

**Network of Women's Power in Islamic Education Institution  
(A Case Study at Nur Medina Pondok Cabe  
Islamic Boarding School)**

**Isman Iskandar\*<sup>1</sup>, Sri Widyastr<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an (IIQ) Jakarta

e-mail: [isman@iiq.ac.id](mailto:isman@iiq.ac.id), [widi@iiq.ac.id](mailto:widi@iiq.ac.id)

*Abstract*

The phenomenon of gender equality in Indonesia in recent times has attracted public attention, both at the local, regional, national and international levels. This discourse has become a discourse that is considered crucial in the social system. An interesting phenomenon is the appearance of a woman who gets a leadership space in power networks in Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools. This research focuses on the leadership of women in an Islamic educational institution, especially in Nur Medina Islamic Boarding School. This type of research is descriptive qualitative research which tries to parse a wider range of the object of study so that it gets a more comprehensive understanding, while the theory used is feminist theory and integrates it with Islam. While the data sources in this study are primary and secondary data. Primary data, the authors conducted interviews and direct observations. Secondary data are in the form of: articles and books related to the concept of leadership. The data analysis techniques are data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions and verification. The results showed that the Nur Medina Islamic boarding school was led by a woman who was familiarly called *Bu Nyai*. A title of respect given by the social community to a woman who has knowledge in the realm of religion, both the literal understanding of the verses of the Koran as well as the ability to memorize His verses *mutqin* as well as strong theological understanding.

*Keywords: Leadership, Gender, Theological, and Socio-Cultural.*

*Abstrak*

Fenomena kesetaraan gender di Indonesia dalam beberapa waktu terakhir telah menarik perhatian publik, baik di

tingkat lokal, regional, nasional dan internasional. Wacana ini telah menjadi diskursus yang dianggap krusial dalam sistem sosial. Fenomena yang menarik adalah dengan tampilnya seorang perempuan yang mendapatkan ruang pemimpin dalam jejaring kekuasaan di lembaga pendidikan Islam seperti di Pondok Pesantren. Penelitian ini memokuskan pada kepemimpinan perempuan dalam sebuah lembaga pendidikan Islam khususnya di Pondok Pesantren Nur Medina. Jenis penelitian ini yaitu penelitian kualitatif deskriptif yang mencoba mengurai lebih luas objek kajian sehingga mendapatkan pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif, sedangkan teori yang digunakan adalah teori feminis dan mengintegrasikannya dengan Islam. Sedangkan sumber data dalam penelitian ini yaitu data primer dan sekunder. Data primer, penulis melakukan wawancara dan observasi langsung. Data sekunder berupa: artikel dan buku yang berkaitan dengan konsep kepemimpinan. Adapun teknik analisa data dengan reduksi data, penyajian data, penarikan kesimpulan dan verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ponpes Nur Medina dipimpin oleh seorang perempuan yang akrab disapa *Bu Nyai*. Sebuah gelar penghormatan yang diberikan oleh masyarakat sosial kepada seorang perempuan yang memiliki keilmuan dalam ranah agama, baik pemahaman terhadap literal ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an juga kemampuan menghafal ayat-ayat-Nya secara *mutqin* serta paham teologis yang begitu kuat.

*Kata kunci: Kepemimpinan, Gender, Teologis, dan Sosial-Kultural*

## INTRODUCTION

The existence of a leader and a spirit of leadership in an Islamic educational institution is very important. Like a vehicle if it is not run by a reliable driver, the vehicle will not function optimally. As with Islamic educational institutions, if they do not have a qualified leader, the educational institution will be stagnant and shaky. Thus, the progress and retreat of an Islamic educational institution is very dependent on the figure of a leader. Moreover, the existence of Islamic education is present in the midst of the Muslim community to invite and lean back on Islamic principles at a time when globalization, commoditism, and materialism is current.

As already mentioned by Sri Widyastris and Isman Iskandar in their

research, it explains that scientific progress must be accompanied by improved management so that Islamic education institutions are of high quality and able to compete in this modern era. With their various contents and modifications, these institutions become the mainstay institutions for Muslims in the process of Islamic learning and education. This proves that Islamic educational institutions in the Islamic world are able to survive and adapt to the current modernization of education that is sweeping most of the Islamic world (Widyastr & Iskandar, 2020, p. 17).

Syamsul Nizar in his book *Educational Leadership in the Perspective of Hadith: A Historical Study of Philosophy*, concludes that it is said to be a leader if he has the power to influence others under his leadership. Nizar further explains that leadership is an art as well as a strategy and technique in managing some people to have the desire to work to achieve a goal (Nizar & Hasibuan, 2019, p. 4). Thus, it can be concluded that a patriarchal man and a feminist woman have the opportunity to become a leader if he has the *ideology* and *power* that becomes an attraction to influence other people or groups. According to Bradley E Wiggins, ideology can arise from individuals, but has the power to influence social life (Wiggins, E, 2003, p. 25). Branston and Stafford separate the meaning of ideas and ideology, according to him that ideas exist in a person and do not have social power (Branston & Stafford, 2010, p. 172). In influencing others, it is not enough to use ideas alone, but ideology which has cohesive power, values and beliefs and shows the idea where power is channelled. Controversy also colours the discourse about the status of a woman's leadership, why? This is because the traditions of the feudal system and the Dutch system have taken root in Indonesia, which has been prevalent for thousands of years being dominated by men.

As according to Xintong Lu in his research *The Barriers, Facilitators, and Solutions for Women in Educational Leadership Roles in a Chinese The University* concluded that women have the *contributor* domination the field of education, but there are still few women who are leaders in education representation. Research conducted at the Chinese University criticized that in the Chinese context, the feudal system that forces women to not contribute to leadership, such as in research and research institutions, is due to facilities. The effect is the absence of equality *gender* in educational leadership (Lu, 2020, p. 7). It cannot be denied that in the world of education, especially Islamic education, the presence of women is an important element. This may be due to the strength of theological dogma in

Islam. As in *mahfudzah* (a mother becomes the first school for her children). Thus, the process of Islamic education is more identical to the teaching of a woman by not denying the presence of men.

Islamic education in the informal realm, namely the role of parents is very important and main, the role of the mother as a figure who is pregnant, giving birth, raising and educating children from childhood is the main carriage for the child's education. Thus it is no longer common for a woman to exist in the world of education, especially in Islamic education. Even though the leadership of a man is more dominant than the leadership of women in education, it does not rule out the possibility of women becoming leaders as well. This is because the discourse one quality *gender* regardless of social background continues to be promoted by several groups who are pro-feminism.

A study conducted by Rahma Abdulkadir and Henriette Muller in their article concluded that substantially, the United Arab Emirates has increased the socialization of women in public life. However, women's leadership in the public sphere still lags behind what other countries have achieved. Women who hold leadership positions in the political, economic and community spheres cannot be separated from their socio-economic backgrounds because the nature of women's leadership in Emirates is still very complex (Abdulkadir & Müller, 2020, p. 80). But a survey conducted by Rana Al-Mutawa found that out of 350 Emirati women there were 93 people who wanted or might want to become leaders (Al-Mutawa, 2020, p. 56).

Furthermore, Laila Prager in her journal *Women Leaders in the Cultural Sector* stated that although the term female leadership has become fashionable in public and government discourse, women leaders are forced to navigate between the discourse of state feminism and conservative gender roles that are still prevalent in the Emirates (Prager, 2020, p. 12). Such as the women's leadership agency that occurred in Saudi Arabia (Karolak & Guta, 2020). This is because building a feminist identity is often an uphill battle, because women face resistance from a country that is not gender neutral and patriarchal (Sedghi, 2020, p. 32). The author highlights in this discussion how the depiction of women's leadership status becomes controversial. The controversy stems from western countries that uphold human rights and gender equality with the United Arab Emirates, especially Saudi Arabia, where women's leadership has met with resistance from a country that is not gender neutral and patriarchal.

It is different from the situation of gender equality in Indonesia, even though the government has facilitated Indonesian women to be actively involved in women's leadership in the realms of education, politics, economy and socio-society but they still face resistance from several groups such as from themanhaj *salafiyah*, local cultural traditions, as well the majority of Muslim scholars also reject the argument of *naqly* and *aqly*.

In a modern context, there is also a contra to the status of women's leadership, as explained by Wahid in his research on the *Discourse of Leadership in Islamic Perspective* that many modern thinkers also reject the ideas of classical scholars related to prohibition of women from becoming leaders (Wahid, 2020, p. 85).

A study conducted by Harun AR and Maria Qibtiyah in *Women's Leadership: The Role of Women in Networking Power In Pondok Pesantren Aqidah Usumuni Terate Pandian Sumenep* concluded that there are opportunities that can be obtained in the open space for women to gain power and lead in Islamic boarding schools, because women's leadership is based on two things, namely; kinship and matrilineal systems as well as public awareness of equality *gender* (Harun, 2014, p. 25). Thus, because kinship is an important and main factor behind the emergence of women leaders, because women leaders have strong kinship, these women have created local oligarchs. Some of the research above is the author's attention to examine more deeply how the Women's Power Network in Islamic Education Institutions. To limit the scope of the research, this study was conducted at the Nur Medina Legoso Ciputat Islamic boarding school.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In accordance with the focus of the study, this research is a research field, by conducting research at the Nur Medina Islamic Boarding School, Legoso, Ciputat, South Tangerang area, it is very relevant to use phenomenological and sociological approaches which are used as cognitive frameworks in this research process. This research is very relevant to qualitative research which focuses on social phenomena because it involves the interpretation, experience, feelings and perceptions of the subject under study.

While phenomenology, the use of this approach - according to its character, requires researchers as a key instrument to go to the field in sufficient time, Phenomenology requires researchers to unite with research subjects and supporting subjects (Muhadjir, 1996, p. 25). Look closely at the individual's interpretation of his own experiences (Marguerite & G. Lodico, Dean T.

Spaulding, 2006, p. 148). Meanwhile, the sociological approach pays attention to the relationship between interaction and social construction. (Michael S. Northcott, tt, p. 193). In order for this research to be able to explore data completely and holistically, in-depth interview techniques (in-depth interview), observation and documentation are used simultaneously. Interviews were conducted with caregivers and leaders of the Nur Medina Islamic Boarding School, teachers, students, and the local community.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Criticism of Feminism

Moh Khuza'I criticizes the entry of feminism. According to him, feminism must be treated critically, because from a historical perspective it does not make women better and more respectable in their lives. Khuza'I also criticized gender insiders who often show facts to the public about the backwardness of women and oppression. Furthermore, Khuza'I compared Islamic concepts such as the concepts of fitrah and amanah, he tried to prove that it was true that Islam had a bias towards one of the concepts being debated (Khuza'i, 2012, p. 102).

Feminism was born in Western civilization with a socio-historical condition that was not necessarily the same as the condition of Eastern women, especially Islam. However, the claim of implementing gender equality as the only solution to the backwardness of Eastern women, turns out to be accepted without criticism and control (Arif, 2008, p. 103). It is not uncommon for these demands to be accompanied by accusations that the shari'a that has reached us today is not what God intended, but the fabrication of a patriarchal culture through mufassir and fuqahâ 'to perpetuate its hegemony (Sofia et al., 2020, p. 2).

Related to the reinterpretation of the meaning of hadith about women's reason and religion. Ibn Hajar Ansori in the journal *Intellect and Religion of Women (Perspective of the Prophet's Hadith and Psychology)* concluded that the Prophet Muhammad stated that most of the inhabitants of hell were women because they lacked reason and religion, textually there was gender discrimination and there was an element of misogyny in the saying, considering women's intelligence under male intelligence. In fact, if examined from the contextual, women experience hormonal changes and their adjustments to the menstrual cycle which affect some reason functions and have an impact on their daily activities (Ansori, 2019, p. 9). The concept of equality first departs from the theological proposition that humans before God have the same status and duty, namely as servants on

the one hand and as khalifah on the other. This fact has implications for the theological framework in social space. This is in accordance with the argument of the Koran that humans are God's creation who from the beginning are born in a different state; gender, ethnicity and nationality (Thalib, 2020, p. 152).

Javanese philosophy even mentions women as '*konco wingking*' whose duties are only about three meters, namely *macak*, cooking, and *manak*. This assumption is reinforced by the existence of verses from the Koran and the Hadith of the Prophet about women that are biased and interpreted from one side of interest (Novianti, 2008, p. 2). Distinguishes between gender and sex (gender). According to him, gender includes traits that exist in men and women that are socially and culturally constructed through a long process (Alfian Rokhmansyah, 2016, p. 9). Dialectics on the issue of gender equality also attracted the attention of fascism experts. One of them is Maxine Molyneux in *Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua*, divides gender interests into two, namely: practical gender interests and gender strategic interests. The practical importance of gender (gender practical interest) include a series of programs that seek to meet the needs and optimize the role of women in the context and specific objectives, while gender strategic interests (strategic gender interests) seeks to overcome the backwardness of women in society by creating more gender-just structures between men and women (Molyneux, 1984, p. 9). In the historical record of human civilization, the problem of social injustice often leads to women. This injustice makes women only placed in domestic roles such as; household chores and reproduction alone, such as bearing and raising children. This certainly disturbs and hinders them, namely women, from enjoying the public world and production. In the course of culture and traditions that symbolize, label or stereotype women, they are deeply rooted in the minds of the people. Society has a strong role in shaping these stereotypes. In fact, the dependence of women on men is quite large.

This dependence, according to the authors, is very toxic. Especially in the case of women under the power of men. The power of a patriarchal husband does have more reason and religion than a woman. On the other hand, women have the authority and opportunity to get the same portion and position as men. For example, women may pursue their dreams by continuing to receive higher education, women can have professional careers to get the same salary and rights as men, and there are many other positions and portions that can be obtained by a woman.

So, the authors conclude that the hadith when examined in psychology does not have an element of misogyny because contextually women have menstrual cycles of up to a week or two weeks. In that vulnerable time, women experience physical and psychological weakness because they excrete too much blood. However, things will return to normal if you skip the menstrual cycle. Thus, it is very ironic if some people who act in the name of religion loudly say that women should be at home, only serve their husbands, do housework and take care of children. In fact, this person does not comprehensively understand his own religion and has put aside the values of humanism in socializing society, especially towards women.

### **Discourses on Leadership**

Today, leadership in an Islamic education institution, organizations, agencies, companies, regional, provincial and presidential leaders is in the spotlight by the public. The number of cases such as: abuse of office, drug use, corruption, nepotism, ex-convicts and sexual harassment and other negative cases committed by some of these leaders. This has provoked the public and students to take to the streets to question the quality of his leadership. To shorten this discussion, the author will present several leadership models and integrate them with the Al-Qur'an and Hadith. The goal is that prospective leaders can understand and improve their *skills* leadership so that they avoid negative things as the authors mentioned above.

### **Leadership models**

Experts have developed various models of approaches. Like Hellriegel and Slocum. They divided the leadership model into three forms, namely: 1) the model properties (*traits model*) that focuses on the personal characteristics of the leader, 2) a *behavioural model* that focuses on the actions of the leader, and 3). a *contingency model* that assesses the relationship between the characteristics of the situation and the behaviour of a leader (Hellriegel & Slocum, 1973, p. 7). In the John D. Millet trait approach, there are four characteristics that leaders need to have, including: the ability to see the organization as a whole, the ability to make decisions, the ability to delegate authority and the ability to instil loyalty. In contrast to Keith Dabis in Bintoro Tjokroamnoto requires four kinds of superior traits that need to be possessed by leaders, including: intelligence, maturity and breadth of social views, motivation from within the individual to have an

interpretation and have the ability to establish human relationships (Djoakrominoto, 1985, p. 12).

From the opinion of these experts, the author can conclude that there are at least five traits that need to be attached to a leader, namely: high and comprehensive scientific insight, a critical attitude and prioritizing reason rather than feeling in a problem.

### **Women's Leadership in Islamic History**

Since Islam was brought by the Prophet Muhammad as a message, it has given women a noble status. Because the patriarchal nature of men before Islam made women like trash, slaves, and satisfying male passions. When Islam came the attitude of the eligator was abolished. Issues related to the obligation to *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* are also borne by women. This obligation is recognized equally for both men and women. As a simple example, the naming of Ratu Saba is proclaimed in the Koran. How lucky the queen of Saba is because her name and kingdom are immortalized in the Qur'an. We have seen that the queen of Saba had the brilliance of leading, the intelligence of her mind and the highly intelligent advisor. Even around the Queen of Saba's kingdom, there are two gardens as a symbol of the beauty of the kingdom. It is contained in Surah Saba paragraph 15.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَا فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ جَنَّتَانِ عَنْ يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ كُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَشْكُرُوا لَهُمْ بَلَدَهُ طَيِّبَةً وَرَبُّ غَفُورٌ

Meaning: *was, for the people of Saba there was a sign (power of God) in their residence hich s two gardens on the right and on the left. (To them it is said): "Eat by you from the sustenance (bestowed by) your Lord and give thanks to Him. (Your country) is a good land and (your God) is God the Most Forgiving.*

The verse textually tells about the *Sabaeen* people where they have a queen named Queen Saba who is very wise in leading. So that Allah SWT bestows two gardens on the right and left as a *reward* for the prosperity of the country which is led by a woman. According to the Quraish Shihab that the Koran is also very fair to women, this is seen from the naming of its chapters with the names of women, the Koran upholds the dignity of women and provides aspirations for women's struggles. An example of a human woman who has won a position as the leader of a country is Ratu Balqis who has a country called the country of Saba (Shihab, 2018, p. 208).

The opinion that developed about women's leadership in the discourse of classical Islamic thought was still very much influenced by the culture and understanding that was dominant at that time, so it was not surprising that their products of thought were still in favor of men's interests. Today's women have

ample opportunity to take part in all fields, including to become leaders. This is in no way contradicting the teachings of Islam because the Koran does not differentiate between humans except for their acts of worship. (Novianti, 2008). Even if educated women do not get a seat to lead, on the one hand women have a role that is not exposed but has a great influence (Mufidah et al., 2020, p. 17).

### **Analysis of the Establishment of Nur Medina Nur Medina**

Islamic boarding school has a history that is almost the same as that of Islamic education institutions in general. This means that the initiation of this institution originated from anxiety, an explosion of motivation, and a glimmer of inspiration from its founders in advancing Muslims in the world of education. Although this inspiration experiences considerable obstacles and obstacles, with joy it can develop rapidly. This happened at the Nur Medina Islamic Boarding School. Starting in 2004, it only had 3 students. The place is very limited, namely in the residence of Ustadz H. Endang and his wife Hj. Arbiah Mahfudz. The house is still a rented house which may only be enough to accommodate a small family of husband and wife and two children.

Even though obstacles are in front of their eyes, the enthusiasm of Ustadz Endang and Hj Arbiah Mahfudz has not subsided. Armed with seriousness, they both devoted themselves to fostering and forming community cadres. Until 2005 the number of students studying at their rented houses increased to 50 people. A positive response also accompanied their da'wah struggles until news of their recitation was widely spread in the community. This was proven by the fact that during 2006-2012 the recitation was growing rapidly accompanied by extensive land expansion. The naming of the Nur Medina Islamic Boarding School (PPA) was their choice for the *pesantren*. This naming is not just that, but in the background by a spiritual journey that was very memorable for them.

Arbiah Mahfudz complements that in 2020, Nur Medina's santri if combined with his orphaned santri for women only 70 people, around 30 men, around 150 people (Interview Arbiah Mahfudz, 14 July, 2020). Based on the spirit of his pilgrimage from Medina, Al-Munawwarah can be maintained in his efforts to apply his knowledge to the community. The philosophy of the word Nur Medina (Nurul Madinah) was also taken from the Prophet's hijrah from the city of Mecca to the city of Medina, which was the beginning of opening up his way of sharing. Medina became the center of preaching and Islamic civilization. The Prophet's Hijrah changed the Jahili culture to an Islamic culture. After returning

from their spiritual journey, the search for a more adequate place was carried out, the naming of Majelis Ta'lim Al-Husana is now replaced by Nur Medina because the journey of the spirit of the pilgrimage to Medina Al-Munawwarah can be maintained in their efforts to apply their knowledge to the community (Basith, 2017, p. 17).

### **Arbiah Mahfudz Leadership Network**

In the process of developing his education, not only the people around Puncok Cabe enjoy the teaching of the Koran that is applied, students and female students across provinces who are studying at the Institute of Al-Qur'an Sciences (IIQ) Jakarta, UIN Syarif, PTIQ, UMJ also experienced the Koran education. This is the impact of the role of a woman Arbiah Mahfudz as the founder of Nur Medina as well as an alumnus of the Institute of Al-Qur'an Science (IIQ) Jakarta. IIQ Jakarta Private Islamic Religious College that very concerned about deep Islamic values community development. This can be seen from the mission, vision and people who want to advance and be prominent together with religious people who ground the Al-Qur'an (Widyastri, 2018, p. 58).

Arbiah Mahfudz is an alumni who tries to internalize the values of the Koran to be practiced, the Koran recitation in her home becomes a forum for preaching the knowledge she gets. The role of Arbiah Mahfudz in supporting her husband's missionary mission is also inseparable from her knowledge, charismatics, and attitudes. This charismatic attitude is what attracts female students, Nur Medina, who makes Arbiah Mahfudz the head of the management of female students.

Arbiah Mahfudz also has very close kinship with the famous ulama in Indonesia, namely DR. KH. Akhsin Sakho Muhammad. Arbiah Mahfudz is still in the same family, namely cousin and brother-in-law with Akhsin Sakho. Akhsin Sakho Muhammad himself is a rare expert on the Science of the Koran. Not only memorizers of Al-Quran, Expert Tafseer is also an expert on Qiraat Science. Caretaker of the Dar Al-Quran Islamic Boarding School and the Advisory Board of the Dar Al Tauhid Islamic Boarding School in Arjawinangun District, Cirebon Regency, to print memorizers of the Al-Qur'an and the generation of qur'ani. Served as the Council of Al-Quran Experts at the Center for Al-Quran Studies and a member of the Ministry of Religion's Department of Religion of the Pentashih Al-Quran Lajnah.

Dar Al-Tauhid Arjawinangun Islamic Boarding School Cirebon This pesantren was founded by KH Sanawi bin Abdullah bin Muhammad Salabi, KH

Syathori's father. The exact year it was founded is not known, but it is likely in the early decades of the twentieth century, because KHA Syathori's return from a quest for knowledge was recorded in 1932. At that time, the activities of the pesantren had been started by his father several years earlier. The first caretaker of this pesantren is KH. Sanawi bin Abdullah, then KH. A. Syathori until 1969. When KH. A. Syathori died on May 19, 1969, the age of his son (KH. Ibnu Ubaidillah) was only 20 years old and was in the learning process, so for the time being the control of the pesantren was shared by KH's son-in-law. A. Syathori, namely KH. A. Baidlowi, KH. Muhammad Asyrofuddin and KH. Mahfudz Thoha, Lc. [32]

Thus, Arbiah Mahfudz still has a family relationship with the founder of the Dar Al-Tauhid Arjawinangun pesantren Cirebon. So the authors conclude that Arbiah Mahfudz's leadership has a kinship network system with contemporary Nu scholars who are also their families. This has had a very positive impact both historically and sociologically for Arbiah Mahfudz's leadership because it strengthens his professionalism in leading a pesantren. So it could be that Nur Medina pesantren would be famous and well-known throughout the country.

#### **Arbiah Mahfudz's leadership challenges and opportunities**

In the midst of the demands of today's globalization, Islamic education institutions, both formal, non-formal and informal must have a status. The status includes how the institution exists with ownership status. Ownership status of Islamic educational institutions is very important and main. Because this is the point of the government in assessing an Islamic education institution whether it is feasible to operate or not. If the land status of an Islamic educational institution is still in dispute with other parties, this is a challenge for the leader of the institution. Likewise, the opening of formal schools in Islamic educational institutions must meet the document requirements related to land, students, teaching staff and infrastructure. This was also experienced by Arbiah Mahfudz. According to him, there must be opportunities and challenges, the opportunity is because Nur Medina is increasingly in demand but on the other hand Nur Medina has to spread her wings

*"Nur Medina uses the kinship system in management like an old person looks after the younger one. we will open a formal school next year and start managing the administration."* (Arbiah Mahfudz, 14 October 2020).

Thus, Arbiah Mahfudz's leadership system is kinship. He also did not burden the students who wanted to enter Nur Medina because those who were admitted to Nur Medina would definitely experience natural selection. Those who survive will continue who do not survive will naturally retreat. One of the things that is interesting at Nur Medina is the obligation to pray in congregation for students, this spiritual value is very much emphasized so that it can become a provision for the students if they leave Nur Medina. In the midst of Arbiah Mahfudz's leadership, this 41-year-old figure has *power* and *ideology* a very strong in the midst of the santri, even though his age is fairly old but the power to influence his subordinates is quite high. As in the interview with Arbiah Mahfudz;

*"I have 4 children, the fourth is still 2 years old, I gave birth to this fourth child at the age of 41 years and I am now 43 years old. Although some people say that at 41 years of age, it is very prone to give birth, Alhamdulillah, I am fine."*  
(Arbiah Mahfudz, 15 October 2020)

One of Arbiah Mahfidz's challenges in her leadership is that she has to take care of her baby who is still a toddler. Intensive attention from the mother is needed by the toddler. The figure of mother and leader is firmly attached to Arbiah Mahfudz. With this persistence, he also brought success in his child's education. The first child has finished school in Kudus and is continuing on to college. The author witnesses first hand that Arbiah Mahfudz has a charismatic power that is not possessed by female leaders in general, when the author mentions her name in front of people who know her, they are very respectful and call her *bu Nyai*. A symbol and sign to indicate that the object has a very meaningful meaning, *bu Nyai* is a title given by society, family, and relatives to people who have deep religious knowledge and are known for their knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

This article concludes that women's leadership in Islamic education institutions is needed to improve the quality of women and eliminate patriarchal attitudes in institutions. Arbiah Mahfudz is a charismatic female leader at the Nur Medina Islamic Boarding School. Arbiah Mahfudz's leadership proves that there is gender equality and a network of women's power and potential that exceeds men's potential in terms of leadership.

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