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IBU NYAI'S LEADERSHIP IN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY AT AL-CHOERiyAH PESANTREN

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Kata Kunci:	ABSTRAK
Pendidikan islam; Ibu Nyai; Manajemen pendidikan Islam; pesantren; kepemimpinan perempuan	Penelitian ini menganalisis kepemimpinan Ibu Nyai dalam manajemen pendidikan Islam di Pondok Pesantren Al-Choeriyah, Cintaraja, Singaparna. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh masih dominannya perspektif kepemimpinan yang berpusat pada kiai sehingga kontribusi manajerial dan edukatif Ibu Nyai belum banyak dikaji. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif deskriptif dengan melibatkan 28 responden yang terdiri atas 2 pimpinan pesantren, 8 ustadz/ustadzah, dan 18 santri. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terstruktur yang didukung dokumentasi kelembagaan dan dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif berupa distribusi frekuensi dan persentase serta perbandingan deskriptif antarkelompok responden. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Ibu Nyai menjalankan peran substantif dalam pengelolaan kegiatan pesantren sehari-hari, pembinaan santri, penanaman adab dan kedisiplinan, serta pemeliharaan hubungan dengan wali santri dan masyarakat. Sebanyak 100% responden menyatakan bahwa keterlibatan Ibu Nyai dalam pengambilan keputusan dan perumusan kebijakan pesantren penting, sedangkan 100% responden memandang Ibu Nyai memiliki peran yang besar dalam pengembangan pesantren. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan Ibu Nyai tidak terbatas pada pengasuhan, tetapi mencakup fungsi edukatif, relasional, dan manajerial dalam kehidupan pesantren. Penelitian ini memperluas pemahaman tentang kepemimpinan pesantren sebagai praktik yang kolektif dan relasional.

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Keywords:	ABSTRACTS
Islamic education; Ibu Nyai; Islamic education management; pesantren; women's leadership	<p>This study examines the leadership of Ibu Nyai in Islamic educational management at Pondok Pesantren Al-Choeriyah, Cintaraja, Singaparna. The study addresses the limited attention given to the managerial and educational contributions of Ibu Nyai within predominantly kyai-centered perspectives of pesantren leadership. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, the study involved 28 respondents comprising 2 pesantren leaders, 8 ustadz/ustadzah, and 18 santri. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire supported by institutional documentation and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage distributions, with descriptive comparisons across respondent groups. The findings indicate that Ibu Nyai performs substantive roles in managing daily pesantren activities, mentoring students, cultivating adab and discipline, and maintaining relationships with parents and the surrounding community. Notably, 100% of respondents agreed that Ibu Nyai's involvement in decision-making and policy formulation is important, while 100% perceived her as having a substantial role in pesantren development. These findings demonstrate that Ibu Nyai's leadership extends beyond caregiving to include educational, relational, and managerial functions. The study contributes to understanding pesantren leadership as collective and relational, positioning Ibu Nyai as an important actor in Islamic educational management.</p>

A. INTRODUCTION

Pesantren are among the most influential institutions in the development of Islamic education in Indonesia (Hidayatulloh et al. 2023; Nurtawab 2025; Purwanti et al. 2023). Their significance lies not only in the transmission of Islamic knowledge, but also in the formation of character, the habituation of religious practice, the cultivation of adab, and the social development of students (santri) (Mediawati 2023; Sofy 2025). Unlike many other educational institutions that primarily emphasise formal academic achievement, pesantren integrate instruction, caregiving, moral exemplarity, and communal life within a unified educational system (Pamungkas 2025; Qorib and Umiarso 2025). They should therefore be understood not merely as sites of religious learning, but as Islamic educational institutions with distinctive systems of management, leadership, and student formation (Fachrizal et al. 2023; Halimah, Yusuf, and Safiudin 2024). In this regard, the study of educational management in Islamic institutions becomes essential, as the quality of pesantren education is closely related to how these institutions are organised, directed, and sustained over time (Rofiqi et al. 2026).

Existing discussions on pesantren management have largely centred on the kiai as the primary leader (Aminudin 2023; Neliwati 2023; Hastasari, Setiawan, and Aw 2022). This emphasis is understandable, given the kiai's central role in shaping educational direction, preserving scholarly traditions, exercising moral authority, and making major institutional decisions. However, if pesantren are viewed as living educational systems, leadership within them cannot be reduced to a single formal figure. A range of actors contributes to institutional continuity, particularly in the areas of student care, moral guidance, disciplinary culture, and social relations with students and the wider community. One of the most important of these actors is Ibu Nyai.

Within pesantren life, Ibu Nyai is not merely the wife of the kiai or a symbolic companion to male leadership (MAesaroh 2024). In many pesantren, she plays a central

role in the everyday educational life of the institution. Her responsibilities often include mentoring students, especially female students, maintaining the rhythm of pesantren life, instilling adab, modelling appropriate conduct, attending to students' daily concerns, and mediating relationships between the pesantren, parents, and the surrounding community. These roles demonstrate that Ibu Nyai is not positioned at the margins of the educational system, but rather occupies a place close to the core of institutional life. If educational management is understood as the process of organising, mobilising, and sustaining education effectively, then the contribution of Ibu Nyai clearly falls within the domain of Islamic educational management (Hanafi et al. 2021; Chano et al. 2025; Rodriguez et al. 2023).

This perspective is important because studies of pesantren leadership have often placed women in relatively marginal positions. In practice, however, leadership in pesantren does not operate solely through formal and singular authority, but also through cultural, relational, and functional forms of influence. In many cases, Ibu Nyai is the figure most consistently involved in shaping the educational environment. Her presence is not limited to moments of crisis or formal intervention; rather, it is embedded in the daily routines through which students' character is formed. For this reason, her role should be recognised as part of educational leadership rather than being confined to domestic or supplementary functions outside the institutional structure of the pesantren.

Scholarly attention to women's leadership in pesantren has begun to emerge in recent years. Prasetiawan and Lis, for example, argue that women occupy an important position in the dynamics of pesantren and cannot be excluded from discussions of Islamic educational leadership (Prasetiawan and Lis 2019). This argument is significant because it affirms that women's presence in pesantren is not merely complementary, but constitutes an integral social and educational reality. Nevertheless, their discussion remains largely focused on recognising women's general position within pesantren and does not yet explain in detail how such roles operate within the day-to-day governance of pesantren education.

A more specific discussion of the Nyai's role appears in the study by Nisa, Risqiya, and Putri, which characterises Nyai leadership as flexible, firm, rational, and capable of promoting moderate educational values (Nisa, Risqiya, and Putri 2022). This finding is important because it suggests that Nyai leadership has its own distinctive strength in shaping an educational culture that is both humane and authoritative. Even so, the study places greater emphasis on the authority of female ulama and the development of moderate education, rather than examining the Nyai's contribution within the broader framework of managing Islamic educational institutions.

Similarly, Putri, Taufiq, and Izzan provide a conceptual basis for understanding women's leadership more openly within Islamic thought (Putri, Taufiq, and Izzan 2024). Their study argues that women may legitimately exercise leadership so long as they possess the capacity, responsibility, and ability to fulfil the trust placed upon them. This contribution is important in challenging restrictive understandings of women's roles in Islamic educational institutions. However, the study remains primarily concerned with interpretation and normative legitimacy, rather than explaining how women's leadership is enacted within concrete institutional settings, particularly in pesantren.

In another context, Abeng and Faridah show that women's leadership in educational institutions is often associated with strong communication skills, social

sensitivity, collaborative capacity, and organisational effectiveness (Abeng and Faridah 2025). Although their study focuses on formal schools rather than pesantren, its findings remain relevant because they underline that successful educational leadership is determined not by gender, but by the ability to manage institutions, direct human resources, and cultivate a healthy learning environment. Nevertheless, pesantren differ from formal schools in that their leadership is embedded not only in administrative structures, but also in traditions of moral exemplarity, caregiving, and religious authority. As such, findings derived from formal school settings are insufficient to explain the leadership of Ibu Nyai in pesantren comprehensively.

Taken together, previous studies have established the importance of women's leadership in Islamic educational settings, but they differ substantially in focus, analytical scope, and empirical context. Prasetiawan and Lis discuss women's leadership in pesantren in general, but do not specifically examine Ibu Nyai as an actor in educational management (Prasetiawan and Lis 2019). Nisa, Risqiya, and Putri focus on Nyai's authority and her contribution to moderate education (Nisa, Risqiya, and Putri 2022), while Putri, Taufiq, and Izzan primarily address the normative legitimacy of women's leadership (Putri, Taufiq, and Izzan 2024). Meanwhile, Abeng and Faridah examine women's leadership in formal schools rather than pesantren (Abeng and Faridah 2025). These studies provide important foundations, but they leave limited empirical explanation of how Ibu Nyai performs managerial, educational, relational, and decision-making functions within the everyday governance of pesantren.

Table 1 Previous Research Comparison

Previous Research	Focus	Limitation
Prasetiawan and Lis (2019)	Women's leadership in pesantren	Examines women's leadership broadly rather than Ibu Nyai's role within Islamic educational management
Nisa, Risqiya, and Putri (2022)	Nyai authority and moderate education	Focuses on authority and moderate education rather than broader educational management functions
Putri, Taufiq, and Izzan (2024)	Legitimacy of women's leadership	Primarily normative and interpretive
Abeng and Faridah (2025)	Women's leadership in formal schools	Conducted outside the pesantren context
Present study	Ibu Nyai's leadership in Islamic educational management	Provides empirical evidence from a pesantren setting, focusing on daily management, decision-making, educational culture, and institutional development

The distinctive contribution of the present study lies in positioning Ibu Nyai as an empirical actor within Islamic educational management rather than examining her solely as a religious figure, caregiver, or companion to the kiai. The study connects her

managerial, educational, relational, and decision-making functions within the everyday institutional context of an Indonesian pesantren.

Pondok Pesantren Al-Choeriyah, Cintaraja, Singaparna, Sukabumi provides a relevant context for addressing this issue. As an Islamic educational institution, this pesantren functions not only as a site of religious learning, but also as a space for the formation of students' everyday lives, requiring leadership that is actively embodied in daily practice (Ihwan 2025; Malik 2025; Sopwandin 2025). In this context, Ibu Nyai should be understood not merely as a member of the pesantren family, but as part of its educational leadership, with responsibilities related to caregiving, moral exemplarity, disciplinary culture, and institutional social relations. Such an approach is important because it allows pesantren studies to move beyond formal leadership figures and to capture the educational work that actually sustains institutional life on a daily basis.

Against this background, the present article aims to analyse the leadership of Ibu Nyai from the perspective of educational management in Islamic educational institutions at Pondok Pesantren Al-Choeriyah, Cintaraja, Singaparna. The analysis focuses on her role in managing everyday pesantren life, her involvement in decision-making, her contribution to the formation of educational culture, and her significance in strengthening the institution. This study is important because it broadens prevailing understandings of pesantren leadership and reaffirms that the quality of Islamic education is shaped not only by formal authority, but also by the collective work of actors who sustain educational life from within. It is therefore expected to contribute both theoretically to the development of Islamic educational management studies and practically to the strengthening of pesantren governance in a more comprehensive, contextual, and gender-aware manner.

B. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach to examine perceptions of Ibu Nyai's leadership in the management of Pondok Pesantren Al-Choeriyah Cibeas, Cintaraja, Singaparna, Tasikmalaya Regency (Sugiyono 2022). The study focused on three respondent groups directly involved in pesantren life: pesantren leaders, ustadz/ustadzah, and santri. A total of 28 respondents participated in the study, consisting of 2 pesantren leaders, 8 ustadz/ustadzah, and 18 santri. The respondent composition was intended to capture perspectives from institutional leadership, educational practitioners, and students.

Respondents were selected from these three groups to provide information relevant to the research focus. Because the original study documentation does not provide a sampling frame or a detailed randomization procedure, the present analysis does not classify the selection as multistage random sampling. The findings are therefore interpreted descriptively and are not intended to represent the perceptions of pesantren leaders, teachers, or students beyond the participants involved in this study.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher based on the research objectives and the role of Ibu Nyai within the pesantren. The questionnaire addressed several aspects, including: (1) Ibu Nyai's activities in managing pesantren life; (2) respondents' perceptions of Ibu Nyai's role; (3) Ibu Nyai's involvement in decision-making and policy formulation; (4) respondents' perceptions of Ibu Nyai's contribution to pesantren development; and (5) respondents'

length of residence in the pesantren. The same core questions were presented to the three respondent groups to facilitate descriptive comparison of their perspectives.

The questionnaire data were complemented by institutional information concerning the history, leadership structure, and educational activities of Pondok Pesantren Al-Choeriyah Cibeas. Because the original research documentation does not specify the number of questionnaire items, response scale, instrument validation procedure, reliability coefficient, or pilot-testing process, these methodological characteristics are not assumed in the present report. The available research documentation does not provide information on the number of questionnaire items, response scale, scoring procedure, pilot testing, or formal validity and reliability coefficients. These limitations are therefore acknowledged in interpreting the quantitative results

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages, followed by descriptive cross-group comparison among the three respondent groups. Because the groups were unequal in size, particularly the leadership group ($n = 2$), the comparisons were interpreted descriptively rather than through inferential statistical testing. An overall percentage of 100% indicates agreement among all 28 respondents with the respective indicator and is interpreted as descriptive consensus rather than statistical significance or causal influence.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

This study was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al-Choeriyah, Cintaraja, Singaparna. Historically, this pesantren has demonstrated continuity of leadership from its founding to the present. The institution was originally established by KH. Choer Afandi in 1953 under the name Pesantren Attarbiyah Wata'lim. In its subsequent development, the institution was renamed Pondok Pesantren Al-Choeriyah as a form of respect for its founder. This continuity indicates that the pesantren has been built upon a sustained tradition, strong kinship-based relations, and a relatively stable institutional life. In such a context, the presence of Ibu Nyai cannot be understood merely as that of a family figure, but rather as part of the living socio-educational structure of the pesantren.

In terms of respondent composition, the study involved 28 participants, consisting of 2 members of the pesantren leadership, 8 ustadz/ustadzah (teachers), and 18 santri (students). This distribution shows that the data were drawn from three groups directly involved in pesantren life, namely policy actors, educational practitioners, and learners. Such variation is important because it allows the study to capture perceptions from different social positions, ensuring that the portrayal of Ibu Nyai's leadership is not based on a single group alone.

When viewed in terms of length of residence in the pesantren, the leadership group had particularly extensive experience, namely 33 and 69 years. Among the ustadz/ustadzah, most had resided in the pesantren for less than 10 years, while among the santri, the majority had stayed for less than 5 years. These differences in duration of residence indicate that the data represent layered experiences, ranging from long-term institutional involvement to more immediate everyday experience. Accordingly, the perceptions expressed by respondents reflect not only structural viewpoints, but also direct experience of educational and caregiving practices within the pesantren.

Table 2 Respondent Characteristics

Respondent Group	Number	Duration of Residence in the Pesantren	Role Representation
Pesantren leadership	2	33 years and 69 years	Policy actors and custodians of institutional continuity
<i>Ustadz/Ustadzah</i>	8	< 10 years = 5 respondents; 10-20 years = 2 respondents; > 20 years = 1 respondent	Educational and student development practitioners
<i>Santri</i>	18	< 5 years = 10 respondents; 5-10 years = 7 respondents; > 10 years = 1 respondent	Learners with direct experience of pesantren life
Total	28	-	Representing the three main components of pesantren life

a. The Role of Ibu Nyai in Managing Pesantren Life

With regard to the management of pesantren life, the findings indicate that Ibu Nyai occupies an active and functional position. From the perspective of the pesantren leadership, her most prominent roles include managing the activities of female students, overseeing the student kitchen, supervising and accompanying female students, and organising student activities more generally. These findings suggest that, from the leadership's viewpoint, the involvement of Ibu Nyai directly supports the rhythm of everyday pesantren life. These responsibilities indicate that Ibu Nyai's involvement is not peripheral, but forms part of the organizational and educational processes that sustain students' daily lives in the pesantren.

Responses from the ustadz/ustadzah group reveal an even broader scope of roles. In addition to teaching kitab kuning to female students, Ibu Nyai was described as managing the student kitchen, supervising and mentoring students, organising activities, instilling the values of simplicity, independence, and adab, maintaining the pesantren's relationship with parents and the surrounding community, and serving as a communication bridge between the kiai and the students. This range of responsibilities demonstrates that the role of Ibu Nyai extends beyond caregiving alone and encompasses educational, communicative, and institutional-relational functions. In academic terms, these findings confirm that the sphere of Ibu Nyai's work lies at the intersection of everyday management, value formation, and the social stability of the pesantren. This pattern can be interpreted as a form of educational and cultural leadership, in which leadership is exercised through the organization of everyday routines, the transmission of institutional values, and the maintenance of the social environment in which students live and learn.

From the students' perspective, the presence of Ibu Nyai appears even more closely embedded in everyday life within the pesantren. From the students' perspective, Ibu Nyai was closely embedded in everyday pesantren life through teaching, supervision, mentoring, guidance, care, and the cultivation of cleanliness, social ethics, and leadership. This emphasis indicates that Ibu Nyai is present not only as an organiser,

but also as a figure who shapes the habitus of students through closeness, example, and habituation. Her role is therefore strongly evident in both pedagogical and relational dimensions. From a relational leadership perspective, this proximity is important because leadership is exercised through sustained interpersonal interaction, trust, and social responsiveness rather than through formal authority alone. The students' perceptions therefore suggest that Ibu Nyai's leadership is embedded in relationships through which guidance, moral example, and habituation are continuously enacted.

When the responses of all three respondent groups are compared, a relatively consistent pattern emerges. The leadership group places greater emphasis on operational functions and daily governance, the ustadz/ustadzah highlight the breadth of educational and communicative functions, while the students stress the dimensions of personal closeness and everyday guidance. This consistency suggests that her position should be understood as part of the substantive management of education rather than merely as a symbolic accompaniment to male leadership. Can be interpreted through distributed leadership, this pattern indicates that leadership in pesantren is not necessarily concentrated in a single formal authority, but can be shared through complementary functions performed by different institutional actors. In this context, Ibu Nyai contributes through her proximity to students, educational practices, and the everyday management of pesantren life.

Rather than equating caregiving with leadership, the findings suggest a process through which caregiving can become educational leadership: attention to students' needs creates sustained interaction; sustained interaction enables guidance and habituation; and these practices contribute to the formation of values, discipline, and educational culture. In this sense, Ibu Nyai's leadership integrates managerial, pedagogical, and relational functions within everyday pesantren life. Activities such as supervising students, managing daily routines, and addressing basic needs become leadership practices when they are connected to educational purposes and the formation of students' character. This interpretation strengthens the understanding of Ibu Nyai not merely as a caregiver, but as an educational leader whose leadership is embedded in the everyday practices through which pesantren education is organized and experienced.

b. Perceptions of the Role of Ibu Nyai in the Pesantren

With regard to respondents' perceptions, the study shows that the position of Ibu Nyai is widely understood as an important component of pesantren life. Among the pesantren leadership, the responses were particularly emphatic, indicating that Ibu Nyai should play a role in all aspects of pesantren life. This view suggests that, from the leadership's perspective, Ibu Nyai is not regarded as an additional or secondary figure, but as an integral element of the institution's social and educational order. In other words, recognition of her role is already present at the structural level. This indicates that recognition of Ibu Nyai's role is not limited to personal relationships, but is also embedded in the structural understanding of the pesantren's educational and organizational life.

By contrast, the ustadz/ustadzah group offered a more detailed description of that role. Ibu Nyai was perceived as a caregiver and educator, a source of attention and affection, a role model, a maternal figure for the students, a participant in the management of administration and finance, and a community actor engaged in

activities such as majelis taklim. This description indicates that educators' perceptions of Ibu Nyai extend beyond the emotional sphere and encompass institutional and social dimensions as well. It implies that Ibu Nyai is understood as a figure whose work spans multiple domains, ranging from student guidance to the strengthening of relations between the pesantren and the wider community.

From the students' perspective, perceptions of Ibu Nyai appear even richer in affective and character-forming dimensions. Students perceived Ibu Nyai as a caregiver, educator, role model, maternal figure, emotional companion, and trusted partner in addressing student-related problems. Such perceptions indicate that, in the eyes of students, Ibu Nyai is not merely an authority figure who regulates daily life, but also a trusted person to whom they can turn and from whom they can seek moral guidance. This perception indicates that Ibu Nyai possesses strong relational legitimacy among students, derived from trust, accessibility, emotional support, and continuous interaction in everyday pesantren life.

A comparison of these three respondent groups shows that perceptions of Ibu Nyai operate at several interconnected levels. At the first level, she is understood as a caregiver and educator. At the second, she is seen as a maternal figure and a source of moral exemplarity. At the third, she is recognised as a leadership partner and a reinforcing presence within institutional life. This layered recognition can also be interpreted through the perspective of distributed leadership. Ibu Nyai is recognized not only for performing caregiving functions, but also for contributing to educational guidance, social relations, and institutional coordination. Her legitimacy therefore emerges from the combination of different functions that complement the formal authority of the kiai.. Accordingly, the findings demonstrate that the legitimacy of Ibu Nyai is derived not merely from symbolic status, but also from collective recognition of the functions she performs.

The perceptions expressed by the three respondent groups indicate that the legitimacy of Ibu Nyai's leadership is constructed through a combination of positional, relational, and functional dimensions. Her recognition does not derive solely from her relationship with the kiai or her status within the pesantren family, but also from the educational, caregiving, communicative, and problem-solving functions that she performs. This finding is important theoretically because it suggests that leadership legitimacy in pesantren can emerge through everyday interaction and demonstrated contribution, rather than solely through formal authority. In this sense, Ibu Nyai represents a form of relational and distributed leadership that complements the central position of the kiai while responding to the practical and educational needs of students and the wider pesantren community.

c. The Involvement of Ibu Nyai in Pesantren Decision-Making

With respect to decision-making, the findings show that Ibu Nyai is consistently involved in the formulation of pesantren decisions and policies. Among the pesantren leadership, this involvement is primarily justified by the view that Ibu Nyai possesses extensive experience and knowledge regarding the pesantren, its students, and the surrounding community. Her presence is also considered important in ensuring that decisions are more just, prudent, and consistent with the ethical norms of pesantren life. These responses suggest that the inclusion of Ibu Nyai in decision-making is not merely formal, but represents a form of consultative leadership grounded

in experience, institutional knowledge, and sensitivity to the needs of the pesantren community.

The responses of the ustadz/ustadzah provide a more detailed rationale. They emphasise that Ibu Nyai should be involved because of her broad experience and knowledge, her capacity to offer reasonable judgments, her understanding of students' psychological, social, and spiritual needs, and her position as a parental figure within the pesantren. These considerations indicate that the basis for her involvement does not rest solely on seniority or proximity to formal leadership, but also on her substantive capacity to interpret the realities and needs of pesantren life. In this sense, the legitimacy of Ibu Nyai in institutional decision-making is grounded in a strong functional role. This can be interpreted through a relational leadership perspective, in which leadership legitimacy emerges from sustained interaction, contextual knowledge, and the ability to understand the needs of those affected by institutional decisions.

Significantly, the findings do not reveal any responses that place Ibu Nyai outside the sphere of policy-making. On the contrary, all responses consistently affirm the importance of her participation in institutional decisions. This suggests that, in the practice of pesantren life, institutional deliberation is understood in a more collective sense and does not rest exclusively on a single formal authority. Decision-making therefore appears to operate through a combination of experience, social proximity, and sensitivity to the actual needs of students.

The descriptive analysis shows that all 28 respondents (100%) agreed that Ibu Nyai should be involved in pesantren decision-making and policy formulation. This finding indicates unanimous agreement among the participants regarding the importance of her participation. However, the result should be interpreted as descriptive consensus within the study sample rather than as evidence of statistical significance or generalizable institutional necessity.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Ibu Nyai's participation in decision-making represents more than an additional voice in institutional deliberation. Her contribution combines contextual knowledge of students, relational understanding of the pesantren community, and practical experience in everyday educational management. These dimensions support a distributed and relational conception of leadership in which institutional decisions are informed by multiple forms of knowledge rather than by formal authority alone. In this model, the kiai retains a central leadership position, while Ibu Nyai contributes complementary expertise derived from her close engagement with students and the daily life of the pesantren.

d. The Perceived Contribution of Ibu Nyai to Pesantren Development

In relation to pesantren development, respondents expressed strong perceptions regarding the contribution of Ibu Nyai. From the perspective of the pesantren leadership, Ibu Nyai was perceived as contributing to institutional development, student welfare, the fulfilment of basic needs, support for pesantren management, relationships with parents and the surrounding community, and students' spiritual and moral education. These responses indicate that her perceived contribution extends across caregiving, managerial, social, and moral dimensions of institutional life.. These responses indicate that the influence of Ibu Nyai is understood not only in internal institutional terms, but also in relation to the pesantren's external

engagement with the community. In other words, her influence encompasses caregiving, managerial, social, and moral dimensions simultaneously.

Unlike the leadership group, which placed greater emphasis on institutional continuity, the *ustadz/ustadzah* group highlighted more strongly the quality of the educational process. They regarded Ibu Nyai as highly wise in decision-making, capable of guiding students in spiritual, moral, and administrative matters, and serving as an inspiring figure, particularly in the religious sphere. In addition, Ibu Nyai was considered to shape the direction of caregiving and educational patterns that form students' character and discipline. These assessments suggest that the perceived contribution of Ibu Nyai is closely associated with the quality of student guidance and the formation of educational culture. From an educational and cultural leadership perspective, her contribution lies in translating institutional and Islamic values into everyday practices that shape students' character, discipline, and religious orientation.

Viewed more comprehensively, the perceived contribution of Ibu Nyai on *pesantren* development can be mapped across several major domains. First, it is evident in student welfare and the fulfilment of basic needs. Second, it appears in the management of everyday *pesantren* life and in cooperation with the *kiai*. Third, it is reflected in spiritual, moral, and administrative guidance. Fourth, it is visible in the *pesantren*'s social relations with parents and the wider community. Fifth, it contributes to the formation of students' character, discipline, and religious inspiration. This mapping shows that, in this study, *pesantren* development is not understood narrowly as structural growth, but rather as the strengthening of the overall quality of educational life. This broader conception is consistent with educational leadership perspectives in which institutional development is also reflected in student welfare, educational culture, social relationships, and the sustainability of everyday educational processes.

The descriptive analysis shows that all 28 respondents (100%) perceived Ibu Nyai as having a substantial role in *pesantren* development. This result indicates unanimous agreement among the participants regarding her perceived contribution to institutional and educational life. However, because the data reflect respondents' perceptions, the finding should be interpreted as evidence of perceived importance rather than as proof that Ibu Nyai independently causes or determines *pesantren* development.

The perceived contribution of Ibu Nyai to *pesantren* development can therefore be understood through the interaction of distributed, relational, and educational leadership. Her everyday engagement with students provides relational knowledge; her participation in decision-making connects that knowledge to institutional governance; and her role in moral and character formation contributes to the educational culture of the *pesantren*. These interconnected functions suggest that institutional development in *pesantren* is sustained not only through formal administrative authority, but also through relational and educational practices embedded in everyday life.

Table 3 Quantitative Distribution of Respondents' Perceptions

Focus of Findings	Key Indicators	Direction of Findings
The role of <i>Ibu Nyai</i> in managing pesantren life	Management of female students' activities, student kitchen, mentoring, cultivation of <i>adab</i> , teaching, and communication with students' parents	<i>Ibu Nyai</i> performs concrete caregiving, educational, and daily managerial functions
Perceptions of the role of <i>Ibu Nyai</i> in the pesantren	Regarded as a caregiver, educator, role model, maternal figure, leadership partner, and emotional companion	The role of <i>Ibu Nyai</i> is widely recognised by leaders, educators, and students
Involvement in decision-making	Experience, wisdom, understanding of students' needs, and alignment with pesantren <i>adab</i>	<i>Ibu Nyai</i> is positioned as an important part of consultation and institutional policy-making
Influence on pesantren development	Student welfare, moral and spiritual guidance, character formation, relations with the community, and institutional stability	<i>Ibu Nyai</i> is perceived as having a major influence on pesantren development
General quantitative findings	Fundamental role, importance of involvement in decision-making, and influence on institutional development	All major indicators received 100% respondent agreement

The quantitative findings indicate a consistent perception of the role of *Ibu Nyai* across the three main aspects examined in the study. The analysis involved 28 respondents, comprising 2 pesantren leaders, 8 ustadz/ustadzah, and 18 santri. Regarding pesantren management, all respondents (100%) recognized the fundamental role of *Ibu Nyai* in organizing daily activities, supervising and mentoring students, teaching, and cultivating *adab*. In relation to decision-making, all respondents (100%) considered the involvement of *Ibu Nyai* important in formulating pesantren decisions and policies. Likewise, all respondents (100%) perceived *Ibu Nyai* as having an important role in the development of the pesantren, particularly in student welfare, moral and spiritual education, institutional management, and relationships with parents and the surrounding community. These findings demonstrate a consistent pattern of recognition of *Ibu Nyai*'s role in the educational and managerial life of the pesantren.

Table 4 Summary of Main Research Findings

Indicator	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Fundamental role in pesantren management	28	100
Involvement in decision-making and policy formulation	28	100
Perceived contribution to pesantren development	28	100

Note: N = 28. The percentages represent the proportion of all respondents expressing agreement with the respective indicator.

DISCUSSION

a. The Role of Ibu Nyai in the Management of Pesantren Life

From the perspective of Islamic educational management, the findings of this study indicate that the role of Ibu Nyai is inseparable from the management of everyday life in the pesantren. Her involvement in student activities, dormitory supervision, the cultivation of adab, and the regulation of students' basic needs demonstrates that education in the pesantren is carried out through the totality of institutional life rather than through formal instruction alone. In this sense, the role of Ibu Nyai should be understood as part of the managerial work embedded in the daily practices of the institution.

A closer examination further shows that the broad range of responsibilities undertaken by Ibu Nyai reflects the way pesantren education is built through the integration of teaching, caregiving, and habituation. The management of the student kitchen, the supervision of student activities, the fostering of cleanliness, and daily mentoring are, in essence, integral parts of an educational process that shapes discipline, responsibility, and character. Accordingly, the work of Ibu Nyai cannot be reduced to a merely domestic function. Rather, it represents a form of educational environmental management that contributes to the formation of students within their everyday institutional setting. This pattern can be interpreted as a form of educational and cultural leadership, in which leadership is exercised through the organization of everyday routines, the transmission of institutional values, and the maintenance of the social environment in which students live and learn.

In this regard, the present findings reinforce the argument of Prasetiawan and Lis, who position women as an important part of the leadership dynamics of pesantren (Prasetiawan and Lis 2019). However, this study goes further by showing that the significance of women's presence is visible in the operational and educational functions that sustain the continuity of institutional life. From the perspective of distributed leadership, these findings suggest that leadership in pesantren is not necessarily concentrated in a single formal authority, but can be shared through complementary functions performed by different institutional actors. In this context, Ibu Nyai contributes through her proximity to students, educational practices, and the everyday management of pesantren life.

Rather than equating caregiving with leadership, the findings suggest a process through which caregiving can become educational leadership: attention to students' needs creates sustained interaction; sustained interaction enables guidance and

habitation; and these practices contribute to the formation of values, discipline, and educational culture. In this sense, Ibu Nyai's leadership integrates managerial, pedagogical, and relational functions within everyday pesantren life. Activities such as supervising students, managing daily routines, and addressing basic needs become leadership practices when they are connected to educational purposes and the formation of students' character. This interpretation strengthens the understanding of Ibu Nyai not merely as a caregiver, but as an educational leader whose leadership is embedded in the everyday practices through which pesantren education is organized and experienced.

b. The Involvement of Ibu Nyai in Pesantren Decision-Making

The findings concerning the involvement of Ibu Nyai in decision-making indicate that pesantren leadership operates through a collective and consultative pattern. Her participation suggests that institutional policies are formulated not solely on the basis of formal authority, but also through consideration of experience, knowledge, and proximity to the realities of students' lives. This is significant because sound educational decisions are not merely those that are structurally valid, but also those that are appropriate to the needs of the institution and its learners. The involvement of Ibu Nyai can therefore be understood as a form of consultative leadership grounded in contextual knowledge and responsiveness to the educational community.

From the standpoint of institutional governance, the participation of Ibu Nyai in deliberative processes demonstrates that pesantren require perspectives that emerge from close engagement with students' everyday lives. Her direct experience in guiding, mentoring, and supervising students gives her a form of knowledge that is not always fully available within formal administrative spaces. For this reason, her judgment becomes important in ensuring that decisions remain fair, prudent, and responsive to actual conditions on the ground. From a relational leadership perspective, this role is significant because leadership legitimacy can emerge through sustained interaction, contextual understanding, and responsiveness to the needs of those affected by institutional decisions.

Importantly, the findings show that the position of Ibu Nyai in decision-making is not perceived as a mere formal complement. On the contrary, her involvement is understood as an element that enriches the quality of institutional policy. This suggests that authority in the pesantren is not interpreted simply as the right to decide, but also as the capacity to understand circumstances and promote the common good. Within this framework, Ibu Nyai contributes through social sensitivity and a closer understanding of students' conditions as well as the broader atmosphere of institutional life. From the perspective of distributed leadership, her participation represents a complementary form of leadership in which knowledge and responsibility are shared across institutional actors while the kiai retains a central position in formal religious and institutional authority.

This view is consistent with the study by Putri, Taufiq, and Izzan, which argues that women's leadership may be understood in relation to capacity, responsibility, and the benefits it produces (Putri, Taufiq, and Izzan 2024). The present study extends this perspective by showing that such capacity is recognized through concrete participation in institutional deliberation and policy-making. The legitimacy of women's leadership,

therefore, is not limited to normative or conceptual recognition, but is also constructed through demonstrated knowledge, experience, and contribution within the educational institution.

Ibu Nyai's participation in decision-making represents more than an additional voice in institutional deliberation. Her contribution combines contextual knowledge of students, relational understanding of the pesantren community, and practical experience in everyday educational management. These dimensions support a distributed and relational conception of leadership in which institutional decisions are informed by multiple forms of knowledge rather than by formal authority alone. In this model, the kiai retains a central leadership position, while Ibu Nyai contributes complementary expertise derived from her close engagement with students and the daily life of the pesantren.

c. The Contribution of Ibu Nyai to the Formation of Pesantren Educational Culture

One of the most important implications of the findings lies in the contribution of Ibu Nyai to the formation of pesantren educational culture. Such culture is not built solely through written regulations, but grows through moral example, habituation, everyday relationships, and the sustained presence of figures who accompany students throughout their daily lives. Because Ibu Nyai is closely involved in students' everyday routines, her contribution to the formation of the educational atmosphere is experienced directly within daily pesantren life.

At this point, the role of Ibu Nyai is visible not only as that of a caregiver, but also as a guardian of institutional values. Simplicity, independence, cleanliness, social ethics, and respect for others do not appear merely as abstract teachings, but as habits that are continually cultivated. The presence of Ibu Nyai within this sphere of habituation makes pesantren values come alive and enables students to experience them directly in their everyday lives. From the perspective of educational and cultural leadership, this process illustrates how institutional values are sustained through repeated practices, modelling, and habituation rather than through formal regulations alone. Ibu Nyai's everyday presence therefore functions as a mechanism through which pesantren values are translated into students' lived experience.

Equally important is the affective dimension of Ibu Nyai's leadership, which gives a distinctive character to pesantren educational culture. When she is present as a maternal figure, an emotional companion, and a confidante, what is formed is not only personal closeness, but also a psychological atmosphere that supports the educational process. Such a relational environment may support students' engagement with the values being cultivated in everyday pesantren life. It is here that the strength of Ibu Nyai's leadership becomes evident, namely in the way it combines firmness of values with warmth of care. This dimension can also be interpreted through a service-oriented leadership perspective, in which care, attention, and responsiveness to students' needs constitute important mechanisms of leadership. The maternal and relational position of Ibu Nyai thus does not merely provide emotional support, but creates a social context in which educational guidance and value formation can take place.

This condition resonates with the study by Nisa , which argues that the leadership of Nyai tends to be flexible, firm, rational, humble, and respectful toward others (Nisa, Risqiya, and Putri 2022). In the present study, these characteristics appear

in the way Ibu Nyai maintains a balance between closeness to students and authority as a caregiver. The findings further suggest that these qualities are expressed through everyday educational practices and are therefore relevant to the formation of the pesantren's educational culture.

These findings indicate that the educational culture of the pesantren is sustained through a combination of formal values and everyday practices. Ibu Nyai contributes to this process through modelling, habituation, emotional support, and continuous interaction with students. This suggests that educational leadership in pesantren operates not only through formal instruction, but also through the everyday cultural practices through which students encounter and enact Islamic values.

d. The Perceived Contribution of Ibu Nyai to Pesantren Institutional Development

At the institutional level, the findings confirm that the leadership of Ibu Nyai holds substantial significance for pesantren development. Her perceived contribution is visible in student care, the fulfilment of basic needs, spiritual and moral guidance, and relationships with parents and the wider community. These findings suggest that respondents understand institutional development as involving not only formal structures, but also leadership practices that sustain educational life, trust, and student welfare.

From the standpoint of institutional trust, the role of Ibu Nyai is particularly strategic. Parents entrust their children to the pesantren not only because of its scholarly reputation, but also because of their confidence that the children will be cared for, guided, and protected properly. When Ibu Nyai plays an active role in caregiving, moral guidance, and attention to students' basic needs, These practices may contribute to parents' trust in the institution because caregiving and moral guidance are visible dimensions of students' everyday experience. Such trust constitutes an important form of social capital for the continued development of the pesantren.

Moreover, the relationship of Ibu Nyai with parents and the surrounding community reveals the social dimension of her leadership. Pesantren do not stand alone, but exist within networks of social relations that must be carefully maintained. In this regard, Ibu Nyai acts as a bridge of communication that makes the pesantren appear more approachable and open. This function reinforces the institution's social legitimacy and helps ensure that it remains accepted and supported by its surrounding environment. From a relational leadership perspective, this intermediary role illustrates how institutional relationships are maintained through communication, accessibility, and social trust. Ibu Nyai's contribution therefore extends beyond internal student care to the relational networks connecting the pesantren with parents and the surrounding community.

The relevance of these findings is consistent with the study by Abeng and Faridah, which emphasises the strength of women's leadership in communication, social sensitivity, and the ability to build cooperation (Abeng and Faridah 2025). In the pesantren context, these same qualities appear in a more distinctive form because they are integrated with caregiving, moral exemplarity, and religious service. Thus, the leadership of Ibu Nyai proves to be not only socially effective, but also important for the stability and development of Islamic educational institutions. Thus, the findings suggest

that the leadership of Ibu Nyai is experienced as socially valuable and relevant to the stability and development of the pesantren.

The perceived contribution of Ibu Nyai to institutional development emerges through interconnected managerial, relational, and educational functions. Her engagement with students provides contextual knowledge of their needs; her communication with parents and the surrounding community strengthens institutional relationships; and her participation in institutional processes connects everyday educational practices with governance. This pattern supports a conception of pesantren leadership as complementary and distributed, in which institutional development is sustained through the interaction of formal authority and relational forms of leadership.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the leadership of Ibu Nyai at Pondok Pesantren Al-Choeriyah, Cintaraja, Singaparna occupies an important and substantial position within Islamic educational management. Her role extends beyond accompanying the kiai and includes the management of everyday pesantren life, student guidance, the formation of educational culture, participation in decision-making, and contribution to institutional development. The findings indicate that these functions are recognized by the participating leaders, ustadz/ustadzah, and santri, suggesting that pesantren leadership operates through complementary and relational forms of participation rather than through formal authority alone.

The strength of Ibu Nyai's leadership lies in her ability to connect pedagogical, social, moral, and cultural dimensions within everyday pesantren life. She contributes through student guidance, habituation of adab, moral example, communication, and participation in institutional processes. Through these functions, Ibu Nyai can be understood as an important actor who connects caregiving, pedagogy, social relationships, and institutional processes within pesantren education.

The findings have practical implications for pesantren governance. Pesantren may provide more systematic opportunities for Ibu Nyai to participate in policy-making, programme development, student guidance, and communication with parents and the wider community. Such recognition can strengthen a more complementary form of educational leadership in which formal authority is supported by relational, educational, and caregiving functions embedded in everyday pesantren life.

Nevertheless, this study has certain limitations. It was conducted in only one pesantren, involved a relatively limited number of respondents, and relied primarily on perceptual data. These limitations mean that the findings should be interpreted as context-specific perceptions rather than generalized or causal conclusions about Ibu Nyai's leadership across pesantren. Future research should examine multiple pesantren using broader samples and, where possible, mixed or qualitative designs to further investigate how Ibu Nyai's leadership operates across different institutional contexts.

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