



## Kiai's Collective Leadership in Maintaining the Existence of Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School, Kediri, East Java, Indonesia

M. Munir<sup>1</sup>, Imam Fu'adi<sup>2</sup>, Nur Efendi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Postgraduate at UIN Ali Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung

### ABSTRACT

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This research focuses on the collective leadership of kiai at Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School in Kediri, with a particular emphasis on the role of the Board of Trustees and Welfare (BPK-P2L). The BPK-P2L, known as the Islamic Boarding School Development and Welfare Body, acts as the highest decision-making forum, ensuring policies align with the school's mission and values. This qualitative study employs a case study approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, with data analysis following the Croswell model. Findings reveal that collective kiai leadership, initiated by the *dzuriah*, aims to unite families and prevent miscommunication. The BPK-P2L, comprising representatives from previous caretakers, plays a crucial role in determining school care, maintaining its existence, and supporting the principal. The implication of collective kiai leadership is evident in actively contributing to the school's care and development while preserving the founders' noble values.

### KEYWORDS:

Collective Leadership, Leadership, Existence of Islamic Boarding School

### A. INTRODUCTION

*Pondok pesantren*, a long-established Islamic educational institution in our country, actively plays a role in educating society and the future generation to have sufficient religious knowledge as a fundamental foundation for developing students' abilities. The institution has proven its role in instilling Islamic teachings, starting from cultivating good morals in students to guiding them on how to apply their knowledge in society. Managed by a patient and dedicated kiai, pondok pesantren conducts the tarbiyah process for students seeking knowledge through various methods tailored to the kiai's capabilities and background. Typically, the caretaker of the pesantren serves as the sole leader in organizing and managing it, with the kiai's policies being the sole reference. Kiai, often also serving as a religious leader, traditionally hails from an influential family, and scholars and kiai act as unifying factors in the social order of the community. According to Horikoshi's observations in West Java, the utilization of the kiai's role is highly significant in rural communities (Ziemek, 1986).

*Corresponding Author: M. Munir*

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In the 1980s and 1990s, many pesantrens and madrasahs under pesantren auspices thrived within society. The community had high hopes for education provided by these pesantrens, expecting their children to learn, understand, and deeply embrace religion under the guidance of the kiai (spiritual leaders) of the pesantren who served as their role models. Numerous pesantrens prepared the next generation of kiai leaders from an early age, ensuring that their successors were well-equipped with knowledge and various skills comparable to the esteemed kiai. On the other hand, some kiai, though lacking a formal leadership succession process, were called by a higher power, leading to successors unprepared for the responsibility of leading a pesantren. Additionally, certain students pursuing knowledge believed in learning from kiai with perceived perfect abilities, and upon the demise of such revered figures, these students often departed the pesantren, driven by the influence of the kiai as a role model rather than the educational institution itself (Ziemek, 1986).

Inadequate leadership succession processes in pesantrens may lead to changes and policy decisions that deviate from the established practices of their predecessors. Such leaders, lacking sufficient information from their predecessors, may face opposition and support from both the kiai's family members and the successors involved in the educational process within the pesantren. These

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circumstances, compounded by conflicts among pesantren successors regarding pesantren policies, educational policies, and other matters, can potentially result in division among them (Majid, 1997).

*Santri* who have studied under a charismatic Kiai from the beginning, considering the kiai as their role model, may leave the pesantren when the influential figure is no longer present. This situation is exacerbated by rumors of conflicts within the pesantren, causing discomfort among the students. Many face internal struggles before deciding to leave, taking into account various considerations and emotional turmoil. This scenario is common in pesantrens where the kiai plays a central role due to their strong charisma, influencing all aspects and policies. Currently, only a few pesantrens sustain the central leadership model of a kiai, while others adapt to societal needs by establishing formal educational institutions such as junior high schools, senior high schools, and vocational schools. Some pesantrens hope that formal institutions will maintain the quantity of students through the circulation of entrants and graduates.

Parents, on the other hand, expect their children to gain both religious knowledge and academic discipline in formal education, enabling them to pursue further studies or secure jobs. The activities in a pesantren are often influenced by the kiai's role, requiring collaboration with the organizational management to facilitate various operations. Furthermore, many pesantrens establish businesses to generate additional operational funds, consolidate alumni networks, and serve as promotional platforms. Kiai, as leaders, are essential, but their effectiveness relies on collaboration with their subordinates. Effective leadership integrates task-oriented and human-relations-oriented approaches, fostering cooperation and maintaining a conducive organizational climate (Marno & Supriyatno, 2008).

Leadership in a pesantren is a crucial factor in achieving its goals. According to Mastuhu, pesantren leadership is defined as the art of utilizing the resources (facilities and human resources) of the pesantren to achieve its objectives. The most prominent manifestation of this art lies in mobilizing and directing the elements within the pesantren to act in accordance with the leader's intentions, all in pursuit of the pesantren's goals (Mastuhu, 1999)

The research reveals an intriguing phenomenon within pesantren families, where the Islamic Boarding School Development and Welfare Body (BPK) serves as the highest forum determining policies for Hidayatul Muhtadiin Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School and Madrasah. The BPK, representing each Bani K.H. Abdul Karim, ensures the cohesion and management of Islamic boarding schools with over 30,000 students, preventing family issues and aligning with the policies of pesantren successors. The pesantren's independent nature allows it to innovate and stay relevant in education, provided it is professionally managed. In line with this, Vroom suggests that individual success, termed as

performance level, is crucial, emphasizing productivity. The study chooses Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo Kediri as a case study to understand its management model for present and future applications.

### B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Collective leadership is a collaborative organizational system where individuals mutually influence each other through contributions, participation, ideas, and experiences for systemic goals. It involves leadership, education, and caregiving efforts within a team system, based on proximity and professional capabilities. The collective leadership aims to achieve organizational objectives more effectively and participatively. The source of authority for collective leadership encompasses various aspects, including the ability to coerce, reward, formal legitimacy, psychological influence, professional expertise, and charisma. (Atiqullah, 2013)

Collective leadership is a behavior and characteristic of leaders that involves engaging the entire staff and systematically allocating all tasks based on each unit's functional responsibilities. In this approach, no individual, staff member, department, or leader at a lower level feels uninvolved or idle. Instead, all units within the structure work collaboratively and equally based on their authority, responsibilities, and tasks through a jointly established organizational structure. They collaborate and share responsibility within a collectively oriented leadership structure. The institution is jointly controlled through a leadership council, similar to a corporate board, comprising a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and section leaders (Majid, 1997).

Factors influencing collective leadership in the context of management include the leadership capacity of an individual, such as personality, level of education, experience, climate and culture, as well as the situations surrounding the leader. In Islamic nomenclature, external strengths such as *isti'râd*, *mâ'unah*, *kâromah*, and *mukjizât* often become specific factors in leadership. *Ghirah* can be analogized as the enthusiasm in a leader through heroism, involving "igniting great desires," self-awareness in "organizing one's own life," ingenuity in "the whole world will be our home," and compassion "with a greater love than fear" (Anwar, 2021)

The study of leadership in Islamic boarding schools cannot be separated from the need for an understanding of the substance of education developed in these institutions, namely Islamic religious education (Neliwati, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to convey an understanding of the substance of education developed in Islamic boarding schools. The characteristics of Islamic religious education, as identified by Wahid, are as follows:

Firstly, Islamic religious education fundamentally aims not to impart a particular religious ideology or pattern to

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students but emphasizes the process of enabling them to acquire methodological skills to understand the fundamental messages conveyed by religion.

Secondly, religious education is not excessively tied to romanticizing the past with emotional attachment but is directed towards forming projective thinking skills in responding to life's challenges.

Thirdly, instructional materials in religious education should be integrated with the cultivation of social awareness. Through this, students will be trained to perceive reality based on theological understanding developed from emancipatory insights in the implementation of religious education, providing them the opportunity to participate in developing methodological skills in studying the substance or material of religion.

Fourthly, religious education should be directed towards instilling emotional religious devotion, good behavioral habits, and commendable attitudes within the family, school, and community environments. This ensures that students have the ability to use religion as a meaning system to define every situation from the perspective of their faith and knowledge (Wahid, 1985).

A person's skill in planning, organizing and moving or mobilizing existing forces has never been used as the first alternative in leading an Islamic boarding school. On the contrary, the consideration that is put forward is piety. According to Clifford Geertz. There are generally several types of Kiai leadership in Islamic boarding schools, including (Geertz, 1981, 160-162):

### a. Individual leadership

The pattern of individual leadership is still prevalent among Islamic scholars (Kiai) in pesantren, creating the impression that the pesantren is the personal property of the Kiai. This condition has repercussions as it closes the door for external individuals to participate and contribute by proposing various constructive and strategic ideas for the future development of the pesantren. Unfortunately, many positive proposals are met with negative responses in this context.

### b. Collective leadership of the foundation

Many instances of individual leadership have led to the closure of pesantren due to the lack of successor cadres capable of continuing their father's leadership. There is a yearning in the community to restore pesantren as a place of knowledge acquisition and even a center for scholarly studies. A shift towards collective leadership within the foundation is seen as a strategic solution because the responsibilities of the Kiai become lighter when handled collectively according to their respective tasks. Additionally, the Kiai does not bear the moral burden regarding the continuity after his leadership.

### c. Democratic leadership

The shift from an individual leadership pattern to a collective foundation brings about significant changes. These changes involve the authority of the Kiai and the participation

of teachers (ustadh) and students (*santri*). The new atmosphere strengthens the involvement of teachers and leads to the emergence of a democratic system in pesantren, although the issues involved are not simple. The social relationship between the Kiai and the *santri* is built on a foundation of trust. Obedience in dealing with the Kiai is always expressed with caution, diligence, and respect. However, sometimes the students' respect for their Kiai is considered excessive in the context of the teaching-learning interaction, leading to the loss of their critical thinking, especially when dealing with the Kiai. The students' approach to the Kiai is driven by the expectation of receiving grace, as understood from Sufi concepts. Their efforts to relate to the Kiai are always expressed with caution, diligence, and respect, although sometimes this respect is seen as excessive in the context of the teaching-learning interaction, resulting in the students losing their critical thinking, especially when dealing with the Kiai.

Considering the characteristics of religious education as the substantive function of pesantren education, as mentioned above, leadership in the Islamic boarding school is more likely to be approached with the concept of charismatic leadership. In Conger's view, charismatic leadership emphasizes a leader's self-authority, demonstrated by a high sense of responsibility to subordinates. The sensitivity and closeness of a charismatic leader to their subordinates arise from the leader's personal authority (personal power) to instill trust and proactive attitudes in their subordinates (Mahfudz, 2020, 93-94)

According to Wahjosumidjo, the charisma of a kiai's leadership is related to the extent of the kiai's mastery of religious studies and the consistency of practicing religious knowledge in the kiai's daily life. Assuming charisma can be equated with the 'power' of the kiai, charismatic leadership of the kiai can also be analyzed through the concept of a source of authority. Based on this approach, successful leadership is more influenced by a person's authoritative excellence in leading an organization, leading to a two-way communication process between superiors and subordinates. The leader's authority is also related to its main scope, namely the best pattern of using authority, how a successful leader uses authority, and how much authority a leader optimally possesses. The creative thinking in the leadership of Islamic boarding schools tends to focus more on the kiai as a central figure (Neliwati, 2019, 86-87)

Therefore, there is a need for special awareness among kiai to accept and implement various ideas that can lead the Islamic boarding school towards improvement. The creative thinking and innovative attitude of the kiai are influenced by factors such as the kiai's vision and mission, as well as a deep-seated fear of new ideas that are considered misleading and may lead the boarding school community in a negative direction. Based on literature, there are two models of kiai

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leadership in Islamic boarding schools: individual leadership and collective leadership.

Arifin (1993) stated that Individual leadership represents the kiai's role as the leader of the Islamic boarding school, involving unique phenomena beyond curriculum development, rule-making, evaluation system design, and religious teaching. The kiai also serves as a mentor, educator, community leader, and even the sole owner of the boarding school. The presence of the kiai in the pesantren environment is crucial, resembling the heart of human life.

The kiai's intensity demonstrates an authoritative role due to being the pioneer, founder, manager, caretaker, leader, and even the sole owner of a pesantren. Consequently, when a kiai with such multifaceted roles passes away without a capable successor, the reputation of the pesantren often declines. Kiai, with their expertise, depth of knowledge, charisma, and skills, dominantly regulates the development and sustainability of a pesantren. Many pesantrens lack organized educational management and depend on the policies of their kiai. The pesantren's "dependence" on the kiai indirectly influences the leadership transition system within the pesantren (Badawi, 1993, 90)

According to Dhofier (2011), pesantrens often adopt practical methods to preserve their traditions and prevent them from fading away. Consequently, the leadership transition system in Islamic boarding schools often follows the concept of "*sedulur sederek*" (brotherhood) creating a small kingdom where the kiai holds absolute power and authority. This aligns with Ziemek's idea that the name and influence of a pesantren are closely linked to each kiai, illustrating the strong capabilities and personality radiance of a pesantren leader in determining the position and status of the pesantren.

Therefore, the concept of "*sedulur sederek*" becomes a distinct pattern in the pesantren environment to determine its leadership. However, becoming a leader (kiai) in a pesantren is not as easy as it seems. A kiai is someone who can set an example (uswah) for the community, providing them with a spiritual experience, not just creating impressive scenes on the stage. The process of studying under a kiai is not merely an educational process but a spiritual event, an effort to seek the identity of a person. Although leadership in pesantrens is familiar with the "dynasty" or "bani" system, Faizin (2015) acknowledges that there are essentially three types of leadership transformations in the pesantren environment: single leadership by the kiai, dual leadership, and collective leadership.

### C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative study that utilizes the case study method. This approach is chosen because the collected data is qualitative, and the research is conducted in a naturalistic setting. The researcher acts as a key instrument, with a focus on meaning rather than generalization

(Sugiyono, 2015). The method is inductive, allowing issues to emerge from the data and open to interpretation (Arikunto, 1996)

A case study is selected due to the research object concerning the collective leadership of kiai in Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo, considered specific, unique, and conducted within a limited system. The research explores real-life and the limited system through detailed and in-depth data collection, involving diverse sources of information (Stake & Lincoln, 2000). The case study method is deemed appropriate when the research emphasizes contemporary ongoing processes or programs. Additionally, this method is suitable when research questions revolve around "how" and "why," and when the researcher has little control over the investigated events.

Based on the issues that are the focus of the research, this is a qualitative study that employs a case study approach. The case study research, as formulated by Creswell, is as follows. First, a description of the case and the themes or issues uncovered by the researcher when studying the case. Second, the themes or issues are organized chronologically, then the entire case is analyzed to: (a) identify various similarities and differences among the cases; (b) present it in a theoretical model; and third, draw conclusions about the overall meaning obtained from the case (Creswell, 2015)

In qualitative research, data analysis is described as a continuous, iterative, and systematic effort. According to Bogdan and Biklen, as cited by Zainal Arifin, data analysis is a systematic activity aimed at searching, discovering, and organizing interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials collected by the researcher through various data collection techniques (Moleong, 2017)

### D. DISCUSSION

#### 1. Kiai Collective Leadership at the Lirboyo Kediri Islamic Boarding School

From the data findings described as presented earlier, the leadership occurring in Pondok Lirboyo at present falls under the category of genetic leadership. This theory posits that a leader is born with leadership talents, and in any situation, an individual is placed at a time when they will become a leader because they are born for it. This theory is widely contested by experts because an individual's talent for leadership is considered thin. According to C. Bird, leadership talent only accounts for about 5%, as education and training play a more decisive role (Saebani, 2012).

It can be understood that fundamentally, caregivers or leaders of the pondok must be dzuriyah or direct descendants of previous caregivers. Additionally, if we observe the leadership of the kiai in Pondok Lirboyo, it is carried out collectively, but the members are also descendants or dzuriyah, not from elsewhere. Therefore, the collective leadership of the kiai in Pondok Lirboyo is a type of leadership that is genetic in nature.



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### **2. The role of the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School Development and Welfare Board (BPK-P2L) as a Collective Leadership Forum in Maintaining the Existence of the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School, Kediri, East Java**

The Board of Trustees and Welfare of Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo (BPK-P2L) fundamentally represents the collectivity of the existing kiai leadership. Its members are selected from descendants or families; however, the kiai organization essentially requires the main condition of being family or dzuriyah.

Therefore, even though there is an organizational structure for the kiai, the model or leadership applied is essentially genetic, as BPK-P2L membership requires being a descendant or part of the family. On the other hand, within this structure, a democratic leadership style is still implemented, where the decision-making process involves the role of the most senior or eldest caregiver as a primary consideration in forums such as deliberation meetings. According to the researcher, this is one of the characteristics of limited democratic leadership.

The intended style of democratic leadership is one that unifies and synchronizes the interests and goals of the organization with the interests and goals of those being led. A democratic leader is considered the best type of leader, always prioritizing group interests over individual interests. The characteristics of democratic leadership are as follows:

- a. In the process of motivating subordinates, always starting from the belief that humans are the noblest beings in the world.
- b. Always striving to align personal interests and goals with the interests of the organization.
- c. Enjoys receiving suggestions, opinions, and even criticism from subordinates.
- d. Guides subordinates who make mistakes and provides education to prevent mistakes without diminishing the creativity, initiative, and initiative of subordinates.
- e. Involves others in decision-making (deliberation) and supports the development of positional leadership and emerging leadership.

Mifta Thoha, as mentioned by Saefullah, states that democratic leadership style is associated with personal strength and the participation of followers in problem-solving processes and decision-making. A democratic leader is respected and honored, not feared, for their behavior in leading the organization. The leader's behavior will encourage subordinates to cultivate and develop their innovation and creativity. A democratic leader is not afraid or hesitant to let subordinates develop their ideas, even if there is a possibility that those ideas may have fatal consequences.

In the Quran, democracy is a fundamental principle concerning the selection of leaders, heads, chairpersons, and the supervision of power and rights, applied in various practical contexts. This is because it is rooted in different

situational factors and conditions. It is reasonable that the principle of consultation (*musyawarah*) in the Quran is explained globally, and the Prophet did not provide a fixed set of rules for implementing consultation (democracy). This is due to the diverse situations and conditions, and if there were specific guidelines from the Prophet, various forms and rules would arise due to the aforementioned differences, making the consultation process non-conductive.

### **3. Implications of Kiai Collective Leadership in the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School Development and Welfare Board (BPK-P2L) in Maintaining the Existence of the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School, Kediri, East Java**

The general implications of the collective leadership of kiai in Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo include fostering unity and togetherness among family members to collectively manage, develop, and preserve the existence of the Islamic boarding school.

On the other hand, the collective leadership of kiai under the umbrella of BPK-P2L has positive implications for the continuity of the teachings left by the founders and predecessors of the pondok. This ensures that the teachings preserved by the institution continue to be known and upheld.

Another implication of collective leadership in BPK-P2L is the presence of training and cadreship processes for successors. As previously explained, the organization involves younger members, indicating a commitment to training and preparing the next generation.

Furthermore, the existence of BPK-P2L signals that Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo adopts a modern system. This is evident in the organization's structure, which serves as a platform for kiai, and the delegation or empowerment of its members, showcasing a modern organizational approach within the traditional setting of the Islamic boarding school.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

From the results of this research, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The collective leadership of kiai in Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo, Kediri, emerged from the idea or proposal of the dzuriyah to unite the family and avoid division. The dzuriyah membership received approval from its members and had the main task of preserving the existence and upholding the teachings of the predecessors.
2. The role of the Board of Trustees and Welfare of Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo (BPK-P2L) as a platform for collective kiai leadership in maintaining the existence of Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo will continue to serve as a collective leadership platform in Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo. As an organization consisting of dzuriyah members from previous caretakers of the boarding school, it has the main task of determining the leadership of the boarding school, preserving its existence, and

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involving all dzuriyah members in carrying out its core functions as the main support for the existence of the boarding school.

3. The implications of collective kiai leadership in the Board of Trustees and Welfare of Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo (BPK-P2L) in maintaining the existence of Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo, Kediri, involve playing a role in determining the leadership and development of the boarding school. It fulfills its strategic role in preserving and upholding the noble values left by the founders.

### Suggestions

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher provides the following suggestions:

#### 1. Leaders/Caregivers of Islamic Boarding Schools

The leaders or caregivers of Islamic boarding schools should always pay attention to the continuity of the values of the boarding school to ensure its existence despite numerous changes within the educational institution, including changes in curriculum integration patterns. The internal role of the boarding school family is crucial to consistently imbue and uphold the values of the pesantren. Therefore, internal cadres equipped with general and modern knowledge are essential to prevent dominance by external forces that may influence the mindset and alter the values of the pesantren.

#### 2. the Next Researcher

The next researchers are expected to contribute more to the understanding of leadership in Islamic boarding schools through the findings of their research. This could be achieved by conducting research on larger, older Islamic boarding schools with higher quality graduates and a greater quantity than what the current researcher has undertaken.

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