



Research Article

Women's Leadership in Pesantren in the Modern Era: A Study on the Leadership of Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab

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Women's Leadership in Pesantren in the Modern Era: A Study on the Leadership of Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab

Abstract. This study aims to analyze the leadership style of Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab in developing Pondok Pesantren Al-Lathifiyyah 2 and Al-Wahabiyyah 1 in the modern era. This research uses a qualitative approach with a biographical study type and a multisite design. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, while data analysis is

conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions using a triangulation approach to ensure data validity. The results of the study show that the leadership style of Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab has democratic and participatory characteristics, charismatic qualities, maternal leadership (motherhood leadership), collaborative orientation, and adaptability in balancing traditional pesantren values with the demands of modernity. Her leadership is manifested through deliberative mechanisms, the active involvement of administrators and educators in operational decision-making, and firmness in determining strategic policies of the pesantren. In addition, the practice of delegation of authority and empowerment of administrators allows the pesantren to continue operating effectively even when the caretaker is not always physically present. This leadership is influenced by supporting factors such as public leadership experience, support from the pesantren family, solid internal cooperation, a structured management system, and public trust, as well as inhibiting factors such as time limitations, variations in human resource capacity, and challenges in adapting to modernity. This study concludes that the leadership style of Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab represents a manifestation of adaptive leadership that combines the principles of deliberation, participation, delegation, and service. This leadership model contributes to the realization of effective and sustainable pesantren governance while remaining strongly rooted in Islamic values and pesantren culture.

Keywords: Nyai Leadership, Pesantren, Adaptive Leadership, Islamic Education, Women's Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Women's leadership in Muslim societies continues to be a subject of debate, particularly when associated with religious legitimacy and socio-cultural constructions that develop within society. This debate arises from the assumption that leadership, especially in the public sphere and religious institutions, is normatively more appropriate for men. This view is generally influenced by textual religious interpretations and patriarchal cultures that have become deeply rooted in the social life of Muslims. As a result, the capacity and legitimacy of women as leaders are often questioned, even though empirically women possess competencies, experiences, and contributions that are no less significant than those of men (Putry Raihan, 2015).

In social reality, such understanding has led to limited opportunities for women to actualize themselves in strategic positions, including within Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren). In fact, Islamic history records many female figures who played important roles in the development of education, social affairs, and religious life. Therefore, the debate surrounding women's leadership is not merely normative-theological in nature but is also closely related to social dynamics, culture, and the construction of gender roles that continue to transform along with the development of the times.

From an Islamic perspective, leadership is essentially understood as a social trust that demands justice, moral integrity, intellectual capacity, and responsibility toward the community. Leadership is not interpreted as a symbol of domination or superiority, but rather as a form of devotion and social service that must be carried out responsibly. Debates regarding women's leadership often refer to Q.S. An-Nisa' verse 34, which textually mentions the role of men as qawwam over women:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا ٣٤

Meaning: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given some of them an advantage over others and because they spend from their wealth. Therefore, righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in the husband's absence what Allah would have them guard. As for those women whose disobedience you fear, advise them, abandon them in bed, and (if necessary) discipline them (without causing harm). But if they obey you, seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is Most High, Most Great".

This verse is often interpreted literally as legitimizing male leadership over women in various aspects of life. However, contemporary Islamic scholarship emphasizes that Q.S. An-Nisa' verse 34 must be understood contextually, particularly within the framework of family relations and economic responsibilities, rather than as an absolute ruling that closes the space for women's leadership in public and institutional spheres. Contextual interpretation shows that the verse emphasizes aspects of social responsibility and protection rather than absolute gender superiority (Raihan, 2015).

Islam essentially places men and women in equal positions as servants of Allah who possess the same moral and social responsibilities. This equality is reflected in the principles of justice, trustworthiness, and equal opportunities to contribute to the welfare of the community. Thus, leadership in Islam is determined more by one's capacity, integrity, and ability to carry out responsibilities rather than merely by gender. This perspective opens wider opportunities for women to actively participate in leadership, including within the context of Islamic educational institutions (Walida, 2024).

Along with the development of the times, leadership paradigms have undergone significant shifts. Leadership is no longer understood as a result of natural talent or the dominance of a particular gender, but rather as the result of learning processes, experience, and systematic readiness formed through education and social interaction. In this context, women in the modern era demonstrate significant improvement in education, intellectual capacity, and participation in public spaces. These conditions have encouraged the emergence of female leadership figures in various sectors, including education and religious fields.

Characteristics of women's leadership, such as participatory tendencies, the ability to build interpersonal relationships, sensitivity to social needs, and orientation toward member empowerment, become strategic assets in organizational management. In the context of educational institutions, such leadership styles are considered capable of creating inclusive, collaborative environments oriented toward sustainable human resource development (Akramun Nisa & Andy, 2025). This shows that women's leadership has strong relevance in addressing the challenges of managing educational institutions in the modern era.

Within the pesantren environment, leadership has traditionally been identified with the figure of the kiai as the main authority in scholarly, spiritual, and social aspects. The kiai is viewed as the center of leadership who determines the direction of policies and the development of the pesantren. However, behind this leadership structure, there is the role of the Nyai who makes significant contributions in maintaining the continuity of education and life within the pesantren. The role of the Nyai is not limited to the domestic sphere but also includes managerial, educational, and social functions carried out directly in the daily practices of the pesantren.

Nyai hold strategic roles in guiding students, managing female students' education, and making decisions related to the internal life of the pesantren. In some pesantren, Nyai even become central figures who determine the direction of institutional development, both formally and informally. Recognition of the leadership role of Nyai has grown stronger, one of which is reflected in the decision of the 30th Nahdlatul Ulama Congress in Lirboyo which opened space for the reinterpretation of Qur'anic verses regarding women's leadership and affirmed the legitimacy of women's roles in religious leadership (Fitri & Ondeng, 2022).

One of the Nyai figures who represents women's leadership within the pesantren environment is Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab. She is known as a female pesantren figure who has extensive experience in education, social affairs, and bureaucracy. Her leadership in managing Pondok Pesantren Al-Lathifiyyah 2 (female students) and Pondok Pesantren Al-Wahabiyyah 1 (male students) demonstrates her ability to manage pesantren adaptively amid the challenges of modernization. Her leadership style reflects democratic and participatory principles as well as openness to change without abandoning the fundamental values of the pesantren.

Amid her various activities in the public sphere, pesantren leadership continues to operate through mechanisms of delegation of authority, collective deliberation, and strengthening the role of pesantren human resources. This leadership pattern indicates that the success of a pesantren does not solely depend on a central figure but also on the leader's ability to build a sustainable, collaborative leadership system that is adaptive to change.

Several previous studies have examined the leadership of Nyai in the context of pesantren development. Zahro (2020) found that Nyai leadership contributes to the institutional, physical, and managerial development of pesantren (Zahro, 2020). Meanwhile, Bariroh (2023) emphasized the Nyai leadership model characterized by charismatic, democratic, and motherhood leadership in addressing the challenges of modern pesantren (Bariroh & Arif, 2023). Other studies by Riski (2023) and Oktavia et al. (2023) reveal variations in the typology of Nyai leadership that influence the effectiveness of pesantren management (Riski, 2023; Oktavia et al., 2023). However, most of these studies remain general or comparative in nature and have not examined in depth the leadership practices of a specific female pesantren figure.

Based on this research gap, this study becomes important because it focuses on an in-depth analysis of the leadership style of Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab as a female pesantren figure. This research not only examines the characteristics of her leadership but also analyzes the supporting and inhibiting factors in pesantren development in the modern era. Thus, this study is expected to contribute

theoretically to the enrichment of studies on women's leadership in Islamic education and provide practical contributions for pesantren managers in formulating leadership models that are adaptive, inclusive, and strongly rooted in the spiritual and social values of the pesantren.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm (Pramitha, 2020), aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the practices and meanings of women's leadership in the context of pesantren. The type of research used is a biographical study with a multisite design, focusing on the leadership of Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab in developing Pondok Pesantren Al-Lathifiyyah 2 and Pondok Pesantren Al-Wahabiyyah 1. The selection of a multisite design is intended to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the consistency and variation of the Nyai's leadership style in two different pesantren institutional contexts. The research subjects include the daughter of the Nyai as the main informant, pesantren administrators, male and female teachers (ustadz and ustadzah), students (santri), and internal parties of the pesantren who understand the dynamics of leadership and institutional development.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies to obtain rich and holistic data (Sa'diyah & Fitrah, 2022). Data analysis was carried out interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. The validity of the data was maintained through source and technique triangulation, as well as member checking with key informants (Aishah et al., 2024). This research was conducted by considering research ethics principles, including informant consent, data confidentiality, and respect for the values and traditions of the pesantren.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Leadership Style of Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab in the Development of Pesantren

Based on the results of the research conducted through in-depth interviews, it was found that the leadership style of Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab demonstrates a pattern of leadership that is democratic, charismatic, maternal, collaborative, and capable of balancing the traditional values of pesantren with the demands of modernity. These findings are structured based on five main indicators that represent the characteristics of her leadership in the management of the pesantren, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Karakteristik Kepemimpinan Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab



Figure 1. Leadership Characteristics of Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab

1. Democratic and Participatory

The democratic leadership style is reflected in the active involvement of various elements of the pesantren, ranging from ustadz, ustadzah, to daily administrators, in the policy formulation process. Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab explained that in leading the pesantren, she applies firmness accompanied by democratic principles, particularly through the mechanism of musyawarah (deliberation) in every important decision-making process. According to her, the involvement of various parties is necessary so that the decisions produced truly consider the interests of the pesantren as a whole. This view is reinforced by the explanation of her daughter, LN, who stated that in Ibu Nyai's leadership, every issue and policy is always discussed through deliberation involving various related parties. LN emphasized that although Ibu Nyai is known for her firmness, a democratic attitude remains the main foundation in the decision-making process. In line with this, FA confirmed that administrators are always involved in every pesantren policy process. Furthermore, RIF explained that in the practice of decision-making, Ibu Nyai provides space for administrators to express their opinions and participate actively. However, there are also certain decisions that are principled in nature and remain the absolute authority of the pengasuh together with the keluarga ndalem. This indicates that Ibu Nyai's leadership fosters a democratic participatory culture while maintaining a balance between member involvement and the authority of the pesantren leadership.

2. Charismatic and Exemplary

The charismatic leadership of Ibu Nyai is reflected in her firmness in enforcing pesantren regulations as well as her ability to serve as a moral role model for the entire pesantren community. LN explained that in leading the pesantren, Ibu Nyai firmly establishes clear boundaries regarding behaviors that are permitted and those that are not allowed for the students (santri). This firmness is accompanied by

explanations of educational values, so that the rules function not only as a tool of control but also as guidelines for the moral development of the students.

In addition to her firmness, Ibu Nyai's exemplary character is also reflected in her attitude toward rejection or dislike from certain parties. Ibu Nyai explained that although there are individuals who may not favor her, she chooses not to respond with negative attitudes. Instead, she continues to demonstrate friendliness, openness, and a commitment to maintaining harmonious relationships. This attitude indicates that in her leadership, she prioritizes unity and harmony over conflict.

This explanation is reinforced by RIF, who stated that although there are parties outside the pesantren who do not favor Ibu Nyai, she continues to adopt an inclusive approach and does not respond with harmful treatment. The combination of firmness, authority, and charisma is what makes Ibu Nyai a leader who is not only respected but also regarded as a role model by the students (santri), ustadz, ustadzah, and the wider community.

3. Motherhood Leadership

The maternal aspect of Ibu Nyai's leadership is reflected in her approach to guiding students and administrators with care, protection, and empathy. RIF explained that the leadership style practiced by Ibu Nyai is not coercive or oppressive; instead, it emphasizes a supportive and collaborative approach in maintaining discipline and guiding the students. This leadership system is considered more humane because it positions the students as subjects of guidance rather than merely objects of rules.

This approach demonstrates that Ibu Nyai's leadership is not solely oriented toward obedience to regulations, but also toward emotional development and the cultivation of healthy interpersonal relationships. This maternal characteristic contributes to creating a harmonious atmosphere within the pesantren and strengthens the relationship between the caregiver, administrators, and students.

In addition, RIF also explained that in the decision-making process, Ibu Nyai provides space for administrators to convey criticism and suggestions. This indicates that she understands the dynamics of the field and appreciates input from administrators who are directly involved in the daily guidance and supervision of the students.

4. Collaborative and Delegative Leadership

Ibu Nyai's leadership style also demonstrates strong collaborative practices through structured task distribution, trust in administrators, and the delegation of authority to various divisions. Ibu Nyai explained that managing the students cannot be done individually; therefore, the role of administrators is very important in supporting the processes of guidance, supervision, and fulfilling the students' needs.

This explanation is supported by Daughter of Ibu Nyai, who stated that Ibu Nyai gives freedom and trust to the administrators to be directly involved in managing the students. According to Daughter of Ibu Nyai, this responsibility represents the trust given by Ibu Nyai so that the pesantren can operate optimally through collective work.

In the context of educational policy, Ustadz of Ponpes Al-Wahabiyyah 1 explained that Ibu Nyai does not excessively intervene in curriculum management or

in the selection of teaching staff. She provides full flexibility to those who have been entrusted with these responsibilities, ensuring that the professionalism of the ustadz and ustadzah is maintained. This demonstrates that Ibu Nyai builds leadership based on trust and respect for competence.

Ustadz of Ponpes Al-Lathifiyyah 2 further strengthened this explanation by stating that the collaborative system that has been established allows the pesantren's activities to continue running even when Ibu Nyai is not present at the location. According to TE, the pesantren does not rely solely on the figure of the caregiver, but also on an organizational system and strategy that involves supervisors, mentors, and the ustadz and ustadzah. The clear organizational structure indicates that the delegation of authority has become an integral part of her leadership.

5. Balance Between Tradition and Modernity

The leadership of Ibu Nyai demonstrates a balance between preserving the traditional values of the pesantren and implementing modern management practices. Ibu Nyai explained that the continuity of pesantren values and traditions is maintained through an organizational structure that manages all operational activities of the pesantren, as well as through the roles of supervisors, mentors, and administrators in maintaining the identity of the pesantren. This statement was reinforced by Daughter of Ibu Nyai, who emphasized that the values of the pesantren remain preserved due to the existence of an organizational system that involves various elements in managing the pesantren. At the same time, the division of work by departments and the delegation of authority reflect the implementation of systematic modern management principles. In terms of supervision, Ibu Nyai explained that the responsibility for daily supervision has been delegated to her sons and daughters as well as to the administrators based on divisional responsibilities, especially considering her busy schedule in social and community activities. This explanation is supported by Student of Ponpes Al-Wahabiyyah 1, who stated that the pesantren's supervision system has developed from a division-based pattern to one that also involves Ibu Nyai's children. This combination reflects the continuity of pesantren family traditions while simultaneously adapting to modern managerial models.

The leadership of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab in managing Pondok Pesantren Al-Lathifiyyah 2 and Pondok Pesantren Al-Wahabiyyah 1 is influenced by a combination of supporting and inhibiting factors. These factors interact dynamically and influence the effectiveness, sustainability, and adaptability of leadership practices within the pesantren environment. Identifying these factors is important to understand not only the strengths that support leadership performance but also the structural and contextual challenges that require strategic responses. Table 2 presents a systematic overview of the main supporting and inhibiting factors that characterize the leadership of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab in managing the pesantren.

Table 1. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Leadership of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab in Managing the Pesantren

No.	Aspect	Analytical Description	Factor
1	Personal Leadership	Extensive experience in public office has formed managerial maturity, broad social networks, and	Supporting

		moral legitimacy that strengthen the authority of pesantren leadership	
2	Institutional Support	The involvement of the keluarga ndalem, particularly her sons and daughters, strengthens the supervision system and ensures the continuity of pesantren values and traditions	Supporting
3	Internal Working Relations	Strong cooperation between administrators, ustadz, and ustadzah supports the smooth operation of the pesantren, especially when the caregiver is not directly present	Supporting
4	Pesantren Management System	A clear organizational structure, division of work by departments, and an organized management system support the stability and consistency of pesantren management	Supporting
5	Community Social Support	High public trust strengthens the social legitimacy of the pesantren and increases external support for the leadership of the caregiver	Supporting
6	Caregiver Time Availability	Responsibilities as a public official limit the caregiver's direct involvement in daily supervision and the consolidation of pesantren policies	Inhibiting
7	Human Resource Quality	The uneven capacity of some administrators requires improvement in managerial competence, discipline, and consistency in program implementation	Inhibiting
8	Adaptation to Modernity	The demands of technology, modern management, and the improvement of educational quality require continuous adaptation without losing the identity of the pesantren	Inhibiting
9	Decision-Making Patterns	Dependence on strategic decisions centralized in the caregiver and the keluarga ndalem has the potential to slow institutional innovation	Inhibiting

Based on the results of research conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al-Lathifiyyah 2 and Pondok Pesantren Al-Wahabiyyah 1, it was found that the leadership style of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab demonstrates a distinctive leadership pattern that is adaptive to the context of pesantren. In managing the Islamic boarding school, Ibu Nyai's leadership is characterized by a combination of firmness and democratic principles. She is able to balance openness in involving administrators, ustadz, and ustadzah in the decision-making process through deliberation, while maintaining firmness in establishing rules and strategic policies for the pesantren.

In operational aspects and religious activities, Ibu Nyai provides broad opportunities for participation to the administrators. However, in crucial matters such as determining the direction of pesantren policies, development planning, and the management of strategic educational programs, the final decision remains under the authority of Ibu Nyai together with the keluarga ndalem. This pattern reflects a leadership style that is both participatory and authoritative, applied flexibly according to the context and the level of urgency of the issues faced by the pesantren.

These findings are consistent with the Situational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes that leadership effectiveness largely depends on a leader's ability to adjust their leadership style according to the situation encountered. In stable and routine conditions, democratic and participatory leadership styles are considered more effective, whereas in strategic or crisis situations a firmer and more dominant leadership style is required. In addition, the Democratic vs. Autocratic Leadership Theory also supports these findings by emphasizing that in Islamic educational institutions, a democratic style can increase participation and motivation among members, while authoritative aspects remain necessary to maintain discipline and certainty in strategic decision-making (Karya et al., 2025).

The participatory leadership style is also reinforced by various studies within pesantren environments which show that the involvement of administrators and educators in operational decision-making can enhance organizational effectiveness and foster a more inclusive pesantren culture (Qomar & Muhajir, 2025). Furthermore, a study entitled "Analysis of Leadership Styles in Islamic Education Institutions: Tracing the Typology and Practice in the Midst of Crisis and Global Trends" found that leadership flexibility characterized by the ability to shift between participatory and authoritative styles according to the level of urgency is a hallmark of adaptive and effective leadership in the context of modern Islamic education (Hikmah & Aimah, 2025).

Thus, the leadership style of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab can be categorized as Situational Leadership, which integrates democratic-participatory aspects in operational management and religious activities with authoritative aspects in strategic decision-making. This pattern enables the pesantren to remain responsive to internal dynamics, maintain institutional order, and foster a sense of ownership and participation among all stakeholders.

Furthermore, the leadership of Ibu Nyai in the pesantren also emphasizes the principles of trust, autonomy, and collaboration in institutional management. This is reflected in her attitude of granting autonomy to administrators and madrasa heads to perform their duties professionally without direct intervention. Such a leadership pattern cultivates a sense of responsibility and independence at every organizational level, allowing the pesantren management system to operate in a stable manner.

Although Ibu Nyai cannot always be physically present due to her public responsibilities, learning activities and pesantren management continue to run effectively because of the strong organizational system and the support of the internal administrative structure. This inclusive and non-authoritarian leadership approach creates a harmonious working environment, increases the motivation of administrators and students, and maintains the effectiveness of pesantren governance.

Theoretically, this leadership pattern aligns with the concept of Distributed Leadership, which emphasizes that leadership does not rely solely on a single figure but is distributed among various members of the organization according to their respective roles and responsibilities. In the pesantren context, the involvement of madrasa heads, ustadz, ustadzah, and administrators enables the institution to function effectively even when the main caregiver is not physically present. Research

on pesantren management also confirms that distributed leadership enhances institutional effectiveness and sustainability through the delegation of authority and collective work within the organizational structure (Prasetyo, 2022).

In addition, this leadership practice is also consistent with the Empowering Leadership theory, a leadership style that provides trust and autonomy to subordinates to make professional decisions according to their capacities. By minimizing direct intervention, leaders encourage the growth of creativity, a sense of ownership, and strong commitment among administrators. Studies in madrasas and pesantren indicate that staff empowerment through trust can improve performance, professionalism, and active participation in institutional development (Murwanto & Inharjanto, 2025).

The leadership approach of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab also reflects the principles of Servant Leadership, a leadership model that emphasizes service, empathy, and moral motivation. In this model, leaders do not merely highlight authority but instead focus on empowering others, creating harmony, and strengthening collective commitment. Research within pesantren environments shows that servant leadership can create a positive work climate, enhance collaboration, and maintain institutional stability even when the main leader is temporarily absent (Alfiandy & Eka Wardhana, 2024).

The leadership style of Ibu Nyai can therefore be understood as a combination of distributed leadership, empowerment, and service, supported by a strong organizational structure and a collaborative culture. This pattern not only ensures the effective sustainability of the pesantren but also reflects a modern leadership model aligned with Islamic values, namely trust, togetherness, and collective responsibility.

Furthermore, the continuity of pesantren values and traditions under the leadership of Ibu Nyai has been well maintained through an organized system of management and structured supervision. The management of the pesantren is carried out by internal administrators who are organized into various divisions and formal structures, both in the general administrative domain and in the diniyah education sector. Each division has clear duties and responsibilities, along with a coordination system that allows all activities to run in an orderly and continuous manner.

The supervisory function also operates effectively even when Ibu Nyai is not always physically present within the pesantren environment, through the involvement of divisional administrators and the delegation of authority to her sons and daughters. This pattern reflects a leadership system that is adaptive, collaborative, and based on the delegation of responsibility, thereby maintaining institutional stability and the collective continuity of pesantren values.

Theoretically, this pattern aligns with the concept of Distributed Leadership, in which formal organizational structures and delegated authority enable an institution to function even when the central leader is not always present. A study on student organizational management in pesantren by Heli and Zakiah indicates that student organizations with clear divisional structures and supervisory functions play an important role in maintaining the operational sustainability of pesantren (Alhidayah, 2021).

In addition, this leadership practice is also consistent with the theory of Delegation and Supervisory Control, in which leaders delegate authority to trusted

administrators while still maintaining systematic supervisory functions. Such delegation not only increases a sense of responsibility but also creates space for collective participation that strengthens organizational continuity (Muadin, 2022).

The leadership approach of Ibu Nyai can also be associated with the concept of Adaptive Leadership, which refers to a leader's ability to adjust their leadership style according to the institutional context and needs. In the pesantren context, this adaptation is manifested through the delegation of operational tasks to internal administrators, while the main caregiver focuses on strategic policymaking and safeguarding the core values of the pesantren (Rojiid Arbi Muhyardho & Imamul Muttaqin, 2024).

The leadership style of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab reflects a combination of distributed, delegative, and adaptive leadership supported by a formal and collaborative organizational system. This pattern ensures that the values and traditions of the pesantren are preserved, educational activities run in a stable manner, and institutional sustainability can be collectively maintained even when the caregiver has limited physical presence.

Furthermore, Ibu Nyai applies an open and participatory leadership style by consistently involving administrators who interact directly with students in the decision-making process. Through consultation mechanisms that include collecting criticism, suggestions, and reports from ribaṭh administrators or dormitory heads, she is able to understand the needs and conditions of the students comprehensively. As a result, the decisions taken possess both social legitimacy and practical relevance in the field (Safitri et al., 2025). This openness reflects a distinctive participatory leadership model in contemporary pesantren, where the kiai or nyai retains strategic authority while providing space for deliberation among internal cadres as sources of information and recommendations for operational policies. This model has been shown to increase a sense of ownership among administrators and students and to strengthen policy implementation because decisions are produced through a consultative process (Hariyadi et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the limited direct involvement of Ibu Nyai in daily supervision, as conveyed by informant FN, is consistent with findings from studies examining the relationship between the visibility of caregivers and the effectiveness of delegation systems. When a caregiver holds public responsibilities or external positions, indirect supervision mechanisms through core administrators, regular forums, and periodic reports become effective strategies for maintaining continuity in caregiving without reducing strategic control (Salim et al., 2024).

Charismatic and Exemplary Leadership of Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab in the Development of Pesantren

Theoretically, this leadership pattern can be explained as a combination of Participative Leadership, Distributed Leadership, and the principle of Shura (Syūrah) in the Islamic leadership tradition. This integrated approach enables the pesantren to maintain a balance between the accountability of the caregiver as the final decision-maker and the operational responsiveness of administrators as policy implementers and sources of input (Savira et al., 2024).

As a synthesis of the entire research findings and theoretical discussion, the leadership style of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab can be understood as a form of adaptive leadership that integrates normative Islamic values with modern managerial practices in the context of pesantren. This leadership does not rely on a single approach but rather represents a combination of the principles of deliberation, participation, delegation, and service applied contextually according to institutional needs. The integration of these values and practices enables the pesantren to be managed effectively and sustainably without losing its Islamic and cultural identity.

Table 2. Presents A Synthesis of The Main Principles That Shape The Leadership Style of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab Along With Their Impact on Pesantren Governance

No.	Leadership Principle	Implementation Description	Impact on Pesantren Governance
1	Deliberation	Decision-making is carried out through consultation and consideration of input from administrators, ustadz, and other related parties	Increases decision legitimacy and a sense of collective ownership
2	Participation	Active involvement of administrators and educators in operational management and the guidance of students	The formation of an inclusive and responsive organizational culture
3	Delegation	Delegation of authority to administrators and the pesantren family with clear task distribution	Ensures leadership continuity and institutional stability
4	Servant Leadership	Leadership oriented toward nurturing, empathy, and the empowerment of pesantren members	The creation of harmonious relationships and a conducive pesantren climate
5	Adaptability	Adjustment of leadership style to the context, needs, and challenges of the pesantren in the modern era	The pesantren remains relevant, effective, and rooted in Islamic values and pesantren culture

Thus, it can be concluded that the leadership style of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab represents a manifestation of adaptive leadership that combines the principles of deliberation, participation, delegation, and service. Through the integration of these values, she has successfully established a pesantren governance system that is effective, sustainable, and firmly rooted in Islamic values as well as the cultural traditions of the pesantren.

1. Deliberation

The principle of deliberation (*musyawarah*) serves as the primary foundation in the decision-making system implemented by Ibu Nyai Hj. Mundjidah Wahab. In its implementation, every strategic policy formulation and institutional problem-solving within the pesantren is not carried out unilaterally, but through active consultation forums that involve administrators, ustadz, ustadzah, and other related components. This deliberation-based approach exerts a highly significant impact on pesantren governance, whereby the legitimacy of the resulting decisions becomes immensely

strong and widely recognized. Furthermore, involving various parties successfully fosters a sense of collective ownership among the managers, ensuring that each element assumes full responsibility for the successful execution of the mutually agreed policies (Karya et al., 2025).

2. Participation

The principle of participation represents Ibu Nyai's commitment to establishing an open and inclusive working environment for the entire academic community of the pesantren. The application of this principle is clearly evident in the active involvement of administrators and educators in daily operational management as well as the direct guidance of the students (*santri*). By providing a broad scope of involvement, the governance of the pesantren develops in a more inclusive direction and does not revolve solely around a single figure. The direct impact of this participative model is the formation of an organizational culture that is highly responsive to field dynamics; every daily obstacle faced by the students can be identified and addressed swiftly because the managers at the grassroots level possess the authority and space to take active measures (Qomar & Muhajir, 2025).

3. Delegation

The principle of delegation becomes a highly crucial managerial instrument, particularly in addressing the limitations of Ibu Nyai's physical presence due to her external public responsibilities. This principle is realized through structured task distribution and the transfer of formal authority to the administrative board and the internal circle of the *keluarga ndalem* (her sons and daughters) based on their respective work divisions. The positive impact of this well-organized delegation of authority on organizational governance is the guarantee of leadership continuity and robust institutional stability. The pesantren has proven to remain capable of running all educational programs, supervision, and its organizational wheels independently, consistently, and effectively, even when the main caregiver is not present on-site (Prasetyo, 2022).

4. Servant Leadership

The principle of servant leadership highlights Ibu Nyai's humanistic and highly empathetic interpersonal approach. This leadership style is implemented through concrete actions oriented toward genuine nurturing, protection, deep empathy, and the consistent empowerment of all pesantren members, including both the administrators and the students. In terms of internal environmental governance, the application of this service principle triggers the creation of highly harmonious and friction-free relationships among the caregiver, administrators, and students. The subsequent impact is the construction of a pesantren climate that is conducive, safe, and psychologically comfortable, which in turn boosts the administrators' work motivation and optimally supports the emotional and spiritual development of the students (Alfiandy & Eka Wardhana, 2024).

5. Adaptability

The principle of adaptability reflects Ibu Nyai's flexibility as well as firmness in responding to the demands of the times through a situational leadership model. The implementation of this principle is demonstrated by her ability to adjust her leadership approach, shifting flexibly between a participative-democratic style for

daily operational matters and an authoritative-firm style for principled policies in accordance with the context, needs, and challenges of modernity. The long-term impact of this adaptability on pesantren governance is that the institution remains relevant, competitive, and effective amidst the current of management and technological modernization. Remarkably, this managerial flexibility is successfully applied without sacrificing the nobility of traditional Islamic values and the authentic cultural identity that forms the root of the pesantren's strength (Rojiid Arbi Muhyardho & Imamul Muttaqin, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The leadership style of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab in managing Pondok Pesantren Al-Lathifiyyah 2 and Al-Wahabiyyah 1 demonstrates distinctive and adaptive characteristics. Her leadership is reflected in the integration of democratic and participatory principles, charismatic role modeling, a maternal approach (motherhood leadership), as well as structured practices of collaboration and delegation. Through deliberative mechanisms (musyawarah), the active involvement of administrators and educators, and firmness in making strategic decisions, she is able to maintain a balance between participatory openness and leadership authority. This pattern enables the pesantren to remain responsive to internal dynamics while maintaining order, discipline, and the continuity of traditional pesantren values amid the demands of modernity.

Furthermore, her leadership is also influenced by a combination of supporting and inhibiting factors that interact dynamically. Supporting factors such as her experience in public leadership, the support of the pesantren family, strong cooperation among administrators and ustadz, a structured management system, and high public trust strengthen the effectiveness of her leadership. Meanwhile, time constraints due to public responsibilities, uneven human resource capacity, challenges in adapting to modernity, and certain patterns of decision-making represent inhibiting factors that require strategic responses. Overall, the leadership style of Hj. Mundjidah Wahab can be understood as a manifestation of adaptive leadership that integrates the principles of deliberation, participation, delegation, and service, thereby enabling the establishment of effective and sustainable pesantren governance while remaining firmly rooted in Islamic values and pesantren culture.

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