

Women's Spiritual Leadership as a Driver of Visionary Leadership for Sustaining Educational Quality: A Case Study of a Salafi Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT. This study examines how women's spiritual leadership functions as the driving force of visionary leadership in sustaining the quality of Islamic educational institutions within the context of a Salafi Islamic boarding school. While previous studies have separately explored spiritual leadership, visionary leadership, women's leadership, and educational quality, limited attention has been given to the interrelationship among these constructs, particularly in faith-based educational settings. This study employed a qualitative single-case study with an abductive research approach at Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh Lirboyo, Kediri, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Bu Nyai Noer Channah Zamzami Mahrus, family members, teachers, administrators, alumni, and students, complemented by participant observation and document analysis. Data were analyzed iteratively through thematic analysis, integrating empirical findings with relevant theoretical perspectives to enhance analytical rigor and credibility. The findings reveal that women's spiritual leadership serves as the foundation of visionary leadership through four interconnected roles: setting institutional direction, acting as an agent of change, serving as an organizational spokesperson, and developing future leaders through continuous mentoring. These leadership roles collectively strengthen organizational culture, reinforce the institutional identity of Qur'an memorization, and sustain educational quality by internalizing shared spiritual values. The study further demonstrates that women's leadership legitimacy within a patriarchal Salafi environment is primarily derived from spiritual authority, moral integrity, and religious competence rather than formal organizational power. This study extends the literature by integrating Spiritual Leadership Theory and Visionary Leadership Theory into a unified conceptual framework, proposing that spiritual leadership serves as the ethical and motivational foundation of visionary leadership, thereby sustaining educational quality in Islamic educational institutions. The findings also offer a contextual contribution to women's leadership scholarship by demonstrating how spiritual authority enables women to exercise strategic leadership within faith-based organizations.

Keywords: *Educational Quality; Spiritual Leadership; Visionary Leadership; Women's Leadership*

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INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership has become one of the most influential determinants of institutional quality amid rapid educational, social, and technological changes (Hariyanti et al., 2025; Nurjanah et al., 2026; Mufron & Purwanto, 2026; Hefniy et al., 2026). Educational institutions are increasingly expected not only to improve academic performance but also to develop organizational resilience,

ethical governance, and sustainable institutional cultures that can respond to evolving societal needs (Fisher, 2016; Asrin et al., 2022; Adeoye et al., 2025). Consequently, leadership is no longer understood merely as an administrative function but as a strategic process through which organizational vision, institutional values, and educational quality are continuously developed. Recent studies have emphasized that effective educational leaders drive sustainable improvement by aligning organizational goals with shared values, fostering stakeholder commitment, and encouraging continuous organizational learning (Firmansyah et al., 2022; Bakker et al., 2023). These developments suggest that educational quality depends not only on managerial competence but also on leadership approaches that inspire long-term institutional commitment.

Within this evolving discourse, spiritual leadership has attracted increasing scholarly attention because it integrates ethical values, intrinsic motivation, and organizational purpose into leadership practice (Reave, 2005; Fry et al., 2005; Crossman, 2010; Neimann et al., 2017). Unlike conventional leadership models that primarily emphasize authority, control, and performance, spiritual leadership centers on spirituality, moral integrity, and service in organizational decision-making (Rafsanjani, 2017; Amin, 2024). Previous studies have demonstrated that spiritual leadership strengthens organizational commitment, improves institutional performance, and promotes sustainable organizational development through shared values and ethical behavior (Asrin et al., 2022; Ruhullah & Ushama, 2025; Muslihah et al., 2025). Nevertheless, existing studies generally conceptualize spiritual leadership as an independent leadership approach that directly influences organizational outcomes. Relatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how spiritual leadership becomes the driving force behind visionary leadership that sustains educational quality, particularly within faith-based educational institutions, where spirituality constitutes the foundation of organizational life.

Educational quality is closely associated with leaders' capacity to formulate and communicate a compelling institutional vision that guides organizational change and aligns stakeholders toward shared educational goals. Visionary leadership, therefore, extends beyond strategic planning by enabling leaders to transform institutional aspirations into sustainable organizational practices (Nurlela et al., 2025). Although previous studies have examined spiritual and visionary leadership independently, little attention has been given to their relationship. Existing research generally explains visionary leadership through strategic competence, innovation, or transformational leadership (Adeoye et al., 2025; Bakker et al., 2023), while spiritual leadership is frequently discussed as an antecedent of organizational commitment and ethical behavior (Rafsanjani, 2017; Ruhullah & Ushama, 2025). Consequently, the mechanism through which spiritual leadership shapes visionary leadership to sustain educational quality remains insufficiently understood. Addressing this theoretical relationship is particularly important in Islamic educational institutions, where organizational vision is inseparable from religious values and spiritual commitments.

The relationship between spiritual leadership and visionary leadership becomes even more significant when examined through the perspective of women's leadership in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Previous studies have shown that women (*Bu Nyai*) play important roles in preserving Islamic traditions, managing educational activities, and influencing institutional development (Syatibi, 2016; Istiqlaliyani, 2022). Nevertheless, the existing literature has predominantly interpreted women's leadership through the lenses of gender equality, patriarchal culture, or women's participation in educational management (Baroroh, 2024; Latifah, 2024; Huda & Dahliana, 2025). Such perspectives provide valuable insights into women's social positions but pay little attention to how women's spiritual authority drives visionary leadership and institutional quality. This limitation is particularly evident in studies of Salafi Islamic boarding schools, where leadership legitimacy is strongly rooted in religious competence, moral integrity, and spiritual exemplarity. Consequently, examining women's spiritual leadership in this context offers an opportunity to broaden current leadership theory and to provide a more contextually grounded understanding of leadership practices in faith-based educational institutions.

Despite the growing body of literature on spiritual, visionary, women's, and educational leadership, these streams of research remain largely fragmented. Existing studies have rarely examined how women's spiritual leadership operates as the underlying mechanism through which visionary leadership is enacted to sustain educational quality, particularly within Salafi Islamic boarding schools. Most studies focus on organizational performance, transformational leadership, or gender participation, without explaining how spiritual authority simultaneously shapes institutional vision, organizational culture, and quality improvement (Asrin et al., 2022; Firmansyah et al., 2022; Muslihah et al., 2025). Likewise, studies on women leaders in pesantren have predominantly highlighted issues of gender equality and patriarchal culture (Syatibi, 2016; Baroroh, 2024; Huda & Dahliana, 2025), while paying limited attention to the leadership processes through which women influence institutional sustainability. This theoretical and contextual gap indicates the need for a more integrative perspective that connects spirituality, visionary leadership, gender, and educational quality within a single analytical framework.

Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh Lirboyo, Kediri, provides a distinctive context for addressing this gap. As a Salafi Islamic boarding school recognized for its strong Qur'an memorization (*tahfidz*) tradition, the institution has developed a sustainable educational model under the leadership of Bu Nyai Noer Channah Zamzami Mahrus, whose spiritual authority plays a central role in shaping institutional vision, educational practices, and organizational development. Unlike conventional leadership structures that rely primarily on formal authority, leadership legitimacy in this *pesantren* is closely associated with religious competence, exemplary conduct, and continuous spiritual mentoring. This unique context offers an important opportunity to explore how women's spiritual leadership is translated into visionary leadership practices that strengthen organizational culture, preserve institutional identity, and sustain the quality of Qur'an memorizers across generations.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine how women's spiritual leadership serves as the driving force of visionary leadership in improving the quality of Islamic educational institutions through a qualitative case study of Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh Lirboyo in Kediri. Specifically, the study investigates how spiritual leadership manifests through four interconnected visionary leadership roles—setting institutional direction, acting as an agent of change, serving as an organizational spokesperson, and developing future leaders—and how these roles collectively sustain educational quality. By integrating Spiritual Leadership Theory, Visionary Leadership Theory, and the perspective of women's leadership in Islamic educational institutions, this study offers a novel conceptual contribution that extends current leadership literature beyond managerial and gender-based explanations toward a value-based understanding of sustainable educational leadership in faith-based organizations.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a single-case qualitative design to investigate how Bu Nyai Noer Channah's spiritual leadership shapes visionary leadership in improving the quality of Islamic education. A case study design was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are inseparable. The study was guided by an abductive research strategy, which allows continuous interaction between empirical findings and theoretical perspectives to generate contextually grounded explanations rather than merely testing existing theories. The analytical framework integrated theories of spiritual leadership, visionary leadership, women's leadership, educational quality, and feminist perspectives to interpret the empirical evidence.

Research Setting

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh Lirboyo, Kediri, East Java, Indonesia, from October 2025 to January 2026. The institution was purposively selected because it represents a distinctive case of a Salafi Islamic boarding school in which a female religious leader (*Bu Nyai*) plays a strategic role in institutional governance, Qur'an memorization programs, and educational quality improvement. This setting provides an information-rich context for examining women's leadership within a predominantly patriarchal educational environment.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they had direct experience and extensive knowledge of Bu Nyai Noer Channah's leadership. The principal participant was Bu Nyai Noer Channah, whose leadership practices constituted the primary unit of analysis. Additional participants included alumni occupying diverse professional and social roles, such as Islamic boarding school leaders, teachers, Muslimat Nahdlatul Ulama activists, entrepreneurs, and homemakers. These participants were selected for their prolonged engagement with the pesantren and their ability to offer multiple perspectives on the influence of Bu Nyai's leadership. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached, indicated by the absence of substantially new themes emerging from subsequent interviews.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews explored participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding Bu Nyai's spiritual leadership and its contribution to institutional vision and educational quality. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Participant observation was conducted throughout religious, educational, and organizational activities to capture leadership practices, interpersonal interactions, and institutional culture. The researcher maintained detailed field notes to document observations and contextual information. Document analysis complemented the interview and observational data by examining institutional documents, organizational regulations, curriculum materials, archival records, annual reports, and historical documents relevant to leadership practices and institutional development. The integration of these three data sources enabled methodological triangulation, thereby strengthening the comprehensiveness and credibility of the findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an abductive thematic analysis. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were systematically organized and analyzed through iterative coding procedures. The analysis began with open coding to identify significant concepts emerging from the data, followed by axial coding to establish relationships among categories and selective coding to construct overarching themes. Throughout the analytical process, emerging findings were continuously compared with existing theories of spiritual leadership, visionary leadership, educational quality, and gender to refine conceptual interpretations. The iterative movement between empirical evidence and theoretical propositions enabled the development of explanations that were simultaneously grounded in participants' experiences and theoretically informed. Data management and coding procedures were conducted systematically to ensure analytical consistency and transparency.

Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through methodological triangulation, prolonged engagement in the research setting, and member checking with key participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context and participants. Dependability and confirmability were strengthened by maintaining an audit trail that documented methodological decisions, coding processes, and

analytical reflections. Peer debriefing with qualitative research scholars was also conducted to minimize researcher bias and improve interpretative rigor.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles for qualitative research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, all participants received detailed information about the study's objectives and voluntarily provided informed consent. Participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. To protect participants' privacy, all personal identifiers were removed from the dataset, and pseudonyms were used where appropriate. All research data were securely stored and used exclusively for academic purposes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Spiritual Vision as the Foundation of Institutional Quality

Abductive thematic analysis of interview transcripts, participant observations, and institutional documents revealed that the foundation of educational quality at Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh is a shared spiritual vision centered on the development of Qur'an memorizers (*huffāẓ*). Rather than being articulated as a formal strategic statement, this vision is embedded in the pesantren's organizational culture, daily educational practices, and leadership decisions. Across all data sources, participants consistently described the vision as the primary reference guiding institutional activities and long-term educational objectives.

The interviews demonstrated that Bu Nyai Noer Channah perceived Qur'an memorization not merely as an educational achievement but as the central purpose of students' personal and spiritual development. She explained: *"We want every female student to become a memorizer of the Qur'an or, at the very least, to live in close relationship with the Qur'an. Women nurtured by the Qur'an will establish families grounded in Qur'anic values, bringing peace and blessings to society. The greater the number of Qur'an memorizers, the greater the opportunity for society to preserve religious values."* (BN). Alumni participants consistently echoed this vision. They described the Qur'an-centered orientation as a principle that continued to influence their personal, professional, and religious lives after completing their studies. Several participants emphasized that maintaining daily muroja'ah (Qur'an revision) had become a lifelong commitment rather than an obligation limited to their years in the boarding school. One alumna explained that the institutional vision remained *"a moral commitment that accompanies us wherever we live and work"* (SN).

Participant observation further confirmed that this spiritual vision was translated into everyday educational practices. Daily learning activities were systematically organized around Qur'an memorization schedules, collective recitation sessions, and regular supervision by teachers and senior students. Field observations also revealed that Qur'anic recitation was consistently integrated into various institutional activities beyond formal memorization sessions, including communal prayers, mentoring meetings, and routine religious gatherings. These recurring practices reinforced the collective understanding that Qur'an memorization constituted the pesantren's primary educational identity.

The convergence of interview, observation, and documentary evidence also demonstrated that the institutional vision originated from the religious values shared by Bu Nyai Noer Channah and the pesantren leadership. Participants consistently described this vision as evolving from family-based spiritual commitments before becoming institutionalized as the guiding philosophy of Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh. According to several senior administrators, the shared vision subsequently influenced organizational planning, educational priorities, and leadership practices

across different administrative levels. Observation data further indicated that this vision was collectively understood by teachers, administrators, dormitory supervisors, and students. Daily interactions reflected a common expectation that every educational activity should strengthen students' relationship with the Qur'an. Rather than functioning as a symbolic institutional slogan, the vision was enacted through routine educational practices, organizational discipline, and leadership behavior.

Spiritual Leadership as a Direction Setter

The second theme emerging from the abductive thematic analysis demonstrates that Bu Nyai Noer Channah's spiritual leadership functions as the primary mechanism for establishing institutional direction. Interviews, observations, and documentary data consistently revealed that strategic decisions regarding educational programs, organizational regulations, and student development were guided by spiritual values centered on preserving the Qur'an. Participants described leadership not merely as administrative authority but as a process of directing institutional members toward a shared spiritual and educational mission.

Interview data indicated that Bu Nyai personally determined the strategic orientation of the Qur'an memorization program and continuously monitored its implementation. Senior alumni explained that although the number of students had increased substantially, the quality of memorization remained under Bu Nyai's direct supervision. One participant stated: *"Although the number of students continues to grow, Bu Nyai still ensures that every memorizer receives proper guidance. Students who have reached the mutqin level are required to recite directly before her for final evaluation."* (SN). Other participants explained that the increasing number of students prompted institutional adjustments without altering the central vision. Family members, senior teachers, and dormitory supervisors were assigned to assist in monitoring students' progress in memorization, while Bu Nyai retained responsibility for evaluating students who had achieved advanced memorization competency. Participants regarded this arrangement as an effort to maintain educational quality while responding to organizational growth.

Participant observation further demonstrated that strategic direction was translated into structured educational routines. During the observation period, the researcher documented compulsory memorization sessions organized at the dormitory level, with each room supervised according to predetermined schedules. Students were expected to participate in mandatory memorization and revision sessions under the supervision of room coordinators and senior memorizers. These structured routines reflected the institutional commitment to ensuring consistency in students' engagement with the Qur'an.

Observations also revealed that Bu Nyai consistently modeled the discipline expected from students. She regularly attended memorization sessions, listened to students' recitations, and remained actively involved in monitoring educational activities despite her extensive leadership responsibilities. Participants repeatedly referred to her personal example as an important source of motivation for maintaining discipline in Qur'an memorization. Documentary evidence supported these observations. Internal regulations governing daily learning activities emphasized compulsory memorization schedules, periodic evaluation of memorization quality, and continuous supervision by teachers and administrators. Institutional documents also outlined organizational responsibilities for monitoring students' progress in memorization, indicating that quality assurance was embedded in routine educational management rather than implemented only during formal assessments.

Interview data further revealed that Bu Nyai defined the quality of a Qur'an memorizer differently from conventional performance indicators. Rather than emphasizing only memorization completion or public recitation proficiency, participants consistently explained that they regarded *istiqamah* (consistency) in daily memorization and *muroja'ah* as the principal indicators of educational quality. One administrator explained: *"Bu Nyai always reminds us that becoming a hafiz is not*

the end of the journey. What matters most is maintaining the memorization consistently throughout one's life." (AH). This perspective was also reflected in participant observation. Students routinely engaged in scheduled revision activities regardless of how much new memorization they had completed. Teachers frequently encouraged students to prioritize consistency over speed, reinforcing institutional expectations that the long-term retention of memorization was the core educational objective.

Spiritual Leadership as an Agent of Change

The third theme emerging from the data analysis demonstrates that Bu Nyai Noer Channah's spiritual leadership functions as an agent of institutional and social change. Across interview, observation, and documentary data, participants consistently described leadership as facilitating organizational development while preserving the *pesantren's* Salafi identity and Qur'anic orientation. Rather than introducing change solely through structural reforms, *Bu Nyai* encouraged gradual transformation by integrating spiritual values into institutional development, educational practices, and students' aspirations.

Interview data revealed that participants perceived the establishment and expansion of Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh as closely associated with *Bu Nyai's* leadership. Senior administrators explained that the institution initially functioned as a dormitory for female students attending Madrasah Hidayatul Mubtadi-ien (MHM). As the number of students increased and the Qur'an memorization program developed, the institution gradually evolved into an independent *pesantren* with its own organizational structure and educational identity. Participants consistently described this transformation as being guided by a clear commitment to strengthening Qur'an memorization without abandoning the traditional Salafi educational system.

Participant observation also confirmed that organizational growth did not alter the institution's educational priorities. Daily learning activities continued to emphasize Qur'an memorization alongside the study of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts). Observations indicated that both learning components were implemented in a complementary manner, with Qur'an memorization serving as the central educational focus and classical Islamic scholarship reinforcing students' religious understanding. Teachers and administrators consistently described both learning traditions as mutually supportive rather than as competing educational objectives.

Interview participants further explained that *Bu Nyai's* leadership extended beyond institutional development to the reshaping of students' perspectives on women's educational and professional roles. Alumni consistently reported that *Bu Nyai* encouraged female students to pursue broader social contributions while maintaining their identity as Qur'an memorizers. One participant explained: "*Bu Nyai often reminded us that memorizing the Qur'an does not limit women to domestic responsibilities. Instead, it prepares us to contribute to society in many different capacities while remaining committed to Qur'anic values.*" (MS)

Several alumni described how this encouragement influenced their career choices after graduation. Participants reported serving as lecturers, teachers, educational administrators, religious educators, entrepreneurs, and community leaders while continuing to preserve their Qur'an memorization practices. They consistently attributed their confidence to *Bu Nyai's* continuous motivation during their years at the *pesantren*. Participant observation supported these narratives. Throughout educational activities, *Bu Nyai* regularly incorporated motivational messages into Qur'an memorization sessions, emphasizing that religious knowledge and Qur'anic mastery should serve as foundations for lifelong service to society. During alumni gatherings and religious forums, she encouraged graduates to maintain their memorization and to participate in educational, social, and religious organizations actively.

Spiritual Leadership as an Organizational Spokesperson

The fourth theme emerging from the abductive thematic analysis indicates that Bu Nyai Noer Channah's spiritual leadership extends beyond internal institutional management to encompass representation and communication with diverse stakeholders. Interview, observation, and documentary evidence consistently demonstrated that her credibility as a Qur'an memorizer and religious leader enabled her to communicate the *pesantren's* vision effectively to students, alumni, parents, religious scholars, community members, and public institutions. Participants described this communicative role as essential for strengthening organizational legitimacy and sustaining the institutional mission.

Interview data revealed that *Bu Nyai's* communication integrated religious guidance, moral encouragement, and practical advice. Alumni consistently explained that her public addresses rarely focused solely on administrative matters; instead, they emphasized the importance of maintaining a lifelong commitment to the Qur'an, personal integrity, and service to society. One alumna stated: *"Every time Bu Nyai speaks to us, her message always returns to the Qur'an. She reminds us that memorizing the Qur'an is not only an achievement but also a lifelong responsibility that should guide every aspect of our lives."* (SN). Participants further reported that *Bu Nyai* adapted her communication to different audiences while maintaining consistent educational messages. Students described receiving motivational guidance during Qur'an memorization sessions, whereas alumni recalled discussions that connected Qur'anic values with professional responsibilities and community engagement. Administrators noted that communication with teachers and staff frequently focused on maintaining educational quality and ensuring consistent implementation of institutional policies.

Participant observation confirmed these patterns of communication. During religious gatherings, Qur'an memorization evaluations, alumni meetings, and institutional events, *Bu Nyai* consistently conveyed the *pesantren's* vision through clear, accessible language. Observations indicated that her communication encouraged active participation rather than one-way instruction. Students and teachers were frequently invited to ask questions, seek advice, and discuss educational challenges, creating an atmosphere of openness while preserving respect for religious authority. Observation data also showed that digital communication complemented face-to-face interactions. Institutional coordination among administrators and teachers was regularly conducted via digital messaging platforms, enabling the timely dissemination of information on educational programs, student development, and organizational activities. Participants explained that this communication system improved coordination while ensuring that institutional decisions remained aligned with the *pesantren's* educational objectives.

Documentary analysis further supported these findings. Institutional records, meeting documentation, and reports on religious and educational activities demonstrated that Bu Nyai regularly represented the *pesantren* at public forums with Islamic organizations, educational institutions, alumni associations, and community stakeholders. Documentation of the 2024 National Reunion of Jam'iyyah Mudarasatil Qur'an Lil Hafizhat (JMQH), held at Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh, illustrated her active role in facilitating communication among Qur'an memorization communities from across Indonesia. Institutional documents also reflected collaborative relationships with parents, alumni organizations, and religious leaders, indicating that external communication formed an integral component of organizational management. Interview participants emphasized that *Bu Nyai's* credibility as both a Qur'an memorizer and educational leader strengthened the acceptance of her messages among diverse audiences. Teachers and administrators explained that institutional policies were more readily accepted because they were consistently communicated through religious values and personal example rather than solely through formal authority. One administrator remarked, *"Communication with Bu Nyai is always open and constructive. Whenever new policies or evaluations are introduced, she explains not only what should be done but also why it is important for preserving the quality of Qur'an memorization."* (AH). These findings demonstrate that organizational communication at Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh is sustained through

leadership practices that integrate religious authority, educational guidance, and stakeholder engagement.

Spiritual Leadership as a Leadership Trainer

The fifth theme emerging from the abductive thematic analysis demonstrates that Bu Nyai Noer Channah's spiritual leadership is enacted through continuous mentoring and leadership development. Interviews, participant observation, and documentary evidence consistently revealed that leadership within Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh extends beyond the transmission of religious knowledge to the cultivation of lifelong spiritual discipline, personal responsibility, and community leadership. Participants described *Bu Nyai's* educational role not only as teaching Qur'an memorization but also as preparing students to become future educators, religious leaders, and contributors to society.

Interview data indicated that *Bu Nyai* regarded mentoring as an ongoing process that continued even after students graduated from the *pesantren*. Alumni consistently reported that guidance did not end with the completion of formal education but was maintained through regular alumni gatherings, Qur'an revision sessions (*muroja'ah*), religious forums, and personal communication. One participant explained: "*Although we have returned to our respective communities, Bu Nyai continues to accompany us. She regularly reminds us to preserve our memorization and encourages us to remain beneficial to society wherever we serve.*" (NC). Several alumni further explained that these mentoring activities focused not only on maintaining Qur'an memorization but also on addressing practical challenges encountered in professional, family, and community life. Participants emphasized that *Bu Nyai* frequently shared personal experiences and practical strategies for balancing religious commitments with social and professional responsibilities. Consequently, alumni perceived mentoring as a continuous process of spiritual and personal development rather than a periodic institutional activity.

Participant observation confirmed the continuity of these mentoring practices. During Qur'an memorization sessions, alumni meetings, and religious gatherings, *Bu Nyai* actively engaged with students and graduates, offering individual feedback, motivational guidance, and spiritual encouragement. Observations indicated that mentoring frequently occurred in informal educational settings, where participants discussed personal concerns, educational responsibilities, and community engagement. These interactions fostered close relationships among *Bu Nyai*, current students, and alumni, reinforcing a culture of continuous learning beyond formal educational programs. Observation data also revealed that leadership training was embedded within students' daily responsibilities. Senior students were entrusted with supervising junior memorizers, coordinating dormitory activities, leading collective Qur'an revision sessions, and assisting teachers in monitoring students' progress. Administrators explained that assigning these responsibilities enabled students to develop leadership competencies while strengthening their commitment to Qur'anic values and institutional discipline.

Documentary analysis further demonstrated that mentoring constituted an integral component of the *pesantren's* educational system. Institutional schedules, alumni activity reports, and documentation of religious programs showed that mentoring was systematically incorporated into both on-campus and alumni development activities. Monthly alumni Qur'an revision programs, leadership forums, and community outreach initiatives illustrated the institution's commitment to sustaining educational relationships beyond graduation. Institutional documents also indicated that senior alumni frequently returned to the *pesantren* to mentor current students, thereby contributing to the continuity of leadership development across generations.

Interview participants consistently emphasized that *Bu Nyai's* mentoring approach was characterized by sincerity (*ikhlas*), compassion, and personal example. Rather than relying primarily on formal authority, participants described her leadership as being expressed through direct involvement in students' educational journeys. One alumna reflected: "*Bu Nyai teaches us not only how*

to memorize the Qur'an but also how to preserve it throughout our lives. She demonstrates through her own actions that leadership means serving others with sincerity and consistency." (MS). Across all three sources of evidence, participants consistently described mentoring as a central mechanism for transmitting spiritual values from one generation of students to the next. Leadership development was embedded in everyday educational practices, interpersonal relationships, and alumni engagement, enabling students to cultivate the knowledge, discipline, and commitment required to assume educational and religious responsibilities within their communities. These findings indicate that leadership training at Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh is sustained through continuous mentoring practices that integrate spiritual formation, educational guidance, and community service.

Educational Quality as the Outcome of Spiritual Leadership

The sixth theme emerging from the abductive thematic analysis indicates that participants consistently perceived educational quality as the primary outcome of spiritual leadership. Across interviews, participant observations, and documentary evidence, educational quality was not defined by formal academic achievement alone but by students' sustained commitment to preserving the Qur'an, demonstrating moral discipline, and maintaining lifelong engagement with Qur'anic learning. These findings suggest that the quality of education at Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh is operationalized through students' ability to internalize the institution's spiritual values in both educational and social contexts.

Interview data revealed that participants shared a common understanding of educational quality despite the absence of a formal institutional document explicitly defining quality standards. Rather than referring to measurable academic indicators, participants consistently associated educational quality with students' commitment to *istiqamah* (consistency) in Qur'an memorization and daily *muroja'ah* (revision). Bu Nyai explained: "*A hafiz is not recognized merely because the Qur'an has been memorized. What is more important is the commitment to preserve the memorization continuously throughout life.*" (BN). Teachers, administrators, and alumni consistently confirmed this understanding. Participants emphasized that maintaining regular Qur'an revision after graduation represented the most important indicator of educational success. One administrator stated: "*Students may complete the memorization while studying here, but the real measure of quality is whether they continue preserving it after returning to their communities.*" (AH). Similarly, alumni described daily Qur'an revision as a lifelong educational responsibility rather than an institutional requirement. Several participants explained that habits established during their years in the *pesantren* continued to shape their personal routines and professional lives. Alumni working as teachers, lecturers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders reported that the discipline developed through Qur'an memorization remained central to their daily activities.

Participant observation further confirmed that consistency in Qur'an memorization was embedded within everyday educational practices. Throughout the observation period, students participated in scheduled memorization sessions, collective *muroja'ah*, and regular evaluations supervised by teachers and senior students. Observation data indicated that students were encouraged to prioritize consistency over speed in completing memorization targets. Daily educational routines repeatedly reinforced the importance of maintaining memorization as an ongoing spiritual practice rather than a temporary academic achievement. Observation also revealed that educational quality was reflected in students' attitudes and interactions within the *pesantren*. Teachers and dormitory supervisors consistently encouraged discipline, responsibility, mutual support, and respect for religious learning. Senior students routinely assisted junior students in Qur'an revision sessions, creating collaborative learning environments that reinforced shared educational values.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that spiritual leadership is the fundamental mechanism by which visionary leadership is developed and educational quality is sustained at Pondok Pesantren Al Baqoroh. Unlike conventional leadership models that emphasize managerial competence, strategic planning, or formal authority, the institutional vision in this study is rooted in deeply internalized spiritual values that shape organizational priorities, leadership behavior, and educational practices. This finding supports the argument that spiritual leadership cultivates organizational commitment through shared meaning, ethical responsibility, and intrinsic motivation (Rafsanjani, 2017; Ruhullah & Ushama, 2025). Consistent with previous studies, spirituality strengthens institutional commitment and organizational effectiveness (Asrin et al., 2022; Amin, 2024). However, this study extends the existing literature by demonstrating that, within a Salafi Islamic boarding school, spirituality functions not merely as a source of motivation but as the normative foundation upon which institutional vision and educational quality are continuously constructed and maintained.

The present findings further reveal that spiritual leadership is translated into visionary leadership through four interconnected leadership roles: a direction setter, an agent of change, an organizational spokesperson, and a leadership trainer. Rather than operating independently, these roles collectively enable the transformation of institutional vision into organizational culture and daily educational practice. This finding complements previous studies conceptualizing visionary leadership as a leader's ability to formulate strategic goals and inspire organizational members (Nurlela et al., 2025). The present study broadens this perspective by showing that visionary leadership in Islamic boarding schools derives its legitimacy primarily from spiritual authority and moral credibility rather than managerial expertise alone. Consequently, institutional policies regarding Qur'an memorization, student discipline, mentoring, and alumni engagement are collectively perceived as manifestations of shared spiritual responsibility rather than administrative regulations.

An important contribution of this study concerns the role of women in leadership within a patriarchal religious institution. Previous studies have generally discussed female leadership in pesantren from the perspectives of gender equality, cultural negotiation, or women's participation in educational management (Syatibi, 2016; Istiqlaliyani, 2022; Baroroh, 2024; Latifah, 2024). The present findings offer an alternative interpretation, demonstrating that Bu Nyai's leadership legitimacy is derived primarily from spiritual competence and religious authority rather than gender status. Consequently, patriarchal culture does not automatically constrain women's leadership when religious legitimacy, Qur'anic expertise, and moral integrity become the principal sources of authority. This finding challenges the common assumption that patriarchal organizational structures necessarily limit women's opportunities for leadership and supports recent discussions advocating a more contextual understanding of gender relations within Islamic educational institutions (Huda & Dahliana, 2025).

The findings also demonstrate that spiritual leadership shapes organizational culture by embedding shared spiritual values into everyday educational practices. Daily Qur'an memorization, *muroja'ah*, *talaqqi*, mentoring, and continuous interaction between Bu Nyai, teachers, students, and alumni collectively reinforce institutional identity and strengthen organizational commitment. These practices illustrate that educational quality is sustained not merely through formal regulations but through the internalization of values that become collectively shared organizational norms. This interpretation is consistent with previous studies that emphasize that organizational transformation is achieved through value-based leadership and a sustainable institutional culture (Firmansyah et al., 2022; Jannah et al., 2023; Muslihah et al., 2025). In this respect, spiritual leadership functions as the mechanism through which organizational culture continuously reproduces the institutional vision across generations.

Another significant finding concerns the meaning of educational quality in Islamic boarding schools. Unlike conventional quality management perspectives that primarily evaluate educational quality through institutional performance, customer satisfaction, or continuous improvement

(Kurnia & Faslah, 2025), this study demonstrates that quality within the *pesantren* context encompasses the preservation of Qur'anic memorization, consistency (*istiqāmah*), moral discipline, and lifelong spiritual commitment. Educational quality, therefore, extends beyond measurable academic achievement to encompass the effective transmission of religious values and the continuity of Qur'anic traditions across generations. This finding complements recent studies on *tahfidz* education that emphasize the importance of integrating program management with students' spiritual and character development (Setiawan et al., 2025), suggesting that educational quality in Islamic institutions should be understood as the integration of academic excellence, moral formation, and spiritual sustainability.

Overall, this study contributes theoretically by integrating Spiritual Leadership Theory, Visionary Leadership Theory, and Educational Quality into a single conceptual framework. While previous studies have predominantly examined these constructs separately, the present findings suggest that spiritual leadership serves as the foundational mechanism through which visionary leadership is enacted, ultimately leading to sustainable educational quality. Theoretically, this study proposes that visionary leadership practices, including direction-setting, organizational change, stakeholder communication, and leadership development, mediate the relationship between spirituality and educational quality. In practical terms, the findings offer an alternative leadership model for Islamic educational institutions by demonstrating that educational excellence can be achieved through the institutionalization of shared spiritual values without diminishing women's strategic leadership roles within religious organizations.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that women's spiritual leadership constitutes the fundamental mechanism through which visionary leadership is enacted to sustain educational quality in a Salafi Islamic boarding school. The findings demonstrate that spiritual values are translated into visionary leadership through four interconnected roles—setting institutional direction, driving organizational change, acting as an organizational spokesperson, and developing future leaders—which collectively strengthen organizational culture and the quality of Qur'an memorizers. Theoretically, this study extends the literature by integrating Spiritual Leadership Theory and Visionary Leadership Theory and proposing that spiritual leadership serves as the ethical and motivational foundation of visionary leadership in faith-based educational institutions. Furthermore, the study challenges the assumption that patriarchal environments inherently constrain women's leadership by showing that spiritual authority and religious competence provide a legitimate basis for women to lead and sustain institutional excellence. These findings offer an alternative leadership model for Islamic educational institutions while suggesting that future comparative and multi-case studies are needed to examine the applicability of this conceptual framework across different *pesantren* and broader Islamic educational contexts.

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