

Women's Agency and Leadership Transformation In Pesantren

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Abstract: This study examines how women's agency and leadership typologies in pesantren have changed and how these changes contribute to the reorientation of pesantren management toward an inclusive educational ecosystem. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 framework. Searches of Google Scholar and Crossref, carried out with Harzing's Publish or Perish, identified 97 records; after screening, 25 articles published between 2014 and 2026 met the inclusion criteria. The researchers manually coded and extracted information from the included studies in a spreadsheet and synthesized the data thematically. Four themes were identified: the transformation of women's agency, leadership typologies, the reorientation of pesantren management, and contributions to an inclusive educational ecosystem. Across the studies, women's roles extend from supporting and domestic responsibilities toward more strategic, participatory, and transformative forms of leadership, although this change is uneven and context-dependent. Transformational and democratic-participatory practices are prominent in recent studies, while charismatic and maternal forms continue to coexist. Women's leadership is associated with educational, organizational, economic, and technological initiatives. The review proposes a conceptual model linking these dimensions and identifies women's leadership as one contributor to institutional adaptation and development in contemporary Islamic education.

Keywords: Women's Agency, Leadership Transformation, Pesantren

Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are among the most influential Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, playing a strategic role in education, religious propagation (*dakwah*), and community empowerment. Over time, *pesantren* have evolved beyond their traditional function as centers for the transmission of Islamic knowledge and have increasingly been recognized as educational organizations that must adapt to social, cultural, and managerial changes. This transformation has encouraged the emergence of more participatory and inclusive leadership models, including the growing involvement of women in *pesantren* leadership structures. Studies of women leaders document their expanding responsibilities in religious education, institutional management, and community engagement, while also showing

that access to strategic authority remains uneven across institutions.¹ Gender and leadership in pesantren therefore concern both women's leadership capacity and the institutional conditions under which their authority is recognized.² This makes it important to examine how women exercise agency within pesantren and how leadership practices vary across institutional and historical contexts.³

Despite these developments, leadership within *pesantren* has historically been dominated by male figures, particularly *Kyai*, who have traditionally served as the primary religious authorities and key decision-makers. Consequently, women have often occupied less visible positions within *pesantren* leadership structures. Historical records identify *Nyai Nafisah Sahal Mahfudh* of *Pesantren Al-Badi'iyah* as one of the pioneers of female leadership in *pesantren*.⁴ Nevertheless, the contributions of female leaders have frequently been overshadowed by the prominence of their husbands. A significant paradigm shift became evident through figures such as *Nyai Hj. Kholidah Thayyibah*, who independently established *Pondok Pesantren Darut Thayyibah* in 1980.⁵ Studies by Faiqoh and Muttaqin further demonstrate that women's agency in female *pesantren* has gradually moved from informal spheres toward formal managerial structures characterized by high levels of self-efficacy and organizational influence.

Research conducted by Thubatussalamah et al. at *Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Nurul Huda Poncokusumo*, Malang, revealed that women, particularly *Ning* (female descendants of *pesantren* founders), perform not only administrative functions but also play significant roles in spiritual guidance, character development, and institutional decision-making processes. The study further indicated that women have been able to adapt and contribute

¹ Zakiyah, "Female Leadership in Indonesia Pesantren," *PENAMAS: Jurnal Penelitian Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 29, no. 2 (2016): 199–210, Retrieved from <https://penamas.kemenag.go.id/penamas/article/view/28>.

² Ahmad Yusuf Prasetyawan and Lis Safitri, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pesantren," *YINYANG: Jurnal Studi Islam, Gender Dan Anak* 14, no. 1 (2019): 39–69, <https://doi.org/10.24090/yinyang.v14i1.2874>.

³ Zunita Thubatussalamah, Winin Maulidya Saffanah, and Nuril Lutfiatul Laila, "Analisis Peran Dan Kepemimpinan Perempuan Di Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Nurul Huda Poncokusumo Malang," *DIALEKTIKA: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Ilmu Sosial* 17, no. 2 (2024): 68–81, Retrieved from <https://jurnal.iainambon.ac.id/index.php/DT/article/view/8838/2362>.

⁴ Faiqoh, "Nyai Ageng Perubahan Di Pesantren," *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* 3, no. 2 (2017): 60–74, Retrieved from <https://jurnaledukasi.kemenag.go.id/edukasi/article/view/212/163>.

⁵ Moh Zammil Al Muttaqin and Sigit Priyo Sembodo, "Pola Kepemimpinan Perempuan Di Pondok Pesantren Darut Thayyibah Dan Peran Sosialnya Di Masyarakat," *IRSYADUNA: Jurnal Studi Kemahasiswaan* 1, no. 3 (2021): 273–288, Retrieved from <https://pondokjurnal.uwj.ac.id/index.php/irsyaduna/article/view/350/218>.

substantially despite persistent male dominance and gender bias within *pesantren* environments.⁶

These findings reflect an ongoing transformation of women's agency within *pesantren*. Women are no longer merely positioned as companions of the *Kyai* or managers of domestic *pesantren* affairs; instead, they increasingly emerge as strategic actors capable of influencing institutional policies and organizational development. Their agency is reflected in their ability to establish leadership legitimacy, manage educational resources, and introduce innovations in *pesantren* governance. In this context, women's leadership constitutes an important dimension of social transformation that challenges patriarchal structures historically embedded within religious educational institutions. As argued by Mariyam & Aziz, female leadership in *pesantren* is not a new phenomenon; rather, it has long remained underrepresented and insufficiently explored in academic literature.⁷

The development of women's leadership in *pesantren* has also given rise to diverse leadership typologies. Mardhiah in a study conducted at Dayah Darul Aman, Aceh Besar, found that female leaders effectively implement the full spectrum of management functions, including planning, organizing, implementing, supervising, and evaluating educational and cultural programs within the *pesantren*.⁸ These findings suggest that women's leadership extends beyond nurturing and caregiving roles and encompasses strong managerial competencies in educational organizational management.

Furthermore, Arsila et al. reported that female leadership at *Pondok Pesantren Kebon Jambu Al-Islamy*, Cirebon, exhibits various characteristics, including charismatic, collective, and democratic leadership styles. Female leaders were found to foster participatory organizational cultures, involve multiple stakeholders in decision-making processes, and develop more transparent and modern governance systems.⁹ These findings indicate that women's leadership typologies in *pesantren* are not homogeneous but rather evolve according to specific social, cultural, and institutional contexts.

On the other hand, women's leadership has also been shown to contribute significantly to improving the quality of *pesantren* education.

⁶ Thubatussalamah, Saffanah, and Laila, "Analisis Peran Dan Kepemimpinan Perempuan Di Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Nurul Huda Poncokusumo Malang."

⁷ Mariyam and Ach Taufiqil Aziz, "Kiprah Nihayatul Wafiroh Di Masyarakat (Studi Kepemimpinan Perempuan Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Blok Agung)," *Jurnal Darussalam: Jurnal Pendidikan, Komunikasi Dan Pemikiran Hukum Islam* 14, no. 2 (2023): 93–113, <https://doi.org/10.30739/darussalam.v14i2.1848>.

⁸ Ainul Mardhiah, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pengelolaan Budaya Pesantren Di Dayah Darul Aman Tungkop Aceh Besar," *Indonesia Journal of Teaching and Teacher Education* 3, no. 2 (2023): 57–68, <https://doi.org/10.58835/ijtte.v3i2.296>.

⁹ Ai Rifa Husni Arsila, Buhori Muslim, and Tatang Astarudin, "Strategi Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Di Pesantren," *Pesan-Trend: Jurnal Pesantren Dan Madrasah* 4, no. 1 (2025): 46–74, Retrieved from <https://jurnal.pustakaturats.com/index.php/pesan-trend/article/view/211/162>.

Pauziah & Jali found that female leaders successfully enhanced female students' motivation in memorizing the Qur'an through the establishment of short-term and long-term goals, the implementation of innovative learning methods, and the provision of recognition and rewards that encouraged learning enthusiasm. These findings suggest that women's leadership tends to promote more humanistic, motivational, and learner-centered approaches to educational development.¹⁰

From a broader perspective, women's leadership in *pesantren* extends beyond internal institutional influence and reaches wider social and political spheres. Mariyam & Aziz in their study of Nihayatul Wafiroh, demonstrated that *pesantren* values such as simplicity, sincerity, dedication, *tawazun* (balance), *ta'adul* (justice), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *tawassuth* (moderation) serve as the foundation for a model of female leadership that is widely accepted by society and capable of influencing public policy.¹¹ This finding indicates that women within *pesantren* possess the capacity to function as agents of social change, contributing not only to educational development but also to broader public discourse and policymaking.

Although previous studies consistently acknowledge the increasing role of women in *pesantren* leadership, their findings remain fragmented and context-specific. Most studies highlight women's contributions to educational management, organizational governance, and community empowerment, whereas only a few critically examine the structural constraints, patriarchal traditions, and institutional factors that shape women's leadership practices. These variations indicate that women's leadership in *pesantren* cannot be fully understood through isolated case studies, underscoring the need for a comprehensive synthesis that integrates diverse empirical findings into a broader conceptual understanding.

The increasing participation of women in *pesantren* leadership is highly relevant to the development of an inclusive educational ecosystem. Inclusive leadership emphasizes participation, equality of opportunity, respect for diversity, and the empowerment of all members of educational institutions. The collaborative, participatory, democratic, and human-resource-oriented characteristics often associated with female leadership have the potential to strengthen the transformation of *pesantren* management toward governance systems that are more adaptive and responsive to contemporary societal needs.

From a theoretical perspective, this study draws upon Agency Theory, which explains women's capacity to act as transformative agents within

¹⁰ Riska Pauziah and Muhammad Jali, "Upaya Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi Menghafal Al-Qur'an Santri Putri Di Pondok Pesantren Miftahul Khairat Sungai Ambangah," *STUDIA ULUMINA: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan* 02, no. 02 (2026): 219–228, Retrieved from <https://stidia-ulumina.stitdarkkr.ac.id/index.php/home/article/view/51/271>.

¹¹ Mariyam and Aziz, "Kiprah Nihayatul Wafiroh Di Masyarakat (Studi Kepemimpinan Perempuan Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Blok Agung)."

institutional structures; Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes leaders' ability to inspire organizational change; and Inclusive Leadership Theory, which highlights leadership practices that foster participation, equity, and organizational inclusion. Integrating these theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive lens for understanding how women reshape leadership practices and management within contemporary *pesantren*.

Despite the growing body of literature on women's leadership in *pesantren*, existing studies remain fragmented and predominantly focus on individual leaders, specific institutions, or particular regional contexts. Most previous research has examined the roles of *Nyai*, leadership strategies, student motivation, or the contributions of prominent female figures separately, without providing a comprehensive synthesis of how women's agency has evolved, what leadership typologies have emerged, and how these transformations contribute to the reorientation of *pesantren* management. Furthermore, no previous study has integrated Agency Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Inclusive Leadership Theory into a single conceptual framework to explain how women's agency shapes leadership transformation and institutional change within *pesantren*. Addressing these empirical and theoretical gaps, the present study synthesizes empirical evidence to develop a conceptual framework linking women's agency, leadership typologies, management reorientation, and the development of an inclusive educational ecosystem in *pesantren*.

To address this research gap, this study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to synthesize empirical evidence on women's leadership in *pesantren*. Specifically, this review addresses four interrelated research questions: (1) How has women's agency transformed within the leadership of *pesantren*? (2) What leadership typologies characterize women leaders in *pesantren*? (3) How does women's leadership contribute to the reorientation of *pesantren* management? and (4) How does women's leadership foster the development of an inclusive educational ecosystem? By addressing these questions, this study seeks to develop a comprehensive conceptual understanding of women's leadership and its implications for the transformation of contemporary *pesantren*.

Methods

To answer the four research questions stated above, this study used a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The review was designed to synthesize empirical studies of women's leadership in *pesantren* and to trace patterns in women's agency, leadership typologies, management practices, and inclusive educational development. The selection and reporting process followed the PRISMA 2020 framework.¹²

¹² Matthew J Page et al., "The PRISMA 2020 Statement: An Updated Guideline for Reporting Systematic Reviews," *BMJ* 372, no. 71 (2021): 1-9, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>.

The literature search was conducted on June 10, 2026, using Harzing’s Publish or Perish software. The databases utilized for article retrieval were Crossref and Google Scholar. Two primary keywords were employed in the search process: (1) women’s leadership and (2) women’s leadership in *pesantren*. The initial search identified 97 articles, which were subsequently screened based on their titles, abstracts, and full texts according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in Table 1.

Criteria	Inclusion	Criteria
Publication Year	2014 - 2026	Before 2014
Publication type	Journal Articles	Conference Proceedings, Undergraute Theses
Language	Indonesian and English	Language other than Indonesian and English
Topic	Women’s Leadership in Pesantren	Studies unrelated to Pesantren
Indexing	SINTA-indexed Journals	Non-SINTA Journals

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria
Source: Author’s analysis (2026)

To facilitate the screening process, EndNote X9 was employed to manage references and support a more structured article selection procedure. Duplicate records were identified and removed using EndNote X9 before the screening process. Subsequently, coding, data extraction, and analysis were conducted by manually identifying relevant information from each selected article and recording the results in a spreadsheet database.

Following screening and eligibility assessment, 25 articles met the inclusion criteria and were retained for analysis. The included studies were retrieved through Google Scholar and Crossref using Harzing’s Publish or Perish (PoP). Figure 1 presents the selection flow and counts.

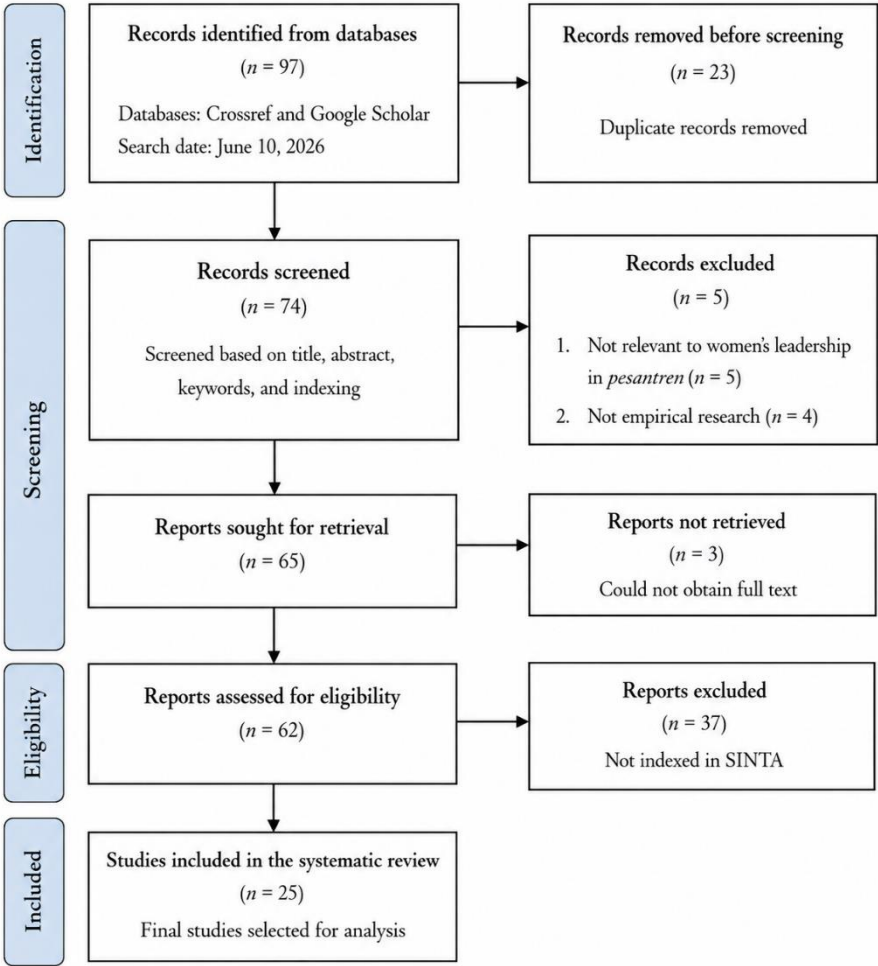


Figure 1. Article Selection Process

Based on the selection procedure presented in Figure 1, a total of 25 articles were included in the final analysis. Data were analyzed using the six-phase thematic analysis approach described by Braun and Clarke, and discussed in Forbes.¹³ Familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Coding and data extraction were conducted manually by the researchers and recorded in a spreadsheet; EndNote X9 was used to manage references and identify duplicates, not to code the data. The four themes reported below correspond to the study's research questions and the patterns developed through this synthesis.

¹³ Melissa Forbes, "Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide," *Evaluation Journal of Australasia* 22, no. 2 (2022): 132-135, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1035719X211058251>.

Result and Discussion

Based on the screening and selection process, a total of 25 articles on women's leadership in *pesantren* were identified through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and included for further analysis. The summary of findings derived from these studies is presented in Table 2.

Author (s)	Year	Key Findings
Nur Hayati, Mohammad Muchlis Solichin, Ali Nurhadi	2026	<i>Bu Nyai's</i> leadership represents gender equality through an egalitarian reinterpretation of religious texts and empowerment programs for female students. The leadership style combines charismatic-spiritual, transformational, and values-based leadership.
Lu'lu' Syuroiyah Nadliroh, Amrulloh, Dhikrul Hakim	2025	<i>Bu Nyai</i> applies a combination of transformational and servant leadership through a hidden curriculum. Students are directly involved in operational management to develop decision-making and coordination skills.
Ai Rifa Husni Arsila, Buhori M, Tatang Astarudin	2025	The leadership strategies employed include charismatic, collective (foundation-based), and democratic leadership. <i>Nyai</i> Masriyah Amva successfully developed the <i>pesantren</i> after her husband's death by involving key stakeholders in decision-making and promoting gender equality.
Linda Yuli Yani, Siti Aimah, Andi Setiawan	2025	Women's leadership plays a significant role in institutional transformation through the strengthening of compassion-based spirituality and the development of inclusive programs, such as community-engaged entrepreneurship initiatives.
Zunita Thubatussalamah, Winin Maulidya Saffanah, Nuril Lutfiatul Laila	2024	Women's leadership (<i>Ning</i>) extends beyond administrative responsibilities to include spiritual guidance and character development. Despite structural challenges, including male dominance in strategic decision-making, they act as agents of change toward a more inclusive <i>pesantren</i> .
Nurul Azizah, Mohammad Armoyu, Joseph Okwesili Nkwede	2024	Women's leadership has transformed from the domestic sphere to the public and political sphere, including leadership as regional heads. This demonstrates the decline of patriarchal culture in the

		postmodern era through the utilization of social capital and digitalization.
Hilmiyatul Latifah, Hasyim Asy'ari	2024	Women's leadership effectively improves the quality of madrasah education through democratic, transformative, and collaborative leadership styles. Despite gender bias, women have proven competent as administrators and motivators..
Ainul Mardhiah	2023	Female leaders implement comprehensive management functions, including planning, organizing, actuating, controlling, and evaluating. Their leadership is democratic and humanistic, successfully preserving traditional values while adapting to modern needs.
Mariyam, Ach Taufiqil Aziz	2023	Leadership construction is shaped by <i>pesantren</i> values such as sincerity and simplicity, as well as <i>Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah</i> (<i>Aswaja</i>) perspectives. It combines charismatic authority within the <i>pesantren</i> and legal-rational authority in parliament.
Shofia Himayatul Bariroh, Mahmud Arif	2023	The leadership model combines charismatic, democratic, and maternal (motherhood) leadership. The <i>Nyai</i> serves as caregiver, motivator, policymaker, and communicator while simultaneously holding public office.
Sri Intan Wahyuni, Mega Cahya Dwi Lestari, Diana Sartika, Sulasmi	2023	Women possess leadership capacities equal to men. Rahmah El Yunusiyah emerged as a pioneer of women's education whose contributions gained international recognition.
Khoirul Mudawinun Nisa', Nabila Arqis Risqiya, Chairin Najwa Alifiansyah Putri	2022	The <i>Nyai</i> applies the 9C leadership model (Credibility, Competence, etc.), characterized by flexibility and firmness. Moderate education is promoted through tolerance, anti-violence values, and accommodation of local traditions.
Aminatu Zuhriyah, Zaenal Arifin	2021	<i>Bu Nyai</i> 's decision-making is situational, ranging from authoritarian and directive to analytical approaches depending on the issue. Motivation is enhanced through effective communication and reward systems.

Moh Zammil Al Muttaqin, Sigit Priyo Sembodo	2021	Leadership is individualistic and transformational, characterized by a contingency approach combining charismatic, autocratic, and democratic styles. The Nyai plays a central role in decision-making and community empowerment.
Riska Dwi Agustin	2020	Umi Waheeda's leadership is authoritarian and masculine in nature. Her primary strategy, known as Ilmu Kepepet, promotes economic self-reliance through socio-entrepreneurship, enabling the pesantren to operate independently without external donors.
Alfiatun Munawwaroh, Farid Wajdi, Vinesa Fitri	2020	The leadership style combines charismatic, democratic, and collective approaches. The <i>Nyai</i> actively involves all pesantren stakeholders in institutional development and exercises firm yet considerate supervision of educators.
Nailal Muna, Hamam	2020	The <i>Nyai</i> 's leadership tends to be authoritarian in work orientation to achieve curriculum targets, particularly in classical Islamic text learning, while effectively preserving traditional salaf values.
Najmah Fairuz	2019	Leadership strategies encompass three dimensions: <i>uswah</i> (role-model authority), inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. Women's leadership emerged in response to modernization and growing democratic and emancipatory awareness.
Ahmad Yusuf Prasetiawan, Lis Safitri	2019	Women's leadership in <i>pesantren</i> is generally transitional or successor-oriented. Decision-making tends to be interactive, constructive, participatory, and delegative due to domestic and technical constraints.
Moh. Rifa'i, Wardatu Miladiyah	2019	Women serve as operational managers, including secretaries, treasurers, and heads of religious schools, while the <i>Kyai</i> remains the highest authority within the pesantren
Nurhilaliati	2017	This institution demonstrates that women can serve as sole founders and leaders of <i>pesantren</i> . Edupreneurship is implemented through various profit-oriented business units to ensure financial sustainability.

Zakiyah	2016	The <i>Nyai</i> typically leads the female section of the <i>pesantren</i> , while the <i>Kyai</i> remains the overall leader. The <i>Nyai</i> 's authority is generally limited to the management of female students and major decisions require consultation with the <i>Kyai</i> .
Marzuki	2014	Acehnese scholars distinguish between Sharia affairs, where women are generally not permitted to lead, and <i>Muamalah</i> affairs, where leadership roles such as school principal are considered acceptable. Women's leadership is accepted when supported by competence and religious integrity.
Muhyiddin Zainul Arifin	2014	The <i>Nyai</i> performs dual roles as servant and guardian. Leadership strategies include pathfinding (vision and mission formulation), alignment (stakeholder engagement), and empowerment through training programs.
Ambarwati, Aida Husna	2014	Women's leadership emerged in response to gender segregation between male and female students. Compared to <i>Kyai</i> , <i>Nyai</i> tend to be more democratic, detail-oriented, and characterized by a nurturing, maternal approach.

Table 2. Women's Leadership in *Pesantren*: Summary of Selected Studies

Transformation of Women's Leadership Agency in Pesantren

The synthesis of 25 articles indicates that women's leadership in *pesantren* has undergone significant transformation over time. In the early period (2014–2019), women were generally positioned as adjuncts to *Kyai* leadership, with their scope of action limited to managing female *santri* and domestic activities within the *pesantren*. Strategic authority remained in the hands of the *kyai* as the highest decision-maker, while women were more often assigned roles as caregivers, administrative managers, or supporting

figures within the *pesantren* leadership system, Zakiyah;¹⁴ Marzuki;¹⁵ Prasetiawan & Safitri;¹⁶ Rifa'i & Miladiyah.¹⁷

Entering the 2020–2022 period, a shift became evident through the increasing involvement of women in decision-making, the management of educational institutions, and the development of *pesantren* programs. During this phase, women began to gain social and institutional legitimacy to lead *pesantren* independently. Women's leadership was no longer viewed merely as a temporary substitute in the absence of the *Kyai*, but rather as a form of leadership with its own capacity and competence, Ulum & Fairuz;¹⁸ Istiqlaliyani;¹⁹ Nisa et al.²⁰

This transformation became even more pronounced in the 2023–2026 period. Women emerged as agents of change who actively promoted the modernization of *pesantren*, the strengthening of educational quality, entrepreneurship development, the use of digital technology, and participation in public and political spheres, Azizah et al.;²¹ Yani et al.;²² Hayati et al.²³ These findings indicate a shift in agency from a subordinate

¹⁴ Zakiyah, "Female Leadership in Indonesia Pesantren."

¹⁵ Marzuki Marzuki, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Perspektif Ulama Pesantren Di Aceh," *AKADEMIKA: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 19, no. 167–184 (2014), Retrieved from <https://ejournal.metrouniv.ac.id/index.php/akademika/article/view/429>.

¹⁶ Prasetiawan and Safitri, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pesantren."

¹⁷ Moh Rifa'i and Wardatu Miladiyah, "Agensi Perempuan Dalam Manajemen Pendidikan Madrasah: Belajar Dari Pondok Pesantren Nurul Jadid Probolinggo," *Marwah: Jurnal Perempuan, Agama Dan Jender* 18, no. 1 (2019): 96–106, <https://doi.org/10.24014/marwah.v18i1.6862>.

¹⁸ Bahrul Ulum and Najmah Fairuz, "Kepemimpinan Wanita Sebagai Gerakan Emansipasi Berbasis Gender Awareness Di Pondok Pesantren," *SALWATUNA: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1–26, Retrieved from <https://ejournal.stitta.ac.id/index.php/salwatuna/article/view/15>.

¹⁹ Fikriyah Istiqlaliyani, "Ulama Perempuan Di Pesantren: Studi Tentang Kepemimpinan Nyai Hj. Masriyah Amva," *Jurnal Educatio* 8, no. 1 (2022): 104–109, <https://doi.org/10.31949/educatio.v8i1.1670>.

²⁰ Khoirul Mudawinun Nisa, Nabila Arqis Risqiya, and Chairin Najwa Alifiansyah Putri, "Otoritas Ulama Perempuan: Kepemimpinan Nyai Dalam Mewujudkan Pendidikan Moderat Di Pondok Pesantren MIA Melalui Perspektif 9C," *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education Management* 3, no. 2 (2022): 313–324, <https://doi.org/10.21154/sajiem.v3i2.109>.

²¹ Nurul Azizah, Mohammad Armoyu, and Joseph Okwesili Nkwede, "Resiliensi Dan Transformasi Komunikasi Kepemimpinan Perempuan Pesantren: Dari Tradisional Ke Sekuler Di Era Postmodernisme," *Maddah: Jurnal Komunikasi & Konseling Islam* 6, no. 1 (2024): 29–41, <https://doi.org/10.35316/maddah.v6i1.4553>.

²² Linda Yuli Yani, Siti Aimah, and Andi Setiawan, "Revitalisasi Kepemimpinan Pesantren: Kajian Peran Perempuan Dalam Transformasi Pendidikan Islam," *El-Idare: Journal of Islamic Education Management* 11, no. 1 (2025): 1–10, Retrieved from <https://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/El-idare/article/view/26741/8260>.

²³ Nur Hayati, Mohammad Muchlis Solichin, and Ali Nurhadi, "Kepemimpinan Bu Nyai Sebagai Representasi Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Tradisi Pondok Pesantren

position toward strategic leadership that directly contributes to the institutional transformation of *pesantren*.

This phenomenon can be explained through the perspective of agency theory, which positions individuals as actors with the reflective capacity to transform social structures that limit their room for action. In the context of *pesantren*, women no longer merely accept established patriarchal structures; instead, they actively negotiate, adapt, and transform them through the strengthening of education, religious legitimacy, managerial competence, and social engagement. These findings also show that the modernization of Islamic education has opened broader access for women to educational resources, social networks, and leadership positions. Thus, the transformation of women's agency is part of the social change occurring within *pesantren* in response to modern societal demands that increasingly emphasize equality, professionalism, and organizational effectiveness.

Although most studies describe a significant transformation in women's agency, several studies also indicate that such transformation remains uneven across *pesantren*. Traditional leadership structures, patriarchal cultural norms, and religious legitimacy continue to influence women's access to strategic decision-making positions. These findings suggest that agency is negotiated rather than uniformly achieved across institutional contexts.

Typologies of Women's Leadership in Pesantren

The analysis of the selected studies indicates that women's leadership in *pesantren* is not homogeneous; rather, it encompasses complementary typologies. The studies identify charismatic-spiritual, democratic-participatory, transformational, servant, maternalistic, entrepreneurial, and situational practices. These categories describe patterns across studies and should not be treated as mutually exclusive types or as a single sequence of development. Based on the synthesis of studies conducted by Ulum and Fairuz,²⁴ Nisa et al.,²⁵ Mariyam and Aziz,²⁶ Bariroh and Arif,²⁷ and Hayati et

Al-Azhar Azzayyadiyah Sampang," *Jurnal Manajemen Dan Pendidikan Agama Islam* 4, no. 3 (2026): 233–240, Retrieved from <https://journal.aripafi.or.id/index.php/jimpai/article/view/2000/2042>.

²⁴ Ulum and Fairuz, "Kepemimpinan Wanita Sebagai Gerakan Emansipasi Berbasis Gender Awareness Di Pondok Pesantren."

²⁵ Nisa, Risqiya, and Putri, "Otoritas Ulama Perempuan: Kepemimpinan Nyai Dalam Mewujudkan Pendidikan Moderat Di Pondok Pesantren MIA Melalui Perspektif 9C."

²⁶ Mariyam and Aziz, "Kiprah Nihayatul Wafiroh Di Masyarakat (Studi Kepemimpinan Perempuan Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Blok Agung)."

²⁷ Shofia Himayatul Bariroh and Mahmud Arif, "Model Kepemimpinan Nyai Dalam Mengembangkan Pondok Pesantren Di Era Modern," *JIP (Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan)* 6, no. 10 (2023): 7717–7726.

al.²⁸ a charismatic-spiritual leadership typology was identified. This leadership model derives its legitimacy from the *Nyai's* religious knowledge, moral exemplarity, and spiritual authority. Such a typology is commonly found in *pesantren* that continue to maintain leadership traditions grounded in personal charisma and religious legitimacy.

Furthermore, the synthesis of studies by Ambarwati and Husna,²⁹ Prasetiawan and Safitri,³⁰ Munawwaroh et al.,³¹ Istiqlaliyani,³² Mardhiah,³³ Aulia et al.,³⁴ and Anggraeni et al.,³⁵ reveals that women's leadership in *pesantren* tends to adopt a democratic-participatory approach characterized by deliberation, collaboration, and the involvement of multiple stakeholders in decision-making processes. In addition, several studies indicate that women's leadership demonstrates strong transformational characteristics through efforts to promote innovation, human resource development, organizational change, and educational quality improvement, Ulum &

²⁸ Hayati, Solichin, and Nurhadi, "Kepemimpinan Bu Nyai Sebagai Representasi Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Tradisi Pondok Pesantren Al-Azhar Azzayyadiyah Sampang."

²⁹ Ambarwati and Aida Husna, "Manajemen Pesantren Responsif Gender : Studi Analisis Di Kepemimpinan Nyai Pesantren Di Kabupaten Pati," *PALASTREN: Jurnal Studi Gender* 7, no. 2 (2014): 445-456, Retrieved from <https://journal.uinsuku.ac.id/index.php/Palastren/article/view/1032/943>.

³⁰ Prasetiawan and Safitri, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pesantren."

³¹ Alfiaatun Munawwaroh, Farid Wajdi, and Vinesa Fitri, "Gaya Kepemimpinan Nyai Hajah Masriyah Amva Di Pondok Pesantren Kebon Jambu Al-Islamy Babakan Ciwaringin Kabupaten Cirebon," *Eduprof: Islamic Education Journal* 1, no. 2 (2019): 258-274, Retrieved from <https://journal.ljpi.bbc.ac.id/eduprof/article/view/21/63>.

³² Istiqlaliyani, "Ulama Perempuan Di Pesantren : Studi Tentang Kepemimpinan Nyai Hj. Masriyah Amva."

³³ Mardhiah, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pengelolaan Budaya Pesantren Di Dayah Darul Aman Tungkop Aceh Besar."

³⁴ Hesti Dina Aulia, Yudin Citriadin, and Muhammad Thohri, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam (Studi Kasus Di Pondok Pesantren Syaikh Zainuddin NW Anjani)," *MANAZHIM: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Ilmu Pendidikan* 5, no. 1 (2023): 434-455, <https://doi.org/10.36088/manazhim.v5i1.2988>.

³⁵ Dewi Anggraeni, Fitrotul Muzayanah, and Gumilar Irfanullah, "Pola Kepemimpinan Nyai Masriyah Amva Terhadap Resiliensi Pesantren Di Era Pandemi Covid -19," *HAYULA: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (2023): 107-124, <https://doi.org/10.21009/hayula.007.01.07>.

Fairuz;³⁶ Muttaqin & Sembodo;³⁷ Latifah & Asy'ari;³⁸ Nadliroh et al.;³⁹ Hayati et al.⁴⁰

Read across publication periods, the studies suggest a change in emphasis rather than a simple replacement of one leadership type by another. Studies published in 2014–2019 more often describe women's authority as bounded by gendered divisions of responsibility, although participatory and democratic practices are also reported in this period, Ambarwati & Husna;⁴¹ Zakiyah;⁴² Prasetiawan & Safitri.⁴³ Studies published from 2020 onward more explicitly discuss transformational, collaborative, and participatory practices alongside educational innovation and organizational change, Muttaqin & Sembodo;⁴⁴ Mardhiah;⁴⁵ Latifah & Asy'ari;⁴⁶ Nadliroh et al.;⁴⁷ Hayati et al.⁴⁸ Charismatic-spiritual legitimacy remains present across periods. Because these are separate studies of different institutions, the pattern is a descriptive change in the literature's emphasis, not evidence that leadership styles changed longitudinally within the same pesantren.

The characteristics of servant leadership are also evident in leadership practices that prioritize service, empowerment, mentoring, and student

³⁶ Ulum and Fairuz, "Kepemimpinan Wanita Sebagai Gerakan Emansipasi Berbasis Gender Awareness Di Pondok Pesantren."

³⁷ Muttaqin and Sembodo, "Pola Kepemimpinan Perempuan Di Pondok Pesantren Darut Thayyibah Dan Peran Sosialnya Di Masyarakat."

³⁸ Hilmiyatul Latifah and Hasyim Asy'ari, "Peran Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pengembangan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam," *Thawalib : Jurnal Kependidikan Islam* 5, no. 2 (2024): 463–472, <https://doi.org/10.54150/thawalib.v5i2.486>.

³⁹ Lu'lu' Syuroiyah Nadliroh, Amrulloh, and Dhikrul Hakim, "Kepemimpinan Bunyai Dalam Mendukung Kompetensi Manajerial Santri di Pondok Pesantren Baitul Qur'an Nganjuk," *Al-Zayn: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial & Hukum* 3, no. 4 (2025): 3417–3427, Retrieved from <https://ejournal.yayasanpendidikandzurriyatulquran.id/index.php/AlZayn/article/view/1851/932>.

⁴⁰ Hayati, Solichin, and Nurhadi, "Kepemimpinan Bu Nyai Sebagai Representasi Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Tradisi Pondok Pesantren Al-Azhar Azzayyadiyah Sampang."

⁴¹ Ambarwati and Husna, "Manajemen Pesantren Responsif Gender : Studi Analisis Di Kepemimpinan Nyai Pesantren Di Kabupaten Pati."

⁴² Zakiyah, "Female Leadership in Indonesia Pesantren."

⁴³ Prasetiawan and Safitri, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pesantren."

⁴⁴ Muttaqin and Sembodo, "Pola Kepemimpinan Perempuan Di Pondok Pesantren Darut Thayyibah Dan Peran Sosialnya Di Masyarakat."

⁴⁵ Mardhiah, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pengelolaan Budaya Pesantren Di Dayah Darul Aman Tungkop Aceh Besar."

⁴⁶ Latifah and Asy'ari, "Peran Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pengembangan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam."

⁴⁷ Nadliroh, Amrulloh, and Hakim, "Kepemimpinan Bunyai Dalam Mendukung Kompetensi Manajerial Santri di Pondok Pesantren Baitul Qur'an Nganjuk."

⁴⁸ Hayati, Solichin, and Nurhadi, "Kepemimpinan Bu Nyai Sebagai Representasi Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Tradisi Pondok Pesantren Al-Azhar Azzayyadiyah Sampang."

development. These characteristics were identified in studies conducted by Arifin,⁴⁹ Istiqlaliyani,⁵⁰ Nadliroh et al.,⁵¹ and Yani et al.⁵² Meanwhile, a maternalistic leadership typology is reflected in a nurturing approach that emphasizes caregiving, protection, character development, and emotional relationships between leaders and students. This model was reported in studies by Ambarwati and Husna,⁵³ Arifin,⁵⁴ Bariroh and Arif,⁵⁵ and Thubatussalamah et al.,⁵⁶ Women's leadership also exhibits entrepreneurial leadership characteristics, marked by the development of business units, students' economic empowerment, and the promotion of financial sustainability within *pesantren*. Such findings were reported by Nurhilaliati,⁵⁷ Agustin,⁵⁸ Anggraeni et al.,⁵⁹ and Yani et al.⁶⁰

The findings further reveal that the most dominant leadership models among women leaders in *pesantren* are transformational, democratic, and charismatic leadership. The prevalence of these three models suggests that women's leadership tends to emphasize collaborative approaches, human resource empowerment, and moral exemplarity as the primary sources of influence within educational organizations.

⁴⁹ Muhyiddin Zainul Arifin, "Peran Kepemimpinan Nyai Di Pondok Pesantren," *SAINTEKBU: Jurnal Sains Dan Teknologi* 7, no. 2 (2014): 25–47, Retrieved from <https://ejournal.unwaha.ac.id/saintek/article/view/25/26>.

⁵⁰ Istiqlaliyani, "Ulama Perempuan Di Pesantren : Studi Tentang Kepemimpinan Nyai Hj. Masriyah Amva."

⁵¹ Nadliroh, Amrulloh, and Hakim, "Kepemimpinan Bunyai Dalam Mendukung Kompetensi Manajerial Santri di Pondok Pesantren Baitul Qur'an Nganjuk."

⁵² Yani, Aimah, and Setiawan, "Revitalisasi Kepemimpinan Pesantren : Kajian Peran Perempuan Dalam Transformasi Pendidikan Islam."

⁵³ Ambarwati and Husna, "Manajemen Pesantren Responsif Gender : Studi Analisis Di Kepemimpinan Nyai Pesantren Di Kabupaten Pati."

⁵⁴ Aminatu Zuhriyah and Zaenal Arifin, "Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Bu Nyai Dalam Pengembalian Keputusan Dan Motivasi Pemimpin Di Pesantren Al-Qur'an," *Intelektual: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Keislaman* 11, no. 3 (2021): 263–76, <https://doi.org/10.33367/ji.v11i3.2057>.

⁵⁵ Bariroh and Arif, "Model Kepemimpinan Nyai Dalam Mengembangkan Pondok Pesantren Di Era Modern."

⁵⁶ Thubatussalamah, Saffanah, and Laila, "Analisis Peran Dan Kepemimpinan Perempuan Di Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Nurul Huda Poncokusumo Malang."

⁵⁷ Nurhilaliati, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dan Edupreneurship Di Pondok Pesantren Al-Kautsar Ranggo Pajo Dompu," *Qawwam: Journal for Gender Mainstreaming* 11, no. 1 (2017): 35–48.

⁵⁸ Riska Swi Agustin, "Agensi Kepemimpinan Perempuan: Entrepreneurship Umi Waheeda Di Pesantren Al Ashriyyah Nurul Imam, Parung, Bogor," *MUSAWA: Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Islam* 19, no. 2 (2020): 235–247, <https://doi.org/10.14421/musawa.2020.192-235-247>.

⁵⁹ Anggraeni, Muzayanah, and Irfanullah, "Pola Kepemimpinan Nyai Masriyah Amva Terhadap Resiliensi Pesantren Di Era Pandemi Covid -19."

⁶⁰ Yani, Aimah, and Setiawan, "Revitalisasi Kepemimpinan Pesantren : Kajian Peran Perempuan Dalam Transformasi Pendidikan Islam."

From the perspective of Transformational Leadership Theory developed by Bass and Avolio, as cited in Eaton et al., transformational leaders seek to inspire organizational members to transcend personal interests in pursuit of collective goals. This characteristic is evident across numerous studies demonstrating how *Nyai* are capable of developing institutional visions, fostering educational innovation, and empowering both students and surrounding communities.⁶¹

The widespread adoption of democratic leadership practices also reflects a shift in *pesantren* governance from centralized leadership structures toward more participatory management systems. Deliberation, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement have become essential mechanisms in institutional decision-making processes. These findings support the argument that women leaders tend to cultivate stronger interpersonal relationships through effective communication, empathy, and cooperation.

Interestingly, despite adopting democratic and participatory principles, most female leaders continue to maintain religious charisma as a key source of leadership legitimacy. This finding suggests that the modernization of *pesantren* leadership has not diminished the institution's traditional characteristics. Instead, it has generated a synthesis between traditional Islamic values and modern management practices, enabling *pesantren* to remain culturally rooted while adapting to contemporary educational and organizational demands.

While transformational and democratic leadership emerge as dominant patterns, several studies caution that leadership practices remain highly context-dependent. In more traditional *pesantren*, charismatic and maternalistic leadership continues to play a central role, indicating that leadership typologies frequently coexist rather than replace one another. This suggests that women's leadership in *pesantren* is hybrid rather than homogeneous.

Reorienting Pesantren Management through Women's Leadership

The synthesis indicates that women's leadership is associated with management reorientation in four domains: education, organizational governance, economic development, and technological adaptation. The following paragraphs distinguish the evidence reported in the studies from

⁶¹ Lauren Eaton, Todd Bridgman, and Stephen Cummings, "Advancing the Democratization of Work: A New Intellectual History of Transformational Leadership Theory," *Leadership* 20, no. 3 (2024): 125-143, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17427150241232705>.

its interpretation, Nurhilaliati,⁶² Muttaqin & Sembodo,⁶³ Mardhiah,⁶⁴ Yani et al.⁶⁵

In the educational domain, the reviewed studies report women's involvement in curriculum development, student competency development, moderate Islamic education, and gender-equality values in learning, Nisa et al.,⁶⁶ Latifah & Asy'ari,⁶⁷ Nadliroh et al.,⁶⁸ Hayati et al.⁶⁹ These findings position women as contributors to educational decision-making and program development, rather than solely as administrators. They are consistent with the agency perspective used in this study: leadership influence is exercised through the ability to initiate and shape institutional practices. The evidence also shows that such change is framed within, rather than simply in opposition to, *pesantren* religious traditions.

From an organizational perspective, women's leadership encourages more participatory, collaborative, and transparent governance practices. Decision-making processes are increasingly conducted through *musyawarah* (collective deliberation), involving multiple stakeholders within the *pesantren* community, Prasetiawan & Safitri,⁷⁰ Munawwaroh et al.,⁷¹ Mardhiah,⁷² Arsila et al.⁷³ This pattern indicates a movement toward shared responsibility in the cases reviewed. It is consistent with the participatory dimension of inclusive leadership, while the persistence of centralized authority in some institutions cautions against treating the shift as universal.

⁶² Nurhilaliati, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dan Edupreneurship Di Pondok Pesantren Al-Kautsar Ranggo Pajo Dompu."

⁶³ Muttaqin and Sembodo, "Pola Kepemimpinan Perempuan Di Pondok Pesantren Darut Thayyibah Dan Peran Sosialnya Di Masyarakat."

⁶⁴ Mardhiah, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pengelolaan Budaya Pesantren Di Dayah Darul Aman Tungkop Aceh Besar."

⁶⁵ Yani, Aimah, and Setiawan, "Revitalisasi Kepemimpinan Pesantren: Kajian Peran Perempuan Dalam Transformasi Pendidikan Islam."

⁶⁶ Nisa, Risqiya, and Putri, "Otoritas Ulama Perempuan: Kepemimpinan Nyai Dalam Mewujudkan Pendidikan Moderat Di Pondok Pesantren MIA Melalui Perspektif 9C."

⁶⁷ Latifah and Asy'ari, "Peran Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pengembangan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam."

⁶⁸ Nadliroh, Amrulloh, and Hakim, "Kepemimpinan Bunyai Dalam Mendukung Kompetensi Manajerial Santri di Pondok Pesantren Baitul Qur'an Nganjuk."

⁶⁹ Hayati, Solichin, and Nurhadi, "Kepemimpinan Bu Nyai Sebagai Representasi Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Tradisi Pondok Pesantren Al-Azhar Azzayyadiyah Sampang."

⁷⁰ Prasetiawan and Safitri, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pesantren."

⁷¹ Munawwaroh, Wajdi, and Fitri, "Gaya Kepemimpinan Nyai Hajah Masriyah Amva Di Pondok Pesantren Kebon Jambu Al-Islamy Babakan Ciwaringin Kabupaten Cirebon."

⁷² Mardhiah, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pengelolaan Budaya Pesantren Di Dayah Darul Aman Tungkop Aceh Besar."

⁷³ Arsila, Muslim, and Astarudin, "Strategi Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Di Pesantren."

In the economic domain, several studies demonstrate that women leaders have successfully developed edupreneurship and socio-entrepreneurship initiatives to strengthen institutional sustainability, Nurhilaliati,⁷⁴ Agustin,⁷⁵ Anggraeni et al.,⁷⁶ Yani et al.⁷⁷ Business ventures such as cooperatives, microfinance institutions, livestock enterprises, bakeries, and student-based creative industries have become important mechanisms for enhancing the financial independence of *pesantren*. These initiatives connect women's leadership with institutional sustainability and student economic empowerment. They also broaden the management role described in the literature beyond educational administration, although the review does not compare the financial outcomes of these initiatives.

The studies also report women's use of digital technologies for learning, *dakwah*, organizational communication, and network development, with several accounts describing increased use during and after the COVID-19 period.⁷⁸ This evidence suggests that technological adaptation is another area in which women leaders participate in institutional change. The reviewed studies do not, however, establish that digital adoption is unique to women's leadership; it is therefore best interpreted as a contribution documented in these cases, not as a gender-specific causal effect.

Taken together, the four domains show that women's leadership is associated with a broader reorientation of *pesantren* management. Through the study's agency and transformational-leadership lenses, the reported initiatives illustrate how leaders can mobilize people and resources toward organizational adaptation. The synthesis identifies recurring patterns across cases; it does not establish causal effects or show that these changes occur in every *pesantren*.⁷⁹

The findings further indicate that the reorientation of *pesantren* management through women's leadership extends beyond organizational effectiveness. It contributes to the development of more adaptive, innovative, and sustainable educational institutions. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on individual leaders or specific institutional contexts, this review demonstrates that such transformation represents a broader pattern across diverse *pesantren* settings. Therefore, women's leadership should be

⁷⁴ Nurhilaliati, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dan Edupreneurship Di Pondok Pesantren Al-Kautsar Ranggo Pajo Dompu."

⁷⁵ Agustin, "Agensi Kepemimpinan Perempuan: Entrepreneurship Umi Waheeda Di Pesantren Al Ashriyyah Nurul Imam, Parung, Bogor."

⁷⁶ Anggraeni, Muzayanah, and Irfanullah, "Pola Kepemimpinan Nyai Masriyah Amva Terhadap Resiliensi Pesantren Di Era Pandemi Covid -19."

⁷⁷ Yani, Aimah, and Setiawan, "Revitalisasi Kepemimpinan Pesantren: Kajian Peran Perempuan Dalam Transformasi Pendidikan Islam."

⁷⁸ Azizah, Armoyu, and Nkwede, "Resiliensi Dan Transformasi Komunikasi Kepemimpinan Perempuan Pesantren: Dari Tradisional Ke Sekuler Di Era Postmodernisme."

⁷⁹ Muttaqin and Sembodo, "Pola Kepemimpinan Perempuan Di Pondok Pesantren Darut Thayyibah Dan Peran Sosialnya Di Masyarakat."

understood as a strategic force that reshapes governance practices and strengthens the long-term sustainability of Islamic educational institutions.

Nevertheless, several studies report that organizational transformation is constrained by limited institutional authority, resource availability, and resistance toward organizational change. Consequently, the success of management reorientation depends not only on leadership capacity but also on institutional readiness and organizational culture.

Contribution of Women's Leadership to an Inclusive Educational Ecosystem

One of the most significant findings of this review is that women's leadership contributes substantially to the development of a more inclusive educational ecosystem within *pesantren*. This inclusivity is reflected across multiple dimensions, including gender, social, organizational, and economic domains.

From a gender perspective, women leaders promote more equitable educational opportunities for both male and female students while expanding women's participation in various institutional activities. At the social level, women's leadership strengthens the relationship between *pesantren* and local communities through community-based programs in education, economic empowerment, and entrepreneurship. These initiatives demonstrate that women leaders are not only involved in internal institutional management but also play an active role in extending the social impact of *pesantren*.

At the organizational level, women leaders foster a collaborative, participatory, and responsive leadership culture that accommodates the interests of diverse stakeholders. In the economic domain, women's leadership contributes to the financial sustainability of *pesantren* through the development of productive business units and entrepreneurial initiatives. Collectively, these findings indicate that women's leadership has evolved into a transformative force that not only reshapes institutional governance but also supports the creation of a more inclusive, adaptive, participatory, and sustainable Islamic educational ecosystem.

The findings further demonstrate that women's leadership plays a significant role in promoting inclusive educational environments through increased participation in decision-making processes, the advancement of gender-responsive education, and the implementation of community empowerment programs that engage previously underrepresented groups. These developments highlight the growing contribution of women leaders to institutional transformation and social inclusion within *pesantren*.

From the perspective of Inclusive Leadership Theory, inclusive leaders create environments that value diversity, provide equal opportunities, and encourage the participation of all organizational members.⁸⁰ These

⁸⁰ Amy E. Randel et al., "Inclusive Leadership: Realizing Positive Outcomes through Belongingness and Being Valued for Uniqueness," *Human Resource Management Review* 28, no. 2 (2018): 190–203, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.07.002>.

characteristics are evident in the leadership practices of women in *pesantren*, who emphasize deliberation (*musyawarah*), collaboration, empathy, and empowerment as central leadership strategies.⁸¹ Through these approaches, *Nyai* have demonstrated the ability to reduce rigid hierarchical barriers and create psychological safety that encourages female students to participate actively, express ideas, and engage in innovation.

Importantly, the inclusivity fostered by women leaders extends beyond gender-related concerns. It encompasses broader social, economic, educational, and cultural dimensions. Consequently, women's leadership contributes not only to improving institutional governance but also to strengthening the role of *pesantren* as open, moderate, and socially responsive Islamic educational institutions capable of addressing contemporary societal challenges.

Despite these positive contributions, inclusivity is not automatically achieved across all *pesantren*. Some studies indicate that traditional gender norms, unequal access to leadership positions, and institutional conservatism continue to challenge the implementation of inclusive educational practices. Therefore, inclusive leadership should be understood as an ongoing institutional process rather than a universally established condition.

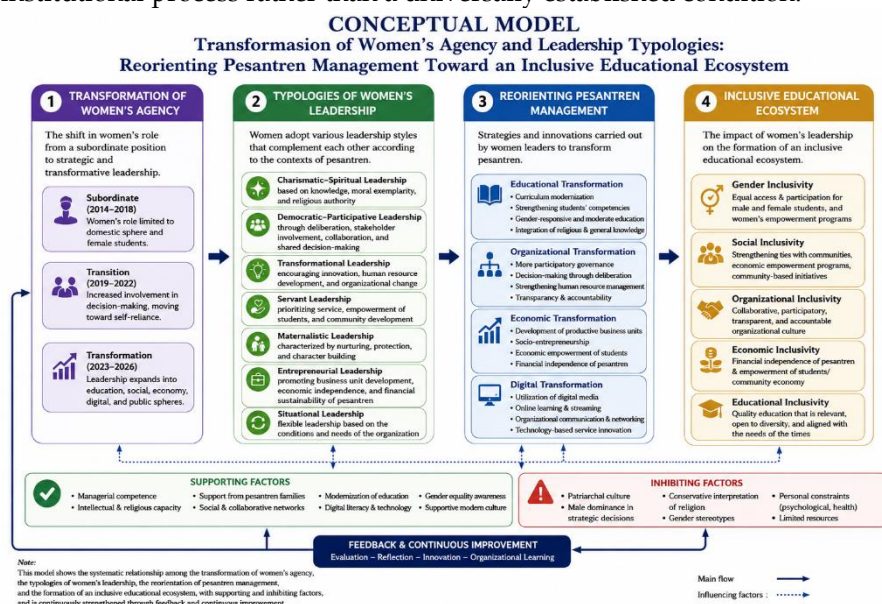


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Women's Leadership Transformation In Pesantren. Created using Canva based on the findings of this study.

⁸¹ Rene Valdés, J Jose Manuel Améstica, and Catalina Coronado, "Educational Leadership for Inclusive Education: A Systematic Literature Review," *Cogent Education: Educational Leadership & Management* 13, no. 1 (2026): 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2026.2666707>.

The conceptual model developed in this study illustrates the interrelationships among three key elements: the transformation of women's agency, the emergence of transformational and democratic-participatory leadership, and the reorientation of pesantren management. Together, these elements contribute to the development of a more inclusive and sustainable educational ecosystem within pesantren.

The findings suggest that women's leadership is no longer a peripheral phenomenon within pesantren. Rather, it has emerged as a critical driver of institutional transformation in contemporary Islamic education. The model proposed in this study integrates four interconnected dimensions: the transformation of women's agency, leadership typologies, the reorientation of pesantren management, and the development of an inclusive educational ecosystem.

Unlike previous studies, which have largely focused on specific leaders, individual institutions, or particular regional contexts, this review provides a comprehensive synthesis of broader patterns of transformation in women's leadership across diverse pesantren settings. The findings demonstrate that women's leadership functions as a strategic factor in the transformation of pesantren into educational institutions that are more inclusive, adaptive, innovative, and sustainable. As such, women's leadership should be recognized not merely as a complementary component of pesantren governance but as a central force shaping the future development of Islamic education in Indonesia.

The proposed conceptual framework was inductively developed through thematic synthesis of the reviewed studies. Women's agency serves as the initial driver that enables female leaders to assume strategic organizational roles. These roles are manifested through various leadership typologies, which subsequently influence the reorientation of pesantren management across educational, organizational, economic, and technological dimensions. Ultimately, these transformations contribute to the emergence of a more inclusive educational ecosystem.

Conclusion

This study identified the transformation of women's agency and leadership typologies within *pesantren* and examined their contributions to the development of an inclusive educational ecosystem. The findings reveal a significant shift in women's leadership roles, from traditionally subordinate positions toward more strategic, participatory, and transformative forms of engagement. This transformation is reflected in the increasing involvement of women in institutional decision-making, organizational management, economic empowerment initiatives, and technology-based innovation. Women are no longer positioned merely as complementary figures within *pesantren* leadership structures; rather, they have emerged as key agents of change in the modernization and development of Islamic educational institutions.

The review further demonstrates that women's leadership in *pesantren* is multidimensional, with transformational and democratic-participatory leadership emerging as the most dominant typologies. These leadership approaches have contributed to the reorientation of *pesantren* management across educational, organizational, economic, and digital domains, ultimately fostering a more inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable educational ecosystem. In addition, this study proposes a conceptual model that integrates the transformation of women's agency, leadership typologies, management reorientation, and the development of an inclusive educational ecosystem. The model provides a broader understanding of how women's leadership contributes to institutional transformation within contemporary *pesantren*.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the review was limited to studies indexed and accessible through Google Scholar, which may have excluded relevant publications available in other academic databases. Second, most of the reviewed studies employed qualitative and case-study approaches within specific *pesantren* contexts, meaning that the findings primarily reflect localized experiences and should be interpreted cautiously when applied to broader settings. Third, the thematic synthesis approach focused on identifying patterns and research trends; therefore, the proposed conceptual model does not empirically test causal relationships or the magnitude of influence among variables. Future studies are encouraged to validate and refine this model through quantitative or mixed-methods research involving diverse *pesantren* contexts.

For *pesantren* managers, the findings support practical steps such as including women leaders in formal decision-making, providing transparent pathways to leadership roles, and supporting their access to management training and resources. For Islamic education policymakers, these measures offer a basis for gender-responsive leadership development while allowing institutions to adapt implementation to their local governance and religious contexts.

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