



Strategic Leadership of Kyai in Traditional Islamic Educational Institutions: Dynamics of Adaptation and Transformational Challenges in Salaf Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract

The accelerating expansion of digital disruption, institutional accountability, and global educational competition has generated profound challenges for faith-based educational institutions, particularly in maintaining religious authenticity while simultaneously developing adaptive and sustainable governance systems. Within traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren salaf), these tensions position the kyai not merely as a symbolic religious authority, but as a strategic actor responsible for negotiating institutional continuity, organizational transformation, and educational resilience. Despite the growing literature on pesantren modernization, existing studies remain largely dominated by descriptive and techno-centric perspectives that insufficiently explain how charismatic-theological authority is strategically reconstructed into adaptive institutional governance. This study therefore aims to critically examine the strategic leadership of the kyai at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding School and to analyze the dynamics of adaptation and transformational challenges within traditional Islamic educational institutions. Employing a qualitative approach grounded in an interpretive paradigm, this research adopted a single-case study design involving in-depth interviews, participant observation, and institutional document analysis. Participants consisted of kyai, administrators, senior ustaz, alumni, dormitory administrators, and santri selected through purposive sampling. The findings reveal that the strategic leadership of the kyai operates through an integrated hybrid governance system combining charismatic-theological authority, professional educational management, adaptive-transformative leadership, indigenous-transformative values, and collaborative governance mechanisms. The study further demonstrates that institutional transformation within salaf Islamic boarding schools does not occur through the displacement of tradition, but through the strategic reconstruction of religious legitimacy and local cultural values into adaptive institutional capital. Theoretically, this study proposes the concepts of Theo-Managerial Hybridity and Hybrid Resilience as alternative non-Western frameworks for understanding organizational transformation and sustainability within faith-based educational institutions. More broadly, the findings contribute to the global discourse on educational leadership by demonstrating that institutional resilience within traditional religious organizations can emerge through strategic cultural hybridization rather than through secularization or the erosion of spiritual authority.

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INTRODUCTION

Faith-based educational institutions across the world are increasingly confronted with the challenge of sustaining religious identity while simultaneously responding to rapid organizational transformation, technological disruption, and global educational competition. Within this evolving landscape, leadership no longer functions merely as an administrative mechanism; rather, it has become a strategic determinant of institutional resilience, adaptability, and long-term sustainability.

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Contemporary educational leadership studies have demonstrated that institutions grounded in strong cultural and spiritual traditions frequently encounter tensions when attempting to integrate professional governance systems without eroding their foundational identity (Darwanto et al., 2024; Macpherson, 2025). These tensions are particularly visible within traditional Islamic educational institutions, where leadership authority is historically embedded in theological legitimacy, moral influence, and socio-cultural trust. In Indonesia, salaf Islamic boarding schools, commonly referred to as pesantren salaf, represent one of the largest and most enduring faith-based educational ecosystems in the Muslim world. The Ministry of Religious Affairs reports that thousands of pesantren continue to operate across Indonesia, serving not only as centers of Islamic learning but also as institutions of social reproduction, cultural preservation, and community empowerment. In this context, the strategic leadership of the kyai becomes increasingly significant because the sustainability of traditional Islamic educational institutions depends largely upon their ability to negotiate continuity and transformation within a rapidly changing global environment.

Historically, the leadership structure of salaf Islamic boarding schools has been strongly centered on charismatic authority, hereditary legitimacy, and the transmission of religious knowledge through sanad-based traditions. The kyai occupies a highly influential position, functioning simultaneously as spiritual leader, educational authority, cultural guardian, and institutional decision-maker (Karim et al., 2024; Rofiqi et al., 2026). However, the accelerating expansion of digital technology, institutional accountability standards, educational modernization, and managerial complexity has transformed the operational landscape of traditional Islamic educational institutions. Pesantren are no longer expected merely to preserve classical Islamic scholarship; they are increasingly required to demonstrate administrative effectiveness, strategic planning, organizational professionalism, and adaptive educational governance (Faizin, 2024; Sofi et al., 2025). These conditions create a multidimensional tension between preserving traditional authority and responding to contemporary institutional demands. In many cases, leadership systems rooted primarily in personal authority encounter challenges when facing issues related to governance distribution, technological adaptation, leadership regeneration, and institutional sustainability. Consequently, the strategic role of the kyai can no longer be interpreted solely within theological or cultural dimensions, but must also be understood through the lens of adaptive leadership, organizational transformation, and institutional resilience.

The urgency of examining strategic kyai leadership becomes more critical when considering the expanding role of pesantren within contemporary Muslim societies. Beyond functioning as educational institutions, pesantren increasingly operate as agents of social transformation, moral development, economic empowerment, and religious moderation (Jusubaidi et al., 2024; Tiana et al., 2025). Their institutional relevance depends not only on preserving religious orthodoxy, but also on their ability to respond effectively to social change and educational disruption. In this regard, the failure of leadership adaptation may weaken institutional legitimacy and reduce the capacity of pesantren to maintain their historical role within society. Several recent studies have shown that ineffective leadership transformation frequently results in organizational stagnation, limited innovation, and reduced institutional competitiveness in faith-based educational organizations (Hosch, 2025). At the same time, global educational systems increasingly emphasize collaborative governance, accountability, and innovation-oriented management practices, including within religious educational institutions. This situation positions the kyai not merely as a guardian of tradition, but as a strategic actor responsible for orchestrating institutional adaptation without sacrificing the cultural and spiritual authenticity of the pesantren. Therefore, understanding how kyai leadership reconstructs traditional authority into strategic institutional governance has become an increasingly important scholarly concern within contemporary Islamic educational management studies.

Among traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding School in Probolinggo represents a particularly significant empirical setting for examining these leadership dynamics. As a pesantren salaf deeply rooted in classical Islamic traditions, Nurul Qodim simultaneously demonstrates notable institutional adaptation in response to modern educational challenges. Following the transition of leadership after the passing of the founding kyai, the pesantren gradually strengthened its managerial structure, administrative coordination, educational governance, and organizational distribution of authority while maintaining its salafiyah

identity. This transformation illustrates that institutional modernization within pesantren does not necessarily occur through the abandonment of tradition, but rather through the reinterpretation and strategic reconstruction of local religious values. Leadership practices at Nurul Qodim reveal an ongoing negotiation between charismatic-theological authority and professional managerial rationality, particularly in areas related to governance effectiveness, educational quality, and institutional sustainability. The kyai continues to function as the central source of moral and spiritual legitimacy, yet leadership practices increasingly involve collaborative mechanisms, participatory decision-making, and adaptive organizational management. Such conditions make Nurul Qodim a compelling case for understanding how strategic leadership evolves within traditional Islamic educational institutions confronting the pressures of global transformation.

Recent scholarly discussions have increasingly highlighted the transformation of kyai leadership within pesantren contexts. Hadi, (2025); Halil, (2025); Utomo & Nadia, (2024) demonstrate that contemporary pesantren leadership has shifted toward more adaptive, collaborative, and technologically responsive governance patterns. Malik, (2024); Qorib, (2025) further argues that the transformation of Islamic educational institutions emerges from negotiations between religious conservatism and rational organizational modernization. Similarly, Darwanto et al. (2024) emphasize that leadership effectiveness significantly influences institutional accessibility, educational quality, and organizational sustainability within Islamic educational systems. Other studies by Khoirunnisa & Inayati, (2026); Nu'man, (2025); Suresman & Faqihuddin, (2026) indicate that the strategic role of the kyai increasingly extends beyond symbolic authority into managerial adaptation and institutional transformation. Furthermore, Houssaini, (2024); Negash Tesema, (2025) underline the growing importance of integrating spiritual values with professional educational governance in response to contemporary institutional challenges. Collectively, these studies confirm that kyai leadership has become a central issue within the discourse of Islamic educational transformation.

Despite the growing body of literature concerning pesantren leadership, several important limitations remain insufficiently addressed. First, the majority of previous studies primarily focus on modernization, digitalization, or leadership transformation in descriptive terms without adequately examining how strategic leadership is structurally constructed within salaf Islamic boarding schools. Second, many studies continue to conceptualize tradition and modernity as dichotomous categories, thereby overlooking the possibility of hybrid and negotiated leadership configurations. Third, insufficient attention has been devoted to understanding how charismatic-theological authority can simultaneously function as a mechanism of institutional legitimacy and a catalyst for organizational transformation. Existing studies also tend to emphasize institutional adaptation as an external managerial process while neglecting the internal cultural mechanisms through which transformation is legitimized and sustained. Moreover, limited research has explored how local pesantren values such as sanad, musyawarah, spiritual obedience, and collective ethics are strategically reconstructed into adaptive governance systems capable of responding to global educational disruptions. As a result, contemporary scholarship still lacks an integrative analytical framework capable of explaining how strategic kyai leadership mediates the tension between institutional continuity, adaptive transformation, and organizational resilience within traditional Islamic educational settings.

Departing from these limitations, this study aims to analyze the strategic leadership of the kyai at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding School by focusing on the dynamics of adaptation and transformational challenges within salaf Islamic educational institutions. Specifically, this research examines how charismatic-theological authority is integrated with professional managerial governance, how adaptive-transformative leadership mechanisms are constructed, and how collaborative governance emerges within a tradition-based institutional environment. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of strategic educational leadership literature by proposing the concept of Theo-Managerial Hybridity, a leadership framework that explains how transcendental authority and managerial rationality coexist within institutional transformation processes. The study further introduces the notion of Hybrid Resilience to explain how salaf Islamic boarding schools maintain institutional flexibility while preserving epistemological and cultural authenticity. Practically, the findings are expected to provide strategic insights for Islamic educational leaders, policymakers, and faith-based educational institutions regarding the development of adaptive governance systems rooted in local religious values. More broadly, this research contributes to the

global discourse on faith-based leadership by demonstrating that institutional transformation within traditional religious organizations can emerge through strategic hybridization rather than through the displacement of cultural identity.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach grounded in an interpretive paradigm to critically examine the strategic leadership of the kyai within the context of a traditional salaf Islamic boarding school. The interpretive paradigm was selected because the phenomenon under investigation involves socially constructed meanings, institutional values, leadership negotiations, and cultural interactions that cannot be adequately explained through positivistic or purely quantitative perspectives. Rather than measuring leadership effectiveness statistically, this study sought to understand how charismatic-theological authority is reconstructed into adaptive and transformative institutional governance within a faith-based educational environment. The qualitative approach enabled the researchers to capture the complexity, contextuality, and multidimensionality of leadership practices embedded within pesantren culture and organizational life. This study specifically adopted a single-case study design because the research aimed to investigate intensively and holistically a unique institutional phenomenon possessing strong empirical and theoretical significance (Amadi, 2021; Annamalah et al., 2025). The case study framework facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the interrelationship between strategic leadership, institutional adaptation, collaborative governance, and organizational resilience within a naturally bounded setting. Furthermore, the design was considered highly appropriate because leadership within salaf Islamic boarding schools is inseparable from historical traditions, spiritual legitimacy, social interaction, and local institutional culture that must be interpreted contextually rather than generalized mechanically (Bahri et al., 2026; Nawawi, 2025).

The research was conducted at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding School located in Kalikajar, Paiton, Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia. The pesantren was purposively selected because it represents a traditional salaf Islamic educational institution currently experiencing organizational adaptation and leadership transformation while maintaining strong theological and cultural foundations. Nurul Qodim constitutes a particularly relevant empirical setting for examining how strategic leadership evolves within faith-based institutions confronted by modernization, educational accountability, technological disruption, and institutional sustainability challenges. The pesantren has undergone gradual leadership restructuring following the transition of authority after the passing of the founding kyai, resulting in strengthened managerial coordination, redistribution of institutional authority, and increased organizational collaboration. These conditions provide a rich institutional context for analyzing the negotiation between charismatic authority and professional managerial governance. The study was conducted from September to December 2025, enabling prolonged engagement within the research setting. Prolonged field involvement was essential to strengthen contextual immersion, deepen interpretive understanding, and facilitate comprehensive observation of naturally occurring leadership practices and institutional interactions (Dumont, 2023; Rojas-Bravo et al., 2025).

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on role significance, institutional involvement, and experiential relevance to the research objectives. The participants consisted of the kyai as the principal institutional leader, core pesantren administrators, senior ustaz, senior alumni, dormitory administrators, and santri actively involved in educational and organizational activities. Inclusion criteria required participants to possess direct experience related to leadership processes, governance practices, educational management, organizational adaptation, or institutional transformation within the pesantren environment. Individuals lacking substantial institutional involvement or adequate understanding of leadership dynamics were excluded from participation. The purposive sampling strategy was selected because strategic leadership within traditional Islamic educational institutions is contextually embedded and socially negotiated; therefore, only information-rich participants could provide meaningful and analytically relevant insights (Hidayah et al., 2025). Data collection continued iteratively until thematic saturation was achieved, indicated by the recurrence of interpretive patterns and the absence of substantially new conceptual information emerging from subsequent interviews and

observations. Saturation was considered critical for ensuring analytical completeness and strengthening the credibility of the findings within qualitative inquiry.

Table 1. Research Setting and Participant Characteristics

Component	Description
Research Approach	Qualitative approach grounded in an interpretive paradigm
Research Design	Single-case study design
Research Location	Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding School, Kalikajar, Paiton, Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia
Research Period	September–December 2025
Participants	Kyai, core administrators, senior ustaz, senior alumni, dormitory administrators, and santri
Sampling Technique	Purposive sampling
Inclusion Criteria	Participants directly involved in leadership, governance, educational management, and institutional activities
Exclusion Criteria	Individuals lacking substantial institutional involvement or leadership-related experience
Research Focus	Strategic leadership, adaptation dynamics, and transformational challenges in salaf Islamic boarding schools
Saturation Strategy	Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached

Table 1 presents the research setting and participant characteristics employed in this study. The table demonstrates that the research involved multiple institutional actors representing diverse organizational positions within the pesantren ecosystem. The inclusion of various participant groups strengthened the richness, depth, and triangulation of perspectives regarding strategic leadership practices, institutional adaptation, and transformational governance within the pesantren environment.

The primary research instruments consisted of semi-structured interview protocols, participant observation guidelines, and document analysis frameworks. Semi-structured interviews were employed to explore participants' experiences, interpretations, reflections, and perceptions regarding strategic kyai leadership, institutional adaptation, governance transformation, and organizational sustainability. The interview protocols were developed based on theoretical dimensions derived from strategic leadership theory, adaptive leadership, organizational resilience, and Islamic educational management literature. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews enabled participants to articulate their perspectives naturally while allowing the researchers to probe emerging issues in greater analytical depth. Participant observation was conducted to examine leadership interactions, decision-making processes, educational activities, governance practices, religious gatherings, and everyday institutional dynamics within the pesantren environment. Observational field notes were systematically recorded to capture naturally occurring behaviors and contextual interactions associated with leadership practices. In addition, document analysis was conducted to examine organizational structures, institutional policies, leadership decrees, meeting reports, strategic programs, archives, and historical institutional documents relevant to the research focus. The integration of interviews, observations, and document analysis facilitated methodological triangulation and enabled the development of rich, contextualized, and empirically grounded interpretations (Ogunkan & Akinpelu, 2026; Schlunegger et al., 2024).

To ensure the trustworthiness, rigor, and credibility of the findings, several validation strategies were implemented throughout the research process. Content validity of the interview and observation protocols was established through expert judgment involving scholars in qualitative research methodology and Islamic educational leadership. The experts evaluated the relevance, clarity, conceptual alignment, and contextual appropriateness of the research instruments prior to field implementation. Preliminary observations and pilot interviews were also conducted to refine question structures and strengthen contextual sensitivity. The credibility of the findings was reinforced through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation (Kazu & Kuvvetli, 2023; Papavasileiou & Dimou, 2024). Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from the kyai, administrators, ustaz, alumni, and santri. Technique triangulation was achieved through cross-verification of interviews, participant observations, and institutional documents. Meanwhile, time triangulation ensured the consistency of findings across multiple

observation periods. Member checking was conducted by returning thematic interpretations and selected interview summaries to participants for confirmation and clarification. The researchers also maintained analytical memos, reflexive notes, and systematic audit trails throughout the research process to critically evaluate interpretive assumptions, minimize researcher bias, and strengthen analytical transparency (Lin et al., 2025; Zagami, 2026).

Table 2. Triangulation Framework for Data Trustworthiness

Triangulation Type	Implementation Strategy	Purpose
Source Triangulation	Comparing data obtained from kyai, administrators, ustaz, alumni, and santri	To ensure consistency and credibility of leadership interpretations
Technique Triangulation	Cross-checking interviews, participant observations, and institutional documents	To validate findings through multiple qualitative techniques
Time Triangulation	Conducting observations and interviews across different periods during fieldwork	To verify the stability and consistency of emerging findings
Member Checking	Returning thematic interpretations to selected participants	To confirm interpretive accuracy and reduce researcher bias
Prolonged Engagement	Maintaining continuous field involvement from September–December 2025	To strengthen contextual immersion and analytical depth

Table 2 presents the triangulation framework employed to strengthen the credibility, consistency, and interpretive trustworthiness of the study findings. The integration of multiple triangulation strategies enabled the researchers to minimize subjective bias, enhance contextual validity, and ensure that the interpretations accurately reflected the institutional realities of the pesantren environment.

The data collection process was conducted systematically through several interconnected stages. During the preparation stage, institutional permission was formally obtained from pesantren authorities, preliminary observations were undertaken, research instruments were developed, and participants were identified based on purposive criteria. During the implementation stage, in-depth interviews were conducted within naturally appropriate institutional settings to facilitate openness and contextual authenticity. Each interview lasted approximately 45–90 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent to ensure data accuracy and completeness. Simultaneously, participant observation was conducted during educational activities, religious gatherings, leadership meetings, dormitory supervision, and organizational interactions within the pesantren environment. Relevant institutional documents were continuously collected throughout the fieldwork process to support contextual interpretation and analytical triangulation. During the documentation stage, interview recordings, observational field notes, institutional documents, and reflective memos were systematically transcribed, organized, coded, and archived using structured qualitative data management procedures. Continuous reflective engagement was maintained throughout the fieldwork process to ensure interpretive sensitivity and analytical depth.

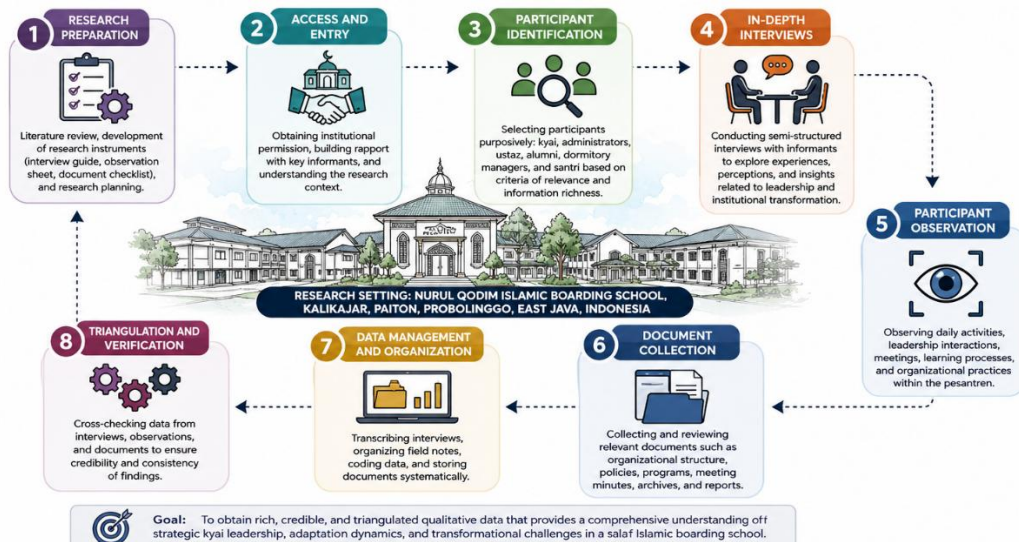


Figure 1. Data Collection Procedures

Figure 1 illustrates the sequential stages employed during the data collection process. The figure demonstrates that the study integrated interviews, observations, and document analysis systematically within an iterative qualitative framework. This procedure strengthened contextual immersion and enabled the researchers to capture naturally occurring leadership dynamics and institutional interactions within the pesantren environment comprehensively.

The data analysis process employed the interactive qualitative analysis model developed by (Hasanah et al., 2022), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection to facilitate continuous reflection, iterative interpretation, and conceptual refinement. The analytical process began with data condensation through transcription, open coding, categorization, and thematic reduction to identify meaningful patterns associated with strategic leadership practices and institutional transformation. Open coding was initially employed to identify significant concepts emerging directly from the empirical data. Subsequently, axial coding was conducted to establish relationships between categories and construct broader thematic patterns. Selective coding was then applied to synthesize central themes explaining the integration of charismatic authority, managerial rationality, collaborative governance, and adaptive transformation within the pesantren. Throughout the analytical process, analytical memos were continuously developed to capture emerging insights, interpretive reflections, conceptual relationships, and theoretical abstractions. The categorized data were subsequently displayed through narrative descriptions, thematic matrices, and relational interpretations to facilitate analytical clarity and conceptual integration. Finally, conclusions were drawn through iterative verification processes involving triangulation, reflexive interpretation, and alignment between empirical findings and relevant theoretical frameworks. This analytical approach enabled the researchers to construct nuanced and theoretically grounded interpretations while preserving the contextual authenticity of the investigated phenomenon.

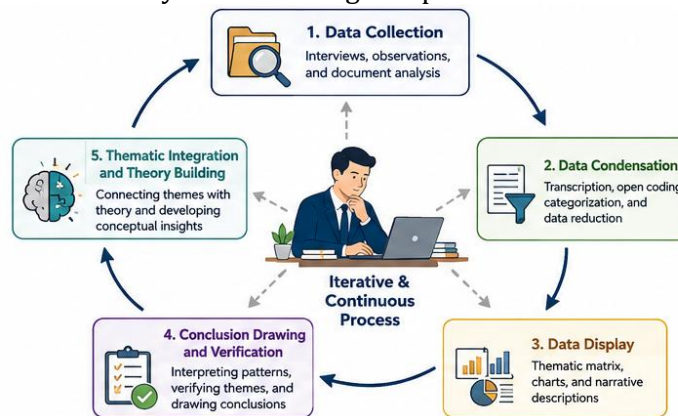


Figure 2. Interactive Qualitative Data Analysis Model

Figure 2 presents the interactive qualitative data analysis model employed in this study. The cyclical analytical structure demonstrates that interpretation was conducted continuously throughout the research process rather than only after data collection had been completed. This iterative approach strengthened analytical rigor, facilitated deeper theoretical abstraction, and ensured interpretive consistency across all stages of qualitative inquiry.

Research ethics constituted a central component of this study and were implemented throughout all stages of the research process. Prior to participation, all participants received a detailed explanation regarding the objectives, procedures, voluntary nature, and ethical considerations of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before interviews and observations were conducted. Participants were informed that they retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without negative consequences. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participant identities were replaced with pseudonyms and generalized institutional identifiers during transcription, interpretation, and reporting. All digital recordings, field notes, transcripts, and institutional documents were securely stored and accessed exclusively by the research team. The researchers also maintained reflexive awareness throughout the study to minimize interpretive bias and ensure ethical sensitivity toward the religious, cultural, and institutional values of the pesantren environment. Furthermore, the study adhered to institutional

ethical standards governing qualitative educational research and ensured that all findings were reported transparently, responsibly, and academically.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings concerning the integration of charismatic-theological authority and professional educational management demonstrate that the strategic leadership of the kyai at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding School operates through a hybrid governance configuration that harmonizes spiritual legitimacy with managerial rationality. The kyai no longer exercises authority solely through personal charisma and traditional religious influence, but strategically reconstructs theological legitimacy into an institutional mechanism capable of supporting organizational professionalism, administrative accountability, and adaptive educational governance. This integration enables the pesantren to maintain its salaf identity while simultaneously strengthening institutional coordination, governance effectiveness, and educational sustainability amidst contemporary educational disruption. The findings further indicate that managerial transformation within the pesantren is not interpreted as secularization or the erosion of traditional authority; rather, it is framed as a collective religious responsibility aimed at preserving institutional continuity and public benefit (*maslahah*). Consequently, charismatic authority functions not as an obstacle to organizational modernization, but as a strategic catalyst facilitating institutional adaptation without undermining the pesantren's cultural and epistemological foundations.

Integration of Charismatic-Theological Authority and Professional Educational Management

The professionalization of leadership at Pondok Islamic Boarding Schools Nurul Qadim unfolds as a process of strengthening the kyai's leadership capacity through the habituation of managerial practices integrated with the traditional values of the Islamic Boarding Schools. This professionalization is not intended to replace the kyai's cultural and spiritual authority; rather, it aims to enhance institutional management capabilities so that the Islamic Boarding Schools operates in an orderly, accountable, and responsive manner toward the dynamics of contemporary education. In this context, leadership professionalization functions as an adaptive strategy to ensure the sustainability of the Islamic Boarding Schools while preserving its scholarly and epistemic identity.

An exploration of the leadership dynamics and strategies at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding Schools reveals a hybrid leadership model that effectively integrates charismatic-theological authority with professional educational management. The findings indicate that the kyai no longer positions charisma as an untouchable instrument of absolute power; instead, it is reframed as a source of moral legitimacy to drive a professional bureaucratic system. Within this model, the kyai translates theological vision into measurable managerial performance indicators, enabling strategic decisions—such as quality standardization and curriculum digitalization—to be embraced by the Islamic Boarding Schools community as manifestations of progressive and adaptive spiritual obedience (*sami'na wa atha'na*).

The strategic leadership of the kyai at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding Schools is constructed through the integration of charismatic-theological authority and professional educational management. This model of leadership synthesizes religious legitimacy grounded in charisma, scholarly authority, and moral leadership with managerial rationality in the governance of educational institutions. The findings indicate that the authority of the kyai does not operate merely as a traditional symbol preserving the continuity of salaf values; rather, it expands functionally into a strategic force that directs institutional planning, organizes educational systems, ensures quality control, and fosters adaptive responses to external environmental changes. In this context, the integration of charismatic-theological and professional-managerial dimensions does not result in a negating dualism; instead, it generates a leadership configuration in which religious tradition serves as a normative foundation for effective, accountable, and transformation-oriented educational management practices. These findings affirm that the modernization of governance in salaf Islamic Boarding Schools does not occur through the substitution of traditional authority, but rather through its reconstruction into a more adaptive form of strategic leadership.

The integration operates through three principal mechanisms: value legitimation, managerial rationality, and the professionalization of educational leadership. Value legitimation is reflected in

the position of the *kyai* as the center of normative authority, safeguarding the ideological, moral, and epistemological orientation of the Islamic Boarding Schools in every strategic decision-making process. Managerial rationality is evident in the application of core management functions, including institutional planning, the distribution of organizational roles, the strengthening of coordination, and the development of educational systems that are more responsive to evolving demands. Meanwhile, the professionalization of educational leadership is realized through the enhancement of managerial capacity, a strong orientation toward quality, and the reform of governance practices that remain rooted in Islamic Boarding Schools culture. Collectively, these three mechanisms demonstrate that the effectiveness of *kyai* leadership is no longer determined solely by personal authority and charisma, but by the ability to synergize religious authority with professional competence in order to ensure institutional sustainability.

From an interpretive standpoint, the integrative model implemented at Nurul Qodim offers a significant theoretical contribution concerning the importance of *spiritualized management* within the context of traditional Islamic educational institutions. The findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of transformation in *Islamic Boarding Schools salaf* does not depend on replacing traditional authority with secular systems; rather, it hinges on the leader's capacity to hybridize organizational identity. This model evidences that charismatic-theological authority can function as a catalyst for managerial professionalism when it is framed within the narrative of public benefit (*maslahah 'ammah*). These findings provide a novel perspective to the global educational management literature, illustrating how faith-based institutions can achieve organizational excellence through the harmonization of sacred local wisdom and profane managerial rationality.

Hybrid Leadership Model at Nurul Qadim



Figure 3. Integration of Charismatic-Theological Authority

Figure 3 illustrates the conceptual integration between charismatic-theological authority and professional educational management within the leadership structure of Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding School. The figure demonstrates that spiritual legitimacy and moral leadership function as the foundational source of institutional authority, which subsequently legitimizes organizational adaptation and governance reform within the pesantren environment. Through a process of theological legitimation, managerial professionalism, administrative coordination, and governance restructuring become institutionally acceptable because they are interpreted within religious and cultural frameworks rooted in pesantren values. The figure further shows that this strategic hybridization process ultimately generates institutional sustainability and adaptive resilience, enabling the pesantren to remain organizationally responsive without losing its *salaf* identity and theological authenticity.

Visionary-Adaptive-Transformative Leadership

The strategic leadership of the *kyai* at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding Schools is constructed through an Adaptive-Transformative Leadership model, defined as a leadership pattern that integrates adaptive capacity in responding to change with transformative capability in directing institutional renewal grounded in the values of the *salaf* Islamic Boarding Schools tradition. This model is reflected in the *kyai's* leadership practices, which not only preserve traditional authority as a foundation of religious and moral legitimacy, but also develop strategic rationality in institutional

management, decision-making processes, and the adjustment of educational governance in response to evolving social demands.

An exploration of leadership practices at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding Schools reveals the manifestation of a distinctive Adaptive-Transformative model, in which the *Kyai* functions as an architect of change without uprooting established traditions. The findings indicate that the *Kyai* operationalizes a mechanism of “Theological Agility” to facilitate institutional adaptation—namely, the capacity to recontextualize *salafiyah* norms so that they remain compatible with the demands of modern educational management. Within this model, adaptation is not construed as a concession to secularism, but rather as a form of strategic *ijtihad* aimed at ensuring the sustainability of Islamic Boarding Schools values amid the currents of global educational disruption. Consequently, this approach produces an organizational structure that is flexible in its operational dynamics while maintaining a firmly rooted spiritual identity.

Furthermore, the transformative dimension of *Kyai* leadership at Nurul Qodim is manifested in a strategy of “Managerial Syncretism,” wherein charismatic authority is synergized with digitally grounded professional governance. The *Kyai* enacts transformation not through radical structural overhaul, but through the internalization of innovation-driven values within the *turats*-based curriculum. These findings indicate that the *Kyai* strategically orchestrates the Islamic Boarding Schools’s social and symbolic capital to mitigate internal resistance, while simultaneously converting external threats into opportunities for institutional development. Such transformation is inherently organic, positioning technological and administrative changes as *wasilah* (instrumental means) to attain a higher transcendental *ghayah* (ultimate purpose).

Based on the researcher’s interviews and observations, the adaptive–transformative leadership model operates through three principal mechanisms: strategic adaptation, distributed leadership, and value-based transformation. Strategic adaptation is reflected in the *kyai*’s capacity to interpret external changes, respond to institutional challenges, and undertake managerial adjustments without compromising the Islamic Boarding Schools’s identity. Distributed leadership is evident in the involvement of administrators, *asatidz*, and organizational structures in collective management processes, marking a shift from a centralized pattern toward a more collaborative leadership approach. Meanwhile, value-based transformation is manifested through governance reform, the strengthening of the educational system, and a sustainability-oriented institutional vision that remains rooted in the *salaf* tradition. These three mechanisms indicate that the effectiveness of *kyai* leadership is not solely determined by the strength of personal authority, but rather by the capacity to construct a leadership system that is adaptive, resilient, and transformative in responding to the dynamics of change.



Figure 4. Visionary–Adaptive–Transformative Leadership

Interpretively, this Adaptive-Transformative model constructs a new paradigm in Islamic educational management that challenges the dichotomy between traditionalism and modernity. The strategic leadership of the *kyai* at Nurul Qodim has successfully cultivated an educational ecosystem characterized by “hybrid resilience,” defined as the institutional capacity to sustain orthodoxy while remaining competitive within international academic standards. The findings of this study affirm that the success of transformation in *salaf* Islamic Boarding Schools is highly contingent upon the *kyai*’s capability to engage in sense-making processes regarding contemporary changes and to frame them within a narrative of *maslahah* (public good). This positions the model as a relevant and transferable leadership framework for faith-based educational institutions operating within the global arena.

Indigenous-Transformative Leadership

An in-depth exploration of leadership dynamics at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding Schools reveals the emergence of an Indigenous-Transformative Leadership model, a strategic synthesis that integrates the noble values of the Islamic Boarding Schools with the demands of contemporary change. The findings indicate that the *kyai* does not merely adopt modern management theories in a mechanistic manner; rather, he undertakes an “indigenization” process, embedding these concepts within the cosmological framework of the *salaf* tradition. In this context, the *kyai* positions his traditional authority as an anchor of stability, while his transformative vision functions as a catalyst for innovation. Within this model, institutional transformation is not perceived as a historical discontinuity, but rather as a reinforcement of indigenous existence that is capable of engaging critically with the demands of global educational standards.

The strategic leadership of the *kyai* at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding Schools is constructed through an Indigenous-Transformative Leadership Model, a framework that is deeply rooted in the values, authority, and local traditions of the Islamic Boarding Schools, while simultaneously possessing a transformative capacity to respond strategically to institutional change. This model demonstrates that the authority of the *kyai* does not merely function as a source of charismatic legitimacy that preserves the continuity of the *salaf* tradition; rather, it evolves into a strategic force that directs organizational adaptation, manages change, and ensures institutional sustainability.

This leadership practice is manifested in the *kyai's* ability to transform indigenous Islamic Boarding Schools values—such as *sanad* (scholarly transmission), exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*), deliberation (*musyawarah*), and a culture of obedience—into an operational foundation for strategic decision-making, institutional management, and the reinforcement of educational vision. These findings indicate that transformation within *salaf* Islamic Boarding Schools does not emerge through the imitative adoption of modern leadership models, but rather through the rearticulation of local values as a contextual and sustainable foundation for change.

The research findings further reveal that the indigenous-transformative leadership model operates through three principal characteristics: tradition-based value preservation, contextual institutional adaptation, and culturally grounded strategic transformation. Value preservation is reflected in the *kyai's* efforts to maintain moral authority, sustain scholarly traditions, and uphold the epistemological identity of the Islamic Boarding Schools as the foundation of leadership legitimacy. Contextual institutional adaptation is manifested in the *kyai's* capacity to interpret social change, accommodate managerial demands, and integrate elements of reform without displacing the core value structure of the Islamic Boarding Schools. Meanwhile, culturally grounded strategic transformation is evident in the renewal of governance practices, the distribution of leadership roles, and the strengthening of institutional sustainability through mechanisms that remain rooted in Islamic Boarding Schools culture. This configuration indicates that *kyai* leadership does not operate within a dichotomy between tradition and modernity; rather, it evolves through a dynamic process of negotiation that produces a form of identity-driven transformation anchored in local cultural foundations.

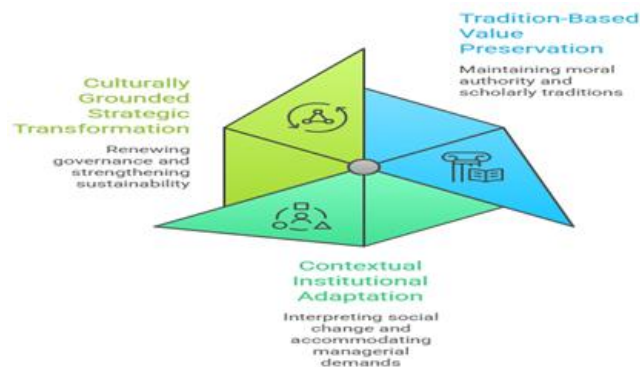


Figure 5. Indigenous-Transformative Leadership

Thus, in synthesis, this leadership model constructs a new paradigm in which the sustainability of traditional Islamic educational institutions is highly contingent upon the leader's capacity to balance the rigidity of core values with tactical flexibility. The findings of this study affirm that the Indigenous-Transformative Model at Nurul Qodim offers an antithesis to Western

universalist leadership models, which often fail to adequately apprehend the socio-religious context of Eastern societies. The *kiai*'s success in steering this adaptive process contributes theoretically to the global literature on educational leadership by demonstrating how a grassroots-based institution can achieve a high level of managerial effectiveness without compromising its cultural integrity, thereby fostering a form of organizational resilience that is both deeply rooted and broadly adaptive.

Collaborative Governance Leadership

An analysis of the leadership dynamics at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding Schools reveals a fundamental shift toward a Collaborative Governance Leadership model, in which the *Kyai* functions as the primary driving force (lead agency) within an inclusive partnership ecosystem. The findings indicate that the *Kyai* no longer exercises authority in an isolated manner; rather, he integrates diverse stakeholders—ranging from the board of caretakers, alumni (*Iksan*), and government institutions to professional experts—into the strategic decision-making process. Within this model, the governance of the Islamic Boarding Schools transforms into a form of “collaborative governance” that transcends traditional boundaries, whereby each stakeholder is afforded participatory space to contribute resources and competencies in pursuit of institutional transformation, without negating the foundational principles of *salafiyah*.

The strategic leadership of the *kyai* at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding Schools is constructed through a Collaborative Governance Leadership Model, a framework that positions the *kyai* not merely as the sole center of authority, but as a strategic actor who orchestrates collaboration, develops participatory governance, and integrates diverse institutional elements within strategic decision-making processes. This model is manifested in leadership practices that shift from a centralistic-charismatic pattern toward a collectivist leadership configuration, characterized by the active involvement of administrators, *asatidz* (teachers), educational structures, and other internal actors of the Islamic Boarding Schools in institutional management. Within this context, the authority of the *kyai* is not diminished; rather, it undergoes a functional transformation—from personal dominance to facilitative leadership that strengthens coordination, fosters consensus-building, and enhances governance effectiveness. These findings indicate that leadership transformation in *salaf* Islamic Boarding Schools does not occur through the erosion of traditional authority. Instead, it unfolds through a strategic reorientation of authority into a collaborative mechanism aimed at sustaining institutional continuity.

Based on in-depth interviews and archival document analysis of the Islamic Boarding Schools, the collaborative governance leadership model operates through three principal mechanisms: the distribution of authority, collective deliberation, and value-based synergy. The distribution of authority is reflected in the delegation of specific strategic functions to administrators and institutional structures without diminishing the *kyai*'s position as the holder of the institution's normative direction. Collective deliberation is manifested through *musyawarah* (consultative consensus), which functions not merely as an administrative decision-making instrument but also as a medium for generating shared legitimacy within the Islamic Boarding Schools's governance. Meanwhile, value-based synergy is evident in the integration of a culture of compliance, collegial ethics, and an orientation toward *maslahah* (public good) as the foundation of collaborative relationships among the Islamic Boarding Schools's constituent elements. These three mechanisms indicate that the effectiveness of the *kyai*'s strategic leadership does not solely rest on individual capacity, but rather on the ability to construct a participatory, adaptive, and sustainability-oriented governance ecosystem.

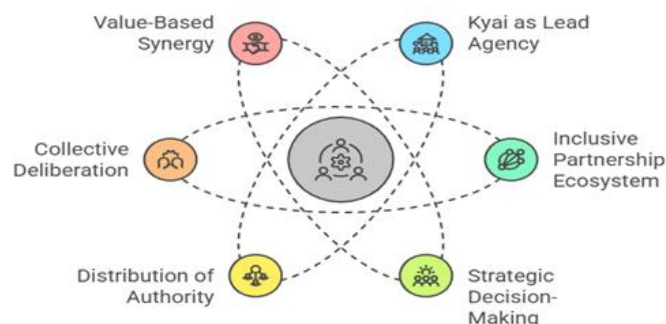


Figure 6. Collaborative Governance Leadership

Based on an in-depth and holistic exploration of the research data, this leadership model constructs a new paradigm asserting that the sustainability of *salaf* Islamic Boarding Schools in the era of disruption is highly contingent upon their capacity to remain open to collaboration without compromising institutional autonomy. The findings affirm that the Collaborative Governance model implemented by the *Kyai* at Nurul Qodim represents an antithesis to the traditionally closed and rigid models of Islamic educational management. By embracing principles of transparency and accountability within a religious framework, the *Kyai* has successfully fostered dynamic organizational resilience. These findings contribute theoretically to the global body of literature by demonstrating how religion-based leadership can effectively appropriate contemporary public governance structures to address the challenges of global transformation, thereby positioning this model as a relevant and adaptable framework for other traditional Islamic educational institutions at the national level.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the strategic leadership of the *kyai* at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding School has evolved beyond conventional charismatic authority into a hybridized governance system that integrates transcendental legitimacy with managerial rationality. This transformation indicates that leadership within *salaf* Islamic boarding schools is no longer sustained solely through symbolic religious influence, but increasingly through the institutionalization of adaptive governance mechanisms capable of responding to educational disruption and organizational complexity. The integration between spiritual authority and professional management identified in this study supports adaptive leadership theory, which argues that institutional resilience emerges from the capacity to reinterpret core values in response to changing environments rather than from rigid structural preservation. However, this study extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that adaptation within *pesantren* does not occur through the secularization of institutional authority, but through the theological legitimization of managerial transformation itself. Similar patterns were identified by Darwanto et al. (2024), Malik (2024), and Halil (2025), who observed that Islamic educational institutions increasingly require leadership models capable of balancing cultural authenticity with organizational professionalism. Nevertheless, unlike previous studies that primarily framed modernization as an administrative necessity, the findings of this research reveal that managerial reform within Nurul Qodim is interpreted as a collective moral obligation rooted in *maslahah*-oriented institutional ethics. This distinction is theoretically significant because it challenges the dominant assumption within global educational governance literature that professionalism and charismatic-religious authority necessarily exist in opposition. Instead, the findings indicate that theological legitimacy can function as a strategic catalyst that strengthens institutional modernization while simultaneously preserving epistemological continuity and organizational trust.

The professionalization of leadership identified in this study further illustrates that governance transformation within *salaf* Islamic boarding schools is fundamentally negotiated through cultural and spiritual narratives rather than imposed through bureaucratic restructuring alone. The findings reveal that managerial practices such as institutional planning, quality control, role distribution, and administrative coordination become socially acceptable because they are embedded within religious discourses emphasizing collective responsibility, obedience, and institutional sustainability. This finding reinforces institutional resilience theory, which emphasizes that organizations maintain long-term adaptability by reconstructing internal legitimacy systems rather than abandoning foundational identities. Studies conducted by Houssaini (2024), Khoirunnisa and Inayati (2026), and Negash Tesema (2025) similarly found that faith-based educational institutions achieve sustainable transformation when modernization is interpreted through locally accepted cultural frameworks. However, this study contributes a more critical perspective by revealing that professional governance within *pesantren* does not diminish charismatic authority; rather, it redistributes authority into collaborative managerial structures while preserving the *kyai* as the central source of normative legitimacy. Such findings contradict earlier modernization paradigms that associated bureaucratic professionalism with the decline of traditional authority structures. From a contextual standpoint, this process is strongly influenced by the *pesantren*'s socio-cultural ecosystem, where institutional trust is deeply embedded in theological obedience and

collective ethics. Consequently, governance reform is not perceived as an external intervention, but as a continuation of the pesantren's spiritual and educational mission. This study therefore contributes conceptually to the global discourse on faith-based governance by demonstrating that organizational professionalism can emerge through spiritualized management rather than through institutional secularization.

Another important finding concerns the emergence of visionary–adaptive–transformative leadership as a dominant mechanism through which the kyai negotiates institutional continuity and educational transformation. The findings indicate that adaptive leadership within Nurul Qodim is operationalized through what may be conceptualized as “theological agility,” namely the strategic capacity to reinterpret salaf values in ways that remain compatible with contemporary educational demands without undermining institutional authenticity. This finding aligns with adaptive leadership theory, which emphasizes contextual flexibility, strategic responsiveness, and organizational learning in periods of disruption. Recent studies by Utomo and Nadia (2024), Sofi et al. (2025), and Qorib (2025) similarly argue that pesantren leadership increasingly requires adaptive capacity in responding to technological expansion, institutional accountability, and global educational competition. Nevertheless, this study advances previous scholarship by showing that adaptation within salaf institutions is not merely reactive to external pressures, but is internally constructed through theological narratives framing transformation as a form of strategic *ijtihad*. In this context, adaptation is interpreted not as accommodation to secular modernity, but as an effort to preserve the sustainability of Islamic educational values in changing social environments. This finding is particularly significant because it challenges binary assumptions that position tradition and modernity as incompatible categories within Islamic educational systems. Instead, the evidence suggests that pesantren transformation emerges through negotiated continuity, where innovation becomes culturally legitimate precisely because it is framed within inherited epistemological structures. Theoretically, this finding broadens the global literature on educational leadership by introducing a culturally grounded model of adaptive transformation rooted in religious legitimacy rather than purely technocratic rationality.

The transformative dimension of kyai leadership identified in this study also demonstrates that organizational change within pesantren is achieved through gradual cultural reconstruction rather than through radical institutional rupture. The findings reveal that technological adaptation, governance restructuring, and educational innovation are positioned merely as instrumental means (*wasilah*) for achieving broader transcendental objectives rather than as autonomous indicators of institutional progress. This interpretation strongly supports value-based transformational leadership theory, which argues that sustainable organizational transformation depends on the alignment between institutional innovation and collectively shared moral vision. Comparable observations were reported by Karim et al. (2024), Jusubaidi et al. (2024), and Nu'man (2025), who found that pesantren transformation is highly dependent on leaders capable of integrating spiritual authority with organizational innovation. However, unlike previous studies that largely described transformational leadership in normative terms, this study critically demonstrates how symbolic religious authority is strategically operationalized to reduce institutional resistance toward change. This suggests that the effectiveness of transformation within salaf Islamic boarding schools does not emerge through coercive managerial restructuring, but through the reinterpretation of inherited traditions into adaptive institutional capital. Furthermore, the findings indicate that distributed leadership mechanisms significantly strengthen organizational resilience because adaptation no longer depends exclusively on the kyai's individual charisma. The gradual expansion of participatory managerial structures allows institutional flexibility to develop without weakening theological legitimacy. In broader theoretical terms, these findings modify conventional transformational leadership discourse by emphasizing that institutional change within faith-based organizations is inseparable from culturally embedded systems of moral authority and symbolic legitimacy.

The emergence of Indigenous-Transformative Leadership within Nurul Qodim further reveals that local pesantren values constitute the primary epistemological foundation of institutional adaptation and strategic governance. The findings demonstrate that indigenous concepts such as *sanad*, *musyawarah*, *uswah hasanah*, and collective obedience are not merely preserved as cultural symbols, but are transformed into operational principles guiding decision-making, institutional coordination, and organizational sustainability. This result supports studies conducted by Tiana et

al. (2025), Faizin (2024), and Suresman and Faqihuddin (2026), which emphasize the continuing relevance of local wisdom in strengthening institutional resilience within Islamic educational systems. However, this study extends prior scholarship by demonstrating that indigenous leadership within pesantren functions simultaneously as a mechanism of cultural preservation and strategic transformation. Rather than perceiving local tradition as an obstacle to modernization, Nurul Qodim reconstructs indigenous values into adaptive governance resources capable of responding to global educational disruption. This finding challenges universalist leadership paradigms that frequently prioritize managerial standardization while marginalizing culturally specific systems of legitimacy. From a critical perspective, the effectiveness of this indigenous-transformative model is strongly influenced by the pesantren's communal structure, where authority is inseparable from intergenerational trust, socio-religious continuity, and collective moral identity. Nevertheless, the findings also imply that the transferability of this leadership model to other institutional settings may depend upon the existence of similarly strong cultural legitimacy structures. In theoretical terms, this study contributes to the global leadership literature by offering a non-Western framework demonstrating how grassroots cultural systems can generate highly adaptive, resilient, and organizationally sustainable governance models.

The findings also demonstrate a substantial transformation toward collaborative governance leadership within the pesantren environment. The kyai increasingly functions not as an isolated authority holder, but as a strategic orchestrator integrating administrators, teachers, alumni, and institutional actors into participatory governance mechanisms. This transformation reflects a movement from centralized charismatic control toward a collectivist governance ecosystem emphasizing coordination, shared responsibility, and institutional sustainability. Conceptually, these findings align with collaborative governance theory, which highlights the importance of stakeholder participation, distributed authority, and collective decision-making in strengthening organizational effectiveness. Similar tendencies were identified by Rofiqi et al. (2026), Hadi (2025), and Macpherson (2025), who argued that educational institutions confronting complex transformation increasingly require collaborative governance structures rather than rigid hierarchical systems. However, this study demonstrates that collaboration within pesantren differs fundamentally from secular governance models because participatory mechanisms remain embedded within ethical obedience, theological legitimacy, and musyawarah-oriented consensus. Consequently, collaboration does not weaken the authority of the kyai; instead, it transforms authority into a facilitative mechanism that strengthens organizational cohesion and institutional legitimacy. This finding suggests that the sustainability of faith-based educational institutions increasingly depends upon their capacity to balance centralized moral authority with decentralized managerial participation. Practically, these findings provide important implications for Islamic educational institutions seeking governance reform without eroding cultural authenticity. More broadly, this study positions pesantren leadership within the global discourse on participatory educational governance by demonstrating that collaborative institutional systems can emerge organically from religious and cultural foundations rather than solely from liberal-democratic organizational frameworks.

Collectively, the findings of this study construct a broader conceptual argument that institutional resilience within salaf Islamic boarding schools emerges through strategic hybridization rather than through the displacement of tradition. The integration of charismatic authority, adaptive leadership, indigenous values, and collaborative governance demonstrates that pesantren transformation operates through negotiated continuity instead of institutional rupture. This finding fills a significant gap within previous scholarship, which frequently positioned tradition and modernity as dichotomous categories within Islamic educational transformation. In contrast, this study demonstrates that salaf institutions are capable of preserving epistemological authenticity while simultaneously developing adaptive governance systems responsive to global educational disruption. The concepts of Theo-Managerial Hybridity and Hybrid Resilience proposed in this study therefore contribute new perspectives to the international literature on faith-based educational leadership by explaining how transcendental legitimacy and managerial rationality can coexist within organizational transformation processes. Moreover, the study provides a critical alternative to dominant Western leadership paradigms that often overlook the strategic role of spiritual legitimacy and indigenous cultural systems in sustaining institutional adaptability. Within the broader landscape of global educational research, this study reinforces the argument that non-

Western leadership traditions should not merely be treated as local anomalies, but as legitimate epistemological frameworks capable of enriching contemporary organizational theory. Although the findings are contextually grounded within a single pesantren case, they provide transferable conceptual insights regarding how traditional religious institutions may sustain organizational effectiveness in rapidly changing environments. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that the future sustainability of faith-based educational institutions may depend less on abandoning tradition and more on their ability to strategically reconstruct tradition into adaptive institutional capital.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the strategic leadership of the kyai at Nurul Qodim Islamic Boarding School represents a dynamic and adaptive transformation of leadership within salaf Islamic educational institutions in the contemporary era. The findings demonstrate that the sustainability of traditional pesantren is no longer determined solely by the preservation of charismatic-theological authority, but by the capacity to reconstruct that authority into an adaptive governance system capable of responding to organizational complexity, educational disruption, and global institutional change. The leadership model identified in this study operates through the integration of spiritual legitimacy, managerial rationality, collaborative governance, and culturally grounded transformation, thereby producing a hybrid governance structure that simultaneously preserves institutional authenticity and strengthens organizational resilience. Through this process, the kyai functions not merely as a symbolic religious figure, but as a strategic institutional actor who orchestrates adaptation, legitimizes transformation, and sustains collective institutional identity within a rapidly changing educational environment. The findings further reveal that institutional modernization within salaf Islamic boarding schools does not emerge through the displacement of tradition or the secularization of religious authority. Instead, transformation is strategically negotiated through theological narratives, indigenous cultural values, participatory governance, and adaptive reinterpretation of pesantren traditions. Consequently, the study demonstrates that organizational professionalism and religious legitimacy are not contradictory categories, but can coexist within a mutually reinforcing institutional framework capable of generating sustainable educational transformation.

Theoretically, this study contributes significantly to the global discourse on educational leadership by proposing the concepts of Theo-Managerial Hybridity and Hybrid Resilience as alternative analytical frameworks for understanding institutional transformation within faith-based educational organizations. These concepts extend existing leadership literature by explaining how transcendental legitimacy, indigenous institutional values, and managerial professionalism may operate simultaneously within adaptive governance systems. The study also challenges dominant Western-centered leadership paradigms that frequently position modernization and traditional authority as mutually exclusive constructs. Instead, the findings demonstrate that non-Western faith-based institutions possess their own epistemological mechanisms for constructing organizational resilience and governance effectiveness through culturally embedded leadership systems. Practically, the findings provide important strategic implications for Islamic educational institutions, policymakers, and faith-based educational leaders seeking to strengthen institutional sustainability without undermining cultural identity and spiritual authenticity. The collaborative, adaptive, and indigenous-transformative leadership patterns identified in this study may serve as a relevant governance model for traditional educational institutions confronting the pressures of globalization, technological disruption, and institutional accountability. Nevertheless, this study remains contextually grounded within a single-case qualitative setting, and therefore future studies are encouraged to examine the applicability of these leadership concepts across diverse pesantren ecosystems, comparative faith-based educational institutions, and broader socio-cultural contexts. Ultimately, this study affirms that the long-term resilience of traditional Islamic educational institutions depends not on resisting transformation, but on their ability to strategically reconstruct tradition into adaptive institutional capital capable of sustaining both cultural continuity and organizational innovation within the contemporary global educational landscape.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Dian Zulfafatul Iman contributed to the conceptualization of the study, research design development, data collection, field investigation, data interpretation, drafting of the manuscript, and preparation of the discussion and conclusion sections. Jazilurrahman contributed to methodological refinement, theoretical framework development, supervision of the research process, critical review and validation of the findings, academic editing, and final manuscript revision. Both authors collaboratively discussed the research findings, contributed to the interpretation of the data, approved the final version of the manuscript, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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