

FROM AUTHORITY TO INSTITUTIONAL TRUST; A STUDY OF KYAI MODALITIES IN PESANTREN COMMUNITIES

Agus Nu'man ^{1*}

¹ STAI Nurul Huda Situbondo, East Java, Indonesia

Correspondence Author: agussinta12@gmail.com

Received: April 2025	Accepted: July 2025	Published: July 2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.33650.pjp.v12i1.11063		

Abstract : *Leadership plays a pivotal role in sustaining social cohesion within pesantren. The authority of kyai is not only rooted in personal qualities but also shaped by cultural legitimacy, genealogical heritage, and symbolic charisma that extend influence beyond educational boundaries into socio-political spheres. This study focuses on the role of the kyai as the highest authority holder who is not only responsible for the direction of education. Employing a qualitative approach, the study was conducted in two prominent pesantren in East Java. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Findings reveal that kyai leadership builds trust through the synergy of economic independence, alumni-based social networks, preservation of cultural traditions, and symbolic authority manifested in rituals, rhetoric, and institutional symbols. The study concludes that public trust is not an instant achievement but a socially constructed process rooted in sustained moral conduct, adaptive leadership, and cultural continuity. This research contributes to the sociology of Islamic education by demonstrating how kyai transform personal authority into institutional legitimacy through interdependent modalities.*

Keywords : Authority; Institutional Trust; Kyai Modalities; Pesantren.

Abstrak : *Kepemimpinan memainkan peran penting dalam menjaga kohesi sosial di pesantren. Otoritas kyai tidak hanya berakar pada kualitas personal, tetapi juga dibentuk oleh legitimasi budaya, warisan genealogis, dan kharisma simbolik yang memperluas pengaruh hingga melampaui ranah pendidikan ke dalam konteks sosial-politik. Penelitian ini berfokus pada peran kyai sebagai pemegang otoritas tertinggi yang tidak hanya bertanggung jawab terhadap arah pendidikan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini dilaksanakan di dua pesantren terkemuka di Jawa Timur. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam, serta dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan kyai membangun kepercayaan melalui sinergi antara kemandirian ekonomi, jaringan sosial berbasis alumni, pelestarian tradisi budaya, serta otoritas simbolik yang termanifestasi dalam ritual, retorika, dan simbol kelembagaan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kepercayaan publik bukanlah pencapaian instan, melainkan sebuah proses sosial yang dibangun melalui keteladanan moral yang berkelanjutan, kepemimpinan yang adaptif, dan kesinambungan budaya. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian sosiologi pendidikan Islam dengan menunjukkan bagaimana kyai mentransformasikan otoritas personal menjadi legitimasi kelembagaan melalui modalitas yang saling bergantung.*

Kata Kunci : Otoritas; Kepercayaan Institusional; Modalitas Kyai; Pesantren.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a key pillar in maintaining the sustainability and social cohesion of a community, both on a micro-scale, such as local organizations, and in socio-religious contexts, such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Effective leadership stems not only from personal qualities but also from a systematic and reflective approach to managing resources and social dynamics. In this context, the concept of "leadership from the inside out" becomes relevant for understanding how an individual's internal dimensions, such as integrity, vision, and spiritual values, contribute to authentic leadership processes. As emphasized by Muali et al. (2021), public trust in the social order is largely determined by the strength of leadership that is able to respond to changes and challenges of the times. Ideal leaders are perceived not only based on heredity or symbols of power, but also on their actual ability to realize collective hopes and maintain the integrity of community values (Saelendra, 2023).

The social recognition of a kyai is built upon elements such as genealogy, knowledge, morality, and symbolic charisma, which are deeply embedded in Javanese-Islamic culture (Alan in Dafa Saelendra, 2023). Communities respect kyai not only for their intellectual lineage but also for their exemplary conduct, humility, and spiritual charisma believed to bring divine blessings. This reverence constructs a form of public trust that extends beyond pesantren into broader socio-political and economic contexts (Yunus, Mukhtar, & Nugroho, 2019). Pesantren function as both educational and socio-religious institutions whose legitimacy depends largely on the credibility of their leaders (Bashori, 2019). However, in contemporary times, pesantren are challenged to maintain this trust amidst modernization, accountability demands, and social transformation (Sulistyanto, 2017). Thus, the transformation of leadership authority into sustainable institutional trust becomes an essential academic inquiry in Islamic education studies (Habsi, 2022).

Previous studies have examined the importance of leadership in shaping organizational dynamics and social relations. For example, research by Fajri (2022) and Bashori (2019) emphasizes that the success of leaders in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) is not determined solely by formal appointment, but rather by their actual capacity to realize the organization's vision. Meanwhile, Yunus et al. (2019) strengthen this argument by stating that substantive leadership is a form of social recognition for a leader's success in fostering collaboration and solidarity. However, most previous research has focused on the managerial and administrative aspects of Islamic boarding school leadership, with few delving deeply into the symbolic role and social modalities of a kyai in building public trust. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by exploring how the leadership of

the kyai, as a central figure in the socio-religious structure, represents symbolic power in shaping public trust based on the values of the Islamic boarding school.

The primary objective of this study is to identify and analyze the modalities of kyai leadership in building public trust in Islamic boarding schools. The research focuses on the kyai's role as a manager, spiritual mentor, and social leader, who holds significant authority in determining the policy direction and organizational culture of the Islamic boarding school. This research also examines the symbolic and social dimensions of kyai leadership, which make them figures not only respected institutionally but also culturally sacred by the surrounding community. With this approach, the research is expected to answer the question: How do kyai leadership patterns build public trust within Islamic boarding schools, and what socio-cultural modalities support this?

The uniqueness of this research lies in the integration of Bourdieu's habitus and cultural capital theories in explaining how the kyai's social position is shaped not only by institutional structures but also by mechanisms of symbolic reproduction that are passed down through generations. Habitus, as a collection of perception and action schemes formed from life experiences, enables kyai to influence society through moral and spiritual authority. On the other hand, cultural capital in the form of knowledge, charisma, and genealogical heritage makes kyai leadership a socially recognized hegemonic force. With this perspective, the research not only observes leadership practices within the context of Islamic boarding school administration but also explores the symbolic depth that makes kyai central actors in the formation of social trust based on religious values.

Thus, this study focuses on the role of the kyai in Islamic boarding schools as the highest authority holder who is not only responsible for the direction of education and religion, but also for the social legitimacy of the Islamic boarding school institution in the eyes of society. Trust in the kyai is built through a number of factors, such as lineage, depth of knowledge, noble personality, and charisma, which make him a sacred figure in the Javanese social structure (Roland Alan). Therefore, the kyai is not only understood as an institutional leader, but also as a collective symbol of society in maintaining the values of spirituality, social harmony, and religious identity. Thus, this study contributes to broadening the horizon of leadership studies by positioning the Islamic boarding school as an important locus in the formation of public trust rooted in local value systems and religious cultural heritage.

Mayer highlighted three important factors that shape an individual's trust in others: ability, integrity, and benevolence (Rifa'i, 2015). The emphasis on ability illustrates the importance of confidence in good performance, which can be accounted for through

experience, competence, and institutional validation. Integrity encompasses consistency between words and actions and, beyond mere honesty, involves perseverance in difficult situations. Meanwhile, benevolence reflects good intentions in interactions, influenced by concern, empathy, trust, and acceptance of others. In addition to the factors proposed by Mayer, research also highlights organizational justice as an important concept in organizational behavior. Organizational justice plays a key role in shaping individuals' perceptions of fair treatment from the organization, which encompasses relationships between superiors and subordinates, good treatment, honesty of information, and fairness within the organization. Furthermore, there is an additional factor called organizational justice, which is a concept in organizational behavior that influences individual attitudes and behaviors within an organization. Organizational justice is related to individuals' perceptions of fair treatment from the organization and their behavioral reactions to those perceptions. Factors such as the relationship between superiors and subordinates, good treatment, honesty of information, and fairness within the organization influence how employees perceive organizational justice.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological-naturalistic approach to deeply understand the leadership modalities of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in building public trust. The study focuses on two institutions: Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School and Darul Lughah wal Karomah Islamic Boarding School, chosen because they integrate Salafiyah and modern educational systems and have significant influence within the Islamic educational community. The research was conducted in a natural setting without variable manipulation, allowing the researcher to uncover the meaning of subjective experiences and social relations underlying the leadership practices of the Islamic boarding schools. The researcher's presence in the field served as the primary instrument for data collection, equipped with interview guidelines, recording equipment, and a camera. The research subjects consisted of Islamic boarding school (kyai), heads of educational institutions, Islamic boarding school management staff, and the information technology team, selected purposively based on their strategic roles within the leadership and management structures of the Islamic boarding schools.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted through direct involvement of researchers in Islamic boarding school activities to gain a rich contextual understanding of the leadership practices of kyai. In-depth interviews focused on exploring the experiences, perspectives, and values that shape the kyai's leadership character, and how these influence the perceptions and beliefs of the Islamic boarding school

community. Documentation techniques were used to collect secondary data in the form of policy documents, Islamic boarding school profiles, organizational structures, and relevant digital and print archives. All data was collected continuously throughout the research period to ensure rich data and a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study. Researchers also employed extended participation techniques to build rapport with the subjects and increase trust and openness in the data collection process.

The collected data were analyzed using Spradley's data analysis model, which includes four main stages: domain analysis, taxonomy, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis. The initial stage of domain analysis was used to identify the main categories of the observed phenomena. Taxonomy analysis was used to construct a classification structure for the data. Componential analysis was used to identify differences in meaning between categories. Cultural theme analysis was conducted to draw deeper meaning from the structured data. During the analysis process, the researcher also applied source and method triangulation techniques to enhance the validity of the findings. Furthermore, diligent observation and an audit trail were used to ensure consistency and transparency in the analysis process. All these steps aimed to ensure that the research results were valid, accountable, and relevant to the development of leadership theory and practice based on Islamic boarding school values.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals how Kyai leadership builds public trust in Islamic boarding schools through various complementary strategic modalities. The findings indicate that public trust is not solely built through spiritual aspects, but also through the integration of moral, social, cultural, and symbolic modalities consistently applied in daily leadership. These four modalities not only reflect the Kyai's personal and religious capacity but also illustrate the social and cultural skills that form the basis of their legitimacy in the eyes of the community. By referring to the results of interviews, field observations, and documentation of Islamic boarding school activities, this study highlights that Kyai leadership has multidimensional power in creating emotional, spiritual, and cultural bonds between the Islamic boarding school and its community. This also shows that public trust in Islamic boarding schools is not the result of an instant process, but rather the fruit of leadership deeply rooted in tradition, ethics, and a track record of social and educational service.

1. The Economic Modalities of Kyai

Interviews and observations at the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School indicate that Kyai Zuhri Zaini possesses economic strength, which serves as a foundation for building public trust. In an interview with a community leader, it was explained that "Kyai Zuhri's land is very extensive; he could even be considered one of the landowners in Paiton" (Interview, 2024). Owning extensive agricultural land is a symbol of prosperity and independence, and allows for the financing of the pesantren's operations without relying on external parties. This aligns with Bourdieu's theory that economic capital is the most visible resource in establishing dominance and authority. This land is not only used for personal needs but is also managed for the benefit of the pesantren, such as productive agriculture and student housing.

From the documentation obtained, it is clear that the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School has several agribusiness-based business units and a pesantren cooperative managed directly by the students under the supervision of the Kyai. In addition to providing a source of independent funding, these business units also create a space for the economic empowerment of the students. Kyai Zuhri Zaini also actively forged institutional relationships with the government and organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). These relationships provided access to educational and religious assistance programs. For example, BOS (School Operational Assistance) funds and Islamic boarding school empowerment programs were obtained through Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) institutions. Although not always in the form of cash, the economic implications of these social relationships were clearly felt.

A similar situation occurred at the Nurul Qadim Islamic Boarding School. The Kyai's caretaker was known to have various sources of income, ranging from trade and agriculture to managing Islamic boarding school-based education. In an interview with one of the senior students, he stated, "Our Kyai never depended on anyone. He met all the needs of the Islamic boarding school himself, and he often helped local residents" (Interview, 2024). This economic modality strengthened the Kyai's social authority, establishing him as an autonomous figure who could not be co-opted. This economic capability created a public perception that the Kyai was a strong figure worthy of emulation.

Economic independence also provided the Kyai with the freedom to engage in social and da'wah activities. Researchers have observed that Kyai Nurul Qadim often self-funds various social activities, such as free medical treatment, orphanages, and Islamic holiday celebrations. Thus, a strong economic capital not only serves as a source of symbolic power but also creates a long-term influence of trust. The Kyai becomes the

center of community hope, not just a spiritual leader but also a social leader capable of meeting the real needs of the community.

2. The Social Modalities of the Kyai

Social capital is a dominant aspect in building public trust in both Islamic boarding schools. At Nurul Jadid, Kyai Zuhri Zaini leverages an alumni network spread across various regions and abroad. This network was formed through a long process of education and mentoring. One alumnus said, "We always feel connected to Nurul Jadid, not only because of the knowledge we gained, but also because of Kyai Zuhri's indelible character" (Interview, 2024). This social capital is used to support the development of the Islamic boarding school, both in terms of human resources and access to external resources.

Kyai Zuhri is also active in various religious organizations such as the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the Islamic Youth Movement (RMI), and the Environmental Agency (BKLH). His involvement in official forums such as Bahtsul Masail (Religious Discussion Forum) and Lailatul Ijtima' (The Meeting of the Islamic Boarding Schools) has made him widely known among Kyai and other religious figures. Documentation of the pesantren's activities records that he frequently serves as a resource person in various scientific and da'wah forums at the provincial and national levels. This active involvement not only strengthened his personal standing but also enhanced the reputation of the Islamic boarding school he led. This social network also created opportunities for cross-Islamic boarding school collaboration and strengthened solidarity among alumni.

At the Nurul Qadim Islamic Boarding School, the power of social capital is also strongly felt. The cleric (Kyai) in charge has kinship ties (genealogy) with several prominent clerics in the Tapal Kuda region. This relationship is utilized to build cooperation in religious, educational, and other social activities. Researchers documented the Islamic preaching competitions and the Quranic Recitation Competition (MTQ) regularly held at the school. In an interview with a local Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) figure, it was stated that "Nurul Qadim Islamic Boarding School is known for its active and open social network, due to the strong social network of its clerics" (Interview, 2024). His involvement in organizations such as IPNU, Ansor, and even political parties (in the past) demonstrates his broad social reach.

However, his involvement in practical politics does not diminish the cleric's spiritual image. In fact, he clearly separates practical politics from societal politics. Currently, he is more focused on strengthening religious and educational social networks. Researchers have observed that halaqah (Islamic gatherings), community

meetings, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organizational consolidation are held regularly, making Islamic boarding schools centers of socio-religious activity. This network strengthens community trust in Islamic boarding schools and their administrators as centers of spiritual and social guidance.

3. The Cultural Modalities of Kyai

The Kyai's cultural modality reflects the strength of local cultural values, which are preserved and transformed through the leadership practices of the Islamic boarding school. Interviews with students and alumni indicate that the Kyai not only teaches religious knowledge formally but also shapes the cultural habits of the Islamic boarding school through exemplary living, disciplined time, and respect for traditional values. One student stated, "Our Kyai never demands obedience from the students, but his way of life makes us respect and honor him." Observations also noted that the Kyai is a central figure in every traditional Islamic boarding school event, such as the "haul" (traditional Islamic gathering), tahlilan (religious recitation), and "ngaji pasar" (traditional Islamic study), which have a strong cultural dimension. This modality serves as a foundation for public trust, as the Kyai is considered capable of maintaining the continuity of the noble values of Islam Nusantara.

The Kyai's role as guardian of local cultural values also differentiates the Islamic boarding school from other educational institutions. Based on documentation of the annual "haul" (traditional Islamic gathering), local residents attend not only as ritual participants but also as a form of cultural respect for the Kyai. In this context, the Kyai serves as a unifying symbol of the community's spiritual and cultural values. This reinforces their cultural modality, as this role cannot be easily replaced by other leaders who lack similar cultural legitimacy. Interviews with community leaders confirmed that "the Kyai is not only a religious teacher, but also a guardian of the customs we have believed in for a long time."

Kyai also play a crucial role in the conservation and adaptation of local culture to changing times. One example is the use of digital media to disseminate religious studies (kitab kuning), while maintaining the cultural nuances of the Islamic boarding school (pesantren). Observations of Islamic boarding school social media channels reveal content for religious studies that uses both Javanese and Arabic, demonstrating a cultural hybridization strategy aimed at maintaining authenticity while adapting to today's digital audience. This represents the actualization of cultural modality in the digital space, expanding the reach of public trust.

Thus, cultural modality is a key pillar in constructing public trust in the Kyai. The success of Kyai in preserving local cultural values—both through traditional practices

and adaptive innovation—proves that Islamic boarding schools are not only educational institutions but also cultural institutions. This modality gives Kyai a distinct advantage as community leaders, as they are deeply rooted in cultural heritage and able to transform with the times.

4. The Symbolic Modalities of Kyai

Symbolic modality is the most prominent form of Kyai leadership in building public trust in Islamic boarding schools. Based on observations, the community widely views the Kyai as a sacred figure who not only possesses religious knowledge but is also considered to possess charisma and spiritual closeness to God. In interviews with senior students, it was stated that "whatever the Kyai says, even without explicit evidence, will be obeyed because it is believed to bring blessings." This demonstrates the symbolic power of the Kyai in shaping collective thought patterns and behavior. This symbolism is reinforced by the use of distinctive attire, such as a white turban and long robe, as well as religious rituals performed only by the Kyai. The presence of these symbols reinforces an aura of authority and forms an established belief system within the pesantren environment and the surrounding community.

Interviews with pesantren administrators indicate that the symbolism of the Kyai's leadership is also conveyed through ceremonial activities. The Kyai plays a central role in commemorating Islamic holidays, commemorating the end of the Islamic year (hajj), and inaugurating student organizations. In these moments, the Kyai appears not only as a spiritual leader but also as a signifier of values, ethics, and social norms. Photographic documentation shows how the community flocks to kiss the Kyai's hand as a symbolic form of respect imbued with religious meaning. This act is not only a cultural expression but also a mechanism of symbolic reproduction that maintains traditional leadership structures. Thus, the Kyai's symbolic presence is not only representative but also performative, as it is able to internalize the values of obedience and loyalty in his followers.

The symbolic aspect is also evident in the Kyai's use of language and rhetoric. In regular religious studies, the Kyai uses classical diction sourced from the yellow books and combines it with polite, profound, and captivating local language. This creates an authoritative and inclusive communication style, strengthening his symbolic legitimacy as an authentic carrier of religious messages. An alumnus of the Islamic boarding school stated that "the Kyai's words are not only understood literally, but also interpreted spiritually." This demonstrates that symbolism goes beyond the outward form but also forms a deeper structure of meaning. The Kyai's rhetoric serves as a tool for creating a

strong social and religious imagination, establishing the Islamic boarding school as a revered center of traditional Islamic civilization.

Symbolic modalities are also internalized in the architecture and spatial layout of the Islamic boarding school. The Kyai's inner courtyard, physically located at the center of the complex, serves as a symbol of spiritual and administrative dominance. Field observations revealed that students do not dare to cross this area without permission, signifying a symbolic boundary that must be respected. Furthermore, the Islamic calligraphy and artifacts adorning the walls of the Islamic boarding school reinforce the sacred atmosphere surrounding the Kyai's figure. This symbolic structure creates a habitus that disciplines the students' behavior, encouraging them to conform to the values espoused by the Kyai. These symbols, although unwritten, possess strong regulatory power and serve as instruments of social control within the Islamic boarding school leadership system.

The Kyai's symbolic power in building public trust is also reflected in his role outside the Islamic boarding school. In the surrounding community, Kyai are often asked to mediate conflicts, lead prayers at weddings, or seek blessings before starting a business. All of this demonstrates that symbolic modalities have transcended the boundaries of Islamic boarding schools and entered the public sphere as a recognized form of cultural capital. Interviews with community leaders stated that "the words of the Kyai are more trusted than those of government officials." This demonstrates that the Kyai's symbolism not only creates internal loyalty but also influences external trust structures. Thus, symbolic modalities serve not only as instruments of power within Islamic boarding schools but also as social capital that expands the Kyai's authority in the public sphere.

The findings of this study indicate that Kyai leadership in building public trust within Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) operates through the integration of various mutually supportive social, economic, cultural, and symbolic modalities. Economic modality is evident in the financial independence of Kyai in managing Islamic boarding schools without relying on external parties, as exemplified by the leadership of Kyai Zuhri Zaini and the caretaker Nurul Qadim. This economic independence not only reflects managerial capacity but also symbolizes moral strength and integrity (Amir, 2019; Purnama, 2016). This also serves to rebut the assumption that Kyai are dependent on elite capitalists (Syafiqurrohman in Chapter V), which in the long term can erode their social legitimacy. Economic strength actually provides autonomy in making strategic decisions for the institution, strengthens institutional stability, and enhances social credibility within the community (Wahyudi, 2019).

The social capital developed through alumni networks, active participation in socio-

religious organizations, and kinship relationships with other religious figures demonstrates that the influence of Kyai extends beyond the physical boundaries of the Islamic boarding school. This aligns with the concept of social capital as a bridge of trust-based interaction and cooperation (Yunus et al., 2019). In this context, Kyai leadership serves as a catalyst for the formation of social solidarity and a space for sustainable collaboration. Strong social networks also enable Islamic boarding schools to play a role in the national education and community development agenda through various institutional collaborations (Amalia, 2020; Baharun, 2021). Moreover, Kyai involvement in organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), IPNU (National Student Association), and national scientific forums expands the advocacy capacity of Islamic boarding schools and strengthens their position as relevant public actors amidst socio-religious dynamics (Bashori, 2019).

Furthermore, Kyai leadership is inextricably linked to the influence of cultural and symbolic capital. This cultural capital is reflected in educational practices based on the traditional values of Islamic boarding schools, which are maintained and actualized through exemplary behavior. As explained by Muali et al. (2021), the Sufi leadership of the Kyai in shaping the character of students is an effective cultural strategy in building collective morality. The Kyai not only teaches Islamic knowledge but also represents noble values such as simplicity, wisdom, and spiritual closeness to the community. Symbolic modalities, such as figurehead, representation in social organizational structures, and publicly recognized spiritual status, strengthen the legitimacy of leadership. This is relevant to the findings of Junaris et al. (2022) regarding the prophetic leadership of the Kyai, which influences the effectiveness of learning and social cohesion in Islamic boarding schools. Overall, these modalities indicate that public trust in the Kyai is built through the accumulation of sustainable social practices rooted in local cultural structures.

This research contributes knowledge to the study of religious leadership and the development of public trust in Islamic boarding school-based educational environments. Unlike previous research that tends to separate the spiritual, social, and economic aspects in understanding Kyai leadership, the findings of this study actually show that the four modalities—economic, social, cultural, and symbolic—do not operate in isolation, but form an interdependent and operational ecosystem of power. This approach enriches Bourdieu's analytical framework of leadership by showing that in the context of Islamic boarding schools, the accumulation of these capitals not only produces symbolic authority but also builds a system of public trust based on values, social relations, and local structures. Thus, this study not only emphasizes the importance of the Kyai's role as a spiritual actor, but also as a strategic and sustainable manager of socio-cultural capital in the context of contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

The main findings confirm that Kyai leadership in building public trust is not solely supported by spiritual authority, but rather is shaped by the synergy of four modalities: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. A key lesson learned is that public trust in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) grows from the Kyai's consistent actions, moral example, and ability to adapt to the challenges of the times. In this context, Kyai play a role not only as religious leaders but also as key actors in strengthening social cohesion, institutional independence, and preserving local culture. Thus, this research provides a holistic understanding that public trust is the result of complex social processes rooted in the historical and cultural relationships between Islamic boarding schools and their communities.

The research findings contribute to scholarship by integrating Bourdieu's framework of capital into the context of Islamic boarding school leadership. Unlike previous studies that focus on Kyai leadership from a single perspective, such as spirituality or administration, this research reveals how the interaction between these modalities generates symbolic power and sustainable public legitimacy. These findings enrich the study of the sociology of Islamic education and leadership by demonstrating that symbolic power is not formed naturally, but rather through social processes, cultural reproduction, and historical legitimacy. Therefore, this study is relevant in deconstructing narratives about religious authority and broadening theoretical horizons regarding the relationship between local values, social capital, and power structures in Islamic education.

The limitations of this research lie in its limited scope, which is limited to two Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in the Tapal Kuda region of East Java, and the dominance of narratives by male Kyai figures. The research has not yet explored the dynamics of leadership modalities in the context of female Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) or *pesantren* with collective leadership systems. The informants are also predominantly young and older adults, thus not fully reflecting the perspectives of the younger generation. Furthermore, the descriptive qualitative approach used does not capture the longitudinal aspects of the long-term formation of public trust. Therefore, further studies could develop long-term ethnographic methods or quantitative approaches to examine patterns of influence of modalities on levels of public trust in a more systematic and representative manner.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Special thanks are extended to the kyai, teachers, students, and alumni who generously shared their experiences and insights, which significantly enriched the depth of this study. Appreciation is also due to colleagues at STAI Nurul Huda and the academic mentors whose constructive feedback helped refine the direction of the research. This study was made possible by the invaluable cooperation of local community figures and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) representatives who offered contextual perspectives regarding the role of

pesantren leadership in shaping public trust. Finally, the author acknowledges the inspiration drawn from the legacy of Islamic educational leaders who continue to bridge tradition and innovation in the pursuit of spiritual and societal advancement. All errors and limitations in this study remain the responsibility of the author.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adewahyu, J. I. (2022). Manajemen kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu tendik SD Muhammadiyah 05 RL. *Al-Madrasah: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 6(4), 1472–1483. <https://doi.org/10.35931/am.v6i4.1406>
- Álvarez-González, M., Leirós-Rodríguez, R., Álvarez-Barrio, L., & López-Rodríguez, A.F. (2022). Perineal Massage during Pregnancy for the Prevention of Postpartum Urinary Incontinence: Controlled Clinical Trial. *Medicina (Lithuania)*, 58(10), 23–33. <https://doi.org/10.3390/medicina58101485>
- Amalia, V. (2020). Strategi komunikasi Humas dalam Meningkatkan Public Trust di Perguruan Tinggi (Studi Kasus di Universitas Nurul Jadid, Paiton, Probolinggo). *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 4(1), 13–23. <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v4i1.812>
- Amir, A. (2019). Membangun Budaya Mutu pada Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Menuju Madrasah Unggul. *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 3(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v3i2.676>
- Assa'idi, S. (2021). The Growth of Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia as The Islamic Venue and Social Class Status of Santri. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 2021(93)5, 425–440. <https://doi.org/10.14689/EJER.2021.93.21>
- Assykurrohim, D., Ikhrum, D., Sirodj, RA, & Afgani, MW (2022). Case Study Method in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Science and Computer Education*, 3(01), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.47709/jpsk.v3i01.1951>
- Ayub Wahyudin, Noval Maliki, Hilyatul Auliya, Raharjo, R., Najahan Musyafak, Mohammad Fahmi bin Abdul Hamid, & Muhammad Nurkhanif. (2024). Controversy and Voluntarism Among the Elite: An Ethnographic Study of the Sufi Community in Cibingbin, Indonesia. *IBDA: Journal of Islamic and Cultural Studies*, 22(1), 89–102. <https://doi.org/10.24090/ibda.v22i1.10064>
- Baharun, H. (2022). Assistance in The Preparation of Madrasah Self-evaluation and Madrasah Work Plans in Madrasahs. *Indonesia Journal of Communication Engagement*, 2(1), 40–47.
- Baharun, H., Wahid, A. H., et al. (2021). Building public trust in Islamic school through adaptive curriculum. *Pendidikan Islam*, 7(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i1.17163>
- Bashori, B. (2019). Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kyai Pada Lembaga Pendidikan Islam. *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 3(2), 73–84. <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v3i2.535>
- Buanaputra, VG, Astuti, D., & Sugiri, S. (2022). Accountability and Legitimacy Dynamics in an Islamic Boarding School. *Journal of Accounting and Organizational Change*, 18(4), 553–570. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JAOC-02-2021-0016>

- Cuthbertson, J., & Penney, G. (2023). Ethical Decision Making in Disaster and Emergency Management: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *In Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 38(5), 622–627. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X23006325>
- D'Alessandro-Lowe, A.M., Karram, M., Ritchie, K., Brown, A., Millman, H., Sullo, E., Xue, Y., Pichtikova, M., Schielke, H., Malan, A., O'Connor, C., Lanius, R., McCabe, R.E., & McKinnon, M.C. (2023). Coping, Supports and Moral Injury: Spiritual Well-Being and Organizational Support Are Associated with Reduced Moral Injury in Canadian Healthcare Providers during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(19), 87–100. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20196812>
- Digmayer, C. (2024). Automated Economic Welfare for Everyone? Examining Barriers to Adopting Robo-Advisors from the Perspective of Explainable Artificial Intelligence. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics*, 36(2), 224–245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02601079221130183>
- Fatmawati, E., Suharto, B., Dahlan, M., Suhma, WK, & Yudiawan, A. (2023). Challenges of Educational Management in the Islamic Higher Education Sector Based on Islamic Boarding Schools. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 13(6), 105–118. <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2023-0151>
- Hamzah, M., Basri, H., Muchlinarwati, Herlina, & Silahuddin. (2023). Book Review of the Tradition of Islamic Boarding Schools: A Study of the Kyai's View of Life. *Cahaya Mandalika Journal*, 7(5), 1082–1089.
- He, L., Kenett, Y.N., Zhuang, K., Liu, C., Zeng, R., Yan, T., Huo, T., & Qiu, J. (2020). The Relationship Between Semantic Memory Structure, Associative Abilities, and Verbal And Figural Creativity. *Thinking and Reasoning*, 27(2), 268–293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13546783.2020.1819415>
- Herlina, A. (2024). Mindful Messaging: Public Relations (PR) Strategies in Schools by Using Hierarchy of Effects. *Manager: Indonesian Journal of Educational Management*, 6(1), 98–110.
- Idiakez, F. J. A. (2023). Cooperatives and Labor Societies as Formula to Promote Employment Through Social Security: Analysis of The Capitalization of Benefits for Unemployment and Termination of Activity. *Revista Del Ministerio de Trabajo y Economia Social*, 22(1) 157, 197–226. <https://doi.org/10.55617/revmites.63>
- Karim, A., Bakhtiar, A., Sahrodi, J., & Chang, PH (2022). Spiritual leadership behaviors in religious workplace: the case of Islamic boarding school. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 32(3), 234–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2022.2076285>
- M., Leirós-Rodríguez, R., Álvarez-Barrio, L., & López-Rodríguez, A.F. (2021). Prevalence of peripartum perineal tears after two antepartum perineal massage techniques: A non-randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 10(21), 211–227. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm10214934>
- Maciejko, L.A., Fox, J.M., Steffens, MT, Patten, CA, Newman, H.R., Decker, P.A., Wheeler, P., Juhn, Y.J., Wi, C. Il, Gorfine, M., Brewer, L.P., & Sinicrope, P. S. (2023). Rural and Urban Residents' Attitudes and Preferences Toward COVID-19 Prevention Behaviors in A Midwestern Community. *PLOS ONE*, 18(6), 117–129. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0286953>
- Muafiah, E., Sofiana, NE, & Khasanah, U. (2022). Boarding School Education In Indonesia: Efforts to Create Child-Friendly Pesantren. *Ullumuna*, 26(2), 447–471.

- <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v26i2.558>
- Mulyani, H., & Maula, R. (2021). Quality Service in Improving the Profitability of Educational Institutions Based on Islamic Boarding Schools. *Isema Journal: Islamic Educational Management*, 6(2), 171–186. <https://doi.org/10.15575/isema.v6i2.15580>
- O'Hara, I. (2022). Automated Epistemology: Bots, Computational Propaganda & Information Literacy Instruction. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 48(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2022.102540>
- Saelendra, D., & Waliamin, S. J. (2023). Pengaruh gaya kepemimpinan karismatik, karakteristik individu, dan [judul tidak lengkap]. *Simki Economic*, 6(2), 394–402.
- Smith, B.E., Pacheco, M.B., & Khorosheva, M. (2021). Emergent Bilingual Students and Digital Multimodal Composition: A Systematic Review of Research in Secondary Classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56(1), 33–52. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.298>
- Van Kleef, G. A., & Côté, S. (2022). The Social Effects of Emotions. In *Annual Review of Psychology*, 73(2), 629–658. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-020821-010855>
- Waruwu, M. (2023). Educational Research Approaches: Qualitative Research Methods, Quantitative Research Methods, and Mixed Method Research Methods. *Tambusai Education Journal*, 7(1), 2896–2910.
- Yudha Pratama, P., Habibi, MB, & Ningtias, RK (2024). Dynamics of the Islamic Political Movement The Influence of Pesantren's Islamic Community in East Java in the 2024 Elections. *Civilization Journal of Religion and Society*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.59001/pjrs>.