



THE ROLE OF KYAI'S LEADERSHIP IN STRENGTHENING SANTRI'S DISCIPLINARY CHARACTER BASED ON REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

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Abstract:

The disciplinary character of santri constitutes a critical foundation within pesantren-based Islamic education, essential for molding individual character, responsibility, and moral integrity. This study aims to investigate the strategic role of a Kyai's leadership in conceptualizing, planning, and implementing a balanced system of rewards and punishments to cultivate sustainable internal discipline among santri. Conducted at Pondok Pesantren Daarusy Syifa Al-Islami in Kudus, Central Java, this research utilizes a qualitative descriptive approach, departing from traditional pure library methods to capture empirical data through field triangulation. Data collection techniques comprise semi-structured interviews with the Kyai, administrators, teachers, and santri, alongside direct field observation and comprehensive documentary analysis. The findings reveal that the Kyai exercises a vision-driven, transformational style of leadership, serving as a primary moral model and strategic architect. The implementation of rewards includes social praise, public acknowledgment, and motivational privileges, which reinforce positive behavior. Conversely, punishments are executed through educational, non-physical sanctions designed to induce behavioral reflection and regular self-correction rather than mere superficial compliance. The integration of these dual approaches successfully bridges external compliance with internal moral consciousness, ensuring that discipline becomes a core personal value aligned with the national character-building framework.

Keywords: *Kyai's Leadership, Disciplinary Character, Reward and Punishment, Pesantren Education*

INTRODUCTION

Santri discipline serves as an indispensable cornerstone in the architecture of boarding-based Islamic education (pesantren), acting as the primary vehicle for internalizing character values, lifelong responsibility, and deep individual integrity. The cultivation of a disciplinary culture does not merely rest upon rigid, formal regulations; rather, it is profoundly dependent on leadership strategies capable of instilling substantive moral values sustainably. Within this educational dynamic, visionary and transformational leadership emerges as the decisive factor. A visionary leader outlines a clear directional path, provides an uncompromised behavioral example (suri tauladan), and provides the spiritual motivation required to sustain structured behavioral discipline. The strategic and

balanced implementation of rewards and punishments effectively deepens the internalization of discipline, ultimately generating a highly conducive, harmonious, and productive learning environment for santri (Husna & Hamid, 2025).

This academic inquiry is particularly compelling because it thoroughly explores the direct intersection between a Kyai's visionary governance and active student behavior management utilizing dual behavioral reinforcements: reward and punishment. The reward paradigm emphasizes positive reinforcement by offering acknowledgment, moral validation, and physical or social rewards for compliance and meritorious achievements. Conversely, the punishment paradigm underscores educational consequences and corrective measures designed to rectify negative behavioral deviations. The harmonious combination of both elements does not merely establish a skin-deep, external compliance driven by immediate fear or shallow gratification; instead, it nurtures an profound, lasting internal consciousness among santri. This illustrates that specific visionary leadership approaches empower students to transform discipline into an intrinsic character attribute rather than a simple reaction to regulatory sanctions or transactional incentives (Ihwan, 2025).

This research establishes a distinct empirical divergence from preceding scholarly literature by centering the Kyai's strategic leadership as the absolute catalyst in formulating a cohesive disciplinary culture, rather than observing the mechanics of rewards and punishments as isolated, standalone tools (Yuliasih et al., 2025). A significant portion of previous studies has focused strictly on the procedural execution of rules, failing to recognize the vital role played by the central leader's vision and charismatic authority. By integrating both motivational and corrective frameworks concurrently, this study offers a comprehensive and sustainable structural model. This analytical distinction is crucial to evaluate how a Kyai's leadership optimizes the psychological efficacy of rewards and operational sanctions to construct resilient discipline. Consequently, the primary objective of this study is to examine how the leadership strategies of a Kyai construct a persistent disciplinary character among santri through an educational system of reward and punishment, providing both practical administrative insights and expanding Islamic educational literature.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, shifting the traditional theoretical framework of pure library research into an active empirical study to capture real-time operational field data regarding administrative dynamics. The inquiry was explicitly carried out at Pondok Pesantren Daarusy Syifa Al-Islami, located in Ploso Village, Jati District, Kudus Regency, Central Java Province. This institution was purposely selected due to its deeply entrenched structural governance led by a central Kyai, and its active operational implementation of highly structured educational rewards and non-physical corrective punishments to build student character throughout a continuous 24-hour communal living cycle.

Data sources are bifurcated into primary and secondary categories. Primary data were gathered directly from the central informants, including the Kyai as the primary guardian (*pengasuh*), the administrative board members, the teaching faculty (*ustadz/ustadzah*), and the santri themselves. These primary accounts captured first-hand narratives regarding strategic planning, policy enforcement, and individual behavioral impact. Secondary data consisted of

institutional profiles, formal codes of conduct, historical archives, student achievement registries, and structural organization charts to substantiate primary claims. The data collection techniques utilized three main methods: semi-structured interviews conducted with flexible but targeted prompts, direct field observation of daily routines, and document analysis of regulatory ledgers. To ensure data trustworthiness and absolute scientific rigor, the study deployed extensive source and methodological triangulation, cross-examining interview testimonies against observable field behaviors and written records.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The empirical investigation demonstrates that the Kyai at Pondok Pesantren Daarusy Syifa Al-Islami plays an all-encompassing role as both the strategic visionary and the primary moral exemplar. Leadership is not delegated passively through rigid bureaucratic manuals; rather, the Kyai acts as the active heart of the institution, functioning as a psychological surrogate parent to ensure that character building is deeply tied to emotional trust. The planning of the disciplinary framework combines classical Islamic jurisprudence values with modern behavior-management practices. The Kyai formulates the core operational vision, which is subsequently translated by the administrative board into clear behavioral parameters and actionable guidelines.

The implementation of the reward system under the Kyai's direct supervision functions as a powerful instrument for positive reinforcement. Based on field data, rewards are categorized into social, moral, and functional tiers. Social and moral rewards manifest through public praise during mass assemblies, formal validation from the Kyai, and peer acknowledgment. Functional rewards grant high-behaving santri special leadership responsibilities or flexible study privileges. This multi-tiered approach creates a constructive social hierarchy where compliance is highly celebrated, stimulating a healthy communal desire among students to self-regulate and actively uphold institutional ethics.

Conversely, the punishment system is strictly structured around non-violent, educational, and restorative interventions. When a behavioral infraction occurs, the administrative apparatus avoids punitive or retaliatory measures, opting instead for a mandatory diagnostic dialogue. This pedagogical dialogue helps the student identify their behavioral error without feeling alienated or textually condemned. If the non-compliance persists, educational sanctions are applied, such as memorizing select Quranic passages, performing institutional community service, or clean-up tasks. These consequences are specifically designed to prompt cognitive reflection and intrinsic moral remorse, ensuring the punishment yields long-term behavioral correction rather than brief external compliance based on fear.

The synthesis of these findings illustrates that the simultaneous deployment of strategic rewards and educational punishments, validated by the charismatic authority of the Kyai, succeeds in moving santri from an initial state of heteronomous compliance (obeying rules due to external forces) into a permanent state of autonomous discipline. The constant presence and active behavioral modeling of the Kyai ensure that the rules are perceived as equitable, transparent, and spiritually meaningful. Consequently, discipline ceases to be a restrictive burden and becomes a deeply internalized character trait, providing a functional blueprint for broader national character education initiatives.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the strategic leadership of the Kyai serves as the structural anchor in building a resilient disciplinary character among santri at Pondok Pesantren Daarusy Syifa Al-Islami. By combining visionary transformational governance with an interactive behavior reinforcement model, the Kyai successfully transcends basic regulatory enforcement. The reward system acts as a powerful motivator that honors positive student development, while the educational punishment system offers a restorative mechanism for behavioral correction without damaging the psychological well-being of the student. The core success of this dual model relies entirely on the consistency, fairness, and moral modeling of the Kyai. Ultimately, this integrated approach effectively bridges the gap between external compliance and internal moral consciousness, proving that traditional Islamic boarding school leadership provides a highly sustainable, sophisticated methodology for comprehensive character development that aligns perfectly with national education goals. Future research is highly encouraged to explore quantitative measurements evaluating the longitudinal impacts of these specific leadership models on alumni behavior within secular professional settings.

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