

## The Leadership of the Kyai as a Conservative Instrument of the Islamic Boarding School (A Case Study at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo)

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### Abstract

This study explores the role of kyai leadership as a conservative force in preserving traditional values at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo. In the face of modernization and social change, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are confronted with significant challenges to the continuity of their cultural heritage and value systems. As both spiritual and organizational leaders, kyai play a central role in maintaining the ideological stability of the pesantren through their charismatic authority, moral exemplarity, and adaptive strategies in response to change. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research utilizes in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Thematic analysis is used to identify patterns of conservative kyai leadership and strategies for value preservation. The findings reveal that kyai internalize salafiyah values through religious rituals, the teaching of classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), modest lifestyles, and the selective integration of technology—without compromising the pesantren's identity. Kyai leadership influences not only the daily lives of the students (santri), but also the broader surrounding community. Max Weber's concept of charismatic leadership and the theory of social conservatism serve as the analytical framework for understanding this phenomenon. Kyai function as both guardians of tradition and adaptive agents who ensure the continuity of pesantren values amid a changing social landscape. This study fills a gap in the literature on pesantren conservatism and demonstrates that kyai leadership remains relevant and effective in confronting the pressures of modernity while upholding the cultural and spiritual integrity of the pesantren.

**Keywords:** Kyai leadership, pesantren conservatism, traditional values, charisma, modernization.

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji peran kepemimpinan kyai sebagai alat konservatif dalam menjaga nilai-nilai tradisional di Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo. Dalam konteks modernisasi dan perubahan sosial, pesantren menghadapi tantangan signifikan terhadap eksistensi budaya dan sistem nilainya. Kyai sebagai pemimpin spiritual dan organisatoris memainkan peran sentral dalam menjaga stabilitas ideologis pesantren melalui otoritas karismatik, keteladanan moral, serta strategi adaptif terhadap perubahan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi. Analisis tematik digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi pola kepemimpinan konservatif kyai dan strategi pelestarian nilai. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kyai menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai salafiyah melalui ritual keagamaan, pembelajaran kitab kuning, gaya hidup sederhana, serta integrasi teknologi secara selektif tanpa menghilangkan identitas pesantren. Kepemimpinan kyai tidak hanya memengaruhi kehidupan santri secara langsung, tetapi juga komunitas sosial sekitar. Konsep kepemimpinan karismatik Weber dan konservatisme sosial menjadi kerangka dalam memahami fenomena ini. Kyai berperan sebagai penjaga nilai dan adaptator yang mampu menjaga kesinambungan tradisi dalam lanskap sosial yang berubah. Penelitian ini mengisi celah dalam literatur mengenai konservatisme pesantren dan menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan kyai masih relevan dan efektif dalam menghadapi tekanan modernitas, sekaligus mempertahankan integritas kultural dan spiritual pesantren.

**Kata Kunci:** kepemimpinan kyai, konservatisme pesantren, nilai tradisional, karismatik, modernisasi.



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## Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) are traditional Islamic educational institutions that have long served as centers for the transmission of religious knowledge, values, and morality in Indonesia. Within the socio-cultural structure of the pesantren, the kyai occupies a central position as a spiritual, intellectual, and organizational leader.<sup>1</sup> The role of the kyai extends beyond religious instruction to include social control, character formation of the santri

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<sup>1</sup> Ferry Muhammadsyah Siregar, "RELIGIOUS LEADER AND CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP IN INDONESIA: THE ROLE OF KYAI IN PESANTREN IN JAVA," *Jurnal Kawistara* 3, no. 2 (August 17, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.22146/kawistara.3977>.

(students), and strategic decision-making in the daily life of the institution.<sup>2</sup> In the context of rapid modernization and social transformation, pesantren are increasingly challenged by shifts in cultural and value systems. Nevertheless, many pesantren continue to uphold their traditional and conservative values. This persistence is often attributed to the leadership of the kyai, who plays a decisive role in shaping the ideological and cultural direction of the institution.<sup>3</sup> This study aims to examine how kyai leadership functions as a conservative force in preserving the traditional values of the pesantren, with a particular focus on the case of Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo. Understanding this leadership dynamic is essential for gaining deeper insight into how pesantren navigate the pressures of change while maintaining their core identity.<sup>4</sup>

Previous studies have shown that the role of the kyai is multidimensional—encompassing duties as an educator, religious leader, community figure, and institutional manager.<sup>5</sup> Weberian theories of charismatic leadership are often used to explain the kyai's authority, which derives from their religious knowledge and moral integrity.<sup>6</sup> Other scholarly works also emphasize the kyai's role in reproducing traditional Islamic values and norms. Pesantren are frequently viewed as agents of cultural conservatism, where traditions are preserved and transmitted across generations. A seminal study by Dhofier highlights that the strength of the pesantren lies in the stability of values maintained through the kyai's authority.<sup>7</sup> However, in practice, this conservatism faces growing challenges from the influx of technology, the integration of national education systems, and the broader demands of modernization. The extent to which kyai are able to maintain their conservative role under such pressures is a critical question. Theories of social conservatism<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Nur Hidayati and Mamlukhah, "GAYA KEPEMIMPINAN KHARISMATIK KIAI DALAM MENGEMBANGKAN PONDOK PESANTREN AL-ISLAMI SUMBERMULYO PESANGGARAN BANYUWANGI," *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam Darussalam* 5, no. 2 (October 11, 2023): 155–71, <https://doi.org/10.30739/jmpid.v5i2.2553>.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Hariyadi, "KEPEMIMPINAN KARISMATIK KIAI DALAM MEMBANGUN BUDAYA ORGANISASI PESANTREN," *Equity In Education Journal* 2, no. 2 (October 20, 2020): 96–104, <https://doi.org/10.37304/eej.v2i2.1694>.

<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Afif Syafiudin et al., "The Kyai's Leadership in Efforts to Maintain the Boarding School Tradition," *SCHOOLAR: Social and Literature Study in Education* 3, no. 3 (2024).

<sup>5</sup> Ahmad Aditan Fiaidha, Suharfani Almaisaroh, and Fiddiniyah Qiflunah, "Kepemimpinan Kharismatik Kyai Dalam Pondok Pesantren Modern," *Al Yasini: Jurnal Keislaman, Sosial, Hukum Dan Pendidikan* 5, no. 1 (2020): 224–64.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Gane, "Max Weber as Social Theorist," *European Journal of Social Theory* 8, no. 2 (May 24, 2005): 211–26, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431005051764>.

<sup>7</sup> Hariyadi, "KEPEMIMPINAN KARISMATIK KIAI DALAM MEMBANGUN BUDAYA ORGANISASI PESANTREN."

<sup>8</sup> Kamilia Hamidah and Arif Chasannudin, "Mechanization of Islamic Moderation Da'wah in the Nahdlatul Ulama Pesantren Tradition," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 41, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 15–29, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v41.1.7134>.

nd transformational leadership<sup>9</sup> offer useful lenses through which to understand the strategies employed by kyai to preserve value stability while also adapting to change. This study seeks to contribute to the discourse by exploring how traditional leadership remains relevant in today's socio-religious context.

Although the existing literature extensively discusses kyai leadership in pesantren, most studies focus primarily on charisma and the development of Islamic education. Few specifically examine how kyai leadership operates as a conservative mechanism, particularly in response to modernization and changing social values. At Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo, kyai leadership appears to play a pivotal role in preserving traditional religious practices and value structures amid a constantly evolving environment. Yet, the specific mechanisms and strategies employed by the kyai to uphold these values remain unclear. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the conservative aspects of kyai leadership and investigating how kyai manage the internal dynamics of the pesantren to remain aligned with inherited values. Such an inquiry is crucial for understanding the resilience of pesantren as traditional Islamic educational institutions in today's shifting social landscape.

The primary objective of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of how kyai leadership functions as a conservative force in sustaining traditional values at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo. Specifically, the research aims to identify the characteristics of kyai leadership that are oriented toward conservatism, to explain the strategies and mechanisms employed in preserving pesantren values and traditions, and to examine the extent of this leadership's influence on the daily lives of santri and the educational system within the pesantren. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the challenges faced by the kyai in safeguarding the identity of the pesantren amid the pressures of modernization, as well as how they respond to these changes without compromising the institution's conservative essence.

By doing so, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of Islamic leadership studies and the management of traditional educational institutions, particularly within the context of local culture and social transformation. This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the social and cultural realities within Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo. Data collection strategies include in-depth interviews with the kyai, pesantren administrators, teachers, and senior santri, as well as direct observation of pesantren activities and analysis of relevant written documentation. The collected data is analyzed thematically to identify patterns of conservative kyai leadership and the strategies employed to preserve traditional values.

## Discussion

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<sup>9</sup> Murni Murni, "Model Kepemimpinan Transformasional Pendidikan," *Intelektualita* 7, no. 01 (2021).

### ***The Charismatic Leadership of the Kyai in Shaping Pesantren Culture***

The charismatic leadership demonstrated by the kyai at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo serves as a foundational element in the formation and reinforcement of pesantren culture. The kyai functions not merely as a formal or administrative leader, but more profoundly as a spiritual figure whose influence deeply shapes the behavior and attitudes of the santri (students). His daily conduct becomes the primary medium through which Islamic and moral values are instilled. To the santri, the kyai is not only a figure to be respected but also a model to be emulated in every aspect of life. His personal consistency in worship, simplicity in lifestyle, and steadfastness in principles form a strong moral foundation within the pesantren environment.

This form of leadership acts as the cultural compass and guiding force in the santri's lives. The kyai establishes a structured system of daily, weekly, and monthly routines based on Islamic values, including communal prayers, classical Islamic text (kitab kuning) study sessions, and collective recitations of wirid and dhikr. These routines are not merely religious activities; they serve as mechanisms for internalizing the pesantren's core values among the santri. As a result, a culture of discipline, commitment, and social piety is cultivated and consistently upheld in every aspect of santri life. According to several senior ustadz interviewed, these routines are seen not simply as rituals, but as essential tools for character and moral development.

Furthermore, the culture cultivated by the kyai also reflects values of simplicity and self-reliance. Direct observations reveal that all pesantren activities are guided by a principle of modest living, far removed from luxury and consumerism. The kyai actively teaches the importance of zuhud (asceticism) and qana'ah (contentment), and this is visibly embodied in his personal use of humble facilities despite holding full authority. This simplicity, in turn, shapes an egalitarian culture within the pesantren community, where santri learn to live humbly, yet meaningfully.

The kyai's charismatic leadership also plays a vital role in preserving the pesantren's traditional values. He continues to uphold the teaching of classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning) as a central part of the curriculum and encourages religious practices that have long been traditions in salafiyah pesantren. Even as technology and modern influences begin to penetrate the pesantren environment, the kyai skillfully adapts and integrates these elements without compromising the institution's core values. In this role, the kyai functions as both a guardian of tradition and a filter against external influences. Santri are taught to be open to new ideas, yet remain critical and grounded in their Islamic identity.

### ***The Implementation of Traditional Values in Pesantren Activities***

The implementation of traditional values at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo is clearly reflected in the daily life of the santri (students), which is deeply influenced by religious and social activities rooted in pesantren tradition. One of the most prominent expressions of this is the regular study of

classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), conducted not only at night but also in special *halaqah* (study circles) held at designated times. Foundational works such as *Tafsir Jalalain*, *Fathul Mu'in*, and *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* form the core curriculum. Under the direct guidance of the *kyai* or senior *ustadz*, *santri* are encouraged to delve deeply into these texts, fostering both intellectual development and reverence for the classical Islamic scholarly heritage as an integral part of *pesantren* identity.

In addition to the *kitab* study sessions, the five daily congregational prayers (*shalat berjamaah*) serve as the foundation of daily life in the *pesantren*. All *santri* are required to participate in prayers at the *pesantren* mosque, and attendance is monitored by the student discipline team (*musyrif*). The *kyai* emphasizes that discipline in performing communal prayers is a concrete form of instilling values such as obedience to Allah, humility, and the strengthening of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood) among *santri*. Frequently, the *kyai* delivers brief sermons before or after the prayers, offering moral guidance on topics like honesty, responsibility, and respect for teachers.

Collective *dhikr* (remembrance of God), held every Thursday night and on other specific occasions, represents another avenue for the internalization of the *pesantren's* spiritual values. These sessions are led by the *kyai* or senior *ustadz*, often accompanied by a solemn and calming rhythm. The purpose of these gatherings is not only to foster inner peace and love for Allah but also to cultivate deep spiritual habits in the *santri*. Group *dhikr* becomes a moment to reinforce emotional bonds among *santri* and strengthen the spiritual connection between them and the *kyai*. The reverent and ritualistic atmosphere creates a profound religious experience that shapes the collective identity of the *pesantren* community.

On a weekly basis, the *pesantren* also holds a public *pengajian* (Islamic lecture) every Saturday night, open to the surrounding community. These events serve as a strategic platform for the *kyai* to convey traditional Islamic values to a broader audience while fostering stronger ties between the *pesantren* and society. Core values such as humility (*tawadhu'*), caution in worldly matters (*wara'*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), and steadfastness (*istiqamah*) are often central themes. The *santri* involved in organizing these activities gain leadership skills, openness, and a sense of service. This gathering also functions as a form of cultural *dakwah* (Islamic outreach), reinforcing the *pesantren's* role as a moral center for the community.

Islamic holidays such as *Maulid Nabi*, *Isra' Mi'raj*, and *Nuzulul Qur'an* are utilized as both educational and spiritual events rich in traditional values. The *kyai* typically serves as the main speaker, delivering sermons that highlight historical Islamic wisdom while drawing relevant moral lessons for *santri* life. These events often involve *santri* in Islamic artistic performances like *qasidah* (devotional singing), *rebana* (traditional percussion), and religious dramas that depict stories of the Prophet or pious predecessors (*salaf*). Active participation

in these activities provides a space for religious expression and strengthens contextual and cultural understanding of Islamic values among the santri.

The kyai's role in all these activities is not merely symbolic but also practical and substantive. He provides direct guidance to the student leadership, designs the activity schedule, monitors implementation, and frequently leads the prayers or dhikr himself. This leadership approach underscores the kyai's commitment to merging authority with service. His active presence in every activity serves as a moral force, strengthening motivation and a sense of responsibility among the santri and staff alike.

Through these various activities, traditional pesantren values are not only taught theoretically but are actively lived and internalized in the everyday lives of the santri. The traditions inherited from earlier generations are not merely symbolic or ritualistic, but function as a system of habituation that shapes the character, mindset, and spirituality of the students. This makes Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo not only a place of academic excellence but also a center of moral and spiritual formation. The ongoing implementation of traditional values through diverse pesantren activities stands as strong evidence of the pesantren's enduring vitality as a value-based educational institution amidst the tides of modern change.

### ***The Strategic Role of the Kyai in Enhancing Educational Quality***

The strategic role of the kyai in enhancing the quality of education at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo is inextricably linked to his visionary leadership in integrating Islamic sciences with general knowledge. The kyai believes that to address the challenges of contemporary times, pesantren must embrace modernity without severing ties with its traditional roots. Consequently, in developing the curriculum, the kyai actively designs a learning roadmap that encompasses not only the study of classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning) and Qur'an memorization, but also subjects such as mathematics, English, science, and entrepreneurship. This integration is carried out systematically, ensuring that santri receive both spiritual enrichment and intellectual competencies relevant to societal needs.

The kyai also places significant emphasis on the quality of teachers and educational staff. He does not delegate the recruitment process entirely to the pesantren administrators; instead, he is directly involved in setting spiritual and moral criteria for prospective educators and in formulating clear competency standards. Periodically, he conducts special training sessions for ustadz and teachers to instill pesantren values, reinforce commitment to educational duties, and encourage pedagogical innovation. During these sessions, the kyai underscores the importance of being sincere, patient, and exemplary educators. This continuous guidance has fostered a harmonious and dedicated work environment, which in turn positively influences teachers' motivation and performance.

Regular evaluation of the teaching and learning process is also a key component of the kyai's strategy for ensuring educational quality. He does not

rely solely on reports from the school principal or pesantren administrators, but often conducts classroom visits, engages in dialogue with santri, and reviews their academic progress. The kyai holds quarterly evaluation meetings to monitor both academic and spiritual achievements of the students. In these meetings, he provides direct feedback on teaching methods, classroom management, and teacher-student communication. This approach cultivates a healthy culture of evaluation within the pesantren, promoting continuous improvement and a shared responsibility for educational excellence.

Beyond technical aspects, the kyai also plays a vital role in creating a supportive academic atmosphere and a vibrant learning culture. Through daily sermons, weekly lectures, and informal communication, he consistently motivates students to pursue knowledge diligently, to respect their teachers, and to never be complacent with what they have learned. He frequently cites verses from the Qur'an and Hadith that emphasize the virtue of seeking knowledge and the importance of beneficial learning. As a result, santri develop a deep awareness that studying is a form of worship, and that academic achievement must be grounded in sincere intentions. This spiritually charged learning environment encourages students to study not merely out of obligation, but from an intrinsic desire driven by faith.

The kyai's leadership influence on educational quality is further demonstrated by his ability to foster partnerships with various stakeholders. He actively opens avenues for collaboration with alumni, community leaders, and external institutions to enhance facilities, provide teacher training, and secure educational scholarships. In recent years, he has successfully initiated programs such as integrative curriculum training based on pesantren values and intensive mentoring for Qur'an memorization and literacy development among santri. These initiatives reflect not only the kyai's forward-thinking vision but also his strong managerial capacity to elevate the pesantren into a competitive and high-quality Islamic educational institution.

### ***The Influence of Kyai's Leadership on Santri Character Formation***

The leadership of the kyai at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo plays a profoundly influential role in shaping the character of the santri. The kyai serves not only as an authoritative figure in religious instruction but also as a moral and social role model, whose demeanor is consistently referenced by santri in their daily lives. His humility, discipline, and compassion are evident in both formal settings—such as majelis taklim—and informal interactions, including communal meals and nightly patrols. The kyai's simple lifestyle, regular devotion to worship, and steadfast adherence to Islamic principles provide a daily source of inspiration, subtly shaping the santri into individuals who are disciplined and responsible.

The kyai's presence as the central figure of the pesantren also has a strong psychological impact on the students. Santri perceive him as a second parent—not only nurturing them intellectually and physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. As such, when the kyai offers advice or reprimand, it



is received not as punishment but as an act of affection and concern. This relationship nurtures a heightened moral awareness among santri, fostering traits such as honesty, resilience, and loyalty to the pesantren's values. The bond between kyai and santri, grounded in sincerity and love, makes character development within the pesantren both natural and effective.

Discipline is one of the most visible indicators of the kyai's success in character formation. The santri are trained to lead highly structured daily lives, beginning with the pre-dawn tahajjud prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and continuing through to formal classroom learning. These activities are supervised directly by the kyai or through a system he has established. When disciplinary issues arise, the kyai generally avoids harsh punishment in favor of spiritual advice and personal guidance. This approach fosters a culture of discipline rooted not in fear, but in awareness and mutual respect. In this way, santri learn to be accountable for their actions and decisions.

The development of responsibility is another central focus of the kyai's leadership. Santri are entrusted with various duties such as maintaining the cleanliness of their dormitories, organizing duty rosters, caring for prayer equipment, and serving as event committee members for major pesantren programs such as Maulid Nabi or Haflah Akhirussanah. The kyai consistently emphasizes that responsibility is a form of worship valued by God. He often teaches that leadership begins with a sincere commitment to fulfilling even the smallest of duties. Consequently, santri not only become spiritually devout but also develop strong social skills and a high sense of accountability.

The kyai also plays a pivotal role in cultivating social awareness among the santri. Through regular sermons and lessons, he emphasizes the importance of helping others, respecting differences, and participating in religious community service. On several occasions, the kyai personally invites santri to join social outreach activities, such as charity drives, distributing basic necessities, or visiting bereaved families in the local community. These experiences provide santri with firsthand lessons in empathy and communal cooperation. The kyai teaches that knowledge is incomplete unless it is applied in service to society. Thus, his leadership fosters a holistic integration of spirituality, intellectual growth, and social responsibility.

Lastly, the kyai instills a spirit of moderation and openness to diversity—an essential legacy of his leadership. Although the pesantren adheres to a salafiyah orientation, the kyai emphasizes the importance of tolerance and respectful dialogue across differing perspectives. In learning sessions and discussions, santri are encouraged to explore various schools of thought and to avoid blind fanaticism. The kyai frequently shares stories of classical scholars who exemplified broad-mindedness and inclusive attitudes. This nurtures santri to become individuals who are both steadfast in their beliefs and wise in their dealings with difference. Such character traits are vital for shaping a generation of Muslims capable of engaging with the wider world in a civil and respectful manner.

### ***The Leadership Model of Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo and Its Contribution to the Pesantren Landscape***

The charismatic leadership of the kyai at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo constitutes a fundamental pillar in the formation of a strong pesantren culture. The kyai is not merely an administrative figure but also a spiritual leader whose influence significantly shapes the attitudes and behavior of the santri. His daily example—marked by consistent devotion, simplicity of life, and unwavering principles—provides a moral compass that fosters holistic character development among students. This aligns with Max Weber's concept of charismatic leadership, wherein a leader gains legitimacy through exceptional personal qualities and emotional resonance with followers.

Structured religious routines—such as congregational prayers, classical Islamic text studies (*pengajian kitab*), *wirid*, and group *dzikir*—serve not only as religious rituals but also as mechanisms for internalizing pesantren values, cultivating discipline and spiritual commitment. According to Zuhriy, the unique cultural elements of pesantren, including the kyai, santri, mosque, dormitory, and traditional texts (*kitab kuning*), form a resilient subculture capable of preserving its identity amidst the pressures of modernization and globalization.<sup>10</sup> The kyai also promotes a culture of simplicity and self-reliance, reflected in a pesantren lifestyle that is deliberately distanced from luxury. This simplicity nurtures an egalitarian ethos and a spirit of gratitude within the community, grounded in the Islamic principles of *zuhud* (asceticism) and *qana'ah* (contentment). Hasyim underscores the importance of simplicity as a foundational value for building harmonious and resilient pesantren communities.<sup>11</sup>

In preserving traditional values, the kyai plays a dual role as both guardian of tradition and adapter to modernity. The study of classical texts (*kitab kuning*) remains central to the learning process, yet the kyai has successfully integrated modern technology without compromising the pesantren's identity. Mukhlisin et al. affirm that modern pesantren can adopt technology while maintaining their traditional Islamic ethos.<sup>12</sup> The kyai's influence also extends into the broader community. Beyond his role as religious leader within the pesantren, he actively engages in resolving social issues and serves as a moral authority in the surrounding society. This reinforces his status as a charismatic figure whose leadership transcends institutional boundaries.

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<sup>10</sup> M. Syaifuddin Zuhriy, "BUDAYA PESANTREN DAN PENDIDIKAN KARAKTER PADA PONDOK PESANTREN SALAF," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 19, no. 2 (December 6, 2011): 287–310, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.19.2.159>.

<sup>11</sup> Muhammad Hasyim, "Pengembangan Keilmuan Dengan Teknologi Informasi Di Pesantren Salaf," *Journal of Education and Religious Studies* 3, no. 02 (August 5, 2023): 37–46, <https://doi.org/10.57060/jers.v3i02.100>.

<sup>12</sup> Mukhlisin Mukhlisin et al., "URGENSI LITERASI DIGITAL BAGI SANTRI MILENIAL DI PONDOK PESANTREN RAHMATUTTHOYIBAH AL IFLAHAH GUNUNG KALER TANGERANG," *Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat (JPKM) - Aphelion* 1, no. 2 (February 26, 2021): 208, <https://doi.org/10.32493/jpka.v1i2.9672>.

Basri highlights the function of the kyai as both a social mediator and moral guide within the pesantren and the community at large.<sup>13</sup> The emotional and moral connection between the kyai and santri is a crucial element in fostering loyalty and adherence. Santri show deep respect not out of coercion, but through genuine admiration for the kyai's exemplary conduct. Major decisions in the lives of santri are often made in consultation with the kyai, who is regarded as the moral and intellectual authority. Chandra reinforces this point, noting that leadership based on example and emotional bonds creates strong cohesion within the pesantren community.<sup>14</sup>

The implementation of traditional pesantren values—such as collective prayer and classical text studies—at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an functions not merely as ritual practice, but as a system of habitual formation that shapes both character and spiritual depth. Hasanah emphasizes that such habituation is an effective means of preserving and transmitting classical Islamic values within the pesantren environment.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the kyai's role in enhancing educational quality is strategically vital. He not only formulates a curriculum that integrates Islamic sciences with general knowledge, but also engages in the development of teaching staff and the direct evaluation of the learning process. Hasanah et al. demonstrate that kyai leadership significantly contributes to the improvement of educational quality in pesantren through teacher capacity-building and the implementation of continuous assessment systems.<sup>16</sup>

The leadership of the kyai plays a crucial role in shaping the character of santri, particularly in fostering discipline, responsibility, and social awareness. Through personal example and a compassionate approach, the kyai cultivates a relational dynamic that supports the moral and social development of the students. This study affirms that leadership grounded in affection and exemplary behavior is effective in nurturing positive character traits among the younger generation in pesantren. The kyai also promotes moderation and tolerance, especially in the context of differing schools of Islamic thought (mazhab). Although rooted in a salafiyah tradition, the kyai encourages dialogue and

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<sup>13</sup> Hasan Basri, Hilman Rizky Hasibuan, and Zaizul Ab Rahman, "Transformational Leadership of Pesantren as a Role Model for Contemporary Islamic Education Institutions," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Educational Management* 7, no. 1 (May 3, 2024): 1, <https://doi.org/10.24014/ijiem.v7i1.25856>.

<sup>14</sup> Pasmah Chandra, Nelly Marhayati, and Wahyu Wahyu, "Pendidikan Karakter Religius Dan Toleransi Pada Santri Pondok Pesantren Al Hasanah Bengkulu," *Al-Tadzkiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 1 (2020): 111–32.

<sup>15</sup> Atin Hasanah, "Sejarah Pendidikan Pesantren," *Al-Idaroh: Jurnal Studi Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (March 17, 2022): 48–64, <https://doi.org/10.54437/alidaroh.v6i1.374>.

<sup>16</sup> Riskiyah Hasanah et al., "Integrating Situational Leadership and Traditional Values: Enhancing Student Discipline in Islamic Boarding Schools Through Holistic Training Programs," *Communautaire: Journal of Community Service* 3, no. 2 (August 28, 2024): 138–51, <https://doi.org/10.61987/communautaire.v3i2.463>.

inclusive understanding—key assets for santri as they engage with a socially pluralistic world.

Kyai leadership within the pesantren environment represents a distinctive phenomenon that simultaneously integrates spiritual, social, and cultural authority. The kyai functions not only as a religious educator but also as a symbolic authority who shapes the normative values and traditions of the pesantren. According to Siregar, the kyai's position as an informal leader is deeply entrenched, largely due to sustained communication and interaction with both the santri and the surrounding community.<sup>17</sup> The charisma of a kyai does not merely stem from lineage or formal title but is derived from the depth of faith, moral integrity, and consistent embodiment of Islamic values. This charismatic dimension serves as a vital instrument for maintaining the continuity of pesantren's traditional values.

A study by Hidayati and Mamlukhah reveals that the kyai at Pondok Pesantren Al-Islami Sumbermulyo exhibits a leadership style marked by forward-looking vision, effective communication, and steadfastness in pesantren management principles.<sup>18</sup> Such leadership enables the kyai to consistently actualize pesantren values and transmit them to future generations of santri. These findings are further supported by Hariyadi, who emphasizes that kyai leadership shapes the organizational culture of pesantren through a systematic rhythm of daily, weekly, and monthly activities—thereby forming student character within the framework of Islamic values.<sup>19</sup>

Charismatic leadership exercised by the kyai also plays a pivotal role in shaping an organizational culture within pesantren that is adaptive to contemporary changes. Furqon highlights the example of Kiai Ali Rohbini at Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum, who successfully integrates traditional Islamic values with modern innovations such as entrepreneurship and information technology.<sup>20</sup> his integrative approach fosters a pesantren culture that not only preserves its traditional essence but is also responsive to the evolving needs of modern society. Such leadership illustrates that the kyai's charisma can act as a catalyst for positive transformation within the organizational structure and culture of pesantren.

In the context of salafiyah pesantren, the charismatic leadership of the kyai plays a central role in safeguarding traditional values. Amarullah et al., in

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<sup>17</sup> Siregar, "RELIGIOUS LEADER AND CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP IN INDONESIA:THE ROLE OF KYAI IN PESANTREN IN JAVA."

<sup>18</sup> Hidayati and Mamlukhah, "GAYA KEPEMIMPINAN KHARISMATIK KIAI DALAM MENGEMBANGKAN PONDOK PESANTREN AL-ISLAMI SUMBERMULYO PESANGGARAN BANYUWANGI."

<sup>19</sup> Hariyadi, "KEPEMIMPINAN KARISMATIK KIAI DALAM MEMBANGUN BUDAYA ORGANISASI PESANTREN."

<sup>20</sup> Mufasirul Furqon, "KEPEMIMPINAN KARISMATIK KIAI ALI ROHBINI DALAM MEMBANGUN BUDAYA ORGANISASI DI PONDOK PESANTREN BUSTANUL ULUM PEKAUMAN GRUJUGAN BONDOWOSO," *Jurnal Syaikh Mudo Madlawan: Kajian Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 1, no. 2 (2024): 62–70.

their study at Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Al-Jawahir, found that kyai utilize routine religious activities such as classical Islamic text study (pengajian kitab kuning), congregational prayers, and Islamic holiday commemorations to instill pesantren values in their students.<sup>21</sup> The organizational culture emerging from these practices reflects the kyai's commitment to preserving pesantren traditions amidst the constantly shifting landscape of social change.

Moreover, charismatic leadership of kyai contributes significantly to the implementation of pesantren's educational values in the modern era. Hendrayadi emphasizes that the kyai possesses idealized influence encompassing envisioning, energizing, and enabling functions in guiding santri.<sup>22</sup> Through this leadership model, the kyai transcends the role of a mere spiritual figure to become a transformative leader who inspires and motivates students to internalize pesantren values in daily life. Charismatic kyai leadership also plays a role in the development of quality management systems within pesantren. Srianahayu, in her study at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Hidayah, demonstrates that kyai with charismatic and visionary leadership styles are capable of articulating a clear organizational vision, mobilizing resources, and conducting performance evaluations to improve educational quality.<sup>23</sup> This suggests that the charisma of a kyai can be translated into effective managerial practices in the context of Islamic education.

Leadership of kyai within the pesantren environment extends beyond spiritual and symbolic dimensions, encompassing significant managerial roles in improving educational quality. Suhendar et al. demonstrate in their research that the quality of kyai leadership has a direct impact on pesantren culture and teacher motivation, which in turn influences the overall quality of education.<sup>24</sup> This underscores the strategic role of the kyai in managing human resources and educational institutions rooted in Islamic values, as well as in driving internal educational policy decisions. Furthermore, kyai leadership contributes to shaping an inclusive and moderate religious character within the pesantren. Fajar highlights the kyai as a central figure in promoting values of religious moderation, tolerance, and openness.<sup>25</sup> The kyai is not merely a teacher or

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<sup>21</sup> Muhamad Matin Shopwan Amarullah, Mulyani, and Ari Prayoga, "Kepemimpinan Karismatik Kiai Dalam Membangun Budaya Organisasi Di Pesantren Salafiyah," *Dirasah: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 2 (August 8, 2020): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.29062/dirasah.v3i2.122>.

<sup>22</sup> Hendrayadi Hendrayadi, "Kepemimpinan Kharismatik Kiai Dalam Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Pesantren," *Journal Of Science And Social Research* 6, no. 3 (2023): 620–31.

<sup>23</sup> Ana Dwi Srianahayu, "Kepemimpinan Karismatik Dan Visioner Kyai Dalam Pengembangan Manajemen Mutu Pesantren," *Al-Fikri: Jurnal Studi Dan Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 1 (n.d.): 21–32.

<sup>24</sup> Suhendar Suhendar, Soedjarwo Soedjarwo, and Ismet Basuki, "Analisis Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Kyai, Budaya Pesantren, Dan Motivasi Kerja Guru Terhadap Mutu Pendidikan Pesantren Di Provinsi Banten," *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan* 34, no. 2 (2017): 161–72.

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad Sahal Malik Fajar, "KYAI'S LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN PESANTREN-BASED UNIVERSITIES: A

spiritual leader, but also a facilitator of inter-perspective dialogue and an architect of a learning environment that upholds diversity. This role is essential in maintaining a balance between the conservative values of tradition and an openness to difference.

In the context of salaf pesantren, kyai leadership is deeply rooted in spiritual authority. Hernawati et al. examine the charismatic spiritual leadership model of Kyai Subhan Makmun at Pondok Pesantren Assalafiyah, revealing that such leadership has a significant influence on educational policy and institutional development strategies.<sup>26</sup> Grounded in piety and simplicity, this model of leadership serves as a moral exemplar for both students and the surrounding community, thereby reinforcing the traditional educational mission of the pesantren. Additionally, kyai leadership plays a vital role in fostering religious moderation within pesantren settings. Hafsaawati and A'yun emphasize that the kyai contributes in multiple capacities: as a role model advocating moderation, tolerance, and inclusivity; as a religious facilitator providing interpretive guidance that encourages interfaith understanding; and as an architect of a conducive learning environment where diverse perspectives are respected and dialogue is encouraged.<sup>27</sup> This multifaceted role is crucial for balancing the preservation of traditional religious values with openness to socio-religious diversity.

## Conclusion

The charismatic leadership of the kyai at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an Banjarrejo not only embodies the traditional strength of the pesantren but also opens up space for innovation within the leadership paradigm of Islamic education that is grounded in spiritual values, transformational approaches, and adaptability to contemporary developments. This finding affirms the need to reinterpret the role of the kyai as a strategic actor who not only preserves salafiyah values but also acts as a social innovator, transformative educator, and agent of moderation in facing global social dynamics. Future models of pesantren leadership should integrate moral-emotional exemplarity with managerial competence and digital literacy, ensuring that pesantren remain relevant and resilient amid the challenges of the modern era without losing their spiritual and cultural roots.

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<sup>26</sup> Sari Hernawati, Khoirun Nofik, and Muhammad Hafizh, "The Paradigm of Salaf Pesantren: The Concept of Charismatic Spiritual Leadership of Kyai at Assalafiyah Pesantren," *Edukasia Islamika* 9, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 97–111, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jei.v9i1.7276>.

<sup>27</sup> Nuning Himami Hafsaawati and Qurroti A'yun, "Moderasi Pesantren (Studi Kasus Pondok Pesantren Miftahul Jannah Randuagung Lumajang)," *Risalatuna Journal of Pesantren Studies* 3, no. 2 (2023): 181–96.

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