



Transforming Islamic Education: The Role of Bu Nyai in Madurese Pesantren Leadership

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Bu Nyai Nusantara (BNN) in transforming Islamic education within pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) in Madura, Indonesia. Utilizing a qualitative, phenomenological approach, the research explores the challenges faced by female leaders in traditionally male-dominated institutions, the strategies they employ to navigate and transform gender roles, and their unique contributions to Islamic education and broader societal change. The study draws on theories of women's educational leadership, particularly the model proposed by Grogan and Shakeshaft (2010), and Islamic feminism to analyze the experiences of Bu Nyai. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis across four districts in Madura. The findings reveal that Bu Nyai faces multifaceted challenges stemming from cultural norms, religious interpretations, and societal expectations. However, they have developed innovative strategies, including pursuing higher education, embracing technology, and building collaborative networks, to overcome these obstacles. The research highlights Bu Nyai's significant contributions to modernizing Islamic education, redefining religious authority, and advancing gender equality. Their leadership approach aligns with Grogan and Shakeshaft's five dimensions: leadership for change, instructional leadership, spiritual leadership, relational leadership, and balanced leadership. This study contributes to the understanding of women's leadership in religious educational contexts and demonstrates how educational leadership theories can be applied and adapted in diverse cultural settings. The findings have implications for educational policies and practices in Islamic institutions and provide insights into the potential of women's leadership as a catalyst for social change in traditional religious contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The role of women in Islamic education, particularly in the context of pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), has gained increasing attention in recent years. This growing recognition is exemplified by events such as the third National Silaturrahim Bu Nyai Nusantara (Silatnas) held on November 7-8, 2022, which brought together Nyai (female Islamic scholars and leaders) from across Indonesia. The event, themed "Welcoming 1 Century of Nahdlatul Ulama: Islamic Boarding School Women Move and Synergize to Build World Civilization," highlights the crucial role of women in Islamic education and community development (Abukari, 2014; Astani et al., 2024; Offenhauer & Buchalter, 2005; Sahin, 2018; Setia & Rahim, 2024). This gathering not only showcases the importance of women's leadership in Islamic institutions but also signals a shift in the traditional paradigms of Islamic education in Indonesia (Alwasilah, 2013; Kersten, 2015; Rasmussen, 2010).

The landscape of Islamic education, particularly in Indonesia, has been undergoing significant transformations in recent decades. Pesantren, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, have played a pivotal role in shaping the religious, social, and cultural fabric of Indonesian society (Lukens-Bull, 2019; Mujahid, 2021; Nilan, 2009). Historically, these institutions have been predominantly led by male scholars, known as Kiai. However, the emergence and recognition of female leaders, the Nyai, represent a significant development in this educational ecosystem.

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of women's leadership in religious educational institutions. Bhimji (2009), Liberatore (2019), and Zubair and Zubair (2017) explored the emergence of female Islamic authority in various Muslim contexts, highlighting how women are carving out spaces of influence within traditional religious structures. Bano and Kalmbach (2012), Jouili and Amir-Moazami (2006), Kalmbach (2008), Liberatore (2019), and Sahin (2013) examined the expanding roles of Muslim women as religious leaders and teachers, demonstrating how these roles are reshaping Islamic education and authority. In the Indonesian context, Anwar (2018) Khariroh (2010), Kloos and Ismah (2023), Salim (2024), Uyuni et al. (2024) and Uyuni and Adnan (2023) provided a comprehensive analysis of the roles of Nyai in pesantren and their contributions to Islamic scholarship and community development. These studies collectively point to a global trend of increasing female participation and leadership in Islamic education.

The island of Madura presents a unique context for studying these developments. As Trisnani (2021) notes, Islamic boarding schools are ubiquitous in Madura, deeply embedded in the cultural and social fabric of the island. The establishment of Islamic boarding schools, with the Kiai as the central figure, is highly valued in Madurese culture. Kiai are revered as representatives of the Ulama (Islamic scholars), and their influence extends beyond religious matters to political, cultural, and economic spheres (Romadhon, 2020). This pervasive influence of pesantren and Kiai in Madurese society makes it a particularly interesting context for examining the emerging roles of Nyai.

Despite the growing body of literature on women's roles in Islamic education globally, there remains a significant research gap regarding the specific roles, challenges, and contributions of Nyai in the Madurese context. While studies such as Kosim (2007), Romadhon (2020), and Trisnani (2021) have explored the importance of pesantren and Kiai in Madurese society, the roles of Nyai have been largely overlooked. This oversight is particularly notable given the unique cultural and religious landscape of Madura, where Islamic institutions play a central role in social, educational, and economic spheres.

The emergence of Bu Nyai Nusantara, an organization of female pesantren leaders, represents a significant development in the landscape of Islamic education in Indonesia. This organization not only challenges traditional patriarchal structures but also repositions the role of women in Madurese Islamic culture. As Jannah (2020) points out, despite the numerous functions and activities performed by Nyai, their roles have often been perceived as secondary or supplementary to those of the Kiai. The formation of Bu Nyai Nusantara, therefore, marks a crucial step in asserting the importance and autonomy of female leadership in Islamic education.

However, the educational orientation and services provided by Bu Nyai Nusantara remain understudied, presenting an important area for research. Understanding the specific contributions, challenges, and strategies employed by these female leaders is crucial for comprehending the evolving nature of Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly in the context of Madura.

This research aims to address the existing research gap by examining the roles, contributions, and challenges faced by Bu Nyai Nusantara within the context of Islamic education in Madura. Specifically, this study will investigate the primary educational orientations and services provided by Bu Nyai Nusantara in Madurese pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), identify the ways in which they navigate and transform traditional gender roles within the pesantren system, and explore their unique contributions to the development of Islamic education in the region.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to provide insights into the evolving roles of women in Islamic education, particularly in the context of a traditionally patriarchal society. By focusing on Bu Nyai Nusantara, this study contributes to the broader understanding of women's leadership in religious institutions and their impact on educational and social development. Moreover, it sheds light on the strategies employed by female leaders to assert their authority and influence within established religious and educational structures.

Theoretically, this research is guided by the framework of Islamic feminism, as articulated by scholars such as Mir-Hosseini (2006) and Shaikh (2003). This framework allows for an analysis of how Bu Nyai Nusantara negotiate their roles within Islamic traditions while advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment. Islamic feminism provides a lens through which to examine how these women leaders interpret and apply Islamic teachings in ways that support gender equality and women's rights within an Islamic framework.

Additionally, the study draws on theories of educational leadership, particularly those addressing women's leadership in educational institutions (Grogan &

Shakeshaft, 2010). This theoretical perspective helps in understanding the specific challenges and strategies employed by women leaders in educational settings, especially in contexts where their leadership roles are not traditionally recognized.

The research also incorporates concepts from social change theory, particularly as it relates to the role of education in societal transformation. As noted in the TOR of the Bu Nyai Nusantara National Silaturahmi 3, these women leaders are seen as agents of development and catalysts for social change. Analyzing their roles through this theoretical lens allows for a deeper understanding of how their educational initiatives contribute to broader societal transformations.

By combining these theoretical perspectives with an in-depth exploration of Bu Nyai Nusantara's activities, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of women's roles in Islamic education in Madura. It seeks to contribute not only to academic discourse but also to practical considerations for enhancing women's participation and leadership in Islamic educational institutions.

The methodology employed in this study is qualitative, utilizing a phenomenological approach to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of Bu Nyai Nusantara members. This approach allows for a deep exploration of the subjective experiences and meanings attributed to their roles by the Nyai themselves. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, providing a rich and multifaceted dataset for analysis.

The expected outcomes of this research are multifold. Firstly, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the educational philosophies, practices, and challenges of Bu Nyai Nusantara in the Madurese context. Secondly, it seeks to illuminate the strategies employed by these women leaders in navigating and transforming traditional gender roles within Islamic educational institutions. Thirdly, the study aims to identify the unique contributions of Bu Nyai Nusantara to the development of Islamic education and broader societal change in Madura.

This research addresses a critical gap in our understanding of women's leadership in Islamic education, particularly in the context of Madura, Indonesia. By focusing on the Bu Nyai Nusantara organization, it offers insights into the evolving roles of women in religious education and leadership. The findings of this study have the potential to inform policy and practice in Islamic education, contribute to discussions on gender and leadership in religious contexts, and provide a foundation for further research in this crucial area of study.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the role of Bu Nyai in Madurese Pesantren leadership. Qualitative methods are particularly suitable for this research as they allow for in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena and lived experiences (Hamzah, 2020). The study is grounded in a phenomenological framework, which focuses on understanding the essence of participants' experiences and their interpretations of these experiences (Helaluddin, 2018).

Research Design

The research adopts a phenomenological design, specifically focusing on narrative studies that report individuals' experiences through descriptions of general life knowledge related to various theories and phenomena (Cilesiz, 2011). This approach is particularly appropriate for examining the experiences, events, and statuses held by Bu Nyai in the context of Madurese Islamic education.

Research Setting and Participants

The study is conducted across the four districts of Madura: Sumenep, Pamekasan, Sampang, and Bangkalan. These locations were chosen due to their shared cultural background with nuanced differences in social life. The primary participants are Bu Nyai who are active members of the Bu Nyai Nusantara organization. This focused selection of participants allows for a deep exploration of the specific roles and challenges faced by female leaders in Madurese Islamic education.

Data Collection Methods

In-depth Interviews

The primary data collection method involves open-ended, in-depth interviews with Bu Nyai and other stakeholders in Madurese Islamic boarding schools. These interviews aim to uncover "something" that is not yet apparent, allowing for a rich exploration of the phenomena under study (Helaluddin, 2018; Qu & Dumay, 2011). The interviews are designed to capture the participants' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of their roles in Islamic education leadership.

Participant Observation

Extensive observations are conducted to complement the interview data. These observations focus on the direct involvement of Bu Nyai in various educational, social, and civic activities. This method allows for a more holistic understanding of the Bu Nyai's roles and interactions within their communities.

Documentation Analysis

The study also employs a documentation approach, which involves analyzing various written and visual materials related to Bu Nyai activities. This includes official documents, meeting minutes, activity schedules, and other relevant materials (Pan & de La Puente, 2005). The documentation provides contextual information and supports the data obtained through interviews and observations.

Data Analysis

Data analysis follows a structured procedure that includes describing and synthesizing data from observations, interviews, and documents (Sugiyono, 2016). The analysis process involves three main steps:

- a. **Data Reduction:** This step involves summarizing, selecting relevant facts, and categorizing data related to the gender legitimacy of Bu Nyai Nusantara.

- b. Data Presentation: Reduced data is presented in the form of descriptions, graphs, and relational categories. This step aims to explore the function of Bu Nyai Nusantara in the development of civilization and inform future activities.
- c. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: The final stage involves drawing conclusions based on the analyzed data. This process ensures that the research questions regarding the orientation and validity of Bu Nyai in Madurese civilization formation are adequately addressed.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations are prioritized. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, and their anonymity and confidentiality are maintained. The research adheres to the ethical guidelines set forth by [relevant ethical board or institution].

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, multiple data collection methods are employed (triangulation) (Moon, 2019). Additionally, member checking is used, where participants are given the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of their interview transcripts and the researchers' interpretations.

This methodology is designed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the roles, challenges, and contributions of Bu Nyai in Madurese Islamic education leadership, contributing to the broader discourse on women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role and Endeavors of Bu Nyai Nusantara in Advancing Islamic Boarding Schools and Society

Bu Nyai Nusantara (BNN) is a community of female leaders of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) under the auspices of Rabithah Maahid Islamiyah (RMI), an organization within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). RMI is one of NU's organizations that focuses on the development of pesantren and religious education, in accordance with the 34th NU Articles of Association and Bylaws (AD/ART) Chapter V, Article 17, Letter C. The existence of RMI is considered essential, given that more than 23,000 pesantren in Indonesia require a specialized body to foster and affiliate them. Since its establishment, RMI has endeavored to strengthen the capacity of pesantren in producing excellent cadres and advancing society, as stated by Muhammad Taufiq in an interview on December 24, 2023, in Pamekasan.

BNN was founded in conjunction with the first National Gathering (Silatnas I) on July 13-14, 2019, in Surabaya, initiated by the East Java Regional Board of NU (PWNU) and RMI NU East Java. The event was attended by approximately 400 Bu Nyai and Ning from various pesantren across Indonesia. Through BNN, Bu Nyai can develop the strength of the movement within a single framework to reinforce the ideology of Islam Wasathiyah in the manner of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah and the

spirit of nationalism, as conveyed by Mudzifatul Jannah in an interview on December 26, 2023, in Pamekasan.

Bu Nyai plays a vital role as a center of Muslim intellectuals, creators of excellent human resources, agents of community development, and drivers of social change, as outlined in the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the 3rd Bu Nyai Nusantara National Gathering. The presence of Bu Nyai is increasingly recognized in pesantren leadership, following the results of the 30th NU Congress in Lirboyo, which legitimized changes in the interpretation of scriptures regarding women's leadership, as stated by Bariroh and Arif (2023). Bu Nyai also serves as a role model for the community and has many followers, as expressed by Qomar (2002).

In carrying out their roles, Bu Nyai adheres to the principles of gender equality in the Quran, such as QS Adz-Dzariyah: 51, 56 on the equality of men and women as servants of Allah; QS al-Hujurat: 13, 49 on the equal ability to become pious servants; and QS Al-Baqarah: 30 on the equal position as khalifatullah fil ardl (Allah's vicegerent on earth), as elaborated by Mufidah Cholil (2013). The leadership of Bu Nyai in pesantren is also supported by Quranic verses relevant to the philosophy of leadership, such as QS Ali Imran: 28, QS Al-Maidah: 51, 57, QS Al-Mujadilah: 22, QS An-Nisa 138-139, 144, and QS At-Taubah: 24.

Through their endeavors in advancing pesantren and society, Bu Nyai Nusantara has become an inspirational figure capable of responding to contemporary challenges with structured abilities and wisdom to realize moderate Islam and build civilization. Their presence in the exclusive forum of BNN further strengthens their roles and contributions, as conveyed by Toyyibah in an interview on December 5, 2023, in Bangkalan. Through BNN, Bu Nyai can share experiences, knowledge, and strategies in managing pesantren with a feminist perspective, as well as expand networks and collaborations among pesantren throughout Indonesia.

Challenges of Bu Nyai Nusantara in the Madurese Context

Bu Nyai Nusantara face numerous challenges in their roles as leaders within the Madurese pesantren context. These challenges stem from deeply ingrained cultural norms, religious interpretations, and societal expectations that have historically limited women's roles in Islamic education and leadership.

One of the primary challenges is overcoming traditional gender roles and stereotypes (Abdulina et al., 2021; Ellemers, 2018; Hasan & Rajak, 2024; Merma-Molina et al., 2022; Sugitanata et al., 2024). As Toyyibah (interview, December 5, 2023) noted, "Nyai is not only a cover for the figure of a Kiai or a servant of a Kiai who is only tasked with serving and preparing all the needs of the Kiai." This statement highlights the persistent view of women as subordinate to men in pesantren leadership, a perspective that Bu Nyai must continually challenge and transform.

Another significant challenge is balancing traditional Islamic values with modern educational needs (Alkandri, 2014; Moslimany et al., 2024). Bu Nyai must navigate the delicate task of preserving essential religious teachings while adapting to contemporary educational demands. This challenge is particularly evident in the integration of technology and modern pedagogical approaches within the traditional pesantren system. As Mafrudlah (interview) pointed out, Bu Nyai are involved in

"facilitating the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure, representative study spaces, decent and magnificent school buildings, and the provision of complete learning media." This effort requires not only financial resources but also the ability to convince more conservative elements within the pesantren community of the necessity for such changes.

The legitimacy of female leadership in Islamic institutions remains a contentious issue in some circles. Despite the growing acceptance of Bu Nyai as leaders, they often face scrutiny and skepticism regarding their authority in religious matters. This challenge is compounded by the lack of formal recognition in some pesantren structures, where Bu Nyai's roles may be seen as auxiliary rather than central to the institution's leadership.

Furthermore, Bu Nyai face the challenge of limited access to higher Islamic education and scholarship. While many Bu Nyai have pursued advanced degrees, as noted by Siti Mailah (interview, November 28, 2023), there remain barriers to women's participation in higher levels of Islamic scholarship. This limitation can impact their ability to assert authority in religious matters and fully participate in the intellectual discourse within Islamic education.

The dual responsibilities of managing both domestic and professional duties present another significant challenge. Bu Nyai often must balance their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers with their responsibilities as educational leaders. This balancing act can lead to burnout and stress, potentially limiting their effectiveness in either sphere.

Lastly, the challenge of creating and maintaining networks of support and collaboration among Bu Nyai across different regions and institutions is significant. While the formation of Bu Nyai Nusantara as an organization has helped address this issue, as noted by Mudzifatul Jannah (interview, December 26, 2023), sustaining these networks and ensuring their effectiveness in supporting and empowering Bu Nyai remains an ongoing challenge.

In conclusion, the challenges faced by Bu Nyai Nusantara in the Madurese context are multifaceted, encompassing cultural, religious, educational, and personal dimensions. These challenges reflect the broader struggles of women in leadership positions within traditional religious contexts. However, it is important to note that these challenges also present opportunities for transformation and growth. By confronting and overcoming these obstacles, Bu Nyai are not only reshaping their own roles but also contributing to the broader evolution of Islamic education and gender norms in Madurese society. Their perseverance in the face of these challenges demonstrates the resilience and determination that characterize effective leadership, as described in Grogan and Shakeshaft's (2010) theory of women's educational leadership.

Strategies Employed by Bu Nyai in Navigating and Transforming Traditional Gender Roles

Bu Nyai Nusantara have developed and implemented various strategies to navigate and transform traditional gender roles within Islamic educational institutions in Madura. These strategies demonstrate their adaptability, resilience, and commitment to advancing both Islamic education and women's leadership.

One key strategy is the pursuit of higher education and continuous learning. As Siti Mailah (interview, November 28, 2023) noted, many Bu Nyai have obtained advanced academic degrees, elevating their status as educated women within their communities. This pursuit of knowledge not only enhances their expertise in Islamic studies but also equips them with broader perspectives on education and leadership. By positioning themselves as scholars in their own right, Bu Nyai challenge the traditional notion that religious knowledge and authority are exclusively male domains.

Active involvement in infrastructure development and institutional management is another crucial strategy. Huzaimah Asmu'I Zain's approach, as described in her interview, exemplifies this: "Nyai Huzaimah, as she is known, does not hesitate or hesitate to be involved in the planning process, such as the procurement of materials, foremen, and the builder, the design." This hands-on involvement in traditionally male-dominated areas of pesantren management demonstrates Bu Nyai's competence and challenges gender-based division of labor within these institutions.

Embracing technology and innovation in education is a forward-thinking strategy employed by Bu Nyai. As Mafrudlah (interview) explained, many Bu Nyai are adapting to educational advancements, including curriculum development, quality assurance, and digitalization of education. This approach not only modernizes pesantren education but also positions Bu Nyai as progressive leaders capable of bridging traditional Islamic education with contemporary educational needs.

The empowerment of alumni networks serves as both a strategy for institutional development and a means of extending Bu Nyai's influence. Toyyibah (interview) highlighted the importance of maintaining connections with former students, recognizing alumni as significant assets for the pesantren. This strategy helps create a supportive ecosystem around Bu Nyai's leadership and extends their impact beyond the immediate confines of the pesantren.

Engagement in community leadership is another critical strategy. As Qomar (2002) noted, Bu Nyai often serve as community leaders and role models, extending their influence beyond the pesantren. This broader engagement helps legitimize their leadership roles and challenges societal perceptions about women's capabilities and appropriate spheres of influence.

Collaboration and network-building among Bu Nyai themselves, as exemplified by the formation of Bu Nyai Nusantara, is a powerful strategy. Mudzifatul Jannah (interview, December 26, 2023) described this as creating "a gigantic movement connection power within one ideal frame." This collective approach allows Bu Nyai to share resources, experiences, and support, strengthening their individual and collective positions as leaders.

The integration of spiritual leadership with practical education, as seen in the emphasis on "elmuh tengka" or behavioral science (Huzaimah, interview, November 30, 2023), is another nuanced strategy. By grounding their leadership in spiritual and moral principles, Bu Nyai legitimize their roles within the traditional Islamic framework while also addressing contemporary educational needs.

Lastly, Bu Nyai employ a strategy of balanced leadership, as described by Grogan and Shakeshaft (2010), navigating multiple roles and responsibilities. This approach allows them to fulfill traditional expectations while gradually expanding their spheres of influence and authority.

In conclusion, the strategies employed by Bu Nyai Nusantara demonstrate a multifaceted approach to navigating and transforming traditional gender roles within Islamic educational institutions. These strategies reflect a deep understanding of their cultural and religious context, coupled with a progressive vision for the future of Islamic education. By employing these diverse strategies, Bu Nyai are not only changing their own status within pesantren but are also reshaping the broader landscape of Islamic education in Madura.

The effectiveness of these strategies highlights the innovative and adaptive nature of women's leadership in challenging contexts. It underscores the idea that transformative change often comes not through confrontation but through strategic, persistent efforts that work within and gradually reshape existing systems. The success of Bu Nyai in implementing these strategies suggests that meaningful change in gender roles and leadership within traditional religious institutions is possible, given the right approach and sustained effort.

Unique Contributions of Bu Nyai Nusantara to Islamic Education and Societal Change in Madura

The Bu Nyai Nusantara movement has made significant and unique contributions to the development of Islamic education and broader societal change in Madura. These contributions extend beyond the walls of pesantren, influencing the broader Madurese society and challenging long-held perceptions about gender roles in Islamic contexts.

One of the most significant contributions is the redefinition of religious authority and scholarship. By asserting themselves as religious scholars and leaders, Bu Nyai have expanded the concept of Islamic leadership beyond the traditional male-dominated paradigm. As Kholifah (2014) and Prasetiawan and Lis (2019) argue, female leadership in pesantren contributes to eradicating myths of male superiority and changing perceptions of religion as a male domain. This shift not only empowers women within Islamic educational institutions but also provides role models for young women in the broader Madurese society.

Bu Nyai have also made substantial contributions to the modernization and diversification of Islamic education in Madura. As Siti Mailah (interview, November 28, 2023) noted, many Bu Nyai oversee educational institutions ranging from kindergarten to university level, alongside traditional madrasah diniyah. This

comprehensive approach to education ensures that Islamic teachings remain relevant and applicable in contemporary contexts. The integration of life skills and technological literacy, as seen in the establishment of Job Training Centers within pesantren (Mafrudlah, interview), demonstrates Bu Nyai's commitment to preparing students for the challenges of modern life while maintaining Islamic values.

The emphasis on character development and moral education, or "*elmuh tengka*" (Huzaimah, interview, November 30, 2023), represents another unique contribution of Bu Nyai. This focus on behavioral science, taught through both formal and informal means, addresses a critical need in contemporary education – the cultivation of ethical and moral values alongside academic knowledge. This holistic approach to education contributes to the development of well-rounded individuals who can navigate the complexities of modern society while adhering to Islamic principles.

Bu Nyai's active engagement in community leadership and social issues extends their impact beyond education. As community leaders and role models (Qomar, 2002), Bu Nyai contribute to social development and change in Madura. Their involvement in addressing social issues and providing guidance on various aspects of life helps bridge the gap between traditional Islamic teachings and contemporary societal needs.

The formation of Bu Nyai Nusantara as a formal organization has itself been a significant contribution to Islamic education and societal change. As Mudzifatul Jannah (interview, December 26, 2023) described, this organization has created "a gigantic movement connection power within one ideal frame." This collective platform has amplified the voices of women leaders in Islamic education, enabling them to influence policy, share best practices, and advocate for gender equality in religious and educational contexts.

Furthermore, Bu Nyai's contributions extend to the realm of women's empowerment and gender equality. By demonstrating that women can successfully balance multiple roles – as educators, religious leaders, community figures, and family members – Bu Nyai challenge traditional gender norms and inspire other women to pursue leadership roles. This has a ripple effect on Madurese society, gradually shifting perceptions about women's capabilities and appropriate roles.

The emphasis on alumni networks and ongoing engagement with former students (Toyyibah, interview) represents another unique contribution. This approach creates a continuous cycle of influence and support, extending the impact of Bu Nyai's leadership far beyond the immediate confines of the pesantren. It helps create a community of individuals who carry forward the values and teachings imparted by Bu Nyai, contributing to long-term societal change.

In conclusion, the unique contributions of Bu Nyai Nusantara to Islamic education and societal change in Madura are multifaceted and far-reaching. Their impact extends from the modernization of educational practices to the redefinition of religious authority and the advancement of gender equality. These contributions demonstrate the transformative potential of women's leadership in traditional religious contexts.

The success of Bu Nyai in making these contributions highlights the importance of inclusive leadership in driving social and educational progress. It suggests that when women are empowered to take on leadership roles in religious and educational institutions, they bring unique perspectives and approaches that can enrich and transform these institutions. The case of Bu Nyai Nusantara in Madura provides a compelling example of how women's leadership can be a catalyst for positive change, not only in educational settings but in broader societal contexts as well.

Comprehensive Analysis: Theoretical Implications, Contextualization, and Original Contributions of Bu Nyai Nusantara's Role in the Transformation of Islamic Education in Madura

This research reveals the significant role of Bu Nyai Nusantara in transforming Islamic education in Madura, with broad theoretical and practical implications. This analysis integrates perspectives from educational leadership theory, particularly the model of women's leadership proposed by Grogan and Shakeshaft (2010), with empirical findings from the context of Bu Nyai in Madura.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2010) identify five approaches commonly employed by female educational leaders: leadership for change, instructional leadership, spiritual leadership, relational leadership, and balanced leadership. The findings of this research indicate that Bu Nyai Nusantara apply these approaches within the unique context of Islamic education in Madura.

Leadership for change is evident in Bu Nyai's strategies to transform traditional gender roles. As articulated by Toyyibah (interview, December 5, 2023), "Nyai is not merely a cover for the figure of Kiai or a servant of Kiai whose only duty is to serve and prepare all the needs of Kiai." This statement reflects Bu Nyai's efforts to alter perceptions about women's roles in pesantren leadership.

Bu Nyai's instructional leadership is manifested in their emphasis on quality education and curricular innovation. Siti Mailah (interview, November 28, 2023) highlights how Bu Nyai are involved in various levels of education, from kindergarten to higher education. This demonstrates their commitment to enhancing the quality of Islamic education.

The aspect of spiritual leadership is particularly prominent in Bu Nyai's approach. Huzaimah (interview, November 30, 2023) emphasizes the importance of "elmu tengka" or behavioral science, which integrates spiritual values with practical education. This aligns with Grogan and Shakeshaft's observations on the significance of spirituality in women's educational leadership.

Bu Nyai's relational leadership is evident in their efforts to build networks and collaborations. Mudzifatul Jannah (interview, December 26, 2023) describes Bu Nyai Nusantara as "a gigantic movement connection power within one ideal frame." This reflects the collaborative approach often associated with women's leadership.

Finally, Bu Nyai's balanced leadership is realized in their ability to manage various roles and responsibilities. They not only lead pesantren but are also active in community development, demonstrating the balance between professional and

personal life that Grogan and Shakeshaft identify as characteristic of women's educational leadership.

The original contribution of this research lies in the application of women's educational leadership theory within the context of traditional Islamic education. These findings expand our understanding of how principles of women's educational leadership can be applied and adapted in specific cultural and religious settings.

This research also uncovers unique strategies developed by Bu Nyai to overcome contextual challenges. For instance, the use of higher education as a tool for legitimacy, as explained by Siti Mailah, represents a creative adaptation to structural barriers within the traditional pesantren system.

The practical implications of these findings are significant. They indicate the need for educational policies that support and empower women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions. This could include leadership development programs specifically designed for Bu Nyai and structural reforms to facilitate greater female participation in decision-making within pesantren.

In conclusion, this research not only enriches the literature on women's leadership in Islamic education but also provides valuable insights into how educational leadership theory can be enhanced through the study of diverse cultural contexts. The case of Bu Nyai Nusantara in Madura demonstrates that women's leadership in education can be a powerful catalyst for social change, even in highly traditional and religiously-based contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This research on Bu Nyai Nusantara's role in transforming Islamic education in Madurese pesantren offers significant insights into the dynamics of women's leadership in traditional religious educational settings. The study demonstrates that despite facing numerous challenges rooted in cultural, religious, and societal norms, Bu Nyai have successfully carved out spaces of influence and authority within the pesantren system. The strategies employed by Bu Nyai, such as pursuing higher education, actively engaging in institutional management, and embracing technological innovations, reflect their adaptability and commitment to advancing both Islamic education and women's leadership. These approaches align with and expand upon Grogan and Shakeshaft's model of women's educational leadership, demonstrating its applicability in diverse cultural contexts.

Bu Nyai's contributions extend beyond the walls of pesantren, influencing broader Madurese society and challenging long-held perceptions about gender roles in Islamic contexts. Their emphasis on integrating traditional Islamic values with modern educational needs, focus on character development, and engagement in community leadership showcase the transformative potential of women's leadership in religious institutions. The formation of Bu Nyai Nusantara as an organization represents a significant step towards collective empowerment and advocacy for women's leadership in Islamic education. This collective approach has amplified their voices

and enhanced their ability to influence policy and practice in Islamic educational institutions.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on women's leadership in religious contexts and provides a nuanced understanding of how educational leadership theories can be enriched through the study of diverse cultural settings. The findings have important implications for educational policies and practices in Islamic institutions and offer valuable insights into the potential of women's leadership as a catalyst for social change in traditional religious contexts. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of Bu Nyai's leadership on educational outcomes and societal attitudes towards gender equality in Madura and beyond.

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