



Kiai Communication's Contribution to Enhancing Organisational Effectiveness

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the role of Kiai communication in improving organizational performance in Islamic Boarding Schools. This study focuses on the communication strategies used by Kiai, especially in bridging internal and external communication channels to strengthen the identity of the Islamic boarding school. A qualitative case study approach was used to collect data through interviews, observations, and document analysis with data analysis, according to Miles and Huberman. The findings of the study revealed that the charismatic and empathetic communication style of Kiai fosters loyalty among students, administrators, and the wider community, thereby improving organizational performance. This study is expected to contribute to understanding how effective leadership communication can create a cohesive and high-performance educational environment and provide insights for other Islamic boarding schools that want to strengthen their organizational dynamics through communication.

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is a crucial factor in the success of any organization, including social, political, religious, and educational institutions (Saputra, 2021; Orunbayev, 2023; Iskandar et al., 2022; Aririguzoh, 2022). In the context of pesantren, communication plays a vital role in influencing behaviour and actions, fostering change, and achieving organizational goals (Prasetyo & Rahmatullah, 2024; Bashori et al., 2022; Falah et al., 2023; Sanjani et al., 2024). Effective communication creates a reciprocal relationship, where each influences and motivates the others, thereby building a sense of commitment (Zhang & Liu, 2022; Foroudi et al., 2022; Junaidi et al., 2023; Prouska et al., 2023; Zaini, 2023). This commitment is essential in improving the quality of teachers, as it helps them perform their professional duties with dedication and purpose. Leadership and communication are closely interconnected, with leadership being a key determinant of how communication flows within an organization (Yuan & Van Knippenberg, 2022; Safitri, 2024). Leaders, particularly Kiai in the pesantren, have a significant role in guiding and directing communication among teachers, students, and the community (Wajdi et al., 2022; Dian et al., 2024; Aisyah et al., 2022). Their ability to communicate effectively can strengthen organizational unity and foster a cooperative atmosphere essential for the sustainability of the pesantren. Leadership involves traits and behaviours that affect how individuals interact and cooperate and the ability to influence others toward achieving

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shared objectives (Vallina et al., 2021; Alblooshi et al., 2021; Saharani & Diana, 2024). As the community typically manages pesantren cooperatively, communication becomes even more critical in ensuring everyone is aligned with the pesantren's vision and mission.

The Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta is one of the Islamic educational institutions that has an important role in shaping the character and quality of human resources in Indonesia. Its existence is not only focused on religious teachings but also acts as a centre for social and economic empowerment for the surrounding community. In this Islamic boarding school, the role of the Kiai as a leader is very central to directing and managing various educational and social activities. As a respected figure, the Kiai provides religious education and guides the students in various aspects of their lives. Communication carried out by the Kiai, both directly and through various activities, influences the running of the Islamic boarding school organization and success in achieving educational and empowerment goals (Arifin et al., 2024; Mahmud et al., 2024; Ridlo & Yanti, 2023). Therefore, it is important to understand how communication carried out by the Kiai can affect organizational performance at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta, as well as the factors that support and hinder the success of this communication in improving the performance of the Islamic boarding school organization.

Several previous studies have shown the importance of communication in educational organizations, especially in the context of Islamic boarding schools. Research by Prayogi et al. (2022) shows that effective communication between Islamic boarding school managers, students, and the community can improve the quality of education and organizational performance. Likewise, research by Arifin et al. (2024) emphasized the role of leader communication in managing Islamic boarding school organizations to improve the quality of education. Other research by Zakaria et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of interpersonal communication in building good relationships between Kiai and students, impacting the success of Islamic boarding school programs. In Islamic boarding school organizations, open and transparent communication can strengthen trust between members and create a conducive working atmosphere. Research by A'yun Prianti (2024) stated that the persuasive communication approach by Kiai can influence the participation of students in activities carried out by Islamic boarding schools. Research by Falah et al. (2023) also showed that communicative Kiai leadership can actively motivate students to participate in social activities and self-development. In addition, research by Muhammad et al. (2024) revealed that good communication between Kiai and Islamic boarding school administrators increases professionalism in managing Islamic boarding schools. However, although many studies discuss the role of communication in Islamic boarding school organizations, few specifically examine how Kiai communication can improve the overall performance of Islamic boarding school organizations.

A gap needs to be filled regarding the influence of Kiai communication in the context of Islamic boarding school organizations, especially at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta. Previous studies have focused more on the role of communication in managing education and interpersonal relationships. However, not many have linked Kiai communication to improving overall organizational performance, including its impact on the quality of teaching, human resource management, and increasing student participation in social activities. Therefore, this study offers novelty by directly linking Kiai communication to the performance of Islamic boarding school

organizations, including by considering the local and cultural contexts at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta. This study also identifies the most effective communication elements in improving the performance of Islamic boarding school organizations and the factors that influence the quality of such communication.

The purpose of writing this research is to explore and analyze the role of Kiai communication in improving organizational performance at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta. This study seeks to understand how Kiai communication in various aspects of Islamic boarding school life can contribute to the success of Islamic boarding school management and improve the quality of education. In addition, this study also attempts to target insights into communication strategies that Kiai can apply to increase the motivation and participation of students in Islamic boarding school activities and how this can have implications for the management of human resources, finances, and social activities carried out by Islamic boarding schools. Thus, the results of this study are expected to provide fundamental contributions to the development of effective communication models in Islamic boarding school organizations, which can be used as a reference by other Islamic educational institutions in improving performance and achieving their goals.

RESEARCH METHOD

The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach with a case study type (Nasri, 2023). This study seeks to explore more deeply the role of Kiai communication in improving organizational performance at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta. Case studies were chosen because they allow researchers to gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of the phenomena that occur in a specific context, in this case the Islamic boarding school managed by Kiai. This approach provides flexibility in exploring various factors that influence Kiai communication and its impact on the performance of the Islamic boarding school organization. The selection of the research location was based on several considerations with the Islamic boarding school has a fairly complex organizational structure with various educational, social, and economic activities that involve many parties, including students, Islamic boarding school administrators, and the surrounding community. By using a qualitative case study approach, researchers can explore more deeply the dynamics of Kiai communication in the local and cultural context, and understand how this communication contributes to improving the performance of the Islamic boarding school organization.

The data sources in this study consist of two main categories, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with informants who were directly involved in the management of Islamic boarding schools, such as Kiai, Islamic boarding school administrators, and several teachers or ustadz who were active in educational activities at the Islamic boarding school. Observations were conducted by participating in activities at the Islamic boarding school, both those related to teaching and learning activities and other social activities involving interaction between Kiai, administrators, teachers, and students. Documentation was also used to collect information related to archives, notes, and activity reports that could provide a more complete picture of the communication carried out by Kiai in the Islamic boarding school as in Table 1.

Table 1. Source of Informants

Position of Informant	Qty
Head of <i>Pesantren</i>	2
Education Manager	4
Social Manager	2
Administration Manager	2
<i>Santri</i> /Students	5
Students' Guardians	2
Community	2

Researchers can explore the views, experiences, and perceptions of informants through interviews related to how Kiai communication affects the performance of Islamic boarding school organizations. Observations were conducted in various places and activities of Islamic boarding schools to directly observe the interaction between Kiai and other parties in the Islamic boarding school. In addition, documentation was used to obtain additional data in the form of written notes that could enrich the research results.

Data analysis in this study was carried out using an approach developed by Miles and Huberman, which includes three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification (Bhangu et al., 2023). At the data reduction stage, researchers will select, focus, and organize data that is relevant to the research questions, so that only data that is directly related to the role of Kiai communication in improving the performance of Islamic boarding school organizations will be analyzed further. Furthermore, at the data presentation stage, researchers will compile the reduced data in a more systematic form, such as a matrix, graph, or narrative description, to facilitate understanding and drawing conclusions. Finally, drawing conclusions or verification is carried out to identify patterns that emerge from the data that has been presented, and to test whether the existing findings can answer the research questions. During the data analysis process, researchers will also apply data triangulation, which is a technique to check the consistency of findings by comparing data obtained from various sources and different data collection methods. This triangulation is done by comparing the results of interviews with observations and documentation, so that a more valid and reliable picture can be obtained regarding the role of Kiai communication in improving the performance of Islamic boarding school organizations. By using triangulation techniques, researchers can ensure that the findings obtained are not influenced by bias or inaccuracy in one data collection method alone, but rather based on the convergence of evidence from various sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Multilevel Communication in *Pesantren*

Kiai at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta has a crucial role as a liaison between various levels of communication in the Islamic boarding school, both internal and external. At the internal level, Kiai maintains effective communication with students, teachers, and administrators through direct interaction, discussion forums, and collective delivery of the vision and mission of the Islamic boarding school. Meanwhile, at the external level, Kiai becomes a figure who is able to unite the interests of the community, guardians of students, and parties who contribute to the sustainability of the Islamic boarding school. The approach taken by Kiai is inclusive, where each party

is given space to contribute and convey aspirations. This multilevel communication model has been proven to increase the involvement of all parties, both in aspects of learning, management of the Islamic boarding school, and community participation in social activities. Thus, Kiai not only plays a role as a spiritual leader, but also as a communication catalyst that maintains the balance of relations between institutions inside and outside the Islamic boarding school.

An interview with one of the teachers at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School revealed, "Kiai always ensures that we teachers not only educate academically, but also understand the emotional needs of the students. In every meeting, he always gives everyone the opportunity to express their opinions, both administrators and guardians of students." This explanation shows that the communication implemented by Kiai is not one-way, but rather dialogic and participatory. Another interview with a guardian of students confirmed, "When there are problems with our children, Kiai always contacts us directly. He understands that our role as parents is very important for the development of students." This confirms that Kiai's external communication involves a personal approach to strengthen the relationship between the Islamic boarding school and the students' families. This communication strategy makes everyone feel heard and appreciated, which has a positive impact on their involvement in Islamic boarding school activities.

The results of observations at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School show that Kiai is actively present in various internal and external activities. In daily activities such as pengajian, Kiai gives lectures that not only contain religious teachings, but also directions for teachers and administrators on managing their respective tasks. At certain moments, such as routine meetings or meetings of guardians of students, Kiai becomes a mediator who is able to overcome various communication obstacles between administrators and guardians of students. Observations also show that the physical presence of Kiai in community events, such as commemorations of Islamic holidays or social activities, creates a close relationship between the pesantren and the surrounding community. This activity shows that Kiai's communication is not only verbal but also through real actions that build trust for all parties.

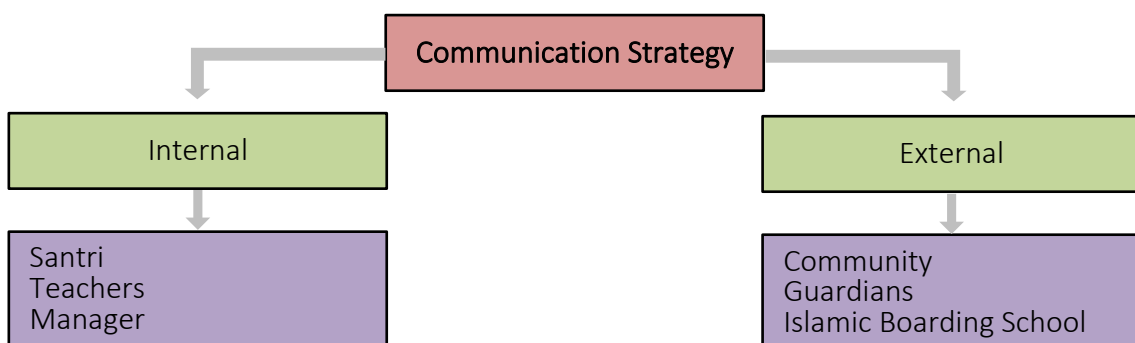


Figure 1. Kiai Communication Strategy

Kiai at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta as Figure 1 plays an important role as a communication bridge connecting various internal and external levels. At the internal level, communication is carried out between students, teachers, and administrators through the delivery of a clear vision, mission, and organizational direction. Kiai also encourages active participation from all parties in internal discussions so that a strong sense of belonging is created. On the external side, Kiai builds relationships with the community, guardians of students, and partners of the boarding school through a personal approach, which strengthens community involvement and support for boarding school activities.

The results of this study are in line with the findings of several previous studies on the role of leaders in organizational communication. Effective leaders use communication to create cross-functional collaboration and strengthen commitment (Purwanto & Wafa, 2023; Ataman et al., 2024). In addition, Muhammad et al. (2024) on religious leader communication confirms that a dialogical approach can increase trust and involvement of organizational members. In the context of pesantren, research by Prasetyo and Rahmatullah (2024) also revealed that Kiai have a unique role as spiritual and social leaders, which makes them the main agents in maintaining the balance of internal and external relations. Based on this analysis, the findings at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School strengthen the view that multilevel communication carried out by Kiai not only improves organizational performance, but also creates a harmonious and productive environment.

Strengthening the Identity of *Pesantren*

Kiai at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta have an important role in strengthening the identity of the Islamic boarding school through consistent delivery of core values. The identity of the Islamic boarding school is built on Islamic principles rooted in the tradition of the Salaf Islamic boarding school and adaptation to modern challenges. In every interaction, whether with students, administrators, or the community, Kiai always emphasizes values such as sincerity, discipline, togetherness, and devotion to the community. This is done not only through lectures or religious studies, but also through real examples in everyday life. Kiai show that Islamic boarding schools are not just places to learn religion, but also a place for character and identity formation that distinguishes students from other individuals. By uniting these values into the vision and mission of the Islamic boarding school, Kiai creates a strong and respected organizational culture, not only within the Islamic boarding school but also among the wider community.

An interview with one of the Islamic boarding school administrators revealed, "Kiai always reminds us about the importance of maintaining Islamic boarding school values in every activity. He said that the identity of the Islamic boarding school lies in how we consistently practice religious teachings." This narrative shows that the core values of the pesantren are not only taught, but also internalized by all elements of the pesantren. Another interview with a guardian of students added, "When we attend the Kiai's religious study, we feel how he instills the values of the pesantren in us as parents of students. This makes us more confident in the pesantren as the best place to educate our children." From this interview, it is clear that the communication carried out by the Kiai does not only include students and administrators, but also strengthens emotional

relationships with guardians of students as part of a strategy to build a solid organizational identity.

Observation results at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School show that the Kiai is always present in various activities involving students, administrators, and the community. In routine religious studies, the Kiai not only provides religious material, but also inserts messages that reflect the values of the pesantren, such as togetherness, sincerity, and responsibility. In addition, during community activities such as community service or celebrations of Islamic holidays, the Kiai is actively involved and provides direct examples. The identity of the pesantren is also seen from the daily routines carried out by the students, such as the schedule of religious studies, worship activities, and interactions between individuals that are full of a spirit of mutual respect. This observation shows that the values of the pesantren strengthened by the Kiai are not only theories, but are applied in real actions followed by all elements of the pesantren.

Table 2. Pesantren Values

Aspect	Pesantren Values	Explanation
Religious	Sincerity, Piety, Worship	Emphasizes the importance of carrying out worship and getting closer to Allah with full sincerity.
Discipline	Order, Responsibility	Students are taught to respect time, carry out their duties well, and maintain discipline in daily life.
Togetherness	Solidarity, Family	A close relationship between students, administrators, and the community is built through the spirit of togetherness.
Devotion	Serving, Spreading Benefits	Islamic boarding schools teach the importance of contributing to society through real actions and services.
Independence	Toughness, Adaptability	Students are trained to be independent both in learning and facing life challenges.
Noble Morals	Honesty, Patience, Courtesy	Focus on shaping the character of students so that they have behavior in accordance with Islamic teachings.
Scientific	Love of Learning, Thirst for Knowledge	The pesantren encourages students to continue to learn and develop their insights.
Social Openness	Tolerance, Mutual Cooperation	Building harmonious relationships with the community and prioritizing cooperation in social life.

The values of the Islamic boarding school as in Table 2 reflect the core teachings of Islam and educational practices that build character at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School. In terms of religion, the Islamic boarding school instills sincerity and piety as a spiritual foundation that encourages students to worship with full confidence. The values of discipline, togetherness, devotion, and independence are important pillars that train responsibility and solidarity in the community. Noble morals such as honesty and politeness as well as social openness through tolerance and mutual cooperation strengthen internal and external relationships, making the Islamic boarding school an educational institution with a strong identity and adaptive to the needs of the community.

The Islamic boarding school has a distinctive identity formed by traditional values inherited through the Kiai (Sanjani, 2024; Zuhdi et al., 2024). Research by Saputra (2021) also shows that the role of the Kiai as a spiritual and social leader is very important in building the collective identity of the Islamic boarding school. Another study by Prayogi

et al. (2022) emphasized that consistent communication from organizational leaders can strengthen organizational culture and identity. In the context of the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School, the role of the Kiai as the guardian of the core values of the Islamic boarding school is in line with these findings, showing that the strong identity of the Islamic boarding school is not only maintained through tradition, but also through adaptation to changes in the times that are well managed by the Kiai.

Kiai as a Figure

Kiai in Pondok Pesantren Sunan Pandanaran Yogyakarta plays a pivotal role as a central figure whose charismatic and empathetic communication style enhances the loyalty of staff and students. This leadership quality fosters a strong bond within the pesantren community, ensuring organizational objectives align with shared values. Through a balanced approach combining authority with understanding, the Kiai can influence the organizational culture and instil a sense of belonging among all members. His ability to empathize with various stakeholders reinforces trust, which ultimately boosts performance across the pesantren's administrative, educational, and social aspects. By creating a supportive and inspiring environment, the Kiai exemplifies a leadership model that bridges generational and hierarchical gaps, enabling cohesive teamwork and sustained commitment to the pesantren's mission.

Direct interviews with key figures and participants in the pesantren further highlight the influence of the Kiai's communication style. A senior teacher stated, "The Kiai often shares his vision through personal anecdotes that inspire us to work harder while staying true to our values." This sentiment was echoed by one of the students, who remarked, "His words carry a sense of wisdom and guidance that make us feel seen and valued." Administrative staff also expressed admiration for how the Kiai integrates empathy into decision-making processes, fostering mutual respect. These insights underscore the critical role of the Kiai's interpersonal skills in shaping a cohesive and motivated community.

Observations at the pesantren reveal that the Kiai actively engages with different groups through structured and informal interactions. He regularly attends class discussions, participates in community events, and consults with administrative staff, ensuring his presence resonates at every level. Notable instances include the Kiai addressing challenges faced by students with personalized advice and leading joint prayers that unify the community. His approachable demeanour creates a positive atmosphere, allowing members to express concerns freely and contribute ideas for

Comparative analysis with previous research highlights the significance of empathetic and charismatic leadership in educational settings. Studies indicate that leaders who adopt such styles foster a sense of purpose and commitment among their teams (Faiz et al., 2023; Wajdi et al., 2022; Zakaria et al., 2022). The findings from Pondok Pesantren Sunan Pandanaran align with these conclusions, emphasizing the transformative impact of Kiai's communication approach on organizational performance. By bridging traditional values with modern leadership practices, the Kiai strengthens

internal cohesion and external partnerships, positioning the pesantren as a model institution in Islamic education.

The findings contribute significantly to understanding the pivotal role of Kiai leadership in pesantren. Multilevel communication facilitated by the Kiai bridges internal (santri, teachers, administrators) and external (community, parents) stakeholders, fostering greater engagement and collaboration. The consistent transmission of pesantren values strengthens its organizational identity, ensuring alignment and cohesion among all parties. Furthermore, Kiai's empathetic and charismatic communication style enhances loyalty and performance, demonstrating an effective model of leadership rooted in Islamic principles. These insights offer a framework for improving organizational practices in religious educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

The formation of religious values at Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta, has an important role in maintaining the sustainability of religious education amidst leadership changes. In this case, leadership changes must be managed well to maintain existing religious values and continue to develop. Commitment to religious education must remain the main focus, with efforts to ensure that religious teaching and the formation of religious character in students are not disrupted. New leaders are responsible for continuing and strengthening these values by prioritizing continuity in the implementation of religious education programs and religious character.

However, the findings of this study have limitations. This study only covers one Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta. It has not covered variations in other madrasahs that may have different dynamics in leadership changes and the formation of religious values. In addition, this study is limited to direct observation and interviews with internal parties of the Islamic boarding school, so it does not include the perspectives of parents of students or the surrounding community who also have an important role in forming students' religious character. Further research is needed with a broader sample and a more diverse approach to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the influence of leadership changes on the formation of religious values in madrasahs.

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