



The Role of Islamic Cleric Leadership in Improving the Quality of Traditional Islamic School Education

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DOI: 10.32764/dinamika.v9i2.5052

Received: 05 Juli 2024

Accepted: 28 Agustus 2024

Published: 24 Desember 2024

Abstract :

This study aims to analyze the strategic role of the kiai as the leader of Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) in building a pesantren culture that contributes to the formation of institutional character. This institutional character serves as the identity of the organization, reflecting the process of developing institutional excellence through the growth of scholarly traditions and a clear system of educational management. The research employs a qualitative approach, with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through organizing and classifying data, as well as verifying its validity using triangulation and referencing scholarly materials. The findings of the study reveal that the kiai plays a pivotal role in improving the quality of education in Islamic boarding schools through various strategies. These include strengthening an integrated curriculum combining religious and general subjects, enhancing teacher quality through training and recruitment of qualified educators, improving facilities and infrastructure, implementing active learning approaches, conducting continuous evaluation and monitoring, and developing extracurricular activities aligned with students' interests and talents. Furthermore, the kiai fosters collaboration with parents and the community to support educational programs holistically and sustainably. The implications of this research highlight that the responsibilities of the kiai extend beyond administrative tasks to include providing spiritual and moral guidance to students, creating a conducive learning environment, instilling Islamic values, and preparing students to become individuals with noble character who are ready to face life's challenges. Therefore, the role of the kiai is crucial in shaping Islamic boarding schools as excellent and competitive educational institutions.

Keywords : *Islamic Cleric Leadership; Quality Improvement; Pesantren; Educational Leadership.*

Abstrak :

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran strategis kiai sebagai pemimpin pondok pesantren dalam membangun budaya pesantren yang berkontribusi terhadap pembentukan karakter lembaga. Karakter lembaga ini menjadi identitas organisasi yang mencerminkan proses pembentukan keunggulan kelembagaan melalui pengembangan tradisi keilmuan dan sistem pengelolaan pendidikan yang jelas. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui pengorganisasian, klasifikasi, serta pengecekan validitas data menggunakan

triangulasi dan referensi bahan pustaka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kiai memainkan peran penting dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan pondok pesantren melalui berbagai strategi. Strategi tersebut meliputi penguatan kurikulum terintegrasi antara materi agama dan umum, peningkatan kualitas tenaga pengajar melalui pelatihan dan rekrutmen, perbaikan fasilitas dan infrastruktur, penerapan pendekatan pembelajaran aktif, evaluasi dan monitoring berkelanjutan, serta pengembangan kegiatan ekstrakurikuler yang sesuai dengan minat dan bakat santri. Selain itu, kiai juga berperan dalam menjalin kolaborasi dengan orang tua dan masyarakat untuk mendukung program pendidikan secara holistik dan berkesinambungan. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa tugas kiai tidak hanya terbatas pada aspek administratif, tetapi juga melibatkan pembimbingan spiritual dan moral santri, penciptaan lingkungan belajar yang kondusif, penanaman nilai-nilai keislaman, serta mempersiapkan santri untuk menjadi individu yang berakhlak mulia dan mampu menghadapi tantangan kehidupan. Dengan demikian, peran kiai sangat krusial dalam membentuk pondok pesantren sebagai lembaga pendidikan yang unggul dan berdaya saing.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Ulama; Peningkatan Kualitas; Pesantren; Kepemimpinan Pendidikan.*

INTRODUCTION

Leadership within an organization is a crucial element that determines the success of achieving its goals. In the context of education, particularly in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), the leadership role of the *kiai* possesses unique characteristics distinct from general leadership models (Sukanto, 1999). Pesantren not only function as educational institutions managing administrative aspects but also bear a significant responsibility in shaping the moral values and character of their students. In this regard, the *kiai* acts as a spiritual leader while also managing the pesantren as a whole (Noor, 2019).

Although pesantren have long served as moral and religious bastions in Indonesian society, many face challenges in aligning their educational concepts with the developments in science, technology, and social demands. One of the greatest challenges is how pesantren remain relevant amidst complex social changes, such as declining morality among the younger generation, high unemployment rates, and poverty issues. These changes compel pesantren to not only adhere to traditional approaches but also innovate adaptively (Siswanto & Yulita, 2019).

Several previous studies have examined the role of the *kiai* in building students' character. For instance, (Sulaiman, 2014) highlighted the importance of Islamic values in fostering noble character, while (Anwar & Muhayati, 2021) explored the leadership of *kiai* in pesantren management. However, most of these studies have focused more on traditional aspects, such as strengthening Islamic values, without deeply exploring pesantren management innovations in addressing modern challenges.

Challenges faced by pesantren include the need to update their curricula to be more relevant to contemporary societal needs (Zubedi et al., 2022). Pesantren must also develop more interactive and contextual teaching methodologies to address workplace demands and social changes. Moreover, the pesantren's social function as a community empowerment center needs to be strengthened to help address social issues such as poverty and unemployment (Miftakhul Jannah et al., 2021).

This study offers a new perspective by evaluating the role of *kiai*

leadership in enhancing educational quality through renewal and development in various aspects, such as curriculum, teaching methodologies, the social function of pesantren, and institutional management. It emphasizes that *kiai* not only serve as spiritual leaders but also as strategic change agents in navigating the dynamics of the era. Through a case study on Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin in Gresik, this research contributes new insights into exploring the implementation of renewal based on *kiai* leadership as a model for exemplary pesantren education management.

Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin, located in Sampurnan Bungah, Gresik, is one of the pesantren with a long history in developing Islamic education. As one of Indonesia's oldest pesantren, Qomaruddin has demonstrated a dedication to education rooted in Islamic values. However, like other pesantren, Qomaruddin also faces challenges in staying relevant in the globalization era.

This study aims to evaluate the extent to which the *kiai's* leadership role enhances educational quality at Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin. The research focuses on identifying strategies used by the *kiai* in managing renewal in the educational, institutional, and social aspects of pesantren. These strategies include curriculum innovation, technology-based learning approaches, and community empowerment through social programs initiated by the pesantren.

The *kiai's* leadership at Qomaruddin reflects a combination of traditional values and modern approaches. For example, the *kiai* plays a vital role in preserving the moral and spiritual values of the students while encouraging them to master modern knowledge. Additionally, the pesantren has begun integrating technology into the learning process, such as utilizing digital media to support the teaching of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*).

In conclusion, the *kiai's* leadership role in pesantren is not limited to spiritual aspects but also encompasses management and educational innovation to address the challenges of the times. By examining Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin as a case study, this research demonstrates that adaptive and innovative *kiai* leadership can be a key factor in pesantren's success in meeting the demands of the modern era. These findings also provide a foundation for other pesantren to develop relevant and effective leadership models to support the advancement of Islamic education in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to gain a deep understanding of the role of leadership in the context of pesantren education. Data collection was carried out through techniques such as observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to understand the patterns of interaction and leadership dynamics within the pesantren environment, while interviews were held with *kiai*, teachers, and students to gain a comprehensive perspective on the role of leadership in improving the quality of education. Additional data were collected through documentation, such as organizational notes, activity reports, and the curriculum used. This approach aims to ensure that the data collected is accurate and highly relevant to answering the research questions (W, 1994).

The data obtained were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, involving the systematic process of managing, classifying, and interpreting the data (M. Sobry & Prosmala Hadisaputra, 2020). Data validity was tested using triangulation methods, which involve comparing data from various sources and methods to ensure consistency. In addition, supplementary references were used to strengthen the research findings. This approach enables the researcher to uncover patterns, themes, and leadership strategies relevant to improving the quality of pesantren education. This methodology is expected to provide accurate and applicable research results for the development of leadership models that meet the needs of religious-based educational institutions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership Concept

Leadership has become a common phenomenon in various layers of society. Every individual who carries the responsibility of leadership is involved in interactions with their colleagues. Leadership consists of a set of abilities and personality characteristics, including having authority, which is used as a tool to convince those being led. The main goal is for them to have the readiness and ability to carry out the tasks assigned to them voluntarily, enthusiastically, with joy, and without coercion (Syahriyah, 2023). Even in the personal realm, humans possess the ability or potential and control that essentially allows an individual to control themselves. Leadership is a complex event, which makes it difficult to formulate a comprehensive definition of its meaning (Mahfud Ifendi, 2020).

According to Wahjosumidjo, leadership is a characteristic inherent in the figure of a leader, consisting of various traits such as personality, skills, and talents. Leadership can also be considered as a series of activities that cannot be separated from the position and style or behavior of the leader. Furthermore, leadership is described as a process of communication or relationship between the leader, followers, and the situational context (Asyari et al., 2020). According to (Siagian, 2003), leadership involves an individual's ability and expertise in holding a leadership role with the aim of influencing the actions of others, especially subordinates. By inspiring them to think and act positively, management significantly contributes to achieving the organization's goals.

Leadership in the pesantren educational environment has a significant impact on the direction of the development of the community within the structure of Islamic society. If the community has a superior, productive leader who can develop creativity and practice good deeds, a strong leadership ensures that the nation's journey will reach the peak of success (Nasikhin & Yani, 2014). On the contrary, if a group is led by someone with many weaknesses in knowledge, leadership, understanding of responsibility, and prioritizes decisions and actions based on their own desires, it can be assured that the group will face setbacks, even the risk of destruction. Therefore, from the Islamic perspective, leadership is seen as a vital role in achieving a society that embodies the principle *Baladatun Thoyyibatun Wa Rabbun Ghafur* (QS 34:15), meaning a community that implements Islamic principles in its system.

The term leadership has variations in naming depending on the context.

In the context of government organizations, the term used is leader. In administrative contexts, it is referred to as administrator. Meanwhile, in the context of pesantren, the title commonly used is kyai, although not all kyais manage pesantren (Kartika, 2019).

The styles and types of leadership commonly used include charismatic, paternalistic, authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership. In authoritarian leadership, there is extraordinary energy, attraction, and consistency in communication to influence others, so the leader has many followers and reliable guards. The reason why people are strongly attracted is not fully understood. This individual possesses mystical powers and extraordinary human abilities believed to be a gift from the Almighty. This leader is highly inspired, courageous, and deeply confident in their principles. The general personality of the leader has a profound influence and attraction (Noor, 2019). Below is a table depicting the styles and types of leadership commonly used, including their characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages:

Table 1. Characteristics of Leadership Styles and Types

Leadership Style/Type	Characteristics	Advantages	Disadvantages
Charismatic Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The leader has a strong personal appeal. Inspires and motivates through personality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspires and motivates subordinates. Increases loyalty and commitment of followers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vulnerable to dependence on the leader. Organizational success depends on the leader's presence.
Paternalistic Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The leader acts like a "father" to subordinates. Prioritizes the welfare of members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fosters respect and loyalty. Creates a harmonious work environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tends to limit individual creativity and initiative. Can create dependence on the leader.
Authoritarian Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The leader makes decisions unilaterally. Focuses on full control over subordinates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficient in emergency situations. Suitable for tasks requiring strict obedience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limits subordinate participation. Can lead to dissatisfaction and resistance from subordinates.
Democratic Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The leader involves subordinates in decision-making. Open and participative communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages creativity and innovation. Increases job satisfaction and member loyalty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision-making process may be slow. Not suitable for situations requiring quick decisions.
Laissez-faire Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The leader gives full freedom to subordinates to act. Minimal intervention in management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages independence and individual initiative. Suitable for highly experienced and competent teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk of lack of direction or supervision. Ineffective for team members who need guidance.

The table above provides a comprehensive overview of various leadership styles and types that are commonly used in organizations. Each leadership type has its unique characteristics, as well as its respective advantages and disadvantages. Understanding these leadership styles is crucial for a leader to adjust their approach according to the needs of the organization and the characteristics of the team they lead (AH & Ashoumi, 2019).

1. Charismatic Leadership is characterized by the leader's ability to influence and inspire others through their personal charm. This style is highly effective in boosting loyalty and motivation among subordinates. However, organizations that rely too heavily on a charismatic leader may face sustainability challenges if that leader leaves their position.
2. Paternalistic Leadership adopts a "parent-like" approach toward team members, where the leader gives considerable attention to the well-being of subordinates. This style can foster harmonious and respectful working relationships but may limit creativity due to high dependency on the leader.
3. Authoritarian Leadership emphasizes complete control by the leader over decision-making and its implementation. While this style is suitable for emergency situations or tasks that require strict adherence, it can reduce subordinates' morale due to the lack of participation in the decision-making process.
4. Democratic Leadership focuses more on participation and involvement of team members in decision-making. This style enhances creativity, innovation, and job satisfaction. However, its main weakness is the decision-making process, which tends to be slower, making it less ideal for situations that require quick responses.
5. Laissez-faire Leadership provides full freedom to subordinates to work with minimal intervention from the leader. This style is highly effective when working with individuals or teams that are already highly competent and experienced. However, its main risk is the lack of direction and supervision, which can lead to confusion or low productivity for teams that are not ready.

Choosing the right leadership style should consider the organizational context, the maturity level of the team, and the nature of the tasks being performed. Effective leaders are typically able to adapt their leadership style according to situational needs, ensuring the organization operates more optimally (Syahriyah, 2023).

The paternalistic leadership type is a leadership style that views subordinates as immature individuals or children who need development, offering excessive protection, rarely providing opportunities for subordinates to make decisions independently, seldom allowing subordinates to take initiative, not giving subordinates the freedom to explore their imagination and creativity, and always displaying an attitude of knowing everything and always being right (Zubedi et al., 2022).

The authoritarian leadership type is based on absolute power and the obligation to obey without question. Managers always strive to be the sole decision-makers. In contrast, democratic leadership focuses on the human perspective and provides effective leadership to its followers. Tasks are organized collectively by the entire team, with an emphasis on internal responsibility and effective cooperation. The strength of democratic leadership comes not from the individual leader, but from the active participation of each group member (Siswanto & Yulita, 2019).

In the laissez-faire management model, the manager does not actively

manage; instead, they give complete freedom to the group and individuals to act as they wish. This administrator does not participate at all in the group's activities. Team members must handle all work and responsibilities on their own. The position is more of a leadership symbol, and the leader often lacks technical skills because their position as a leader, administrator, or commander is often obtained through corruption, bribery, or nepotism (Nasikhin & Yani, 2014).

Strategies Implemented by Kyai to Enhance the Quality of Education at Madrasah Diniyah

To improve the quality of education at Madrasah Diniyah Pondok Pesantren Putri Qomaruddin, the kyai implements various integrated and comprehensive strategies. First, the kyai ensures that the curriculum taught is always relevant and of high quality. This curriculum not only focuses on religious knowledge but also includes general knowledge essential to equip the santri in facing modern life challenges. The kyai also regularly evaluates and adjusts the curriculum to keep it up-to-date with the times and the needs of the santri (Sinaga et al., 2023).

Second, the kyai emphasizes the importance of character development and noble morals in the educational process. Building good character is a priority, so that each santri is not only intellectually smart but also possesses strong morals and ethics. The kyai frequently gives sermons and inspirational advice, and applies a fair and educational discipline system. Religious activities such as tadarus, dhikr, and group prayers are also routinely carried out to instill strong spiritual values (Nihayah et al., 2023).

Third, the kyai pays attention to the development of the teaching staff as part of efforts to improve the quality of education. Periodic training and workshops are held to enhance the teachers' competencies and teaching methods. The kyai also encourages teachers to continue learning and developing themselves, either through further studies or participation in seminars and educational conferences. As a result, the teachers can provide more effective and inspiring lessons, ensuring that the santri can achieve optimal learning outcomes (Rohmadi, 2017).

In addition to the above strategies, the kyai also focuses on providing adequate infrastructure to support the learning process. A comfortable environment and complete facilities, such as libraries, laboratories, and good classrooms, are of primary concern. The kyai also encourages active participation from the parents of the santri and the surrounding community in supporting the educational programs at the pesantren. With this comprehensive approach, the kyai strives to ensure that Madrasah Diniyah Pondok Pesantren Putri Qomaruddin continues to produce high-quality and competitive graduates (Hana, 2021).

To improve the quality of education at Madrasah Diniyah Pondok Pesantren Putri Qomaruddin, the kyai implements various innovative strategies and methods. One of the approaches is improving the quality of teaching through intensive training for teachers to make them more competent in delivering the lessons. Additionally, the kyai introduces a curriculum that integrates modern knowledge without neglecting the traditional and Islamic aspects that are central

to pesantren education (Siswanto & Yulita, 2019).

The use of technology in the teaching and learning process is also beginning to be implemented to support the effectiveness of learning. Furthermore, the kyai emphasizes the importance of character building and morals for the santri through regular religious and social activities, as well as creating a conducive learning environment with adequate facilities. All of this aims to produce graduates who are not only excellent in knowledge but also of noble character and ready to make a positive contribution to the community around Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin (Zubedi et al., 2022).

Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin applies various strategies and methods for diniyah education for female santri, ensuring they receive comprehensive religious education. One of the main methods is the study of the classical Islamic books (*kitab kuning*), where santri learn Islamic texts such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, aqidah, and tasawuf through the sorogan and bandongan methods. Additionally, the Tahfidz Al-Qur'an program is a key part, with santri encouraged to memorize the Quran through intensive guidance (Ni'mah, 2020).

Discussion and deliberation are also implemented to develop critical thinking skills and deeper understanding, while daily religious practices like congregational prayers and fasting help the santri apply the knowledge they have learned. Personal approaches and character development are conducted by the kyai and ustadzah, providing individual guidance to help santri develop noble morals. Extracurricular religious activities, such as Quran recitation competitions and religious speeches, as well as the integration of technology in learning, such as using digital apps for Quran and *kitab kuning* studies, are also implemented to enrich the learning experience. All these strategies aim to create a conducive learning environment, equipping female santri with profound religious knowledge and good character (Amrullah et al., 2021).

The diniyah learning process at Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin is influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors include the quality and competence of the teachers, both kyai and ustadzah, who play a crucial role in effectively and inspiringly conveying religious knowledge. The curriculum, which is systematically and integratively designed to combine religious and general knowledge, is also an important factor, ensuring that the santri receive a holistic education. In addition, learning facilities such as libraries with complete collections of books and a conducive pesantren environment support optimal learning. The discipline and strong pesantren culture in Islamic values also shape the character and morals of the santri, reinforcing the internalization of the materials taught (Ni'mah, 2020).

On the other hand, external factors that affect the diniyah learning process include support from the santri's families, which play an important role in providing motivation and enthusiasm for learning. The surrounding community's religious environment and support for religious activities also contribute positively to the learning atmosphere at the pesantren. Furthermore, government policies in the field of education and pesantren regulations provide a framework and direction that influence the operational and curriculum development of the pesantren. Access to global technology and information also

provides opportunities for the pesantren to integrate modern teaching methods, although it also requires adjustments and supervision to ensure they do not conflict with pesantren values. The combination of these internal and external factors together shapes the dynamics of the diniyah learning process at Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin.

The Kyai's Role in Leadership at Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin

In the leadership of Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin, a kyai plays a central and multifaceted role. As the main figure in the pesantren's leadership structure, the kyai is responsible not only as a spiritual and moral leader but also as an educational guide, administrative manager, and protector of all the santri. As a spiritual leader, the kyai leads various religious activities such as study groups, congregational prayers, and other religious rituals. They are also the primary reference in matters of Islamic teachings, providing advice and guidance to the santri and the surrounding community.

The kyai's duties in leading Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin cover various aspects aimed at ensuring the continuity and advancement of both the education and life at the pesantren (Asyari et al., 2020). First, the kyai is responsible for planning and implementing the educational curriculum that aligns with Islamic principles and the needs of the santri. The kyai determines the materials taught, teaching methods, and educational evaluations. In this role, the kyai must ensure that the curriculum equips the santri with deep religious knowledge as well as relevant general knowledge for modern life. Additionally, the kyai often provides sermons and study groups to strengthen the religious understanding and morality of the santri.

Second, the kyai serves as a spiritual leader who provides moral and ethical guidance to all the members of the pesantren. The kyai is a role model in practicing Islamic teachings daily, both in worship, social relations (muamalah), and in character. The kyai frequently holds religious gatherings, Quran recitations, dhikr, and other religious activities aimed at shaping the character of the santri to be righteous and of good morals. In certain situations, the kyai also offers advice and solutions to various problems faced by the santri, whether related to personal or social life.

Third, the kyai is responsible for managing and developing the pesantren as a whole. This includes managerial aspects such as financial management, administration, and the development of infrastructure and facilities. The kyai must ensure that the pesantren has adequate facilities to support the learning and daily life of the santri, such as dormitories, classrooms, libraries, and sports facilities. The kyai also works with the pesantren management board, teachers, and staff to implement the planned programs. In addition, the kyai fosters good relations with the surrounding community, alumni, and external parties to support the development of the pesantren. Through wise and visionary leadership, the kyai strives to ensure that Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin continues to grow and make a positive contribution to the ummah and the nation.

In education, the kyai also plays a role in creating a curriculum that integrates religious knowledge with general knowledge, ensuring that the santri

receive a holistic education. They also directly teach certain key subjects, guiding the santri in developing both knowledge and character. Administratively, the kyai oversees the operational running of the pesantren, from financial management, facility arrangements, to relations with external parties such as the government and the broader community.

As a protector, the kyai maintains discipline and order at the pesantren, setting an example in behavior and attitude, and providing care and affection to each santri, creating a conducive environment for learning and self-development (Noor, 2019). Thus, the kyai's role in the leadership of Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin is integral and diverse, covering spiritual, educational, administrative, and social aspects.

Factors Affecting and Supporting the Quality of Education at Madrasah Diniyah in Improving Education Quality

The factors affecting and supporting the quality of education at Madrasah Diniyah Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin Sampurnan Bungah Gresik play a crucial role in improving the quality of education. One of the main supporting factors is the strong commitment of the kyai and pesantren management to continuously improve and update the educational curriculum. The support from the kyai in the form of spiritual and intellectual guidance creates a conducive learning environment. In addition, the availability of educational resources such as reference books, an adequate library, and access to information technology also greatly assists in improving the quality of education (Ashoumi & Hariono, 2020).

On the other hand, one of the hindering factors is the lack of adequate financial support. Many pesantren rely on donations and contributions from the community, which sometimes are not sufficient to meet all operational needs and infrastructure development. The limited funds can hinder the purchase of educational tools, building renovations, and provision of adequate learning facilities. Furthermore, the lack of competent and trained teaching staff also poses a major challenge. Despite the desire to improve the quality of teaching, without teachers with adequate qualifications and skills, these efforts may be hampered.

Social and cultural factors also play a role as both supporters and hindrances. On one hand, the strong support from the surrounding community for the pesantren can strengthen the educational programs being implemented. A supportive community is more likely to actively participate in pesantren activities, including making contributions in the form of donations or labor. On the other hand, cultural challenges such as low reading interest or lack of awareness about the importance of formal education can be a hindrance. The differences in views between older and younger generations regarding the methods and objectives of education can also cause friction that hinders efforts to improve educational quality. Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of education at Madrasah Diniyah Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin require a holistic approach, involving all relevant parties, as well as adaptive strategies to address existing challenges.

Improving the quality of diniyah education at Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin Sampurnan Bungah Gresik faces several significant challenges.

One of the main obstacles is the limitation of human resources, where the number and competency of teachers are often insufficient to meet the educational needs optimally. Additionally, limited learning facilities, such as inadequate classrooms and minimal access to modern technology, also hinder the learning process. The curriculum, which still needs to be refined to be more relevant to the times and the needs of the santri today, also presents a challenge (Maris et al., 2016). Furthermore, financial constraints often limit the ability to develop infrastructure or offer additional teaching materials. Therefore, solving these problems requires collaboration between the kyai, pesantren administrators, teachers, parents, and other related stakeholders, as well as innovative strategies to ensure the quality of education continues to improve over time.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the importance of understanding various leadership styles within organizational contexts, particularly in pesantren environments. Each type of leadership (whether charismatic, paternalistic, authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-faire) has unique characteristics that can be optimized according to the context and needs of the organization. Charismatic and paternalistic leadership tend to be effective in building loyalty and harmonious relationships in organizations based on traditional values like pesantren. However, this approach requires balance to avoid fostering excessive dependence on the leader figure.

Conversely, authoritarian leadership may be relevant in situations requiring quick decisions and high compliance, but it needs to be balanced with a more participatory approach to prevent a decline in subordinates' motivation. Democratic and laissez-faire leadership, while encouraging creativity and independence, must be applied strategically, particularly in environments that require clear direction.

In the context of Pondok Pesantren Qomaruddin, the leadership of the kiai plays a strategic role in managing organizational transformation to remain relevant in the modern era. The renewal strategies undertaken, including innovations in curriculum, teaching approaches, and institutional management, reflect the relevance of applying various leadership styles situationally. These findings emphasize that adaptive, value-based leadership that is responsive to social changes plays a significant role in creating superior and competitive pesantren education.

This research contributes to the leadership literature by highlighting the importance of adapting leadership styles in the context of religious-based education. Additionally, this study provides a relevant leadership model for other Islamic educational institutions. However, further research is needed to explore how these leadership styles can be integrated with modern management approaches to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of religious-based educational institutions holistically. Thus, the conclusions are expected to serve as a reference for developing innovative leadership strategies, both in the pesantren context and in educational organizations more generally.

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