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Bunyai leadership in developing santri literacy in an Indonesian pesantren: A gendered organizations perspective

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Abstract:

The role of Nyai in pesantren literacy development warrants examination beyond their position as kiai's wives through leadership practices, organizational support, and santri involvement. This study examines the leadership of Bunyai, a local term for Nyai, in developing santri literacy traditions through educational authority, a supportive ecosystem, and strategies for organizing literacy activities. A qualitative case study approach was employed. Data were collected in September 2024 through in-depth interviews with Bunyai and two purposively selected female teachers, direct observation, and documentation of santri activities and written works. Data were analyzed thematically and interpreted through Joan Acker's gendered organizations perspective. Credibility was assessed through source and methodological triangulation. Three findings emerged. First, Bunyai's leadership involved establishing literacy requirements, developing learning support structures, and fostering pedagogical relationships that guided santri engagement with knowledge sources. Second, the literacy ecosystem connected leadership and collaborative support, the santri initiative and participation opportunities, the learning environment, and the library. Third, literacy strategies encompassed writing based on activity experiences, organizing the publication of santri works, providing spaces for discussion and consultation, and managing access to reading materials. The study concludes that literacy activities are organized through interconnected educational authority, institutional support, and santri participation. The findings enrich contextual understanding of women's leadership in family-based pesantren and provide a practical basis for coordinating and evaluating literacy programs. The study does not establish improvements in literacy skills across all santri, causal relationships, or changes in gender relations.

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INTRODUCTION

Strengthening literacy traditions is essential to pesantren education amid social and technological change. Literacy management requires planning, organization, habit formation, and evaluation (Marmoah et al., 2022), while digital literacy emphasizes collaboration and innovation in Indonesian education (Sari et al., 2024). Integrating local culture supports reading skills (Hadianto et al., 2022). Pesantren responses to the pandemic reveal challenges related to leadership, readiness for learning, and technological facilities (Hanafi et al., 2021). These studies highlight the importance of organizing activities and providing institutional support. Nyai leadership encompasses exemplary conduct, attention to students' needs, and intellectual stimulation (Aini et al., 2021). At Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Utara Annuqayah Putri, the Nyai is known as Bunyai, who is the Kiai's wife and the second-ranking leader after the Kiai. The organization of reading and writing activities, guidance in reading, and publication of female students' work provide the empirical context for examining how she exercises educational authority to develop literacy traditions through learning activities in everyday pesantren life.

The literature is mapped into three groups. First, studies on leadership and gender address women's leadership, career challenges, identity negotiation, and the roles of Nyai in pesantren (Aini et al., 2021; Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023; Hilal et al., 2024; Mustofa et al., 2023). Second, studies on the organization of learning examine instructional leadership, mentoring, learning environments, and educator competencies as factors supporting student engagement (Munna, 2023; Acosta-Gonzaga & Ramirez-Arellano, 2022; Arroyo et al., 2023; Rusticus et al., 2023; Zaqiah et al., 2024). Third, studies on literacy culture address reading habits, program management, the establishment of routine activities, organizational support, learning opportunities, and access to reading materials (Cochrane et al., 2022; Marmoah et al., 2022; Loh et al., 2017; Merga & Mason, 2019). The research gap lies in the limited availability of integrated explanations of how Nyai exercise educational authority, how organizational support and student initiatives are interconnected, and how literacy activities are organized in pesantren. The proposed contribution is a contextual explanation of the interconnections among these three aspects in the development of students' literacy traditions.

This study aims to analyze Bunyai's leadership at Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Utara Annuqayah Putri in developing students' literacy traditions through educational authority, organizational support, student initiatives, and the organization of activities. It asks: (1) How does Bunyai exercise educational authority in developing students' literacy traditions? (2) How are organizational support and student initiatives interconnected within the pesantren literacy ecosystem? (3) What strategies does Bunyai employ to organize students' literacy activities? Acker's (1990) *gendered organizations* perspective examines Bunyai's leadership position through authority, mentoring interactions, role division, access to resources, and opportunities to produce work, based on available evidence. Theoretically, it enriches women's leadership scholarship by explaining educational authority within organizational practices and pedagogical relationships. Practically, it informs literacy programs by connecting reading and writing policies, mentoring the production of students' work, managing learning resources, and supporting student participation and publication opportunities.

This study argues that literacy traditions must be understood through interconnections among leaders' educational authority, organizational support, and student participation. Bunyai's position as the Kiai's wife and second-ranking leader contextualizes her authority in organizing learning and pedagogical relationships. Institutional support, learning environments, access to reading, and student initiatives constitute the literacy ecosystem

examined. Organizational strategies encompass writing activities, publication outlets, discussions, consultations, and management of access to learning resources. The analysis connects leadership position with everyday educational practices without assuming changes in Bunyai's formal position, the influence of gender norms, or successful literacy development among all students. Accordingly, the study examines how educational authority, organizational support, and student initiatives are manifested in the organization of literacy practices within the pesantren, with attention to the interconnections among these elements.

METHOD

Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative single-case study approach to examine Bunyai's leadership in developing students' literacy traditions at Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Utara Annuqayah Putri. A case study enables an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). The case concerned Bunyai's leadership practices in organizing literacy activities, within the pesantren context, and based on data collected in September 2024. The unit of analysis was Bunyai's exercise of educational authority over reading and writing policies, program development, mentoring, and the organization of student participation and publication. The study also examined how institutional support, the learning environment, and the library were interconnected with literacy practices. Its focus was to explain how literacy activities were organized within the pesantren context.

Participants and Informants

The study involved three informants: Bunyai, the pesantren leader (P1), and two female teachers (ustazah) (P2 and P3). Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their roles and knowledge of leadership practices and literacy activities (Palinkas et al., 2015). Bunyai provided information on institutional policies, program development, and literacy mentoring, while the teachers explained the implementation of activities and student participation. Their accounts were compared to examine how literacy activities were organized from different institutional positions. Additionally, students' literacy activities were directly observed, and their written work was documented to support the findings. However, students were not interviewed as research informants. Informant codes were consistently applied throughout the presentation of quotations and the mapping of research findings to ensure clarity and consistency in reporting.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation in September 2024. Interviews with Bunyai and two teachers examined literacy policies and implementation, including reading and writing requirements by educational level, supporting institutions, mentoring, discussions, consultations, library services, and student work production and publication (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020). Observations covered reading, note-taking, consultations, reading guidance, writing, and publication through information boards and wall magazines. Documentation included photographs of reading activities, sample book reviews, poetry anthologies, student-produced bulletins, and the library information board. Observational and documentary evidence complemented informants' accounts of literacy practices, outputs, and facilities; the existence of student work was not treated as a measure of improved ability among all students.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis: familiarization, initial coding, theme development, review, definition and naming, and reporting. Coding addressed literacy requirements, programs, mentoring, collaboration, participation, library services, and work production and publication. Interview-, observational-, and documentary-data-informed themes were mapped alongside key data, initial codes, and meanings. Findings covered Bunyai's leadership, the literacy support ecosystem, and literacy mobilization strategies. Systematic organization clarified evidence–theme links (Naeem et al., 2023). Acker's (1990) *gendered organizations* perspective guided the interpretation of authority, role division, mentoring interactions, and participation opportunities, with theoretical interpretation grounded in evidence (Collins & Stockton, 2018).

Data Trustworthiness and Credibility

Data credibility was assessed through source and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation compared Bunyai's and the two teachers' accounts of policies, mentoring, facilities, and student participation in literacy activities. Methodological triangulation compared interview, observational, and documentary data to examine convergence and discrepancies (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023). These checks maintained alignment between the available evidence and the study's interpretations. Statements about reading targets were distinguished from evidence of their attainment, while documented work and publication media were distinguished from improvements in writing ability. Informants' statements about student participation were also distinguished from students' subjective experiences, which were not explored through direct interviews. Credibility was thus assessed through both evidence comparison and appropriately bounded conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Bunyai's leadership in developing students' literacy traditions

At Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Utara Annuqayah Putri, Bunyai is the Kiai's wife and the second-ranking leader after her husband. She exercises educational authority by setting the direction of learning, developing institutional structures, and guiding students' selection of knowledge sources. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis generated three themes: establishing literacy requirements, developing structures to support learning, and exercising leadership through pedagogical relationships. These themes were interpreted through Acker's (1990) *gendered organizations* perspective to examine how Bunyai exercises educational authority within the context of her leadership position and familial relationships in the pesantren, as reflected in educational arrangements and direct engagement with students.

The establishment of literacy requirements is evident in the reading and writing policy introduced around 2017. Bunyai provides learning guidance by setting reading targets and assigning tasks based on educational level. P1–Informant 1 explained:

> Students at the MTs/MA levels are required to read 25 books per year, while university students are required to read 30. MTs students summarize their reading, whereas MA and university students write reviews so that they do not merely summarize but also evaluate and critically examine what they read. *(P1–Informant 1, September 2024)*

This quotation shows Bunyai's authority in setting literacy requirements, including book quotas, written assignments, and tasks differentiated by educational level. Observed reading and note-taking, alongside documentation of reading activities and sample book reviews, support evidence of policy implementation.

Figure 1
Students' Reading Activities and Book Reviews

(a) (b)



Note. (a) Students reading in the pesantren library; (b) samples of students' book reviews. Source: Researcher's documentation, September 2024.

Figure 1 presents two forms of evidence supporting literacy practices in the pesantren. Figure 1(a) documents students' reading activities in the library, while Figure 1(b) shows samples of students' book reviews. Together, these materials support observations of reading activities and the informant's account of written assignments, although they do not establish whether all students have met the annual reading targets.

Bunyai's educational authority is also evident in the development of learning support structures. According to P1–Informant 1, since 2018, the pesantren has developed institutions for *kitab* studies, literacy, languages, agriculture, an environmental community, and a *jam'iyyah mudarasah* of the Qur'an. These structures accommodate diverse educational activities, with the literacy institution incorporating reading and writing into pesantren programs. However, each institution's connection to literacy remains unspecified.

Bunyai also exercises leadership through pedagogical relationships that guide students' selection and examination of reading materials. She recommends books and encourages students to engage with English-language sources. As P2–Informant 2 stated, "Bunyai encourages students to learn English so that they can read books originally written in English and compare them with their translations" (P2–Informant 2, September 2024). This statement indicates that Bunyai's guidance extends beyond achieving reading targets to encouraging students to compare original texts with their translations. Observed consultations and reading guidance further demonstrate her direct involvement in students' learning. Her educational authority is thus exercised through institutional policies and pedagogical interactions that shape students' selection and examination of learning resources.

Table 1
Mapping of Findings on Bunyai's Leadership in Developing Students' Literacy Traditions

No.	Key data and sources	Initial codes	Theme	Pattern of meaning
1	Reading targets by educational level and summary and review assignments. P1–Informant 1. Observations of reading and note-taking; documentation of reading activities and book reviews in Figure 1.	Reading targets; writing requirements; differentiation by educational level; learning direction.	Establishing literacy requirements	Bunyai's educational authority is expressed through the establishment of reading and writing requirements according to educational level.
2	Development of institutions for *kitab* studies, literacy, languages,	Institutional development;	Developing structures to	Educational development is

	agriculture, an environmental community, and *jam'iyyah mudarasah* of the Qur'an since 2018. P1–Informant 1.	educational structures; diversity of learning fields.	support learning	supported by institutional structures, including an institution specifically addressing literacy.
3	Book recommendations and guidance on accessing and comparing English-language sources. P2–Informant 2. Observations of consultations and reading guidance.	Reading recommendations; guidance on sources; comparison of reading materials; learning interactions.	Exercising leadership through pedagogical relationships	Bunyai exercises leadership through direct involvement in guiding students' selection and examination of knowledge sources.

Source: Processed by the researcher, 2025.

Table 1 synthesizes three interconnected dimensions of Bunyai's educational leadership in developing students' literacy traditions: establishing literacy requirements, developing educational support structures, and providing pedagogical guidance on knowledge sources. Reading targets and differentiated writing assignments demonstrate her involvement in directing students' learning, while institutional development provides organizational support for educational activities. Book recommendations and guidance on English-language sources further illustrate her direct pedagogical engagement. Together, these findings indicate that Bunyai exercises educational authority through both organizational arrangements and interactions with students, although her precise contribution to the establishment of individual institutions remains unspecified.

Viewed through Acker's (1990) *gendered organizations* perspective, these findings situate Bunyai's educational leadership within the organizational hierarchy of a family-based pesantren, where she occupies the position of the Kiai's wife and second-ranking leader. Her involvement in establishing learning requirements and guiding students demonstrates the exercise of educational authority within this institutional position. However, the available evidence does not establish how gendered divisions of responsibility or familial relationships shape the scope of that authority. The findings, therefore, identify Bunyai's substantive involvement in educational leadership without determining whether these practices reproduce or transform existing gender relations within the pesantren.

The pesantren ecosystem supporting students' literacy development

Literacy development at Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Utara Annuqayah Putri is supported by the interconnections between organizational support and student participation. Data mapping using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis generated four themes: Bunyai's leadership and collaborative support; student initiatives and opportunities for participation; a supportive learning environment; and the library as literacy infrastructure. Acker's (1990) *gendered organizations* perspective was used to examine authority, mentoring interactions, role division, and access to learning resources. This section focuses on the interconnections between literacy support and students' initiatives in using learning spaces and opportunities to produce work.

Bunyai's leadership connects pesantren management with routine writing practices and the production of written work. P1–Informant 1 stated, "I also improved the pesantren's management structure and directed all activities toward literacy. I encourage written reports on various pesantren activities, which are then compiled into a book" (September 2024). This account illustrates how pesantren activities are integrated with report writing and book

compilation. Interviews further identified mentoring, competition support, and stakeholder cooperation as important forms of support for literacy development.

Student participation also contributes to literacy development through collaborative learning and direct engagement with pesantren leadership. P2–Informant 2 explained, "They also form discussion groups with fellow students and hold regular meetings. Students interested in literacy do not hesitate to express their wish to receive guidance from the pesantren leader" (September 2024). These practices demonstrate students' active involvement in discussion groups and their initiative to seek guidance. Interviews also described the anthology production process, opportunities for writing, and Bunyai's trust in supporting students' literacy interests.

Literacy development is further supported by access to reading materials and student participation in library management. P3–Informant 3 explained, "The library is staffed by several pesantren administrators drawn from the students. Students can borrow the books or *kitab* available there" (September 2024). This arrangement provides students with access to reading resources while involving them in library administration. The informant also described efforts to establish a comfortable learning environment through institutional rules and programs oriented toward spiritual development, knowledge acquisition, and literacy.

Observations identified the reading of *kitab* and Indonesian- and English-language books, note-taking, writing, and publication through information boards and wall magazines. Bunyai also participated in consultations and provided guidance on reading materials and learning resources *(Observation, September 2024)*. These data support the existence of literacy practices in everyday pesantren life. Table 2 presents the data mapping underlying the four themes.

Table 2
Mapping of Data and Themes Supporting Students' Literacy Development

No.	Key data and sources	Initial codes	Theme	Thematic meaning
1	Bunyai mentors students, improves management, guides literacy activities, supports competitions, and encourages the compilation of reports into books. Cooperation among the pesantren leader, administrators, students, and parents or guardians is considered important for mentoring. P1–Informant 1.	Mentoring; management; literacy guidance; competitions; reports; cooperation.	Bunyai's leadership and collaborative support	Bunyai's guidance and mentoring support literacy development, while cooperation among stakeholders is considered important for its implementation.
2	Students seek guidance, engage in discussions, meet regularly, and produce anthologies. Bunyai places trust in students and provides opportunities to write according to their interests. P2–Informant 2.	Initiative; discussion; regular meetings; written work; trust; writing opportunities.	Student initiatives and opportunities for participation	Student initiatives accompany the provision of trust and opportunities to learn and produce work.
3	Efforts are made to create a comfortable environment; rules and programs are oriented toward spiritual development, knowledge, and literacy. P3–Informant 3.	Comfort; developmental orientation; learning support.	A supportive learning environment	Efforts to create a comfortable environment and the orientation of programs demonstrate attention to students' learning conditions.
4	The library offers various activities, is managed by student administrators,	Management; student involvement;	The library as literacy infrastructure	The library provides access to reading materials and

	and provides borrowing services for books and *kitab*. P3–Informant 3.	borrowing; access to reading materials.	opportunities for students to participate in facility management.

Source: Processed by the researcher, 2025.

Table 2 synthesizes four interconnected themes supporting students' literacy development: Bunyai's leadership and collaborative support, student initiatives and opportunities for participation, a supportive learning environment, and the library as literacy infrastructure. Bunyai's guidance, mentoring, and encouragement of written work are complemented by students' initiatives to seek guidance, participate in discussion groups, and produce written work. Institutional efforts to provide supportive learning conditions and library access further demonstrate the availability of resources and opportunities for student participation. Together, these findings identify a pattern in which organizational support, pedagogical guidance, learning facilities, and student initiatives coexist within everyday literacy practices. The term *ecosystem* describes these interconnected elements without implying established causal or reciprocal relationships.

Viewed through Acker's (1990) *gendered organizations* perspective, these findings highlight the organizational dimensions of educational authority, mentoring interactions, role distribution, and access to learning resources within the girls' pesantren. Bunyai's involvement in management and literacy guidance demonstrates her exercise of educational authority, while students' participation in discussions, writing activities, and library administration illustrates their involvement in learning and organizational responsibilities. These practices show how leadership, institutional arrangements, and student participation are organized within the pesantren. However, the available data do not establish how gender norms or familial leadership structures influence the allocation of responsibilities and educational opportunities. The findings, therefore, document the organizational conditions and participatory practices accompanying literacy development without determining their implications for the reproduction or transformation of gender relations.

Bunyai's strategies for mobilizing students' literacy activities

Bunyai's literacy strategies at Pondok Pesantren Lubangsa Utara Annuqayah Putri involve writing activities, publication outlets, consultations, and access to reading materials. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis generated four themes: activity-based writing, publication organization, discussion and consultation spaces, and library-based access to reading materials. Acker's (1990) *gendered organizations* perspective guided the interpretation of task allocation, learning interactions, and participation opportunities within Bunyai's position as a female pesantren leader. This section examines strategy implementation and its connections to her exercise of educational authority, limiting interpretations of gender relations to available evidence.

Writing based on activity experiences involves encouraging students to transform pesantren activities into news articles and written reports. Bunyai provides guidance, recommends reading materials, and encourages documenting activities in published works. As P1–Informant 1 stated, "I guide students, recommend reading materials, encourage them to write news articles about activities, activate the wall magazine, and support written documentation of activities. I encourage written reports on various pesantren activities, which are then compiled into books" (P1–Informant 1, September 2024). This account demonstrates Bunyai's involvement in directing writing activities and encouraging the compilation of reports

into books, although the mentoring and editing processes for individual works remain unspecified.

Publication activities are supported by providing writing outlets and organizing student participation. Bunyai encourages the use of the wall magazine as a medium for presenting students' written work. P3–Informant 3 explained, "Bunyai activates the wall magazine, which features students' writing contributed on a rotating schedule" (P3–Informant 3, September 2024). This arrangement provides students with opportunities to publish their writing through scheduled contributions. Observations further document writing and publication activities, while documentation of a poetry anthology and bulletin illustrates the types of written work produced and their publication formats.

Figure 2

Students' Work: A Poetry Anthology and a Bulletin

(a) (b)



Note. (a) A poetry anthology containing students' written works; (b) a bulletin used to publish students' writing. Source: Researcher's documentation, September 2024.

Figure 2 presents two forms of students' published work. Figure 2(a) documents a poetry anthology containing students' written works, while Figure 2(b) shows a bulletin used as a medium for publishing students' writing. These materials provide documentary evidence of writing production and publication within the pesantren. However, they do not establish the extent of individual student participation or improvements in writing quality.

Another strategy involves providing spaces for discussion and consultation, allowing students to share information, communicate their learning needs, and obtain direct guidance from the pesantren leader. As P3–Informant 3 explained, "Students are encouraged to discuss, consult, share information, and receive direct guidance. Those interested in literacy do not hesitate to express their wish to be mentored by the pesantren leader" (P3–Informant 3, September 2024). This account indicates that discussion and consultation provide opportunities for students to express their literacy interests and to seek direct mentoring from the pesantren leader. However, the available data do not specify the frequency of consultations, the forms of feedback provided, or the extent of mentoring across all students.

Literacy activities are also supported by the library, which, according to P2–Informant 2, provides borrowing services for books and *kitab* and involves student administrators in its management. These services support access to reading materials, while an information board communicates library information.

Figure 3
Library Information Board and Students' Wall Magazine

(a) (b)



Note. (a) Library information board; (b) students' wall magazine. Source: Researcher's documentation, September 2024.

Figure 3 depicts two facilities that support literacy activities within the pesantren. Figure 3(a) shows the library information board, which provides a medium for communicating library-related information, while Figure 3(b) presents the students' wall magazine as an outlet for displaying written work. These facilities demonstrate the availability of information and publication spaces that support literacy activities. However, the documentation does not establish the frequency of library use, the extent of student participation, or the effectiveness of these facilities in improving literacy skills.

Table 3
Mapping of Data and Themes on Bunyai's Strategies for Mobilizing Students' Literacy Activities

No.	Key data and sources	Initial codes	Theme	Thematic meaning
1	Bunyai guides the writing of news articles and activity reports and encourages their compilation into books. P1–Informant 1.	Activity experiences; news articles; written reports; compilation of writing.	Writing based on activity experiences	Pesantren activities provide material for writing and documentation directed toward the production of written work.
2	Contributions to the wall magazine follow a rotating schedule. P3–Informant 3. Observations of writing and publication; documentation of a poetry anthology and a bulletin in Figure 2.	Publication outlets; rotation; participation; presentation of work.	Organizing the publication of students' work	The presentation of written work is supported by publication outlets and arrangements for student involvement.
3	Students are encouraged to discuss, consult, share information, and receive direct guidance. P3–Informant 3.	Discussion; consultation; learning needs; access to guidance.	Providing spaces for discussion and consultation	Students have opportunities to communicate their interests and learning needs to the pesantren leader.
4	Provision of books and *kitab*, borrowing services, and library management by student administrators. P2–Informant 2. Documentation of the information board in Figure 3.	Borrowing; reading resources; student administrators; library information.	Managing access to reading materials through the library	Access to learning resources is supported by library services, student administrators' involvement, and information facilities.

Source: Processed by the researcher, 2025.

Table 3 synthesizes four interconnected strategies employed by Bunyai to mobilize students' literacy activities: activity-based writing, organizing the publication of students' work, providing spaces for discussion and consultation, and managing access to reading materials through the library. These strategies are reflected in the use of pesantren activities as writing material, scheduled contributions to the wall magazine, opportunities for direct consultation, and the provision of library services involving student administrators. Documentation of a poetry anthology, bulletin, and library information board further supports the existence of publication outlets and literacy facilities. Together, these findings identify a pattern of literacy mobilization through writing practices, publication opportunities, pedagogical guidance, and access to learning resources, but do not establish uniform participation or measurable improvements in students' literacy skills.

Viewed through Acker's (1990) *gendered organizations* perspective, these findings highlight the organization of educational authority, task allocation, pedagogical interactions, and participation opportunities within Bunyai's leadership. Her guidance in writing news articles and reports demonstrates the exercise of educational authority, while rotating contributions to the wall magazine and students' involvement in library administration illustrate the distribution of literacy-related responsibilities. Discussion and consultation opportunities further demonstrate interactions between students and pesantren leadership. Unlike Finding 1, which identifies Bunyai's educational authority, and Finding 2, which examines organizational support and student initiatives, these findings document the implementation of specific literacy strategies. However, the available evidence does not establish how gender norms influence the allocation of responsibilities, opportunities for participation, or recognition of students' written work. Consequently, the findings demonstrate the implementation of literacy strategies without determining their implications for existing gender relations.

Discussion

This study identifies three main findings. First, Bunyai's leadership in developing students' literacy traditions is expressed through the establishment of literacy requirements, the development of learning support structures, and pedagogical relationships that guide students' selection and examination of knowledge sources. Second, the literacy support ecosystem comprises interconnections among Bunyai's leadership and collaborative support, student initiatives and participation opportunities, a supportive learning environment, and the library as literacy infrastructure. Third, literacy mobilization strategies involve activity-based writing, the organization of publication, spaces for discussion and consultation, and access to reading materials through the library. Together, these findings demonstrate interconnections among Bunyai's educational authority, organizational support, and student initiatives, and the implementation of literacy activities. This conclusion concerns literacy organization and practices within the pesantren studied, without establishing success levels across all students, causal relationships between leadership and literacy outcomes, or changes in gender relations.

These findings underscore the need to strengthen reading and writing skills among young Indonesians. PISA 2022 reported that only 25% of Indonesian students attained at least Level 2 proficiency in reading (OECD, 2023). This provides context for the importance of access to reading materials, mentoring, and writing opportunities across educational settings. In the pesantren studied, Bunyai establishes literacy requirements, supports the development of learning structures, and guides students toward knowledge sources. These practices are accompanied by library support, discussions, consultations, and the organization of

publications. Her position and exercise of authority are also relevant to examination through the *gendered organizations* perspective, without treating women's involvement as evidence that gender norms determine these practices (Acker, 1990). Meanwhile, Rahman's (2022) study of cultural diversity in pesantren provides context for understanding educational development within its social environment. The social relevance of this study lies in its account of literacy practices and women's involvement in their organization, while distinguishing national literacy concerns from students' abilities, which were not measured specifically or systematically in this study.

Theoretically, the findings demonstrate Bunyai's exercise of educational authority through literacy requirements, learning support structures, and pedagogical relationships. The *gendered organizations* perspective helps examine leadership position, role allocation, and interactions within these practices, although the influence of gender norms cannot be determined from the available data (Acker, 1990). Reading and writing requirements can also be interpreted through the lens of institutional work, which links leaders' actions to the creation and maintenance of educational practices (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Direct mentoring and guidance on knowledge sources open discussion of social and cognitive competencies in leadership (Boyatzis, 2008). Learning guidance and opportunities to write in line with students' interests can likewise be discussed within the framework of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). These theories offer interpretations of the observed practices rather than establishing the full range of leadership characteristics. The central implication is the interconnectedness of educational authority, organizational support, and student participation in literacy organization, without inferring changes in gender hierarchy or causal relationships with improvements in students' abilities.

A fundamental lesson of this study is that developing literacy traditions involves connections among the organization of activities, access to learning resources, and opportunities for participation. Literacy requirements are accompanied by library services, mentoring, discussions, and publication. Social capital helps explain relationships and information channels as resources for collective action (Coleman, 1988). Reed and Johnson (2023) extend this reflection by positioning libraries as spaces for accessing cultural resources and developing knowledge. Hojeij (2024), meanwhile, offers a perspective on educational leadership in supporting program innovation. In this study, the lesson is to attend to the relationships among policies, leaders' direct involvement, learning environment support, and student initiatives. Experiences of pesantren activities also provide material for news articles and reports intended for compilation into books. Researchers need to distinguish program existence, activity implementation, and skill development. Anthologies and bulletins demonstrate work production, whereas the attainment of reading targets and improvement in writing skills require separate evaluations that are attentive to students' experiences and needs at each educational level.

These findings align with Rahayu and Faraz (2019) in demonstrating Nyai's active role in girls' pesantren education. However, their study emphasizes transformational leadership characteristics and decision-making, whereas this study maps Bunyai's educational authority, support ecosystem, and the implementation of literacy strategies. Fatmawati et al. (2024), examining women's leadership, *fiqh siyasah*, and patriarchal culture, provide a comparison concerning gender, while this study focuses on educational authority in literacy practices. Kusmana (2019) discusses women's leadership strategies in interaction with social norms and traditional roles. Hanafi et al. (2021) examine pesantren leadership responses to the pandemic, offering a comparison of educational organizations in a different context. This study's scholarly contribution is a contextual explanation of the interconnections among

Bunyai's authority, organizational support, and student initiatives, and strategies involving activity-based writing, publication, discussions and consultations, and access to reading materials. It elaborates the organization of literacy practices without claiming changes in gender structures or successful outcomes for all students.

These findings inform recommendations for strengthening pesantren literacy organization and evaluation. First, align reading policies and writing assignments with educational levels, document implementation, and periodically assess students' work. Second, coordinate with the literacy institution, the library, and publication outlets to support access to reading and to present written work, including news articles and reports on pesantren activities. Third, Bunyai and mentors should schedule discussions, consultations, reading guidance, and feedback. Fourth, support students' library management and publication contributions through task allocation and training. Fifth, focus communication among leaders, administrators, students, and parents or guardians on implementation needs. Sixth, develop publishing support, training, and networks among pesantren according to needs and resources. Semester evaluations should assess attainment of reading targets, summaries, book reviews, published work, and participation experiences to guide improvements. Assess skill development separately, without treating the existence of a program as evidence of literacy success.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that santri literacy traditions develop through the interplay of Bunyai's educational authority, institutional support, and santri participation. This authority is exercised through reading and writing requirements, structured learning, guidance on sources of knowledge, and pedagogical relationships. These practices are supported by a conducive learning environment, library services, collaborative support, and santri initiatives in reading, discussing, writing, and publishing their work. Literacy strategies connect santri experiences in pesantren activities with writing, provide publication opportunities, facilitate discussion and consultation, and support access to reading materials. This pattern reflects women's leadership through the organization of activities and everyday pedagogical relationships. Literacy practices thus take shape through leadership guidance, organizational support, and opportunities for participation. This synthesis explains connections among the identified practices without establishing success for all santri, program sustainability, causal relationships with literacy outcomes, or changes in gender relations.

Theoretically, this study enriches scholarship on women's leadership and gender-informed organizational studies by providing a contextual understanding of Bunyai's educational authority in a family-based pesantren. The findings explain the connections among activity organization, institutional support, pedagogical relationships, and santri participation in the development of literacy traditions. Its contribution is an empirical explanation, rather than a new theory or evidence of changes in gender structures. In practical terms, the study offers a framework for organizing literacy activities that connects reading and writing policies, library services, mentoring, discussion, and the publication of santri work. Pesantren can adapt this framework to their needs through role allocation, activity documentation, feedback on writing, and periodic evaluation. Evaluation should distinguish program implementation from the development of santri skills so that the presence of activities and facilities is not automatically treated as evidence of literacy success.

This study is limited to a single girls' pesantren; therefore, its findings cannot be directly generalized to other pesantren contexts. The data also do not explain in depth the basis of Bunyai's legitimate authority, the division of decision-making with the Kiai, the influence of

gender norms on her scope for action, or the distribution of opportunities for participation among students. Furthermore, the study did not systematically assess attainment of reading targets, development of writing skills, or the sustainability of literacy practices. Future research could compare pesantren with other institutions with different leadership structures and institutional characteristics to identify shared and context-specific patterns. Further studies could also explore the experiences of students, parents or guardians, and administrators through interviews or observations, alongside longitudinal data and assessments of written work, to trace literacy development without assuming causal relationships.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest related to this study.

DECLARATION OF AI USE

No AI tools were used in conducting the research or preparing the manuscript. All findings, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions are the authors' own work.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Herlina: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Project Administration; Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing. **Munawara**: Conceptualization; Formal Analysis; Methodology; Writing Original Draft. **Irmak Sude Gurel**: Supervision; Visualization; Writing Review & Editing.

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