

Nyai leadership: The role of women in maintaining the tradition of santri literacy in islamic boarding schools

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Article information	Abstract
Submitted: 2024-11-12 Revised: 2025-06-13 Published: 2025-06-29	The issue addressed in this study is the limited understanding of the role of Nyai's leadership in preserving the literacy tradition among santri (Islamic boarding school students), particularly regarding their strategies, challenges, and contributions in maintaining the continuity of Islamic intellectual culture within traditional educational settings. This study also aims to understand how Bu Nyai's leadership influences the development of santri literacy, what efforts are undertaken by Bu Nyai to promote literacy among santri, and which factors support success in this context. The literacy tradition in Islamic boarding schools is an essential factor in shaping the students' character and intellectual capacity. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observations involving Bu Nyai, santri, and the boarding school administrators. This study concludes that Bu Nyai democratic, visionary, and transformative leadership effectively fostered a culture of literacy among students. Her strategies included literacy programs, student publications, discussions, an active library, and consistent policies. Direct guidance, integration of spiritual, socio-academic, and documentation practices fostered creativity, independence, and a sustainable literacy tradition, emphasizing the central role of female leadership in Islamic boarding school education. This research contributes by demonstrating the effectiveness of female leadership in fostering literacy in Islamic boarding schools. The findings emphasize the importance of structured strategies, direct guidance, and the integration of spiritual-social-academic values, as well as documentation practices, as leadership models that can serve as references for developing a culture of literacy and character education in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords:

Leadership of Nyai,
Literacy tradition,
Boarding School of
Pesantren.



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INTRODUCTION

Strengthening literacy in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) has become an important issue to ensure that Islamic educational institutions remain relevant in the era of globalization and technology. According to Marmoah et al (2022) as well as Sari et al. (2024), literacy in pesantren plays a vital role in maintaining their existence as centers for the development of Islamic knowledge and values. However, Hanafi et al. (2021) argue that santri literacy culture still faces obstacles such as weak management, limited facilities, and insufficient use of technology. In this context, Aini et al. (2021) emphasize that Nyai's leadership holds a strategic position, not only as a companion to the Kiai but also as an educator and role model. Mustofa et al. (2023) further highlight that Nyai actively shapes the character of santri through educational activities. In several pesantren, Nyai fosters a culture of literacy through writing training and book discussions, demonstrating adaptive leadership despite facing patriarchal challenges (Merino et al., 2024). In line with Hadianto et al. (2022), literacy is a fundamental skill, and Nyai plays a crucial role in strengthening the santri literacy tradition within Islamic boarding schools.

Previous studies indicate that effective leadership in Islamic boarding schools greatly influences students' motivation and literacy achievement. Arroyo et al. (2023) emphasize that strong and responsive leadership contributes to a more engaging learning environment. According to Munna (2021), Bu Nyai as a central leader in the boarding school structure plays an essential role in policy formulation, curriculum management, and direct mentorship of students. Acosta-Gonzaga and Ramirez-Arellano (2022) further assert that moral support and adequate learning facilities provided by leaders can significantly increase students' enthusiasm and participation in literacy activities. In a broader perspective, Galsanjigmed and Sekiguchi (2023) explain that women's leadership is increasingly recognized globally due to their emotional intelligence, multitasking abilities, and strong spiritual foundation. Zaqiah et al. (2024) highlight that literacy in Islamic education encompasses both religious and general knowledge as indicators of educational quality. At Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School, Bu Nyai demonstrates a strategic role in fostering an inclusive and motivating learning climate (Rusticus et al., 2024). Through the application of transformational (Riggio & Bass, 2005) and servant leadership principles (Ragnarsson et al., 2018), Bu Nyai successfully strengthens students' motivation and literacy development.

Previous studies have shown that leadership significantly influences students' motivation and literacy achievement in Islamic boarding schools. However, most research still focuses on general leadership patterns without examining the specific role of Bu Nyai as a female leader with both educational and moral authority. Studies on women's leadership have recognized their emotional intelligence and spiritual depth, yet there is limited understanding of how these qualities are applied in the context of pesantren, especially in literacy development. Furthermore, research has not sufficiently explored how Bu Nyai implements concrete strategies, overcomes challenges, and utilizes contextual factors to build a literacy culture. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by exploring how Bu Nyai's leadership motivates students, shapes literacy initiatives, and fosters an inclusive and inspiring learning environment within the pesantren setting.

This study aims to deeply understand the role of Bu Nyai's leadership in influencing the development of students' literacy in the Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School environment. The main focus of the study is to explore how Bu Nyai motivates students to achieve achievements in the field of literacy through an active, inspiring, and innovative leadership approach. This study also aims to identify various efforts made by Bu Nyai in building a culture of literacy in the Islamic boarding school, as well as to analyze the factors that support the success of this strategy. By understanding the dynamics of Bu Nyai's leadership, it is hoped that the results of this study can provide theoretical contributions to the development of women's leadership studies in the context of Islamic boarding school education, as well as become a practical reference for

managers of similar educational institutions. In addition, this study is expected to provide new insights in designing more effective and inclusive literacy policies in the Islamic boarding school environment in order to improve the quality of education and empower students as a whole.

The preliminary hypothesis of this study states that Bu Nyai's active, inspiring, and innovative leadership has a significant influence on students' motivation and literacy achievement at Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School. Leadership based on transformational and spiritual approaches is believed to create a conducive learning environment, provide emotional support, and foster close relationships between the leader and students. Various literacy strategies and programs designed by Bu Nyai such as writing training, book discussions, and student media management are expected to contribute positively to improving students' literacy skills. In addition, supporting factors such as institutional support, availability of facilities, and Bu Nyai's role as a spiritual and intellectual role model are believed to strengthen the impact of her leadership on students' literacy achievement. Thus, there is a strong relationship between Bu Nyai's leadership style and the success of literacy development in the pesantren.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to deeply explore the meaning of individuals' lived experiences regarding social phenomena they encounter. Dodgson (2023) and Lim (2024) argue that this approach enables researchers to capture individuals' perceptions, awareness, and experiences in depth, making it relevant for understanding leadership practices in educational contexts. The phenomenon under study is Bu Nyai's leadership in fostering literacy at Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Annuqayah Putri. Englander (2016) and Frechette et al. (2020) emphasize that phenomenology can uncover the essence of lived experiences within specific social contexts, thereby capturing the dynamics between leaders and followers. This research focuses on how Bu Nyai exercises her leadership and how female students respond to its impact on literacy. Hassan and Wright (2023) argue that female leadership plays a strategic role in shaping learning culture, while Galsanjigmed and Sekiguchi (2023) indicate that effective leadership can significantly influence educational outcomes and literacy development.

In the data collection process, the researchers employed several techniques, including in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Rutledge and Hogg (2020) emphasize that combining these techniques is essential for obtaining rich and in-depth understanding in qualitative research. Interviews were conducted with Bu Nyai as the primary informant due to her strategic role in pesantren leadership, while female students were interviewed to explore their direct experiences. McGrath et al. (2018) and Guo et al. (2024) argue that interviews allow researchers to understand individuals' subjective perspectives and interpretations of experienced phenomena. Observations were conducted to review routine activities, the learning environment, and interactions between Bu Nyai and the students; Zamiri and Esmaeili (2024) highlight that researchers' direct involvement in the setting enables a more holistic understanding of social dynamics. Documentation, such as activity archives, policies, and internal records, according to Palinkas et al. (2015), complements the data to provide a more comprehensive research perspective. Direct visits to the pesantren, as noted by Esmeli et al. (2022), help build strong contextual understanding and offer a complete picture of Bu Nyai's leadership practices.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, the researcher applied triangulation techniques by comparing and confirming findings from various sources and data collection methods, as emphasized by Valencia (2022), who underscores the role of triangulation in strengthening research results. This triangulation includes source triangulation (Bu Nyai, female students, and documents), method triangulation (interviews, observations, documentation), and

time triangulation (conducted on several occasions), as highlighted by Donkoh and Mensah (2023), who suggest that multiple perspectives and methods enhance research depth. The main focus of this study is Bu Nyai's leadership in fostering a literacy culture at the Lubangsa Annuqayah Putri Islamic Boarding School. According to Carter et al. (2014), Bu Nyai serves as the primary informant, while female students act as supporting informants, offering insights as those directly experiencing her leadership. The informants were selected using purposive sampling, an approach effective for identifying relevant individuals. Additionally, the snowball technique, as discussed by Johnson (2014), was used to gather further informants based on recommendations from knowledgeable sources.

In analyzing the data, the researcher used thematic analysis techniques, as developed by Boyatzis (1998), who emphasized identifying patterns, themes, and meanings within qualitative data. Naeem et al. (2023) note that thematic analysis helps uncover key patterns and relationships in interview data, observations, and documentation. This process involves coding data, grouping themes, and interpreting how they relate to policies, roles, and the impacts of Bu Nyai's leadership on students' literacy development, as explained by Bingham (2023). Through this approach, the researcher illustrates how Bu Nyai's leadership influences students' motivation in literacy and how women's leadership values are integrated within the Islamic boarding school structure, as highlighted by these scholars. The analysis also enables the researcher to link findings with the theoretical framework, offering meaningful interpretations of Bu Nyai's leadership in fostering a sustainable literacy culture in the modern era, as Collins and Stockton (2018) argue, stressing the need for leadership to adapt to contemporary challenges while preserving traditional values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Bunyai's efforts in maintaining student literacy in islamic boarding schools

The role of Nyai in the Islamic boarding school includes the role of domestic leadership and public leadership. In its existence, Bu nyai contributes to creating a disciplined and literate Islamic boarding school environment (religious culture) while instilling Islamic religious values in students. In her leadership at the Islamic boarding school, Nyai also takes part in the management of the boarding school including program planning, organizing institutions, implementing programs, and also supervising all programs implemented at the Lubangsa Utara Annuqayah Putri Islamic Boarding School.

The Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School has a strong literacy culture climate among students from generation to generation. This is a major concern for Nyai as a caretaker (leader) at the boarding school. Moreover, the desire and awareness of the students to learn and work are increasing so that they do not hesitate to ask for Bunyai's guidance directly by visiting Bunyai's residence. Seeing this high interest makes Bunyai enthusiastic in developing and implementing larger boarding school activity programs related to students' reading and writing literacy. Various efforts made by Nyai during her time as the supervisor of Pondok Lubtara Putri, as in table 1 below.

Table 1
Bunyai's Efforts in Maintaining Literacy Traditions

No	Results	Description
1	Obligation to Read Books and Review Them	Since 2017, Islamic boarding schools have required all students to read 25–30 books per year. MTs students summarize the readings, while MA students and students write reviews as a form of literacy implementation.
2	Creating a Literacy Program at the Islamic Boarding School	In 2018, the number of institutions in the Islamic boarding school grew from two to several, including book institutions, literacy, Arabic, English, agriculture, environmental love communities, and Al-Qur'an mudrasah

3	Supporting the Publication of Students' Written Works and Sharing Information	jam'iyah. Nyai's support includes direct guidance, providing recommendations for quality reading material, motivating English learning, encouraging the writing of news about pondok activities, and activating a bulletin boarding house containing the students' works on a rotating basis.
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Based on table 1, it shows that Bu Nyai has a central role in maintaining and developing the literacy tradition in Islamic boarding schools through strategic policies and direct support for students. Starting from the obligation to read and review books, this program forms a structured literacy culture at all levels of education. The development of literacy institutions since 2018 shows an institutional commitment to making literacy an integral part of the Islamic boarding school curriculum. In addition, Bu Nyai's support in publishing students' written works shows a transformative approach that not only encourages academic abilities but also builds students' self-confidence in expressing themselves. The activation of information media such as wall magazines becomes a space for appreciation and distribution of students' works, strengthening the literary atmosphere in the Islamic boarding school environment. Bu Nyai's exemplary role is the key to the successful implementation of the program, showing that inclusive and inspiring leadership is able to drive sustainable changes in literacy culture in Islamic boarding schools.

Supporting factors in producing literate students

Based on the findings obtained through interviews with several pesantren administrators and Bu Nyai at Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa, there are numerous factors that support the development of literate students who are skilled in creative work. Historically, the literacy culture among students has been deeply rooted and constitutes an essential part of the pesantren's identity. To ensure that this culture remains vibrant and is not eroded by changing times, its preservation is carried out through consistent and sustainable efforts by various parties, including the pesantren's leaders, administrators, and the students themselves. Strong commitment combined with strategic measures, such as establishing literacy programs, active mentoring, activating libraries, and documenting activities, is necessary to ensure that literacy values continue to develop. These strategies ensure that literacy practices are not only relevant to contemporary needs but can also be effectively transmitted from one generation of students to the next, building a strong and sustainable literacy tradition.

Table 2

Supporting factors for the success of the North Lubangsa Islamic Boarding School

No	Results	Description
1	Leadership Bunyai	Nyai guides students, enhances school management, encourages interest-based competition participation, and requires written reports of every activity for publication.
2	High interest in learning among students	The students' interest is reflected in their initiative to visit literacy caretakers, form regular discussion groups, ask for guidance, and actively write and publish works in the form of anthologies.
3	Comfortable and Student-Friendly Environment	The friendly and comfortable boarding environment is designed to support spiritual strengthening, knowledge, and literacy, thereby increasing students' motivation to learn and develop.
4	Support for Islamic Boarding Schools between Caretakers, Students, Administrators, and Guardians of Students	Nyai provides direct support to students through various methods. The harmonious relationship between caregivers, administrators, guardians of students, and students creates an environment that supports the development of students holistically and collaboratively.
5	Opportunities and Trust Given to Students.	Bunyai supports students through literacy programs to develop writing skills and build self-confidence and innovation according to their respective

6 Active Library	interests. The Lubtara Library is managed by students and is active in various activities, becoming a center for access to knowledge that encourages students' reading literacy through lending books and scriptures.
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Based on table 2, it shows that the success of the Lubangsa Utara Islamic Boarding School in building a culture of literacy does not only rely on one aspect, but is the result of synergy between Bu Nyai's visionary leadership, active participation of students, and supportive environmental support. Bu Nyai's transformational leadership provides direction and inspiration, while the students' high interest in learning is the main driving force. The comfortable boarding school environment and collaboration between caregivers, students, administrators, and guardians of students create a holistic system in fostering character and skills. Giving trust and opportunities to students to write and innovate shows the importance of empowerment in the education process. On the other hand, the existence of an active library also strengthens the literacy ecosystem in the Islamic boarding school. All of these factors show that literacy can thrive if supported by leadership, participation, facilities, and a culture that strengthens each other.

Discussion

Bu Nyai's leadership style in realizing literacy in islamic boarding schools

The role of women in pesantren demonstrates a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. Bu Nyai's leadership not only emphasizes spiritual guidance but also strengthens the culture of literacy among students, in line with Rosadi (2023), who highlights the importance of education based on religious values and literacy. The Islamic perspective affirms the equality of men and women, where virtue is measured by piety, consistent with Chapman's (2018) interpretation of gender justice principles as the foundation of leadership. Analyses by Barthold et al. (2020) and Nassani et al. (2024) indicate that this principle enables Bu Nyai to implement democratic, participative, and open leadership, fostering creativity and critical thinking among students. Farhan (2024) emphasizes how visionary leadership promotes both functional and intellectual literacy, while Arifin et al. (2018) stress the importance of open communication and strategic policies in strengthening a literacy culture. Bu Nyai's inspirational and innovative approach, according to McPhee & Cox (2024), instills intellectual values, independent thinking, and a scholarly ethos, demonstrating the integration of leadership, literacy, and student character development.

The findings indicate that Bu Nyai's leadership style plays a crucial role in shaping the literacy culture at Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Utara Putri Annuqayah, which is part of Pondok Pesantren Annuqayah founded by Kiai Syarqawi in 1887 in Guluk-Guluk, Sumenep, Madura, and is currently led by Bu Nyai Fadilah. Previously, the role of Nyai was limited to assisting the Kiai without direct involvement in decision-making, as observed by Flechtner et al. (2024). The findings reveal a significant shift under Bu Nyai's leadership, as she emerges as an active and visionary leader focused on empowering students through literacy, in line with Schmitz et al. (2023) interpretation of transformative leadership. Bu Nyai's commitment is evident through direct mentoring, writing training, and short courses, which Downey et al. (2024) suggest effectively strengthen literacy culture. Bunjak et al. (2022) further emphasize that Bu Nyai's transformative leadership promotes change, empowerment, and a significant enhancement of students' literacy capacity, demonstrating the integration of leadership and the development of literacy culture in the pesantren.

Bu Nyai's leadership in promoting literacy at Pondok Pesantren Putri Lubangsa Utara Annuqayah is reflected in the innovations implemented by Bunyai Fadilah since assuming leadership. The findings indicate that in 2018 she established eight new institutions to develop

students' potential, replacing the previous system that only had two institutions, English and Arabic, aligning with Blixen & Pannell (2020) analysis on strengthening organizational structures as a literacy strategy. All students are required to read and write from elementary to tertiary levels, which, according to Atterstrom et al. (2021), reflects inclusive and sustainable leadership. Since 2023, Bunyai Fadilah has been teaching directly in literacy institutions, emphasizing a participative and inspirational approach that Rehman et al. (2024) interpret as effective in enhancing literacy skills. Thanh & Quang (2022) further support these findings, showing that Bu Nyai's leadership successfully instills a literacy culture characteristic of the pesantren while empowering students to think critically and independently.

Bu Nyai's leadership in promoting literacy in the pesantren is reflected in her strategic vision and policies that position literacy as an essential skill for every student. The findings indicate that this approach aligns with Levy's (2016) interpretation, which emphasizes literacy as the foundation for developing critical and strategic competencies in education. Literacy here is not merely the ability to read and write, but also a means to foster creative, critical, and productive thinking, as analyzed by Wang (2012), who highlights the integration of literacy with intellectual capacity building. Bu Nyai's commitment to maintaining the literacy traditions passed down over generations reinforces the findings of Krissandi et al. (2023) regarding the importance of sustaining academic culture in pesantren. The implemented literacy programs, including encouraging students to actively read, write, and produce works, support the perspectives of Mebert et al. (2020) and Konstantinidis (2024), indicating that sustainable leadership cultivates independent, knowledgeable students who can preserve literacy culture as a core identity of the pesantren.

Bu Nyai's leadership in promoting literacy in the pesantren is evident through various concrete initiatives, including the implementation of mandatory reading for all students, literacy-based sanctions, and programs that encourage reading, writing, and creative activities. These findings align with Payne's (2015) analysis, which emphasizes that strengthening a literacy culture requires concrete and consistent policies. Direct mentoring through discussions and short courses, as examined by Cutillas et al. (2023), demonstrates that participative leadership effectively enhances students' literacy skills. The effectiveness of these policies is reflected in improvements in students' literacy abilities and knowledge, both in religious studies and general skills, consistent with the interpretation of Purkarthofer & Mäntysalo (2022). Despite challenges such as low literacy awareness and limited facilities, Bu Nyai's inclusive, solution-oriented, and empowering leadership reinforces Korkmaz et al. (2022), indicating that sustainable literacy leadership can instill a deeply rooted literacy culture within the pesantren.

One of the main challenges faced by Nyai's leadership at Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Utara in maintaining literacy is the limited time available for intensive student mentoring. The findings indicate that this is due to the multiple roles Nyai fulfills, including as the pesantren leader, a lecturer at Annuqayah University, and manager of domestic affairs, consistent with Samsu et al. (2022) analysis on the complexity of educational leadership roles. Nevertheless, Nyai remains actively involved in student activities and ensures that literacy programs run effectively, as highlighted by Prado et al. (2018), who emphasize the importance of direct leader engagement in the learning process. Nyai's leadership is also reflected in the formulation of policies and regulations that support literacy enhancement, in line with Ghamrawi et al. (2024) interpretation of visionary leadership fostering critical thinking skills and broad knowledge. Bellibas et al. (2021) further stress that literacy serves as a foundational element in developing competent, independent, and open-minded students, demonstrating the integration of leadership and literacy education in the pesantren.

Building a literacy tradition: Nyai's leadership strategies among santri

Nyai Fadilah's role in fostering literacy at Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Utara is reflected through a democratic and visionary leadership approach. According to Bus et al. (2024), active and participatory leadership practices have proven effective in guiding santri through reading, writing, and creative activities, which aligns with the findings at this pesantren. Mohiuddin et al. (2024) emphasize that leaders who demonstrate noble character, self-confidence, innovation, responsibility, and a transformative vision can significantly enhance students' potential and motivation. In the context of literacy, Chan and Lee (2021) highlight the importance of integrating reading and writing skills with the development of critical thinking, which corresponds with Nyai's strategy to prepare santri for the era of globalization. Eva et al. (2019) assert that leaders who balance administrative roles with direct guidance improve the effectiveness of literacy programs. These findings indicate that democratic and participatory leadership, combined with direct mentorship, can cultivate a sustainable literacy culture as a distinctive pesantren tradition.

The strategies implemented by Nyai Fadilah to advance literacy at Pesantren Lubangsa Utara demonstrate a systematic and visionary leadership approach. Szenczi et al. (2023) emphasize that the establishment of structured literacy programs can cultivate consistent reading and writing habits, aligning with the practices applied by Nyai at the pesantren. Marzuki et al. (2023) highlight that active leadership support for students' publication of written works fosters creativity and critical thinking, reflected in the various literacy activities facilitated by Nyai. Marmoah et al. (2022) stress the importance of integrating libraries and literacy policies as primary tools to strengthen a reading and writing culture in daily school life, consistent with Nyai's strategy in instilling a literacy tradition. Additionally, Cattoni et al. (2024) indicate that consistent literacy practices, supported by transformative leadership, contribute to reinforcing literacy traditions as a distinctive feature of educational institutions. These findings suggest that without sustained policies and culture, literacy traditions risk being eroded by globalization, making the integration of literacy practices into the pesantren's core structure essential for maintaining their relevance and sustainability.

In supporting the publication of students' written works, Nyai Fadilah demonstrates active and inspirational leadership. Kim et al. (2019) emphasize that leaders who guide students to deeply understand content, rather than focusing solely on the publisher's label, can enhance analytical and critical skills, aligning with Nyai's practice of mentoring santri to engage deeply with book content. Hossain (2024) highlights the importance of foreign language proficiency to broaden literacy access, reflected in Nyai's encouragement for santri to learn English to read original books and compare them with translated versions. Kujala et al. (2022) stress that writing news and sharing information strengthens functional literacy, which aligns with Nyai's strategy of having santri write pesantren news and post it on the information board. Schreier et al. (2006) underscore the importance of written documentation for reflective practice; Nyai implements this by requiring each institution to submit reports and activating the wall magazine as a platform for expression. Escala et al. (2024) indicate that integrating learning, creativity, and documentation strengthens literacy culture, clearly reflected in Nyai Fadilah's literacy strategies at the pesantren.

At Lubangsa Utara Islamic Boarding School, nearly every activity is documented through written reports, reflecting Nyai Fadilah's direct instructions to santri serving as reporters. Salzmann et al. (2021) emphasize that students' direct involvement in writing activities can significantly enhance literacy skills, aligning with Nyai's practice of training santri to write news and assume journalistic roles. Endres et al. (2020) show that consistent exposure to writing activities fosters literacy habits embedded in daily routines, which is clearly evident in the strategies implemented at this pesantren. According to Ma and Yuen (2008), journalistic experience through creating activity reports adds value to students' writing and analytical skills,

consistent with Nyai's practice of integrating elements of professional journalism. Bezerra et al. (2022) assert that sustained proficiency in reading and writing strengthens intellectual capacity and expression, supporting the finding that this strategy cultivates a consistent and sustainable literacy culture within the pesantren environment.

Nyai Fadilah demonstrates a leadership character that embodies the principle of a servant leader with high dedication. Van Dierendonck et al. (2024) emphasize that servant leadership, which prioritizes community welfare, can foster the development of both individuals and institutions, as reflected in Nyai's practices at the pesantren. Haidari et al. (2024) note that a leader's commitment to service has long-term impacts on student development and institutional growth, aligning with the success of Nyai's literacy programs. In the context of pesantren, Urrila & Eva (2024) highlight that the ability to serve is not merely a task but a core competency of a leader. Kyambade et al. (2024) stress that service-oriented leadership forms the foundation for effective institutional management. Labib et al. (2023) underscore the importance of considering both internal and external factors in literacy strategies. Nyai's approach reflects an integration of spiritual, social, and academic values, effectively cultivating a sustainable literacy culture among students.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that Bu Nyai's leadership in developing literacy among students at Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Utara adopts a democratic, visionary, and transformative model that effectively fosters a culture of literacy. Her leadership strategies include the establishment of structured literacy programs, support for the publication of students' written works, organization of sharing and discussion activities, activation of the library, and consistent implementation of literacy policies. Bu Nyai emphasizes direct mentoring while integrating spiritual, social, and academic values, instilling creativity, critical thinking, and independence in students. The practice of documenting activities and involving students as reporters strengthens writing skills and journalistic experience, building a sustainable literacy tradition. Her leadership character as a devoted servant to the community highlights that her progressive vision and dedication are key to the success of literacy development, while also underscoring the central role of female leadership in strengthening the educational culture of the pesantren.

The theoretical implications of this study indicate that female leadership in pesantren can be analyzed through the framework of democratic, visionary, and transformative leadership, which plays a crucial role in fostering a literacy culture. The findings highlight the relationship between participatory leadership, direct mentoring, and the integration of spiritual, social, and academic values with the enhancement of students' literacy skills, creativity, critical thinking, and independence, providing a basis for developing literacy-based educational leadership theory. Practically, this study offers guidance for pesantren administrators and other Islamic educational institutions in designing effective literacy strategies, including the establishment of structured literacy programs, active mentoring, library activation, support for student publications, and documentation of activities. Furthermore, the results emphasize the importance of women as visionary leaders who can integrate educational, spiritual, and social values, thereby strengthening the educational culture and creating a sustainable literacy tradition within the pesantren environment.

The limitations of this study lie in its focus on a single pesantren, namely Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Utara, meaning the findings may not fully represent literacy leadership practices in other pesantren with different contexts. Additionally, the study primarily emphasizes Bu Nyai's leadership and literacy strategies, without thoroughly examining external factors such as government support, access to technology, or family involvement, which may also influence the

effectiveness of the literacy culture. The limited observation period may further constrain understanding of the long-term impact of the implemented literacy strategies. Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across multiple pesantren, assess the role of external factors in supporting literacy, and measure the long-term effects of literacy programs. Further studies could also explore models of female leadership in broader Islamic educational contexts and investigate the influence of integrating spiritual, social, and academic values on the development of students' literacy.

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