



Leadership in Pesantren: Educational Management Approaches for Spiritual and Academic Development

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37348/aksi.v2i3.455>

Received: 11-03-2024

Accepted: 17-07-2024

Published: 27-07-2024

Abstract:

Pesantren, as an integral part of the Indonesian education system, have adapted to the demands of the times while maintaining a deep approach to religious education. This research focuses on Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo Pesantren, analyzing how this pesantren integrates spiritual and academic education in the face of modern social and educational dynamics. This study employs a qualitative approach, involving in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis to explore aspects of leadership and educational management in the pesantren. The leadership of the kyai in Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo Pesantren plays a central role in decision-making, combining spiritual and managerial authority. This pesantren has successfully implemented a unique educational management approach, blending traditional and modern methods. This includes the use of a structured management system for daily operations and a flexible approach to religious education. The pesantren also creates a balance between religious and general education, preparing students to actively contribute to modern society.

Keywords: *Islamic Boarding Schools, Islamic Education, Leadership in Islamic Boarding Schools, Educational Management, Spiritual and Academic Development.*

Abstrak:

Pesantren, sebagai bagian integral dari sistem pendidikan Indonesia, telah beradaptasi dengan tuntutan zaman sambil mempertahankan pendekatan pendidikan agama yang mendalam. Penelitian ini fokus pada Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo, menganalisis bagaimana pesantren ini mengintegrasikan pendidikan spiritual dan akademis dalam menghadapi dinamika sosial dan pendidikan modern. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, melibatkan wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan analisis dokumen untuk mengeksplorasi aspek kepemimpinan dan manajemen pendidikan di pesantren. Kepemimpinan kiai di Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo berperan sentral dalam pengambilan keputusan, menggabungkan wewenang spiritual dan manajerial. Pesantren ini berhasil mengimplementasikan pendekatan manajemen pendidikan yang unik, menggabungkan metode tradisional dan modern. Ini termasuk penggunaan sistem manajemen yang terstruktur untuk operasional harian dan pendekatan fleksibel untuk pendidikan agama. Pesantren ini juga menciptakan keseimbangan antara pendidikan agama dan umum, mempersiapkan santri untuk berkontribusi secara aktif dalam masyarakat modern.

Kata Kunci: *Pesantren, Pendidikan Islam, Kepemimpinan Pesantren, Manajemen Pendidikan, Pengembangan Spiritual dan Akademis.*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren) are a crucial component of the history and education system in Indonesia. The history of pesantren in Indonesia can be traced back to the 15th century when Islam first entered the archipelago. The first pesantren were established by scholars or kyai with the aim of preserving and developing Islam within the community. Pesantren serve as centers for religious education and character building for students (santri). They play a role in providing profound religious education and preparing the younger generation to become competent scholars proficient in understanding, practicing, and disseminating Islamic values. Pesantren also have a significant role in maintaining cultural diversity and local traditions, as their education approach, which is based on the pesantren system, values diversity while simultaneously promoting Islamic religious values. (Isbah, 2020)

Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren) make a significant contribution to religious and moral education in Indonesia. Pesantren consistently promote a deep mastery of Islamic teachings, including an understanding of the Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, ethics, and other religious sciences. They also play a role in shaping the character and morals of students (santri), teaching Islamic values such as simplicity, discipline, honesty, and righteous deeds. Pesantren provide opportunities for santri to develop social and leadership skills through activities such as community service, group mentoring, and managing student communities. This approach helps in creating a young generation that is not only academically intelligent but also possesses strong moral integrity and leadership qualities. (Nasor & Jasmadi, 2020)

The Dynamics of Social and Educational Change Affecting Pesantren. Pesantren are not immune to the dynamics of social and educational change in Indonesia. They must continuously adapt to the evolving times and the demands of modern society. Pesantren need to implement more inclusive and open approaches, integrating religious learning with general knowledge and modern sciences. They also need to pay attention to the development of information and communication technology and utilize it in the learning process to remain relevant and meet the needs of today's younger generation. Additionally, pesantren must continuously strive to improve the quality of the religious and moral education they provide, enhancing the competencies of their teachers and developing relevant curricula. Pesantren should not overlook the importance of valuing diversity and promoting tolerant and peaceful Islamic values in a multicultural society. According to Fathoni Ahmad, author of the book "Pesantren and Modernity," pesantren have played a role in sustaining and maintaining the dignity of Islamic civilization in Indonesia. Pesantren have been an integral part of the Indonesian education system since the 13th century. (Khoiriyah, 2019) Pesantren have long been educational institutions with a rich history and a significant role in the Indonesian education system.

Challenges in Integrating Traditional and Modern Educational Methods. The need for pesantren to adapt to the demands of the times, including technology and globalization, is evident. Pesantren indeed have a rich history

and play a vital role in the Indonesian education system. However, it is undeniable that pesantren also face various challenges in integrating traditional educational methods with the needs of modern times, including technology and globalization.

In facing these challenges, pesantren need to continuously strive to preserve traditional values and local wisdom while paying attention to technological advancements and global demands. The integration of traditional educational methods with modern approaches must be done carefully to ensure pesantren remain relevant and capable of meeting the educational needs of the present times. Additionally, pesantren must also equip their students with knowledge and skills that can address the challenges of the era, such as digital literacy, foreign language skills, and an understanding of global dynamics.

Another challenge is how Islamic boarding schools (pesantrens) can maintain their identity as distinctive religious educational institutions while opening themselves to developments in science and technology. This requires genuine awareness and effort from the kyai (Islamic scholars) and all components of the pesantren to continually innovate and enhance the quality of education, in terms of curriculum, teaching methods, and the quality of human resources involved in the educational process. (Khoiriyah, 2019)

With the ability of Islamic boarding schools (pesantrens) to continuously adapt and innovate, they are expected to remain relevant and beneficial educational institutions for society and the nation, in line with the spirit of the pesantren's founding, which is always grounded in the interests of the community and religion.

The Importance of Leadership in Pesantren Management In facing the challenges and demands of the times, strong and visionary leadership is crucial in the management of pesantrens. According to Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, a prominent Islamic scholar and scientist, pesantren leadership must be capable of being adaptive, creative, and innovative in response to the evolution of the times and educational demands. Pesantrens need leaders who can understand and accommodate technological advancements and global demands without sidelining the principles and religious values that form the identity of the pesantren itself. Leadership in pesantren management also requires collaboration among kyais, teachers, and all components of the pesantren in decision-making and formulating policies relevant to educational developments and community needs. This aligns with the views of Azyumardi Azra, a historian and pesantren expert, who states that pesantren leadership should be democratic and participatory, involving all members of the pesantren in the decision-making process. (Maksum et al., 2020)

In the realm of education, particularly within the Islamic boarding school (pesantren) environment, the concept of educational management plays a crucial role in shaping and developing the academic and spiritual capacities of the students (santri). Educational management in pesantrens goes beyond mere administrative and curriculum management; it is a comprehensive approach that integrates spiritual values, traditions, and the needs of modern education. This

means that every aspect, from the arrangement of a curriculum that is synergistic with religious values to the management of human resources and infrastructure, must be managed with consideration for the uniqueness of the pesantren.

The implementation of educational management strategies in pesantrens does not solely focus on the intellectual development of the students (santri) but also on nurturing their character and spirituality. These strategies may include innovative teaching methods, which do not just emphasize academic skills but also encourage critical thinking, creativity, and religious values. This means that the learning process in pesantrens is not limited to the classroom but also involves extracurricular activities, group discussions, and religious activities, all designed to support the holistic growth of the students.

Furthermore, effective educational management in pesantrens can significantly impact the performance of educators. With good management, educators are provided with adequate support, resources, and training to enhance their teaching quality. The performance of educators and the quality of learning in pesantrens greatly depend on the extent to which the educational management system can provide an environment conducive to learning and professional growth. This includes continuous training for educators, the use of educational technology, and the development of a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of the students (santri) and the demands of the times.

Thus, educational management in pesantrens is about creating a balance between the maintenance of traditional values and adaptation to modern educational principles. It is about ensuring that pesantrens are not only places for religious knowledge but also institutions that shape the character and intelligence of the students (santri), preparing them not just for life in this world but also for their spiritual life. This holistic and integrated approach to educational management is key to achieving these objectives.

Pesantren, as a unique educational institution in Indonesia, holds a dual responsibility: not only to provide academic knowledge but also to nurture the spirituality and character of the students (santri). This demands a holistic approach to education, which integrates intellectual and spiritual aspects in a balanced manner.

This holistic approach does not solely focus on the delivery of knowledge from textbooks and academic materials but also on the development of morals, ethics, and religious values. In practice, this could mean integrating discussions of religious values and ethics into academic lessons, or applying teaching methods that allow students to apply their knowledge in real-life contexts, in line with spiritual values.

One example of a pesantren that has successfully integrated spiritual and academic education is Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo in Situbondo. This pesantren is known for its innovative approach in combining formal education with religious education. Here, students receive strong religious education while also following the national formal curriculum. Both aspects of education are not seen as separate entities, but rather as complementary components in the comprehensive development of the students.

At Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo, the balance between worldly knowledge and hereafter knowledge is pursued through various programs and activities. For example, teaching classical religious texts is conducted alongside teaching general subjects such as mathematics and science. Additionally, the pesantren offers extracurricular activities designed to enrich the students' spiritual experience, such as religious activities, group discussions, and social activities.

The success of Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo in integrating spiritual and academic education demonstrates that a holistic approach in pesantren education is not only possible but also highly effective in shaping individuals who are knowledgeable as well as virtuous. This shows that pesantrens have great potential to be comprehensive education centers, capable of preparing young generations to face the challenges of the modern world while still holding firmly to spiritual and moral values.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to investigate aspects of leadership and educational management in pesantrens, as well as their impact on the spiritual and academic development of students (santri). Utilizing a qualitative approach, this research examines the dynamics of leadership within the unique context of pesantrens, as well as how educational management practices are applied to support the holistic growth of students. (Patton, 2015)

A case study method was selected to enable in-depth analysis of leadership and educational management practices across various pesantrens. This involves a detailed examination of how pesantren leaders design and implement educational strategies that meet the academic needs of the students while nurturing their spiritual growth. (Yin, 2018)

In-depth interviews with pesantren managers, educators, and administrative staff will be conducted to gather their perspectives on educational management approaches and leadership practices. Participatory observation in the pesantrens under study will provide additional insights regarding daily interactions and decision-making within the educational context of pesantrens.

This research aims to provide useful recommendations for pesantren managers, educators, and policymakers in formulating effective and comprehensive educational strategies. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the existing literature on educational management and leadership within the context of traditional Islamic education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research confirm that at Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo, the leadership of the kiai plays a central and determinant role in decision-making. The kiai serves not only as a spiritual leader but also as the final decision-maker in various aspects of the pesantren's management and operations. Decisions made by the kiai are often regarded as the final affirmation, demonstrating the significant influence of the kiai within the pesantren's leadership structure.

This study also found that decision-making in this pesantren often involves meetings among department heads. Although the decisions produced in these forums are important, the findings indicate that these decisions are not always final. The kiai has the capacity to change or finalize decisions that come out of these forums, reaffirming their role as the supreme leader

Uniquely, in the leadership practice at Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo, the process of *istikharah* also becomes an important element in decision-making, especially in situations that require deep contemplation or when facing significant decisions. The use of *istikharah* indicates an integration between managerial decisions and Islamic spirituality, where the kiai seeks divine guidance to assist in making wise decisions.

The results of this study highlight how Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo successfully implements a unique educational management approach, combining traditional and modern principles. On one hand, the administrative management of the pesantren utilizes a well-structured system, showing adaptation to modern management methods. This includes the use of management information systems for administrative, financial, and academic tracking, as well as the application of standardized management processes for daily operations.

On the other hand, in terms of religious education, this pesantren remains faithful to a more flexible approach oriented towards the values and traditions of the pesantren. The religious curriculum and teaching methods in this pesantren are developed to reflect Islamic principles and the cultural heritage of the pesantren, with an emphasis on a more personal and spiritual learning experience. This includes the use of classic teaching methods such as *majelis ta'lim* and *halaqah*, as well as the study of classic books, which continue to be maintained as an essential component of the religious education program.

Furthermore, this study reveals that Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo strives to create a balance between the need to maintain traditional identity and the demands of providing education relevant to the contemporary context. This is reflected in the pesantren's efforts to integrate general lessons that align with the national curriculum, while still maintaining a primary focus on religious teaching and character building. This initiative demonstrates the pesantren's commitment to providing education that not only strengthens the religious foundation of the students but also prepares them to actively and effectively contribute to the broader society.

In terms of staff and educator development, Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo also applies managerial principles in training and professional development. This includes providing training for teachers to enhance their pedagogical competence, as well as developing managerial capacity to ensure effective pesantren management.

This study reveals that Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo has implemented a unique educational system, where religious education is given primary priority, while general education is considered a secondary component. Religious education, conducted through the *Madrasah Diniyah* program, is a

mandatory and primary element in the pesantren's curriculum. Participation in this program is highly prioritized, to the extent that prospective students and their parents must make an agreement affirming their commitment to religious education before the admission of new students. The pesantren's seriousness in prioritizing religious education is further emphasized by the requirement that students must graduate from the Basic Madrasah Diniyah to be eligible to take exams in formal education. Moreover, a student's success or failure in the Madrasah Diniyah program can directly impact their eligibility to participate in formal education exams.

On the other hand, Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo also offers general education that includes junior high school (SMP), vocational high school (SMK), to college level. Although this general education is not mandatory and considered secondary education, the institution provides opportunities for students to receive comprehensive formal education. This general education is conducted during the daytime, unlike the Madrasah Diniyah program which emphasizes more on religious and spiritual aspects.

These findings indicate a consistent effort from Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo to create a balance between spiritual and academic education. The curriculum designed in this pesantren ensures that students receive in-depth religious education, but also offers them opportunities to acquire formal education that can assist them in facing challenges in the modern world. The integration between these two aspects of education reflects the pesantren's commitment to shaping students' characters to be not only strong spiritually but also academically competent.

The findings of this research that highlight the central role of the kiai in decision-making at Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo provide important insights into the unique leadership dynamics in Indonesian pesantrens. As explained by (dhofier, 1980), the position of the kiai is not limited to that of a spiritual leader but also encompasses the role of the main decision-maker, combining spiritual and managerial authority. This role reflects a profound and multifaceted model of leadership, where the kiai becomes the central point in the organizational structure of the pesantren, similar to the figure of a leader in many Indonesian communal traditions.

The presence of a meeting forum among department heads in Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo indicates a form of collective participation in the decision-making process. This aligns with the study by (Geertz, 1960), which describes how consultation and collective discussion play an important role in the dynamics of power within traditional Javanese communities. This process illustrates the pesantren's tendency to involve various stakeholders in dialogue and deliberation, reflecting the principle of democracy in communal decision-making.

However, the finding that the kiai has the final authority in decision-making reaffirms the traditional leadership structure in pesantrens, where the kiai acts as the ultimate arbiter. This role is often seen as a reflection of the concept of leadership in Islam, where the kiai is respected not only for his extensive

knowledge of religion but also for his wisdom and ability to lead the community. As emphasized by (Rasmussen, 2011), the kiai in pesantrens is often regarded as a symbol of authority that is based not only on knowledge but also on personality and moral exemplariness.

In the context of Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo, the kiai as a leader who has the ability to influence and inspire students and other staff is key in maintaining the continuity and integrity of the institution. Decisions made by the kiai not only reflect practical judgment but are also guided by religious values and ethics, demonstrating how Islamic spirituality is translated into leadership practice. This study shows how the practice of istikharah in decision-making reflects the integration between management and spirituality, where the kiai seeks divine guidance in making significant decisions.

Overall, these findings reveal how leadership at Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo reflects a traditional pesantren leadership model that has evolved to meet contemporary demands and needs. This leadership model offers a unique perspective on how traditional and modern values can be integrated into leadership practices, providing valuable lessons in the context of Islamic education and organizational management..

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the role and evolution of pesantrens in the context of Indonesian education, with a specific focus on Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo. Employing a qualitative approach, this research investigates aspects of leadership, educational management, as well as the integration of religious and general education in pesantrens. Based on these findings, several conclusions can be drawn: Firstly, the Central Role of Kiai in Pesantren Leadership. This research confirms that in Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo, the kiai holds a central and determinant role in decision-making, unifying spiritual and managerial authority. The decision-making process involves a meeting forum among department heads, yet the kiai has the final authority in these decisions. This indicates adherence to traditional leadership structures while allowing for collective participation.

Secondly, A Unique Educational Management Approach. This pesantren has successfully implemented an educational management approach that combines traditional and modern principles. Structured administrative management demonstrates adaptation to modern management methods, while the religious education approach remains flexible and oriented towards traditional values. Thirdly, the Integration of Religious and General Education. Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo demonstrates a balance between religious education and general education. Religious education remains the primary priority, yet the pesantren also provides comprehensive general education, affirming the pesantren's commitment to preparing students to face challenges in the modern world. Fourthly, the Importance of Adaptive and Innovative Leadership. In the face of social and educational changes, adaptive, creative, and innovative leadership becomes critically important. Pesantren leaders must be capable of accommodating technological advancements and

global demands while maintaining religious principles and values.

This research provides valuable insights into the internal dynamics of pesantrens and their role in the Indonesian education system. These findings underscore the importance of pesantrens in shaping an educated, ethical, and future-ready younger generation, establishing pesantrens as a significant and relevant educational institution within the current and future context of Indonesian education.

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