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## TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE MANAGEMENT OF MODERN PESANTREN

**Wahyudi Widodo**

STAI Mahad Aly Alhikam Malang

[wahyudiwido62@gmail.com](mailto:wahyudiwido62@gmail.com)

### HIGHLIGHT

- The planning of work programs in the field of public relations is carried out through a structured mechanism, the school principal conducts periodic evaluations, community participation is quite good and enthusiastic.

### ABSTRACT

Modern pesantren face significant challenges in managing Islamic educational institutions to remain relevant in the era of globalization without losing their identity. Transformational leadership is one approach that can be applied to ensure that pesantren can develop adaptively and innovatively. This study aims to analyze the role of transformational leadership in the management of modern pesantren, focusing on strategies for enhancing human resource capacity, strengthening financial independence, optimizing technology, and establishing strategic partnerships. The research method used is a literature study (library research) with a qualitative descriptive approach. Data sources were obtained from indexed journals, academic books, and relevant policy documents. The data were analyzed using content analysis techniques with a thematic approach to identify key patterns in the implementation of transformational leadership in modern pesantren. The results indicate that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in driving positive changes in modern pesantren. Through systematic strategies, pesantren can enhance human resource capacity through leadership training and certification, strengthen financial independence by managing business units based on sharia economics and productive waqf, and optimize technology

*in pesantren management systems. Additionally, partnerships with universities and industries create opportunities for pesantren to continue innovating and improving their competitiveness at both national and international levels. This study contributes academically to the discourse on pesantren leadership and serves as a foundation for further empirical research. It is expected that the findings of this study can serve as a reference for pesantren administrators in implementing more effective and sustainable transformational leadership.*

## **KEYWORD**

Transformational Leadership, Modern Pesantren, Educational Management, Educational Innovation, Pesantren Governance

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Modern pesantren represent a significant transformation in Islamic education over the past few decades. As Islamic educational institutions, modern pesantren strive to accommodate contemporary changes by integrating traditional Islamic values with a more structured formal education system (Bashori, 2017; Nuryani et al., 2023). Unlike traditional or salafiyah pesantren, which emphasize the study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) as the primary source of Islamic knowledge, modern pesantren integrate religious education with formal education systems, including science, technology, and foreign languages. This development necessitates a more adaptive and innovative leadership model to address various challenges, such as globalization, digitalization, and increasingly complex socio-economic dynamics. This transformation is driven by the need for Muslim communities to have educational institutions that not only equip students (*santri*) with a strong understanding of Islam but also with skills relevant to contemporary advancements (Gusli et al., 2024).

In practice, several modern pesantrens in Indonesia have successfully implemented an educational system aligned with technological advancements and global demands. For instance, Pesantren Modern Darussalam Gontor has adopted technology-based learning methods and integrated character education with a modern management system (Zulkifli, 2023). Additionally, Pesantren Tebuireng has implemented digitalization in administration and student learning through a

pesantren-based Learning Management System (LMS) platform (M. I. Yusuf, 2025). The success of these pesantrens in adapting to change highlights the importance of a leadership model capable of addressing contemporary challenges, one of which is transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership was first introduced by Burns (1978) and later expanded by Bass (1985). This model focuses on how leaders can inspire, motivate, and transform organizational members toward achieving higher goals and visions. There are four key components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). A transformational leader is not merely an administrative manager but also a change agent who instills vision, enhances performance, and creates a conducive environment for innovation and human resource development. In the context of modern pesantren, transformational leadership can serve as an effective strategy to improve the quality of education, resource management, and character formation of santri not only in terms of intellectual intelligence but also in their spiritual and social development (Imaduddin, 2024).

Several previous studies have highlighted the significant impact of transformational leadership on the effectiveness of educational organizations. For instance, research conducted by Nashrullah et al. (2025), Ridlo (2024), dan Syahrul et al. (2023) in the context of school leadership demonstrates that transformational leadership contributes to enhancing teacher motivation, improving learning effectiveness, and fostering a positive organizational culture. In the context of Islamic education, studies by Mumtaz (2021), Nasution (2017), dan Syafi'i (2022) affirm that modern pesantren led by *kiai* who adopt transformational leadership styles are better able to adapt to globalization challenges, improve student quality, and develop innovative management strategies. This underscores the relevance of transformational leadership in modern pesantren management, especially in addressing the challenges of the 21st century.

One of the primary challenges in modern pesantren leadership is balancing traditional pesantren values with the demands of modernization and globalization (Khofi & Furqon, 2024). Many pesantren still adhere to a charismatic leadership model, where the *kiai* serves as the central authority in all aspects of pesantren life (Rosita, 2018). While this approach fosters loyalty and discipline among *santri*, it is often less flexible in adapting to changes in educational systems and technology. A study by Syihabuddin (2024) found that pesantren implementing transformational leadership are more successful in integrating digital technology into learning, managing resources effectively, and fostering a stronger culture of innovation.

Additionally, the digitalization of education and technological disruption pose significant challenges for modern pesantren. In recent years, technological advancements have transformed learning methods, including in Islamic education systems. Research by Kaniawati et al. (2022) highlights the increasing necessity of utilizing Learning Management Systems (LMS), pesantren-based e-learning, and digitalized pesantren administration to enhance learning effectiveness. However, the implementation of these technologies often faces obstacles, particularly concerning human resource readiness and organizational culture, which still adheres to traditional approaches (M. I. Yusuf, 2025). Thus, transformational leadership emerges as a potential solution to these challenges, requiring pesantren leaders to have a clear vision for adopting technology while preserving the Islamic essence of pesantren education.

Furthermore, in the context of globalization, modern pesantren must also address challenges related to pluralism and multiculturalism. Many modern pesantren today accommodate *santri* from diverse social, cultural, and even national backgrounds. Yusuf (2021) emphasizes that transformational leadership can help pesantren create an inclusive environment, ensuring that Islamic values remain universal and adaptable to diversity. Consequently, transformational leadership is essential not only for academic and administrative management but also for shaping a pesantren culture that is open and responsive to social dynamics.

Despite the significant potential of transformational leadership in modern pesantren management, research gaps remain regarding its specific application in the Indonesian pesantren context (Fathiyyah & Khusna, 2024). Most studies on pesantren leadership are still dominated by discussions on charismatic and paternalistic leadership models, while research on the implementation of transformational leadership in areas such as management, learning strategies, and human resource development is still limited (Mumtaz, 2021; A. Yusuf, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to examine how transformational leadership is applied in modern pesantren management through an in-depth literature review to identify the principles, strategies, and impacts of this leadership model.

This research contributes academically by enriching the discourse on Islamic educational leadership from a transformational perspective. Practically, it also provides recommendations for pesantren leaders in adopting more adaptive and innovative leadership strategies, enabling modern pesantren to develop into competitive, high-quality educational institutions while remaining firmly rooted in Islamic values. Hence, this study is expected to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the role of transformational leadership in addressing contemporary challenges faced by modern pesantren in Indonesia.

## **B. METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using a literature review (library research) method. A literature study was chosen to analyze the concept of transformational leadership in the management of modern pesantrens in depth, based on credible academic sources. This method is appropriate as it examines various credible academic references to explore conceptual and theoretical understandings of transformational leadership. The primary data sources in this study include Scopus- and SINTA-indexed scientific journals, academic books, conference proceedings, and relevant official policy documents. These sources are selected using keywords related to transformational leadership and modern pesantren management.

Data analysis in this study is conducted using content analysis with an inductive thematic approach. The collected data is reduced, categorized based on key themes, and then interpreted to identify patterns of transformational leadership within the context of modern pesantren. To enhance the validity of the study, source triangulation is applied by comparing various academic references to ensure objectivity and relevance of findings. Although this study does not utilize primary data, the findings can serve as a foundation for further research exploring the implementation of transformational leadership in modern pesantrens through an empirical approach, such as interviews with kiai, pesantren leaders, and students. Thus, this study provides a strong conceptual contribution while also creating opportunities for more practical, field-based research.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Characteristics of Transformational Leadership in the Context of Modern Pesantren**

Transformational leadership is a leadership paradigm oriented towards change and innovation, which is highly relevant in the context of modern pesantren. Transformational leadership in modern pesantren has distinctive characteristics, where leaders not only act as scholars and educators but also as innovators capable of bringing about changes in the education system. Bass & Avolio (1994) state that transformational leadership comprises four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In the context of modern pesantren, these four dimensions are reflected in various aspects of management, ranging from curriculum design to human resource management within the institution. Next, these four dimensions can be examined and elaborated as follows.

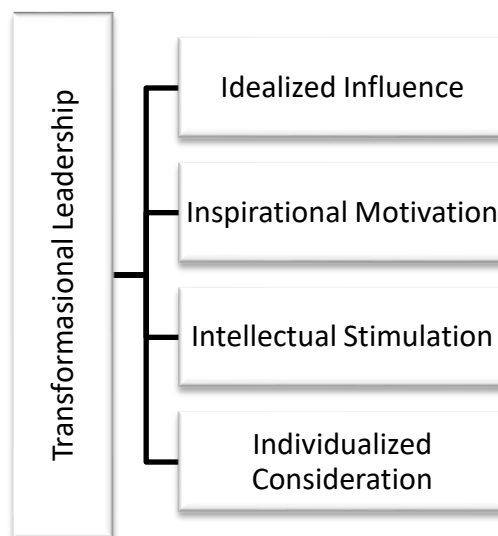


Figure 1. Four Elements of Transformational Leadership Behavior

a. Idealized Influence

Leaders act as role models who are respected and followed by their followers. Idealized influence in modern pesantren is evident in the figure of a kiai or pesantren leader who serves as an example for students and educators (Pramitha, 2020). A leader with idealized influence can build trust and integrity in leading the pesantren, thereby creating an environment that supports intellectual and spiritual development. In this regard, pesantren leaders must possess integrity, moral commitment, and a strong vision to develop pesantren that remain relevant to contemporary advancements. For instance, several modern pesantren in Indonesia have begun implementing curricula that integrate Islamic values with contemporary scientific knowledge.

b. Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation is reflected in how pesantren leaders communicate a clear vision and mission of Islamic education transformation, which is not only rooted in traditional values but also oriented toward contemporary needs. Leaders can inspire students, educators, and all pesantren stakeholders to have a clear vision for the future of Islamic education. A transformational leader in a modern pesantren is not only involved in religious education but also inspires students to be competitive in the global arena. This is evident in the leadership model of Pesantren Daarut Tauhiid, which teaches the principle of economic independence based on spirituality (A. Yusuf, 2021).

c. Intellectual Stimulation

The dimension of intellectual stimulation is reflected in how modern pesantren encourage students and educators to think critically and innovatively. This is often manifested through curriculum development that integrates religious and general sciences, the use of technology in learning, and the strengthening of digital literacy within pesantren environments. Transformational leadership in modern pesantren fosters innovation in teaching methods, pesantren management, and students' intellectual development. The blended learning model, which combines digital technology with the traditional halaqah-based learning system, is one example of how pesantren are adapting to the digital era (Kholik, 2023).

#### d. Individualized Consideration

Individualized consideration reflects a leader's attention to the personal development of individuals in pesantren, including students and educators, through mentoring, coaching, and leadership training programs. Leaders in modern pesantren must recognize the unique development of each student and educator. The mentoring and coaching models are emerging as approaches to ensure that students receive guidance tailored to their potential and interests, both in religious and general knowledge (Faqih, 2024).

Previous studies indicate that pesantren adopting transformational leadership demonstrate a higher level of adaptability in facing modernization challenges. A study conducted by Aini (2021) concluded that modern pesantren led with a transformational approach are better able to enhance students' competitiveness at both national and international levels.

## **2. Implementation Strategies of Transformational Leadership in Pesantren Management**

Modern pesantren function not only as religious educational institutions but also as centers for character development, economic empowerment, and social engagement. In the context of modern pesantren, transformational leadership requires appropriate strategies to be effectively implemented. Several key strategies in managing modern pesantren include:

#### a. Curriculum Transformation

Modern pesantren develop a curriculum that integrates religious and general sciences, enabling students to acquire a strong understanding of Islam while gaining skills relevant to the job market. For instance, Pesantren Al-Izzah in Batu applies an Islamic Leadership-based curriculum, which combines religious education with leadership and entrepreneurial skill development (Muthohar, 2024). Additionally, several pesantren have adopted a science-Islam integration model by implementing the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) approach

contextualized within Islamic teachings. This policy allows students to master worldly knowledge without losing their spiritual essence. This approach demonstrates that modern pesantren not only uphold Islamic values but also provide students with the opportunity to compete in the Industry 4.0 era.

b. Human Resource Strengthening and Teacher Empowerment

In the context of transformational leadership, strengthening the competencies of educators and pesantren administrators is a key factor for success. Pesantren leaders can implement various strategies, such as providing pedagogical and technology-based learning methodology training, leadership and educational management training for teachers, and performance-based evaluation systems to improve teaching quality. Research by Tohiroh et al. (2021) indicates that pesantren with regular training programs for educators are more effective in enhancing education quality and the competitiveness of graduates.

c. Digitalization of Pesantren Management

Transformational leadership in modern pesantren is also reflected in the utilization of digital technology in administrative and learning systems. Modern pesantren are beginning to integrate technology into administration and learning, such as digital-based academic information systems for efficient student and teacher data management, e-learning to enhance student learning accessibility, and mobile-based pesantren applications to facilitate communication between administrators, parents, and students. For example, pesantren like Gontor have started implementing digitalization systems to improve pesantren management efficiency (Nur & Sanina, 2024). This aligns with Huzali (2024) research on leadership, which suggests that innovation and digitalization-based strategies can enhance leadership effectiveness in educational organizations, including pesantren. Therefore, the implementation of this strategy in modern pesantren can improve the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions in the era of globalization.

d. Collaboration with Industry and Higher Education Institutions

Modern pesantren, led with a transformational approach, are also beginning to establish strategic partnerships with industries and universities. Some forms of collaboration that have been implemented include internship programs for students in Sharia-based companies to provide them with real work experience, partnerships with universities in double-degree programs that enable students to obtain both academic degrees and pesantren-certified religious credentials, and the development of pesantren-based entrepreneurship programs, such as productive waqf-based business units that serve as self-sustaining funding sources for pesantren.



### **3. Challenges in Implementing Transformational Leadership in Modern Pesantren**

Although transformational leadership offers various advantages in managing modern pesantrens, its implementation is not without complex challenges. These challenges arise from both internal and external factors. Some challenges and limitations in applying transformational leadership in modern pesantrens include:

#### **a. Resistance to Change**

One of the main challenges is resistance from some caregivers, educators, and students who have long been accustomed to the traditional system (Hadi, 2023). Modernization efforts are often perceived as a deviation from deeply rooted pesantren values. This resistance can hinder the acceptance of new policies introduced by leaders.

#### **b. Limited Resources**

Modern pesantrens implementing transformational leadership often face constraints in terms of funding, infrastructure, and qualified educators (Santoso & Selwen, 2023). The transition to a more advanced system requires substantial investment, including human resource training, technology procurement, and supporting facilities.

#### **c. Management Complexity**

The application of transformational leadership demands more complex managerial skills (Fauziyah, 2022). Leaders must balance traditional pesantren values with modernization demands, including academic, financial, and human resource management aspects. Not all pesantren leaders possess the necessary competencies to effectively implement this leadership style.

#### **d. Generational Perspective Differences**

Differences in perspectives between senior and younger generations in pesantrens often pose challenges in implementing transformational leadership (Muaz, 2023). Senior generations tend to maintain established methods, while younger generations are more open to innovation. This imbalance can lead to internal tensions in the decision-making process.

#### **e. Regulatory and Government Policy Challenges**

Modern pesantrens that adopt transformational leadership also face challenges in adapting to evolving regulations (Fathiyyah & Khusna, 2024). Government policies related to education, licensing, and accreditation often influence the flexibility of pesantren management.

### **4. Solutions and Recommendations for Strengthening Transformational Leadership in Modern Pesantren**

To overcome challenges in implementing transformational leadership, a systematic and sustainable strategy is required. The following are several solutions that can be applied to strengthen the role of transformational leadership in managing modern pesantrens. A hybrid leadership approach serves as the primary solution by integrating traditional pesantren values with modern leadership principles to maintain a balance between pesantren culture and innovation demands (Febriantina et al., 2025).

Additionally, human resource capacity building is key to reinforcing transformational leadership in pesantrens. Leaders and educators need to be equipped with managerial skills, pedagogical expertise, and innovative strategies in Islamic education. Training programs covering transformational management, digital learning, and educational entrepreneurship can enhance leadership effectiveness (Romlah et al., 2024). Furthermore, teacher certification in digital learning and educational management is an essential step to ensure that teaching methods remain relevant to contemporary developments (Das & Halik, 2021; Shandilia et al., 2024).

Financial independence is also a crucial factor in institutional transformation. Independent funding models can be developed through Sharia-based business units, such as student cooperatives, waqf-based enterprises, and halal product production. The optimization of productive waqf and partnerships with businesses through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs and scholarships for outstanding students can ensure the sustainability of pesantren operations. With a self-sufficient financial system, pesantrens can improve the quality of education without relying on external assistance.

In the digital era, technology optimization is a key strategy for more efficient and transparent pesantren management. According to Efendi et al. (2023), technology-based management information systems can be implemented to enhance administrative accountability, from financial record-keeping to student academic management. The use of e-learning platforms can expand educational access, while the development of mobile applications for pesantrens can facilitate communication between administrators, students, and parents. With the right technological implementation, pesantrens can improve their competitiveness and adaptability to changing times (Mu'awanah, 2024).

Strategic partnerships with universities and industries also play a crucial role in strengthening pesantrens in the modern era. Collaboration with universities can assist in developing research-based curricula, while internship programs in the Sharia economy and halal technology sectors can equip students with practical skills needed in the job market (Aggisni et al., 2024; Dayusman, 2023). Moreover,

establishing research centers within pesantrens can serve as platforms for academic studies in modern Islamic education, allowing pesantrens to function not only as traditional educational institutions but also as knowledge hubs contributing to the advancement of Islamic civilization.

By combining an adaptive leadership approach, human resource development, financial independence, technology optimization, and strategic partnerships, modern pesantrens can overcome challenges in implementing transformational leadership and evolve into more innovative and competitive educational institutions.

## **5. Implications of Research on the Development of Islamic Boarding School Management**

The implementation of transformational leadership in modern pesantren has a significant impact on management quality, learning processes, and the competitiveness of pesantren in facing global challenges. These implications can be observed in several key aspects, including the improvement of education quality, the strengthening of students' character, the modernization of management systems, and the relevance of pesantren in the digital era (Idrus, 2016; Tabroni, 2024).

One of the primary impacts of transformational leadership is the innovation in curriculum and learning systems (Shandilia et al., 2024). With visionary leadership, pesantren do not solely focus on religious education but also integrate modern sciences, technology, and entrepreneurship into their curriculum. A study by Hakim & Maunah (2023) indicates that pesantren implementing transformational leadership experience a significant increase in digital-based teaching methods, the adoption of project-based learning, and the use of interactive learning media. Furthermore, leadership transformation encourages the development of a curriculum that integrates Islam and science, where students are not only taught Islamic knowledge but also equipped with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy (Wijaya et al., 2016). This approach ensures that pesantren graduates are better prepared to face challenges in both the professional and academic worlds.

Transformational leadership also emphasizes the formation of students' character, particularly in terms of independence, creativity, and leadership (Nurul Romdoni & Malihah, 2020). Pesantren leaders not only act as administrators but also as motivators and role models for students. Pesantren adopting this model have been able to enhance students' self-confidence and resilience, as demonstrated by Zahera (2023), who recorded an increase in the number of pesantren alumni becoming entrepreneurs, academics, and professionals in various fields. Thus,

transformational leadership not only strengthens pesantren institutions but also cultivates a generation of independent and competitive students.

In terms of management, transformational leadership promotes the adoption of technology to improve efficiency and administrative transparency. Pesantren have started implementing e-administration, e-learning, and digital financial information systems (Junaidi et al., 2024). Some pesantren have developed Learning Management System (LMS) platforms for online and hybrid learning (Mustofa, 2024), and have implemented more accountable financial systems to enhance public and donor trust. This modernization enables pesantren to manage resources more effectively and create long-term funding opportunities.

The relevance of pesantren in the global era is increasingly strengthened through the implementation of transformational leadership. Pesantren are now actively collaborating with higher education institutions and industries to enhance students' competitiveness. For example, some pesantren have established partnerships with technology companies and research-based universities to develop digital skill certification programs for students. This initiative ensures that pesantren graduates possess competencies aligned with the demands of the workforce.

Additionally, transformational leadership reinforces the role of pesantren in community empowerment. Modern pesantren have developed business incubation programs based on the Islamic economy, such as student cooperatives, organic farming, and halal industries. Some pesantren are also actively involved in social programs, such as providing free education for orphans and underprivileged children, offering vocational training to the local community, and conducting digital-based Islamic outreach. A study by Syihabuddin (2024) affirms that pesantren with transformational leadership have a broader impact in strengthening the relationship between education, economics, and society, contributing to national development. Thus, the implementation of transformational leadership in modern pesantren is not merely a management strategy but also a foundation for the transformation of Islamic education that is more relevant, adaptive, and competitive in the digital era.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Transformational leadership in modern pesantren management serves as a key factor in addressing contemporary challenges while maintaining the identity of pesantren as leading Islamic educational institutions. This leadership model not only focuses on reinforcing traditional pesantren values but also emphasizes innovation, long-term vision, and human resource empowerment to ensure that

pesantren remain competitive in the era of globalization. Its implementation requires a comprehensive strategy, including human resource capacity building through training and certification, financial independence through business units and productive endowments, optimization of technology in pesantren management, and strategic partnerships with universities and industries.

This study affirms that the success of transformational leadership in modern pesantren depends on the leaders' ability to foster an innovative culture, enhance participation from all pesantren stakeholders, and design an adaptive and sustainable management system. By implementing appropriate strategies, modern pesantren can evolve into educational institutions that excel not only in Islamic studies but also in management and societal contributions. Therefore, further empirical research is needed to measure the effectiveness of transformational leadership in various modern pesantren, in order to identify the best models that can be widely applied within the contemporary Islamic education context.

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