

Success strategy of female Ulama leaders to advance Salafiyah Islamic boarding school amid patriarchal resistance

Ahmad Fauzan

Universitas Padjadjaran Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: Fauzanahmad083@gmail.com

Lina Meilinawati Rahayu

Universitas Padjadjaran Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: lina.meiliniawati@unpad.ac.id

Teddi Muhtadin

Universitas Padjadjaran Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: teddi.muhtadin@unpad.ac.id

Hazbini

Univeristas Padjadjaran Bandung, Indonesia

E-mail: hazbini@unpad.ac.id

DOI:10.18326/ijims.v15i2.201-225

Abstract

This article describes the success strategy of a female ulama leader (Nyai) in leading and advancing Salafiyah Islamic boarding schools (Salafiyah Pesantren) amid patriarchal resistance. The female ulama is Nyai Masriyah Amva, the head of pesantren Kebon Jambu Cirebon. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the success strategies employed by women's leadership in Salafiyah Pesantren, and to provide a strategic vision for women living in a patriarchal environment to become more confident in taking action. Furthermore, this article is at least part of an effort to challenge the perception of pesantren salafiyah as patriarchal. The use of qualitative methods, particularly in ethnographic studies, serves to understand the meaning of individuals or groups of people who are considered to be affected by social problems in humanity through observation, interviews, and documentation. The result is that everything considered cultural or taboo is not necessarily part of the actual teachings of "Islamic teachings". Thus, being a leader in a minority setting, she actually has more opportunities to work. All her strategies represent the resistance to patriarchal culture, though they require careful planning. In short, she rejects the patriarchal culture, but can still be accepted around her, even in the way that Nyai Masriyah Amva can advance herself and her pesantren.

Artikel ini memaparkan strategi kesuksesan kepemimpinan ulama perempuan (Nyai) dalam memajukan pesantren salafiyah di tengah perlawanan patriarki. Beliau adalah Nyai Masriyah Amva sebagai pimpinan Pesantren Kebon Jambu, Cirebon, Indonesia. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mempelajari strategi kesuksesan kepemimpinan perempuan di pesantren salafiyah, serta memberikan wawasan strategis bagi perempuan yang hidup di lingkungan patriarki untuk menjadi lebih percaya diri dalam melakukan sesuatu. Selain itu, dengan adanya artikel ini setidaknya bagian dari usaha untuk mengikis pemahaman tentang pesantren salafiyah yang patriarki. Metode kualitatif dengan studi etnografi digunakan untuk mengetahui makna individu atau kelompok orang yang dianggap berasal dari masalah sosial kemanusiaan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Adapun hasil penelitian ini adalah bahwa segala sesuatu yang dianggap budaya atau tabu belum tentu menjadi bagian dari ajaran "ajaran Islam". Menjadi pemimpin di lingkungan minoritas, sebenarnya seseorang memiliki lebih banyak kesempatan untuk berkarya. Semua strategi yang dilakukannya merupakan bagian dari perlawanan terhadap budaya patriarki. Singkatnya, seorang nyai dapat menolak budaya patriarki, namun

tetap bisa diterima di lingkungan sekitarnya, bahkan bisa memajukan dirinya dan pesantrennya.

Keywords: *Women's leadership; Islamic boarding school; Patriarchy; Social resistance.*

Introduction

This article describes the leadership success of Nyai in a Salafiyah Islamic boarding school (Salafiyah Pesantren). Her success was achieved through an interesting strategy that was considered contrary to its environment. Although her leadership is considered contradictory by the pesantren culture, she is a woman who dares to stand amid male domination. She is Nyai Masriyah Amva, the leader of the pesantren in Kebon Jambu, Cirebon. She has managed to become a leader who can influence the santri and the community and bear responsibility. Covey argues that being a good and successful leader lies in the ability to influence members to achieve their goals.¹ The influence in question is setting the strategy, communication, and responsibility. This means that leadership is not determined by heredity or gender.

As in one of the cases we highlighted in this research, an environment that tends to choose leaders based on gender is often male-dominated. Here, Indonesian salafiyah pesantren is usually referred to as environments that are identical to patriarchy, because male figures dominate. Bianca J. Smith adds that “*traditional*” salafiyah pesantren are patriarchal, Kiai, as Muslim scholars and leaders are at the core of the pesantren, not only of their understanding of Islamic texts but also because of their spiritual qualities.²

When Kiai dies, the leadership of the pesantren is often destroyed, except for those who replace male figures. The son or son-in-law, especially

¹Covey Stephen, R., *Principle Centered Leadership*, New York: Rosetta Books, 2012, 12.

²Bianca J. Smith & Mark Word, *Between Sufi and Salafi Subject: Female Leadership, Spiritual Power and Gender Matters in Lombok*, London and New York: Routledge. 2014, 10.

the son-in-law, is usually chosen based on the santri's allegiance to the Kiai, and is asked to marry the Kiai's daughter. No matter how great and capable a woman is, she is only used as a companion rather than a main character or leader in the Salafiyah pesantren. As in the pesantren Babakan, which is located around the pesantren Kebon Jambu. Whenever women run a pesantren, it is often abandoned by the santri and the community.

Kiai is one of the important components in pesantren because it represents a set of skills to carry out leadership tasks in pesantren.³ Turmudi argues that the strong relationship between the kiai and his santri is shaped by a deep-seated supernatural concept called *barokah* (additional goodness).⁴ Kiai can answer the prayers of the students and the community. Thus, the position and role of men in a pesantren can be described as those of a small kingdom, with Kiai as the king-the center of power and authority.⁵ This is what makes it difficult for women in pesantren to show their potential as leaders. This is part of the rise of gender inequality in pesantren.

After understanding some of the reasons for the power, we will describe some previous studies to address the research gaps. First is the "Educational Leadership: An Islamic Perspective." This article highlights the knowledge gap in mainstream literature regarding diverse perspectives on educational leadership. The issue is expected to gain higher significance with the rapidly changing societal structures in Britain. The article's author worked as a Muslim woman educational leader or manager in higher education in an Islamic state for more than two decades. She later worked at a British university, where she was positioned as a non-white Muslim woman.

³Zamakhshari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren, Studi tentang Pandangan Kiai*, Jakarta: LP3ES, 1990, 44.

⁴Turmudi, Endang, *Perselingkuhan Kiai dan Kekuasaan*, Yogyakarta: PT LKiS Pelangi Aksara, 2004, 74.

⁵Muhammad Ilahi, "Figur Elit Pesantren", *IBDA Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Budaya*, Volume 12, No. 2 (2014), 137-148.

The author emphasized the need to move beyond ethnocentrism and develop complex theoretical constructs to redefine educational leadership, drawing on perspectives held by diverse ethnic groups, including students and communities.⁶ Second is the article entitled *Ethnic, gender, and class intersections in British women's leadership experiences*. The leadership style of White women reflected contemporary leadership models.

In contrast, minority ethnic women defined leadership using predominantly ethnocultural lenses, which informed their self-identities and orientation towards others. Regarding enacting leader identities, white women described historical gender and class barriers to passing leadership, while minority ethnic women described current barriers linked to ethnic and religious identities.⁷ Third is "Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-Analysis," which compares and reviews the leadership styles of men and women. Evidence is found for both the presence and the absence of differences between the sexes. Consistent with stereotypical expectations about a different aspect of leadership style, women tended to adopt a more democratic or collaborative style and a less autocratic or directive style than men, aligning with the tendency to lead in a democratic or autocratic manner. This sex difference was observed in all three classes of leadership studies, including those conducted in organizations⁸.

Gaps remain in their research, as noted in various previous studies. The first and second studies have almost the same treatment of injustice against women based on identity, ethnicity, and religion. Likewise, in this research, the mistreatment of women occurs because their leadership. It

⁶Shas, "Educational Leadership: An Islamic Perspectives," *British Educational Research Journal*, Volume 32, No. 3 (2006), 363-385.

⁷Atewolugun, V.S., *Ethnic, Gender, and Class Intersections in British Women's Leadership Experiences*, *Journal EMAL, Educational Management Administration Leadership*, Volume 44, No. 6, (2015), 917-935.

⁸Johnson, E.A., "Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-Analysis", *Psychological Bulletin*, Volume 108, Number 2 (1990), 233-256.

is considered inappropriate for a woman to be a leader. Many negative stigmas persist in society, deeming women unfit to lead. The negative societal stigma still views women as second-class, weak, and incapable of leading compared to men, who are synonymous with masculinity. Other previous research was due to the subject's ethnic and religious identity. The third one described the gender in leadership styles. The article explains the differences in leadership styles between men and women.

In discussions about women, especially regarding the leadership of women in Salafiyah pesantren, a common societal concern is whether a woman is allowed to be a leader from an Islamic perspective. Until now, women in pesantren face two dilemmas: on the one hand, they are placed and respected, but on the other hand, their role is often ignored.⁹

There are various reasons behind women's position of being number two or not being able to become leaders in the Muslim community. First, there is the opinion of scholars who oppose women's leadership on the grounds that men are leaders, and the role and function of men should be leadership.¹⁰ These scholars generally always refer to fiqh studies, which generally seem gender biased. Second, the santri and the community assume that the founders of the pesantren and the book printers are always dominated by men.¹¹ Third, there are cultural factors originating from Arab countries, as Arabic is considered the forerunner of Islamic teachings, allowing for the realization of truth.¹² For this reason, these factors have been used as guidelines from one generation of Kiai to the next, creating a gender bias in pesantren. Then, based on Sahal Mahfudz's perspective,

⁹Oman Fatturrahman, Jajat Burhanudin, *Tentang Perempuan Islam Wacana dan Gerakan*, Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2004, 141.

¹⁰Syafiq Hashim, *Menakar Harga Perempuan*, Bandung: Mizan, 1999, 15.

¹¹Martin Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning Pesantren dan Tarekat*, Tradisi Islam di Indonesia, Bandung: Mizan, 1995, 34.

¹²Sheren El Feki, *Seks dan Hijab: Gairah dan Intimitas dan di Dunia Arab yang Berubah*, (trans. Adi Toha), Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet, 2013, 176.

that men and women are basically the same, they both have the same rights and obligations, which encompass spirit, lust, body, mind, and feelings.¹³

Basically, the Islamic religion does not teach to subordinate one gender. Because religion, especially Islam, was revealed to defend human dignity, that of both men and women.¹⁴ As in Surah An-Nisa verse 34, the interpretation of this verse in a social context suggests that the Quraysh placed women in a lower social class, deprived of rights. However, this verse is not a normative verse applicable in all times. The Quran itself does not require men to be leaders in either the domestic or public sphere.¹⁵

In this case, what's interesting is that women can become leaders (Nyai) in a patriarchal environment. It means that she has dared to stand up and placed herself on an equal footing with male leaders in a predominantly male administration. Women rarely perform this situation, especially in salafiyah pesantren, which are well known for their patriarchal culture. Thus, women leaders must have the right strategy so that their leadership can be accepted. Being such a woman is part of a cultural agent or site in a gender struggle in society, as it requires a special strategy according to the disciplines it masters.¹⁶

The discussion about gender and leadership can be traced back to Islamic history, when many people came to Aisyah—the wife of the Prophet Muhammad—to study the religion. She was known for her intelligence. There are many Hadiths narrated by Aisyah, which demonstrate her intelligence in remembering, including formulating war strategies in

¹³Sahal Mahfudz, *Islam dan Hak Reproduksi Perempuan, Perspektif Fikih*, Jakarta: Mizan, 2002, 141.

¹⁴Husein Muhammad, *Mengaji Pluralisme kepada Maha Guru Pencerahan*, Bandung: Mizan, 2011, 51-52.

¹⁵Husein Muhammad, *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan: Pembelaan Kiai Pesantren*, Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2004, 91.

¹⁶Susan Shifrin, *Women's Rules in Cultural Formation from the Renaissance to Twentieth Century*, London: Routledge, 2016, 28.

the past. Even scholars (ulama) in the past were among Siti Aisyah's students.¹⁷ From history, at least everyone can understand that women are also God's creatures who have equal rights and status with men. All traditions that demean or relegate women to a secondary position must be eliminated because they are inconsistent with Islamic teachings.¹⁸ Imperfect interpreters of religious texts always try to place women second to men and view them as limited beings. Women today are quite vulnerable to the risk of social exclusion in environments that still adhere to a patriarchal culture. It is essential to emphasize that gender should not be used as a measure of a person's potential for leadership, as it promotes equality. Women's involvement in the public sphere or professional work carries the same rights as those of men.¹⁹

Here, we focus on the leadership of Nyai Masriyah Amva, who was known for her unique character, different from that of other Kiai daughters in general. Nyai Masriyah Amva still obeys her master's rules and orders to determine her future. Nyai Masriyah Amva consistently obeyed every rule instructed by her teacher, including the authority to determine her future. For instance, she had no choice but to attend an Islamic boarding school. Furthermore, her parents also chose her future companion. At that time, she realized that her parents' choice was not part of the criteria of personal choice, but apparently, she had to obey the patriarchal culture in the pesantren. Because her marriage was not based on her choice, it ended in divorce. After submitting to obey her husband, she sought to

¹⁷Kaukab Siddique, *Menggugat Tuhan yang Maskulin*, di terj. Arif Maftuhin, Jakarta: Paramadina, 2012, 50.

¹⁸Maria Del Carmen Navarro Garcia-Suelto, "Gender, poverty and Job Seeking: Women at Risk of Exclusion in Spain," *Journal of Gender Studies*, Volume 31, No. 3. (2022), 338-350.

¹⁹Samantha Geraldine G. De Los Santos, Blanquita R. Pantoja, "Gender Equality in Selected Philippine Agrarian Reform Cooperative Management: The Women Members' Perspectives," *International Journal of Gender Studies in Developing Societies*, Volume 4, No. 3. (2022), 229-246.

become independent, but the result was the opposite: divorce.

Nyai Masriyah Amva returned home and often received insults from her siblings and the surrounding environment. Then she started selling ice and clothes. After three years of being widowed, Nyai Masriyah Amva married K.H. Muhammad, who had six (6) children. Nyai Masriyah Amva accepted him. A few months later, she and her husband were expelled from the pesantren due to problems with some management rights. Afterwards, they returned to the beginning to establish a pesantren, namely Kebon Jambu's Pesantren. As time went by, especially after 12 years, her husband passed away, and then the boarding school experienced a downturn until she had a feeling of resignation. At that time, the exams often stemmed from debt collection, student dropouts, and unreasonable accusations from relatives and acquaintances.

As in the story of her life's struggle, Nyai Masriyah Amva's leadership embodies a way of thinking and strategies that align with the values of justice, equality, and courage. Although Kiai and the surrounding community view her leadership as different, Nyai Masriyah Amva hopes to change the image of a pesantren salafiyah to be open to gender discourse in pesantren.

Female leadership in Salafiyah Islamic boarding schools

In leadership, creating a strategic concept is essential, typically based on various considerations, including weaknesses, opportunities, and strengths. A leader must be self-prepared and have a goal for positive change.²⁰ However, as Nyai Masriyah Amva experienced, living in a patriarchal environment hindered her leadership role due to masculine-tinged authority. Her strong point is supported by a female cleric from Cirebon.

²⁰Norlaila, Nuryadin, Yaqin H., "The Role of Women Ulama in the Development of Islamic Education", *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, Volume 9, Number 2 (2025): 261-273.

Nyai Masriyah Amva understands that providing gender knowledge in pesantren is not enough with her own theory and practice; she must be more courageous in creating works and collaborating with institutions outside the pesantren. The findings reveal that knowledge and leadership skills, cooperation and trust, and the integration of knowledge positively influence project performance and project quality practices.²¹ The collaboration in question is cooperation with gender-aware communities. This is done so that her roles and actions can be stronger against the patriarchal culture. Without such cooperation, her efforts could come under strong pressure from various parties. One of the organizations invited to collaborate is “*Fahmina*”, an organization of academics who are concerned with the knowledge of gender in society. All Nyai Masriyah Amva’s thoughts and actions were protected by other scholars in the pesantren, both men and women. Nyai Masriyah Amva often participates in *Fahmina* activities, both in the form of direct socializing and as a writer, providing a gender perspective in society.

Several ulama from the pesantren opposed this organization because it was perceived as a threat to the pesantren’s traditions. In fact, *Fahmina* and Nyai Masriyah Amva just wanted to provide information on gender awareness, so that the santri and the community would know the essence of equality, justice, and the differences in functions and roles between men and women. Therefore, Nyai Masriyah Amva’s movement was quite bold because it was often opposed and received threats from the surrounding environment. She is considered disobedient to the pesantren culture, where a Nyai is expected to focus on managing the pesantren and providing enough knowledge according to the teachings of her predecessors.

²¹Ghos. V. Kabra, G. Mukerjee HS., “Influence of Knowledge Leadership on it Project Performance and Quality Practice: Examining the Role of Leader Risk-Mitigation Efforts,” *International Journal of Knowledge Management*, Volume 18, No. 1, (2002), 235-256.

In addition, Nyai Masriyah Amva's measure is considered to harm the position of men in the *pesantren*. In essence, Nyai Masriyah Amva is limited to expressing her rights as a woman who deserves to be the first person, a free person, and a strong person. Because, in Bunyai's thought, women also have equal rights with men, including the opportunity to become a leader in an organization. Although in general, an organization is led by men. Essentially, leadership is viewed in terms of managerial ability, rather than being limited by gender (male or female). Modern development and economic pressures demand that women contribute to their roles. In this regard, Eagly and Johnson have also studied women's leadership styles, finding that women's leadership styles are more democratic and transformational than those of men.²² Women also have the same potential as men; in other words, feminist leadership serves as a counterbalance to masculine leadership. This real understanding needs to be echoed so that society recognizes women's potential role. When faced with various oppositions from the surrounding environment, Fahmina's role was to protect and guide Nyai Masriyah Amva's footsteps, helping her stay focused on the fight to advance her *pesantren*.

On the other hand, she also saw an opportunity to become a leading woman in a patriarchal environment—a strategy to make the best use of her position. Being a female leader is something to be thankful for, as Nyai has more time to be around her *santri*; we work quietly, and it is easy to think creatively to advance our *pesantren*. According to her, a *Kiai* only focuses on *da'wah* and social issues; generally, a *Kiai* does not have emotional closeness with students, let alone think of innovative and creative things.

Understanding this aspect of her personality, Nyai Masriyah Amva will capitalize on her superiority compared to *Kiai*; she consistently makes new

²²Eagly, Alice H., & Johnson, Blair T., "Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-Analysis," *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, No. 2, (1990), 233-256.

strides to innovate and drive progress at her pesantren. Nyai Masriyah Amva's innovation lies in daring to be different from her husband's environment and leadership, because the difference is that someone will know who we are better. According to Ihab Majid, a Middle Eastern motivator, so that people know who we are and our limits can dare to be different.²³ Still, she had no intention of proving that women were also capable of being leaders. She just runs and always creates and innovates for the pesantren.

The process of disseminating gender knowledge by Nyai Masriyah Amva is carried out in two ways—directly and indirectly. Nyai Masriyah Amva directly provides guidance, knowledge, and understanding of the genre through recitations, which are intentionally shared with each visiting guest or student. Nyai Masriyah Amva shares insights on equality and justice for all santri, as seen in her own experiences when she first ventured out as a leader of the pesantren and the pesantren faced a period of depression. One of them is lecturing on the importance of gender in the pesantren while sitting in the middle of the male santri in the mosque. This moment took place for the first time when her husband died, and it was almost seven days, because almost all the santri were about to leave the pesantren Kebon Jambu. It is at this time that, beginning her career as a pesantren leader, she can be recognized, respected, and imitated by all students. Nyai Masriyah Amva utilizes gender awareness strategies as the primary means to create awareness among students. The goal is for students to understand and respect women in a patriarchal environment.

Speaking of gender, Nyai Masriyah Amva also represents herself as a leader (Kiai or fathering styles) in a pesantren. Fathering styles are highly influenced by the cultural background in which the father was raised. These styles will be observed by children and eventually become an imitated

²³Ihab Majid, *Sukses dari Diri Sendiri: Panduan Mudah Mengenali dan Mengembangkan Potensi Diri*, Bandung: Pustaka Alvabet, 2019, 65.

model for them in shaping their attitude and behavior, as well as their ethnic identity, which represents their cultural values.²⁴ Nyai Masriyah Amva aims to demonstrate that men and women have equal rights and positions in the eyes of Allah SWT. As for the pesantren, the leaders are usually men; this limitation is often attributed to the construction of a patriarchal culture within the pesantren, but it is not the essence of what constitutes a leader. Although the essence of a leader's truth is that the most important person is capable and responsible, leadership is also related to the gender role of the leader and masculine values. So, leadership must be accompanied by masculine values.²⁵

Indirect gender socialization is carried out through various types of social media, WhatsApp status, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. The use of social media can be seen on the website of the pesantren Kebon, as well as uploads of Nyai Masriyah Amva herself. According to Nyai Masriyah Amva, the use of social networks is part of the most effective and fastest strategy for transmitting information, especially about who we are and our institution to others. This is also in line with social media, which is a powerful way to promote products and services through internet marketing. The method is simple, but the effect is extraordinary.²⁶ This is also according to one of the santri keepers who was interested in Kebon Jambu's pesantren name due to the figure of Nyai Masriyah Amva through social media. Nyai Masriyah Amva often emphasizes her identity as a gender warrior in the pesantren, making the pesantren more independent

²⁴Nurhayani, "Fathering Styles of Moslems Families Perceived from Personality Types in North Sumatra", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 5, No. 1, (2019), 49-67.

²⁵Wen Qian Zhou, Yueh Ting Lee, Eric Jacobs, "Leadership Style in Relation to Gender Role and Masculine Values: Being Doaist Water-Like or Agentic", *Journal of Leadership Studies*, Volume 15, No.4, (2022), 18-33.

²⁶Untari D., Endah Fajriana, "Strategi Pemasaran melalui Media Sosial Instagram: Studi Deskriptif pada Akun Subur Batik", *Jurnal Sekretariat dan Manajemen*, Volume 2, No. 2. (2018), 34-51.

through entrepreneurship with a santri undertone.

Similar to the YouTube upload, Nyai Masriyah Amva provides insights on the importance of gender awareness and practice in pesantren. Through this medium, she and the pesantren will gain a clearer understanding of her character and the pesantren, realizing that Kebon Jambu's pesantren is a pesantren directed by women, and it is with women that the pesantren can be more advanced. This is one of the attractions for the students and the community, especially the parents of the Santri."

Social media influencer marketing has garnered significant attention recently. Social networks have a significant positive impact on the purchase intentions of others, and they are a suitable strategy for quickly introducing ourselves to others, as well as for obtaining a reassessment of ourselves from others.²⁷ Here, Nyai Masriyah Amva utilizes the format of a YouTube upload, which originated from the board's idea to promote the pesantren Kebon Jambu. With YouTube, it would be easier to widely present Nyai Masriyah Amva and her pesantren. The most effective way to promote an institution or a person is through social networks, especially YouTube.²⁸ The indirect socialization through YouTube is how Nyai Masriyah Amva channels her thoughts and views, as this strategy can help her identity become more recognized by the public. Besides, her name and the pesantren's are increasingly recognized.

In addition to using social media, Nyai Masriyah Amva also utilizes her talents as a writer, producing various inspirational books, poetry, and literary stage performances in pesantren and across different regions. All of these books are inspired by gender and women. All of her book

²⁷Hisashi Masuda, Spring H. Han, Jungwoo Lee, "Impact of Influencer Attributes on Purchase Intentions in Social Media Influencer Marketing: Mediators Roles of Characterizations", *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Vol. 174, (2022), 121246.

²⁸Ahmad, Ali Nurdin., "Scholarly Feminist versus Internet Commentator on Women Issues in Islam", *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Volume 1, No. 2, (2011), 23-41.

collections can be seen in front of the terrace of Nyai Masriyah Amva's house. Through her books, Nyai Masriyah Amva has become popular in various regions and countries. For Nyai Masriyah Amva, it is a satisfaction and pride because her writings can inspire others. Nyai Masriyah Amva sold her books to one of the leading figures in the Indonesian book industry, and her books became top sellers. Furthermore, Nyai Masriyah Amva deliberately placed her books on the front porch of the house so that students and guests could purchase them.

Nyai Masriyah Amva and her husband can live independently. Therefore, all students are equipped with business practices to achieve independence. Nyai Masriyah Amva capitalizes on social media opportunities as a creative individual. Therefore, she gives and practices gender in pesantren, as she dares to speak in front of all the students, men and women, discussing the yellow books '*Kitab Kuning*', Nyai Masriyah Amva, discussing various current concepts of justice.

Additionally, the right opportunity is to develop entrepreneurship through a mini market for students, and she deliberately opened a shop and cafeteria to help boost the economy for herself and her pesantren. All business managers are santri as managers and people in charge. Nyai Masriyah Amva intentionally left everything to her students because she wanted them not only to be preachers or Islamic religious scholars ('ulama'), but also to be independent and have the courage to act as entrepreneurs. This strategy has two objectives: to build the economy of the pesantren and to train the santri to become entrepreneurs. That is why pesantren Kebon Jambu is known as entrepreneur students.

Nyai Pesantren Resistance to the Patriarchy

Essentially, everything done under Nyai Masriyah Amva's leadership strategy is part of the effort to resist the patriarchal culture of pesantren.

The article uses James Scott's theory of hidden resistance to explain her form of resistance. The hidden transcript is not a dramatic fight. At this point, no one who fights for the interests of this subordinate class pretends to be a hero.²⁹ If someone is in direct resistance, they will inevitably fail. To create positive things for minorities, one must have the courage to act thoughtfully and heartfully—a form of rejecting the environment that limits their space of movement. It is enough to know what she will do.³⁰ This precision requires a deliberate and slow pace, making it easier to achieve its goals. The strategic context implies fighting, but in practice, it remains natural. The next resistance strategy involves various theater events held at the literary children's place in Cirebon, such as poetry performances, dramas, and serving as a speaker at the event. With the poem, many people have experienced the astounding and transformational power of a beautiful poem.³¹

Nyai Masriyah Amva often participates in stage performances at the Cirebon theater building, but she only performs pieces written by others, primarily through poetry and drama. Everything she does goes against the patriarchal culture. This attitude remains natural and acceptable to the community and students due to the resistance that Nyai Masriyah employs through a specific event. In addition, the pesantren Kebon Jambu has put on a play for its students that consistently critiques the government and patriarchal culture. At the event, she always performs poetry about women's rights and equality. The santri realized that the leader figure and the pesantren had become more unique compared to other pesantrens.

²⁹Muhammad Pribadi, "Being Woman in The Land of Shari'a, Politics of the Female Body, Piety and Resistance in Langsa, Aceh" in *Journal of Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 52, No.1, (2014), 59-83.

³⁰Lois Beam, *Leaderless Resistance*, The Seditonist, 1992, 1-7.

³¹Justine Kao, Dan Jurafsky, "A computational Analysis of Style, Affect and Imagery in Contemporary Poetry", *Workshop on Computational Linguistics for Literature*, Canada: Montreal, 2012, 8-17.

Indirectly, this strategy has become part of the way to erode the patriarchal culture in pesantren, because the santri know the essence of women in Islam and many visitors are enthusiastic about the unique leadership figure of Nyai Masriyah Amva.

Nyai Masriyah Amva's form of resistance takes the form of poetry, which can be presented through live performances, social media, or published in books. Poetry is not only concerned with the types of expression and content, but also with actions—that is, how poetry can participate in the construction of people's awareness of the problems in their lives.³² The use of resistance through poetry will give birth to consciousness. The poems are created by the creator, reproducing the words of the participants in chronological order to convey meaning and deepen the analysis.³³ Therefore, poetry is not only concerned with forms of expression and definition, but also with actions, and how poetry can be involved in building people's awareness of the problems in their lives. All of Nyai Masriyah Amva's poems contain lived reality, which makes them powerful tools for creating awareness. According to Gunawan Mohammad, the most essential poetry is reality.³⁴ Nyai Masriyah Amva writes poetry in various media, both directly and in the written form contained in her books. Nyai Masriyah Amva often writes poetry that contains a shoulder to cry on, criticism, satire, and resistance to injustice. Based on her ability to make poetry, Nyai Masriyah Amva has published in newspapers.

The next form, Nyai Masriyah Amva, often gives *da'wah* about gender knowledge, equality, awareness, and justice for all. What is unique is that

³²Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, New York: Routledge, (2013), 4.

³³Brown, M.E.L, Proudfoot A., Mayat N.Y, Finn G.M., "A Phenomenal Study of New Doctor's Transition to Practice, Utilising Participants Voiced Poetry", *Journal Advance in Health Science Education*, Volume 26, No. 4, (2021), 1229-1253.

³⁴Gunawan Muhammad, *Potret Seorang Penyair Muda Sebagai Maling Kundang*, Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1972, 46.

every time we provide enlightenment about gender, whoever we talk to becomes inspired, motivated, and becomes aware of our own shortcomings. This is the goal of institutional spirit, as exemplified by Ibu Nyai Masriyah Amva. The institution's presence and leadership strategies strive to inspire others to develop gender awareness and knowledge about gender equality.

Previously, *pesantrens* in Nyai Masriyah's area had never provided gender education. Kiai only relied on teaching books, or '*kitab*', based on their predecessors' teachings without translating other '*mazhab*' teachings, so it was difficult for *santri* to accept the differences. The *santri* only listens, and must run without any criticism "*sami'na waatho'na*". If they are critical, the *santri* fear that they will not receive the Kiai's blessing "*berkah*". In contrast to Nyai Masriyah Amva, whenever she translates a book or a commentary "*tafsir*" on the Quran, she always associates it with an understanding of gender, difference, equality, and justice for all human beings. Nyai Masriyah Amva refuses to use teaching methods that tend to favor the predecessors, namely the predominance of men in the recitation of books, such as *Uqudul Jain* and *Qiroatul Uyun*.

As an example from QS an-Nisa' verse 34, "*arrijalu qawwamuna 'alannisa*" (men are leaders for women). If it is translated at face value or literally, it suggests that men should be above women or lead them. The translation is valid at a certain time, namely the *Quraisy* era, as previously explained by Husein Muhammad. This means that if we accept teachings or any other practices without being critical or having extensive knowledge, and then we simply practice them, we may be lost. Therefore, Nyai Masriyah Amva always presents nuanced teachings on tolerance, difference, equality, and justice for all.

Another form of rejection of the patriarchal culture is Nyai Masriyah Amva opening a *pesantren* venture. Until now, *salafiyah pesantren* has always been identified with men who can get finances from *pesantren*, Kiai

are the breadwinners, and salafiyah pesantren depend on men. Therefore, Nyai always trusts Kiai. Nyai Masriyah Amva rejects this, because women can essentially be the breadwinners and have earning opportunities for their families and weigh. For this reason, Nyai Masriyah Amva opened various types of student entrepreneurs, canteens, cafes, printing houses, community staples, and travel leaders. With this effort, the pesantren of Nyai Masriyah Amva is becoming more independent and progressive. This is rarely done with the leaders of the pesantren, because ideally, Nyai deals with santri business and does nothing outside of the pesantren business. As for the hobby of driving, traveling, and eating in cafes, it remains a habit that is still frequently practiced today. The attitude that men typically exhibit is part of their efforts to cope with situations that are not in line with their environment. Women tend to greet people of gender in inconsistent situations, although they feel more sympathy for people who need help in masculine situations.³⁵

Indirectly, it rejects that women in pesantren are always seen as weak, passive, and that they will not be able to become leaders of pesantren. For Nyai Masriyah Amva, as long as she does not violate Islamic law, she will continue to be herself. The problem is that the construction in the pesantren is always considered natural and cannot be criticized. Some things can be accomplished by humans and not by Islamic teachings. According to Aquarini Priyatna, something native is cultural, and our experiences often prevent critical thinking.³⁶ So far, the santri believe in policies from pesantren, even though some can be wrong, including the treatment of women in pesantren. This is also part of the effort to empower

³⁵Samuel E. Fiala, "Traci A. Giulano. Natalie M. Remlinger, Lisa C. Braithwhite. Leading A Help Hand: The Effect of Gender on Likelihood of Helping", *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Volume 29, No. 10 (2006), 2164-2176.

³⁶Aquarini Priyatna, *Kajian Budaya Feminis*, Yogyakarta: Arti Bumi Intaran, 2018, 30.

women to increase social inclusion in the judiciary.³⁷

This proves that Nyai Masriyah Amva is capable of strategizing successfully against patriarchy, adapting effectively to the environment. One of the most prominent indicators of success is the increasing number of students, which rises day by day and year by year. When her husband died in 2008, there were 300 students (santri), and by 2021, there were 2,100 students. The upgrading process took a long phase to achieve this, but at least in her leadership, she was able to increase the number of santri and progress in various pesantren facilities.

Through our research on the leadership of “Nyai” ulama women in Salafiyah pesantren, we found evidence that women are capable of being leaders even in a patriarchal cultural environment. The Nyai phenomenon that we raised is proof that women have the same potential as men. Now, women are beginning to control the advantages that “she said” were only for men, so the monopoly of men began to be refuted by itself. Additionally, the presence of Nyai leadership that promotes salafiyah in pesantren is part of the effort to dismiss assumptions or arguments about the weaknesses of women leaders.

Conclusion

The presence of female leadership among religious scholars today is nothing new. Since ancient times, women have held roles in the public sphere across various professions. In Islamic history, Siti Aisyah, Prophet Muhammad’s wife, is renowned as a war strategist during the Battle of Jamal. In Indonesia, Queen Kalinyamat, whose real name was Ratna Kencana from the Demak Sultanate, is known as a brave leader who fought against the Portuguese. History has shown that women also have equal

³⁷Shanuga Cherayi, Justine P. Jose, “Empowerment and Social Inclusion of Muslims Women: Towards a new Conceptual Model”, *Jurnal Rural Life*, Volume 45, No. 10 (2016), 243-251.

rights and are capable of being good leaders.

The role of Nyai Masriyah Amva as the leader of the Salafiyah Islamic boarding school in Kebon Jambu, Cirebon, reflects the significant contribution of female religious scholars in advancing Islamic education and challenging the patriarchal culture that still prevails in the community. Nyai Masriyah implemented leadership strategies while simultaneously propagating the mubadalah (translation of the principle of equality). Gender equality does not seek to diminish the role of men, but rather demonstrates that women, as God's creatures, have the same value and rights as capable human beings. The strategies implemented in her leadership include: 1) Socializing mubadalah and gender justice through various digital platforms as an appropriate space for conveying information; 2) implementing gender justice in daily life so that students can learn for themselves; 3) providing opportunities for students to become entrepreneurs so that they are not only able to preach but also to become entrepreneurs for both male and female students; 4) creating poetry about mubadalah or gender justice as a construct of awareness of equality; 5) frequently preaching knowledge about gender justice in the public sphere.

Based on the various explanations above, the researcher provides space for future researchers to conduct more in-depth studies on gender topics and programs in Islamic boarding schools, examining whether these institutions provide opportunities for women or diminish their role in the public sphere. In modern times, students, especially female students, are also expected to live realistically and possess a wide range of skills and competencies to compete effectively in the global arena.

Bibliography

Ahmad, Ali Nurdin., "Scholarly Feminist versus Internet Commentator on Women Issues in Islam", *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Volume 1, Number 2 (2011): 23-41.

- Atewolugun, V.S., "Ethnic, Gender, and Class Intersections in British Women's Leadership Experiences", *Journal EMAL, Educational Management Administration Leadership*, Volume 44, Number 6 (2015): 917-935.
- Beam, Lois. *Leaderless Resistance*. The Seditonist, 1992.
- Brown, M.E.L, Proudfoot A., Mayat N.Y, Finn G.M., "A Phenomenal Study of New Doctor's Transition to Practice, Utilising Participants Voiced Poetry", *Journal Advance in Health Science Education*, Volume 26, Number 4 (2021): 1229-1253.
- Bruinessen, Martin Van. *Kitab Kuning Pesantren dan Tarekat, Tradisi Islam di Indonesia*. Bandung: Mizan, 1995.
- Cherayi, S.J., & Jose, J.P., "Empowerment and Social Inclusion of Muslims Women: Towards a new Conceptual Model", *Jurnal Rural Life*, Volume 45, Number 10 (2016): 243-251.
- Covey Stephen, R. *Principle Centered Leadership*. New York: Rosetta Books, 2012.
- Dhofier, Zamakhsyari. *Tradisi Pesantren, Studi tentang Pandangan Kiai*. Jakarta: LP3ES, 1990.
- Eagly, Alice H., & Johnson, Blair T., "Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-Analysis," *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, No. 2, (1990), 233-256.
- Fairclough, Norman. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Fatturrahman, Oman, Burhanudin, Jajat. *Tentang Perempuan Islam Wacana dan Gerakan*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2004.
- Fiala, Samuel & Giuliano, Traci & Remlinger, Natalie & Braithwaite, Lisa, "Leading A Help Hand: The Effect of Gender on Likelihood of Helping", *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Volume 29, Number 10 (2006): 2164-2176.

- Ghos, V., Kabra, G., Mukerjee, H.S., "Influence of Knowledge Leadership on it Project Performance and Quality Practice: Examining the Role of Leader Risk-Mitigation Efforts", *International Journal of Knowledge Management*, Volume 18, Number 1 (2002): 235-256.
- Hashim, Syafiq. *Menakar Harga Perempuan*. Bandung: Mizan, 1999.
- Ilahi, Muhammad, "Figur Elit Pesantren", *IBDA Jurnal Kajian Islam dan Budaya*, Volume 12, Number 2 (2014): 137-148.
- Johnson, E.A. "Gender and Leadership Style: A Meta-Analysis", *Psychological Bulletin*, Volume 108, Number 2 (1990): 233-256.
- Justine Kao, Dan Jurafsky, "A computational Analysis of Style, Affect and Imagery in Contemporary Poetry", *Workshop on Computational Linguistics for Literature*, Montreal, Canada, 2012: 8-17.
- Mahfudz, Sahal. *Islam dan Hak Reproduksi Perempuan, Perspektif Fikih*. Jakarta: Mizan, 2002.
- Majid, Ihab. *Sukses dari Diri Sendiri: Panduan Mudah Mengenal dan Mengembangkan Potensi Diri*. Bandung: Pustaka Alvabet, 2019.
- Masuda, Hisashi, Han, Spring H., Lee, Jungwoo, "Impact of Influencer Attributes on Purchase Intentions in Social Media Influencer Marketing: Mediators Roles of Characterizations", *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Vol. 174 (2022): 121246.
- Muhammad, Gunawan. *Potret Seorang Penyair Muda Sebagai Maling Kundang*. Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1972.
- Muhammad, Husein. *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan: Pembelaan Kiai Pesantren*. Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2004.
- Muhammad, Husein. *Mengaji Pluralisme kepada Maha Guru Pencerahan*. Bandung: Mizan, 2011.
- Navarro García-Suelto, M. del C., & Santoveña-Casal, S., "Gender, poverty and Job Seeking: Women at Risk of Exclusion in Spain", *Journal of Gender Studies*, Volume 31, Number 3 (2022): 338-350.

- Norlaila, Nuryadin, Yaqin H., "The Role of Women Ulama in the Development of Islamic Education", *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, Volume 9, Number 2 (2025): 261-273.
- Nurhayani, "Fathering Styles of Moslems Families Perceived from Personality Types in North Sumatra", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 5, Number 1 (2019): 49-67.
- Pribadi, Muhammad, "Being Woman in The Land of Shari'a, Politics of the Female Body, Piety and Resistance in Langsa, Aceh", *Journal of Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 52, Number 1 (2014): 59-83.
- Priyatna, Aquarini. *Kajian Budaya Feminis*. Yogyakarta: Arti Bumi Intaran, 2018.
- Raneses, Florita & Pantoja, Blanquita & De los Santos, Geri, "Gender Equality in Selected Philippine Agrarian Reform Cooperative Management: The Women Members' Perspectives", *International Journal of Gender Studies in Developing Societies*, Volume 4, Number 3 (2022): 229-246.
- Shas, "Educational Leadership: An Islamic Perspectives", *British Educational Research Journal*, Volume 32, Number 3 (2006): 363-385.
- Sheren El Feki. *Seks dan Hijab: Gairah dan Intimitas dan di Dunia Arab yang Berubah*. (trans. Adi Toha). Jakarta: Pustaka Alvabet, 2013.
- Shifrin, Susan. *Women's Rules in Cultural Formation from the Renaissance to Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Siddique, Kaukab. *Menggugat Tuhan yang Maskulin*. trans. Arif Maftuhin. Jakarta: Paramadina, 2012.
- Smith, Bianca J., & Word, Mark. *Between Sufi and Salafi Subject: Female Leadership, Spiritual Power and Gender Matters in Lombok*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Turmudi, Endang. *Perselingkuhan Kiai dan Kekuasaan*. Yogyakarta: PT LKiS Pelangi Aksara, 2004.

- Untari D., Fajriana, Dewi Endah, "Strategi Pemasaran melalui Media Sosial Instagram: Studi Deskriptif pada Akun Subur Batik", *Jurnal Sekretariat dan Manajemen*, Volume 2, Number 2 (2018): 34-51.
- Zhou, Wen-Qian, Lee, Yueh-Ting, Jacobs, Eric, "Leadership Style in Relation to Gender Role and Masculine Values: Being Doaist Water-Like or Agentic", *Journal of Leadership Studies*, Volume 15, Number 4 (2022): 18-33.

