



## Investigating The Role of Religious Leadership at Indonesia's Islamic Boarding Schools in The Sustainability of School Management

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose.** The study's general purpose was to identify the extent of leadership and management practices at Indonesia's Islamic Boarding Schools (*pesantren*) in ensuring the sustainability of education and school management. In particular, the study aimed to investigate the leadership practice patterns of an Islamic Boarding School in the East Java Province of Indonesia and examine teachers' roles in the administration of the institution. **Methodology.** The study used a quantitative research design supported by cross-sectional statistical procedures and

processes with an experimental approach to test variables, by investigating the relationship and testing the hypotheses. A theoretical model was designed for this purpose.

**Findings.** Findings suggest that though pesantren leadership practices are acceptable in policy, social support, and financial dimensions but they still lack structural and teaching aspects. Statistically, there was an indication that pesantren leadership positively and significantly influence the relationship between teachers, school facilities, system, and student achievement. The study recommends that *pesantren* leaders should be given more opportunities of training in administration and governance. The government should also assist pesantren by providing technical facilities to ensure a consistent student achievement. **Implications to Research and Practice.** This study succeeds in reiterating that pesantren as Islamic boarding schools have a unique management system, which has produced top religious leaders different from the secular school system. This study has revealed that principals or leaders in these pesantren have no authority to decide on school policies. It is hoped that this study will draw the attention of the officials and authorities to provide facilities and empowerment to ensure the sustainability of these boarding schools.

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## Introduction

The most important factor in national development is advanced human resources. Singapore, Japan, and some other countries have proved that even though they do not have abundant natural resources, their human resources were equipped enough with knowledge and skills that they became developed countries with a high GDP growth, per capita income, and prosperity. This suggests that to develop, a country must invest heavily in the education system. Education is an activity or a process of transmitting a given standard of norms, know-how, tenets, and perceptions from one person to another. The education process is an embodiment of three notable aspects: the individual, the society, and their holistic physical and spiritual environmental reality, which are crucial to developing both the individual and the society. Education is therefore an important pillar of any nation's development (Aronson, Zimmerman, & Carlos, 1999)

In Indonesia, Pesantren traditional Islamic boarding school still focuses on the religious education while the madrasahs have been transformed and follow a government curriculum, after making significant developments in both curriculum and pedagogy, and by adopting secular type of pedagogy. According to the ADB Technical Assistant Consultant's (Ross & Gray, 2006) Madrasah graduates currently face a challenge of competition from mainstream schools for administrative positions, higher education opportunities and well-paying careers after their studies. Though, it is widely known that Amanatul Ummah's graduates have been successful in getting enrollment in many reputable universities. The Amanatul Ummah does not function only as a madrasah, but also as a pesantren. It has a unique school management system which is contrary to what is commonly practiced by madrasahs in general. As a pesantren, it is an Islamic boarding school which is administered and owned by a Kyai who acts as a religious leader, a school principal, who are the main decision makers within the institution. On the other hand, as a madrasah, Amanatul Ummah is one of the modern schools that have adopted the teaching of secular sciences based on national curriculum provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia

It is therefore important to analyze factors that led to an excellent performance of a madrasah or a pesantren, especially on administrative grounds and managerial functions. This study aimed to ascertain those factors that defined the functions and governance of school heads, the tutors, school infrastructure, systems, and student attainment. So far, in the Indonesian context, the management or administrative functions of educational institution in Indonesia have received scant attention (Burton, Whitman, Yepes-Baraya, Cline, & Kim, 2002; Byers, Imms, & Hartnell-Young, 2018; Byers, Mahat, Liu, & Knock, 2018; Klette, Blikstad-Balas, & Roe, 2017; Kola & Sunday, 2015). Apparently, this is the first attempt to investigate how *pesantren* leaders have demonstrated their ability to position themselves as true leaders and bring *pesantren* to a better position. This study sought to fill this gap by associating various studies on the responses to education leadership, in general, with the findings from research conducted in the context of *pesantren* education in Indonesia. Additionally, the study's general purpose was to identify the extent of leadership practices about *pesantren* leaders and teachers in ensuring the sustainability of education in the *pesantren*. In particular, the study investigated the leadership practice

patterns of *pesantren* leaders and considered teachers' roles in the administration of the institution.

### Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The Islamic thought holds education as a continuous process in one's life that gives the foundation for humans to carry out their role as Allah's vice-regent (*Khalifah*) in this world and are obliged to contribute to the development of their society in attainment of prosperity, not only for this mortal world but also the hereafter (Hashim & Langgulang, 2008; Hassan, 1989; Husain & Ashraf, 1979). A discourse on Islamic education can be better understood with the perception of four notable eras in Islamic history. The first era being the period of the Prophet Muhammad's resurgence to Makkah to the end of Umayyad dynasty, when education curriculum was characterized by religious teaching (Hashim & Langgulang, 2008; Isbah, 2020). The flourishing of Islamic education was experienced during the second era during the period when the Abbasid dynasty that reigned in the East, while the Umayyad Caliphate was reigning in the western Islamic Empire based in Andalusia. The third era was referred to as the period of weakness and regression owing to various events that started from the Islamic territories in the East and areas in North Africa, which was followed by the fourth era known in history as the period of resurgence, awakening and revamping education in Muslim territories. (Lukens-Bull, 2010; Lumpkin, 2013) further noted that the traits of Islamic education during the fourth era included (a) adoption of elements of the western educational system, (b) increased interest in the natural and human sciences, (c) endeavoring to eradicate polarity between religious education and other forms of education. Islamic education in Indonesia as part of the national education system is characterized by the development of curriculum not only in religious subject matters but also in secular sciences, such as logic, mathematics, philosophy, history, metaphysics, medicine, astronomy, chemistry, and medicine.

Islamic education in Indonesia, is characterized by two major types of education institutions that are: *pesantren* and *madrasah*. The *pesantren* (Islamic Boarding Schools) are the oldest type of Islamic education institutions in Indonesia. The *pesantren* encompass divergence in its education system, including a traditional system (*salaf*), a modern system (*khalaf*), and an integrated system. The *pesantren salaf* (traditional *pesantren*) conducts only religious education and character development, while the *pesantren khalaf* (modern *pesantren*) is characterized by religious education and general education as well as skills training (Lukens-Bull, 2010; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012; Rahtikawati & Ratnasih). However, it was further explained that most *pesantren* could be placed in an integrated category. The *pesantren* originally started as a response to acculturation call from the local community to build a team of individuals who can adopt Islamic way of life (*tafaqquh fi al-din*) and follow ethics and morals (*akhlaq karimah*). The *pesantren* also contributed to role in fulfilling Indonesia's national education goals. *Pesantren* are also closely linked to the indigenous form of Islam found in Indonesia.

The second type, *madrasah*, according to (Lukens-Bull, 2010) are "Islamic boarding school" confusingly for the Westerners who associate the term "madrasah" with the boarding schools of the Middle East and South Asia. While *Pesantren* offered informal religious education, *madrasahs* offered a more formalized religious education. The

madrasah originally competed with the Dutch Government policy to build modern schools, *volkscholen*, in Indonesia. These schools were designed to provide basic education to indigenous Indonesians, in line with the changing colonial policy in the Netherlands. However, the Indonesian nationalists objected to it and introduced madrasah tradition as symbol of Islamic reform and resist the Dutch colonial educational policy. The madrasah thus emerged as an Islamic institution of education which taught both Islamic and secular subjects (Dhofier, 1980; Lukens-Bull, 2010; Tanner, 2009; Uko, 2015).

Pesantren in Indonesia had started as a traditional education system based on a mosque or boarding school, but it is now growing into a modern institution that offers education at all levels, including primary, junior high, high school, and tertiary education. These Pesantren or Islamic Boarding Schools (henceforth, IBS) in 2020 have emerged as the epicenter of social transformation, and are helping transform the competence of santri or students of pesantren into something higher in quality (Burton et al., 2002; A. M. Ismail, 2021; I. Ismail, Tahlil, Nurussalam, & Kesuma, 2020) According to the Ministry of Religion, there are 28,194 IBSs in 2020, with a total of 5 million students. There are 21,263 IBSs in Java, which includes West Java, Banten, DKI Jakarta, Central Java, and East Java, with 1.5 million students. The emergence of pesantren indicates a further expansion of Islamic study groups located in mosques or the houses of kiyai and a symbol of Islamic resistance and identity among the santri community (Isbah, 2020; A. M. Ismail, 2021)

Pesantren education is also a system for academic and personal growth has so far been termed as education to teach practical skills and provide social support (Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012; Rahtikawati & Ratnasih) It enables kiyai and santri to become a part of social welfare-based pesantren parenting in order to develop them well-rounded, capable individuals (Ross & Gray, 2006) Currently, there are two types of pesantren: first type is authorized by the Religious Affairs Ministry of the Indonesian government and run under the leadership of tolerant leaders; second type are private ones run by conservative Islamic clerics. The first type tends to offer a liberal curriculum while the second type focuses on radical Islamic indoctrination. The example of Amanatul Ummah given above represents both types of functioning. Its unique school management system made it different from other madrasahs while as a pesantren, it flourished under the administration and leadership of a Kyai or the religious leader, acting as the school principal. Besides administrative and leadership, there are several other elements that make a *pesantren* different from other educational institutions (Dhofier, 1980)(Dhofier, 2000). In other words, the *pesantren* are led by the *kyai*, who hold absolute power and religious authority (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011) The pesantren are chains of several schools at various levels, from primary to secondary, headed by a school principal. In each school, the *kyai* is the head of the *pesantren*, who also acts as school principal. When the *kyai* is associated with the *pesantren*, it gets a leverage within society, which is further enhanced when the *kyai* is also acting as the principal (Lukens-Bull, 2010)

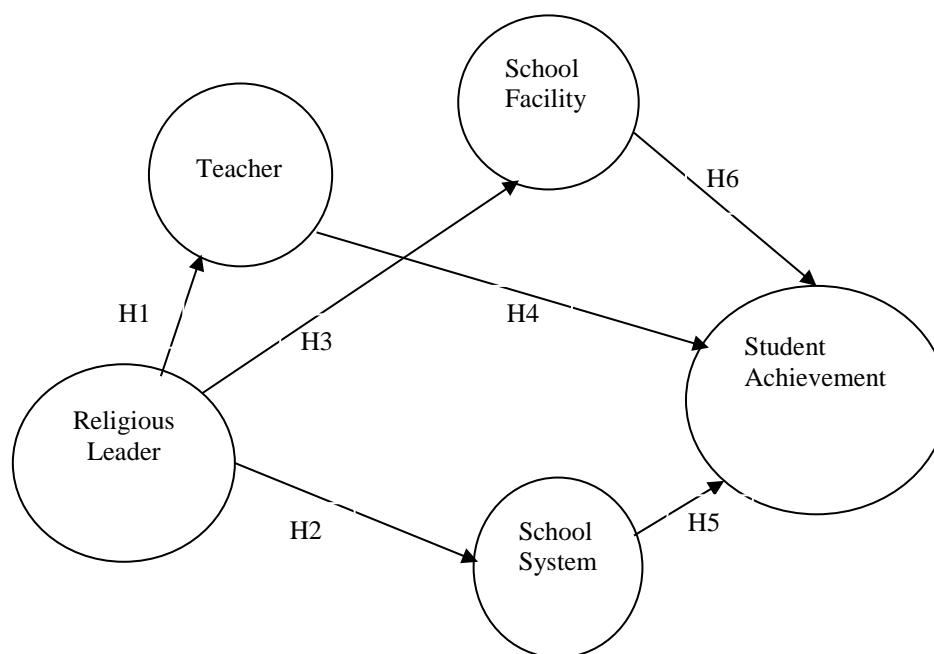
Specifically, pesantren has worked as a class transformation force in which santri are raised from the lower social class to a class of competence and skills. Pesantren education has proved to be a good educational platform for the poor and the underprivileged. In the history of Pesantren, they have proven to be a place where "care" is provided to disadvantaged children from socially and economically vulnerable families. It is through

the pesantren that they are able to learn to become successful people in life (I. Ismail et al., 2020) As a result, several leaders and politicians have shown concern with pesantren. For example, KH. Nur Iskandar, SQ, caretaker of the Ash-Shiddiqiyah Islamic boarding school, was able to conquer the capital city of Jakarta. Muhaimin Iskandar, the DPR-Deputy RI's Chairman, Abdul Azis, a member of the DPRD Central Java, and Imam Akhfas, a member of the DPR-D Banyumas, are a few others who are associated with Pesantren. KH. Ma'ruf Amin, Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Ida Fauziyah, Minister of Manpower, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, Governor of East Java, and Asip Kholbihi, Regent of Pekalongan district, are among the pesantren students who are currently executive officers. There are among hundreds of santri who have been elected by Indonesians to different positions ranging from village head to president of the Republic of Indonesia (Rahtikawati & Ratnasih) The role of pesantren has thus become prominent to form the social status of the Musli (Ross & Gray, 2006) earn the reputation of producing administrators and individuals of high governance abilities.

In any nation, the most common leadership type in schools is the traditional leadership (Husain & Ashraf, 1979) In the context of the *pesantren*, this traditional leadership pattern is strongly embedded in the character of the *kyai*. The approach used is charismatic leadership and personal and religious feudalism, which means it is considered less optimistic in terms of democratic development, egalitarianism, and openness (Aronson et al., 1999; Azra, 2004) It is sometimes felt that the *kyai* cannot rely on leadership in the traditional sense - such as a charismatic, top-down, or authoritative approach - to emerge from a complex crisis (Burton et al., 2002; Byers, Mahat, et al., 2018; Cassar, Salmon, Timperio, Koch, & Koorts, 2020). The traditional leadership techniques of the *kyai* ought to be weakened and shifted to a more progressive type of leadership with several characteristics, namely distributed, collaborative, and networked leadership (Byers, Imms, et al., 2018; Ehrenberg, Brewer, Gamoran, & Willms, 2001; Gaziel, 2007; Husain & Ashraf, 1979). This type of leadership is necessary for the *pesantren* to survive in crisis times (Hashim & Langgulang, 2008; Hassan, 1989; A. M. Ismail, 2021). In other words, crises require democratic structures, not bureaucratic ones, and movement away from conventional wisdom to flexible decision making (Sahlberg, 2010; Spilt et al., 2011) as portrayed in Figure 1.

Among other factors of input for leadership and administration or governance, two of them are school resources and teachers. Meanwhile, the distinctive factors of the process stage are specific practices or school-system and academic climate. Three factors of output stage are student learning, engagement, and achievement. Student academic achievement is affected by several factors, they include but not limited to the learning process during early childhood, support from parents/guardians, the gender of the child, cultural and ethnic background, social status, teacher's professionalism, and the school curriculum. Over recent decades, there has been several studies on these determinants of student achievements.

Based on the previous studies, a theoretical framework was built for this study with some of these factors as exogenous and endogenous variables, to create a model (Figure 1) for understanding the interplay of school leader, teacher, school system, school facility and student achievement.



**Figure 1:** Theoretical framework: Exogenous and Endogenous Variables Path Model

#### *Hypothesis Development*

##### *School Leadership, Teacher Cooperation, and the school system*

Studies have revealed that successful school leadership is crucial to the process of learning, quality teachers, effective school system and better school facilities. It means that school principals can positively influence good infrastructure, qualified and efficient teachers. A highly collective efficacy of the school leadership can show more devotion to the institution's mission by teachers, the community, and the building partnerships with the society for better student achievement (Ross & Gray, 2006). A study by (Uko, 2015) carried out a statistical analysis that found a substantial correlation between school head competence, creativity, and overall attainment of educational objectives. In addition, the effect of leadership in teaching had an indirect effect, which was induced by the school head's behavior, which further affected the culture of a school, and the teacher, which in turn affected student achievement (Aipova, Galiyeva, Anesova, & Burdina, 2020; Azra, 2004; Bontis, Booker, & Serenko, 2007; Cassar et al., 2020).

From the foregoing, three baseline hypotheses were proposed:

*H1: The school leader positively influences the quality of teacher*

*H2: The school leader positively influences the effective school system*

*H3: The school leader positively influences the school facility*

*Teacher-Student Achievement Relationship*

Several researches have been carried out in ascertaining the correlation between the teacher versus student achievement. (Sahlberg, 2010) concluded that the crucial role of student assessment by teachers is carried out in conjunction with curriculum design. Good teacher-student relationships have unquantifiable effects on academic achievements of students (Spilt et al., 2011). A Report summarized those successful teachers of minority students in advanced placement program courses as good teachers for all groups (Burton et al., 2002).

More specifically, many studies have focused on various aspects of teacher background characteristics experience, efficacy, education level, attitude, specific practices, others and student achievement. (Yang & Li, 2018) affirmed that learners grasp more from instructors who exhibit particular traits. Research conducted by (Kola & Sunday, 2015) found a positive correlation between academic qualifications teacher' and their students' academic achievement. Supporting this findings, by using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and ANOVA approach, (Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012) completed their research and indicated teacher self-efficacy as positively influencing students' motivation and achievement. (Klette et al., 2017) also reported that in comparison, instructional practices and qualification background have less robust association with student achievement gains.

Therefore, it was hypothesized:

*H4: Teacher positively influences the student achievement*

*School System-Student Achievement Relationship*

Learning involves discerning aspects that are yet to be completely comprehended. Schooling systems, however, have put in place a basic learning model involving clustering similar age learners to attend to the attention of a central individual initiating activities in a designated physical space, geared towards learning a particular topic (Ehrenberg et al., 2001; Gaziel, 2007). The school system comprises curriculum, school culture, school environment, learning time, model of learning (Aipova et al., 2020; Aronson et al., 1999; Dhofier, 1980). argued that the effectiveness of time addition to a learning activity will only yield better results for all learners only if its utilization is effective. (Aipova et al., 2020; Azra, 2004; Bontis et al., 2007) indicated that there were nested correlations connecting the application of cultural-oriented pedagogic approaches by teachers and schools towards learners' academic outcomes.

Based on insights highlighted, it was concluded that:

*H5: School system positively influences the student achievement*

### *School Facilities-Student Achievement Relationship*

Many studies have revealed that among the other determinants of student achievement is school facility, school facilities are positively related to student outcomes (Byers, Mahat, et al., 2018) School infrastructure and facilities such as learning spaces, sound, temperature, ambience, and ventilation have a bearing on learners' and instructors' performance abilities (Byers, Imms, et al., 2018) In addition, school building, as part of school environment, is important to student academic achievement (Lumpkin, 2013) This argument was supported by findings of (Tanner, 2009) which showed that school design, movement and circulation, day lighting, and views had significant effects on student outcomes.

Thus, it was hypothesized in this study:

*H6: School facilities positively influence the student achievement*

## **Methodology**

### *Research design*

The study adopted the quantitative research design through a well-studied phenomenon and supported by previous research studies using statistical procedures and processes (Sugiyono, 2014). Such a study is called cross-sectional research with an experimental approach to test the effects of one variable on another, either through investigating the relationship or testing the hypotheses. The study designed a theoretical model (Figure 1) for this purpose.

### *Research sample*

The respondents of the questionnaire were the alumni of the Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School, Pacet, Indonesia. They were chosen through a simple random sampling method.

### *Research instrument and procedure*

The questionnaire comprised closed-ended statements with a 5-point Likert measurement scale. The statements were divided into five semantics groups: religious leader (X1), School Facilities (X2), Teachers (X3), School system (X4) and Student achievement (X5). Each of these semantic groups had three items as indicator variables (Table 1)



**Table 1.**

*Statements for Indicator Variables*

<b>Religious Leader (X1)</b>	
X1.1	The religious leader is the best patron
X1.2	The religious leader has an absolute authority
X1.3	The religious leader has a wide horizon of life and knowledge
<b>School Facilities (X2)</b>	
X2.1	The school has a good buildings and furniture
X2.2	The school has a good library
X2.3	The school has a good facility for extra-curricular activities
<b>Teachers (X3)</b>	
X3.1	The teachers have good competencies
X3.2	The teachers have good knowledge transfer ability
X3.1	The teachers have good capability to motivate
<b>School system (X4)</b>	
X4.1	The school has an effective & efficient boarding school
X4.2	The school has an effective & efficient review program
X4.3	The school has an effective & efficient try-out program
<b>Student achievement (X5)</b>	
X5.1	The students have been accepted in good universities
X5.2	The students have good performance in universities
X5.3	The students have good soft-skills and behavior

*Data Analysis*

A correlation path model was adopted to analyze the relationship among independent variables and dependent variables. When any variable was unmeasurable such as the latent variables, the study used proximate value of each variable and expressed them as perceptions. The structural formulation of the correlation path model was built using the PLS-SEM analysis technique. The edge of PLS gave a few advantages over other SEM techniques in this study (Bontis et al., 2007; Burton et al., 2002)

**Results**

The first step of the development of model was PLS algorithm analysis which was to test the validity of construct's indicators and to test the construct's validity. Table 2 shows that loading factors of all variables have a score above 0.70. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the constructs have good convergent validity. The correlation coefficient of reflective indicators to the construct was found higher in comparison to that of the reflective indicators of other constructs.

It shows that the cross-validity value indicates good discriminant validity. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the items in the questionnaires had valid indicators to measure the constructs in our model. Meanwhile, to measure the construct's reliability,

this study used the value of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the Cronbach Alpha as depicted in Table 3. Since the score of AVE were above 0.50 and the score of Cronbach Alpha were above 0.70, it can be concluded that all the constructs of the model were valid and reliable:

**Table 2.**

*Validity Testing*

	<b>School Facilities</b>	<b>Religious Leadership</b>	<b>Student Achievement</b>	<b>School System</b>	<b>Teachers</b>
X1.1	0.179168	0.893145	0.572030	0.606048	0.561772
X1.2	0.119966	0.914122	0.582043	0.699663	0.585806
X1.3	0.183737	0.928222	0.722789	0.743199	0.630481
X2.1	0.878830	0.220048	0.513778	0.458483	0.545660
X2.2	0.865116	0.145333	0.459835	0.457296	0.534381
X2.3	0.841603	0.058017	0.361282	0.323247	0.465647
X3.1	0.487144	0.628455	0.659665	0.655713	0.915053
X3.2	0.590832	0.533487	0.734228	0.659471	0.863075
X3.3	0.553431	0.600243	0.698428	0.673221	0.927495
X4.1	0.534293	0.544341	0.787613	0.826404	0.659755
X4.2	0.316040	0.681962	0.634816	0.877943	0.620723
X4.3	0.429043	0.735086	0.771022	0.910388	0.643442
X5.1	0.437082	0.455822	0.860219	0.626797	0.569884
X5.2	0.367859	0.674519	0.906015	0.779869	0.605042
X5.3	0.596220	0.700818	0.933377	0.837052	0.869797

**Table 3.**

*Reliability Testing*

	<b>AVE</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
School Facilities	0.743021	0.031135	0.830228
Religious Leadership	0.831641		0.898893
Student achievement	0.810677	0.760307	0.883861
School System	0.760844	0.565898	0.842082
Teachers	0.814156	0.424238	0.885283

The bootstrapping analysis of the PLS path modeling estimation at Amanatul Ummah Pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) in Pacet locality, Mojokerto District of East Java Province in Indonesia can be seen in Figure 2.

The coefficient of determination,  $R^2$ , is 0.760 for the student achievement (X5), as endogenous latent variable. This means that three exogenous latent variables, which are school facility (X2), teachers (X3) and the school system (X4) significantly explain 76% of the variance of student achievement (X5) where the religious leaders (X1) are seen as an antecedent of the three latent exogenous variables.

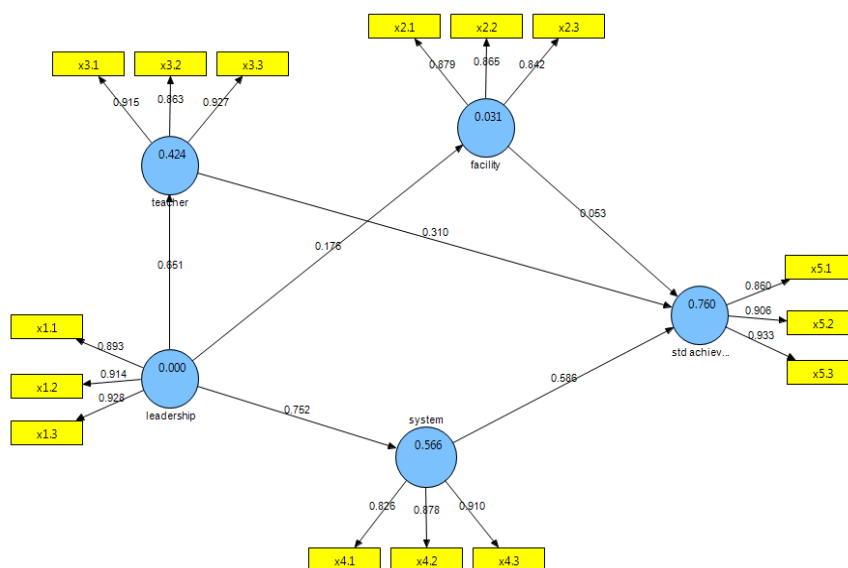


Figure 2. Outer Model

Table 3.

Path Coefficient

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	Standard Error (STERR)	T statistics ( O/STERR )	Sig.P
Facilities -> Student achievement	0.05341	0.05976	0.04807	0.04807	1.11122	0.27
Leadership -> facilities	0.17645	0.18015	0.06252	0.06252	2.82246	0.01
Leadership -> System	0.75226	0.75327	0.03548	0.03548	21.2026	0.00
Leadership -> Teacher	0.65134	0.6542	0.0318	0.0318	20.4812	0.00
System -> Student achievement	0.5858	0.59218	0.04775	0.04775	12.268	0.00
Teacher -> Student achievement	0.31046	0.2991	0.06438	0.06438	4.82245	0.00

In inner model, we can find all the path coefficients that can be used to test the proposed hypotheses. Based on Table 3, the path coefficient between religious leader and school facility has coefficient score of 0.17645 with T-statistics value of  $2.82246 > 1.9710$  (one-way test) at the 5% significance level of confidence where p-value is  $0.01 < 0.05$ . These results give empirical evidence that religious leader has a positive and significant effect to the school facilities and therefore the proposed hypothesis  $H_3$  is accepted. It means that the religious leader plays a key role in determining provision both in quantity and quality of school facility.

The coefficient path between religious leadership and school system has a coefficient score of 0.751226 with T-statistics of  $21.2026 > 1.9710$  (one-way test) at the 5% significance level to confidence where p-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ . These results provide empirical evidence that religious leadership has a positive and significant effect to the school system and therefore the proposed hypothesis  $H_2$  is proved. It means that the religious leadership has a big influence in determining and developing school system.

The coefficient path between religious leadership and teachers has a coefficient score of 0.65154 with T-statistics of  $20.4812 > 1.970$  (one-way test) at 5% significance level of confidence where p-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ . These results give empirical evidence that religious leadership has a positive and significant effect to the teacher and therefore the proposed hypotheses  $H_1$  is accepted. It means that the religious leadership has a significant impact on the teacher performance.

Table 3 shows that the coefficient path between school facilities and student achievement has a coefficient score of 0.05341 with T-statistics of  $1.11132 < 1.9710$  (one-way test) at 5% significance level of confidence where p-value is  $0.27 > 0.05$ . These results give empirical evidence that school facility does not have a positive and significant effect to the student achievement, and therefore the proposed hypotheses  $H_6$  is rejected. It means that contrary to the results of many studies which have found that the school facility had a positive and significant influence on the student achievement (Hashim & Langgung, 2008; Isbah, 2020; Lukens-Bull, 2010; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012; Rahtikawati & Ratnasih; Ross & Gray, 2006; Sahlberg, 2010).

The coefficient path between school system and student achievement has a coefficient score of 0.5858 with T-statistics of  $12.268 > 1.970$  (one-way test) at 5% significance level of confidence where p-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ . These results provide empirical evidence that school system has a positive and significant effect to the student achievement, and therefore the proposed hypotheses  $H_5$  has been proved. Likewise, a positive and significant influence was also seen on the student achievement as was seen in the statistics results which the coefficient path between the teachers and the student achievement was 0.31046 with the T-statistics of 4.82245 at 5% significance level of  $0.00 < 0.05$ . These results give empirical evidence that the teachers have a positive and significant effect to the student achievement, and therefore the proposed hypothesis  $H_4$  is also accepted.

## Discussion

This study is the evidence of showing that religious leadership of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren* and *madrasahs*) have a central position in managing teaching & learning process with the highest authority. But, contrary to the general opinion that most of Islamic boarding schools have unsatisfied performance indicated by uncompetitive outcomes, some Islamic boarding schools have started to prove that they graduated students with excellent performance. The Islamic boarding school, Amanatul Ummah *Pesantrenin* Pacet locality, Mojokerto District of East Java Province in Indonesia, where this study was conducted, revealed that most of its graduates have been accepted in many top ranked Indonesian universities and highly ranked International Universities outside Indonesia. The secret for the success of such Islamic schools is the uniqueness of their programs which turn out to be effective because of the charismatic and inspiring religious leadership.

It also suggests that in, a system as a holistic cycle has a fundamental influence on the student's achievement, which is supported by a good teaching staff and finally the comfortable school facility. Even though learning process in classrooms are conducted as traditional boarding school (*pesantren*), without student's tables and chairs, the students feel comfortable, and no obstacles are felt due to the lack of facilities.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to study the extent to which leadership response was carried out by leaders and teachers in Islamic boarding schools. It also aimed at finding the leadership competencies needed by *pesantren* leaders and what role teachers can play in supporting *pesantren* leaders. This study presents several themes resulting from analysis and discussion, which critically look at the Indonesian education system's dimension. The main objective of this study was to supplement the shortcomings of prior studies and analyze how *pesantren* helped students with different educational backgrounds to move up in their educational careers. This study also explains the potential of the *pesantren* leadership in facilitating class change, and the significance of the role of the *pesantren* for sustainability of the *pesantren* tradition.

One of the implications of this study is that it would keep establishing the fact that *pesantren* institutions are not only centers where students learn about religious values, but they are also places, where students become empowered, where they become well-educated and prosperous. Although *pesantren* provide an alternative education option for the lower classes of society, they also provide life-long support to the *santri*, which goes a long way in developing community. Since community development is becoming increasingly relevant, it is recommended that *pesantren* administration and leadership should be given more opportunities of growth in the current education system.

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