

# Charismatic Kyai Leadership and Educational Management in Mahir Watusalam Pekalongan Islamic Boarding School

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**Abstract.** The uniqueness of the leadership style and management of Islamic Education in the development of the Mahir Watusalam Islamic Boarding School, Pekalongan Regency, Central Java, Indonesia is very interesting because of the charismatic influence of its leadership. This research aims to analyze the charismatic leadership of the Kiai in the management and development of Islamic education at the Mahir Islamic Boarding School. Descriptive research methodology with a qualitative approach and research location at the Mahir Watusalam Islamic Boarding School, Pekalongan Regency. Data collection techniques with interviews, documentation, and observation studies. The results of the research are the Kiai's leadership style which can build and develop the Mahir Islamic Boarding School; the leadership of the Kiai in motivating ustad, followers, sympathizers, and parents of students in attending education at Islamic boarding schools; the leadership function of the Kiai in providing direction to the ustad, santri and their followers to be able to participate in and develop the pesantren implementation program; the impact of the Kiai's leadership that can provide the implementation of pesantren education management. An important finding from this research is that to develop education in Islamic boarding schools in the modern era, a kiai must master in-depth knowledge and knowledge, both general and religious knowledge, and role model.

**Keywords:** Leadership; Charismatic Kyai; Educational Management.

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools are part of the community infrastructure which at the macro level has played a role in awakening the community to have ideals, intellectual abilities, and noble behavior (al-akhlaq al-Karima)(Purnomo, 2017)

The leadership of a figure is something that is "unique" because each leader has a different character and leadership style in leading and communicating with his followers so many theories are found about leadership. Each person's leadership style has an interesting characteristic, whether leadership for governmental, social-religious, or educational activities. Kiai's charismatic leadership is leadership that has received the gift of the Almighty. Leaders with charisma are considered to have supernatural abilities, which can motivate their followers to be willing to sacrifice for an idea and a leader's ideas. Charismatic leaders usually have many followers and extraordinary loyalty (Ansor, 2014).

Leadership is an activity to influence the behavior of others so that it can be directed to achieve certain goals (Thoha, 2015). The process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives

(Yukl & Gardner, 2015). Leadership is the process of influencing employees to work toward the achievement of objectives (Lussier, 2022). Jones and George Leadership is the process by which a person exerts influence over other people and inspires, motivates, and directs their activities to help achieve group or organizational goals.

Kiai is a term for someone who has qualified Islamic religious knowledge. Kiai is also known as ustad. The influence of Kiai's charisma is a force that can move his followers in a militant manner and can implement the hopes and goals that his followers believe can give them happiness in the future. Kiai's leadership has contributed a lot to the process of national independence and the development of education in Indonesia.

The Mahir Watusalam Islamic Boarding School, Pekalongan Regency, Central Java, Indonesia is unique, namely having a Kiai leader who has great charisma in the eyes of his followers and emphasizes the importance of Tawadhu', so he is known as Kiai Tawadhu. The form of management of Islamic boarding schools in addition to boarding school learning is also for students to attend formal education under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion, namely the MTS Mahir and MA Mahir Schools. There is also Madin (Madrasah Read the yellow book), and

lastly, there is the Implementation of an Open University in Collaboration with UT-UPBJJ Semarang, which had previously collaborated with the Nine Walisongo High School Jakarta.

The distinctive style of leading the education and development of the Mahir Islamic Boarding School is very interesting because of the influence of the charismatic leadership of a young Kiai who is usually called Kiai M. Ilyas Yusuf or popularly known as Kiai Yusuf. Kiai's charismatic leadership in a relatively short time can influence his followers to progress and develop according to the vision and mission desired by Kiai Yusuf. Since it was built in 2017 until now, the building of the Mahir Islamic Boarding School in the village of Watusalam has stood majestically. Buaran District, Pekalongan Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. Mahir currently has approx 350 students, with 70 teachers.

Management of pesantren in general is still handled traditionally and the education undertaken by pesantren is still limited to basic and secondary education regulations in the Ministry of Religion and Education and Culture curriculum. The management of the Mahir Islamic Boarding School has used modern national standards with the application of modern Islamic management science. In addition to using national education rules and policies, education is carried out using international standards by using three languages in the introduction of education, namely Indonesian, English, and Arabic. Kiai's guidance and direction in raising Islamic boarding schools can be a reference for other Islamic boarding schools to be able to develop toward internationalization as a response to the global community. The impression of being dirty, dirty, backward, and not up to date with the times surrounding the pesantren world will vanish if you see the development of the Mahir Islamic Boarding School.

Popularity and charisma do not guarantee that a kiai can build a pesantren. Many of the pesantren that have been built have not met the proper standards of life for the students, the environment is unhealthy, the quality of education is low and the management is still traditional. Kyai's leadership in leading the implementation of Islamic boarding schools at Mahir Islamic Boarding School is very interesting to study and study because of the uniqueness and strengths of a Kiai in transforming the vision and mission of his followers to achieve what goals he wants and hopes for. The kiai's charming

communication skills can influence his listeners and the kiai's managerial skills in developing and running a pesantren are very interesting to study. Kyai with extraordinary busyness can still build more advanced pesantren. This needs to be investigated to know the advantages and uniqueness of Kiai's leadership in building quality Islamic boarding schools.

Research studies with case studies on Kiai leadership above can be applied with three research design strategies namely exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. The conditions of the questions, the area of control studied and the focus on contemporary events make the single case study research strategy of research on Kiai's leadership interesting to research and develop.

This study aims to analyze: (1) the Kyai's leadership style that can build and develop the Mahir Islamic Boarding School; (2) the leadership of the Kiai in motivating the ustad, followers, sympathizers, parents of the students to attend education at Islamic boarding schools; (3) the leadership function of the Kiai in providing direction to the ustad, student, and their followers to be able to participate in and develop the pesantren implementation program; (4) the impact of the Kiai's leadership in providing management of pesantren education. The benefits of research as a study of the development of new theories about the charismatic leadership of the Kyai and management are packaged in modern education management at Islamic boarding schools so that Islamic boarding schools can compete and become superior in the realm of educational institutions in Indonesia.

## METHODS

This research is descriptive research with a qualitative approach, namely research to understand the behavior of individuals or groups, and social phenomena in natural conditions (natural), to obtain descriptive data (non-quantitative) in oral and or written forms, which are then interpreted descriptively (Hadisaputra, 2021).

The descriptive method aims to describe various real conditions in the research. Qualitative research describes the results of observations felt by researchers. The research location was at the Mahir Watusalam Islamic Boarding School, Pekalongan Regency. Collecting data using interview techniques, documentation, and observation studies. Research subjects: Caregivers and representatives

of the management and students of the Mahir Watusalam Islamic Boarding School, Pekalongan Regency. In research, according to Miles & Huberman (1992), data analysis takes place during data collection through a series of observations and interviews with research subjects to obtain credible answers (Kurniawaty et al., 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings and results in the study were summarized from the results of interviews, observations, and documents, then analyzed based on the research objectives, namely:

### **Kiai's leadership style can build and develop Mahir Islamic Boarding School**

The leadership of the Kiai in leading the pesantren is organized democratically by way of deliberation and views equal rights and the same position as supporting each other in carrying out the pesantren's mandate. The Kiai hands over the administration of the pesantren entirely to the managers who directly handle the pesantren, starting from the staff to the leaders at the Mahir Islamic Boarding School. Pesantren policies are based on the direction of the Kiai and every decision taken is consulted with the Kiai. Kiai always directs in making decisions by way of night prayer. Kiai's leadership is not authoritarian, he gives trust to the pesantren administrators, especially policies regarding Students. Specifically, policies regarding Islamic boarding schools must be based on the instructions of the Kiai based on deliberation.

The Kiai's charismatic leadership style lies in the Kiai's strength with high religious knowledge, and practicing what he says. The Kiai has great authority over the Teachers and Students, which is shown by carrying out Riyadh, daily religious practice consistently, and being a role model for the Teachers and Students. Kiai is not authoritarian and gives freedom to work to his subordinates and does not force his will, and guides his subordinates to work professionally. Kiai is open to deliberations and accepts criticism and suggestions from both the Teachers and their people.

Kiai's situational leadership by delegating the authority of the pesantren implementation program to the executors of the Teachers in the pesantren. Kiai provides full support to subordinates and is low on direction. Kiai has recruited personnel who are mature in their work.

Free control is given by the Kiai in carrying out the task, the Kiai only directs, monitors, and evaluates the work of the ansatz.

Kiai's leadership follows a democratic, charismatic, and situational style. The Kiai's style of leading has given his color to the Kiai in the modern world, where the Kiai used to be authoritarian and introverted. Kiai's charismatic radiance gives a special charm to his followers so that his listeners are very fond of him. Pesantren management can run well because of the maturity of the managers who are given the authority of the Kiai and can carry out their duties properly.

Empirical findings aligned with (Ushansyah, 2016) Islamic educational leadership has charisma or authority before humans or other people. (Suryana et al., 2021) charismatic leadership style in the development of Islamic boarding schools. (Makmun, 2014) Islamic boarding school education can shape the character of students. Islamic Education Management Ansor research on Kiai leadership in Islamic boarding schools. (Istikomah & Haryanto, 2021) Islamic education management is an activity to organize, implement, mobilize, and even synergize all Islamic education resources to achieve educational goals that have been set based on the rules and provisions of the Al Qur'an and Hadits

### **Kiai leadership in motivating ustad, followers, sympathizers, and parents of students in attending education at Islamic boarding schools**

The power of the Kiai's influence on the organization is based on the position of the Kiai as the founder of the Mahir Islamic Boarding School. The influence of the Kiai on the implementation of Islamic boarding schools as a Foundation Trustee. The formal legality of the Salafiyah Muhammad Abu Nawar (Yasalaman) Foundation through notary deed No. 04 dated November 5, 2014, and operational permits for the provision of formal education from Kemenag RI. The power to give administrators salaries (rewards) so that they have coercive power over the duties of teachers who can change behavior towards goals organization.

The influence of the Kiai is due to the expertise (expert) of the Kiai in mastering religious knowledge. Scholars of the Kiai are marked by the ability of the Kiai to master the yellow book, a graduate of the Al Asror Gunung Pati Islamic Boarding School in Semarang and Darul Aitam in Simbang Kulon Buaran

Pekalongan Central Java, a Masters in Mathematics Education at Unnes and a Lecturer. Kiai's communication skills in conveying religious messages have a strong influence and give people confidence in the truth of the concept. The expertise of the Kiai gives the color of the pesantren that the Kiai establishes to become a pesantren with the characteristics of a pesantren depending on the ability of the Kiai in the field of knowledge he controls.

The influence of Kiai's popularity can be seen in that every recitation will be flooded with a large number of listeners and give Recitation. The charisma of the Kiai is caused by the Kiai practicing what he says and practices. Kiai talks about alms, so Kiai also donates his wealth to the construction of the Mahir Islamic Boarding School. The popularity and charisma of the Kiai affect the number of students and donors, which increases rapidly and significantly every year. Kiai's charisma colors the culture of the pesantren to practice religion and care for others. Fostering a culture of praying for one another and helping those who are experiencing difficulties.

Empirical findings aligned from (Pramitha, 2020),(Scholtz, 2023), (Brook & Pedler, 2020) & (Day et al., 2021) about The process of organizational development is carried out by motivating and inspiring subordinate members to have high enthusiasm in developing Islamic boarding schools. Modern leadership in education management was researched by (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014),(and Antonakis et al., 2019). (Istikomah & Haryanto, 2021) leadership in Islamic Education which has the principles of Trustworthiness, fairness, deliberation, Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar.

**The function of the Kyai's leadership is to provide direction to the ustad, student, and their followers to be able to participate in and develop the program for implementing the pesantren**

Kiai's leadership function directs the study of the yellow book program through the program that has been implemented by the teachers in Islamic boarding schools. Mahir's study and study program at Islamic boarding schools includes memorizing the Qur'an, studying the yellow book, achieving academic achievements, and learning by example. Guidance of Kiai through direct meetings with caregiver teachers and through electronic media. Kiai built the pesantren starting from 2014 then in 2017 Kiai built the Mahir Islamic Boarding School in

Watusalam, and until now 2023 it is continuing to expand the development of development.

The cleric's example in worship can be witnessed directly in the daily life of the cleric, such as congregational prayers, dua prayers, evening prayers, fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, dressing modestly, giving alms, reciting and reciting the Koran, leading recitations and reciting the yellow book. Kiai apart from advocating alms but Kyai is also a charity player, his various incomes include giving lectures in various regions.

Kiai has a very broad outlook and considers many alternatives. Kiai tends to create many creative concepts. Decision-making is based on extensive religious knowledge from the Kiai and on deliberations with Teachers directly or through electronic media information. The Kiai leaves the decision to organize the yellow book recitation program in Islamic boarding schools to the implementing ustad, the Kiai only handles big and strategic matters for the development of the Islamic boarding school program.

Kiai solves the problem of pesantren funding and pesantren development programs. Kiai can manage and control problems both organizational problems and Teachers' problems so that program implementation goes well. The Kiai carries out guidance whenever he has time at the pesantren and home. The mentoring program is carried out according to the priority needs of the Teachers and students.

Empirical findings aligned with (Aditian et al., 2020) Kyai choose a democratic leadership pattern in leading modern Islamic boarding schools. This is caused by several factors related to the effectiveness of the development of Islamic boarding schools and the regeneration of the leadership relay. Research results (Taylor et al., 2019),(Errida & Lotfi, 2021),(Dinh et al., 2014) & (Zdaniuk & Bobocel, 2015) prove the success of organizational management and (Istikomah & Haryanto, 2021) Leadership is an important element in organizational activities. Charismatic leadership is a person's ability to influence other people or groups based on supernatural talent and attractive power.

**The impact of Kiai's leadership that can provide management of pesantren education**

The Kiai's leadership in directing the Memorize the Al-Qur'an al-Qur'an program and reciting the yellow book is going well in the pesantren. Good communication skills of the Kiai with a large number of alms donors for the

development of Islamic boarding schools. The Kiai's leadership has had a positive impact with many donors who are loyal and ready to sacrifice their wealth and lives so that quite a large number of programs carried out by the Kiai can be completed. Kiai builds pesantren along with its facilities and infrastructure as well as organizes education programs for Memorizing the Al-Qur'an Qur'an and reciting the yellow book. All of this has received the help and support of donors who have sacrificed for the progress of the Islamic Boarding School program. The land prepared by the Kiai is 5700 m and the buildings that have been built are the Mahir, MTS, MA, Read the yellow book Islamic Boarding Schools, and most recently for the Open University UPBJJ-UT Semarang. All 2-story buildings.

The pesantren development program can develop quickly because Kiai also allocates most of his income to the pesantren. This is a positive impact of public trust in efforts to develop the tahini and recitation Kiai programs. The Kiai has colored the identity of the pesantren according to the expertise of the Kiai.

Positive impact on the community around the pesantren and the development of advanced and quality modern pesantren. The negative impact of Kiai's leadership is to bring people who are opposite to attack and criticize the policies that have been carried out by the Kiai. The charisma, persona, and central role of the Kiai make the pesantren highly dependent on the existence of the Kiai and the efforts of the Kiai. The very central leadership of the Kiai also has an impact on the concern that the succession of the pesantren after the death of the Kiai does not have strong charisma and personality. Dependence on a central figure will result in the death of the Kiai and the continuity of the pesantren will also fade. Another negative impact was that it was difficult for the subordinates to correct Kiai's directives because they did not dare to propose opinions. This is indicated by the existence of several Kiai programs that cannot be carried out by administrators at the pesantren.

Empirical findings aligned with (Hallinger, 2013) who examined a conceptual framework for a systematic review of research in educational leadership and management, continued (Hallinger, 2014). (Szeto et al., 2015) results of educational leadership research in Hong Kong, 1995-2014 influenced by leadership development, leadership for learning, organizational change, and performance. Researching Educational leadership is very

influential in Education management. (Castillo & Hallinger, 2018) knowledge leadership and management education (EDLM) in Latin America. Research results (Errida & Lotfi, 2021), (Dantley M.E. & Tillman L.C., 2014), (Burgess & Dixon P, 2012) & (Purnomo, 2017) The determinants of successful organizational change management are the change manager's leadership, effective and consistent communication during change, stakeholder engagement, and employee motivation.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Kyai's leadership style fulfills the requirements of a democratic, charismatic, and situational leader with free control; the leadership of the Kiai in the Islamic Boarding School is determined by his strength as the founder, coach, the largest contributor of funds, director, recitation with IT, popularity, figure and scholarship of the Kiai to become an Icon of the Islamic boarding school in attracting the interest of especially the students and guardians of students and society in general; the leadership function of the Kiai is by their nature; the leadership of the Kiai who can provide education management for the Mahir Islamic boarding school in particular and society in general. An important finding from this research is that to develop education in Islamic boarding schools in the modern era, a kiai must master in-depth knowledge and knowledge, both general and religious knowledge, and role model.

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