



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the role of transformational leadership in improving the quality of education in Islamic boarding schools. Transformational leadership emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and guide his followers to achieve their best potential. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with informants consisting of kiai, teachers, and students, and data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The results show that the application of the four dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration can improve students' learning motivation, discipline, creativity, critical thinking skills, and teacher professionalism. Additional strategies such as a collaborative learning culture and strengthening Islamic boarding school values also support the creation of holistic education. Despite challenges such as differences in student character and limited resources, transformational leadership has proven effective in improving the quality of education in Islamic boarding schools and can serve as a model for other Islamic boarding school managers.

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership, Quality of Education*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are Islamic educational institutions that play a strategic role in shaping the character, morals, and intellectual abilities of the younger generation (Harahap et al., 2025). In addition to emphasizing mastery of religious knowledge, pesantren also play a role in equipping students with social skills, leadership skills, and general knowledge relevant to current developments (Gustriani et al., 2024). The quality of education in pesantren is not only determined by the curriculum and infrastructure but also greatly influenced by the leadership style of the administrators, particularly the kiai (Islamic boarding school leader) (Falakhina & Hernawati, 2025).

Transformational leadership is considered an effective leadership model for improving educational quality (Khofi & Furqon, 2024). Transformational leadership emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and guide followers to achieve their full potential (Armiyanti et al., 2023). In the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), kiai, as transformational leaders, act not only as managers but also as moral role models and motivators for students and educators (Maulana, 2021). With this approach, leaders are expected to create a productive, innovative, and highly competitive learning culture.

Numerous studies have shown that transformational leadership has a significant impact on improving the quality of education by strengthening students' motivation, discipline, and commitment to learning. However, its implementation in Islamic boarding schools still faces various challenges, such as differences in student character, limited resources, and evolving social dynamics (Adeoye & Munawwaroh, 2025). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of transformational leadership in improving the quality of education in Islamic boarding schools and identify strategies and best practices that can be applied in the unique context of Islamic boarding school education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the practice of transformational leadership in improving the quality of education in Islamic boarding schools. The research location is the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School in Paiton, Probolinggo, with informants consisting of kiai (Islamic scholars), teachers, and students who were selected purposively. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and supporting documentation such as activity reports and educational evaluation records. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions to identify patterns and relationships between transformational leadership and improving the quality of education. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, so that the results of the study are expected to provide a clear picture of the role of transformational leadership in Islamic boarding schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the transformational leadership implemented by the kiai at the Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo Islamic Boarding School has a significant impact on improving the quality of education. Transformational leadership encompasses four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Zai et al., 2025). These four dimensions are evident in the kiai's daily practice in guiding teachers and students, while simultaneously creating an active and productive learning culture at the Islamic boarding school.

The first dimension, idealistic influence, is evident in how the kiai serves as a moral and spiritual role model for the students (Saputro, 2021). The kiai not only provides guidance but also demonstrates behavior consistent with the values of the Islamic boarding school, such as discipline, honesty, patience, and perseverance. This attitude encourages students to emulate him and fosters a positive learning ethic (Ukhro et al., 2025). One teacher stated that the kiai's direct presence in learning and pesantren activities makes students feel cared for and motivated to study more seriously. This demonstrates that a leader's example is a crucial factor in shaping the students' character and enthusiasm for learning. The second dimension, inspirational motivation, is implemented by the kiai by conveying a clear educational vision and goals while simultaneously encouraging students to achieve. This motivation is conveyed through lectures, regular guidance, and recognition of student achievements. Motivation goes beyond mere words; it is also supported by policies and facilities that enable students to develop their potential (Hikmah & Fitriyani, 2025). For example, students are given the opportunity to lead Islamic boarding school activities or participate in religious and scientific competitions. Interviews show that students who receive direct motivation from their kiai tend to be more confident and have a clear direction in developing both academic and non-academic skills.

The third dimension, intellectual stimulation, is evident when kiai encourage teachers and students to think critically, creatively, and innovatively (Musa & Lesmana, 2022). Kiai emphasize not only memorization but also understanding concepts and developing analytical skills (Abidin & Sirojuddin, 2024). Teachers are given the freedom to adapt learning methods to the students' characteristics, while students are encouraged to ask questions, discuss, and explore knowledge in depth (Kurnia & Prasetyo, 2024). For example, in religious and general subjects, students engage in group discussions, presentations, and case studies relevant to everyday life. This approach has been shown to improve critical thinking skills, material comprehension, and learning independence.

Furthermore, this intellectual stimulation also encourages teachers to continually update their teaching methods, thereby continuously improving the quality of education in Islamic boarding schools. Dimensi keempat, pertimbangan individual, diterapkan kiai dengan memperhatikan kebutuhan, kemampuan, dan potensi setiap santri. Pendekatan personal ini dilakukan melalui pembinaan, konseling, dan evaluasi rutin, sehingga setiap santri merasa diperhatikan dan dihargai (Agustin et al., 2025).

This not only increases learning motivation but also strengthens students' loyalty to the Islamic boarding school. Students who feel cared for tend to be more disciplined, enthusiastic about learning, and actively participate in various Islamic boarding school activities (Imanuddin & Yunus, 2025). Interview results indicate that students who receive special attention from their kiai are better able to overcome academic and non-academic difficulties, thereby improving the overall quality of learning.

In addition to these four dimensions, this study identified additional strategies implemented by kiai to improve the quality of education: developing a collaborative learning culture. Students are encouraged to help each other, discuss, and exchange experiences. The kiai acts as a facilitator and director, making the learning process more participatory, rather than simply top-down. This strategy is effective in fostering a sense of responsibility, social skills, and the ability to collaborate among students.

Furthermore, the kiai emphasizes strengthening Islamic boarding school values, such as discipline, honesty, responsibility, and social awareness. These values are instilled through rules, daily activities, and the kiai's direct example. As a result, education in Islamic boarding schools does not only emphasize academics, but also character and ethics, thus creating a holistic education, combining intellectual, spiritual, and social aspects.

Observations and interviews also show that transformational leadership has an impact on improving teacher quality (Qushwa, 2024). Kiai encourage teachers to develop their professionalism through training, discussions, and regular evaluations. Teachers who receive guidance and motivation from the kiai become more creative, innovative, and more sensitive to the needs of their students. This demonstrates that transformational leadership not only influences students but also improves the overall quality of teaching (Tohet, 2024).

Overall, transformational leadership implemented by kiai has been shown to increase students' learning motivation, critical and creative thinking skills, discipline, character, and teacher professionalism. These findings align with Bass's theory (1990) and previous research, which shows that transformational leadership can improve individual performance and organizational quality through role models, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention (Thohir, 2024).

However, this study also identified several challenges. Differences in student character, limited resources, and social dynamics present obstacles to the implementation of transformational leadership (Adeoye et al., 2025). Therefore, kiai need to implement adaptive, flexible, and creative strategies to ensure effective leadership in improving educational quality (Ataman et al., 2024).

Given these findings, it can be concluded that transformational leadership is an effective model for improving educational quality in Islamic boarding schools. Its implementation not only improves students' academic achievement but also strengthens the character, ethics, and professionalism of teachers. This research is expected to serve as a reference for other Islamic boarding school administrators in implementing inspirational and transformative leadership to achieve higher-quality and more competitive education.

CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership implemented by kiai (Islamic boarding school) has proven to play a significant role in improving the quality of education. The application of four dimensions of leadership—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—can increase students' learning motivation, discipline, creativity, and critical thinking skills, while strengthening the professionalism of teachers. Furthermore, additional strategies such as a collaborative learning culture and strengthening pesantren values contribute to the creation of a holistic education. Despite challenges such as differences in student character and limited resources, transformational leadership remains an effective model and can serve as a reference for other pesantren administrators to improve the overall quality of education.

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