



Pesantren and Gender Issues: Reinterpreting Classical Fiqh to Address Contemporary Gender Equality Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The growing urgency of gender equality issues in Islam, which often conflict with textual interpretations of classical fiqh texts such as *Fath al-Muin* and *ʿAnab al-Thalibin*. Pesantrens, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, have the potential to become spaces for reinterpreting these texts in response to contemporary challenges. This study aims to explore how Pesantren Maʿhad Darul Ikhlas in Mandailing Natal reinterprets classical fiqh by integrating local values, particularly the matrilineal culture that places women in a central role. The research employs a qualitative approach using ethnographic techniques and textual analysis, involving participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the reinterpretation of classical fiqh is carried out through negotiations between the pesantren's scholarly traditions, local culture, and modern social realities. For instance, the principle of justice in QS An-Nisa: 7 is used to support more inclusive inheritance practices for women, while the concept of *qiwamah* is understood as shared responsibility rather than male dominance. However, this reinterpretation still faces resistance from conservative groups and is hindered by the scarcity of progressive literature. The contribution of this research lies in its effort to enrich the discourse on the reinterpretation of fiqh in Islam by highlighting the flexibility of pesantrens in addressing modern challenges. Practically, these findings can serve as a reference for other pesantrens to open discussions on gender equality without abandoning their scholarly traditions.

Keywords: Islamic Classical Fiqh, Gender Equality, *Pesantren* Reinterpretation, Matrilineal Culture, Social Transformation.

ABSTRAK

Meningkatnya urgensi isu kesetaraan gender dalam Islam, yang sering kali bertentangan dengan interpretasi tekstual fikih klasik seperti *Fath al-Muin* dan *ʿAnab al-Thalibin*. Pesantren, sebagai institusi pendidikan Islam tradisional, memiliki potensi untuk menjadi ruang reinterpretasi teks-teks tersebut dalam menghadapi tantangan kontemporer. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana Pesantren Maʿhad Darul Ikhlas di Mandailing Natal mereinterpretasi fikih klasik melalui integrasi nilai-nilai lokal, terutama budaya matrilineal yang memberikan peran sentral kepada perempuan. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik etnografi dan analisis teks, melibatkan observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, serta dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa reinterpretasi fikih klasik dilakukan melalui negosiasi antara tradisi keilmuan pesantren, budaya lokal, dan realitas sosial modern. Misalnya, prinsip keadilan dalam QS An-Nisa: 7 digunakan untuk mendukung praktik warisan yang lebih inklusif bagi perempuan, sementara konsep *qiwamah* dipahami sebagai tanggung jawab bersama bukan dominasi laki-laki. Namun, reinterpretasi ini masih menghadapi resistensi dari kelompok konservatif dan minimnya literatur progresif. Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada upaya memperkaya diskursus tentang reinterpretasi fikih dalam Islam dengan menyoroti fleksibilitas pesantren dalam merespons tantangan modern. Secara praktis, temuan ini dapat menjadi referensi bagi pesantren lain untuk membuka ruang diskusi tentang kesetaraan gender tanpa meninggalkan tradisi keilmuan mereka.

Kata Kunci: Fikih Klasik Islam, Kesetaraan Gender, Reinterpretasi Gender, Budaya Matrilineal, Transformasi Sosial.

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamics of contemporary socio-religious discourse, gender issues have emerged as one of the most pressing and complex debates. Within the context of Islam, discussions on gender equality often face significant challenges due to textual interpretations of classical fiqh, which are frequently perceived as incompatible with modern egalitarian values (Sirazhudinova 2021; Gojali, Abdurrohman, and Ali 2020). Pesantrens, as traditional Islamic educational institutions that play a crucial role in shaping religious understanding among Indonesian Muslim communities, serve as an important locus for studying how classical texts such as *Fath al-Muin* and *Panah al-Thalibin* are understood, taught, and reinterpreted to address contemporary challenges (Manshur 2020). This study aims to explore how pesantrens, particularly Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas in Mandailing Natal, reinterpret classical fiqh to respond to increasingly relevant gender equality issues in the modern era.

Pesantrens are custodians of classical Islamic scholarship, with curricula rooted in traditional yellow books (*kitab kuning*) (Bruinessen 2020). On the other hand, they also function as spaces for dialogue between tradition and modernity, where Islamic values are taught within the framework of evolving social contexts (Zarkasyi 2020; Sumanti, Nunzairina, and Salminawati 2024). According to Martin van Bruinessen, pesantrens are not merely centers of religious education but also serve as social laboratories that enable the reinterpretation of religious texts to address contemporary challenges (Mukhibat and Ghafar 2019; Mansyuroh 2020; Ma'Arif 2018). However, in the context of gender issues, such reinterpretations often encounter structural and ideological barriers. One significant factor is the dominance of patriarchal paradigms in classical fiqh literature, which tends to subordinate women in matters of worship, transactions, and social relations (Aji 2023; Kholifah and Masruroh 2022).

The discourse on gender in Islam has been extensively explored by scholars and activists. Fatima Mernissi, in her work *The Veil and the Male Elite*, demonstrates that many rules in classical fiqh restricting women's rights are more a product of the social and political constructions of their time rather than inherent Islamic teachings (Ishaque 2018; Karoui 2020; Ennaji 2022). Similarly, Leila Ahmed, in *Women and Gender in Islam*, emphasizes that patriarchy in Islam is not intrinsic but rather a product of specific historical contexts (Al-Ali 2020; Ahmed and Ali 2021; Strobel 2022). Meanwhile, Amina Wadud, in *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, proposes a feminist hermeneutical approach to interpreting the Qur'an inclusively and equitably (Zenrif and Bachri 2023; Bakar 2018; Shahin 2020). These approaches highlight the potential for reinterpreting religious texts to create new narratives that are more inclusive of gender issues.

Within the context of pesantrens, systematic reinterpretation of classical fiqh regarding gender issues remains rare (Mahmudah 2017; Faridah and Pd 2018). Previous

research by Noorhaidi Hasan reveals that pesantrens tend to uphold traditional interpretations of religious texts, including fiqh, viewing them as authentic intellectual legacies (Noorhaidi Hasan 2012; Hasan 2009). Nevertheless, recent studies, such as those by Julia Day Howell, indicate a positive trend where some pesantrens are beginning to open discussions on contemporary issues, including gender, albeit still within a traditional framework (Howell, Nelson, and Subandi 2001; Howell 2001). This highlights a significant research gap: how pesantrens can leverage their intellectual traditions to produce reinterpretations of classical fiqh that are relevant to current gender equality challenges.

Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas in Mandailing Natal was chosen as the research site due to its unique characteristics that make it highly relevant for this study. The pesantren uses *Fath al-Muin* and *I'anab al-Thalibin* as primary references for teaching fiqh, both of which are known for their textual and normative approaches to Islamic law (Ikbal, Pohan, and Nasution 2021; S. Nasution, Ikbal, and Pohan 2022). Geographically, Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas is located in close proximity to West Sumatra, home to the Minangkabau matrilineal society. This creates an intriguing dynamic, as the student body comprises individuals from two distinct cultural backgrounds: the patriarchal Mandailing tradition and the matrilineal Minang tradition. This heterogeneity raises interesting questions about how local fiqh teachings are approached in this context.

Moreover, gender issues in Indonesia have become increasingly prominent topics of discussion over the past decade. Data from the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) shows a rising trend in violence against women, with the majority of perpetrators coming from within the family (Angesti et al. 2023; Evanty 2020; Samsul 2020). This phenomenon cannot be separated from social constructions that discriminate against women, including religious interpretations often used to justify discriminatory practices. On the other hand, the Islamic feminist movement, pioneered by organizations such as Rahima and Kalyanamitra, has successfully opened discussions on gender equality within Islam (Ghofur and Susilo 2015). However, the impact of these movements on pesantrens remains limited, as pesantrens are often perceived as resistant to change.

This study introduces significant novelty by exploring the reinterpretation of classical fiqh texts in pesantrens as a response to contemporary gender equality challenges, an area that remains underexplored in existing literature. While previous studies have examined gender issues within Islamic contexts, such as Fatima Mernissi's work on the historical construction of patriarchal interpretations in Islamic jurisprudence (Ishaque 2018; Karoui 2020; Ennaji 2022) and Leila Ahmed's analysis of gender hierarchies in early Islamic societies (Al-Ali 2020; Ahmed and Ali 2021; Strobel 2022), these studies primarily focus on textual critiques rather than practical reinterpretations within traditional institutions like pesantrens. Similarly, Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics (Zenrif and Bachri 2023; Bakar 2018; Shahin 2020) offers a theoretical framework for reinterpreting Qur'anic texts but does not address how such approaches can be institutionalized in conservative settings like pesantrens.

Recent research by Noorhaidi Hasan highlights the resistance of pesantrens to reinterpret religious texts, emphasizing their role as custodians of traditional Islamic knowledge (Noorhaidi Hasan 2012; Hasan 2009). However, this study builds upon Hasan's

findings by demonstrating that pesantrens are not entirely resistant to change; instead, they exhibit flexibility when local cultural values, such as Mandailing's matrilineal traditions, align with reinterpretation efforts. Julia Day Howell's work further complements this by illustrating how some pesantrens are beginning to engage with modern issues, though her focus is more on broader socio-political dynamics rather than specific gender-related reinterpretations (Howell, Nelson, and Subandi 2001; Howell 2001).

Nuroniah's study, which highlights gender interpretation in pesantren, underscores the highly dominant role of kiyai interpretation (Nuroniya 2023), yet it maintains the notion of leadership as embodied in male figures. The authorization of classical literature is so strongly perceived as an incontrovertible standard of religious values that Farida's research identifies Al-Ghazali's *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din* as one of the sources of patriarchal narratives that continue to be preserved to this day (Farida and Kasdi 2021). One implication of this patriarchal narrative within the "yellow books" is evident in South Sulawesi, where, despite women beginning to assume leadership roles in limited contexts, the influence of patriarchal culture still dominates the highest policy-making processes in pesantren. Conversely, the presence of *bissu* as ceremonial figures recognized by the community has made a significant contribution to the acceptance of women in the domain of religious education (Fatmawati et al. 2024).

The uniqueness of this research lies in its ethnographic approach, which connects classical fiqh teachings with local cultural practices. For instance, it highlights how principles like *qiwamah* are reinterpreted as shared responsibility rather than male dominance, supported by matrilineal traditions. This approach bridges the gap between theory and practice, offering a model for other pesantrens to integrate progressive interpretations without abandoning their scholarly heritage. By focusing on Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas, this study provides actionable insights into how traditional institutions can adapt to modern challenges, thereby contributing both theoretically and practically to the discourse on gender and Islam.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach using ethnographic methods and textual analysis to explore how the reinterpretation of classical fiqh is carried out at Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas in response to gender equality issues (Peláez 2013). The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand social phenomena in depth, contextually, and holistically, particularly in the interaction between the scholarly traditions of the pesantren and the social realities of the Mandailing Natal community (Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman 2014). Ethnography was utilized to observe the teaching practices of fiqh within the pesantren and the social dynamics that occur within it, while textual analysis was used to explore how the texts *Fath al-Muin* and *I'anah al-Thalibin* are taught and reinterpreted in the context of gender (Peláez 2013).

Primary data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted over three months within the pesantren environment to understand how fiqh texts are taught in the classroom, how students comprehend the material, and how gender values are reflected in the daily life of the pesantren. In-depth interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including the

pesantren leaders, ustadz/ustadzah (teachers), santri (students), and local community figures, to gain broader perspectives on gender issues within the pesantren context. Documentation included lesson notes, sermon manuscripts, and other literature used in the teaching process (Longhurst 2009).

Textual analysis involved critically reading *Fath al-Muin* and *I'alah al-Thalibin*, as well as other references used in the pesantren curriculum. Hermeneutic techniques were applied to identify fiqh concepts relevant to gender issues, such as inheritance law, marriage, and women's leadership (White and Marsh 2006). Additionally, a contextualization approach was employed to understand how these texts are interpreted within the matrilineal cultural context of Mandailing Natal.

Data validity was strengthened through source and method triangulation. Source triangulation was performed by comparing information from pesantren leaders, santri, and the surrounding community, while method triangulation combined the results of observations, interviews, and textual analysis. Data analysis was conducted thematically, identifying key patterns in the reinterpretation of classical fiqh related to gender. Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive depiction of how pesantrens can serve as agents of social transformation in supporting gender equality without abandoning the authority of religious texts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Textual Traditions in Classical Fiqh Teaching: Unveiling Patriarchal Dominance at Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas

Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas in Mandailing Natal is one of the traditional Islamic educational institutions that continues to uphold the teaching of yellow books (kitab kuning) as the core of its curriculum. In this context, *Fath al-Muin* and *I'alah al-Thalibin* serve as primary references for fiqh learning (S. Nasution, Ikbāl, and Pohan 2022). These texts, written in the 17th and 18th centuries, are products of the social, cultural, and political contexts of their time. The patriarchal narratives embedded in these texts not only reflect the societal structures of that era but also continue to shape influential discourses to this day. At this pesantren, classical fiqh is taught using a textual approach that tends to be literal, where students are encouraged to understand the texts as they are without much room for reinterpretation. This creates an intriguing dynamic when the concepts taught clash with contemporary social realities, including gender equality issues (Shafi 2024).

In fiqh classes, topics such as inheritance law, marriage, leadership, and gender roles in worship are frequently discussed. For instance, in discussions on inheritance law, the ustadz explains the principle of faraid, which grants men twice the share given to women (Ismail, Hermanto, and Muslimin 2020; Murtadlo 2018). This principle is directly derived from the Qur'an (QS An-Nisa: 11), and its interpretation by classical scholars like Sayyid Abu Bakar Muhammad Syatho al-Dimyathi appears to have been influenced by the patriarchal social context of their time. Similarly, in the context of marriage, the text in *I'alah al-Thalibin* emphasizes the concept of *qiwamah*, or the husband's authority as the head of the household, while placing the wife in a subordinate position (Subaidi 2014). This concept is often used to justify gender hierarchies that place women in inferior positions.

Field observations reveal that this traditional interpretation is not entirely passively accepted by the santri (students). Classroom observations show that some santri, particularly female students, have begun questioning the fairness of these rules. A female santri named Siti mentioned that in Mandailing Natal society, women often become the backbone of the family due to the matrilineal culture, which grants women greater inheritance rights (Interview, 2024). For her, there is tension between what is taught in fiqh classes and the social realities she encounters daily. This tension is not merely about differing practices but also about how religious texts are understood and interpreted. These questions indicate that santri no longer view fiqh texts as static but as something that must be understood within the context of evolving social dynamics (Saadah, Umar, and Ramlah 2023).

The ustadz/ustadzah at the pesantren do not entirely dismiss these questions. Some attempt to provide contextual explanations, arguing that classical fiqh texts were written in specific social contexts that may differ from current conditions. For example, Ustaz AM noted that the principle of faraid in inheritance law is not an absolute rule but a guideline that must be understood and adapted to specific social and economic contexts. He even acknowledged that in Mandailing society, where women play central roles in family economics, granting women larger inheritance shares could be considered a form of social justice (Sanusi 2015). However, these reinterpretation efforts remain cautious and are often constrained by the perceived sanctity of the texts. The ustadz tend to argue that classical fiqh texts are the result of scholarly ijtihad from earlier generations and should not be disregarded outright, although they also recognize that reinterpretation may be necessary in modern contexts.

Resistance to the reinterpretation of fiqh doctrines does not only come from the ustadz but also from some male santri who hold more conservative views. A santri named AI rejected the idea that women could have equal inheritance rights as men. According to him, classical fiqh texts provide clear guidance on gender hierarchy, and any attempt to alter them is considered a deviation from Islamic teachings because, in his view, fiqh texts are based on Qur'anic verses and hadiths of Prophet Muhammad as foundational arguments. This perspective reflects how the traditional interpretation of classical fiqh texts remains strong within the pesantren, despite indications that reinterpretation is beginning to emerge.

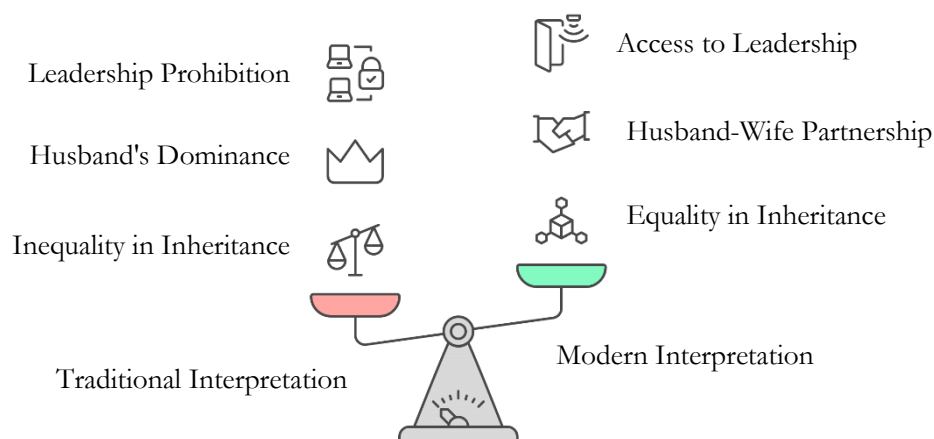


Figure 1. The Interpretation of Patriarchy in Traditional Fiqh in Pesantren

Figure 1 illustrates that although traditional interpretations remain dominant, there is room for discussion and reinterpretation. The questions raised by the santri reflect their concerns about classical fiqh texts, which are often considered irrelevant to contemporary social realities. The responses from the ustadz/ustadzah, though still cautious, indicate that reinterpretation may be possible as long as it remains within the framework of Islamic scholarly traditions.

From the information above, it can be concluded that the teaching of classical fiqh at Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas reflects the complexity of the relationship between tradition, text, and social reality. Traditional interpretations of classical fiqh texts remain dominant but are beginning to show cracks due to social dynamics and local cultural influences. The integration of matrilineal cultural elements into the predominantly patriarchal Mandailing culture plays a flexible yet central role, particularly in empowering women and encouraging the reinterpretation of classical literature. This effort to reinterpret still faces significant challenges, both from within the pesantren and from resistance to change. This narrative demonstrates that the reinterpretation of classical fiqh is not merely about altering the text but also about creating a new paradigm that respects tradition while addressing modern challenges.

Matrilineal as a Gateway to Reinterpreting Gender Discourse

Although geographically located in North Sumatra, Mandailing Natal holds a unique position between two major cultures: the matrilineal patriarchal culture of the Minangkabau and the patrilineal patriarchal culture of the Batak (Mandailing). Historically, Mandailing society has tended to adopt a strong patriarchal system, with men dominating social, political, and economic structures (Fauzi 2022). However, the influence of the Minangkabau matrilineal culture—which places women at the center of family authority—has gradually seeped into Mandailing's social structure through centuries of cross-cultural interactions, especially during intermarriage. This phenomenon creates a complex social dynamic where traditional patriarchal values intersect with matrilineal practices that provide greater space for women. In the context of Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas, these two local cultural influences become important foundations for reinterpreting classical fiqh texts, which are often viewed as products of patriarchal structures.

The influence of matrilineal culture is slowly becoming evident in the practices of land and family wealth inheritance in Mandailing Natal. Although normatively Mandailing society still adheres to patriarchal principles, women often become primary (though not sole) inheritors of land and family assets, especially if they are deemed more capable of managing these resources (Ariani 2016). This contrasts with the concept of *faraid* in classical fiqh, which grants women smaller shares compared to men. In informal discussions at the pesantren, some ustadz attempt to bridge the tension between classical fiqh texts and local cultural realities. For instance, one ustadz (AM) noted that the principle of justice in the Qur'an (QS An-Nisa: 7) can be used to support more inclusive inheritance practices. According to him, this verse emphasizes the importance of social justice rather than rigid textual rules. The infiltration of matrilineal concepts into Mandailing society thus becomes both a challenge to traditional fiqh interpretations and an opportunity to reinterpret these texts contextually (Khairina 2022).

This reinterpretation is not always easily accepted by all parties. Many conservative community leaders reject this approach, arguing that local culture should not dominate religion. Traditional figures in Mandailing often claim that inheritance practices granting greater rights to women result from Minangkabau cultural influences, which they consider incompatible with Islamic teachings (Kamal and Rozi 2020). Classical fiqh texts must be followed literally, as they are regarded as authentic guidelines. This view reflects resistance to reinterpretation, often emerging from groups seeking to preserve the authority of religious texts. This resistance is exacerbated by the lack of progressive Islamic literature available in pesantrens, causing reinterpretations to often be conducted intuitively without a strong theoretical foundation (M. H. Nasution, Siregar, and Harahap 2020).

On the other hand, the younger generation of santri shows a keen interest in contemporary issues, including gender equality. They begin exploring feminism through various platforms, particularly social media. The heterogeneous and complex realities of life foster confidence and belief in women's existence in both public and private spheres. Moreover, the integration of matrilineal culture into Mandailing society opens new avenues for broader and more comparative interpretations, especially regarding women's rights, allowing for their expansion or further interpretation.

This phenomenon illustrates how syncretism between religion and local culture can serve as a tool for reinterpreting religious texts. In the Mandailing context, matrilineal culture is not only part of local identity but also a basis for building new narratives about gender equality (Atikah and Rifa 2023). For example, in discussions about women's leadership, some ustadz attempt to link the concept of *qiwamah* in fiqh with local cultural practices where women often serve as informal leaders within families. They argue that *qiwamah* is not male dominance but a shared responsibility for maintaining family welfare. In this way, the pesantren seeks to bridge religion and local culture to create new narratives about gender equality.

Table 1. Syncretism of Religion and Locality in Gender Discourse within Pesantren Environments

Social Aspects	Mandailing Cultural Practices	Classical Fiqh Interpretation	Local Culture-Based Reinterpretation
Inheritance of Land and Property	Women have historically been primary inheritors of family land and property	Twice the portion for men compared to women (<i>faraid</i>)	The principle of justice in QS An-Nisa: 7 is used to support more inclusive inheritance practices
Leadership within the Family	Women often become informal leaders within the family	Husband as head of the household (<i>qiwamah</i>); wife in a subordinate position	<i>Qiwamah</i> understood as shared responsibility, not male dominance
Economic Role	Women often serve as the backbone of the family economy	Women placed in subordinate positions in classical fiqh texts	Local cultural practices are used to show that women can have equal economic roles

The explanation in table 1 shows that although the traditional interpretation of classical fiqh texts remains dominant, there are visible efforts to reinterpret these texts based on local cultural practices. The integration of Mandailing's matrilineal culture, which gives a central role to women, becomes a significant factor driving this reinterpretation. In general, the incorporation of matrilineal culture in Mandailing serves as an entry point for reinterpreting classical fiqh texts at Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas. The syncretism between religion and local culture creates space for dialogue between Islamic scholarly traditions and contemporary social realities. This reinterpretation does not solely rely on the text but also on the interaction between the text, context, and social agents within the pesantren. Mandailing's matrilineal culture, with its strong influence from Minangkabau culture, demonstrates that classical fiqh can be reinterpreted without abandoning the authority of religious texts. This narrative highlights that the reinterpretation of classical fiqh is not merely about changing the text but also about creating a new paradigm that respects tradition while addressing modern challenges.

Challenges, Opportunities, and the Transformation of a New Paradigm in Pesantren

The reinterpretation of classical fiqh in the context of pesantrens is not merely an academic effort to understand religious texts more inclusively but also a social movement with the potential to drive significant changes in societal structures (Rizka, Shuhufi, and Iqbal 2025). At Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas, this process of reinterpretation faces numerous significant challenges stemming from internal resistance, the scarcity of progressive literature, and the deeply entrenched dominance of patriarchal narratives that have been internalized over centuries. However, amid these challenges, there are substantial opportunities to create a new paradigm on gender equality through the integration of local values, adaptation to modernity, and the use of technology as a tool for transformation. This narrative will explore how pesantrens can become significant agents of social transformation in promoting gender equality, even as they continue to grapple with structural and ideological barriers.

One of the primary challenges in reinterpreting classical fiqh is the resistance from groups that rigidly adhere to traditional interpretations of fiqh texts. For instance, some ustadz reject the notion that women can have equal inheritance rights as men. According to them, the texts in *Fath al-Muin* and *I'anah al-Thalibin* provide clear guidelines on gender hierarchy, and any attempt to alter these teachings is considered a deviation from Islamic principles. This resistance is exacerbated by the lack of progressive Islamic literature available in pesantrens, causing reinterpretations to often be conducted intuitively without a strong theoretical foundation. As an illustration, one ustadz (UA) stated that he finds it difficult to justify local cultural practices that conflict with classical fiqh texts, as he fears such efforts might be perceived as a form of religious liberalization (Ustadz, interview, 2024). This perspective reflects how religious texts are often regarded as sacred and immutable.

Nevertheless, the researcher's findings indicate that santri show a high level of interest in contemporary issues, including gender equality. Social phenomena occurring around them open up broader opportunities for more open discussions on feminism. In addition to insights from local culture, one of the strengths of santri literacy in this context is the vast amount of information accessible through social media. Young santri use platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp to access sensitive topics like

women's leadership, reproductive rights, and gender roles in worship. Through these social media platforms, santri gain access to a wider range of materials related to feminist issues.

The reinterpretation of classical fiqh in pesantrens does not solely depend on individuals or technology but also on the institutional structure of the pesantren itself. This study found that pesantrens have the flexibility to integrate local values into fiqh teachings, as demonstrated in the case of incorporating matrilineal cultural elements into Mandailing culture. In discussions about women's leadership, some ustadz attempt to link the concept of *qiwamah* in fiqh with local cultural practices where women often serve as informal leaders within families, supported by various arguments and conditions. They argue that *qiwamah* is not male dominance but a shared responsibility to ensure family welfare. In this way, pesantrens attempt to bridge religion and local culture to create new narratives about gender equality.

Table 2. Challenges and Opportunities for Reinterpreting Pesantren Fiqh

Aspects Of Reintrepretation	Main Challenges	Opportunities For Reinterpretation	Examples Of Reinterpretation Practices
Progressive Literature	Scarcity of progressive Islamic literature in pesantrens	Santri begin reading modern Islamic feminist works	Discussions on feminist hermeneutics in Islam
Information Technology	Resistance to using technology for religious discussions	Social media used to discuss gender issues	WhatsApp groups for discussions on gender equality
Local Culture	Conflict between classical fiqh texts and local cultural practices	Integration of matrilineal cultural values into fiqh teachings	Granting greater inheritance rights to women based on QS An-Nisa: 7
Institutional Structure	Resistance from conservative groups to change	Flexibility of pesantrens to adapt local values	Interpretation of <i>qiwamah</i> as shared responsibility, not male dominance

Table 2 illustrates that although the reinterpretation of classical fiqh faces several challenges, there are significant opportunities to create a new paradigm on gender equality through the integration of local values, adaptation to modernity, and the use of technology. The incorporation of matrilineal culture into Mandailing traditions, which gives women a central role, becomes a crucial driver for this reinterpretation.

From the above explanation, it can be concluded that the reinterpretation of classical fiqh at Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas demonstrates that pesantrens can become significant agents of social transformation in promoting gender equality. Although this transformation does not solely depend on the text but also on the interaction between text, context, and social agents within the pesantren, the influence of Mandailing's matrilineal culture, with its strong ties to Minangkabau traditions, shows that classical fiqh can be reinterpreted without abandoning the authority of religious texts. This narrative highlights that the reinterpretation of classical fiqh is not just about changing the text but also about creating a new paradigm that respects tradition while addressing modern challenges.

CONCLUSION

Pesantren Ma'had Darul Ikhlas in Mandailing Natal engages in reinterpreting classical fiqh to address contemporary gender equality challenges. It serves as a dialogue space between classical texts, local culture, and modern social realities. While foundational texts like *Fath al-Muin* and *Panah al-Thalibin* reflect patriarchal structures, Mandailing's matrilineal culture provides a basis for inclusive reinterpretation. *Ustadz/ustadzah* are beginning to integrate local values into fiqh teachings, enhancing women's inheritance rights based on justice principles in the Qur'an (QS An-Nisa: 7). However, resistance from conservative groups persists, viewing classical texts as unalterable. Young *santri* show interest in gender issues, using social media to discuss topics like women's leadership and reproductive rights, indicating opportunities for a new paradigm on gender equality. The reinterpretation of fiqh involves creating narratives that respect tradition while addressing modern challenges, allowing *pesantrens* to become agents of social transformation in promoting gender equality despite existing barriers.

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