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# Kiai Leadership Patterns in The Modernization of Boarding School Management

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#### Abstract:

This study explores the leadership patterns of kiai in the effort to modernize pesantren management, with the aim of understanding how kiai leadership can combine traditional values with the demands of modern management. The main focus of this study is to identify the dual role of kiai as spiritual and managerial leaders, and their impact on the operational effectiveness of *pesantren*. Using a qualitative method with a case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations in several *pesantren* that have implemented modern management principles. The results of the study indicate that kiai leadership that successfully combines traditional and modern aspects results in more efficient pesantren management without sacrificing the religious values that are the foundation of the institution. In addition, this leadership pattern also strengthens the identity of the pesantren amidst the flow of globalization, maintaining the relevance of the institution while maintaining its uniqueness. that modernizing *pesantren* findings indicate management through kiai leadership not only increases operational efficiency but also strengthens the competitiveness and resilience of *pesantren* in the long term. This study makes an important contribution to understanding how pesantren can adapt to the times without losing their traditional essence, as well as opening up opportunities for further research on the application of modern management in religious-based educational institutions.

### INTRODUCTION

The leadership pattern of the kiai in the modernization of Islamic boarding school management shows that management changes do not only focus on operational efficiency, but also on instilling traditional values that are maintained in the modernization process(Abdullah et al., 2023; Arifin & Zaini, 2024; Muali et al., 2021; Wajdi et al., 2022). This is because the kiai as a leader has a dual role, namely maintaining the continuity of the teachings of the islamic boarding school which are full of religious and cultural values(Jaenullah et al., 2022; Rahman, 2022), while ensuring that the management of the islamic boarding school is able



to adapt to the demands of the modern era without sacrificing the traditional essence that is the foundation of the islamic boarding school. It can be proven in studies that Islamic boarding schools led by kiai with a leadership style that prioritizes balance between modernization and preserving tradition tend to be more successful in facing the challenges of globalization(Adiyono et al., 2023; Baharun & Rizqiyah, 2023; Sulaiman et al., 2024). These Islamic boarding schools are able to maintain their identity while remaining relevant to contemporary educational needs, thus producing graduates who are not only intellectually competent, but also have spiritual and moral depth(Amadin, 2021; Faiz et al., 2023; Hudori et al., 2024). Thus, the kiai leadership pattern in modernizing islamic boarding school management allows for the creation of a balance between operational efficiency and the preservation of traditional values.

Previous studies have highlighted the role of kiai in Islamic boarding schools, especially in religious and social aspects(Anjar & ZA, 2021; Muharyanto et al., 2022; Sholeh, 2021). Several studies from (Dakir & Umiarso, 2022; Sanusi et al., 2021; Sudrajat et al., 2021) shows that strong kiai leadership can maintain the stability and continuity of Islamic boarding schools amidst changing times. However, there is very little research that specifically discusses how kiai can lead modernizing Islamic boarding process of school management effectively(Asror et al., 2023; Rosyid et al., 2021; Sabila et al., 2024). Previous studies tend to focus on the traditional aspects of kiai leadership, with little attention to how kiai adapt to the demands of modern management(Munirah & Aslamiah, 2022; Rachman, 2022; Shidig & Mubin, 2022). Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by exploring more deeply the patterns of kiai leadership in the context of modernizing Islamic boarding school management.

The novelty of this research lies in its approach which combines analysis of the traditional role of kiai with the need for modern management in Islamic boarding schools. In the context of globalization and increasingly complex demands of the times, this study offers a new perspective on how kiai can become agents of change who not only maintain tradition but also encourage innovation in islamic boarding school management. This study also introduces modern management concepts adapted to the context of islamic boarding school, thus providing a more comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities faced in this modernization process.

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the leadership patterns of kiai who are effective in modernizing islamic boarding school management at Sunan Pandanaran. This study seeks to answer the question of how kiai can balance between maintaining traditional values with the need to adopt efficient and effective modern management practices. In addition, this study also aims to provide practical recommendations for Islamic boarding schools in facing managerial challenges in the era of globalization.

The argument in this study is based on the assumption that kiai have a strategic role in leading the transformation of islamic boarding school management. Adaptive and visionary kiai leadership is considered capable of bridging the gap between tradition and modernization, so that islamic boarding school can continue to develop without losing their identity. By studying the leadership patterns of kiai in this modernization process, it is hoped that this research can provide a significant contribution to the development of better and more sustainable islamic boarding school management, as well as enrich the

literature on leadership in the context of Islamic education.

### RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type to explore the leadership patterns of kiai in the modernization of islamic boarding school management (Ezer & Aksüt, 2021). This approach was chosen because it aims to understand in depth how kiai combine traditional values with modern management practices in managing islamic boarding school. This method allows researchers to explore the perspectives and direct experiences of various parties involved in the islamic boarding school managerial process, such as kiai, islamic boarding school managers, staff, and students. The location of this research is at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic boarding school, Ngaglik, Sleman, Yogyakarta, which is known as the center of traditional islamic boarding school in Sleman Regency and has begun to apply modern management principles. The focus of this study is on how the leadership patterns of kiai in the modernization process affect the operational effectiveness and sustainability of islamic boarding school in facing the challenges of globalization.

Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School is a large Islamic boarding school in the Ngaglik area, Sleman. Of course, it is not easy to unite large Islamic boarding schools to become one unit in providing policies. Given that Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School is divided into several regions and several formal institutions. to unite the management principles between various regions and formal educational institutions into one management principle. Where the previous management had its own management characteristics in each region and educational institution in one boarding school. However, since the leadership of the head of the Islamic boarding school was taken over by the head of the Islamic boarding school while still coordinating with the caretaker, currently Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School has the same management characteristics even though it consists of various regions and formal educational institutions. This cannot be separated from the leadership pattern of a leader.

Data collection techniques in this study used observation, interviews and documentation. The interview technique used in this study was a semi-structured interview technique, which means it has interview guidelines, and although there are interviews outside the guidelines. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher introduced himself and provided an overview of the interview topic. To increase accuracy and thorough documentation, an agreement was made with the participants to record the interviews. These recording sessions, along with the accompanying transcripts, serve as valuable sources for careful analysis and interpretation in this study.

In this study, data analysis was carried out in three stages (Truman, 2023), namely 1) Data Reduction. At this stage, the data is categorized, directed, clarified, organized, and irrelevant data is removed. This process helps in simplifying and focusing the data obtained so that it is easier to analyze; 2) Data Presentation. The data that has been reduced is then presented in various forms such as matrices, graphs, charts, and networks. This presentation aims to visualize the data so that it is easier to understand and further analyze, and 3) Conclusion Drawing. Based on the data that has been presented, the researcher makes conclusions. This process involves interpreting data and generating new ideas or understandings that have not existed before, contributing to the

knowledge or theory being studied.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Uniting various managements that have become traditions is not easy, but it must have a strong spirit and consistent principles for a change. The changes in the management of Islamic boarding schools are currently partly felt by us, starting from changes in activities, structural changes (Harismansyah et al., 2023; Mudhofir & Imam, 2022; Ridlo & Yanti, 2023), changes in education patterns, guidance patterns, payment patterns with virtual accounts and other changes. All these changes are solely to make the activities of students more effective systematically and more intensely.

From the many platforms that have been realized in the change of management of this Islamic boarding school, we can see and feel together that the changes that previously all activities were not well conditioned or controlled and slowed down the effectiveness of the students' activities, now we no longer feel it(Muharyanto et al., 2022; Sanjani, 2024). What is felt now is that it is easier to control, to monitor the development activities of students, and so on. All of this can be felt from the cooperation of all of us, starting from the Head of the Islamic boarding school, administrators, foster parents and all students(Aldeia et al., 2023; Anwar, 2021; Mashuri et al., 2023). One of those who helps this management change is the administrator. The administrator is a bridge, as a container that connects from the caregiver to the students. To become an administrator, you must have standard abilities and skill standards both in terms of educating, protecting and guiding students in their development. The existence of these changes can be carried out by the head of the Islamic boarding school with several leadership patterns.

A leader is someone who has one or more advantages as a talent that he brought since birth (tendency) that is needed in certain situations, so that he can have the power or authority to guide his followers(Aisyah & Muttaqin, 2023; Al Auliya, 2023; Islamiah & Maulidiah, 2024). He also receives recognition, and participation from his subordinates and is able to move his subordinates to achieve certain goals. The word leader then adds ke-in in leadership which means the problem of leading. Leadership according to Sudarman Danim is an action carried out by an individual or group in organizing and providing direction to other individuals to join together to achieve previously agreed goals.

## Kiai as a Role Model

Based on the results of research at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School, it was found that leadership behavior in the dimension of relationship orientation is carried out in the form of exemplary behavior. With this in management science, it is in line with the transformational leadership style, where transformational leaders set a strong example for their followers. It was proven by head Islamic school as the secretary of the Islamic boarding school that "he (pengasuh) is always on time and never delays tasks, both from the smallest to the largest. So that subordinates should feel ashamed if they cannot spare time for the Islamic boarding school compared to him who is very busy". From the explanation of the Islamic boarding school secretary, it can be understood that the head of the Islamic boarding school provides good examples to his subordinates.

A leader must be able to have a good character or attitude so that he becomes a role model for his subordinates. Because every action of a leader will be an assessment for his community, including in the realm of socialization with his subordinates. As conveyed by head Islamic boarding school as follows, "the Head of the Islamic Boarding School who is a leader in driving this Islamic boarding school organization, has an integrated charismatic, visionary, innovative, and democratic leadership style, even the most prominent is the exemplary nature to be imitated, from the way he speaks, his presence and friendliness to every administrator under the auspices of the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic boarding school."

With the presentation delivered by the secretary of the Islamic boarding school, it is in accordance with the observations made by the researcher that the Head of the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in his relationship with the administrators, he respects each other, appreciates each other, provides a sense of tolerance and avoids negative communication as little as possible. The Head of the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School is also a very familiar person, he does not bind the administrators too much in terms of giving task instructions.

There are four aspects that characterize transformational leaders, one of which is idealized influence. Transformational leaders are agents of change and act as catalysts, namely those who play a role in changing the system for the better. Inviting employees to realize shared ideals so that employees' lives and work become meaningful. Working is not just to earn money, but a means to find the meaning of life. Leaders provide opportunities for employees to find wisdom and search about themselves to do something better. Motivate followers to be able to achieve extraordinary work results. Leaders inspire followers to be able to achieve high careers in the future.

Paragraph this speaks at the ideal level about the figure of a leader who will have a positive impact on the lives of the people as a whole, as is the case with the prophets, the chosen human beings of Allah. Because correlatively, the verses before and after this verse in the context describe the prophets who provide exemplary examples in guiding the people to the path that prospers the people physically and mentally. It is not an exaggeration to say that this verse is the principle basis for finding an ideal leader figure who will provide goodness and blessings for the nation wherever and whenever.





Figure 1. Exemplary nature (uswatun hasanah)

From Figure 1, it shows that the leadership of the kiai in an effective islamic

boarding school reflects high personal integrity, deep concern for the students, and good managerial competence. Exemplary kiai demonstrate honesty and consistency in their actions, and provide empathy and meaningful guidance to the students(Amadin, 2021; Hudori et al., 2024; Zuhdi et al., 2024). They also have the ability to manage the islamic boarding school efficiently, make ethical decisions, and apply religious principles in everyday life. Good communication skills, including the ability to speak and listen carefully, are also important in supporting the learning and development process of the students. In addition, innovative kiai are able to adopt relevant changes without sacrificing traditional values, as well as motivate and encourage students to achieve their best potential. Involvement in social activities and concern for the environment also demonstrate comprehensive social responsibility, strengthening the role of the kiai as an inspiring leader who has a positive impact on the islamic boarding school community.

## Cultivating a Supportive Work Environment

Based on the results of research at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School, it was found that leadership behavior in the dimension of relationship orientation is carried out in the form of attention to subordinates. This is in line with the moralist leadership style, where they are warm and polite to everyone. They have high empathy for the problems of their subordinates, are also patient, generous, all forms of virtue are in this leader. Moralist leadership is leadership that values its subordinates the most. The advantages of this leadership are generally very warm and polite to everyone. they have high empathy for the problems of their subordinates, are also patient and generous, all forms of virtue are in this leadership. The advantage of this leadership style is that they are generally warm and polite to everyone.

Attention to subordinates is an effort made by leaders in order to improve subordinate performance. Leaders are figures who are responsible for building good relationships from each of their teams. Harmonious personal relationships will build strength from the existence of trust between one another. A friendly and intimate leader, this needs to be one of the things that needs attention. Because in everyday life with all educators and education personnel, a friendly and intimate attitude is needed which will have an impact on increasing professionalism.

Considering that motivation is a change in energy within a person (personal) which is marked by the emergence of feelings and reactions to achieve goals. This is as conveyed by as the Head of public relation the Islamic Boarding School Court, as follows: "The habit of motivation that is always given by the head of the Islamic boarding school is "The biggest failure is when you don't dare to try". Failure is delayed success, this sentence often appears to raise someone's spirit in trying and is expected to rise from failure and achieve success. We should never feel like we don't dare to try, maybe what we fear is the best way, do whatever you haven't done, the important thing is never be afraid to try."

From the informant's statement above, providing motivation is done so that the administrators of the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School can have good habits in their duties and responsibilities. This motivation is given personally or in general which is delivered during routine meetings. This motivation is carried out in the context of continuous improvement for improving the performance of

educators and education personnel at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School. As conveyed by the Head of the General Sub-Division of the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School, as follows: "Kiai always gives us constructive input. So that in carrying out our duties and responsibilities we can enjoy our work. The point is that the head of the Islamic boarding school only hopes to be a positive target."

In the Islamic boarding school environment, there are many aspects that influence a person's behavior, including motivation. The motivation possessed by teachers will make teachers enthusiastic in working so that teachers will always try to carry out their duties and obligations. Motivation itself can be interpreted as a condition within a person so that the person is motivated to carry out an activity or action.

# In-Service Training and Development

In-service training plays a crucial role in the education system, as it allows teachers to continuously update their educational and professional knowledge, ensuring more effective teaching practices. Research conducted at Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School revealed that leadership behavior, particularly in the area of relationship orientation, was demonstrated through inservice training. This training was implemented via the MGMP (Subject Teacher Forum) to enhance the quality of subject teachers. During MGMP activities, teachers are grouped according to the subjects they teach and the grade levels they handle, where they collaboratively discuss syllabi and lesson plans (RPP). Learning tools, such as the Learning Tools instructional plan outlining the teacher's approach to delivering lesson materials—are critical to the educational process. The MGMP forum, as stated by Saili, the head of the Madrasah, serves to "motivate subject teachers." By encouraging teachers to actively participate in MGMP activities, the school aims to elevate the quality and professionalism of its educators.

Training and certification can help improve teacher competence and compensation so that they can overcome educational problems, namely training conducted by the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School is a program to improve the ability to carry out work individually, in groups and/or based on job levels in the organization. Training is intended to improve mastery of various skills and techniques for carrying out specific, detailed and routine work, such as training to prepare employees to do current jobs. Regarding employee performance, the process of improving employee performance is a very important process. And said to support employee performance achievement, the role of motivation is very important as a power that exists within the individual.

The training carried out at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School is by developing human resource productivity. Because human resources are the most valuable organizational assets, because with all the potential they have, human resources can continue to be trained and developed, so that they can be more efficient, their achievements become more optimal to achieve organizational goals. In the competition of Islamic educational institutions in the era of globalization, having reliable human resources whose abilities are absolutely necessary for every individual in an organization, in this way an educational institution will be of quality. To make education of quality, then the human resources must be of quality too. Education is one of the main targets of

the government in order to improve the welfare of the people. The existence of education can increase the knowledge of individuals in a country.



Figure 2. Inservice Training

The Figure 2, it shows that effective training for kiai in modernizing islamic boarding school management involves careful planning and implementation that is in accordance with the specific needs of the islamic boarding school. Kiai must be actively involved in training, both as participants and as trainers, to ensure effective transfer of knowledge and skills(Dakir & Umiarso, 2022; Sudrajat et al., 2021). The application of knowledge and skills obtained from training must be applied in the management of islamic boarding school, with a measurable positive impact on managerial quality. Good feedback mechanisms are essential to evaluate and improve training programs, while ongoing training and professional development help maintain the relevance and effectiveness of training in the long term. Integration of training with modern technology is also essential to support the process of modernization and adaptation to changing times, ensuring that Islamic boarding schools can develop sustainably and effectively.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the head of Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School has successfully implemented modernization in the management of the institution through specific leadership patterns. These include setting a good example, showing care for subordinates, and providing in-service training. By employing these leadership strategies, the head of the boarding school has been able to lead, direct, and guide the staff effectively, making policy changes more manageable and widely accepted within the community.

Theoretical implications of this research broaden the understanding of the role of kiai in Islamic boarding school management, highlighting the importance of adaptive and innovative leadership. This study shows that a kiai who balances tradition with innovation can effectively guide the institution through modernization without losing its traditional identity. Such a leadership approach not only enhances management efficiency but also strengthens the resilience and sustainability of the Islamic boarding school, ensuring its relevance and competitiveness in a rapidly globalizing world.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

With this writing, the author hopes that this writing can be useful for readers, especially leaders in Islamic Boarding Schools. And there will be further research related to kiai leadership in the modernization of more comprehensive Islamic boarding school management. So that it can provide more knowledge to readers.

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