

The Role Of Kiai As A Spiritual And Moral Leader In Building The Character Of Students At The Raudlatul Qur'an Al-Hasani Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to explore how the leadership of kyai adapts to the challenges faced by their pesantrens, especially considering the developments in their surrounding environment, such as the flexible responses from the local community. The influence of a kyai will be at stake when facing the often-changing attitudes of society. In addition to community responses, a kyai also maintains the quality of educational institutions under their Islamic pesantren. This research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and several previous studies. The kyai's leadership can be said to be successful, seen from the increasing number of students each year, the well-administered institution, and the formation of student ethics as akhlaqul karimah (good character). This study aims to explore in depth the role of a kyai in shaping the character of students through various activities carried out to enhance religious values in Islamic boarding schools. To identify problem patterns in this study, the researcher employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Primary research data was collected from several informants, community and religious leaders. This data was also supported by previous studies relevant to this topic. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a word derived from the word "leader." A leader is often referred to as the head of an organization. The term "leader" is defined as the ability to influence or influence. Etymologically, "leader" comes from the word "pimpin," meaning to guide or mentor. The word "pimpin" can be derived from the word "pimpin," meaning to guide and mentor. In this discussion, a leader is viewed from three

categories: first, leadership is a process of influence. A leader cannot simply rely on a functional position but must also fulfill their duties as a leader. Second, a leader must have the ability to manage an organization to achieve common goals. And finally, a leader must be a leader. must maintain good relations with all its members as well as with external parties. In terms of influence, a kyai can form an exemplary model for interacting with all students, motivating and providing innovation. There are five activities in leadership: planning, assigning tasks, often called organizing, implementing, motivating and innovating, and evaluating. These five stages shape character and provide insight to subordinates, enabling them to become more skilled in carrying out their duties.

There are various types of leadership. However, there are generally four: authoritarian, democratic, charismatic, and military. Some kyai (Islamic scholars) choose a spiritual style of leadership, identified with religious values. However, many kyai still rely on charisma to lead. Charisma is derived from the Greek word meaning a divinely inspired gift. The influence of a kyai is not based on authority or tradition, but rather on their knowledge. Charisma emerges during a social crisis, where a leader emerges with a radical vision that can provide a satisfactory solution. Charismatic leadership is more than just belief in faith; it also possesses supernatural abilities. Subordinates, as part of charismatic leadership, not only trust and respect the leader but also idolize and worship him as a spiritual figure.

There are several characteristics of charismatic leadership. The first is knowledge. A leader must possess competence in the field they lead and understand the ins and outs of their field of activity, both internally and externally. The second characteristic is courage and initiative. Courage is the inner ability to acknowledge fear but be able to face danger or obstacles calmly and decisively. One leader who usually has a charismatic type is the leader of an Islamic boarding school. The word "pesantren" is often used in everyday language with the addition of the word "pondok" to become "pondok pesantren." Linguistically, the words "pondok" and "pesantren" are not fundamentally different because essentially, an Islamic boarding school is an Islamic educational institution. According to the term, an Islamic boarding school is a traditional Islamic educational institution for studying, understanding, deepening, internalizing, and practicing Islamic teachings, emphasizing the importance of religious morality as a guideline for daily behavior.

2. METHODS

This research employed a qualitative methodology. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and several previous studies. To identify problem patterns in this study, the researcher employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The primary data were collected from several informants, community and religious leaders. This data was also supported by previous studies relevant to this topic. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *Biography of the Raudlatul Qur'an Al-Hasani Islamic Boarding School*

The Raudlatul Qur'an Al-Hasani Islamic Boarding School is a branch of the Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic Boarding School. Established on July 24, 2022, the Raudlatul Qur'an Al-Hasani Islamic Boarding School is located in Ketompen Village, Pajarakan District, Probolinggo Regency. The Raudlatul Qur'an Al-Hasani Islamic Boarding School is managed by Kyai Haji Moh Rahmatullah, guided by the Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic Boarding School's central boarding school.

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The Raudlatul Qur'an Al-Hasani Islamic Boarding School is managed by Kyai Haji Moh Rahmatullah, commonly known as Gus Rahmat. Initially, he preached only in the local area, by

opening a madin school and TPQ. In addition, he held routine religious study activities every Friday night. This activity was called the routine of *ngolah pikiran* (mind-making), which included the recitation of *sholawat nariyah* (nariyah prayer) and the congregation consisted of the guardians of the TPQ students. Leadership strategies to improve the religious values of the community certainly require a significant role in spiritual values. Over time, the madin and TPQ institutions managed by him grew, leading to the establishment of Islamic boarding schools with the aim of deepening religious knowledge.

The Raudlatul Qur'an Al-Hasani Islamic Boarding School is a Quran memorization boarding school. Students are required to memorize the entire Qur'an, starting with Juz 'Amma or Juz 30. After completing Juz 30, students are guided to memorize the Qur'an starting from Juz 1. In addition to memorizing the Qur'an, the Raudlatul Qur'an Al-Hasani Islamic Boarding School also studies books discussing Sharia law, the history of the Prophet, and several teachings. This boarding school is packaged as a *tahfidz* boarding school but does not abandon its formal institutional education.

3.2 Various leadership styles

Leadership is a crucial element in the success of any organization, institution, or community. A leader's job is not only to provide instructions, but also to guide, motivate, and serve as a role model for the members they lead. In the world of management, various leadership styles are recognized, each with its own characteristics and influence on group dynamics. Here are some common leadership styles in management:

Authoritarian leadership style Authoritarian leadership is a leadership style in which a leader has complete control over all organizational decisions and activities without much involvement from members or subordinates. In this model, communication is usually one-way, from superior to subordinate. The leader acts as the primary decision-maker, and group members merely carry out instructions. This leadership style is often referred to as dictatorial leadership, although in the context of professional management, the term "authoritarian" is more appropriately used in a neutral manner. The characteristics of an authoritarian leadership style are unilateral decision-making, direct and clear instructions, leaders giving orders that must be carried out without much consideration from team members, strict supervision, and one-way communication. However, the positive values of a military leadership style are fast decision-making, reduced role confusion, and centralized control. In addition, there are also negative values of this type such as reducing motivation and creativity, excessive dependence, resistance to change because ideas only come from the leader, innovation from below is difficult to develop.

Democratic leadership style Democratic leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes the active participation of team members in decision-making. A democratic leader values the opinions, ideas, and input of subordinates and strives to create a collaborative and open work environment. This style is the opposite of authoritarianism, as the leader does not impose his will unilaterally but rather serves as a facilitator and guide. This leadership style is widely adopted due to its several advantages, such as increasing work morale and motivation, encouraging creativity and innovation, and building healthy work relationships. Despite its positive values, the democratic leadership style also has disadvantages, such as slow decision-making and ineffectiveness in crisis situations.

Charismatic leadership style Charismatic leadership is a leadership style that relies on the power of personal magnetism, charm, and emotional influence on followers. Charismatic leaders are able to inspire, motivate, and generate strong commitment from their followers through conviction, a strong vision, and a captivating personality. This type of leader is usually trusted and followed not because of formal power or organizational rules, but because of their extraordinary personal character. The characteristics of a charismatic leadership style are offering clear and inspiring direction and goals, being able to convey ideas with enthusiasm so as to arouse the enthusiasm of followers, and having a personal appeal that makes others admire and respect them even without pressure or coercion. This leadership style is widely adopted due to its advantages, such as inspiring and motivating followers,

the ability to unite and mobilize the masses, and leadership based on personal influence. Furthermore, charismatic leadership also has disadvantages, such as challenges to rational evaluation, a lack of democratic participation, and an over-reliance on the leader's figurehead.

Spiritual leadership style Spiritual leadership is a leadership approach that emphasizes religious values, ethics, and spirituality as the primary foundation for managing an organization or group. Spiritual leaders focus not only on achieving worldly goals but also on guiding their subordinates toward more meaningful life goals, aligned with moral and transcendental values. The spiritual leadership style was first proposed by Louis W. Fry. Fry's model contributes to integrating three spiritual aspects: vision, hope/belief, and altruistic values that must be present in a leader, demonstrating how spiritual leadership can improve the quality of leaders and organizational achievement.

Spiritual leadership helps leaders coordinate comfort and clarity for their followers in the workplace through these three aspects of spiritual leadership. Vision plays a crucial role in directing and motivating organizational members. Hope/belief is the belief that the organization's vision, mission, and goals will be achieved. Altruistic values in spiritual leadership are feelings of wholeness, harmony, and well-being that emerge through a leader's attention, care, and appreciation for themselves and others. Spiritual leadership is synonymous with religious values. Building a dignified, moral, and beneficial organization is the primary goal of spiritual leadership. Furthermore, spiritual leadership aims to foster a sense of responsibility not only to superiors or institutions, but also to God, and to create a peaceful, meaningful, and sincere work environment. The hallmarks of spiritual leadership are typically recognized as pursuing not only worldly success but also happiness in the afterlife. This leadership style is widely adopted due to its several advantages, such as improving morale and work ethics, fostering a sense of responsibility, increasing member loyalty and satisfaction, and fostering a meaningful sense of purpose. Furthermore, there are drawbacks to implementing a spiritual leadership style, such as the potential for overly idealistic leadership, a lack of assertiveness in certain situations, and the risk of being misinterpreted as religious leadership.

3.3 The role of the subject in managing Islamic boarding schools

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are traditional Islamic educational institutions that play a crucial role in developing a generation of Muslims who are not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and spiritually superior. Behind the success of a *pesantren*, the role of the *kiai* (Islamic cleric) is central. The *kiai* serves not only as a teacher of religious knowledge but also as a leader, mentor, and character builder for the students. As a central figure in a *pesantren*, the *kiai* is the primary role model in the daily lives of the students. He serves as a living example of worship, morals, simplicity, sincerity, and steadfastness in principle. The *kiai*'s role as a spiritual leader means he is responsible for guiding the students to draw closer to God, strengthening their faith and piety, and fostering a righteous religious life. This role encompasses several aspects:

Religious Mentor The religious guidance referred to here is to guide worship and provide insight into spiritual values. The *kiai* (Islamic scholars) serves as the primary guide in performing religious duties, such as prayer, fasting, *dhikr* (remembrance of God), and other recommended practices. He teaches not only the procedures but also the deeper meaning of each act of worship. Furthermore, the *kiai* teaches religious sciences such as *tafsir* (interpretation of the traditions), *hadith* (hadith), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and Sufism (Sufism), which form the foundation of the students' faith and piety.

Spiritual Guide In Islamic boarding school life, *kiai* frequently provide religious advice that shapes the students' perspectives and behavior to align with Islamic teachings. *Kiai* play a role in instilling a correct, moderate understanding of Islam that aligns with the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah*. They ensure that students do not fall into extreme or deviant thinking.

The Shaper of Worship Culture Through lectures, recitation of yellow scriptures, and a Sufi approach, the *kiai* fosters a calm, patient, and trusting spirit in his students. Life at the *pesantren* is geared toward strengthening the students' relationship with Allah SWT. The *kiai* also encourages

students to engage in congregational prayer, dhikr (remembrance of God), Quran recitation, and voluntary fasting. In this way, the kiai fosters an environment conducive to spiritual growth. Besides being spiritual leaders, kiai are also known as good role models for their students. The moral values demonstrated in their daily lives are deeply ingrained in the hearts of their students and the surrounding community. Kiai are typically known as honest, patient, humble, compassionate, and trustworthy individuals. These are the traits their students indirectly emulate.

The way the kiai treats guests, resolves conflicts, and interacts with the community provides direct learning for students about Islamic social ethics. Through their daily lives, the kiai shapes the students' character to be disciplined, responsible, just, and empathetic toward others. The kiai tends to foster students with a spiritual and gentle approach, rather than just strict rules, so that the character formation of the students feels more touching and lasting. Students learn not only from what the kiai says, but also from what they do. In the long term, the moral values exemplified by the kiai shape the students' personalities, such as becoming individuals with integrity, committed to Islamic values, and ready to become community leaders who uphold morals and responsibility. As spiritual leaders and moral role models, kiai play a crucial role in the character formation of students in Islamic boarding schools. Through religious guidance and exemplary behavior, kiai not only produce students who are knowledgeable but also who possess noble character, wisdom, and a life orientation grounded in Islamic values. Therefore, the primary strength of a pesantren lies in the kiai, who is able to illuminate the hearts of students with both knowledge and morality.

CONCLUSION

Leadership is the process of influencing and guiding a group of people toward a specific goal. In the context of Islamic boarding school leadership, a kiai plays a central role as a spiritual leader and moral role model. He not only performs administrative functions but also serves as a figure who shapes the character, spirituality, and morals of his students through practical example, religious guidance, and the reinforcement of Islamic values.

A kiai's leadership can be categorized into several styles, such as charismatic and spiritual. The charismatic style is characterized by personal magnetism and the ability to influence through vision and scholarly integrity, while the spiritual style emphasizes religious values, sincerity, and transcendental responsibility. These two styles are very dominant in Islamic boarding school leadership because they reflect a deep relationship between leader and followers based on trust, moral influence, and spiritual closeness.

The Raudlatul Qur'an Al-Hasani Islamic Boarding School, run by Kyai Haji Moh Rahmatullah, is a concrete example of leadership based on spiritual and charismatic values. Through memorization (tahfidz) education, teaching of the yellow books, and practicing daily worship, this Islamic boarding school produces students who are not only proficient in religious knowledge but also mature in character and morals. Thus, the primary strength of Islamic boarding school leadership lies in the figure of the kiai as a leader capable of serving as a spiritual guide and role model, producing a generation that is knowledgeable, moral, and contributes positively to society.

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