

## **Living Qur'an of Pesantren Women: A Manifestation of Surat An-Nisa 34 in A Woman Leadership Role of Nyai Munjidah Wahab**

*Living Qur'an Perempuan Pesantren: Manifestasi QS: An-Nisa:34 dalam Peran Kepemimpinan Perempuan Nyai Munjidah Wahab*

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### **Abstracts**

This article discusses the study of the living Qur'an of "women's Pesantren" with a character study approach namely Nyai Munjidah Wahab. So far, women's Pesantren have been stigmatized as a group of women who only act as "konco wingking", and their scope of work is only in the domestic or internal area of the pesantren. The leadership of "women's pesantren" is often considered as a "second class leader" because the main support for pesantren is the kyai or male figure. Nyai Munjidah Wahab gave a different color among the women's Pesantren in general, by not only becoming the leader of her pesantren but entering the public sphere through organizational and political channels to become a regional head. With the living Qur'an method, this study aims to examine the religious reasoning that frames Nyai Munjidah's behavior on one side and see how Nyai Munjidah Wahab brings QS. An-Nisa: 34 to life in her thoughts and behavior both in her family, Pesantren and in her public leadership. The Living Qur'an of "women's Pesantren" is analyzed using a gender and cultural perspective. Data collection techniques using observation and interviews. The results of this study indicate that the forms of Nyai Munjidah Wahab's living Qur'an are manifested in several forms of culture, both cognitive and non-cognitive cultures as well as performative and informative cultures that are thick with the values of gender equality. From a cultural perspective, Nyai Munjidah's living Qur'an is a form of active and passive cultural adaptation carried out by Nyai Munjidah Wahab as a "woman's Pesantren".

Kata Kunci: Living Qur'an; Women Leader Pesantren; Nyai Munjidah Wahab; QS: An-Nisa:34.

### **Abstrak**

Artikel ini mendiskusikan kajian living Qur'an perempuan pesantren dengan pendekatan studi tokoh yaitu Nyai Munjidah Wahab. Perempuan pesantren sejauh ini distigmakan sebagai kelompok perempuan yang hanya berperan sebagai konco wingking, dan ranah kiprahnya hanya di wilayah domestik atau internal pesantren. Kepemimpinan perempuan pesantren sering dianggap sebagai "pemimpin kelas dua" disebabkan penyangga utama pesantren adalah figur kyai atau laki-laki. Nyai Munjidah Wahab memberikan warna berbeda diantara perempuan pesantren pada umumnya, dengan bukan saja menjadi pemimpin pesantrennya tetapi merambah wilayah publik melalui jalur organisasi dan politik hingga menjadi seorang kepala daerah. Dengan metode living Qur'an, penelitian ini bermaksud melihat nalar keagamaan yang membingkai perilaku Nyai Munjidah satu sisi dan melihat bagaimana Nyai Munjidah menghidupkan Q.S.an-Nisa : 34 dalam pikiran dan perilakunya baik di lingkungan keluarga, pesantren maupun dalam kepemimpinan publiknya. Living Qur'an



perempuan pesantren dianalisis menggunakan perspektif gender dan budaya. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi dan wawancara. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bentuk-bentuk living Qur'an Nyai Munjidah Wahab termanifestasi dalam beberapa bentuk budaya, baik itu budaya kognisi dan non kognisi maupun budaya performatif dan informatif yang kental dengan nilai-nilai kesetaraan gender. Dalam perspektif budaya living Qur'an Nyai Munjidah merupakan bentuk adaptasi budaya aktif maupun pasif yang dilakukan Nyai Munjidah Wahab sebagai perempuan pesantren.

Kata Kunci: Living Qur'an; Pemimpin Perempuan Pesantren; Nyai Munjidah Wahab; QS: An-Nisa:34.

## Introduction

Islamic Boarding School (*Pesantren*) women as a sub-culture which exist in the society, by far, have a stigma that tends to be negative. *Pesantren* tends to put women as *konco wingking* (backstreet friends) which is identical with domestic problems and they have limited domain, conservative,<sup>1</sup> and put women as "second-tier leaders".<sup>2</sup> According to Marhumah in her research, it is said that studies toward *pesantren* always put women as figures who have less role. It can be seen in a research by Zamakhsyari Dhofier and Karel A. Steenbrink, who are failed to consider the *nyai* presence in the figures of *pesantren* that they had analyzed,<sup>3</sup> even though women actually have similar assets with men for being a leader. It is proved by the presence of woman figures who have good leadership career, and one of them is *Nyai Munjidah Wahab*.

*Nyai Munjidah Wahab* is another figure of a *pesantren* woman who can go out of paternalistic, feudalistic, and patriarchic culture and stigma that cover it. *Nyai Munjidah* does not only lead the *pesantren* for female students as a *nyai* in common, but also to become the main guardian of *pesantren* for male and female students, and she is active in various activities as well as socio-politic organizations. Her socio-politic activities nowadays lead her to be the number one figure in Jombang regency. *Nyai Munjidah* gives a spectrum of color about a *pesantren* woman who does not only struggle in domestic and internal *pesantren* domain, but also takes part in public domain, becomes an independent figure for herself, not being subordinated, and capable of choosing and deciding her life choice.

The difference between *Nyai Munjidah* and other common *pesantren* women is caused by their comprehension toward Al-Qur'an, more specifically about Surat An-Nisa 34. This verse literally puts men as the leader for women. That comprehension then being actualized into daily practices. Muslim people's attempt to practice and enliven Al-Qur'an (living Qur'an) is done through various methods,

1 Fida Fadilah, "Konsep Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Pandangan Santri" (2015): 1-27.

2 Studi Analisis, Nyai Pesantren, and Aida Husna, "Manajemen Pesantren Responsif Gender : Studi Analisis Di Kepemimpinan Nyai Pesantren Di Kabupaten Pati," *Palastren* 7, no. 2 (2014): 445-456.

3 Marhumah, "Konstruksi Gender, Hegemoni Kekuasaan, Dan Lembaga Pendidikan," *KARSA*, no. June 2007 (1991): 477-484.

material and natural, personal practice, communal practice, and it is also enlivened both in cognitive and non-cognitive way, Surat by Surat, verses and even pieces of verse from Al-Qur'an. In *pesantren* women community<sup>4</sup>, the attempt to enliven Al-Qur'an especially verses related to gender issue has various colors, depend on the situation that formed it. *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab, as a *pesantren* woman who has different character compared to *pesantren* woman in common, has given a distinct color in study about *pesantren* women in common in the middle of stigma, culture, and surrounding tradition.

Structure of culture developed in society also put *pesantren* women in social patriarchic situation, which is hierarchic, and it is in paternalistic and feudalistic subculture<sup>5</sup>. *Kiai* becomes a brand image and brand market for *pesantren*, who holds the highest superiority in structural and cultural hierarchy in *pesantren*.<sup>6</sup> Woman leadership in *pesantren* is a complementary in woman organization, not in public domain, as what has been found by Siti Chusniyah and Moh Yasir Alimi (2015),<sup>7</sup> and Sri Wahyuni and Zainal Arifin (2016).<sup>8</sup> The figure of *pesantren* is still identical with a figure of a man.<sup>9</sup> The paternalistic, centralistic, feudalistic, and patriarchist subcultures finally influence feeling, mind, question, anxiety, and hope among habituation and habit of *pesantren* women.<sup>10</sup>

Some previous researches related to *pesantren* women have been studied but without using living Qur'an approach, like Ahmad Yusuf Prasetyawan and Lis Safitri (2019) who studied the leadership of *pesantren* women using phenomenology approach.<sup>11</sup> Sri Wahyuni and Zainal Arifin (2016) studied various types of democratic leadership of a *Nyai* in the development of *pesantren* using management science

4 *Pesantren* woman here is a woman who has become a part of *pesantren* existence beside the figure of *Kyai*. They often get called 'Nyai', and they have different place compared to female students.

5 *Pesantren* still choose a son as a Crown Prince, similar to a kingdom or feudalistic system. Hussein Muhammad, *Perempuan, Islam dan Negara : Pergulatan Identitas dan Entitas*, (Yogyakarta : Qolam, 2016), 40

6 Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren; Studi Pandangan Hidup Kiai dan visinya mengenai masa depan Indonesia*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011), 3.

7 Siti Chusniyah and Moh Yasir Alimi, "Nyai Dadah : The Elasticity of Gender Roles and Life History of Pesantren Woman Leader," *Komunitas: International Journal of Indonesian Society and Culture* 7, no. 1 (2015): 112–117.

8 Zainal Wahyuni, Sri dan Arifin, "Kepemimpinan Demokratis Nyai Dalam Pengembangan Pondok Pesantren," *Journal Of management in Education* 1, no. 1 (2016): 53–62.

9 Ahmad Yusuf Prasetyawan and Lis Safitri, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pesantren," *YINYANG: Jurnal Studi Islam, Gender dan Anak* 14, no. 1 (2019): 39–69.

10 Iklilah Muzayanah, "Aku Adalah Perempuan Pesantren," *Antropologi Indonesia* 32, no. Januari-April (2011): 57–65.

11 Prasetyawan and Safitri, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Pesantren."

approach.<sup>12</sup> A research by Siti Chusniyah and Moh. Yasir Alimi (2015) was about the leadership of *pesantren* woman figure using life history approach,<sup>13</sup> and Eny Puspita Ningrum and Agus Mursidi (2018), who studied power relation of a *Nyai* within the roles inside *pesantren*.<sup>14</sup>

This research highlights the gait of *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab as a *pesantren* woman using living Qur'an as the scientific approach, especially living Qur'an of *Nyai* Munjidah for Surat An-Nisa 34. *Nyai* Munjidah enlivens Al-Qur'an in her daily life whether it is as a value, guide, momentum, and something holy.<sup>15</sup> As a value, *Nyai* Munjidah has a faith that her leadership is inspired by Al-Qur'an, which is believed to bring a mission of gender equality and justice. This belief becomes an inspiration of actions for *Nyai* Munjidah, for example in *pesantren* when educating her students from the start to be gender aware and to have self-confidence to compete with male students, and in her various public policies which are friendly and advantageous for females. As something holy, Al-Qur'an becomes a daily companion for *Nyai* Munjidah during her busy schedule where she always fills her spare time by reciting Al-Qur'an, for example when waiting for the plane, during her official trip, and after finishing each *fardlu* prayer.

The religious reasons and efforts by *Nyai* Munjidah to enliven Surat An-Nisa 34 in her mind and behavior whether in the environment of family, *pesantren*, and her public leadership with gender equality insight, have become the consent of this research. Gender approach and research design for biographical study make this research is different from previous living Qur'an researches which excessively studied living Qur'an from traditional and ritual aspects. This research uses thematic design because it uses a theme of verse about gender, which is verse about gender equality in Surat An-Nisa 34, and this is a research with biographical study because the focus attention of this research is on someone's behavior in his/her interaction with Al-Qur'an verses.<sup>16</sup> Data collection method being used is interview and observation as the main data collection beside documentation. The research subject is *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab, the guardian of Ribath Pesantren Al-Latifayah II, a *pesantren* under Bahrul

12 Wahyuni, Sri dan Arifin, "Kepemimpinan Demokratis Nyai Dalam Pengembangan Pondok Pesantren."

13 Chusniyah and Alimi, "Nyai Dadah : The Elasticity of Gender Roles and Life History of Pesantren Woman Leader."

14 Agus Ningrum, Eny Puspita., Mursidi, "Kuasa Perempuan : Peranan Dan Kedudukan Bu Nyai Dalam Memimpin Pondok Pesantren Di Kabupaten Banyuwangi," *DOI* (2018): 56-64.

15 Neny Muthi'atul Awwaliyah, "Potret Budaya Hadidan: Etos Keagamaan Dalam Kultur Living Qur'an Studi Di PA. Darul Hadlanah Kota Salatiga," *Diya Al-Afkar: Jurnal Studi al-Quran dan al-Hadis* 7, no. 02 (2019): 323.

16 Sahiron Syamsudin, "Ranah-ranah penelitian dalam Studi al-Qur'an dan hadist", dalam *Metode Penelitian Living Qur'an dan Hadist*, ed. M.Mansyur dkk., (Yogyakarta : Teras, 2007), xi-xiv

Ulum Tambak Beras Islamic Boarding School Institution in Jombang, East Java.

Technique of data analysis uses Milles and Huberman model, a data analysis technique which is done interactively. Data analysis technique is conducted in three stages, they are data reduction stage which is an effort to decide relevant data which is relevant, meaningful, and important things related to *Nyai* Munjidah behavior to enliven Surat An-Nisa 34. Data display in the form of short essay which is narrative in nature (using text). Deducing (verification) where the researcher will draw a conclusion by giving explanation about the form of living Qur'an of *Nyai* Munjidah from gender and culture perspective.<sup>17</sup>

### Profile of *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab

*Nyai* Hj Mundjidah Wahab is a woman born from a *pesantren* origins. *Pesantren* blood does not only run biologically from her father, who is a grand *ulama*, the founder and driver of NU, KH Wahab Chasbullah. The ideology and culture of her education, from elementary into senior high school was done in *pesantren* environment. *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab was born in Jombang in May 22, 1948, from the couple of KH Wahab Chasbulloh and *Nyai* Hj. Rohmah. KH Wahab Chasbulloh was known in history as the partner of KH Hasyim Asy'ary, the figure who established Hijaz committee which later on became the beginning of NU establishment. The son and daughter of KH Wahab Chasbulloh became witnesses to the growth of NU as well as its autonomy bodies which are influential toward its thought and role in society.

*Pesantren* with its whole culture is a basic fundamental for *Nyai* Munjidah's family. *Pesantren* that is developed by her father, KH Wahab Chasbulloh which is known by the name Bahrul Ulum Tambak Beras Jombang Islamic Boarding School, is one of the oldest *pesantren* education institute in Indonesia which was started by her great grandfather KH Abdus Salam since 1825.<sup>18</sup> During his father reign, KH Wahab Chasbulloh, the *pesantren* stub has fast development through revitalization efforts, one of them is by building madrasah named Madrasah Mubdil Fan. Her father also named that Islamic Boarding School as Bahrul Ulum in 1967.<sup>19</sup> *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab was raised strictly by KH. Wahab Chasbulloh, a multi-talented organizer, that from his hands, he had made some organizations which then became forerunners

17 Nur Latifah and Asep Supena, "Analisis Attention Siswa Sekolah Dasar Dalam Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19," *Jurnal Basicedu* 5, no. 3 (2021): 1175–1182.

18 Ainur Rofik, dkk. *Tambak Beras : Menelidik Sejarah, Memetik Uswah*, (Jombang : Pustaka Bahrul Ulum, 2019), 1

19 Ubaidillah Sadewa, *KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah : Pahlawan Nasional Dari Pesantren Untuk Indonesia*, (Jombang : Lingkar Muda Nusantara, 2011), 12



of NU and its mass organizations, such as *Tashwirul Afkar*, *Nahdlatul Wathan* and *Nahdlatul Tujjar*.<sup>20</sup> As a man who has experiences and wide connections,<sup>21</sup> KH Wahab Chasbulloh educated his son and daughter in the egalitarian way, forward-thinking, and open-minded, for example since she was a child, *Nyai* Munjidah was shown about how to blend with society and in an organization. Her mother, *Nyai* Hj. Rohmah was known as a person who was persistent in giving *da'wah* and educating her people through routine meetings of each group in the society.

“Since I was a child, I was taken by my father to join many conferences whether it is state meeting or NU conference. I was taken to see the palace, to see my father activities to see many important state guests, even meeting with President Soekarno, it feels like I was introduced to the climate of state bureaucracy”<sup>22</sup>

All of *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab's education are completed in Islamic Boarding School; from *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI, an equivalent of Elementary School) to *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA, an equivalent of Senior High School) in within the environment of Bahrul Ulum Tambak Beras Jombang Islamic Boarding School. During her time as a student, she had shown her leadership ability by being an active member and being the leader in several organizations, for example in IPPNU Jombang Branch and became the leader of Bahrul Ulum Students Union. After graduated from *Madrasah Aliyah*, *Nyai* Munjidah had an opportunity to continue her *pesantren* education in Lasem. After she had finished her study in Lasem, *Nyai* Munjidah continued her father footstep to grow Nahdlatul Ulama by taking part inside the organization, start from IPPNU<sup>23</sup>, Fatayat<sup>24</sup>, to Muslimat.<sup>25</sup>

Besides joining organizations, *Nyai* Munjidah also involve herself into political world which led her to be a legislative member at the age of 21 through

20 Ubaidillah Sadewa, *KH. Abdul Wahab ...*,<sup>34</sup>

21 KH Wahab Chasbulloh does not only have friends from pesantren, but also nationalist figures. Even when he studied in Mecca, he established SI (Islamic Union) Mecca Branch together with Kyai Abbas Jember Kyai Asnawi Kudus and Kyai Dahlan Kertosono. When he came back from Mecca, he continued to be active in Islamic Union in Surabaya who got him to meet famous and charismatic figures such as H. Agus Salim, Ki Hajar Dewantara, Alimin, Hendrik Sneevliet, Muso, Abikusno Tjokrosujono, and Soekarno. Even in 1920, together with Dr. Soetomo, he established Islam Studi Club. Ubaidillah Sadewa, *KH. Abdul Wahab ...*,<sup>34</sup>

22 An interview with *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab, January 25, 2021

23 A young *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab was active in IPPNU in 1964 and had a position as the leader of IPPNU Jombang Administrative Branch.

24 *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab was active in PC Fatayat NU during the year 1969-1983. The peak was when she became the leader of Jombang Administrative Branch in 1978.

25 After she left Fatayat, *Nyai* Munjidah was active in Muslimat NU. Her organization career started from being a secretary of Muslimat NU Administrative Branch, until she became the leader of Muslimat Administrative Branch for three period of employment. At the moment, *Nyai* Munjidah is still being the Leader of Muslimat NU Jombang Administrative Branch for 2015-2020 employment period.

NU party in 1955 General Election. The New Order simplified parties into three big parties. *Nyai* Munjidah joined PPP party which has Islam as its basis. In PPP, her political career has led her into an expert politician, started from becoming a DPC (Branch Leadership Board) into DPW (Regional Leadership Board) and becoming a legislative member as well. In 1971, she started her legislator career again by becoming a legislative member in Regional House of Representatives Jombang and from 1997 to 2014, she climbed up to be a legislator in Regional House of Representatives of East Java from PPP faction.

Political career of *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab was getting brighter. In 2013, she tried her luck by joining a political contest of local head general election in Jombang regency, and got her luck by being the Vice Regional Leader of Jombang for 2013-2018 period, accompanying Nyono Suharli Widoko. For the next period, specifically 2018 election, *Nyai* Munjidah raced for the number one position in Jombang, being paired with Sumrambah until 2023.<sup>26</sup>

Even though the culture of a *pesantren* woman tends to put a woman as a companion for *kyai* in managing *pesantren*, *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab can take part in both roles; she still does her job as a *kyai's* wife, a *pesantren* guardian, and a public servant. The figure of *Nyai* Munjidah gives fresh air for *pesantren* women and she can deflect the stereotype view toward *pesantren* women. Her gait in political world is long and consistent, so it becomes an asset for the growth of trust from the society toward her leadership.

As a woman, *Nyai* Munjidah still does her role as a wife and a mother. KH Imam Asy'ari Muhsin, her husband, gives full support toward the journey of her career. Together with her husband, *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab established Al-Latifiyah dormitory which is a *ribath pesantren* of Bahrul Ulum Tambak Beras Islamic Boarding School and established a favorite *Madrasah* (school) KH Wahab Chasbulloh. The husband and wife worked together to develop the *pesantren* and on the other hand, *Nyai* Munjidah was still doing her organization and political activities. In 1996, *Kyai* Asy'ari passed away and from that moment, *Nyai* Munjidah became a member of House of Representatives of East Java province. *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab continued her leader position in *pesantren* together with her children.

### ***Nyai* Munjidah's Comprehension of Surat An-Nisa 34**

*Nyai* Munjidah Wahab is a *pesantren* woman who, from her childhood, was very familiar with values that came from the Holy Scripture Al-Qur'an and many

<sup>26</sup> An interview with Alfiyah Ashmad in January 21, 2021

hadith which are codified in yellow scriptures tradition as well. As a *Nyai* who was taught religious science comprehensively in her education level since she was a child until she became an adult, her religious knowledge especially the knowledge about Arabic grammar as her asset in scripture comprehension has adequate accountability. A life for *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab is an appreciation toward Al-Qur'an's value and The Prophet's Sunnah. Al-Qur'an for *Nyai* Munjidah is a scripture which its value must be highly upheld and become a way of life or a standpoint for daily life. A good life for her is a life based on faith and appreciation of Al-Qur'an's value, especially for women who, in her eyes, have many specific specializations. According to her:

“Verses in Al-Qur'an, for each Muslim, must be obeyed and appreciated. Al-Qur'an put women as noble humans. Al-Qur'an wants human, either men or women, to be the leader in this world. Women nowadays, with their various situation and condition, are really needed in society, because if not the women themselves fighting for their lives, then who else....”<sup>27</sup>

Al-Qur'an is a miracle of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, which is not only has a value of worship for its reader, but also as a way of life or life guidance that becomes an inspiration for her as a Muslim woman to have a better life. This faith made the figure of *Nyai* Munjidah attached to Al-Qur'an, whether it is as a daily read, as a routine read in *pesantren*<sup>28</sup>, and as an inspiration for life. As a daily read. *Nyai* Munjidah continuously does *tadarus* after Maghrib prayer, reads selection of Surat, reads Al-Qur'an in every spare time even during her business trip inside a car, in an airport, or in a plane<sup>29</sup>. According to *Nyai* Munjidah, a good life for women is not something to take for granted, but it should be fought for. One of the domain to fight for women is in political domain, where the battle to fight about regulation can happen. Regulation in the form of laws becomes a domain where many interests fight, including the women interest. *Nyai* Munjidah said:

“The reason I jump into political domain is because of my view that if we, women, do not enter the domain, then the products of rule and law made by the legislatives can be harmful for women. Therefore, if we as a part of Islam especially women do not exist there, later on there will be a law or something that can discredit women, especially

27 An interview with Nyai Munjidah Wahab in January 17, 2021

28 Each student has a routine of *tadarus* (reading Al-Qur'an) together after every maghrib prayer for two pages continuously. An interview with Alfi Nur Laili, The Administrator Leader of Al-Latifiyah II Islamic Boarding School, employment period of 2020-2021, in January 18, 2021

29 Alfiah Ashmad, as an expert staff of Nyai Munjidah during her employment as Jombang Regent, often accompanied Nyai Munjidah in many business trip, both within the city and intercity. Alfi said, Nyai Munjidah often finished one or two *juz* during the trip. Alfi also said she often see Nyai Munjidah, during her trip both with car and by plane, doing *tadarus* of Al-Qur'an. An interview with Alfi Nur Laili, an expert staff of Jombang Regent in January 12, 2021



Muslim women.”<sup>30</sup>

The existence of *Nyai* Munjidah as a woman who grew up in *pesantren* does not limit her in cult traditions of *pesantren* which made her forgetting her people. On the contrary, by joining organizations since she was a child, *Nyai* Munjidah feels the benefit of blending with people and merging feudalistic walls existing in *pesantren*. By joining an organization, in her opinion, every people can learn to be themselves, either men or women. In organization, every people are taught to appear in front of their people, practicing to express their opinion, joining a discussion, and making decision for small actions in an organization.<sup>31</sup> Egalitarian principles established in this organization, in her opinion, are in line with a principle of Surat Al-Hujarat 31 which said that human are created, *both man or woman, any nation or country, are not considered noble except because of their piety in front of Allah*. *Nyai* Munjidah said:

“I learned about organizing in IPPNU, through group discussion, speaking practice, practicing to express opinion, practicing about organizing... I practice mingling with people. No walls of special right even if I am a daughter of a *Kyai*. I think the values from Al-Qur'an about equality here...”<sup>32</sup>

*Nyai* Munjidah sees that Al-Qur'an really glorifies women. The maturity of her thought about values of Al-Qur'an makes her movement as a woman is not limited in domestic domain only, but also in public domain. Furthermore, some of her thoughts about women can be seen from the way she interpret Al-Qur'an Surat An-Nisa 4-34. *Nyai* Munjidah sees Surat An-Nisa 4-34 as a verse that speaks about gender role in the context of family. *Nyai* Munjidah said:

“Surat An-Nisa 34 is a verse about gender. “Ar-Rijalu is something about gender. An-Nisa is also about gender identity. The context of its content is a verse about family. The kind of family which we talk about is the context of family in the past. At the moment the verse is descended, socio-economic and safety factor which only allowed man to work outside of his home, and women who keep their belongings at home. So, this verse actually talks about mutual support relation.”<sup>33</sup>

The circumstance being mentioned above changed a lot, so she thinks it is possible for gender role to be swapped. *Nyai* Munjiddah added:

“It should be about mutual support, because one family can have different reality compared to others. At the moment, it could be the wife or the woman who has higher earnings than her husband. So,

30 An interview with *Nyai* Munjidah in January 24, 2021

31 An interview with *Nyai* Munjidah in January 24, 2021

32 An interview with *Nyai* Munjidah in January 24, 2021

33 An interview with *Nyai* Munjidah in January 24, 2021

there should be a discussion between the two. So this verse cannot be divided from Surat An-Nisa 35 which ensures that a family who is in trouble to discuss and finding a *hakam* or a mediator between them. So it does not talk only about leadership in the outside world, but also inside the family, it is emphasized to support each other and to discuss together”<sup>34</sup>

### **The Form of Living Qur’an from Surat An-Nisa 34 in *Nyai Munjidah Wahab***

Living Qur’an is an Al-Qur’an that lives in Muslim society through various forms. The object of living Qur’an study is not the text in Al-Qur’an, but the culture of society which is built or inspired by Al-Qur’an and hadith. When Al-Qur’an is enliven inside various communities, various forms of living Qur’an appear as consequences from different forming communities. Ahmad ‘Ubaidi Hasbillah stated that the manifestation from various forms of living Qur’an at least can be identified into two cultural parameters, namely cognitive and non-cognitive cultures, as well as informative and performative cultures.<sup>35</sup> In cognitive and non-cognitive forms of living Qur’an, living Qur’an in *Nyai Munjidah* can be identified as follows:

Cognitive cultures in living Qur’an Surat An-nisa 34 which is highlighted by *Nyai Munjidah* namely:

- a) As a Head of Region, *Nyai Munjidah* has created various policies that are friendly for women, for example skill training for women, creating programs to support reproduction health, organizing family school, creating joint venture for women, giving capital support for female entrepreneur, giving affirmative fund for women who become the head of family (*single parent*), and supporting development plan discussion for villages involving woman social organizations such as Muslimat, Aisyah, Fatayat and Nasyiatul Aisyiah.<sup>36</sup>
- b) As a guardian of *pesantren*, *Nyai Munjidah* educates her students not only about the ability to read yellow scripture proficiently, but also about having organization skill. *Pesantren* is also developed using a management system which adopts a parliamentary system, where the management has a periodical conference forum and it becomes an occasion of responsibility from the previous management, commit-

34 An interview with Nyai Munjidah in January 24, 2021

35 Ahmad ‘Ubaidi, *Ilmu Living Qur’an*... 194

36 An interview with Alfiah Ashmad in January 21, 2021

tee meetings to decide programs for the next leadership years and becomes an election domain to select the new management leader of *pesantren* with legislation system. Students of Al-Latifiyah II, so far, are the most advanced students among *ribath pesantren* under Bahrul Ulum Institution.<sup>37</sup> Alfi, the management leader of female *pesantren* Al-Latifiyah II, said that Mrs. Munjidah really encourages her students to take part in society by practicing about organization. Whenever a HIMAPON, an event for competition among *ribath pesantren* under Bahrul Ulum, which has 46 *ribath* in total, the lead is always held by Al-Latifiyah II students. *Pesantren* curriculum of Al-Latifiyah also includes trainings related to skill, for example public speaking practice, training to be a tutor, gender training and various seminar. Intan Budiana, a senior in *pesantren* Al-Latifiyah II said that *Nyai* Munjidah always encourage her students to be a person who is beneficial for others, not only limited as a housewife, and educate her students to be independent and not being reliant to others.<sup>38</sup>

c) As a mother: *Nyai* Munjidah educates her daughters about independence, training about organization, and demands her children to be a human who is ready to serve in society. Her family is educated in an egalitarian culture without distinguishing genders. Her children are given freedom to study in their choice, different from *pesantren* family in common, *Nyai* Munjidah children chose different education outside religious education field. Her first son, H. Ahmad Sillahuddin Asy'ari is now a member of Regional House of Representatives. Her third daughter, Hj. Ema Ummiyatul Chasanah was a graduate of civil engineering and she is now a legislative member in The House of Representatives of Republic Indonesia. Her fourth daughter, Awin Tammah, is an education bachelor and she is now a treasurer in the management of Fatayat NU of East Java Region. Her third daughter, Lailatun Ni'mah is a law bachelor and takes part in the society in *fatayat* organization as the head of management in Jombang Regency Branch.<sup>39</sup>

d) As an individual: *Nyai* Munjidah shows that she is an individual with open mind, egalitarian, and does not discriminate gender. She has

37 An interview with Intan Budiana in January 9, 2021

38 An interview with Alfi Nur Laili in January 11, 2021

39 An interview with Ning Elly Lailatun Ni'mah in January 15, 2021

been gaining experiences in political world since 21 years old and it makes her a mature, polite, and consistent politician. In leading a mass organization with the biggest mass in East Java, that is Muslima NU, she can protect many sides with different political views.<sup>40</sup>

Non-cognitive culture is shown through attitude and behavior which do not come from cognition or comprehension about relation of gender in Al-Qur'an, but more to beliefs about mystical values existing in Al-Qur'an as a scripture. They are:

- a) Bringing Al-Qur'an wherever she goes and reading it in spare time outside working hours, for example during a business trip to a certain place, while waiting for a plane, road trip outside of town, while being in the vehicle, *Nyai* Munjidah uses her spare time to read Al-Qur'an.<sup>41</sup>
- b) Consistently doing *tadarus* (study together) of Al-Qur'an after every Maghrib prayer. During her breaks within busy schedule, *Nyai* Munjidah regularly reads Al-Qur'an even if only several verses done after every Maghrib prayer. When she is in hurry, she will replace it after Isha or Fajr prayer.<sup>42</sup>
- c) Teaching her students to do *tadarus* regularly after Maghrib prayer. After every Maghrib prayer, all students sit together in the hall and read Al-Qur'an together, two pages every day continuously. Not only do *tadarus*, every students are taught to regularly read special Surat in specific time, for example after Fajr prayer they read Surat Al-Dukhon and Waqi'ah, after Ashr they read Surat Ar-Rahman, after Maghrib they do *tadarus*, and after Isha they read Surat Al-Mulk.<sup>43</sup>

The second cultural trait as a parameter for the form of living Qur'an according to Ahmad 'Ubaidi Hasbillah are performative and informative cultures. Performative culture focuses on life behavior inspired by Al-Qur'an and hadith. Meanwhile, informative culture is studied from which side of Al-Qur'an is made as a source of knowledge, doctrine, history of the past, and the sign of science.<sup>44</sup> In the context of *Nyai* Munjidah, living Qur'an of Surat An-Nisa 34 can be identified as follows:

40 An interview with Dr.Faizun,M.Pd in January 14, 2021

41 An interview with Alfi Nus Shanmad, 12 January, 2021

42 Wawancara dengan Ning Elly, Tanggal 15 Januari 2021

43 Wawancara dengan Alfi Tanggal 10 Januari 2021

44 Ahmad 'Ubaydi Hasbillah, *Ilmu living...*,196

### *Performative Culture*

Viewed from the traits of performative culture, *Nyai* Munjidah shows an individual who is aware that her gender and her existence as a *pesantren* woman does not keep her away to perform in public domain. *Nyai* Munjidah, since she was young, is a *pesantren* woman who trains herself in an organization world which made her character familiar with competition. Organization world becomes a vessel where she got her achievement for her own efforts, without relying on her privilege as a daughter of a famous *kyai*, KH wahab Chasbulloh who was the founding father and the movement figure of NU.

Her achievement in organization career started from Female Student Union Organization (IPPNU) which led her to be a branch leader in employment period of 1965-1968. When *Nyai* Munjidah became an administrator of IPPNU branch, she made a breakthrough that women can be a marching band, something which was a taboo at that time. For *Nyai* Munjidah, IPPNU has a special place in her heart, because her time in IPPNU made her thrived as an expert organizational. Through IPPNU, *Nyai* Munjidah learned about being a bureaucrat; learning to express her opinion, her reasoning, appreciating differences, contending competitively toward fellow activists, and many more. Through IPPNU, *Nyai* Munjidah learned how to greet her people by visiting IPPNU members of every branches in Jombang regency only by riding her bicycle, even occasionally she had to walk barefoot to greet her people in grassroot level. This experience became an asset when she had to greet her people more often as the Head of Region.

After no longer being a student, *Nyai* Munjidah moved from IPPNU to Fatayat (from 1969 to 1972). Stocked with her track record in IPPNU, *Nyai* Munjidah started her organization career in Fatayat as the 2nd Head of Fatayat NU Jombang Administrative Branch. In 1978, *Nyai* Munjidah led Fatayat NU Jombang Administrative Branch. Finally in 1984, *Nyai* Mundjidah was chosen as the Head of Muslimat NU Jombang Administrative Branch. During her first period of leadership in Muslimat NU Jombang Administrative Branch, *Nyai* Munjidah received a mandate as a Regional House of Representatives from PPP faction, which made her to leave her previous position as a consequence of her obedience toward the decision in Mukthamar Situbondo about double position. After a new decision in NU about having double position in 1999 had been made, *Nyai* Munjidah was back in position again to lead Muslimat NU Jombang Administrative Branch.<sup>45</sup>

Political career of *Nyai* Munjidah progressed together in line with her

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45 An interview with Dr.Faizun,M.Pd in January 14, 2021



commitment to manage NU. In 1971, a young *Nyai* Munjidah had been a member of Regional House of Representatives Jombang Regency from NU Party (1971-1977). After NU Party had combined with United Development Party (PPP) in The New Order era, *Nyai* Munjidah joined PPP and became a regional council member for three employment periods. In 1997, *Nyai* Munjidah became a legislator from United Development Party in regional level of East Java. The peak of her political career started in 2012, when *Nyai* Munjidah successfully got her position as a vice-regent in Jombang regency. The final peak of her career happened in 2018-2023, where *Nyai* Munjidah became the number one person in Jombang by getting the position as a regent or the regional head of Jombang regency of Jawa Timur.<sup>46</sup>

*Pesantren* and organizational or political public activities for *Nyai* Munjidah are a unity which should empower each other. During her time as a politician, whether as a house of representative member or as an executive member, *Nyai* Munjidah is still being *istiqamah* (consistent) in managing *pesantren*. *Nyai* Munjidah is the guardian of Lathifiyyah 2 and Wahabiyyah dormitory in Bahrul Ulum Tambakberas Jombang Islamic boarding school. *Nyai* Munjidah also established Favorite Senior High School (Madrasah Aliyah Unggulan/MAU) KH Wahab Chasbulloh. Before she lived in regent and vice-regent official residence, *Nyai* Munjidah daily activity is leading her *pesantren* together with her husband, KH Muhammad Asy'ari. The *pesantren* she is managing has uniqueness in its management which is a combination of various organization elements. Many of her students got important position in *ribath pesantren* under Bahrul Ulum Tambak Besar Institution. Regardless of various positions and activities whether in politic, mass organization, *pesantren*, and her family, *Nyai* Munjidah can manage all of them proportionally so everything are done well.

### ***Informative culture***

*Nyai* Munjidah Wahab is a figure who makes Al-Qur'an as sources of knowledge and footholds when she makes her move. She was raised with egalitarian family tradition where her father, *Kyai* Wahab Chasbulloh is an ulama and an organizational. Since she was a child, she was educated with Islamic values which are not conservative and flexible. Even though she was a daughter of a *kyai*, her father KH, Wahab Chasbulloh gave freedom for her children to explore their childhood; little *Nyai* Munjidah was allowed to practice dancing, her sister was allowed to study in public school and also was allowed to wear skirt instead of sarong. Since very young, her father had introduced her to bureaucracy and organization world. Little

<sup>46</sup> An interview with Dr.Faizun,M.Pd in January 14, 2021

*Nyai* Munjidah was used to follow her father to The State Palace, joining a visit or joining various activities in NU organizations. The experience of interaction with the world outside *pesantren* opens *Nyai* Munjidah's heart and mind.

As a daughter of a *kyai*, *Nyai* Munjidah took education based on religious curriculum until she graduated in *muallimat* (an equivalent of senior high school). *Muallimat* is a religious education typical to *pesantren*, which is designed with curriculum focusing on "alat" science such as *nabwu shorof*, *ushul fiqh* science, *fiqh* science, exegesis science, and hadith science. Some big scriptures become the main component of curriculum, for example *Jurumiyah*, *Imrithi*, *Alfiyah Ibn Malik*, *Izzi*, *Waroqot*, *Jalalain* exegesis, *Bukhori Muslim* scriptures, and some other supporting scriptures. With religious education level she had completed, her religious comprehension is considered mature, added with the ability to read *turast* manuscripts or yellow scriptures without any doubt.

With her background which frequently keep in touch with scriptures written in Arabics, it can be understood if *Nyai* Munjidah sees Al-Qur'an Surat An-Nisa 34 as a verse of gender, not as a verse which talks about men leadership over women. By placing Surat An-Nisa 34 as a verse of gender which context of discussion is about family with a background about social situation at the time Al-Qur'an was descended, the man leadership in a family is not considerate absolute.

### **Manifestation of Surat An-Nisa 34 in the life of *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab as a *pesantren* woman.**

In the *khazanah* (treasure) of *pesantren*, a woman has a very important position. A woman is a main *madrasah* (education center) for the development of children inside a family, a woman is also addressed as *imadul bilad* (foundation of a country), and a good woman is considered as the world's best decoration. Values about a woman taken from Al-Qur'an and hadith have formed a particular religious reason for a *pesantren* woman who, since a child, being taught with religious texts. For *Nyai* Munjidah, the internalization of a *pesantren* woman has strongly attached to her. Since she was a child, when other children learned about religion limited to reading Al-Qur'an only, little *Nyai* Munjidah had been introduced with *pegon* letter, reading the works of ulama which are written in Arabic with interpretation model based on *pesantren*, casting *jurumiyah* scripture, *shorof*, *nadhoman*, *tauhid*, until the higher education level in *muallimat*. Being a *pesantren* woman, *Nyai* Munjidah was educated comprehensively about religious science and to behave as well as to dress based on *pesantren*.

*Nyai* Munjidah's interaction with various yellow scriptures also affects

the freedom of thinking especially when facing the texts. Texts of Al-Qur'an are learned not only contextually, but also the variety of tradition of yellow scripture from *pesantren* gives influence toward the acceptance of moderate Islam reason. Her father, KH Wahab Chasbullah is known as an ulama and a true nationalist, gives impressions which are attached to *Nyai* Munjidah's thought to enter political domain as a part of manifestation from her diversity reason. Track record of KH Wahab Chasbulloh, *Nyai* Munjidah's father, in defending NKRI was scripted in the song titled *Syubanut Wathon*, which is popular at the moment as a song that calls about loving our homeland.

Manifestation of *Nyai* Munjidah toward Surat An-Nisa 34 shows how a culture is inspired from Al-Qur'an verses. A culture, according to Marvin Harriss, can be an appearance of various behaviors which are related with certain groups of society.<sup>47</sup> In the context of *Nyai* Munjidah, her behavior pattern is a self-image where she and her behavior pattern cannot be attached from the group of *pesantren* women.

In order to understand further about *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab's behavior pattern in her social community which is *pesantren* women, through a culture of perspective, it can be analyzed from adaptive culture side.<sup>48</sup> The appearance of *Nyai* Munjidah's behavior as a *pesantren* woman from adaptive culture side, is a synthesis from internal and external situation she is facing. It is unavoidable that, as a *pesantren* woman with standardized norms, it takes resilience in doing some adaptations toward various changes around her to survive with real life choices; not only in *pesantren* but also in the society and political domain. The adaptation done by *Nyai* Munjidah for example, as her effort to influence or to change the environment, are both active and passive adaptation. Active adaptation (*alloplastis*) is her activity to change an environment so it will become as what she wants it to be. Passive adaptation (*autoplastis*) is an effort to change oneself according to the situation within an environment.

A manifestation in form of active culture adaptation done by *Nyai* Munjidah for example, is her effort to direct the *pesantren* under her supervision to be a *pesantren* that open for changes, adapting *pesantren* with parliamentary system, inserting movement ideas into her students' mind, so students of Al-Latifiyah can have different image and being dominant in the organization of *Ribath Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Tambak Beras Jombang*. *Ribath Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Tambak Beras* which have 46 *Pesantren*, has many colors and some of them are practicing pure *salaf*, rejecting students to bring mobile phone, and forbidding their students to join any

47 James P Spradley, *Metode Etnografi*, terj. Misbah Zulfa Elizabeth (Yogyakarta : Tiara Wacana, 1997), 5

48 Imam Huda Syaiful Arifa'illah, "Bentuk-Bentuk Adaptasi Masyarakat Dalam Menghadapi Bencana Banjir (Studi Kasus Di Desa Pelangwot Kecamatan Laren Lamongan)," *Upaya Pengurangan Risiko Bencana Terkait Perubahan Iklim*, no. 4 (2016): 299–314.

activity outside of their dormitory complex.

Manifestation in the form of passive culture adaptation done by *Nyai* Munjidah for example, is her effort to absorb egalitarian values of organization, different from the common culture in *pesantren* which is still feudalistic. The culture of *pesantren*, which commonly puts a family member of *kyai* as a *ning* or *nyai* who will receive many privileges or special treatment in many aspects, allows *Nyai* Munjidah to get many conveniences in her life. *Nyai* Munjidah's struggle in organizational and political world teaches many lessons, for example, that a result should be achieved, not ascribed.

In a perspective of gender, Living Qur'an from *Nyai* Manjidah as a *pesantren* woman show *Nyai* Manjidah's personality who is aware of gender and she tries to actualize the behavior of gender equality in her environment. Gender equality can be seen in 4 existing parameters namely: access, participation, control, and benefit. *Nyai* Munjidah as a *pesantren* woman shows that those 4 parameters can support each other in her daily behavior. *Nyai* Munjidah is one of a few *pesantren* women who has equal chance and access with men in terms of authority both in *pesantren* and political domain. *Nyai* Munjidah also has extensive and maximum spaces of participation; in her *pesantren* institution, formal institutes which she established, mass organization, and political domain which she joined in. With her existence, *Nyai* Munjidah has a capacity toward policy control both in society and in her portion as an executive.

Gender equality that has been portrayed and fought for by *Nyai* Munjidah is a manifestation of Surat An-Nisa 34. That thought is then corresponded with principals of gender equality in Islam, one of them is where Al-Qur'an mentioned that men and women are similar as the servants of Allah (Surat Al-Zariyat 56), both men and women have similar task as a caliph on earth (Surat Al-An'am 165), primordial agreement from the God which is recorded in Al-Qur'an involving men and women (Surat Al-A'raf 172). Cosmic drama in Al-Qur'an which involves Adam and Eve as symbols of men and women (Surat Al-Baqarah 35), (Surat Al-A'raf 20), (Surat Al-A'raf 22-23), (Surat Al-Baqarah 187) and Al-Qur'an also mentioned that men and women have similar potential to have similar achievement (Surat Ali Imran 195)

*Nyai* Munjidah's life as a *pesantren* woman cannot be separated from Al-Qur'an. Al-Qur'an on one side, becomes an inspiration of her movement and on the other side is treated as the power of miracle with magic energy. In the context of living Qur'an, Neil Robinson (2013),<sup>49</sup> found the phenomenon of living Qur'an

49 Neil Robinson, *Discovering The Qur'an : a Countemporary aprouch to a veiled text*, (London : SCM Press, 2003), hlm.10

existing in *Nyai* Munjidah's life that living Qur'an is about how Al-Qur'an is listened, memorized, read, and presented in daily life as inspirations.<sup>50</sup> Human interaction with Al-Qur'an can give big impact in someone's life, it happens because of someone's faith who puts Al-Qur'an as prophetic miracle. Those interactions really give big impact toward socio-cultural life,<sup>51</sup> as what Abdullah Saeed said:

“Another important type of text in the Qur'an are the ethical-legal texts. Many Muslims regard these texts as having the greatest impact on their daily lives. Such texts relate to a range of different teachings, including the Muslim system of belief, devotional practices, essential values such as protection of life, and legal instructions such as those on inheritance and the punishment of crimes. This category of texts can at times be difficult to interpret, and interpretation of them requires a careful consideration for both text and context.”<sup>52</sup>

In *Nyai* Munjidah's case, there is a correlation in her portrait of life journey, her interaction with Al-Qur'an, her fight about gender equality through *pesantren*, mass organization, and politic, and in her thought about verses of gender. Seeing the parameter of living Qur'an from how *Nyai* Munjidah makes Al-Qur'an as a source of cognitive and non-cognitive and how Al-Qur'an is placed by *Nyai* Munjidah in terms of performative and informative that becomes inspiration of prophetic behavior based on verses of Al-Qur'an to make gender equality happens in *pesantren* specifically, and in society generally. Living Qur'an by *Nyai* Munjidah also gives a new color toward studies about living Qur'an where with cultural approach, *Nyai* Munjidah has done positive and passive adaptation toward values which become religious reason that affect her behavior as a manifestation of internalization from Surat An-Nisa 34.

## Conclusion

*Nyai* Munjidah's manifestation of Surat An-Nisa 34 shows a form of culturing value of Surat An-Nisa 34 in form of cognitive and non-cognitive cultures; the acculturation of Surat An-Nisa 34 is also visible in form of performative and informative cultures. Outside of the parameters mentioned above, this research looks at the other form of living Qur'an from a *pesantren* woman named *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab, in the form of active adaptive and passive adaptive cultures in terms of internalization values from Surat An-Nisa 34. Living Qur'an of *pesantren* women as viewed from perspective of gender shows that *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab is a *pesantren*

50 Neal Robinson, *Discovering...*,14

51 Tinggal Purwanto, “Fenomena Living al-Qur'an Dalam Perspektif Neal Robinson, Farid Esack Dan Abdullah Saeed,” *Mawa'izh: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Pengembangan Sosial Kemanusiaan* 7, no. 1 (2016): 103–24, <https://doi.org/10.32923/maw.v7i1.607>.

52 Abdullah Saeed, *The Qur'an an Introduction*, (New York : Routledge, 2008), 78



woman with strong religious reason toward gender equality which is actualized in behavior inspired by verses in Al-Qur'an, and one of them is Surat An-Nisa 34. The actualization of *Nyai* Munjidah's behavior as a materialization of text which is actualized in cognitive and non-cognitive culture, performative and informative culture, as well as active adaptive and passive adaptive culture, there are a strong correlation among those three categories which strengthen the influence of verses from Al-Qur'an toward *Nyai* Munjidah's behavior.

Other aspects in the study of woman and Al-Qur'an basically is a research rarely done by researchers. It gives an opportunity for other researchers to do a comprehensive study toward studies of Al-Qur'an and woman. This research is also limited only on discussion about an aspect in the interpretation of Surat An-Nisa 34 as well as the leadership aspect of *Nyai* Munjidah Wahab, therefore other aspects such as scientific tendency, social, and economic role which are only discussed a little here, will be worthy to be studied comprehensively.

### **Supplementary Materials**

The data presented in this study are available in [insert article or supplementary material here] (Usually the datasets were analysed from library research can be found in the whole data references )

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#### **Authors' contributions**

All listed authors contributed to this article. U.L. wrote the original draft, reviewed and edited it, wrote the formal analysis, compiled the resources, conceptualised the study, and managed the project administration. I.T. was responsible for the methodology and validation. Y.A. supervised the project

#### **Data availability statement**

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

#### **Conflict of interests**

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