened through theoretical triangulation between CDA and Islamic feminist perspectives, source triangulation between textbooks and interviews, peer discussion during coding, and the use of audit trails to document analytical decisions. These procedures ensured methodological transparency and rigor in the qualitative analysis.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1. Results**

Based on an analysis of six Islamic Education textbooks for elementary schools in the *Merdeka* Curriculum (grades I-VI) published or recommended by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, a pattern of

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gender representation was found that shows a tendency toward male dominance and stereotypical role division. The analysis was conducted on 214 text units (narratives and dialogues) and 96 visual illustrations that explicitly featured actors of a specific gender.

### Gender Representation Patterns

The results of this study integrate a quantitative analysis of the texts and illustrations in the *Merdeka* Curriculum elementary school Islamic religious education textbooks with qualitative findings from interviews with four Islamic religious education teachers in Pulang Pisau District, Central Kalimantan. This integration aims not only to examine the relationship between symbolic representation and pedagogical practices but also to trace how gender discourse is produced, distributed, and consumed within the state religious education system.

Based on an analysis of 214 text units and 96 visual illustrations, a relatively consistent gender representation imbalance was found, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Gender Representation in Elementary School Islamic Religious Education Textbooks under the *Merdeka* Curriculum

Analysis Categories	Male	Female	Total
Main subjects in the text	132 (61,7%)	82 (38,3%)	214
Public activities (text & images)	97 (65,1%)	52 (34,9%)	149
Domestic activities (text & images)	28 (32,2%)	59 (67,8%)	87
Religious leadership roles	41 (78,8%)	11 (21,2%)	52

The data in Table 1 demonstrate a systematic underrepresentation of men in public activities and leadership positions. Male characters appear as 61.7% of the main subjects in the text and dominate 78.8% of the religious leadership roles represented in the textbooks. In contrast, female characters appear more frequently in domestic contexts, accounting for 67.8% of representations in domestic activities. These patterns indicate that male characters are consistently associated with authority, initiative, and public participation, whereas female characters are more frequently positioned within domestic and supportive roles.

The interview findings reinforce these patterns and provide insight into how the representations are perceived in classroom practice. Three teachers (G1, G3, and G4) acknowledged that male figures dominate illustrations and narrative examples of religious leadership in the textbooks. One teacher (G1) explained, “*Illustrations of prayer leaders are almost always male, even though in classroom activities female students are often equally active and capable.*” This statement highlights a discrepancy between the representations presented in textbooks and the realities of classroom participation.

Teachers also indicated that repeated exposure to these representations can influence students’ perceptions of authority. As noted by G3, “*Students usually imagine a prayer leader or religious role model as a man because that is what they often see in the textbook*

examples.” Similarly, G4 observed that “*female students rarely see themselves represented in leadership roles in the book, even though in class discussions they are often very active.*” These responses suggest that textbook narratives may shape students’ expectations regarding who is considered appropriate to occupy positions of religious authority.

At the same time, not all teachers interpreted the imbalance as problematic. One participant (G2) remarked that “*such representations are common in society,*” indicating that the gendered patterns presented in textbooks are often perceived as reflecting broader social norms. This perception illustrates how repeated discursive representations can become normalized within everyday educational practice.

Overall, the empirical findings from both the textbook analysis and teacher interviews reveal a consistent pattern in which male figures dominate representations of leadership, authority, and public activity, while female figures appear more frequently in domestic contexts and supporting roles. The convergence between textual patterns and teacher perceptions suggests that these representations operate not only at the level of discourse in textbooks but also within the pedagogical environment in which the materials are used.

### Discourse Structure and Religious Interpretation

The analysis of 214 text units indicates that representations of family leadership and religious authority are predominantly associated with male actors. In many narratives, men are explicitly portrayed as leaders within the family, often without further explanation of ethical responsibility, collective deliberation, or shared decision-making within the household. This pattern suggests that the textual narratives tend to present leadership primarily through male figures.

Table 2 presents the distribution of grammatical structures and linguistic representations related to gender in the analysed textbooks.

Table 2. Distribution of Grammatical Structures and Authority References Based on Gender

Linguistic Analysis Categories	Male	Female	Total
Family leadership narratives (explicitly mentioning men as leaders)	53 (73%)	20 (27%)	73
Active sentence structures (leading, teaching, directing)	118 (68,2%)	55 (31,8%)	173
Passive sentence structures (being guided, accompanied, directed)	29 (34,1%)	56 (65,9%)	85
References to moral/religious authority	44 (76%)	14 (24%)	58

The data in Table 2 demonstrate a clear difference in grammatical positioning between male and female characters. Male actors appear more frequently in active sentence structures such as leading, teaching, and directing, accounting for 68.2% of the active constructions identified in the text. These forms commonly appear in narratives describing classroom leadership, community activities, or religious instruction. In contrast, female actors appear more frequently in passive constructions, representing 65.9% of sentences describing actions such as being guided, accompanied, or directed. These patterns indicate

that agency is more often attributed to male characters, while female characters are more frequently positioned as recipients or participants in actions led by others.

The table also shows that narratives about family leadership predominantly feature male figures. Out of 73 family leadership narratives identified in the dataset, 53 (73%) explicitly identify men as leaders, while only 20 (27%) refer to women in comparable roles. Similarly, references to moral or religious authority appear more frequently in relation to male figures (76%) than female figures (24%). These references include examples of individuals who lead prayers, give moral advice, or provide religious instruction within family or community contexts.

Interview data from four elementary school Islamic Religious Education teachers in Pulang Pisau District provides additional context on how these linguistic patterns are perceived in classroom settings. One teacher (G1) noted, "*The sentences in the book often refer to fathers as leaders, but they rarely explain that leadership is a shared responsibility within the family.*" Another teacher (G2) observed, "*In terms of language, male characters are more often active, such as leading or teaching, while women are usually depicted as helping.*" These comments indicate that teachers recognize recurring linguistic patterns that differentiate male and female roles in textbook narratives.

Teachers also indicated that they sometimes attempt to balance these representations during classroom discussions. As G3 explained, "*When I teach, I try to give examples of accomplished women or female leaders, even though such examples are not common in the textbooks.*" Similarly, G4 stated, "*If students only read the text, they may understand that authority belongs mainly to men, so additional explanation is needed.*" These observations suggest that teachers are aware of the limitations of the textbook representations and occasionally provide additional explanations to broaden students' understanding.

Overall, the empirical findings show that gender differences in the textbooks are reflected not only in role distribution but also in grammatical structures and references to authority. Male characters are more frequently associated with leadership roles, active agency, and moral authority, while female characters appear more often in supportive or passive positions within the narratives and illustrations presented in the textbooks.

### **3.2. Discussion**

The findings indicate that male dominance in the analysed textbooks is not only numerical but also concentrated in strategic symbolic positions, particularly in representations of religious leadership and moral authority. Male figures account for 78.8% of religious leadership roles, suggesting a strong association between masculinity and spiritual authority within the narratives presented in the textbooks. Similar patterns have been identified in cross-national studies on gender representation in educational materials [1], [8], [28]. However, the present study extends these descriptive findings by examining how such patterns function discursively in the context of Islamic religious education.

From the perspective of representation theory, textbooks function as symbolic systems that shape social perceptions of authority and legitimacy [29]. When male figures consistently occupy positions of religious leadership, the text not only describes social realities but also helps construct normative expectations about who is recognized as an

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authoritative religious subject. In this study, this process can be understood as the masculinization of religious authority, referring to the discursive normalization of male dominance in religious leadership through narrative roles, visual representation, and linguistic positioning. Within the framework of feminist critical discourse analysis, such patterns can be interpreted as ideological processes that reproduce gender hierarchies through everyday discourse [21], [30]. In this context, masculinity becomes symbolically linked to religious authority, while female participation in religious leadership appears limited or marginal.

Gender hierarchy in the analysed textbooks is reinforced not only through numerical representation but also through linguistic and narrative structures. The grammatical patterns identified in the textual analysis demonstrate that male actors are predominantly positioned as agents of action, while female actors are more frequently represented as recipients of action. Active grammatical constructions, such as leading, teaching, and directing, are predominantly associated with male figures, whereas passive constructions, such as being guided, accompanied, or directed, are more frequently associated with female characters. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, language functions as a social practice that contributes to the construction and reproduction of power relations [6], [7], [32]. These syntactic patterns shape perceptions of agency and authority by repeatedly positioning male characters as initiators of action and female characters as followers or participants. Feminist critical discourse analysis further emphasizes that grammatical structures can operate as ideological tools that normalize gender hierarchies within everyday discourse [21], [30].

The concentration of religious and moral authority on male figures also reflects processes of symbolic reproduction within institutional contexts [5], [33]. Through repeated narrative structures and grammatical positioning, textbooks can contribute to the internalization of hierarchical gender norms among students. Educational materials, therefore, function not only as pedagogical tools but also as discursive mechanisms that shape students' perceptions of social roles, leadership, and religious authority.

These representation patterns are also closely related to the institutional context in which the textbooks are produced and distributed. Islamic Religious Education textbooks are developed within the framework of the *Merdeka* Curriculum and distributed nationally through the official education system. In this context, textbooks serve as a key medium for transmitting religious knowledge and social norms to students. Within Fairclough's framework, discourse is shaped through the interconnected processes of production, distribution, and consumption [6]. In the case of Islamic religious education textbooks, production occurs within state institutions responsible for curriculum development, distribution occurs through the national education system, and consumption occurs in classrooms, where textbooks are often treated as authoritative sources of knowledge [37]. This institutional structure means that discursive patterns embedded in textbooks can have a broad influence on how students understand gender roles and religious authority.

Teacher interviews indicate that educators are aware of the dominance of male representations in textbook narratives and sometimes attempt to reinterpret the material during classroom instruction. In the framework of critical pedagogy, teachers can function as mediators who encourage students to reflect critically on symbolic inequalities embedded

in educational texts [34], [35]. However, the interviews also suggest that such pedagogical mediation remains limited when the structural patterns within textbooks remain unchanged. Without revisions in discourse production, the dominant narratives embedded in textbooks continue to shape students' perceptions of authority and gender roles [31].

Another important finding concerns the representation of family leadership. The frequent association of leadership with the father figure (73%) suggests a narrowing of the concept of *qiwāmah* in the textbooks. In many narratives, leadership is presented primarily as a male role, with little discussion of ethical responsibility, reciprocity, or collective decision-making within the family. Studies on Islamic ethical thought emphasize that leadership should be understood within broader moral frameworks that highlight responsibility, justice, and collective welfare rather than as a fixed biological hierarchy [22], [27], [36], [37].

From the perspective of Islamic feminist scholarship, these findings reveal a tension between textual representations in educational materials and the normative principles of justice (*'adl*), reciprocity (*mu'āsarah bi al-ma'rūf*), and moral equality among human beings. These ethical principles are reflected in Qur'anic teachings, including the affirmation of human equality in QS. Al-Hujurāt: 13. Scholars in Islamic feminist traditions argue that many gender hierarchies in Muslim societies originate from historical interpretations of religious texts rather than from the ethical foundations of Islam itself [22], [27], [24]. Reading the findings through the lens of Islamic feminist hermeneutics enables a critical examination of the epistemological assumptions underlying representations of religious authority in educational discourse. At the same time, these findings provide evidence-based guidance for educators and schools in designing technology-supported IRE that promotes meaningful, attentive, and enjoyable learning experiences [39].

In this sense, the patterns identified in the textbooks do not merely represent gender imbalance but also illustrate the reproduction of gender epistemology in religious education. Male figures are repeatedly positioned as subjects of interpretation and religious role models, while female figures are less visible as interpreters of religious knowledge. This epistemological positioning contributes to the formation of symbolic structures in which masculinity becomes implicitly associated with interpretive authority in religion.

This study contributes to the literature on gender representation in education in two important ways. First, it introduces the concept of gender epistemology reproduction, referring to the process through which educational texts shape the epistemological foundations of gender relations in religious knowledge. Through repeated narrative, linguistic, and symbolic structures, textbooks can reproduce assumptions about who is entitled to interpret and represent religious authority. Second, this study demonstrates the analytical value of integrating Critical Discourse Analysis [6], [7], [38], feminist critical discourse analysis [21], [30], and Islamic feminist hermeneutics [22], [27]. While Critical Discourse Analysis enables the examination of linguistic and discursive mechanisms of power, Islamic feminist perspectives allow these findings to be interpreted within broader theological and ethical frameworks. Together, these approaches highlight the need for curriculum reform, educator training, and educational policies that support the

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implementation of inclusivity in order to cultivate a generation of Muslims capable of engaging constructively in a plural and dynamic global society [40].

This integrative approach expands existing research on gender bias in textbooks by connecting linguistic analysis, institutional discourse production, and normative religious interpretation. By doing so, the study highlights how gender bias in religious education materials operates not only at the level of representation but also at the level of epistemological authority in the production of religious knowledge. Overall, the findings suggest that gender bias in Islamic religious education textbooks is embedded within broader discursive structures linking masculinity, religious authority, and institutional legitimacy. Revising religious education textbooks, therefore, requires more than adjusting the numerical balance of male and female representations. It also requires reconsidering the epistemological structures through which religious authority and leadership are represented so that religious education can contribute to more inclusive and equitable understandings of gender in Islamic educational contexts.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study examines gender representation in elementary school Islamic Religious Education textbooks under Indonesia's *Merdeka* Curriculum. The findings indicate that representations of leadership, religious authority, and social roles tend to associate masculinity with authority and active agency, while female figures are more frequently positioned in supportive or domestic roles. These patterns suggest that gender bias in textbooks operates through interconnected visual, linguistic, and narrative structures that shape students' perceptions of gender roles in religious contexts. The study highlights the importance of critically reviewing religious education materials. Textbooks function not only as sources of knowledge but also as discursive tools that influence how students understand authority, leadership, and gender relations. Therefore, improving gender representation in Islamic religious education textbooks requires not only increasing the presence of female figures but also reconsidering how religious authority and ethical responsibility are represented in educational discourse.

This research contributes theoretically by proposing the concept of gender epistemology reproduction, which explains how educational texts shape assumptions about who is recognized as an authoritative subject in the interpretation and transmission of religious knowledge. By integrating discourse analysis with perspectives from Islamic feminist scholarship, the study offers a framework for comprehensively examining gender bias in religious education materials. Several limitations should be acknowledged. The empirical scope of the study is limited to the analysis of selected textbooks and interviews with four Islamic religious education teachers in Pulang Pisau District. As a result, the findings should be interpreted cautiously and cannot be generalized to all educational contexts in Indonesia. In addition, the study focuses primarily on textbook discourse and does not fully examine classroom practices or broader policy processes involved in curriculum implementation.

Future research could expand this work through broader quantitative studies across regions, ethnographic research on classroom interactions, and deeper analysis of the

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institutional processes involved in curriculum and textbook production. Such studies would help provide a more comprehensive understanding of how gender representations are produced, distributed, and interpreted within educational systems. For the broader public, the findings emphasize the importance of developing religious education materials that reflect principles of justice, inclusivity, and gender equality. Strengthening critical awareness in educational discourse can support the role of religious education in fostering more equitable and inclusive social values for future generations.

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