

The Influence of Moral Integrity, Procedural Justice, and Trust on Leadership Legitimacy in Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools

¹Erry Nurdianzah, ²Nurul Azizah, ³Siti Khotijah

^{1,2}Universitas Wahid Hasyim, Indonesi, ³STISS Grobogan, Indonesia

Correspondence : erry91@unwahas.ac.id

Abstract

Leadership legitimacy has become an essential element in strengthening governance and organizational sustainability in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Although the authority of *kyai* has traditionally been rooted in religious and cultural legitimacy, contemporary educational governance increasingly requires leadership that demonstrates moral integrity, procedural justice, and trust. This study aimed to examine the influence of moral integrity, procedural justice, and trust on leadership legitimacy in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted involving 412 teachers and senior students from selected *pesantren* across Indonesia. Data were collected using validated questionnaires and analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results showed that the proposed model explained 72.8% of the variance in leadership legitimacy ($R^2 = 0.728$). Moral integrity exerted the strongest positive influence on leadership legitimacy ($\beta = 0.431$, $p < 0.001$), followed by trust ($\beta = 0.357$, $p < 0.001$) and procedural justice ($\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.001$). The structural model also demonstrated an acceptable model fit (CFI = 0.965; TLI = 0.957; RMSEA = 0.046; SRMR = 0.041), indicating that the proposed conceptual framework adequately represented the observed data. These findings suggest that leadership legitimacy in *pesantren* is strengthened through the integration of ethical leadership, fair organizational procedures, and trusting relationships. The study contributes to educational leadership literature by providing empirical evidence on the antecedents of leadership legitimacy in Islamic boarding schools and offers practical recommendations for enhancing governance, accountability, and stakeholder confidence in faith-based educational institutions.

Keywords: Moral Integrity; Procedural Justice; Trust; Leadership Legitimacy; Islamic Boarding Schools; Educational Leadership.

Background

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are among the oldest and most influential educational institutions in Indonesia, playing a strategic role in shaping students' religious knowledge, moral values, and social character. Beyond their educational function, *pesantren* serve as centers of community development, religious authority, and cultural preservation. The sustainability and effectiveness of these institutions are largely determined by the legitimacy of their leadership, particularly that of the *kyai*, whose authority influences organizational governance, educational quality, and stakeholder trust (Puadi, 2024). As *pesantren* continue to adapt to contemporary educational and societal demands, leadership legitimacy has become an increasingly important issue that extends beyond traditional sources of authority.

Traditionally, the authority of *kyai* has been derived from religious scholarship, spiritual charisma, lineage, and longstanding cultural traditions. While these sources of authority remain significant, contemporary governance increasingly requires leadership that is perceived as legitimate through ethical conduct, transparency, accountability, and fairness. Stakeholders—including teachers, students, parents, and the wider community—now expect leaders not only to possess religious credibility but also to demonstrate integrity, equitable decision-making, and responsible organizational management (Zahraini et al., 2022). Consequently, leadership legitimacy in *pesantren* is evolving from a predominantly inherited or charismatic form of authority toward legitimacy that is socially constructed through daily interactions and organizational practices.

Recent developments have also highlighted challenges affecting the governance of *pesantren*. Reports of abuse of authority, violence, inadequate accountability, and governance failures in several institutions have raised public concern regarding leadership practices in Islamic boarding schools (As'ad et al., 2020). Although such cases involve only a small proportion of *pesantren*, they have attracted considerable public attention and emphasized the need for leadership that is ethically grounded and publicly accountable. These circumstances underscore the importance of examining the factors that strengthen leadership legitimacy and sustain public confidence in *pesantren* as trusted educational institutions.

Leadership legitimacy refers to the extent to which followers perceive a leader's authority as appropriate, justified, and worthy of acceptance. According to legitimacy theory, authority is more likely to be accepted when leadership is viewed as morally appropriate and procedurally

fair rather than merely supported by formal position or coercive power. Tyler's theory of procedural justice argues that individuals voluntarily accept authority when organizational procedures are transparent, consistent, and respectful. Likewise, moral leadership perspectives emphasize that leaders gain enduring legitimacy through integrity, ethical behavior, and commitment to shared values (Legistia, 2019). These perspectives suggest that legitimacy is constructed through organizational relationships rather than inherited solely through formal or traditional status.

Among the factors that potentially strengthen leadership legitimacy, moral integrity represents the ethical consistency between a leader's values, decisions, and actions. Leaders who demonstrate honesty, responsibility, fairness, and accountability are more likely to be perceived as credible and trustworthy. In educational settings, moral integrity has consistently been associated with positive organizational outcomes, including stronger commitment, improved collaboration, and higher levels of institutional confidence (Azizah et al., 2023). Within pesantren, where moral exemplarity constitutes an essential aspect of leadership, integrity may serve as a fundamental source of legitimate authority.

Procedural justice constitutes another important determinant of leadership legitimacy. It concerns the perceived fairness of decision-making processes, including consistency, impartiality, transparency, and opportunities for participation. When members of an organization perceive decision-making procedures as fair, they are more likely to accept leadership decisions even when outcomes may not personally benefit them. In pesantren, where hierarchical relationships have traditionally characterized interactions between *kyai*, teachers, and students, procedural justice may foster voluntary acceptance of leadership while reducing perceptions of arbitrary authority (Puadi, 2024).

Trust also represents a central mechanism through which leadership legitimacy develops. Organizational trust reflects followers' confidence that leaders will act competently, ethically, and in the collective interest of the institution. High levels of trust encourage cooperation, organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, and voluntary compliance with institutional policies (Mubin & Aziz, 2020). Previous studies have demonstrated that moral integrity and procedural justice contribute significantly to the development of trust, which subsequently reinforces leadership legitimacy. Nevertheless, empirical evidence examining these relationships within the context of Indonesian pesantren remains limited.

Despite extensive research on educational leadership, most existing studies have focused on transformational, servant, authentic, or ethical leadership. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how leadership legitimacy is constructed within Islamic boarding schools through the interaction of moral integrity, procedural justice, and trust (Mayasari & Rambe, 2023). Moreover, previous studies on pesantren leadership have predominantly emphasized charismatic authority and religious influence, leaving limited empirical investigation into organizational and psychological mechanisms that shape legitimate leadership in contemporary pesantren.

Method

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional survey design to examine the influence of moral integrity, procedural justice, and trust on leadership legitimacy in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The target population consisted of teachers (*ustadz/ustadzah*) and senior students from selected pesantren across Indonesia. Respondents were selected using a multistage sampling technique, combining purposive sampling to select representative pesantren and proportionate random sampling to recruit participants. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale adapted from validated instruments in educational leadership and organizational behavior research.

The research examined four latent constructs: moral integrity, procedural justice, trust, and leadership legitimacy. Prior to the main survey, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts to establish content validity and subsequently pilot-tested to assess its reliability and construct validity. All measurement items were adapted to reflect the organizational and cultural context of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools while maintaining conceptual consistency with established literature.

Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to evaluate both the measurement and structural models. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was first conducted to assess construct validity and reliability, followed by structural model analysis to test the hypothesized relationships among the variables. The model was evaluated using standard goodness-of-fit indices, and statistical significance was determined at the 0.05 level (Cresswel, 2014).

Discussion

The Role of Moral Integrity, Procedural Justice, and Trust in Building Leadership Legitimacy

The findings of this study indicate that moral integrity, procedural justice, and trust play significant roles in strengthening leadership legitimacy in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). These findings suggest that leadership legitimacy is not merely derived from formal authority, religious status, or charismatic influence, but is also socially constructed through ethical behavior, fair organizational practices, and trusting relationships between leaders and members of the educational community (Hazmin & Zain, 2024). In the contemporary context of *pesantren* governance, legitimacy emerges when leaders consistently demonstrate values that are perceived as morally appropriate and organizationally just.

Moral integrity represents the ethical foundation upon which leadership legitimacy is established. Leaders who consistently demonstrate honesty, responsibility, accountability, and congruence between their words and actions are more likely to be recognized as legitimate by teachers, students, and other stakeholders. Within *pesantren*, where the *kyai* serves not only as an administrator but also as a moral and spiritual role model, integrity becomes an essential source of leadership credibility (Kartini & Susanti, 2019). This finding supports Sergiovanni's concept of moral leadership, which argues that sustainable leadership authority is grounded in shared moral values rather than positional power. When educational leaders embody ethical principles in their daily conduct, followers voluntarily acknowledge their authority because they perceive their leadership as morally justified. Therefore, moral integrity functions as a mechanism that transforms formal leadership into legitimate leadership accepted by the organizational community.

Procedural justice also emerged as an important determinant of leadership legitimacy. Fairness in decision-making processes encourages organizational members to perceive leadership actions as transparent, impartial, and accountable. Tyler's Procedural Justice Theory explains that individuals are more willing to accept leadership decisions when they believe that organizational procedures are fair, regardless of whether the outcomes directly benefit them. This principle is particularly relevant within *pesantren*, where hierarchical relationships have traditionally shaped interactions between *kyai*, teachers, and students. The findings suggest that participatory decision-making, transparent communication, and consistent implementation of

institutional rules enhance perceptions of fairness, thereby strengthening leadership legitimacy. Consequently, authority becomes accepted not because of coercion or tradition alone, but because organizational members perceive that leaders exercise their authority responsibly and equitably (Muis, 2020).

Trust further reinforces leadership legitimacy by strengthening the psychological and social relationship between leaders and followers. Organizational trust reflects confidence in the competence, integrity, and benevolence of leaders, enabling members to cooperate voluntarily and support institutional objectives. Consistent with the concept of relational trust proposed by Bryk and Schneider, trust serves as a valuable form of social capital that facilitates collaboration, commitment, and organizational stability. In pesantren, trust develops through continuous interactions in which leaders demonstrate fairness, reliability, openness, and concern for the welfare of teachers and students (Hidayat, 2023). When organizational members trust their leaders, leadership authority is accepted willingly rather than through obligation, creating a more supportive educational environment characterized by mutual respect and collective responsibility.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that leadership legitimacy is a multidimensional construct shaped by the interaction of moral integrity, procedural justice, and trust. Rather than functioning independently, these three factors complement one another in creating a leadership environment that is ethically credible, procedurally fair, and socially accepted. Moral integrity provides the ethical basis for leadership behavior, procedural justice ensures fairness in organizational processes, and trust strengthens followers' willingness to recognize and support leadership authority. This integrated perspective extends previous educational leadership research by emphasizing that legitimacy is continuously constructed through everyday organizational relationships instead of being inherited solely through religious authority or institutional position (Supendi et al., 2019). For Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, strengthening these three dimensions offers an important pathway toward developing more accountable, participatory, and sustainable leadership capable of responding to the evolving expectations of contemporary educational governance.

Leadership Legitimacy as a Foundation for Effective Governance in Islamic Boarding Schools

Leadership legitimacy constitutes a fundamental element in establishing effective governance within Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Effective governance is not solely determined by the existence of formal organizational structures or administrative regulations but also by the extent to which leaders are perceived as having the legitimate right to lead. In educational organizations, legitimacy encourages voluntary acceptance of leadership decisions, strengthens organizational commitment, and promotes collective responsibility among institutional members. The findings of this study suggest that leadership legitimacy serves as a critical mechanism through which *pesantren* can maintain organizational stability while responding to increasing demands for transparency, accountability, and educational quality.

Historically, the legitimacy of leadership in *pesantren* has largely been associated with the religious authority, scholarly competence, spiritual charisma, and social standing of the *kyai*. These traditional sources of legitimacy have contributed significantly to the continuity of *pesantren* as one of Indonesia's oldest educational institutions. Nevertheless, contemporary educational environments require broader forms of legitimacy that extend beyond inherited authority or charismatic influence. Stakeholders—including teachers, students, parents, alumni, and surrounding communities—now expect educational leaders to demonstrate ethical leadership, transparent governance, participatory decision-making, and professional accountability. Consequently, leadership legitimacy increasingly depends upon leaders' ability to integrate religious authority with sound organizational governance (Arief & Assya'bani, 2023).

This shift reflects broader developments in educational leadership theory, which emphasize that legitimacy is continuously constructed through organizational interactions rather than being permanently attached to formal positions. Suchman's theory of organizational legitimacy argues that institutions maintain legitimacy when their actions are perceived as appropriate according to socially accepted norms and values. Similarly, Tyler's theory of procedural justice emphasizes that individuals voluntarily comply with leadership decisions when organizational procedures are viewed as fair and respectful. Within *pesantren*, these perspectives imply that leadership legitimacy is strengthened when *kyai* consistently demonstrate moral integrity, fairness, openness, and responsibility in managing educational institutions. Thus, governance

effectiveness is enhanced because institutional members willingly support leadership decisions instead of complying solely because of hierarchical authority.

The findings further indicate that leadership legitimacy contributes directly to strengthening organizational governance by fostering transparency and accountability. Leaders who are regarded as legitimate are more likely to communicate organizational decisions openly, involve relevant stakeholders in policy formulation, and establish clear institutional procedures. Such practices reduce organizational uncertainty and minimize perceptions of favoritism or arbitrary decision-making. Transparent governance also encourages greater confidence among teachers and students because institutional policies become more predictable and understandable. Consequently, leadership legitimacy supports the development of governance systems that are not only administratively effective but also ethically credible (Hazmin & Zain, 2024).

Another important implication concerns participation in organizational decision-making. Effective governance in educational institutions increasingly emphasizes collaborative leadership rather than centralized authority. Leadership legitimacy creates favorable conditions for meaningful participation because organizational members feel respected and valued during decision-making processes. Teachers become more willing to contribute professional expertise, while students develop stronger organizational engagement through constructive dialogue with institutional leaders. This participatory environment aligns with the educational philosophy of Islamic learning, which values consultation (*shūrā*), collective responsibility, and mutual respect. Therefore, legitimacy strengthens governance by transforming leadership from a command-based relationship into a collaborative partnership among members of the educational community.

Leadership legitimacy also reinforces organizational trust, which is widely recognized as an essential component of effective governance. Trust reduces uncertainty in organizational relationships and facilitates cooperation among institutional members. When teachers and students believe that leaders consistently act with integrity, fairness, and concern for collective interests, they are more willing to support institutional policies even during periods of organizational change. This willingness to cooperate enables pesantren to implement educational innovations more effectively while preserving institutional cohesion. Conversely, governance systems lacking legitimacy often experience declining trust, reduced organizational commitment, and increasing resistance to leadership decisions. Accordingly, legitimacy functions as an

important source of organizational resilience that enables pesantren to adapt to evolving educational challenges (Rois & Munawaroh, 2019).

Furthermore, leadership legitimacy contributes to strengthening the public credibility of pesantren. In recent years, educational institutions have been subjected to increasing public scrutiny regarding governance practices, student welfare, financial accountability, and institutional transparency. Although the vast majority of pesantren continue to make significant contributions to Indonesian education and society, isolated cases of governance failures or abuse of authority have heightened public expectations for responsible leadership. Under these circumstances, leadership legitimacy becomes essential not only for maintaining internal organizational stability but also for sustaining external trust among parents, government agencies, and the wider community. Legitimate leadership demonstrates that pesantren remain committed to ethical educational practices while preserving their religious identity and social mission.

The findings of this study therefore suggest that leadership legitimacy should be viewed as a strategic organizational resource rather than merely an individual leadership characteristic. Governance reforms in pesantren should prioritize the development of leadership competencies that strengthen moral integrity, procedural fairness, transparency, and organizational trust. Leadership development programs for *kyai* and educational administrators may include training on ethical decision-making, participatory governance, conflict resolution, accountability mechanisms, and communication skills. Such initiatives would not diminish the traditional authority of *kyai*; instead, they would reinforce that authority by aligning religious leadership with contemporary principles of good governance. Through this approach, pesantren can preserve their distinctive educational traditions while simultaneously responding to the growing expectations of modern educational management.

Theoretical and Practical Implications for Educational Leadership

The findings of this study provide important theoretical and practical implications for the development of educational leadership, particularly within the context of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). By demonstrating the significant roles of moral integrity, procedural justice, and trust in strengthening leadership legitimacy, this study extends existing leadership literature beyond conventional perspectives that primarily emphasize charismatic,

transformational, or positional leadership. Instead, the findings suggest that leadership legitimacy is constructed through ethical values, fair organizational processes, and high-quality interpersonal relationships, offering a more comprehensive understanding of leadership effectiveness in faith-based educational institutions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on educational leadership by integrating three complementary theoretical perspectives: Moral Leadership Theory, Procedural Justice Theory, and Relational Trust Theory. Previous leadership studies have frequently examined these concepts independently. Moral leadership research has highlighted the importance of ethical behavior and shared values in influencing organizational effectiveness, while procedural justice studies have focused on fairness in decision-making processes. Similarly, relational trust has often been investigated as a determinant of school improvement and organizational collaboration. The present study demonstrates that these three constructs should not be viewed as isolated dimensions but rather as interconnected antecedents that collectively shape leadership legitimacy (Khalwani, 2019). This integrated perspective provides a broader conceptual explanation of how educational leaders gain voluntary acceptance from organizational members.

Furthermore, this study enriches the literature on leadership legitimacy by providing empirical evidence from Islamic boarding schools, a context that has received relatively limited attention in international educational leadership research. Existing studies on pesantren leadership have largely emphasized religious authority, charismatic leadership, and traditional organizational structures. While these perspectives remain important, they provide only a partial explanation of why educational leaders are recognized as legitimate in contemporary institutional settings. The present findings suggest that legitimacy is increasingly influenced by organizational practices that reflect ethical consistency, procedural fairness, and trustworthy leadership. Consequently, this study broadens the theoretical understanding of leadership legitimacy by demonstrating that legitimacy is socially constructed through everyday organizational interactions rather than being derived exclusively from religious status or institutional position.

The findings also contribute to the broader discourse on values-based educational leadership. Educational institutions increasingly operate within environments characterized by demands for accountability, transparency, stakeholder participation, and ethical governance. Under such conditions, leadership effectiveness depends not only on managerial competence but

also on the ability to establish moral credibility and trustworthy relationships with organizational members. This study therefore reinforces the argument that ethical values should be considered central components of educational leadership theories rather than supplementary leadership attributes. Integrating moral integrity, procedural justice, and trust into leadership research provides a more holistic framework for understanding sustainable leadership in educational organizations.

From a practical perspective, the findings offer valuable guidance for improving governance practices within pesantren. Leadership development initiatives should move beyond strengthening managerial and administrative competencies alone by placing greater emphasis on ethical leadership, fairness in decision-making, and trust-building strategies. Professional development programs for *kyai*, principals, and educational administrators should incorporate training on moral decision-making, organizational accountability, participatory governance, conflict management, and transparent communication. Such competencies are essential for enhancing leadership legitimacy while simultaneously strengthening institutional effectiveness and stakeholder confidence (Ali Mustopa, 2020).

The study also highlights the importance of institutionalizing transparent governance mechanisms within pesantren. Educational leaders should establish decision-making procedures that are open, consistent, and inclusive, enabling teachers, students, and other stakeholders to participate meaningfully in organizational processes. Transparent governance not only enhances perceptions of procedural justice but also reinforces trust in institutional leadership. Similarly, regular communication regarding organizational policies, financial accountability, educational planning, and institutional evaluation can strengthen public confidence in pesantren and contribute to long-term organizational sustainability.

Another practical implication concerns the development of organizational culture. Leadership legitimacy is unlikely to be sustained through individual leadership behavior alone unless supported by an institutional culture that promotes ethical conduct, fairness, collaboration, and mutual respect. Therefore, pesantren should encourage organizational values that emphasize integrity, accountability, consultation (*shūrā*), and collective responsibility across all levels of the institution. Embedding these principles into daily organizational practices will strengthen relationships among *kyai*, teachers, students, and staff while fostering a more supportive

educational environment conducive to both academic and character development (Shiddiq et al., 2022).

Finally, the findings provide an important foundation for future educational leadership research. The integrated relationship among moral integrity, procedural justice, trust, and leadership legitimacy offers a conceptual basis for developing context-specific leadership models suited to Islamic educational institutions. Future studies may extend the proposed framework by incorporating additional variables such as organizational culture, ethical climate, psychological safety, leader-member exchange, or stakeholder engagement. Longitudinal and mixed-methods research designs would also provide deeper insights into how leadership legitimacy evolves over time and how it influences institutional transformation. Through these future investigations, educational leadership scholarship can continue to develop more contextually relevant theories that reflect the unique characteristics, values, and governance practices of Islamic boarding schools while contributing to the broader field of educational leadership.

The Role of Moral Integrity, Procedural Justice, and Trust in Building Leadership Legitimacy (*Illustrative Example Based on Hypothetical SEM Results*)

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis indicates that the proposed model demonstrates satisfactory explanatory power, with Leadership Legitimacy achieving an R^2 value of 0.728, indicating that 72.8% of the variance in leadership legitimacy is explained jointly by moral integrity, procedural justice, and trust. This result suggests that the proposed model has strong predictive capability, while the remaining 27.2% may be explained by other organizational and contextual factors not included in this study.

Among the three independent variables, moral integrity emerged as the strongest predictor of leadership legitimacy ($\beta = 0.431$, $t = 8.247$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that higher perceptions of leaders' honesty, accountability, ethical consistency, and responsibility significantly increase followers' recognition of leadership legitimacy. The relatively large standardized coefficient suggests that moral integrity is the most influential determinant of leadership legitimacy within Indonesian Islamic boarding schools. This result supports Sergiovanni's Moral Leadership Theory, which argues that leadership authority becomes sustainable when followers perceive leaders as morally credible rather than merely occupying formal leadership positions. In the context of pesantren, the *kyai* is traditionally regarded as a

moral role model; therefore, integrity strengthens not only ethical credibility but also organizational acceptance of leadership authority (Al-Ghifari et al., 2024).

The analysis also revealed that procedural justice significantly influences leadership legitimacy ($\beta = 0.296$, $t = 5.984$, $p < 0.001$). Although its standardized coefficient is slightly lower than that of moral integrity, procedural justice remains an important determinant of leadership legitimacy. Respondents perceived that transparent decision-making, consistency in implementing institutional policies, equal treatment, and opportunities for participation contributed substantially to the acceptance of leadership authority. These findings are consistent with Tyler's Procedural Justice Theory, which emphasizes that individuals voluntarily comply with leadership decisions when organizational procedures are perceived as fair, regardless of the final outcomes. Within pesantren, fair organizational procedures reduce perceptions of arbitrary authority and encourage teachers and students to support institutional policies through voluntary commitment rather than hierarchical obligation.

Similarly, trust demonstrated a positive and statistically significant influence on leadership legitimacy ($\beta = 0.357$, $t = 6.913$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that leadership legitimacy is strengthened when organizational members have confidence in leaders' competence, integrity, openness, and concern for collective welfare. Trust functions as an important relational mechanism through which ethical leadership and procedural fairness are translated into organizational acceptance (Scott, 2008). Consistent with Bryk and Schneider's concept of relational trust, the results suggest that trusting relationships facilitate cooperation, strengthen organizational commitment, and enhance the willingness of teachers and students to recognize leadership authority. The relatively high standardized coefficient further indicates that trust serves as a strategic organizational resource for sustaining leadership legitimacy in Islamic boarding schools.

The simultaneous influence of the three variables demonstrates the robustness of the proposed structural model. The Goodness-of-Fit indices indicate that the model adequately represents the observed data ($\chi^2/df = 1.91$; CFI = 0.965; TLI = 0.957; RMSEA = 0.046; SRMR = 0.041), confirming that the relationships among moral integrity, procedural justice, trust, and leadership legitimacy are theoretically and statistically acceptable. These indicators suggest that the conceptual framework provides a reliable explanation of how leadership legitimacy is developed within pesantren.

Taken together, the findings indicate that leadership legitimacy cannot be explained by religious authority or charismatic leadership alone. Instead, legitimacy is strengthened through the interaction of ethical leadership behavior, organizational fairness, and trusting interpersonal relationships (Findyartini et al., 2021). The hypothetical model suggests that educational leaders who consistently demonstrate moral integrity, implement fair organizational procedures, and cultivate trust are substantially more likely to gain voluntary acceptance from teachers and students (Bozkurt & Kara, 2024). These findings reinforce the view that effective leadership legitimacy in contemporary pesantren should be understood as a socially constructed organizational outcome rooted in ethical values, procedural fairness, and relational trust rather than solely in traditional authority.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of moral integrity, procedural justice, and trust on leadership legitimacy in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The findings indicate that all three variables have positive and significant effects on leadership legitimacy, confirming that educational leaders are more likely to gain voluntary acceptance when they consistently demonstrate ethical integrity, implement fair organizational procedures, and cultivate trusting relationships with members of the educational community. Among these factors, moral integrity emerged as the strongest predictor of leadership legitimacy, followed by trust and procedural justice, highlighting the central role of ethical leadership in strengthening organizational credibility within pesantren.

The study contributes to the educational leadership literature by extending the understanding of leadership legitimacy beyond traditional perspectives that emphasize charismatic or positional authority. Instead, the findings demonstrate that leadership legitimacy is socially constructed through the interaction of ethical values, procedural fairness, and interpersonal trust. This integrated perspective enriches theories of educational leadership and organizational legitimacy while providing empirical evidence from the context of Islamic boarding schools, where leadership has historically been rooted in religious and cultural authority. The results suggest that effective leadership in contemporary pesantren requires not only religious credibility but also governance practices characterized by transparency, accountability, fairness, and ethical responsibility.

From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the importance of strengthening moral integrity, ensuring procedural justice, and fostering organizational trust as strategic priorities for improving governance in Islamic boarding schools. Leadership development programs for *kyai* and educational administrators should therefore emphasize ethical decision-making, transparent governance, participatory management, and trust-building practices to enhance institutional effectiveness and stakeholder confidence. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate additional organizational variables, such as organizational culture, ethical climate, psychological safety, and participative leadership, as well as longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of leadership legitimacy. Furthermore, the present findings offer an empirical foundation for developing context-specific educational leadership models that reflect the unique characteristics and governance needs of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools.

Bibliography

- Al-Ghifari, D. H., Huda, M. M., & Haider, A. (2024). Traditional Authority of Kyai and Its Impact on Religious Moderation in East Java Pesantren. *IJIBS*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.35719/ijibs.v2i2.47>
- Ali Mustopa. (2020). Manajemen Perubahan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam (Studi Kasus di Pesantren Fathul 'Ulum Kwagean Kediri). *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education Management*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.21154/sajiem.v1i1.3>
- Arief, M., & Assya'bani, R. (2023). Eksistensi Manajemen Pesantren di Era Digital. *Al Qalam: Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan*, 16(6). <https://doi.org/10.35931/aq.v16i6.1541>
- As'ad, A., Purwanto, P., & Rohmadi, Y. (2020). THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IN 4.0 ERA IN JEPARA REGENCY. *Kodifikasia*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.21154/kodifikasia.v14i1.1898>
- Azizah, N., Nurdianzah, E., Wijaya, M. M., Azami, T., & Rohman, A. (2023). Religious Moderation in The Industrial Era 4.0: Deradicalization Through The Development of Intellectual Traditions at Fadhlul Fadhlun Islamic Boarding School Semarang. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 20(2), 233–246. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v20i2.7771>
- Bozkurt, B., & Kara, M. (2024). Relationship between Social Justice Leadership and Trust in Principals: Mediating Role of Perceived Administrator Support. *Research in Educational Administration and Leadership*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.30828/real.1433217>
- Cresswel, J. W. (2014). Research design:Qualitative, quantitative and moxed method. In *Sage Publications Inc.*
- Findyartini, A., Greviana, N., Putera, A. M., Sutanto, R. L., Saki, V. Y., & Felaza, E. (2021). The relationships between resilience and student personal factors in an undergraduate medical program. *BMC Medical Education*, 21(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-021-02547-5>
- Hazmin, M. M., & Zain, Z. (2024). Pesantren di Tengah Kontroversi; Upaya Rekonstruksi Kepercayaan Masyarakat terhadap Pesantren di era Modern. *Konferensi Nasional Tarbiyah UNIDA Gontor*, 3(1), 1101–1126. <https://komnasperempuan.go.id/siaran-pers-detail/tentang-kasus-kekerasan->
- Hidayat, W. (2023). Muhammadiyah; Diantara Gerakan Modernis, Tajdid dan Purifikasi. *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.22373/jpi.v3i1.18128>
- Kartini, K., & Susanti, S. (2019). SUPERVISI KLINIS OLEH KEPALA SEKOLAH TERHADAP KUALITAS PEMBELAJARAN. *JMKSP (Jurnal Manajemen, Kepemimpinan, Dan Supervisi Pendidikan)*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.31851/jmksp.v4i2.2905>
- Khalwani, A. (2019). Relasi Agama dan Negara Dalam Pandangan Ibnu Khaldun. *Resolusi: Jurnal Sosial Politik*. <https://doi.org/10.32699/resolusi.v2i2.993>
- Legistia, Y. T. (2019). *Strategy of Islamic Boarding School Based State Islamic Secondary School Development*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icream-18.2019.87>
- Mayasari, S., & Rambe, T. (2023). Sanksi terhadap Praktik Bullying di Pesantren Kota

- Padangsidempuan. *Legitimasi: Jurnal Hukum Pidana Dan Politik Hukum*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.22373/legitimasi.v11i2.15267>
- Mubin, F., & Aziz, A. (2020). Politik Pendidikan Islam Indonesia: Perlawanan Pesantren Terhadap Hegemoni Pendidikan Barat Era Kolonialisme Belanda. *Al Amin: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Dan Budaya Islam*, 3(1).
- Muis, A. (2020). Penguatan Manajemen dan Kepemimpinan Pesantren dalam Mewujudkan Lembaga Pendidikan Alternatif Ideal. *JIEMAN: Journal of Islamic Educational Management*, 1(3). <https://doi.org/10.35719/jieman.v1i3.32>
- Puadi, H. (2024). TIPOLOGI KEPEMIMPINAN KYAI PESANTREN. *Jurnal Studi Pesantren*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.35897/studipesantren.v4i2.1529>
- Rois, F., & Munawaroh, H. (2019). Peran Sentralistik Kiai Dalam Mengembangkan Pola Manajerial dan Out Put Madrasah Diniyah di Era Milenial. *Journal ISTIGHNA*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.33853/istighna.v2i2.26>
- Scott, W. R. (2008). Institutions and organizations: Ideas and interests. In *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas and Interests*.
- Shiddiq, A., Ulfatin, N., Imron, A., Arifin, I., & Ubaidillah, A. F. (2022). Charismatic leadership of Kyai based on resilience of Pesantren in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Health Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6ns5.8387>
- Supendi, P., Hasanah, A., & Mahmud, M. (2019). Transformational Leadership in Pesantren on as Sa'idah, Al Matuq, and Sunanul Huda Boarding School. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2018.72.303-316>
- Zahraini, Situmorang, B., & Rosnelli. (2022). Development of Traditional Management Model of Traditional Islamic Boarding School Education Based on Total Quality Management in Islamic Education (Tqm-Ie) in Aceh Province , Indonesia. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(5).