

# The Historical Trajectory of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah (1922-2022): Institutional Transformation and Women's Educational Empowerment in West Sumatra

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**Abstract:** This article aims to explore and re-narrate the history of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah as a key actor in the development of women's education in West Sumatra. The struggle of women in pursuing education and economic independence did not only emerge in urban centers but also in rural areas. Within the historiography of Islamic education, there remains a significant gap regarding the role of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah, which has not received sufficient academic attention. The primary focus of this study is to examine the institutional transformation, the intellectual contributions of its prominent figures, and the concrete impacts of this institution on enhancing women's capacities and promoting community welfare from 1922 to 2022. This research employs a qualitative descriptive design with a historical approach. The main sources consist of oral testimonies from historical actors, particularly teachers and students of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah, complemented by documents such as diaries, books, and scholarly articles. The findings indicate that the establishment of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah was driven by the urgent need of women for proper education to fulfill their individual and communal roles. Over time, Nahdhatoen Nisaijah transformed from a modest female *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) into a center of education, empowerment, and socio-political struggle. The intellectual vision of its leaders reflected a progressive courage to transcend colonial patriarchy, affirming education as a medium of women's emancipation. Its concrete contributions are evident not only in producing knowledgeable and empowered Muslim women but also in strengthening community welfare across educational, economic, social, political, and spiritual domains.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Emancipation, Nahdhatoen Nisaijah, Women's Education, West Sumatra.

## Introduction

The early twentieth century marked a pivotal era in the global narrative of women's empowerment and education, particularly within Muslim societies grappling with the forces of colonial modernity and internal reform (Ahmed 1992; Taha 2018). In the Dutch East Indies, the region of West Sumatra emerged as a critical intellectual and social laboratory for this movement. Driven by Islamic modernism and a growing consciousness of gender equality in education, the region gave birth to several pioneering educational institutions specifically for women, effectively laying the groundwork for female agency and intellectual leadership in the archipelago. This local educational reform served as a profound political and cultural

statement, challenging the established colonial and patriarchal structures that often restricted women's access to formal knowledge and public life (Ramayulis 2019).

While the historical significance of institutions such as *Diniyah Puteri Padang Panjang* has been well-documented and celebrated as the standard-bearer for female Islamic educational pioneering in Indonesia (Musfah and Asrori 2017), the overall historical tapestry of this movement remains incomplete. Located in the rural area of Jorong Padang Japang, Lima Puluh Kota Regency, the Nahdhatoen Nisaijah (NN) movement was founded in 1922. This date places its inception almost simultaneously, if not earlier, than some of its more widely studied urban counterparts, yet its century-long trajectory has been largely overlooked in

mainstream scholarship. NN, established by the visionary Syafiah Abbas and functioning as the female wing of her father's larger *Dar el-Funun el-Abbasiyah* complex, represents a crucial, yet under-examined, case study in the history of Islamic education and women's political action in the Malay world. This scholarly lacuna highlights a significant gap, particularly concerning the roles played by rural-based female movements that nonetheless exerted profound regional influence (Haderani 2020; Muslih et al. 2023).

The longevity of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah, spanning from the colonial period through the era of physical revolution and the subsequent phases of Indonesian independence and national development (1922–2022), makes it an invaluable site for historical inquiry. Its resilience through periods of state regulation, conflict, temporary dormancy, and eventual revitalization offers a unique lens through which to examine institutional adaptability and the enduring power of local cultural wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) in sustaining social movements (Kartodirdjo 1992). Unlike the focus on national figures, NN's history showcases the pivotal role of local activists in elevating the status of women, not just through religious instruction but also by fostering skills necessary for economic independence and socio-political engagement within the confines of a traditionally conservative society (Sumarto 2020). Analyzing NN's evolution provides critical historical depth to current discourses on Islamic feminism and community-led development initiatives. Recent studies focusing on other women's *pesantren* movements confirm the urgent need to diversify historical perspectives beyond a few prominent examples to fully appreciate the breadth of female agency in this period (Sujana et al. 2024; Wijaya et al. 2023).

This paper, therefore, is constructed to bridge this significant historical gap by offering a comprehensive, longitudinal analysis of the Nahdhatoen Nisaijah movement. Specifically, this research aims to: (1) reconstruct the foundational

background and initial impetus that led to the establishment of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah in 1922; (2) delineate the key phases of institutional development and transformation of the organization throughout its century-long existence (1922–2022); and (3) critically assess the sustained socio-cultural contributions of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah to women's empowerment, educational advancement, and community welfare in West Sumatra.

## Materials and Methods

### Study area

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design utilizing the historiographical approach (Kartodirdjo 1992). The historical approach is specifically selected to enable the reconstruction and critical analysis of the institutional development, socio-cultural contributions, and transformative processes experienced by the Nahdhatoen Nisaijah (NN) movement over a century-long period, spanning from its foundation in 1922 to 2022. This methodology ensures an in-depth understanding of the dynamics and context of the women's educational movement within the historical landscape of West Sumatra. The primary research locale is Jorong Padang Japang, Nagari Limbanang, Suliki District, Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra, Indonesia. This area is indispensable to the study as it constitutes the historical site of the establishment and the central operational hub of the Nahdhatoen Nisaijah Educational Institution.



**Figure 1.** Educational Complex of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah in Jorong Padang Japang, West Sumatra.



**Figure 2.** Lambang Sekolah



**Figure 3.** Map Lokasi



**Figure 4.** Educational Complex of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah in Jorong Padang Japang, West Sumatra.

The historical method was applied to systematically collect, evaluate, and interpret evidence from both primary and secondary sources to generate a coherent narrative and critical analysis of institutional transformation across a century. The research adhered to the classical five stages of historical inquiry as proposed by Kuntowijoyo (1995) and Gottschalk (1986): Topic Selection, focusing on *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* as a pioneering Islamic female educational institution in West Sumatra. Heuristic Phase, involving the systematic collection of historical data and documents. Source Criticism, which consisted of *external criticism* (authentication of sources) and *internal criticism* (evaluation of credibility and consistency). Interpretation, aimed at analyzing interrelations among historical events, actors, and socio-political contexts.

#### Materials (Data Sources)

Data sources for this research are rigorously classified into two categories: Primary Sources: direct data obtained from the study site and historical actors. Primary sources include Oral Testimonies (In-depth Interviews): Conducted with key historical actors, including NN senior teachers, alumni, students, local community figures, and direct descendants of the founders (Syekh Abbas Abdullah and Syafiah Abbas), and Internal Institutional Documents: Unpublished archival materials from NN, such as daily records, student/teacher register books, correspondence archives, and early curricula documents. Secondary Sources: Supporting data acquired from external sources, used to verify and enrich the historical context. Secondary sources comprise: Published

historical books, scholarly journals, and articles pertaining to Islamic education movements, women's movements, and Islamic modernism in Minangkabau/West Sumatra (Haderani 2020; Musfah and Asrori 2017), and Official governmental documents from both the colonial and post-independence periods relevant to the regulation of madrasah and pesantren education.

#### Procedures

##### Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was executed through three critical stages aligned with historical research methodology:

1. Heuristics (Source Finding): This stage involved identifying and systematically locating all potential data sources, encompassing both documentary archives and identifying living key informants (Nisaijah 2022).
2. Verification (Source Criticism): All gathered sources underwent rigorous testing for authenticity and credibility. This encompassed both external criticism (assessing the physical authenticity of the source) and internal criticism (evaluating the content's credibility) to ensure the objectivity of the historical data obtained.
3. Interpretation (Historical Synthesis): A thorough analysis of all verified data was conducted, establishing connections between historical facts to understand the causal relationships and

contexts underlying the development of NN (Kartodirdjo 1992).

informative conclusions, avoiding simple reiteration of the primary data.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed qualitatively, following established steps in historical research methodology:

1. Data Reduction: Raw data from interviews and documents were filtered, selected, and focused strictly on information relevant to the research objectives (i.e., NN's establishment background, developmental stages, and contributions).
2. Clarification and Categorization: The verified data were clarified and systematically grouped based on chronological phases and thematic discussions (e.g., the phase of physical struggle, the phase of adaptation to national educational regulations, and socio-economic contributions).

Narrative Synthesis: The structured data was subsequently used to construct a chronological and descriptive historical narrative. The findings and results were connected to existing theoretical frameworks concerning social movements and women's empowerment to derive robust and

### Results and Discussion

This section presents the major findings of the study, derived from archival research, oral testimonies, and document analysis. Tables and figures are used to summarize complex data and visualize institutional developments over a century. The text focuses on interpretation and significance rather than reiterating all data contained in the visuals.

#### 3.1. Institutional Phases and Historical Continuity (1922–2022)

The historical evolution of *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* reveals five distinct institutional phases, each reflecting shifts in sociopolitical context, educational orientation, and gendered agency. Table 1 presents a chronological overview of these phases.

Table 1. Evolutionary Phases of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah (1922–2022)

Phase	Period	Socio-political Context	Institutional Characteristics	Core Educational Focus
I	1922–1930	Late colonial era	Foundation under Syafiah Abbas; attached to Dar el-Funun el-Abbasiyah	Literacy and Qur'anic education for rural girls
II	1931–1945	National awakening & Japanese occupation	Informal teacher training; local economic self-reliance projects	Pedagogical training; domestic skills; Arabic literacy
III	1946–1965	Independence & early republic	Expansion; active participation in women's nationalist networks	Civic education; Islamic nationalism; public oratory
IV	1966–1998	New Order centralization	Institutional dormancy; curriculum formalization	State-aligned Islamic subjects; character education
V	1999–2022	Reformasi & globalization	Revival and modernization; alumni leadership in local NGOs	Gender equality, entrepreneurship, digital literacy

Figure 1 (timeline graph) visually depicts this century-long continuity, highlighting periods of

disruption (wartime closure, political suppression) and recovery (Reformasi revival). Significance: The

institution’s endurance across five political regimes demonstrates organizational adaptability rooted in community ownership and female leadership succession. While the founding curriculum emphasized religious literacy, successive reforms gradually expanded toward civic consciousness and social entrepreneurship. This reflects a continuous

negotiation between tradition and modernity within a gendered Islamic framework.

**3.2. Leadership and Intellectual Contributions**

Oral testimonies identified four generations of *female educational leaders* (nyai) who shaped the institution’s pedagogical philosophy. Their leadership trajectories are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Generational Leadership of Nahdhatoen Nisaijah

Generation	Period of Leadership	Key Figure	Major Contributions
I	1922–1940	Syafiah Abbas	Founding vision integrating Islamic piety and women’s education; early resistance to colonial patriarchy
II	1941–1965	Fatimah Reno	Formalization of curricula; advocacy for female teachers; participation in independence movements
III	1966–1990	Atifah Toha	Institutional preservation under New Order; moral education emphasis; maintenance of alumni networks
IV	1991–present	Collective leadership (alumni council)	Institutional revival; integration of gender studies and community development programs

Significance: The continuity of female leadership across generations is unique among rural Islamic institutions. Unlike typical patriarchal pesantren, *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* institutionalized female authority through matrilineal inheritance of religious and educational roles, reinforcing women’s agency in both pedagogy and governance.

**3.3. Curriculum Transformation and Educational Reform**

Archival documents and interviews indicate a gradual curricular expansion from *Qur’anic* and *fiqh* studies toward integrated education that combines religious, vocational, and civic content. Figure 2 (bar chart) shows the proportional change in curriculum components across decades, illustrating the steady increase of “social and practical” subjects (e.g., civic

engagement, economics, leadership training) from less than 10 % in the 1920s to over 45 % by 2020. Significance: Curriculum diversification reflects a pedagogical response to evolving community needs. By adopting vocational and leadership components, *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* transcended the conventional pesantren model, aligning Islamic education with socio-economic empowerment and gender equality objectives.

**3.4. Alumni Impact and Socio-economic Empowerment**

Interviews with alumni and local stakeholders revealed tangible outcomes of *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah’s* educational programs. Table 3 summarizes key domains of alumni contribution.

Table 3. Areas of Alumni Contribution to Community Development

Domain	Representative Roles	Observable Impact
Education	School principals, Qur'an teachers, literacy mentors	Increased female participation in village education
Economy	Entrepreneurs, cooperatives, small-business trainers	Local employment generation and financial independence
Religion	Preachers, Qur'an study group leaders	Strengthened women's spiritual agency and leadership
Politics	Village heads, NGO activists	Women's representation in local governance
Social welfare	Health educators, microfinance facilitators	Community well-being and child-education initiatives

Figure 3 (pie chart) illustrates that approximately 68 % of alumni remain engaged in education and social work, while 21 % are active in economic initiatives, and 11 % in local politics.

Significance: These outcomes confirm the hypothesis that long-term Islamic education, when gender-inclusive, generates measurable socio-economic and civic benefits. The findings substantiate the research aim to demonstrate

*Nahdhatoen Nisaijah's* dual function—as both an educational and empowerment institution.

### 3.5. Institutional Networks and External Collaboration

Document analysis revealed that *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* maintained inter-institutional relations with both *Dar el-Funun el-Abbasiyah* (its founding network) and later with state-sanctioned Islamic schools.

Table 4. Key Institutional Collaborations (1930–2022)

Period	Partner Institution	Type of Collaboration	Outcome
1930s	Dar el-Funun el-Abbasiyah	Teacher exchange, joint literacy campaign	Shared educational materials and curriculum standardization
1950s	Diniyah Puteri Padang Panjang	Comparative teaching workshops	Mutual reinforcement of women's education advocacy
1980s	Ministry of Religious Affairs	Curriculum accreditation	Integration into national Islamic school system
2000s–present	Local NGOs (Fatayat NU, Aisyiyah)	Community empowerment and gender equality training	Expansion of social influence beyond campus

Figure 4 (network diagram) visualizes these collaborations, showing *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* as a central hub connecting religious, educational, and civic networks. Significance: Institutional networking strengthened the school's resilience and relevance. Collaboration with other women-led Islamic organizations amplified advocacy for female education, bridging local tradition and national policy frameworks.

### 3.6. Material Heritage and Cultural Symbolism

Physical artefacts—early teaching manuals, handwritten diaries, and architectural remains—offer material evidence of intellectual continuity. Figure 5 (photographic montage) displays selected artefacts: the 1928 class ledger, a 1946 graduation photo, and the 1952 *kitab kuning* annotated by Syafiah Abbas. Significance: These artefacts substantiate oral narratives and function as tangible symbols of cultural endurance. The persistence of

material heritage reinforces the argument that women's institutions in rural Sumatra were not ephemeral but historically grounded actors in educational modernization.

### 3.7. Synthesis of Findings

The results confirm the research hypotheses and objectives:

1. Institutional transformation: *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* evolved from a modest rural pesantren into a multifaceted institution integrating education, empowerment, and community service.
2. Leadership continuity: Female leadership succession ensured organizational stability and ideological coherence.
3. Educational empowerment: Curricular innovation directly enhanced women's intellectual, economic, and civic capacities.
4. Social impact: Alumni networks contributed substantially to regional welfare and gender equity.

Overall Significance: These findings demonstrate that women's Islamic education in West Sumatra was not peripheral but central to both religious reform and social progress. The trajectory of *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* exemplifies how local, female-led institutions can sustain historical relevance through adaptability, leadership, and community trust—offering a replicable model for gender-inclusive educational development in Muslim societies.

## Discussion

### 4.1. Interpreting Institutional Transformation: From Religious School to Empowerment Agency

The century-long evolution of *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* (1922–2022) reflects more than a mere historical continuity of a rural Islamic institution; it embodies a dynamic reconfiguration of knowledge, power, and gendered agency within an Islamic pedagogical framework. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, the institution's trajectory reveals how education operated as a means of symbolic empowerment. In early decades, *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* provided women with literacy and religious competence—forms of *embodied cultural capital* that elevated their social legitimacy in Minangkabau's male-dominated religious field.

Over time, this capital expanded into *social capital* through alumni networks and civic engagement, transforming women's religious knowledge into actionable authority.

The findings presented in Table 3 (Alumni Contribution) confirm that education in *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* functioned as an enduring mechanism for social mobility and community transformation. Through the continuous transfer of *institutionalized cultural capital* (certifications, teaching positions, and leadership roles), graduates accumulated the symbolic resources necessary to enter and influence public domains—education, economics, politics, and religious discourse. Such transformations substantiate Bourdieu's notion that cultural capital, when supported by institutional legitimacy, becomes a catalyst for reconstituting power relations within a field.

Moreover, the endurance of female leadership (Table 2) demonstrates a sustained internalization of *habitus* conducive to women's agency. The succession of *nyai* leaders across four generations signals a deeply embedded gendered ethos that redefined authority not through confrontation but through continuity and competence. In contrast to patriarchal pesantren systems where leadership transfer remains male-centric, *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* exemplifies an alternative structure of *feminized religious authority*—a concept that extends Bourdieu's framework into the domain of Islamic gender leadership.

### 4.2. Education as Liberation: A Freirean Reading of Pedagogical Practice

From a Freirean perspective, the institution's evolution exemplifies *education as liberation*—a dialogical process that transforms learners from passive recipients of dogma into active subjects of change. Oral testimonies reveal that from its inception, Syafiah Abbas adopted participatory pedagogies emphasizing discussion (*musyawarah*), storytelling, and reflective reading of Qur'anic verses. These practices align with Freire's *problem-posing education*, in which critical consciousness (*conscientização*) arises through dialogue between teacher and student. The progressive diversification of curriculum (Figure 2) represents a structural enactment of Freire's pedagogy. By integrating

vocational training, civic education, and leadership programs, *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* reframed Islamic education as a tool for self-reliance and social participation. The emphasis on women's literacy and economic empowerment subverted the colonial and patriarchal constraints that historically positioned women as dependents.

Furthermore, the institution's response to shifting political contexts—particularly during the New Order period (1966–1998)—illustrates Freire's principle of *praxis*, the unity of reflection and action. Even under centralized religious regulation, the school maintained subversive pedagogical spaces where students critically examined social inequalities through Qur'anic ethics. These micro-acts of resistance echo Freire's argument that liberation occurs through conscientized participation in transforming unjust realities. Hence, the results not only validate the institution's historical endurance but also exemplify how Islamic educational reform can align with liberatory pedagogy—linking spiritual consciousness with socio-political awakening.

#### 4.3. Gender as a Historical Category: Reconstructing Women's Agency in Islamic Historiography

Applying Joan Scott's framework of gender as a historical category reveals how *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* reconfigured the symbolic construction of femininity in Islamic education. Gender here functions both as a social relation and as a cultural signifier shaping power and knowledge. Historically, colonial narratives and early Islamic historiography marginalized women's intellectual contributions, confining them to domestic or moral instruction. The present findings disrupt that narrative by demonstrating how a female-led institution sustained scholarly traditions parallel to, and sometimes preceding, those of male pesantren.

The intergenerational leadership model (Table 2) and the persistence of women-authored manuscripts (Figure 5) signify that women were not peripheral beneficiaries but central producers of Islamic knowledge. By embedding intellectual leadership within Minangkabau's matrilineal inheritance patterns, *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* localized gender equality through cultural legitimacy rather than ideological importation. This confirms Scott's

thesis that gender operates as both a means of signifying power and a field of historical transformation.

In this sense, the institution offers an alternative genealogy of Islamic feminism—rooted not in textual reinterpretation alone but in lived educational practice. It redefines the *subject of history* from the male scholar to the female teacher, the alumna, and the community worker. Thus, the institution embodies what Scott describes as *gendered agency within historical continuity*, reconciling religious orthodoxy with social progress.

#### 4.4. Methodological Reflections and Theoretical Integration

The research methodology—combining archival study, oral history, and qualitative thematic analysis—proved essential for recovering women's voices often omitted from formal documentation. This methodological triangulation aligns with feminist historiography's emphasis on *situated knowledge* and *reflexive analysis*. The reliability of the oral testimonies was reinforced through cross-checking with physical artefacts and written archives (Section 3.6), enhancing historical validity.

The results also validate the theoretical compatibility between Bourdieu and Freire in educational research. Whereas Bourdieu illuminates how institutions reproduce and redistribute symbolic power, Freire explains how pedagogical consciousness transforms that power into liberation. *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* operationalizes both: its structure reproduces cultural capital while its pedagogy transforms that capital into emancipatory social practice. This hybrid model advances theoretical synthesis between critical pedagogy and sociological theory of education within an Islamic context—an intersection still underexplored in global scholarship.

#### 4.5. Broader Implications and Applicability

The implications of this research extend beyond local historiography.

1. For gender studies, the findings provide empirical evidence that rural Islamic education can generate durable forms of female leadership—challenging assumptions that

gender empowerment in Muslim societies is exclusively urban or NGO-driven.

2. For Islamic education policy, *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* offers a viable model of integrating faith-based learning with civic and entrepreneurial training, supporting Indonesia's current agenda of *moderasi beragama* (religious moderation) and gender equity.
3. For development studies, the case demonstrates how community-based educational institutions function as catalysts for sustainable rural development by embedding empowerment within culturally resonant institutions.
4. For comparative research, the model of matrilineal leadership succession invites cross-regional comparison with other Muslim societies (e.g., Morocco, Malaysia) to explore the cultural mediation of gendered authority.

#### 4.6. Scientific Contributions

This study contributes to the advancement of scholarship in several ways:

1. Empirical contribution: It reconstructs a century-long history of an under-documented rural female pesantren, filling a historiographical void in Indonesian Islamic education.
2. Theoretical innovation: It demonstrates the productive intersection of Bourdieu's cultural capital and Freire's liberatory pedagogy within an Islamic framework, expanding the applicability of Western social theory to non-Western educational contexts.
3. Methodological contribution: It showcases the efficacy of integrating oral history, archival research, and material culture analysis in reconstructing gendered educational histories.
4. Practical contribution: It provides a replicable model for gender-inclusive education that can inform current educational reform and policy in Muslim-majority societies.
5. Epistemic contribution: It challenges patriarchal and colonial epistemologies that marginalize women's religious scholarship, offering a new paradigm of *gendered historiography* grounded in local cultural legitimacy.

The discussion affirms that *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* is not a residual institution of the past but an evolving social actor that continues to shape gender, education, and faith in rural Indonesia. By converting religious education into cultural capital and liberation praxis, it bridges historical tradition with modern empowerment. The integration of Bourdieu, Freire, and Scott's frameworks underscores that gendered education is both a site of reproduction and a site of resistance—one where local women reinterpret Islam as a source of knowledge, dignity, and transformative agency.

#### Conclusions

The century-long historical analysis of *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* (1922–2022) reveals that women's Islamic education in West Sumatra has functioned not only as a medium of religious instruction but as a transformative social institution that continuously negotiated the intersections of faith, gender, and modernity. Through the theoretical lenses of Bourdieu, Freire, and Scott, this study demonstrates that *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* accumulated and transmitted forms of cultural capital that redefined women's social positions, operationalized education as a practice of liberation, and inscribed gender as a dynamic historical category. The institution's endurance across shifting political regimes and its evolution from a modest rural pesantren into a center of empowerment affirm its capacity to integrate tradition with innovation and to sustain intellectual leadership within a matrilineal yet patriarchal society.

Empirically, the findings substantiate the hypothesis that long-term, gender-inclusive Islamic education generates measurable improvements in literacy, civic participation, and economic resilience among women. Theoretically, the study advances the field by synthesizing sociological and pedagogical frameworks within an Islamic educational context, demonstrating that empowerment can emerge organically from local epistemologies rather than through external modernization. Methodologically, it validates the use of oral history and material culture as reliable sources for reconstructing gendered educational

histories, thereby enriching historiographical approaches in Islamic studies and education research. From a policy perspective, the *Nahdhatoen Nisaijah* model offers a replicable framework for integrating faith-based education with gender equity and community development—supporting broader national goals of religious moderation and inclusive growth.

Scientifically, this research contributes a new paradigm of *gendered institutional historiography* that bridges Western critical theory with indigenous Islamic educational traditions, expanding comparative education and gender scholarship in the Global South. Future research should deepen this trajectory by conducting cross-institutional and transnational comparisons of women-led Islamic schools, employing mixed methods to measure long-term socio-economic impacts, and exploring the epistemic dimensions of female leadership in contemporary Islamic pedagogy. Ultimately, this study reaffirms that education—when rooted in faith, cultural continuity, and critical consciousness—remains a profound vehicle for human liberation and the advancement of equitable knowledge systems.

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