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The Representation of Gender Equality in Nyai's Religious Authority at Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the role and authority of Nyai in Pesantren Annuqayah as a representation of gender equality in the pesantren environment. Traditionally, Nyai is often considered only as a companion of kiai in a subordinate position. However, in Pesantren Annuqayah, Nyai, especially Nyai Fadhilah, occupies a strategic position in decision-making, education, the pesantren economy, as well as being an influential public figure in the community. This study uses a qualitative method with semi-structured interview techniques to Nyai Fadhilah and female santri. The findings show that Nyai not only carries out domestic roles as a wife and mother, but also has religious authority and leadership equal to kiai, both in the internal structure of the pesantren and in the public sphere. In addition, Nyai Fadhilah's leadership in literacy and the environment strengthens women's contribution in the social and religious transformation of pesantren. Using the theoretical approach of Marxist feminism and Radical feminism, this research shows that Pesantren Annuqayah is able to become a model of gender-responsive and inclusive pesantren. This proves that pesantren is not only a place for the reproduction of conservative thinking, but also a potential space for progressive reinterpretation of religious values.

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Introduction

In general, nyai (the wife of a kiai) is only a companion to the kiai or a figure with a second-in-command position after the kiai, who has a role in only one position and is nothing more than a wife who helps the kiai behind the scenes (Habibullah, 2019; Nurhidayah & Nurhayati, 2020). However, this assumption or understanding is not entirely correct because there are many Islamic boarding schools today that position nyai as equal to kiai (Hidayati, 2017; Munawiroh, 2021; Noorhayati, 2017). One such case is the Annuqayah Islamic boarding school in Sumenep, East Java. The Annuqayah Islamic boarding school upholds the position of a nyai, who is one of the mutaharrik and contributes to the continuity of religious activities. Her religious fatwas and daily behavior are not only guidelines for students, but more broadly touch and influence the religious patterns of the wider community. The existence of a nyai is

considered by the community to be an example of piety and is the focus of attention among women in East Java, especially Madura (De Jonge, 1989).

Articles discussing nyai and Islamic boarding schools have so far focused on two aspects. First, studies discussing the role of nyai in empowerment and influencing the interpretation of scriptures that are considered to contain gender bias. As mentioned by Erfan (2018), the role of nyai is equal to that of kiai in empowering gender equality issues, namely by promoting the study of gender role texts and strengthening the normativity of gender roles (Efendi, 2020). Similarly, Afifatul (2021) and Ambarwati (2014) state that nyai must actively participate in the study of tasfir scriptures through a gender approach, thereby providing a new perspective and a more comprehensive understanding (Ambarwati & Husna, 2014; Munawiroh, 2021). Second, studies that focus on the role of nyai in the development of Islamic boarding schools (Fitria & Helmi, 2011; Noorhayati, 2014; Sa'diyah & Anshori, 2021). Mahmudah (2014) said that Islamic boarding schools must build and develop infrastructure functions related to institutions such as early childhood education, kindergartens, madrasahs, and others under the leadership of a nyai (Noorhayati, 2014). Based on existing studies, the author attempts to explore the unexplored realm of nyai authority in two positions, namely the domestic nyai in Islamic boarding schools and the role of nyai as public figures in society, as well as their implications for gender practices and issues in Islamic boarding schools.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an analysis and overview of the general paradigm shift in the issue of nyai authority, as well as gender practices and relations within it. There are three supporting points discussed in this paper. First, Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School is a boarding school that upholds women's rights. Although the dormitories, formal and non-formal education are separated between male and female students, they are still under one central institution, so that the provision of learning facilities and freedom of expression and exploration of interests or majors are not imbalanced. Second, with the separation of students, Nyai has independent authority and power equal to that of kiai in managing and caring for female students. Third, Nyai's position as a caregiver has implications for her influence and privilege both within and outside the pesantren. Thus, nyai are respected, becoming leaders of local religious assemblies, advisors in youth organizations, and so on. Fourth, the strengthening of nyai's authority and influence in pesantren has an impact on the practice of gender equality.

A study covering gender, nyai authority, and Islamic boarding schools, with the Annuqayah Islamic boarding school as a case study, is important to conduct as a form of reconstruction of gender in Islamic boarding schools, which have been considered biased by the general public. This is reasonable because Islamic boarding schools have generally been regarded as machines that produce conservative ways of thinking about the interpretation of classical Islamic texts and religious teachings. Based on several pieces of evidence that the author has found, the author assumes that Nyai Annuqayah, through her leadership, implicitly invites the wider community to reinterpret and rethink gender issues, which are a product of religious thinking that can legally be reinterpreted to suit the current context. The ideas and leadership movements carried out by Nyai Annuqayah are a form of the implementation and struggle for women's rights without neglecting their obligations within the family, Islamic boarding schools, and the surrounding community.

Literature Review

Nyai and her influence

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, in addition to kiai, there is also the term nyai. Nyai is the term for the wife of a kiai. Initially, the role of a nyai was considered no less important than that of a kiai, but this was only within the context of Islamic boarding schools (Ningrum dkk., 2018). With the

improvement in the quality of education among women in general, including nyai, there has been a shift in paradigm and the emergence of social awareness. However, this phenomenon cannot be generalized, as there are certain regions and socio-cultural groups that still adhere to fundamentalist views and subordinate nyai. It cannot be denied that interpretations and understandings of women in general in the private and social spheres are determined by cultural agreements and certain religious understandings (Muhtador, 2017).

This paradigm shift, although not evenly distributed across all social spheres, should at least be appreciated as an important transformation in religious understanding towards a better social society. This is evident in the role of nyai in development and management, which has brought about changes not only in Islamic boarding schools, but also in society through various religious activities such as *kompolan* or religious assemblies (Marwiyah, 2016). Thus, fatwas, behavior, and anything else attached to the identity of nyai have a significant influence on society. Therefore, their authority, leadership, and charisma are expected to become social agents in creating change (Jannah & Ida, 2019).

Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School

Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School is located in Guluk-Guluk, Sumenep, Madura, East Java, and was founded in 1887. Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School offers non-formal education institutions such as Madrasah Diniyah and formal education from early childhood education to higher education. Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School also has about ten sections or areas, each with its own name and characteristics. Some adopt the salaf boarding school system and methods, while others have a semi-modern boarding school style (Budi, 2022). Each area is led by a different caretaker, and each area has male and female students. In Area A, the male students are led by Kiai 1, while the female students are led by Nyai (Kiai 1's wife). In Area B, the male students are led by Kiai 2, while the female students are led by Nyai (Kiai 2's wife), and so on. Although led by many kiai and nyai, this is considered a single leadership, because the kiai and nyai are still one big family. Thus, students from one area will continue to respect and obey the orders or teachings of kiai from other areas.

The large number of kiai and nyai who lead Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School has implications for varied and dynamic learning methods, so that students are rich in perspective and responsive to changes of the times. In addition to being boarding school leaders, some of these clerics also work as rectors, lecturers, preachers, politicians, and writers. As such, the Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School has a strong presence in the community and has fostered trust in it. In other words, the Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School has become a religious institution whose decisions influence the religious patterns of the wider community. In many cases, the fatwas and decisions of the Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School determine the establishment of fiqh laws covering fardhu worship and mu'amalah worship. The Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School can be said to have succeeded in presenting itself as an education institution based on science, so that it is used by the community as a process of internalizing the traditions and teachings of Islam (Hafidhoh, 2016).

Islamic boarding schools and gender issues

The term gender refers to the differences between men and women that are formed through social and cultural constructs. Gender encompasses masculine and feminine characteristics that are influenced by cultural values, stereotypes, social symbols, and the process of identity formation. According to Hambali (2017), gender does indeed refer to men and women, but the discussion tends to focus more on women, a scenario caused by the fact that women have long been marginalized in the history and culture of society. Not only that, in the religious sphere, Muslim women also have limited freedom of movement. Gender issues are ideas and movements that take place over a long period of time, because they require constructive and continuous efforts, as well as encouragement from community elements and religious institutions (Hambali, 2017).

One of the most influential religious institutions is the Islamic boarding school. Islamic

boarding schools have long played a significant role in educating the nation and have become part of the subculture within society (Raharjo, 1994). The large number of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, accompanied by the large number of students in each institution, makes Islamic boarding schools an institution that should be taken into account in national development efforts, particularly in the fields of education and morals. Continuous efforts at reform, both in terms of management and academic curriculum, have encouraged Islamic boarding schools to move away from the traditional and old-fashioned image that has long been associated with them (Hambali, 2017). Pesantren, which have long been known as centers for the development and dissemination of Islamic knowledge, are often associated with conservatism, limited intellectual dynamism, and exclusivity, including in their response to feminist values that emphasize gender equality between men and women. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools need to undergo transformation and build a new paradigm in order to change the clichéd views of society towards them. According to Erfan (2018), in an effort to socialize gender issues both within Islamic boarding schools and the wider community, there are two important orientations: first, strengthening the normativity of gender roles that are usually carried out by clerics, female clerics, and teaching staff; second, emphasizing the importance of textuality in the interpretation of gender roles (Efendi, 2020).

Method

This research is qualitative research using interviews to collect primary data, while secondary data consists of articles and similar writings related to the topic. The interviews were conducted in person. The source interviewed was Nyai Fadhilah. Nyai Fadilah is considered the most authoritative figure in describing gender equality in Islamic boarding schools, given that Pesantren Annuqayah has many female teachers. Although Annuqayah nyai as a whole have a pro-gender equality view, some nyai choose to be passive in promoting and campaigning for gender equality issues, either implicitly or explicitly. Other interviews were conducted with female students who are pesantren administrators, who interact directly with Nyai Fadilah on a daily basis.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured technique, in which the main questions asked were based on a prepared outline, and as the interview progressed, additional questions were adjusted according to the flow of information provided by the interviewee. This study used several tools such as mobile phones to record information and writing instruments to highlight points of information that were deemed necessary in order to explore additional information with new questions spontaneously. This study used several feminist theoretical approaches to analyze the two positions of nyai, namely as a housewife and as a caregiver and community leader.

Result and Discussion

1. The Role of Nyai in the Family

In this discussion, the author refers to Marxist (social) and radical feminist theories. Consciously or unconsciously, society has tended to position men in the public sphere and women in the domestic sphere, a pattern that can be found in almost all human civilizations. This pattern has perpetuated social inequality between the sexes, where men are seen as more dominant in public activities, while women are considered superior in household affairs or the domestic sphere. The domestic role refers to everything related to internal household affairs or domestic issues. In other words, the term domestic covers all aspects within the private sphere, both in the context of the family and the internal environment of a country (Azizah, 2021).

One of the important roles played by a nyai is her role within the family, namely as a wife and mother to her children. This role is very vital in family life. Based on an interview with Nyai Fadhilah, it can be concluded that nyai have specific responsibilities in accordance with their position, duties, and functions within the family, which are described as follows:

a. As a Wife

The role of a nyai as a wife who accompanies her husband is not an easy task. This is because most household matters depend on the role of the wife, from serving her husband, breastfeeding her children, caring for her family, and various other responsibilities. The success of a family is often measured by the extent to which a wife is able to contribute to her household. Ideally, every family desires a wife who is perfect in all aspects, because the role of the wife is crucial in creating a harmonious family. This is due to the main responsibility of a wife, together with her husband, which is to maintain the integrity and harmony of the household (Habibullah, 2019). According to Nyai Fadhilah, as a wife, she is not a servant or maid to her husband (kiai), but neither is she a queen who is served and has all her needs fulfilled by her husband. As a wife, rights and obligations are important elements that must be balanced, without positioning themselves as master and slave, but as partners who must complement and complete each other (Habibullah, 2019; F. Hunaini, komunikasi pribadi, 8 Mei 2023).

b. As a Mother

In an interview with researchers, Nyai Fadhilah said that mothers play the biggest role in the family. Even though fathers' contributions are still important and can't be ignored, kids' success in many aspects of life is really influenced by their moms. Moms have the main responsibility for raising their kids, especially during early childhood. Education in this context is not limited to a narrow meaning, but encompasses various dimensions, such as religious, moral, physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and even sexual education. The role of mothers in the process of educating children can be classified into three main tasks: as providers for their children's needs, as role models or figures of authority, and as stimulators of their children's development. Therefore, it can be concluded that children's perception of themselves is greatly influenced by the quality of the interaction between mother and child (Habibullah, 2019). Nyai Fadilah also revealed that her children are always her priority, no matter how busy she is with her work and no matter how many students she has to take care of. Nyai Fadilah also said that as a mother, she never tried to differentiate between her children, and never blamed her children, regardless of what they had done, whether it was considered wrong or right. Nyai Fadilah believes that whatever a child does is the responsibility of their parents, especially their mother (F. Hunaini, interview, 8 Mei 2023).

Caring for children is a difficult task, especially from infancy to age 5, as it involves various complex health aspects. Although it may seem like a small job, caring for children requires extra attention, caution, and a high level of patience. The general view often considers caring for children to be a woman's job, as it is thought to require a feminine attitude. In fact, caring for children is a non-natural task and responsibility, which means it is a shared responsibility for both men and women. Parental responsibility for caring for and educating children remains in effect even if the parents' marriage ends. Child custody is a parental obligation that includes educating, caring for, providing for, and various other tasks, which have no limitations because children are a trust that must be protected and loved. However, he also acknowledged that the role of mothers in the household remains dominant, because in the family, mothers are the figures who have the strongest emotional bonds with family members (Habibullah, 2019)

2. The Role of Nyai in Islamic Boarding Schools

Nyai pesantren refers to nyai who play an active role in Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools provide ample space for nyai pesantren to carry out their roles, including guiding, nurturing, setting an example, and teaching classical Islamic texts and the Qur'an (Hidayati, 2011)t. In this discussion, the author refers to liberal feminist theory, which emphasizes that nyai pesantren (women) have equal rights with men. Thus, the role of nyai is not limited to the domestic sphere, but also includes their involvement in pesantren affairs and the public sphere.

a. Pesantren Economic Management

Financial management in Islamic boarding schools, especially those located in rural areas, often receives little serious attention from their administrators (Habibullah, 2019). This is not

the case at Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School. At Annuqayah, financial management is handled by a board of trustees appointed by the administrator. Those who become administrators, especially the boarding school treasurer, have undergone a rigorous selection process and have earned the full trust of Nyai or the administrators. Several programs are handled directly by the caretaker, including the construction of dormitories and shops or bookstores, but the buying and selling activities are still carried out by students or administrators who have been entrusted by Nyai. However, there are several sources of income or wealth from outside the Islamic boarding school, such as the construction of dormitories, which are funded by assistance from the local community or the guardians of the students. However, the management of incoming and outgoing funds is still managed directly by Nyai or Kiai. The pesantren's special economy, which has become a regular source of income, comes from the annual tuition fees or contributions paid by the santri, which are then used for various pesantren needs, such as electricity costs, building repairs, cleaning, health, and others (F. Hunaini, interview, 8 Mei 2023).

Nyai Fadhilah is a pesantren leader who does not own a lot of land. She is also a daughter-in-law of a family in Annuqayah, but she also has a significant role and is trusted like her husband. The available land is used for the expansion and development of the pesantren. With her innovative attitude, Nyai Fadhilah has succeeded in building strong economic independence. Nyai Fadilah generates additional economic resources for the boarding school by establishing a bookstore and a cooperative managed by the students, which provides student supplies and staple foods. The funds collected were then circulated through other businesses and entered the boarding school's treasury. Thus, with this system of the boarding school for the boarding school, the economic wheel for the benefit of the boarding school continued to turn. Nyai Fadhilah was a figure who had strong independence thanks to her knowledge. With this knowledge, she was included in the category of independent women. Therefore, it is only natural that Nyai Fadhilah plays a dual role: as a housewife on one hand, and as a boarding school caretaker on the other. This dual role often sparks debate, especially when analyzed from a gender perspective (F. Hunaini, interview, 8 Mei 2023).

In addition to managing the pesantren's finances, Nyai Fadhilah sets aside some of the money she receives from Nyabis (disowani) and from various other activities such as kompolan (religious gatherings) in the community. The tradition of nyabis is most evident among nyai in Islamic boarding schools. The more students there are studying at the boarding school, the more parents or relatives of students will perform nyabis for the nyai (Hidayati, 2011). This phenomenon of nyabis becomes more prevalent as the end of the semester approaches and the beginning of the next semester begins. Of course, there are many motives that lead people to perform nyabis. Some ask for blessings so that their children will feel at home at the pesantren, some give nyabis because they want to send their children home from the pesantren, and so on. In terms of quantity, nyabis generates more income than the husband (kiai) because the pesantren is dominated by female students, and the parents of these students will naturally give nyabis to the nyai (as the caretaker of the female students). From this, it can be seen that the role of nyai in Islamic boarding schools, especially in terms of independence and economy in the boarding school environment, is very significant. A nyai has a very large role in these aspects (F. Hunaini, interview, 8 Mei 2023).

b. Nyai's Religious Authority in Islamic Boarding Schools

Nyai's religious authority in Islamic boarding schools is the result of a deep historical, cultural, and spiritual process. In the traditional structure of Islamic boarding schools, Nyai usually appears as the Kiai's companion. However, in some contexts, especially when the Kiai dies or is inactive, Nyai takes over full leadership and demonstrates strong religious authority. For example, Nyai Hj. Sa'adah Abdul Aziz at the Ma'hadul 'Ilmi wal 'Amal (MIA) Islamic Boarding School in Tulungagung demonstrates a flexible yet firm leadership model, with a moderate approach oriented towards the values of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah. Her leadership is analyzed through the 9C perspective (Credibility, Competent, Confident, Commitment,

Creative, Change, Challenge, Consistency, Communication Skills), which confirms Nyai's capacity as a leader in Islamic education (Khoirul Mudawinun Nisa' dkk., 2022).

Meanwhile, Nyai Masriyah Amva from the Kebon Jambu Al-Islami Islamic boarding school in Cirebon built her religious authority through personal piety, scholarship, and steadfastness in leadership. She gained legitimacy not only through her lineage, but also through her charisma and ability to interpret religious texts contextually (Razak & Mundzir, 2019). At the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School in Paiton, Probolinggo, Bu Nyai not only plays a role in the domestic sphere, but is also active in social, economic, and political activities. They advocate for gender equality and empower female students in a progressive manner that is adaptive to the context of society (Noorhayati, 2017).

At Annuqayah itself, Nyai Fadilah built her religious authority through her active role in guiding and providing formal and non-formal education to her students. Nyai directly teaches classical Islamic texts, fiqh, tafsir, tasawuf, and philosophy. Nyai also participates in student activities such as leading prayers for female students, and even in curriculum development and madrasah management. Not only that, agricultural activities and student development activities at the pesantren are directly supervised and guided by Nyai (D. Hakimah, interview, 14 Mei 2025).

3. The Implications of Authority on Gender at Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School

The leadership and authority held by nyai has brought significant changes to gender dynamics in the boarding school environment. Historically, boarding schools have often been very patriarchal spaces. However, the emergence of nyai figures with strong authority has encouraged the transformation of this structure. Nyai leadership has expanded opportunities for women to become involved in the public sphere of the pesantren, and even in the wider community, including in decision-making, education, and da'wah (proselytizing). In this context, pesantren have become spaces that not only educate female students, but also produce religious and progressive female leaders (Suryatama, 2024).

Nyai Fadilah's leadership at the Annuqayah Islamic boarding school presents a model of female religious authority that is strong, transformative, and has a broad impact on gender construction within the boarding school. Contrary to stereotypes of female pesantren leaders as passive or merely supportive, Nyai Fadilah has taken a central role in managing education, shaping the student management system, and nurturing the character of students through an integrated spiritual and managerial approach. Her authority is not merely symbolic, but is manifested in boarding school policies and systems that prioritize the values of equality, independence, and empowerment. For example, drastic changes in student management occurred after she dismantled the old system, which was considered ineffective, and trained administrators to fully understand the organization's vision and mission. As a result, the student leadership became more aware of values and responsibilities (U. Hasanah, interview, 20 Mei 2025).

For example, Nyai Fadilah Hunaini at Annuqayah is known for her dedication to developing a culture of literacy and leadership among students by implementing a study schedule and establishing an organizational structure for the pesantren. Furthermore, Nyai Fadilah's initiative and leadership in strengthening the culture of literacy actively encourages students to increase their interest in reading and writing. She realizes the low interest in reading among our society and strives to overcome this by encouraging students to read books. At the Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School, Nyai Fadilah also implements policies such as providing special rooms for students who want to focus on literacy and giving writing assignments as a form of educational punishment for certain violations. She also sets a minimum reading target of 30 books per year for high school or MA level students (Mustafa, 2023). She emphasizes the importance of continuing the tradition of literacy inherited from the founders of the pesantren, highlighting that from the beginning, this pesantren has not only focused on religious knowledge, but also teaches general knowledge, including mathematics, earth sciences, and

English. Therefore, strengthening literacy is an effective way to combat ignorance, radicalism, racism, and gender inequality (Patoni, 2017b).

Furthermore, in terms of leadership, Nyai Fadhilah is also active in national forums that discuss the role of Islamic boarding schools in strengthening literacy. In the Halaqah Kiai and Nyai forum organized by the Islamic Boarding School Study Center, she presented material on "Literacy-Based Jihad in Islamic Boarding Schools," emphasizing that literacy is an important tool for curbing extremism and strengthening the role of Islamic boarding schools in society. Thus, she has also implicitly become a pioneer and figurehead in leadership in voicing women's rights and involvement in the discussion arena (Patoni, 2017a). In addition, Nyai Fadhilah has also shown concern for environmental issues. At the Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School, she initiated a zero waste program to reduce waste, especially disposable sanitary napkins. This program involves educating students about the importance of protecting the environment and using environmentally friendly products (Halim dkk., 2024).

In addition to her impact on the pesantren environment, Nyai Fadilah's authority also has implications for the community and alumni. Her spiritual and intellectual influence is recognized not only at the local level, but also in international scientific forums. Pesantren alumni also feel her impact in the form of broad insight, strong spirituality, and courage in facing life, including in academic and professional contexts. One of the alumni who can be said to have followed in Nyai Fadilah's footsteps and achieved success in her career is Ulfatun Hasanah, who now serves as the coordinator of Fatayat NU in East Java and is also active in the central LAKPESDAM. Furthermore, Nyai Fadilah instilled the principles of economic empowerment in the students, including women, through activities such as gardening, recycling, and environmental management. The idea that every santri, including female santri, must be independent in society demonstrates her progressive thinking about women's independence (U. Hasanah, interview, 20 Mei 2025).

The independence of women taught by Nyai Fadilah at the Islamic boarding school is demonstrated through several activities, one of which is guiding students and alumni to establish personal gardens that also include herbal medicines, both at the boarding school and in their respective homes. In fact, some of her alumni who were inspired by Nyai Fadilah, such as Supriyati, are now well-known herbalists or traditional healers in the community. There is also Kamilah Eltiha, who is famous for her role in agriculture and her achievements while serving as chair of the Women Farmers Community, especially among women in Sumenep Regency. In the context of gender, this reconstructs the stigma of women as dependent, second-class, marginalized, and shows that women can be agents of social change (U. Hasanah, interview, 20 Mei 2025).

Nyai Fadilah's spiritual authority also plays a major role in shaping the ethics of santri. The ban on social media, for example, is not based solely on a system of punishment, but rather on building spiritual awareness and trust between teachers and students. This marks an approach to education that is based on ethics and relationships, not just vertical authority. The gender relations built by Nyai Fadilah are also very strong in the ethical dimension of santri. The respect shown by the santri towards her, including from senior santri who feel it is inappropriate to sleep in her private room even when asked to do so, reflects a form of respect that stems from leadership that is valued, not feared. This shows that Nyai Fadilah's authority actually strengthens the position of women as respected leaders in the often patriarchal social structure of Islamic boarding schools (U. Hasanah, interview, 20 Mei 2025).

Thus, Nyai Fadilah's authority proves that female leadership in the world of Islamic boarding schools is not only possible, but also capable of changing gender relations towards greater equality, inclusiveness, and civility. Her leadership is a concrete example of how the power of women in the Islamic boarding school tradition can transform social, spiritual, and educational life as a whole towards greater equality.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the role of Nyai in Islamic boarding schools, particularly at Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School, has transcended domestic boundaries and moved toward a broader public sphere, both in religious, educational, economic, and social aspects. Nyai's dual role as a housewife and leader of the Islamic boarding school shows a significant transformation of the patriarchal structure that has been inherent in the Islamic boarding school system.

Nyai Fadhilah, a central figure in this study, proves that female authority in Islamic boarding schools is not an illusion, but a reality built through integrity, scholarship, spirituality, and progressive leadership. She not only leads students in the study of classical Islamic texts, but is also active in boarding school management, independent economic development, strengthening literacy culture, and environmental movements. This authority has a broad influence on the mindset of students and the surrounding community, as well as creating a space for gender equality in the pesantren environment.

Despite ongoing structural and cultural challenges, such as the tendency for society to still view male religious leaders as the main figures, the existence of Nyai Annuqayah has provided a more inclusive and democratic leadership alternative. Gender-based leadership in this Islamic boarding school is not only a form of struggle for women's rights, but also a form of social ijtihad in response to the ever-changing context of the times. In this case, the Annuqayah Islamic boarding school has successfully proven that Islamic boarding schools can be spaces for gender-equitable and transformative religious social change.

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