

Nyai Leadership: The Role of Women in Maintaining the Tradition of Santri Literacy in Islamic Boarding Schools

Herlina^{1*}, Munawara²

¹Pandiva Books, Bantul, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia

²Universitas Hasyim Asy'ari Tebuireng Jombang, East Java, Indonesia

article information	Abstract
Submitted: 2024-11-12 Revised: 2025-06-13 Published: 2025-06-29	Bunyai's active leadership contributes significantly to the students' literacy achievement. This research also aims to understand how Mrs. Nyai's leadership influences the development of santri literacy, what efforts Nyai makes to develop santri literacy and what factors support success in this context. The literacy tradition in this Islamic boarding school is an important factor in forming the character and intellectuality of students. Using a qualitative approach with a descriptive type, researchers collected data through in-depth interviews and participatory observation of Nyai, students and Islamic boarding school administrators. The research results show that Nyai's leadership has a great influence in encouraging motivation for student, including in fostering interest in reading and writing among students. Nyai plays the role of <i>uswatun hasanah</i> (figure) and motivator, integrating literacy values into daily activities at the Islamic boarding school. Nyai also involves cooperation between the administrators and guardians of the students in balancing their support for the students' learning process at the boarding school. This research highlights the importance of women's leadership in maintaining and developing literacy traditions in Islamic boarding schools, as well as offering recommendations for strengthening the role of Nyai in sustaining more innovative literacy programs for Islamic boarding school students and Islamic boarding schools.

Keywords:

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

INTRODUCTION

Strengthening literacy in Islamic boarding schools is important to remain relevant in the global and technological era, both in preaching, social transformation, and preserving the culture of students (Munawara & Mughiroh, 2024). Although Islamic boarding schools are known as centers of Islamic knowledge, the literacy culture of students is often hampered by literacy management, facilities, and technology (Yanti, 2024). In this context, Nyai's leadership plays a strategic role in education and preaching (Amalia & Arifin, 2018). Nyai is not only a companion to the Kiai, but also an educator and role model for students (Buhori et al., 2022). At the Lubangsa Utara Putri Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School, Nyai actively builds a culture of literacy through writing training and book discussions. This phenomenon shows Nyai's adaptive and progressive leadership, even though she is still faced with the challenges of patriarchy (Nurdiana, 2020). UN Women data (2023) shows that women's leadership globally is still limited, but the role of Nyai in Islamic boarding schools is very significant (Ningrum & Mursidi, 2019). Literacy as an important

To cite this article (APA Style):

Herlina, H., & Munawara, M. (2025). Nyai Leadership: The Role of Women in Maintaining the Tradition of Santri Literacy in Islamic Boarding Schools. *An-Nisa Journal of Gender Studies*, 18(1), 85-98. <https://doi.org/10.35719/annisa.v18i1.319>

*Corresponding author: Herlina, Pandiva Books, Bantul, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia email: ellynmustafa31@gmail.com



An-Nisa: Journal Of Gender Studies is licensed under a Creative Commons AttributionNon-Commercial 4.0 International License. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

basic skill needs to be continuously developed (UNESCO, 2014), and Nyai has a crucial role in encouraging this.

Previous research shows that effective leadership in the Islamic boarding school environment has a major influence on the motivation and achievement of students, especially in literacy development (Thohir & Baharun, 2024). Bu Nyai, as a central figure in the leadership structure of the Islamic boarding school, has an important role in formulating policies, managing the curriculum, and directly mentoring students (Zuhri et al., 2020). Moral support and provision of facilities from the leadership of the Islamic boarding school play a major role in increasing students' interest in learning (Afifah, 2023). In the modern era, women's leadership is increasingly recognized globally thanks to their mastery of religious knowledge, emotional intelligence, and multitasking abilities (Irawan et al., 2024). In the context of Islamic boarding school education, literacy includes understanding and applying religious and general knowledge, which are important indicators of the quality of education (Harismansyah et al., 2023). Bu Nyai's leadership at the Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School shows a strategic role in creating a positive learning climate through an inspiring and inclusive approach (Hamdanah, 2020). The transformational leadership style (Riggio & Bass, 2005) and menial (Ragnarsson et al., 2018) applied by Bu Nyai are key in building motivation and literacy achievement of students.

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.

Based on the background and objectives of the study above, it can be formulated a hypothesis that the active, inspiring, and innovative leadership of Mrs. Nyai has a significant influence on the motivation and literacy achievement of students at the Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School. Leadership carried out with a transformational and mental approach is believed to be able to create a conducive learning environment, provide emotional support, and build closeness between leaders and students. This hypothesis also includes that various literacy strategies and programs designed by Mrs. Nyai—such as writing training, book discussions, and student media management—contribute positively to improving students' literacy skills. In addition, supporting factors such as institutional support, availability of facilities, and Mrs. Nyai's role as a spiritual and intellectual role model are expected to strengthen the influence of her leadership on students' literacy achievement. Thus, this hypothesis leads to a close relationship between Mrs. Nyai's leadership style and the success of literacy development in Islamic boarding schools.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to explore in depth the meaning of individual life experiences toward a social phenomenon they experience, as noted by Dodgson (2023) and Lim (2024). In this context, the phenomenon studied is Bu Nyai's leadership in fostering literacy within the Lubangsa Annuqayah Putri Islamic Boarding School

environment. The phenomenological approach is chosen because it is considered capable of capturing the dynamics of awareness, experience, and perception of individuals who are directly involved in the situation being studied (Frechette et al., 2020). According to these scholars, the phenomenological approach allows researchers to understand the essence of lived experiences in relation to specific social contexts. This study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of how Bu Nyai carries out her leadership role, as well as how the female students respond to and perceive the impact of her leadership on literacy development. The main objective of this study is to understand how female leadership in the Islamic boarding school environment influences the culture of learning and literacy practices among female students, as observed by Galsanjigmed and Sekiguchi (2023), who highlight the role of leadership in shaping educational and literacy outcomes.

In the data collection process, the researchers employed several techniques, including in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Rutledge and Hogg (2020) emphasize the importance of these methods in qualitative research. Interviews were conducted with Bu Nyai as the main informant, given her key role in the leadership of the Islamic boarding school. Female students were also interviewed as they directly experienced her leadership. As noted by these scholars, interviews provide valuable insights into personal experiences and perspectives. Observations were made by examining routine activities, the learning atmosphere, and interactions between Bu Nyai and the students. Zamiri and Esmaeili (2024) argue that observations immerse researchers in the environment, allowing them to understand the dynamics better. Documentation was used to collect data, such as activity archives, policies, and internal records. Palinkas et al. (2015) suggest that using multiple techniques offers a comprehensive view of the research subject. Direct visits to the school helped build a strong contextual understanding, providing a complete picture of Bu Nyai's leadership.

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 (Faiqoh, 2003). In its existence, Bunyai 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 jam'iyah.
3	Supporting the Publication of Students' Written Works and Sharing Information	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.

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

This analysis aims to examine in more depth the various factors that support the formation of literate and skilled students in their work. Historically, the culture of literacy among students has been rooted for a long time and needs to be continuously maintained so that it remains alive and is not eroded by changes in the times. Preserving this culture requires consistent and sustainable efforts from various parties, including the caretakers of Islamic boarding schools, administrators, and the students themselves. A strong commitment and appropriate strategic steps are needed so that literacy values can continue to develop and be instilled from generation to generation to the next generation of students effectively and relevantly.

Table 2. Supporting factors for the success of the North Lubangsa Islamic Boarding School

No	Results	Description
1	Leadership Bunyai	Nyai guides students, improves the management of the boarding school, encourages participation in competitions according to interests, and directs that every boarding school activity be reported in written form to be published.
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 interests.
6	Active Library	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.

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

Nyai's Leadership Style in Nurturing Literacy in Islamic Boarding Schools

Discussion of the role of women in the course of history shows their great contribution to social life and development of a region (Paembonan & Vida, 2019). A number of figures such as Benazir Bhutto, Siti Khadijah, and Siti Aisyah have shown leadership capacity and great influence in religious and political contexts. In Indonesia, figures such as Cut Nyak Dien and Ratu Kalinyamat

also represent women who fought for the nation. Today, many Indonesian women play an active role in development, including in the world of Islamic boarding school education, especially as caretakers of female Islamic boarding schools (Maesaroh et al., 2024). From an Islamic perspective, as in Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 13, it is emphasized that men and women have equal status, and excellence is only measured by piety. Nyai, as a female leader in Islamic boarding schools, is able to apply a democratic leadership style that encourages open communication, strategic policies, and real support for strengthening the literacy of students (Umar, 2021; Aydin, 2016).

Tracing female leadership or Nyai in Islamic boarding schools, it is not much different from discussing leadership, organizational institutions and gender (Kusmana, 2019). The role of female leaders such as Nyai is rarely discussed because what is commonly known by the general public is the role of Kiai, in reality, the female boarding school is mostly led by Nyai while the male boarding school is led by Kiai. As in the Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School, especially in the Lubangsa Utara Putri Boarding School, is one example of how the Nyai leadership entity influences the literacy of students. Islamic boarding schools are the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia that have long been present as alternative institutions for society since the classical era or around the 16th century AD which focuses on the spiritual field (Sabiq, 2020).

Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School was established in 1887 by Kiai Syarqawi in the Guluk-Guluk area, Sumenep Madura. The leadership of the Islamic boarding school has always been the responsibility of the Kiai. Now, as the years go by, the leadership is continued by the descendants of Kiai Syarqawi and is divided into 19 areas of care. Of the 19 boarding schools, one of them is the North Lubangsa boarding school which was formerly known as the Nirmala boarding school. Currently, the female Lubangsa is under the leadership of Ibu Nyai. Initially, the task of a Nyai at the boarding school was as a companion to the Kiai and did not play much of a role in deciding policies and forming programs at the boarding school. Currently, the North Lubangsa Putri boarding school is led by a Bunyai named Bunyai Fadilah. Before becoming a mentor at the North Lubangsa Putri Islamic boarding school, Ibu Nyai Fadilah had been a tutor for students both in the North Lubangsa complex and outside the complex. Her attention to student literacy is very high. Her skills amazed many students so that many students asked her for guidance directly in the field of writing literacy. Her response was very enthusiastic and eager to provide assistance or like a short course and committed to being willing to teach students as long as needed. Since 2015, her role has been very intense and has played a role in the policy of the Lubangsa Utara Putri Islamic Boarding School program until the time the research was conducted.

In 2018, Bunyai Fadilah formed 8 institutions. This is an innovation, because previously there were only 2 institutions in the Islamic boarding school, namely the English and Arabic language institutions. Since Bunyai Fadilah's leadership, many new programs have been running until now. All students are required to read and write, this applies to all students from low education levels to university level, and all students without exception, as long as they are students at the Lubangsa Utara Putri Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School. In addition, since 2023, Ibu Nyai has also taken part in teaching students who are members of the literacy institution, and only specifically for the literacy institution. This means that Nyai's attention to literacy at the Lubangsa boarding school is quite large so that the students have adequate skills. Nyai is a reflection of leadership that becomes a role model for the students (Srimulyani, 2007).

According to Ibu Nyai, literacy is an essential skill that every individual must have (Dianita et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important for Islamic boarding schools to maintain and care for the literacy tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation (Muniroh, 2021). Efforts to maintain this tradition cannot be done spontaneously, but require strategic policies that focus on developing students' literacy (Zein et al., 2020). These policies must be realized in the

form of concrete programs that encourage students to read, write, and produce works. With the existence of sustainable support programs, it is hoped that today's and future students will continue to have a strong literacy climate, be productive in writing, and be able to maintain the culture of work that has become part of the identity of the Islamic boarding school (Maskur, 2019). Including efforts implemented by Bunyai, such as the obligation to read for all students, implementing sanctions with literacy activities, creating activity programs that bring students closer to books or literacy activities (reading, writing, and creating), as well as discussion activities or short courses as an effort to provide direct assistance to students, all of which are seen as an effective policy to improve students' literacy skills (Herlina, 2019). So, students not only have skills and insights in the field of religion, but also have the provision of work skills and broader insights outside the field of religion. Bunyai Fadilah also asked to activate various activities to be more focused in accordance with training skills according to the desired field.



**Graphic 1. Lubangsa Utara Putri Library Information Board
and Student Activity Information**

In the development process, including in the realm of Islamic boarding school education, challenges are an inseparable part. Nyai's leadership in maintaining the literacy of students at the North Lubangsa Islamic Boarding School also faces various obstacles, both internally and externally. One of the main challenges is changing the mindset of students to have literacy awareness and habits, which of course requires a long process, high consistency from the leader, and a burning spirit (Dianita et al., 2023). Nyai must struggle hard to instill a culture of literacy gradually and sustainably. In addition, the challenge of facilities is also a significant obstacle, such as the limited space of the library which is narrow and inadequate, and the collection of books that does not sufficiently support the reading needs of students optimally. However, with an inclusive and solution-oriented leadership style, Nyai continues to strive to maintain her commitment to creating a literate Islamic boarding school environment.

Another challenge faced in Nyai's leadership in maintaining literacy at the Lubangsa Utara Islamic Boarding School is the limited time to provide intensive mentoring to the students. This is due to the dense roles and responsibilities carried out by Nyai, not only as the leader of the Islamic boarding school, but also as a lecturer at one of the universities in Annuqayah and as a manager of domestic affairs. However, Nyai still tries to be present in the midst of the students' activities and ensures that the literacy process runs smoothly. Her leadership is reflected in her efforts to formulate policies and regulations that are oriented towards strengthening literacy. The hope is that the students will not only be proficient in reading and writing, but also have broad insights. For Nyai, literacy is an important foundation in the development of students to become superior and open-minded individuals (Dianita et al., 2023).

Strategies in Mobilizing Santri Literacy

Nyai Fadilah's role in driving student literacy at the Lubangsa Utara Islamic Boarding School is demonstrated through a democratic leadership approach. She not only sets policies, but is also actively involved in assisting students in literacy activities. As a caregiver, mentor, and advisor, Nyai strives to be a good role model for students by demonstrating noble character, self-confidence, innovation, responsibility, and having a transformative vision. She always thinks far ahead for the progress of the boarding school and makes literacy one of the main priorities. Her concern for literacy makes her widely known by students as an active and responsive leader. Despite her many activities, Nyai still takes the time to monitor the condition of the boarding school. She believes that literacy skills are very important so that students have broad insight and can filter information critically in the era of globalization (Faiqoh, 2003).



Graphic 2. Nyai's Strategy in Nurturing Literacy in Islamic Boarding Schools

The strategies implemented by Nyai to promote literacy include: 1) Establishing a literacy program, 2) Supporting the publication of written works, 3) Organizing sharing and discussion activities, 4) Activating the library as a center of knowledge, and 5) Enforcing policies that promote reading and writing literacy. These strategies are believed to significantly enhance students' literacy skills. To develop high literacy abilities, it is essential to have support from both rules and culture. This approach helps preserve the literacy tradition within the Islamic boarding school environment, which has become a distinctive feature, as noted by Ali and Farihatul (2023). Without the backing of institutional policies or programs, the literacy tradition could diminish as globalization progresses, making it crucial to integrate literacy practices into the core structure of the Islamic boarding school to ensure its continuity and relevance.

In supporting the publication of students' written works, Nyai Fadilah plays an active role in various ways. She directly guides students, provides recommendations for quality reading, and encourages them to engage with the content of the books rather than focusing solely on the publisher's label, as highlighted by Kim et al. (2019), who emphasize the importance of understanding content beyond surface-level details. Nyai also motivates students to learn English, enabling them to read the original books and compare them with translated versions. According to Kujala et al. (2022), she encourages students to write news about Islamic boarding school activities and post it on the information board for shared reading. All activities in the Islamic boarding school require written documentation, which is then compiled into a book, as suggested by Schreier et al. (2006), who argue that such documentation is essential for maintaining records and fostering reflective practice. Under Nyai's leadership, each institution is required to submit written reports, and the wall magazine is activated as a platform for students to express themselves in writing. Some of the students' works have even been designed into attractive bulletins.



Graphic 3. Bulletin of Activities of the North Lubangsa Female Students

At the Lubangsa Utara (Lubtura) Islamic Boarding School, nearly every activity is documented through written reports. This practice reflects Nyai's direct instructions to students who serve as reporters, aiming to train them in writing news and taking on the role of journalists, as emphasized by Salzmann et al. (2021), who highlight the importance of involving students in such activities to build their writing skills. This habit is part of a broader literacy strategy instilled in students' daily routines, as noted by Endres et al. (2020), who argue that consistent exposure to writing activities enhances students' literacy development. By regularly creating activity reports, students not only develop writing skills but also gain valuable journalistic experience that can serve them in the future, as suggested by Ma and Yuen (2008). Reading and writing are foundational skills that all students at Lubtura must possess, and with continuous training, these skills contribute to strengthening their intellectual capabilities and expression in various fields, as Bezerra et al. (2022) argue. This strategy plays a crucial role in fostering a consistent literacy culture within the Islamic boarding school environment.

What Nyai Fadilah did reflects the character of a leader who embodies the principle of *al-Imamu khodimul ummah*—a leader as a servant of the people with a heart full of dedication, as Djunaedi (2005) argues, highlighting the importance of servant leadership that is deeply committed to the well-being of the community. The spirit of devotion she exhibits is believed to have a long-term impact on both the development of students and the growth of the boarding school. In the context of Islamic boarding school leadership, the ability to serve is seen not merely as a task, but as the primary competency a leader must possess, as emphasized by Azhari (2024), who stresses that service-oriented leadership is fundamental to guiding an institution effectively. Nyai Fadilah not only demonstrates noble character but also possesses a progressive vision for the advancement of her institution. In implementing literacy strategies, she takes into account various internal factors, such as integrity and self-commitment, along with external factors from the boarding school environment, as observed by Iskandar et al. (2022). The strategy she employs illustrates a balanced integration of spiritual, social, and academic values, aimed at fostering a sustainable literacy culture among students.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Nyai's leadership at the Lubangsa Utara Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School has led to significant progress, as seen in the implementation of activities and programs aimed at maintaining reading and writing literacy. Although the process is time-consuming, Nyai demonstrates strong strategy and commitment. Through policies like mandatory reading and borrowing books from the library, writing reports for bulletins, and enforcing educational

sanctions such as writing book reviews, Nyai ensures that literacy is prioritized. These efforts are part of a broader goal to sustain the literacy tradition, which has been passed down through generations, fostering a culture of continuous learning and intellectual growth among students.

Theoretically, the findings of this study strengthen the perspective of feminist theory that emphasizes the role of women in the public sphere. Nyai is a representation of a leader who participates in organizational development. The leadership style that combines democratic and authoritarian in several ways shows that the role of Nyai, which has rarely appeared in the public sphere, has an urgent position in the transformation of the pondok. Empowerment and preservation of santri literacy is carried out strategically. Practically, this study highlights the need for leadership that has a high level of concern in improving skills and literacy. Literacy is not only limited to reading ability but also to the level of work. The government needs to look at santri literacy and support women's empowerment.

This study is limited to the leadership of Nyai and her role as a literacy activist in Islamic boarding schools. Although the public does not highlight her role much compared to the figure of Kiai, Nyai's contribution is very large in empowering young women, especially in increasing literacy. Researchers in searching for data, involve a number of informants so that the data obtained is strong enough. For future research related to this field, it is recommended to conduct comparative studies in other Islamic boarding schools, because the scope of focus on the object of this research is only on 1 Islamic boarding school to capture the role of Nyai and her contribution to the development of Indonesian human resources through efforts to maintain the tradition of literacy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank the informants who have been willing to take the time and experience to provide information in this study. Then to the management and editorial team of Jurnal Annisa for the valuable opportunity that gave the opportunity for this journal to be accepted. Hopefully this article will complement the reader's insight and see another side of Ibu Nyai's leadership as a literacy activist in Islamic boarding schools.

REFERENCE

- Afifah, A. (2023). *Kepemimpinan Kiai dalam Pengelolaan Literasi Santri (Studi pada Pondok Pesantren Terpadu Ushuluddin Lampung Selatan dan Pondok Pesantren Hasanuddin Bandar Lampung)* [Tesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung]. <http://repository.radenintan.ac.id/29033/1/TESIS%20BAB%201%20%26%20BAB%205.pdf>
- Ali, A. M., & Farihatul, H. (2023). The Role Of Pesantren And Its Literacy Culture In Strengthening Moderate Islam In Indonesia. *Edukasia Islamika*, 8(2), 205–226. <https://doi.org/10.28918/jei.v8i2.1729>
- Amalia, V., & Arifin, Z. (2018). Kepemimpinan Nyai Dalam Memelihara Kajian Kitab Kuning Di Ma'had Aly Nurul Jadid Probolinggo. *Manageria: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 3(2), 215–230. <https://doi.org/10.14421/manageria.2018.32-01>
- Aydin, E. (2016). Interrogating Female Leadership And Empowerment. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 31(2), 154–159. <https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v5i2.3508>
- Azhari, J. F. (2024). Potret pemikiran transforming Islamic education: The role of Bu Nyai in Madurese pesantren leadership. *Jurnal XYZ*, 28, 138–153. (Perlu nama jurnal asli jika tersedia.)

- Bezerra, R. L. M., Alves, R. J. R., & Azoni, C. A. S. (2022). Creativity And Its Relationship With Intelligence And Reading Skills In Children: An Exploratory Study. *Psicologia, reflexao e critica: revista semestral do Departamento de Psicologia da UFRGS*, 35(1), 17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41155-022-00221-3>
- Bingham, A. J. (2023). From Data Management to Actionable Findings: A Five-Phase Process of Qualitative Data Analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231183620>
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis And Code Development*. Sage Publications.
- Buhori, A., Sujiarto, H., Nurjaman, U., & Khor, A. (2022). Transformational Leadership Style Of Kiai In Improving Student Character Education. *International Journal of Educational Research & Social Sciences*, 3(5), 1862–1872. <https://doi.org/10.51601/ijersc.v3i5.483>
- Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The Use Of Triangulation In Qualitative Research. *Oncology nursing forum*, 41(5), 545–547. <https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.545-547>
- Collins, C. S., & Stockton, C. M. (2018). The Central Role of Theory in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918797475>
- Dianita, E. R., Fathiyaturrahmah, & Magfiroh, G. (2023). Literary-Based Literacy Learning In Indonesian Pesantren. In *Proceedings of the 2023 ACIE* (Vol. 2023). Atlantis Press SARL. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-182-1_10
- Djunaedi, A. F. (2005). Filosofi Dan Etika Kepemimpinan Dalam Islam. *Al-Mawarid: Jurnal Hukum Islam*, 13(2). <https://journal.uin.ac.id/index.php/JHI/article/view/2807>
- Dodgson, J. E. (2023). Phenomenology: Researching The Lived Experience. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 39(3), 385–396. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08903344231176453>
- Donkoh, S., & Mensah, J. (2023). Application of triangulation in qualitative research. *Journal of Applied Biotechnology & Bioengineering*, 10(1), 6–9. <https://doi.org/10.15406/jabb.2023.10.00319>
- Endres, T., Leber, J., Böttger, C., Rovers, S., & Renkl, A. (2020). Improving Lifelong Learning by Fostering Students' Learning Strategies at University. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, 20(1), 144-160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475725720952025>
- Faiqoh. (2003). *Nyai: Agen perubahan di pesantren*. Kucica.
- Frechette, J., Bitzas, V., Aubry, M., Kilpatrick, K., & Lavoie-Tremblay, M. (2020). Capturing Lived Experience: Methodological Considerations for Interpretive Phenomenological Inquiry. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920907254>
- Galsanjigmed, E., & Sekiguchi, T. (2023). Challenges Women Experience in Leadership Careers: An Integrative Review. *Merits*, 3(2), 366-389. <https://doi.org/10.3390/merits3020021>
- Hamdanah. (2020). Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Pesantren Terhadap Kualitas Santri. *Jurnal Aksioma Ad-Diniyyah*, 10(1), 223–239. <https://doi.org/10.55171/jad.v1i10>

- Harismansyah, S., Nurmila, N., Irawan, I., & Arifin, B. S. (2023). Kepemimpinan Pesantren Dan Dampaknya Terhadap Motivasi Belajar Santri. *Jurnal Studi Kepemimpinan*, 3(11), 1129–1140. <https://doi.org/10.59188/jurnalsosains.v3i11.1061>
- Herlina. (2019). *Kreativitas menulis santri di pesantren (Studi literasi di Pesantren Annuqayah)* [Skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yohyakarta].
- Irawan, M. F., Hulkin, M., & Saiful, T. (2024). Women In Leadership: Exploring Potential And Challenges In The Islamic Context. *Annisa*, 17, 46–55. <https://doi.org/10.35719/annisa.v17i1.234>
- Iskandar, A., Rusydi, I., Amin, H., Nur Hakim, M., & Amirul Haqq, H. (2022). Strategic Management in Improving the Quality of Education in Boarding School. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14(4), 7229–7238. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i4.2075>
- Johnson, T. P. (2014). *Snowball Sampling: Introduction*. In Wiley StatsRef: Statistics Reference Online (eds N. Balakrishnan, T. Colton, B. Everitt, W. Piegorsch, F. Ruggeri and J.L. Teugels). <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118445112.stat05720>
- Kim, S., Raza, M., & Seidman, E. (2019). Improving 21st-Century Teaching Skills: The Key To Effective 21st-Century Learners. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 14(1), 99–117. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499919829214>
- Kujala, J., Sachs, S., Leinonen, H., Heikkinen, A., & Laude, D. (2022). Stakeholder Engagement: Past, Present, and Future. *Business & Society*, 61(5), 1136–1196. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00076503211066595>
- Kusmana. (2019). Pesantren And Local Female Leadership In Modern Indonesia. *Tarbiya: Journal of Education in Muslim Society*, 6(1), 23–35. <https://doi.org/10.15408/tjems.v6i1.8919>
- Lim, W. M. (2024). What Is Qualitative Research? An Overview and Guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 33(2), 199–229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264619>
- Ma, W. W. K., & Yuen, A. H. K. (2008). News Writing Using Wiki: Impacts On Learning Experience Of Student Journalists. *Educational Media International*, 45(4), 295–309. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523980802571564>
- Maesaroh, S., Asy'ari, H., & Syukur, M. (2024). The Role of Women Leaders in Character Development of Santri: (Leadership of Mrs. Nyai Umi Waheeda at the Al Ashriyyah Nurul Iman Parung Islamic Boarding School, Bogor). *EduLine: Journal of Education and Learning Innovation*, 4(1), 67–76. <https://doi.org/10.35877/454RI.eduline2406>
- Maskur, A. (2019). Penguatan Budaya Literasi Di Pesantren. *IQ (Ilmu Al-Qur'an): Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 2(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.37542/iq.v2i01.21>
- Muna, N., & Hamam, H. (2020). Kepemimpinan Nyai di Pesantren Al Hajar Kapurejo Pagu Kediri. *Intelektual: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Keislaman*, 10(1), 46–57. <https://doi.org/10.33367/ji.v10i1.1090>
- Munawara, M., & Mughiroh, A. F. (2024). Pendampingan penguatan literasi santri dan alumni pesantren Tebuireng. *Karunia: Jurnal Hasil Pengabdian Masyarakat Indonesia*, 3(4), 63–72. <https://doi.org/10.58192/karunia.v3i4.2643>
- Muniroh, S. M. (2021). Character Education for Children in Islamic Boarding Schools: Psychological Perspective. *Jurnal Penelitian*, 18(2), 145–158. <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v18i2.4442>

- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>
- Ningrum, E. P., & Mursidi, A. (2019). Kuasa Perempuan: Peranan Dan Kedudukan Bu Nyai Dalam Memimpin Pondok Pesantren Di Kabupaten Banyuwangi. In *Proceedings FKIP Universitas PGRI Banyuwangi*. <https://doi.org/10.31227/osf.io/kjdt7>
- Nurdiana, D. D. (2020). Peran “Nyai” dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan pesantren di Pondok Pesantren Nurut Taqwa Sangkapura Bawean Gresik. In *Proceeding Book of: The 1st International Conference on Islamic Studies (ICIS)* (pp. 244–254). <https://ejournal.iaforis.or.id/index.php/icois/article/view/92>
- Paembonan, L. S., & Vida, H. D. (2019). Tinjauan terhadap Gaya Kepemimpinan Perempuan di Pemerintah Daerah Kabupaten Toraja Utara. *Jurnal Inada: Kajian Perempuan Indonesia Di Daerah Tertinggal, Terdepan, Dan Terluar*, 2(1), 61–81. <https://doi.org/10.33541/ji.v2i1.1038>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration And Policy In Mental Health*, 42(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Ragnarsson, S., Kristjánsdóttir, E. S., & Gunnarsdóttir, S. (2018). To Be Accountable While Showing Care: The Lived Experience of People in a Servant Leadership Organization. *SAGE Open*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018801097>
- Reza, V., Ardiansyah, M. F., Khovivah, S. N., Camila, L. A., Islam, U., Siber, N., Nurjati, S., & Community, A. (2024). Implikasi Budaya Patriarki Terhadap Perubahan Peran Perempuan Dalam Keluarga Di Lingkungan Sivitas Akademik. *JSPH: Jurnal Sosial Politik Humaniora*, 1(3), 30–41. <https://doi.org/10.59966/jsph.v1i3.1427>
- Riggio, R. E., & Bass, B. M. (2005). *Transformational leadership*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410617095>
- Romdhoni, A. (2016). Dakwah dan Tradisi Literasi di Pondok Pesantren: Studi Kasus di Pondok Pesantren Al-Anwar, Sarang, Rembang, Jawa Tengah. *Jurnal Bimas Islam*, 9(1), 117–150. Retrieved from <https://jurnalbimasislam.kemenag.go.id/jbi/article/view/137>
- Rutledge, P. B., & Hogg, J. L. C. (2020). *In-depth interviews*. In J. Bulck (Ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119011071.iemp0019>
- Sabiq, S. (2020). Eksistensi pesantren sebagai lembaga pendidikan Islam. *Atta’dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 1(2), 13.
- Salzmann, A., Guribye, F., & Gynnild, A. (2021). Adopting a mojo mindset: Training newspaper reporters in mobile journalism. *Journalism*, 24(2), 346–362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884921996284>
- Schreier, A. A., Wilson, K., & Resnik, D. (2006). Academic Research Record-Keeping: Best Practices For Individuals, Group Leaders, And Institutions. *Academic medicine: journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*, 81(1), 42–47. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00001888-200601000-00010>
- Srimulyani, E. (2007). *Negotiating public space: Women and the pesantren in Jombang East Java* [Disertasi, University of Technology].

- Thohir, P. F. D. M., & Baharun, H. (2024). Strengthening the Reputation of Islamic Boarding Schools: The Role of Leadership, Educational Innovation, and Local Wisdom. *Managere: Indonesian Journal of Educational Management*, 6(3), 331–346. <https://doi.org/10.52627/managere.v6i3.720>
- Umar, U. (2021). Female Leadership In Organisational Communication Perspective: A Systematic Literature Review. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi*, 5(2), 453–470. <https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v5i2.3508>
- UN Women. (2023). *Facts And Figures: Women's Leadership And Political Participation*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>
- UNESCO. (2014). *The Global Monitoring Report 2014: Teaching And Learning—Achieving Quality For All*. UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225654>
- Uyuni, B., & Adnan, M. (2023). Tracing The Traces Of Khairiyyah Hasyim: Education, Life And Stories Of Indonesian Women Ulama (1906–1983 AD). *Edujavare: International Journal of Educational Research*, 1(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.70610/edujavare.v1i1.9>
- Valencia, M. M. A. (2022). Principles, Scope, and Limitations of the Methodological Triangulation. *Investigacion Y Educacion En Enfermeria*, 40(2), e03. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.iee.v40n2e03>
- Yanti, E. (2024). Strategi Pesantren Dalam Meningkatkan Literasi Santri. *Tebuireng: Journal of Islamic Studies and Society*, 5(1), 98–119. <https://doi.org/10.33752/tjiss.v5i1.6652>
- Zamiri, M., & Esmaeili, A. (2024). Methods and Technologies for Supporting Knowledge Sharing within Learning Communities: A Systematic Literature Review. *Administrative Sciences*, 14(1), 17. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci14010017>
- Zein, S., Sukyadi, D., Hamied, F. A., & Lengkanawati, N. S. (2020). English language education in Indonesia: A review of research (2011–2019). *Language Teaching*, 53(4), 491–523. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000208>
- Zuhri, Z., Maftukhin, M., Patoni, A., & Akhyak, A. (2020). The leadership actualisation of Kiai visionary in Islamic boarding school at Trenggalek, East Java, Indonesia. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 8, 147–154. <https://doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/10446>