THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES ON CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IN MODERN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

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INFO ARTIKEL	ABSTRAK
	Abstract: Research on leadership strategies in curriculum management in modern *pesantren* is important considering the challenges of Islamic education in the digital era which demands adaptive and innovative governance. This study aims to identify and analyze the most effective leadership strategies in curriculum management in modern *pesantren* using the Systematic Literature Review approach. This study is a qualitative research with data obtained from Dimensions and Scopus databases. The results of the analysis show that leadership transformation that is adaptive to digitalization is a key factor in improving the quality of educational governance. Effective leadership is characterized by the ability to design a strategic vision, build collaboration with various stakeholders, and encourage the integration of technology in the curriculum management process. This finding confirms that strengthening the capacity of transformative leadership needs to be a priority in the development of modern *pesantren* in order to be able to respond to the dynamics of educational change in a sustainable manner. **Abstrak**: Penelitian tentang strategi kepemimpinan dalam manajemen kurikulum di pesantren modern menjadi penting mengingat tantangan pendidikan Islam di era digital yang menuntut tata kelola yang adaptif dan inovatif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis strategi kepemimpinan yang paling efektif dalam manajemen kurikulum di pesantren modern dengan menggunakan pendekatan *Systematic Literature Review*. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan data yang diperoleh dari database Dimensions dan Scopus. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa transformasi kepemimpinan yang adaptif terhadap digitalisasi menjadi faktor kunci dalam meningkatkan kualitas tata kelola pendidikan. Kepemimpinan yang efektif ditandai dengan kemampuan merancang visi strategis, membangun kolaborasi dengan berbagai pemangku kepentingan, dan mendorong integrasi teknologi dalam proses manajemen kurikulum. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa penguatan kapasitas kepemimpinan transformatif perlu menjadi prioritas dalam pengembangan pesantren modern agar mampu merespon dinamika perubahan pendidikan secara berkelanjutan.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Modern *pesantren* integrate Islamic education with a general curriculum to align with contemporary educational demands. This integration seeks to provide students with both religious foundations and practical competencies essential for their future careers. Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the direction and effectiveness of curriculum management in *pesantren* (Halimah et al., 2024). A well-designed leadership strategy ensures that the institution upholds its Islamic principles while simultaneously adapting to the evolving educational environment (Saidi, 2016). By employing appropriate leadership approaches, *pesantren* can establish a curriculum that harmonizes religious teachings with academic excellence, fostering well-rounded graduates

(Marwiji et al., 2024).

Leadership strategies in education have a substantial impact on learning quality and curriculum management. Transformational and participatory leadership styles are frequently linked to institutional effectiveness, as they foster collaboration and encourage innovation in educational settings (Campbell, 2018). Strong leadership not only improves academic performance but also guarantees the continuous development and sustainability of the curriculum in modern *pesantren* (Siregar & Misdar, 2023). To effectively manage contemporary educational challenges, *pesantren* leaders must exhibit adaptability, critical thinking, and strategic foresight (Ridho & Damairi, 2024). These attributes enable them to align the curriculum with both Islamic educational values and modern academic standards.

Pesantren encounter various challenges in integrating religious and general education curricula. The necessity of preserving Islamic teachings while incorporating subjects such as science, technology, and social sciences creates a complex educational framework (Mohammad Chowdhury, 2016). Constraints related to limited human resources and inadequate infrastructure often impede the successful implementation of a well-balanced curriculum (Assey et al., 2022). Furthermore, *pesantren* must comply with governmental regulations and adapt to global educational developments, necessitating continuous curriculum innovation (Basori et al., 2023). To address these issues, *pesantren* leaders must adopt strategic planning and efficient resource management practices to enhance educational quality.

Research shows that effective leadership has an important role in improving the quality of curriculum management in educational institutions, including modern *pesantren*. In the context of education, leadership emphasizes the importance of vision, communication, and innovation as the main elements in creating a dynamic learning environment that is able to adapt to change (Sudrajat et al., 2020). Ahmad R (2020) reported that 78% of Islamic education institutions that adopted transformational leadership experienced increased efficiency in curriculum management. Meanwhile, research conducted by Suyanto, (2021)

revealed that 65% of modern *pesantren* that applied participatory leadership showed increased effectiveness in integrating religious and general curricula. Islamic values-based leadership is also often associated with the effectiveness of curriculum management, where leaders who apply Islamic leadership principles are able to improve the overall quality of education (Sukatin et al., 2023). Thus, the application of appropriate leadership strategies is a crucial factor in ensuring that curriculum management in *pesantren* can run optimally and sustainably.

The role of leadership in shaping the curriculum of modern boarding schools is a crucial yet underexplored area of study. Research highlights that effective leadership, particularly within Islamic boarding schools, is fundamental in influencing educational outcomes and curriculum development. Various leadership styles are evident in these institutions, including the combination of charismatic and traditional leadership by Kiai, which significantly shapes educational practices and curriculum integration (Eriyanto Eriyanto, 2023). Additionally, leadership models must be contextually adapted to align with cultural and religious settings, as seen in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, where principals incorporate Islamic values into their leadership approaches (Kusumaputri et al., 2023). In terms of curriculum development, modern boarding schools emphasize a holistic educational framework that integrates academic learning with character and moral development, reflecting the foundational philosophy of Islamic education (Mardiah Astuti et al., 2023). Furthermore, curriculum innovation remains essential, with many institutions incorporating both traditional and modern approaches, such as project-based learning, to enhance students' skills and spiritual intelligence (Bella & Tamami, 2022). Although the significance of leadership in modern boarding schools has gained increasing attention, further research is necessary to examine how various leadership styles can be optimized to improve curriculum effectiveness and student outcomes.

Research indicates that transformational leadership, which emphasizes inspiring and motivating individuals through shared values, particularly within Islamic educational settings, can lead to significant improvements in educational

outcomes. For instance, a study by Azizah et al. (2020) found that 78% of Islamic university staff reported increased job satisfaction and performance under transformational leadership styles. Persuasive communication plays a crucial role in engaging students through creative and interactive teaching methods, particularly in complex subjects such as Hadith (Riaz et al., 2023). Furthermore, personalized approaches to less motivated students have been shown to significantly enhance their learning motivation. Community involvement is another essential aspect, advocating for the participation of community leaders in school decision-making to strengthen leadership effectiveness. Moreover, training workshops designed for school leaders can enhance their competencies in collaborative management (Ziduli & Buka, 2023). While these leadership strategies offer considerable benefits, their implementation may encounter challenges such as resistance to change and the continuous need for professional development among educators.

Although effective leadership plays an important role in curriculum management in modern *pesantren*, few studies have comprehensively examined the combination of leadership strategies to create a more adaptive and sustainable system. In addition, there is no systematic study that identifies the challenges in implementing persuasive communication and community engagement in *pesantren* leadership. Therefore, this study aims to identify and analyze the most effective leadership strategies in curriculum management in modern *pesantren* through a systematic literature review approach. Specifically, this study will explore how various leadership strategies, such as transformational, participatory, and Islamic value-based, affect the efficiency and integration of religious and general curriculum. In addition, it will examine the main challenges in implementing these strategies, including barriers in persuasive communication and community engagement. The results of this study are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations to improve leadership effectiveness in curriculum management in modern *pesantren*.

B. METHODS

This research is a qualitative research with Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. This method is used to identify, evaluate, and interpret all relevant research results regarding leadership strategies for curriculum management in modern Islamic boarding schools. This approach allows researchers to collect and analyze data from various relevant sources systematically, so as to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic under study. The data in this study were sourced from the Dimensions database (https://app.dimensions.ai) and Scopus (https://www.scopus.com) with the latest 10-year interval publications to ensure that the data used is current and relevant to leadership strategies for curriculum management in modern Islamic boarding schools.

Data eligibility criteria in this study were established to ensure that only relevant and high-quality literature was analyzed. The criteria include (1) scientific articles published in reputable national and international journals; (2) studies that specifically address leadership strategies for curriculum management in modern Islamic boarding schools; (3) publications published in the last 10 years (2015–2024); (4) articles available in full text and in English or Indonesian. To ensure all selected articles met the eligibility criteria, a rigorous validation process was employed. This included a two-step review process. First, two independent reviewers screened the articles based on their titles and abstracts, ensuring alignment with the predefined criteria. Discrepancies between reviewers were resolved through discussion or by consulting a third reviewer as a tiebreaker. Second, for articles deemed eligible after the initial screening, a full-text review was conducted to verify compliance with all criteria. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using Cohen's Kappa statistic to ensure consistency in the selection process. The research procedure is as shown in Figure 1.
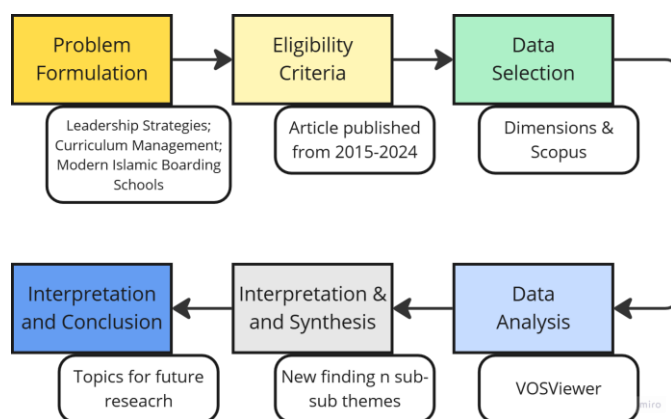
Figure 1. Research procedures

Figure 1 shows that this research was conducted in several stages, namely problem formulation, determining eligibility criteria, data selection, data analysis, data interpretation and synthesis, and drawing conclusions. The problem formulation stage is important to limit the topic discussed, namely leadership strategies for curriculum management in modern Islamic boarding schools. Eligibility criteria were determined to filter data that fit the topic with relevant keywords such as (Strategi Kepemimpinan AND Pengelolaan Kurikulum AND *Pesantren* Modern) OR (Leadership Strategy AND Curriculum Management AND Modern *Pesantren*)". Next, data were selected from the Dimensions database and a filter was applied for data published in the last 10 years (2013-2024). Next, the collected data was imported into VOSviewer software to create a visualization of the relationship between keywords and themes in the study, and R-Studio was used for descriptive statistical analysis and deeper data exploration such as calculating the frequency of themes and conducting trend analysis. The results of data visualization and analysis from VOSviewer and R-Studio were interpreted to explain the key variables in leadership strategies for curriculum management in modern Islamic boarding schools. These results were used to formulate key findings and theoretical and practical implications of curriculum management in modern Islamic boarding school. Finally, the researcher formulated conclusions and studies for further research topics in the future.

C.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1.   Data Selection Results

The search results in the indexer database found a total of 4,063 open access data, including open access as much as 2,573 data and the rest is close access. Of the 2,573 data, 1792 were articles and 781 were books and proceedings. Thus, there are 1,667 data to be analyzed at the next stage. The distribution of the amount of data according to Figure 2.
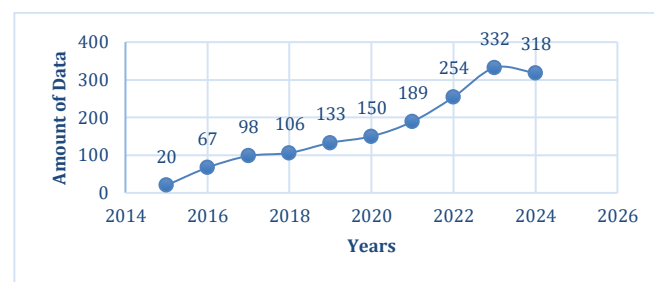
Figure 2. Distribution of the amount of data over a decade

Figure 2 shows the distribution of data on the number of scientific publications in the last decade (2015-2024) related to the theme of "Leadership Strategy, Curriculum Management, and Modern *Pesantren*". There is a significant increasing trend from year to year. In 2015 the amount of data recorded was only 20, then experienced a steady increase until it reached 150 in 2020. A sharper increase was seen after 2020, where the amount of data jumped from 189 in 2021 to a peak of 332 in 2023. However, 2024 saw a slight decline to 318. This trend indicates that issues related to strategic leadership and education management in modern *pesantren* are increasingly becoming a concern in academic studies, especially in recent years. The decrease in 2024 can be assumed as a result of the publication cycle factor or the transition of research focus, but in general the graph shows that this theme is still very relevant and dynamically developing.

2.   Network Visualization of Data

The data that has gone through the selection process is then visualized using VOSviewer to see the research variables and the relationship between variables. The visualization results are as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Network visualization of research variables

Figure 3 is a network visualization of all the variables studied over the past 10 years and depicts four different color groups: green, red, yellow, and blue. The interpretation of each variable is as follows.

a. Green Cluster: Social and Technological Transformation
The green cluster brings together terms such as institution, educational institution, technology, integration, change, innovation, society, generation, and challenge. This cluster emphasizes the transformative dynamics faced by Islamic educational institutions amid the challenges of globalization, technology, and innovation. This indicates the pressures and opportunities that educational institutions must respond to in designing a system that is adaptive and relevant for today's generation.

b. Blue Cluster: Islamic Education Institutions and Values
This cluster includes keywords such as Islamic educational institution, kiai, realization, tradition, characteristic, life, term, excellence, and Islamic value. This cluster describes the conceptual and normative approach to Islamic education, which is rooted in traditions, values and the role of figures such as kiai in realizing the goal of educational excellence. The main focus of this cluster is on the characteristics of Islamic education institutions, including the socio-cultural and spiritual roles played by these institutions.

c. Red Cluster: Managerial Challenges and the Educational Environment

The red cluster involves terms such as environment, principal, performance, government, stakeholder, quality education, inhibiting factor, supporting factor and work. The main focus is on the managerial context and operational environment of educational institutions. In this cluster, the role of the principal, challenges in managerial performance and support from various stakeholders are the main concerns, especially in managing education quality and responding to complex environmental challenges.

d. Yellow Cluster: *Pesantren* Context and Curriculum Management
This cluster includes words such as *pesantren*, santri, Islamic education, management, curriculum, strategy, and community. The yellow cluster is more contextual and specific to the modern *pesantren* system, focusing on managerial aspects, curriculum development, and the relationship between *pesantren* and society. It represents how traditional institutions such as *pesantren* must respond to the demands of strategic management and societal changes through a relevant curriculum.

Based on the cluster division, researchers can make a more in-depth study of several topics as follows.

a. Transformation of Modern *Pesantren* Managerial Strategies in Responding to the Challenges of the Digital Age
Currently, many modern *pesantren* have begun to adopt digital-based management information systems in an effort to improve the quality of education management. The use of technology such as the Learning Management System (LMS) has helped *pesantren* design, implement, and evaluate the curriculum more efficiently and systematically (Mukhibat & Wilujeng, 2021). In addition, academic management applications allow education managers in *pesantren* to record and manage student data, lesson schedules, and assessments in a more structured and measurable manner (Siregar & Misdar, 2023). The adoption of this technology is considered capable of

supporting a learning process that is more transparent, easy to monitor, and in line with the demands of the digital era (Mhlongo et al., 2023).

Today's modern *pesantren* leaders not only act as religious figures, but also as strategic managers who are able to understand and respond to changing times, including in terms of digital technology development (Zulkarnain, 2023). In facing these challenges, an adaptive and innovative leadership style is needed so that *pesantren* can continue to develop without abandoning Islamic values which are the main foundation (Basori et al., 2023). Leadership that is able to integrate the Islamic vision with the use of technology will encourage the transformation of *pesantren* institutions to be more relevant to the needs of the digital era (Hasan et al., 2023).

The transformation of modern *pesantren* managerial strategies shows a shift from conventional leadership patterns towards technology-based approaches and modern management, in response to the digitalization of global education and increasing community expectations. The use of systems such as LMS and academic management applications is no longer limited to administrative tools, but has become a strategic instrument in creating an effective learning environment. *Pesantren* leadership is now required to be more visionary, able to combine religious values with digital and managerial skills so that *pesantren* remain relevant and competitive in the digital era. Although this transformation shows structural and technical readiness, challenges such as the digital literacy gap, resistance to change, and the risk of fading *pesantren*'s distinctive values need to be anticipated through character strengthening, HR training, and holistic supporting policies.

b. Integration of Traditional Values and Technological Innovation in Islamic Education

Modern *pesantren* have now begun to utilize technology to strengthen the learning of yellowclassical books and classical studies without having to abandon the traditional methods that have long characterized *pesantren* education (Nikmatullah et al.,

2023). The use of mobile applications and e-books is a solution to facilitate santri in accessing classical Islamic literature anywhere and anytime, so that the learning process becomes more flexible and interesting (Niswah et al., 2024). This innovation proves that technological development can go hand in hand with preserving the intellectual heritage of *pesantren*, not replacing it (Rohmatulloh et al., 2022).

Current leadership strategies in modern *pesantren* emphasize the importance of integrating character values such as adab, tawadhu, and responsibility in using digital technology (Supaat & Muslim, 2023). These values are taught not only through formal learning, but also in the use of social media and other technologies so that santri have good digital ethics (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). This approach helps to create an Islamic education ecosystem that remains relevant to the times, while maintaining the traditional spirit and distinctive values of *pesantren* (Arif et al., 2020).

The integrative approach in modern *pesantren* education is the key to harmoniously integrating traditional values with technological innovation. Instead of replacing the old system, technology is utilized as a tool to expand access to yellowclassic book learning without reducing the depth of meaning and maintaining character values such as adab and responsibility in the digital space. This strategy makes *pesantren* more adaptive and contextual without losing their authenticity. Although technology increases the flexibility of learning, its success depends largely on the *pesantren* leadership in directing it wisely. Challenges such as the digital literacy gap and the potential decline in direct interaction need to be anticipated with the active role of caregivers and teachers in maintaining a balance between digitalization and spiritual values.

c. The Role of the Principal and Stakeholders in Improving the Performance of Islamic Education Institutions: Analysis of Supporting and Hindering Factors

The performance of Islamic education institutions is strongly influenced by the strategic role of the principal and the active involvement of stakeholders, which collectively can encourage or hinder the progress of the institution. The principal has the primary responsibility for formulating the institutional vision, managing resources effectively, and creating a conducive and inspiring learning environment. The leadership exercised by school principals has direct implications for the professionalism of teaching staff, the quality of educational infrastructure, and the academic achievement of students. In this context, school principals are expected to be able to carry out dual roles as educators, managers and motivators who always encourage institutional quality improvement (Muflihah & Haqiqi, 2019; Sayuti, 2017). One of the indicators of effective leadership is a commitment to professional development of teachers through training, motivation, and placement according to competence, which has an impact on improving the quality of learning (Masruri, 2019; Tamrin et al., 2019). In addition, cooperation with external parties in efforts to improve educational facilities is an important aspect to support the creation of an optimal learning environment. On the other hand, the role of stakeholders is also crucial, especially in strengthening community engagement that can contribute through resource support and participation in educational initiatives (Anam, 2014). In the context of private Islamic education institutions, the existence and active role of school committees are important instruments in maintaining the quality of governance and institutional accountability.

The performance of Islamic educational institutions is strongly influenced by the strategic role of the principal and the involvement of stakeholders, which collectively can encourage improvement or even hinder the quality of education. Principals have a central role in driving improvements in education standards through visionary leadership, effective management and active community participation. In the context of leadership and management, principals are responsible for directing the learning and teaching process and ensuring the implementation of appropriate educational strategies (Guntur et al., 2023). In addition, principals also play a role in improving teachers' professionalism through organizing training and discussion forums, which directly impacts the quality of students' learning outcomes (Subhan Adi Santoso et al., 2023) (Septiani & Syamsudin, 2022). In terms of resource management, competent principals will proactively allocate investments in infrastructure development and the provision of teaching materials to create a supportive learning environment. Equally important, the involvement of stakeholders such as parents and local organizations contributes significantly to the strengthening of education programs and institutional governance. Collaboration between stakeholders and schools, especially in the management of educators and the development of learners, can improve the quality and accountability of educational institutions (Azwar, 2024). However, there are various challenges such as limited resources and low community participation that can become obstacles in realizing educational progress. Therefore, efforts to overcome these obstacles are very important in order to support the sustainability and success of Islamic education institutions.

Principals who carry out the leadership function in a transformative manner are able to bring real changes in the quality of education. Good leadership reflects the ability to design teacher training programs, match teacher placements with competencies and create high work motivation. All of this ultimately leads to improved student learning outcomes. Equally important is the principal's ability to manage the budget and physical resources, such as infrastructure and educational facilities, that support the effectiveness of the learning process. On the other hand, stakeholder involvement reflects the trust and participation of the community in educational institutions. When stakeholders feel part of the education

process, they increase their support for the school, whether in financial, social or moral terms. This has a synergistic effect on improving the quality of education governance and implementation. From the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the success of Islamic educational institutions is highly dependent on the integration between the role of visionary principals and active stakeholder involvement. Both are elements that complement and strengthen each other. However, the reality in the field shows that the ideal implementation is not always achieved. There are still many principals who do not have adequate managerial skills and many stakeholders who are not actively involved in the education process. These inhibiting factors often stem from limited human resources, low managerial competence, lack of principal training, and lack of communication between the school and the community.
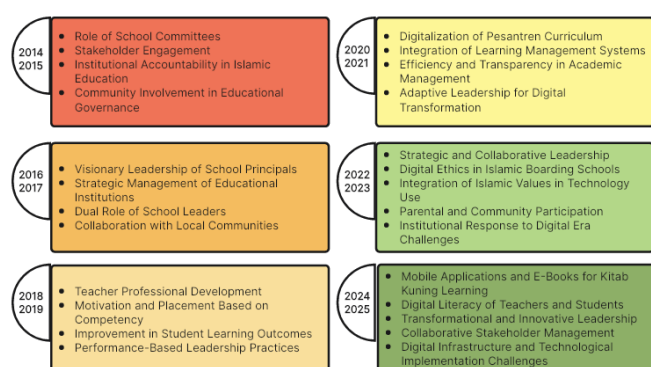
Figure 4. Framework of Thought Variables contained in this study

Research on leadership strategies and curriculum management in modern *pesantren* shows significant developments along with the dynamics of educational needs and the demands of the digital era, as shown in Figure 4. Studies from 2014 to 2025 indicate a shift in focus from traditional approaches towards a more collaborative, adaptive, and technology-based leadership model. In 2014-2015, research highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement such as school committees and communities in holding Islamic education institutions accountable. Community participation is seen as the foundation in strengthening the governance of educational institutions based on participatory values.

Entering the 2016-2017 period, there was a focus on the strategic role of school principals as visionary leaders, who not only act as educators but also as institutional managers. Collaboration with local communities became one of the key strategies in driving educational progress. In 2018-2019, research began to emphasize teacher professional development, including training, motivation, and placement of teachers based on competencies. Effective leadership styles are directly linked to improved student learning outcomes and efficiency in human resource management.

Digital transformation became dominant in the 2020-2021 study, particularly through the adoption of Learning Management System (LMS) and academic management applications. Leadership that is adaptive to digitalization is seen as a key factor in creating curriculum governance that is efficient, transparent and aligned with technological developments. Furthermore, in 2022-2023, research shows the need for integration between Islamic values and digital ethics in the use of technology by santri and teachers. Strategic leadership is emphasized not only in the management aspect, but also in building an Islamic education ecosystem that is responsive to the times, without abandoning the traditional identity of *pesantren.* In the most recent period, 2024-2025, research enriches the discourse by raising the use of mobile applications and e-books in learning kitab kuning as well as challenges in building digital literacy among teachers and students. Innovative transformational leadership is highlighted, including the ability to establish partnerships with stakeholders to strengthen digital infrastructure and sustainability of education governance. Overall, the findings reflect the evolution of thought and practice in the leadership of modern *pesantren* that are increasingly adapting to the demands of the times, while still maintaining the distinctive values that are the identity of Islamic education.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the evaluation of the development of leadership and management of modern *pesantren* and Islamic education institutions in general, it can be concluded that leadership transformation that is adaptive to digitalization is a key factor in improving the quality of educational governance. The leadership of modern *pesantren* is no longer limited to the religious dimension, but has developed into a strategic role that demands managerial abilities, mastery of technology, and skills in managing human resources and collaborating with various stakeholders. The application of information technology, such as Learning Management System and academic management applications, has been proven to increase the efficiency and transparency of education management. However, the success of this transformation is not only determined by the availability of digital infrastructure, but also by the quality of leadership and the level of active participation of stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and the surrounding community. Although there are positive indications of the direction of development of *pesantren* and Islamic education institutions in responding to the demands of the digital era, there are still significant gaps. These gaps include the low level of digital literacy among *pesantren* teachers and caregivers, the weak managerial competence of some educational leaders, and the lack of stakeholder involvement in the strategic decision-making process. In addition, resistance to change and concerns about the erosion of traditional values are also challenges in the process of integrating technology with Islamic values.

Based on the evaluation results, it is recommended that the development of Islamic education institutions, especially modern *pesantren*, be directed at strengthening adaptive and transformative leadership capacity in facing the digital era. Improving the managerial competence and digital literacy of educational leaders needs to be a priority through continuous training and relevant professional development programs. In addition, it is important to build stronger collaborative mechanisms between *pesantren*, teachers, parents and communities to create an educational ecosystem that is participatory and responsive to change. The integration of technology in education must also be accompanied by strengthening character values and spirituality so that digitalization does not shift the identity and authenticity of Islamic education. For this reason, holistic policy support is needed as well as further research that can explore in depth the relationship between leadership styles, technology management, and stakeholder involvement in encouraging the quality and sustainability of Islamic education amidst the challenges of the times.

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