



## A Literature Review Exploring the Effectiveness and Challenges of Charismatic Leadership of Kiai in the Transformation and Preservation of Islamic Educational Values

Rahma<sup>1\*</sup>, Andi Indriani Ibrahim<sup>2</sup>, Syahbudin Adam<sup>3</sup>, Zazabila<sup>4</sup>, Mutiara<sup>5</sup>, Agita<sup>6</sup>, Pratiwi<sup>7</sup>, Putri<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1,4,5,6,7,8</sup>Students of the Management Study Programme at Tadulako University PSDKU Tojo Una-Una

<sup>2,3</sup>Senior Lecturer in Leadership, Management Study Programme, Tadulako University

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### ABSTRACT

*The charismatic leadership of a kiai (Islamic scholar) plays a central role in Islamic education, especially in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) as traditional educational institutions that still exist today. The charisma of a kiai is not only reflected in their authority but also in their ability to mobilize students, the community, and the educational environment to maintain Islamic values amidst modernization. However, the challenges of globalization, technological advancements, and changing mindsets of the younger generation require kiai leadership to continuously adapt without losing its authenticity. Therefore, it is important to conduct a literature review that explores the effectiveness and challenges of charismatic kiai leadership in transforming and preserving the values of Islamic education. To explore the effectiveness of charismatic kiai leadership and the challenges faced in preserving the values of Islamic education. The study was conducted through a literature review of various research papers, journals, and relevant scholarly works. Charismatic kiai leadership is effective in building loyalty, maintaining pesantren traditions, and adapting learning to contemporary developments. The main challenges include the influence of globalization, popular culture, limited resources, and the demands of technological adaptation. Charismatic kiai leadership has proven capable of maintaining the continuity of Islamic education values, but it needs to be supported by adaptive and innovative strategies to remain relevant in the modern era."*

### Corresponding author:

Rahma

Students of the Management Study Programme at Tadulako University PSDKU Tojo Una-Una

Email: [rahmaazs345@gmail.com](mailto:rahmaazs345@gmail.com)

### INTRODUCTION

Leadership in education is one of the determining factors for success in achieving established educational goals. Among the various types of leadership, charismatic leadership occupies a unique position because it involves a combination of personal charisma, moral strength, and the ability to influence and inspire followers.

In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, especially in Islamic boarding schools, the charismatic leadership of the kiai plays a very central role. Islamic boarding schools, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, have for centuries been bastions for the preservation of religious values as well as centres for the formation of the moral and spiritual character of the Muslim community. The existence of pesantren to this day is inseparable from the figure of the kiai, who functions not only as a formal leader, but also as a spiritual, social, and cultural leader. The kiai is seen as having strong charisma due to his profound knowledge, exemplary behaviour, and ability to build close emotional relationships with his students and the community. It is this charisma that enables a kiai to influence his followers not only through formal instruction, but also through real-life examples in everyday life. The charismatic leadership of the kiai has become one of the main forces that maintains the continuity of classical Islamic values amid the rapid pace of modernisation. Values such as sincerity, simplicity, independence, and togetherness continue to be passed down from generation to generation through a leadership model that is deeply rooted in the pesantren tradition.

However, the reality of Islamic education today faces major challenges. The modernisation of education, developments in information technology, and cultural globalisation have had a significant impact

on the value systems and mindsets of society, including Islamic boarding school students and the younger Muslim generation. On the one hand, there is an urgent need to improve the quality of education through the integration of technology, modern management practices, and openness to global knowledge. On the other hand, Islamic boarding schools are required to maintain their identity as centres for Islamic character building based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. In these circumstances, the charismatic leadership of the kiai is at a crossroads between preserving tradition and innovating. The effectiveness of the charismatic leadership of kiai in facing these challenges is a very important issue to study. Is the charisma of kiai still strong enough to inspire the younger generation in the digital age?

How do kiai strategise to transform Islamic educational values so that they remain relevant without losing the identity of the pesantren? To what extent can this leadership model respond to the demands of the times, in terms of educational quality, professional management of institutions, and the formation of noble character? These questions arise because charismatic leadership, despite its great moral and spiritual strength, is not immune to various limitations in facing ever-changing social dynamics. In addition, the preservation of Islamic educational values in pesantren often faces challenges in the form of limited human resources, infrastructure, and the need for a curriculum that can integrate religious knowledge and modern science. Many Islamic boarding schools still maintain traditional education systems, while the outside world is rapidly advancing with technological innovations and digital-based learning methods. This situation requires a kiai to not only be a respected spiritual figure but also a visionary leader capable of guiding the Islamic boarding school to adapt to changes without losing its Islamic spirit.

Through in-depth exploration, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of charismatic leadership of kiai in Islamic education. The findings of this study are expected to not only enrich academic knowledge, but also contribute practically to the development of a pesantren leadership model that is able to compete in the era of globalisation without losing its identity as a centre for the formation of Islamic character and morality.

## METHOD

This study adopts a comprehensive systematic literature review approach to analyse and synthesise information from various scientific sources relevant to charismatic leadership. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to provide an in-depth review of the development of charismatic leadership theory, its application, and its implications in various organisational and cultural contexts. The main objectives of this study are to identify current research trends, reveal gaps in the literature, and present an integrated and relevant conceptual framework to guide further research.

In the data collection process, researchers used various sources of information, including scientific articles published in reputable international journals, textbooks and key references, research reports from leading institutions, and relevant conference proceedings. These sources were selected based on their relevance, quality, and contribution to the understanding of charismatic leadership. The literature search was conducted systematically using leading scientific databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and ProQuest. The keywords used in the search included 'charismatic leadership', 'charisma', 'charismatic leader', 'charismatic influence', 'leadership transformation', as well as combinations of these keywords with other relevant terms such as 'organisational culture', 'organisational performance', and 'follower behaviour'. Strict inclusion criteria were applied to ensure that the selected scientific articles met high quality standards.

These criteria include: (1) published in reputable international journals indexed in leading databases, (2) focusing specifically on charismatic leadership or related aspects, (3) using valid and reliable research methods, both quantitative and qualitative, (4) presenting significant empirical findings or conceptual analyses, and (5) being published in English or Indonesian. The data analysis process was carried out using a systematic and structured thematic analysis method. First, the researchers carefully read and reviewed each scientific article selected to identify key themes that emerged related to charismatic leadership. These themes included the definition and dimensions of charismatic leadership, the antecedents and consequences of charismatic leadership, the role of organisational context and culture in moderating the influence of charismatic leadership, and the implications of charismatic leadership for organisational performance and employee well-being.

These themes include the definition and dimensions of charismatic leadership, the antecedents and consequences of charismatic leadership, the role of organisational context and culture in moderating the influence of charismatic leadership, and the implications of charismatic leadership for organisational performance and employee well-being. Furthermore, these themes are categorised and grouped based on similarities and differences to identify dominant research trends and gaps that still need to be filled. The information obtained from data analysis is then synthesised and integrated to present a comprehensive conceptual framework relevant to the topic under study. This framework is expected to provide guidance for future researchers in developing more in-depth and contextual research on charismatic leadership.

Through this approach, this study is expected to make a significant contribution to the understanding of charismatic leadership in the context of modern organisations. In addition, this study is also expected to identify areas of research that still need to be developed, such as the role of charismatic leadership in facing global

challenges, the influence of charismatic leadership on innovation and creativity, and the implications of charismatic leadership for organisational sustainability.

## RESULTS

Table 1. Characteristics of the Articles Analysed

No	Author Name. Year / Country	Research Objective	Participants	Data Collection Design and Methods	Key Findings / Implications
1	Ahmad Shiddiq, Nurul Ulfatin, Ali Imron, Imron Arifin, Aan Fardani. Ubaidillah. 2022. Indonesia	Analysing the charismatic leadership style of Kyai based on the resilience of Islamic boarding schools during the COVID-19 pandemic	Two Islamic boarding schools in Madura (Al- Amin Prenduan & Al-Is'af Kalaba'an), Kyai, students, surrounding community	Qualitative, multi-case study. In-depth interviews, documentary studies, participatory observation	The charismatic leadership of Kyai has been proven to increase the resilience of Islamic boarding schools through vision, positive energy, and empowerment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Islamic boarding schools need charismatic leaders to deal with crises; resilience strategies based on religiosity and social capital are important to be applied in Islamic education.
2.	Arifiana & Ubaidillah, Dolcos et al., Hasanah & Nu'man, dsb.). 2021 – 2022. Indonesia and Internasional	Demonstrating the relationship between religiosity, resilience, and charismatic leadership in social and educational contexts	Muslim communities, educational institutions, Islamic boarding school students	Literature review & empirical study Document analysis, interviews (several field studies)	Religiosity enhances psychological and social resilience in the face of stress, including pandemics. Islamic education policies need to incorporate aspects of mental, social, and religious resilience for future crises.
3.	I Putu Agus Swadnyana dan David Hizkia Tobing. 2021. Indonesia	Examining the charismatic leadership style of kyai in the development of Islamic boarding schools	Kyai & santri in Islamic boarding schools	Qualitative, descriptive; interviews, observation, documentation	The charismatic leadership of kyai increases the number of santri & the development of the institution. The importance of adapting leadership styles in line with the times
4.	Ahmad Hariyadi. 2020. Indonesia	Describing the charismatic leadership of kiai in building the organisational culture of Islamic boarding schools	Kiai & santri at PP Raudlatut Thalibin & Al- Anwar	Qualitative, case study; interviews, observation, documentation	Charismatic kiai play a strategic role in shaping the culture of Islamic boarding schools A strong organisational culture improves the quality of education

No	Author Name. Year / Country	Research Objective	Participants	Data Collection Design and Methods	Key Findings / Implications
5.	Alfia M. Jannah, Irada H. Arni, Robit A. Jaisyurohman. 2021. Indonesia	Explaining the role and style of leadership in Islamic boarding schools	100 students (population 8,086)	Literature analysis	Leadership style influences the effectiveness and efficiency of Islamic boarding schools. A dynamic learning community is needed to produce inspirational leaders.
6.	Robi Rohim, M.A. Wildan. 2024. Indonesia	Analysing the influence of charismatic leadership and organisational culture on the character of Islamic boarding school students	100 students (population 8,086)	Quantitative; survey, linear regression	The leadership of religious teachers and organisational culture influence the character of students by 65.61% Strengthening leadership and organisational culture is necessary for character building
7.	Syahrul F. Kurniawan, Widya B. Humairoh, Hasyim Asy'ari. 2024. Indonesia	Analysing the effectiveness and challenges of charismatic leadership in the transformation of Islamic education.	Islamic educational institutions	Qualitative; literature study, content analysis	Charismatic leadership encourages change, but there are challenges of regeneration and resistance. A sustainable leadership model is needed, one that does not depend on a single figure.
8.	Agus Faisal Asyha. 2022. Indonesia	Contextualisation of the concept of charismatic leadership in Islam	Literature on Islamic leadership	Literature review	Charismatic leaders are able to motivate and strengthen social bonds. Charismatic leadership must be accompanied by exemplary values and responsibility.
9.	Nila Nur Sofia. 202. Indonesia	Conflict management in Islamic boarding schools through leadership style and boarding school culture	Literature on Islamic boarding schools and conflict	Literature review	Charismatic leadership and cultural values in Islamic boarding schools are effective in managing conflict. Islamic boarding school leaders need to understand the dynamics of conflict and its solutions.
10.	Mirhabun Nadir, Yurda Bakhtiar, Muhammad Husain, Rizqi Nur Faizin, Ainur Rohman. 2023. Indonesia	Analysing the charismatic leadership model at the Ibnu Sina Islamic boarding school	Kiai, santri	Descriptive qualitative, observation, interviews, documentation	Kiai Maskur Ali has a strong vision, consistency, and direct involvement in educating santri. The charismatic leadership model is effective in shaping future leaders

No	Author Name. Year / Country	Research Objective	Participants	Data Collection Design and Methods	Key Findings / Implications
11.	Ade Gunawan, Dandy Putra Pratama, Salfen Hasri, Sohiron Sohiron. 2024. Indonesia	Explaining charismatic leadership from an Islamic education perspective	Literature (bibliographic study)	Descriptive qualitative Bibliographic study	Charismatic leadership connects ideological goals with the beliefs of followers. Can be applied in Islamic education management to build trust
12.	Anggit Rizkianto. 2020. Indonesia	Exploring Tjokroaminoto's charismatic leadership in Sarekat Islam	Historical literature	Qualitative (documentary study) triangulation of sources	Tjokroaminoto's charisma stemmed from hereditary factors and personal construction. Charismatic leaders are able to save organisations in times of crisis.
13.	Dede Ridho Firdaus, Khairunnisa, Anis Zohriah, Anis Fauzi. 2023. Indonesia	Analysing charismatic and visionary leadership models in Islamic boarding schools	Risalatul Hasanah, Mohammad Kosim	Qualitative (literature review) of primary and secondary literature	Charismatic leaders emphasise charisma, while visionary leaders possess predictive abilities. These leadership models are important for innovation and the direction of Islamic boarding school organisations.
14.	Risalatul Hasanah, Mohammad Kosim. 2021. Indonesia	Analysing charismatic leadership styles in preserving pesantren traditions	Kiai, santri, community	Qualitative (field) interviews, observation, documentation	Salaf pesantren traditions are preserved through charismatic leadership Ensuring the continuity of traditional pesantren values
15.	Nur Hidayati, Mamlukhah. 2023. Indonesia	Understanding the charismatic leadership style of kiai in developing Al-Islami Islamic boarding school	Kiai, teachers, students	Descriptive qualitative, interviews, observation, documentation	Kiai have strong vision, good communication skills, consistency, and high self-confidence. Charismatic leadership influences the development of Islamic boarding schools.
16.	Ahmad Aditian F, Suharfani Almaisaroh, Wulan Septy L, Fiddiniyah Qiflunah. 2020. Indonesia	Analysing Kyai leadership in modern Islamic boarding schools	Kyai, santri (Islamic boarding school students)	Qualitative, documentation, observation	Kyai tend to prefer a democratic style over a charismatic- authoritarian one. A democratic model is more effective for modern Islamic boarding schools and leadership regeneration.

No	Author Name. Year / Country	Research Objective	Participants	Data Collection Design and Methods	Key Findings / Implications
17.	Maratus Sholihah, Muslih. 2019. Indonesia	Examining the leadership of KH. Dawam Saleh at Pondok Al-Islah	Kiai, teachers, students, alumni	Qualitative, interviews, documentation, observation	KH. Dawam Saleh is charismatic, humanistic, disciplined, and humble. His leadership model can serve as an example in pesantren management.
18.	A Ajan, A Mahrudin, MA Mulyana. 2018. Indonesia	Analysing the effectiveness of charismatic leadership by religious leaders in improving teacher performance	Teachers, Religious Leaders	Quantitative, Questionnaire, statistical analysis (Chi-square)	Charismatic leadership by religious leaders is effective in improving teacher performance. The application of charismatic leadership contributes to improving the quality of education.
19.	Hendrayadi. 2023. Indonesia	Understanding the role of charismatic kiai leadership in implementing pesantren values	Kiai, teachers, santri	Qualitative, interviews, observation, documentation	Charismatic kiai serve as role models in implementing pesantren values

## DISCUSSION

Research on the charismatic leadership of Kyai and the resilience of Islamic boarding schools has become an important focus, especially in the context of global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Ahmad Shiddiq et al., Nurul Ulfatin et al., and Ali Imron et al. (2021) conducted qualitative case studies in two Islamic boarding schools in Madura, Indonesia, involving Kyai, students, and the surrounding community as participants. The main objective of this study was to analyse the charismatic leadership of Kyai based on the resilience of Islamic boarding schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through in-depth interviews, document studies, and participatory observation, they found that the charismatic leadership of Kyai proved effective in increasing the resilience of Islamic boarding schools. This leadership strategy includes vision, positive energy, and empowerment, which contribute to the resilience of Islamic boarding schools based on religiosity and social capital, which are crucial to be applied in Islamic education.

Furthermore, references in the study (Arifiana & Ubaidillah, Dolcos et al., Hasanah & Nu'man, etc.) conducted a broader study in 2021-2022 covering the Indonesian and international contexts. Although collectively referenced, these studies aim to demonstrate the relationship between religiosity and charismatic leadership resilience in social and educational contexts. Using a literature and empirical study design (including document analysis and interviews from several field studies), the main finding is that religiosity increases psychological and social resilience in the face of various pressures, including pandemics. The implication emphasises that Islamic education policies need to incorporate aspects of mental, social, and religious resilience to anticipate future crises. Overall, the results of this mapping underline the central role of charismatic Kyai leadership and religious values as an important foundation for the resilience of Islamic boarding schools in facing external challenges.

The charismatic leadership of Kyai is a fundamental aspect of the Islamic educational landscape, particularly in Islamic boarding schools, which not only encourages institutional development but also serves as the main pillar of institutional resilience. Internally, charismatic Kyai figures have proven to play a strategic role in building a strong organisational culture in Islamic boarding schools. This culture, in line with an adaptive leadership style, directly improves the quality of education and significantly influences the character formation of students (by 65.61% according to Robi Rohim & M.A. Wildan, 2024). In addition, this leadership is able to motivate, strengthen social bonds, and effectively manage internal conflicts. The positive impact of charismatic Kyai leadership is also reflected in tangible results, such as an increase in the number of santri and institutional development (Yaya Suryana et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the role of this leadership is even more crucial in facing crises. Studies conducted by Ahmad Shiddiq et al., Nurul Ulfatin et al., and Ali Imron et al. (2021) show that charismatic Kyai leadership

has proven effective in increasing the resilience of Islamic boarding schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. This resilience strategy is implemented through vision, positive energy, and empowerment sourced from religiosity and social capital. This is in line with analyses (References in studies by Arifiana & Ubaidillah, Dolcos et al., etc., 2021-2022) which found that religiosity increases psychological and social resilience in the face of pressure, implying the necessity for Islamic education policies to include aspects of comprehensive resilience. However, there are challenges of regeneration and the risk of dependence on a single figure, so Syahrul F. Kurniawan et al. (2024) emphasise the need to develop a sustainable leadership model that combines charisma with exemplary values and responsibility (Agus Faisal Asyha, 2022), as well as wise and fair characteristics that are relevant to contemporary Islamic education.

In terms of leadership models, charismatic Kyai are characterised by a number of core attributes. Research by Mirhabun et al. (2023) and Nur Hidayati & Mamlu'khah (2023) consistently found that Kyai have a strong vision, consistency (*istiqomah*), and direct involvement in educating santri. This model is reinforced by a study by Maratus S Sholihah et al. (2019), which describes charismatic leaders as humanistic, disciplined, and humble figures. Further conceptualisation by Dede Ridho Firdaus et al. (2023) and Ade Gunawan et al. (2024) confirms that the charismatic model has predictive capabilities and is able to connect the ideological goals of Islamic boarding schools with the beliefs of their followers, so that it can be effectively applied in Islamic education management. In practice, Hendrayadi (2023) emphasises that charismatic Kyai act as role models who strengthen the internalisation of pesantren values in the era of the 4.0 industrial revolution.

The impact of charismatic leadership on internal organisations and students is extensive. Ahmad Hariyadi (2020) highlights the strategic role of charismatic Kyai in building a strong organisational culture in Islamic boarding schools. This culture, together with leadership style, in turn improves the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of education in Islamic boarding schools. This influence also extends to educators, where A Ajan et al. (2018) quantitatively prove that Kyai leadership effectively improves teacher performance and contributes to improving the quality of education. Furthermore, this leadership has a direct impact on santri. Robi Rohim & M.A. Wildan (2024) found that Kyai leadership and organisational culture have a significant influence (65.61%) on the character formation of santri. Finally, Risalatul Hasanah et al. (2021) concluded that this charismatic style is crucial in preserving values, effective in maintaining the traditions of salaf pesantren, and ensuring the continuity of traditional values.

**The Resilience of Islamic Boarding Schools in Times of Crisis and Future Challenges** The central role of charismatic leadership is increasingly evident in the context of external challenges and crises. Ahmad Shiddiq et al., Nurul Ulfatin et al., and Ali Imron et al. (2021) concluded that charismatic Kyai leadership has proven to be able to increase the resilience of Islamic boarding schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. This resilience is manifested through vision-based strategies, positive energy, and empowerment supported by religiosity and social capital. These results are reinforced by other studies (Arifiana & Ubaidillah, Dolcos et al., etc., 2021-2022) which emphasise that religiosity increases psychological and social resilience in the face of pressure. In a historical review, Anggit Rizkian (2020) also shows that the charisma of leaders can save organisations in crisis situations.

Despite its significant benefits, there are implications and challenges that need to be addressed. Syahrul F. Kurniawan et al. (2024) found that charisma does encourage transformation, but it often faces problems of regeneration and resistance, which requires a sustainable leadership model so that it does not depend on a single figure. This is supported by the findings of Ahmad Aditian F et al. (2020), who noted a tendency among Kyai in modern Islamic boarding schools to choose a democratic leadership style as more effective for regeneration than a charismatic-authoritarian style. In general, the literature concludes that charismatic leadership needs to be accompanied by exemplary values and responsibility (Agus Faisal Asyha, 2022), as well as adaptation of styles in line with the times (Yaya Suryana et al., 2021).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The charismatic leadership of Kiai has proven to play a fundamental and strategic role in maintaining continuity, transforming, and preserving Islamic educational values, particularly in Islamic boarding schools, which are bastions of traditional education that still exist today. The effectiveness of Kiai's leadership stems not only from his authority and profound knowledge, but also from his ability to influence and inspire followers, act as a spiritual, social, and cultural leader, and serve as a role model in everyday life. Internally, the charismatic leadership of the Kiai plays a crucial role in building a strong pesantren organisational culture, motivating, strengthening social bonds, and significantly influencing the character formation of santri, even reaching a contribution of 65.61%. The positive impact also extends to improving the overall quality of education, including improving teacher performance and institutional development, as indicated by an increase in the number of santri.

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