



Social Modalities of Kiai in The Development of Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

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This study focuses on the role of social modality of kiai in the development of pesantren institutions, with a case study at Burhanul Abrar Islamic Boarding School, Situbondo. Through a qualitative approach and case study strategy, this study explores how community trust in kiai, alumni loyalty, and kiai involvement in socio-religious forums contribute to the sustainability and strengthening of pesantren institutions. The results of the study indicate that non-material social capital such as social networks, reciprocity values, and collective norms can be effectively mobilized by kiai to encourage collective participation and social transformation based on local wisdom. The implications of these findings enrich the literature on social capital in the context of traditional religious education and highlight the importance of the kiai's position as an agent of social change in the community. This study also opens up space for new methodological approaches in the study of pesantren, while encouraging the need for further exploration with a mixed methods approach and wider coverage for more representative results.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of Islamic boarding schools as traditional Islamic educational institutions currently shows significant progress (Aziz et al., 2021; Hidayah, 2021; Roqib, 2021). This progress is not only evident from the physical and infrastructure aspects, but is also greatly influenced by non-material factors, especially the social capital possessed by the kiai as the leader of the Islamic boarding school (Harirah, 2021; Naqiyah et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2022). Within the framework of social capital theory, social capital is understood as a network of social relationships, norms, and values that enable cooperation and coordination between individuals or groups for the common good (Ali & Halim, 2023; Marzuki, 2023; Rosidin et al., 2022). This theory explains how social capital acts as an independent variable that influences the effectiveness of social interaction, trust, and collaboration in a community.

Kiai plays a central role as a leader figure who not only functions as a religious leader, but also as a social leader who is able to build trust and reciprocity cooperation with the surrounding community (Faisal et al., 2022; Idris et al., 2023). This strategic role of the kiai functions as a bridge that unites various group interests in order to achieve collective benefit (Budiyanti et al., 2021; Utama & Akbar, 2023). In the context of the relationship between Islamic boarding schools and society, social capital formed through social networks, norms, and social values is the main foundation in strengthening collaboration and the sustainability of Islamic boarding school institutions.

Theoretically, the social capital variable of the kiai plays a role as a determining factor that influences the success of the empowerment and development program of Islamic boarding schools as a dependent variable (Fuad, 2022; Wajdi et al., 2022; Widayanti & Muawanah, 2021). Strong social capital will increase the level of community participation, strengthen social solidarity, and facilitate the transfer of resources and information between Islamic boarding schools and the surrounding community (Aisyah et al., 2022; Anjar & ZA, 2021). The concept of social capital which emphasizes the importance of social networks and trust norms in building an effective community.

As a concrete example, the Burhanul Abrar Islamic Boarding School in Besuki, Situbondo, shows how the social capital of the kiai is the main driving force in the development of the institution. In this Islamic boarding school, the harmonious relationship between the kiai and the surrounding community creates a conducive environment for the success of educational programs and community empowerment. The social capital internalized in the kiai figure strengthens social ties, increases solidarity, and facilitates coordination between parties so that the Islamic boarding school is able to adapt and develop amidst the challenges of the times. Thus, the social capital of the kiai is not only an inherent social asset, but also a strategic instrument that plays an important role in advancing and maintaining the existence of Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions that contribute significantly to community development.

In the context of theory, social capital consists of elements of trust, norms, and social networks that facilitate coordination and cooperation to achieve common goals (Nurasyiah et al., 2021; Supriyanto et al., 2022). In the pesantren environment, social capital does not only include networks and trust, but also the authority of the kiai as the main figure who is able to mobilize community participation and strengthen the sense of togetherness in the community (Purwanto & Wafa, 2023; Syamsuri et al., 2023; Wahono et al., 2023). This social capital is very important in encouraging the development of community-based pesantren and ensuring the continuity of sustainable development programs.

The success of Islamic boarding schools in maintaining their existence while innovating is highly dependent on the harmonious relationship between the kiai and the surrounding community (Asror et al., 2023; Faiz et al., 2023; Futaqi & Mashuri, 2022). The kiai are able to combine traditional values with the needs of the times through an adaptive cultural and religious approach. Social capital built through networks of trust and collective norms is a strategic asset that not only strengthens internal cohesion (Badrin, 2023; Zaini & Fahmi, 2023), but also increases the capacity of Islamic boarding schools to respond effectively to external dynamics.

Although social capital is recognized as very important, there is a gap in the literature that has not specifically described the real implementation of social capital in the management of Islamic boarding school institutions and the optimization of this social capital in facing contemporary challenges. This study is important because it seeks to highlight the potential of the kiai's social capital as a strategic force in the development of Islamic boarding schools amidst the complexity of the times. In contrast to the focus on technological and infrastructure advances, this study places social capital as a non-material factor that plays a very important role in maintaining the sustainability and independence of Islamic boarding schools. The novelty of this study lies in the approach that not only examines social capital from a theoretical perspective, but also concretely maps the transformation of social relations built by kiai into institutional strengths that support the development of Islamic boarding schools as a whole.

Specifically, this study aims to examine in depth how the social capital owned by the kiai can be optimized in supporting the development of Islamic boarding schools. This study will explain various forms of social relations between the kiai and the community and how these relations are translated into productive cooperation in the context of Islamic boarding school development. In addition, this study also aims to identify key elements of social capital, such as trust, social norms, participation, and networks, which are important foundations in realizing independent, adaptive, and sustainable Islamic boarding schools. The results of the study are expected to be a reference for strategies to strengthen the institutional capacity of Islamic boarding schools based on social capital in order to face the challenges of the ever-evolving era.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method based on the research objective to identify and describe the social capital of kiai in the development of Islamic boarding schools that has been successfully carried out by the Burhanul Abrar Besuki Islamic Boarding School. This objective is thus achieved more quickly

with a qualitative approach that emphasizes its research on the quality of the entity and the research process, but this does not mean that qualitative research does not analyze the relationship between variables, it is just not limited to predetermined variables as in quantitative research. With this qualitative research, it is possible to find other variables (which may also be new) with the variables or problems being studied. From here, a hypothesis or theory will be born (Firdaus et al., 2021).

The use of qualitative research methods will also provide researchers with the opportunity to find the meaning behind the revealed/visible data. Facts in the development of Islamic boarding schools are often found in visible data, so their meaning can be done qualitatively, related to this research, the case studied aims to reduce and understand social interactions that are not dated, so the method used is a qualitative research method. In an effort to answer the research objectives, the strategy used is a case study (Williams, 2021). This is because the case study approach will provide space for research problems that are specific, specific, and local in scale, such as those that occurred at the Burhanul Abrar Besuki Islamic Boarding School.

From the problems and objectives to be achieved, the data collection techniques that will be used documentation and in-depth interviews or unstructured interviews. Documentation is also a source of secondary data and is important, especially for the problem of Islamic boarding school development. Therefore, secondary data is needed to answer the research objectives. Likewise, in-depth or unstructured interviews provide researchers with ample space to better understand the complexity of social capital and the development of Islamic boarding schools at the Burhanul Abrar Islamic Boarding School.

Table 1. Informant

Participant	Gender		Informan
	Male	Female	
Pesantren Caregiver	1	-	K.H Faiqunnuha M
Administrator	1	-	SH
Alumn	2	-	NH, SP
Government Employee	1		SK
Local Residents	-	1	HM
Community Leader	1	-	DW
Santri	1		AM
Head of Hamlet	1		TR
Sum	8	1	

Another important thing in this research method lies in the qualitative data collection technique is finding key informants who will be used as sources of information about the problems to be studied. For the data collection technique

in this study, the purposive technique was used. So in this study, the kiai became the main source as a local elite. Other information is several management staff, community leaders and the community around the pesantren. Finally, for data management and analysis, the researcher used the stages as found by Sugiono who quoted the opinion of Miles and Huberman. The activities in the data analysis are reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social modality is the capacity inherent in individuals or groups to play an active and adaptive role in complex social interactions. This capacity includes a set of connotative abilities that are not only limited to social knowledge and communication skills, but also include sensitivity to norms, values, and social dynamics that exist in society (Prasetyo, 2022; Sa'adah & Formen, 2021). In theory, social modality acts as an independent variable that influences the ability of individuals or groups to build social networks, develop trust, maintain social norms and values, and increase active community participation as a dependent variable that supports the sustainability of a social institution.

In the context of this research, the focus of the study is the social modality of the kiai in the process of developing Islamic boarding schools, with an emphasis on five main aspects: social networks (networking), reciprocity, trust, social norms and values, and active community participation in supporting the sustainability of Islamic boarding schools (Buanaputra et al., 2022). A qualitative approach is used to conduct an in-depth analysis of the social dynamics in the Islamic boarding school environment.

Networking

Relationships built through networking cover a broad spectrum of personal, professional, and institutional relationships, all of which play an important role in expanding access to information, resources, and social support. In institutional practice, networking becomes a vital instrument in strengthening social positions, expanding institutional influence, and encouraging cross-sector collaboration in order to accelerate social transformation. In the context of religious-based educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, the ability of key actors, especially a kiai, to design and implement networking strategies is a fundamental element in supporting the existence and sustainability of the institution. The kiai acts as a social catalyst that bridges the relationship between the Islamic boarding school and external actors, such as community leaders, formal educational institutions, local governments, and socio-religious organizations.

As conveyed by Faiqunnuha Mubarak, the caretaker of the Burhanul Abror Islamic Boarding School, his involvement in strategic forums such as the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) and the Islamic Boarding School Deliberation is part of a systematic effort to present the Islamic boarding school's flagship programs while opening up collaborative channels with various institutions. These forums function as a means of advocacy, social diplomacy, and as a deliberative space in strengthening the existence of Islamic boarding school institutions in the public sphere.

Alumni contributions also show a significant role in expanding the spectrum of Islamic boarding school networking. Kholilurahman, an alumnus, emphasized that moral and emotional attachment to the alma mater encouraged him and his fellow alumni to actively bridge partnerships between Islamic boarding schools and the institutions where they work, such as CSR institutions and universities. This reflects the internalization of the values of loyalty and social responsibility which also strengthen the external network of Islamic boarding schools.

In line with that, Sholehuddin, as the Public Relations of the Burhanul Abror Islamic Boarding School, added that the strategy to strengthen the existence of Islamic boarding schools is also carried out through institutional synergy with religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, as well as the use of social media as an effective public communication channel. This digital activity is not just a form of publication, but a transformation of the way of networking that is adaptive to the dynamics of the digital era.

This is reinforced by the opinion of Eko Wahyunto, (2025) who stated that social networks in the digital era are not only limited to face-to-face interactions, but also extend into virtual relationships that can cross geographical and sectoral boundaries. This shows that Islamic boarding schools that are able to adopt a digital approach in networking have a greater opportunity to expand their social influence transnationally.

Field observations indicate that the grand alumni reunion event is a medium for actualizing connectivity across generations and sectors. Through the formation of digital groups involving partners from the public and private sectors, Islamic boarding schools create a dynamic, participatory, and sustainable communication space.

The concept of resettlement in the networking aspect shows a new orientation of Islamic boarding schools in reconstructing and rearranging their social networks in a more open, professional, and responsive manner to changing times. The active involvement of Islamic boarding schools in cross-institutional forums and strategic synergy with external parties show that networking is no

longer conventional, but has evolved into an instrument of adaptive and future-oriented institutional social transformation.

Alumni play a central role in this process as connective agents who bridge the needs of Islamic boarding schools with external opportunities, both in the form of funding, human resource quality improvement programs, and institutional cooperation. Meanwhile, the Islamic boarding school public relations unit transforms into a digital communication center that actively manages interactions with the public through social media platforms and virtual forums. This study confirms that strengthening networking is an integral part of the institutional strategy of Islamic boarding schools in responding to the challenges of the times while creating a social ecosystem that supports the sustainability of the institution. Through holistic and progressive resettlement, Islamic boarding schools are not only able to maintain the social networks that have been built, but also regenerate them to be more inclusive, adaptive, and transformative.

Resiprocity

Kiai Faiqunnuha Mubarak, the Caretaker of the Burhanul Abror Islamic Boarding School, showed that the value of reciprocity is an integral part of the social relations of the Islamic boarding school. He stated that the community often provides voluntary support, such as logistical assistance or participation in the construction of facilities, and the Islamic boarding school reciprocates through public religious studies, joint prayers, and open socio-religious services. One of the alumni, Kholilurahman, said that he felt he had a moral obligation to repay the Islamic boarding school, which he did by donating rice or helping to design the Islamic boarding school's publication materials voluntarily. This, according to him, is a form of real contribution to the alma mater.

On the other hand, the Islamic boarding school's public relations officer, Sholehuddin, emphasized that all forms of community support are always followed up with clear documentation and reporting. Public relations also actively sends certificates of appreciation and publishes support from partners on social media as a form of symbolic response and strengthening emotional relations. In direct observation, the practice of reciprocity is seen in various activities such as kiai giving lectures at community events without asking for compensation, alumni becoming volunteers for the construction of new buildings, and the involvement of local residents in empowerment-based pesantren activities.

The process of resetting the value of reciprocity shows that Islamic boarding schools have reorganized their social relationship patterns with the community and alumni in a more structured, professional, and sustainable way.

The practice of giving and receiving that was previously spontaneous is now packaged in a more organized system. Islamic boarding school services to the community, such as religious studies or social activities, are now scheduled and documented routinely. Alumni also contribute not only through materials, but also through their professional networks and expertise, such as bridging cooperation between Islamic boarding schools and the institutions where they work, including CSR companies or higher education institutions. Islamic boarding school public relations implements a symbolic strategy by sending digital certificates, uploading public appreciation on social media, and forming online communication groups as a means of maintaining social relations. Thus, reciprocity is not only a social ethic, but has developed into a social system that is relevant to the needs of the times. The findings of this study strengthen that Islamic boarding schools have succeeded in resetting the value of reciprocity, from mere traditional exchanges to a more dynamic and measurable social relationship system. This change confirms that reciprocity is an ethical foundation as well as a strategic instrument in maintaining social cohesion, strengthening institutional legitimacy, and ensuring the sustainability of Islamic boarding schools as educational and socio-religious entities in modern society.

Trust

Kiai Faiqunnuha Mubarak said that trust is built through a long process based on exemplary behavior, justice, and a willingness to be open and honest in handling every problem. He stated that the community will remain loyal if they feel they are treated fairly and respected morally. In line with that, an alumnus who is now a guardian of a student said that he again entrusted his child to study at the Islamic boarding school because he already knows the quality of education and the integrity of the caregivers. From an institutional perspective, the Islamic boarding school's public relations officer, Sholehuddin, explained that transparency is the main key to maintaining public trust. He said that financial reports, such as zakat and infak, are always published openly, including through social media and bulletin boards. Field observations support this finding, where the kiai is often asked by the community to mediate in family and social conflicts, indicating that trust in his moral and social role is very high. Alumni are also actively involved in promoting the Islamic boarding school voluntarily through various digital platforms, while the community shows their support through participation in bazaars, facility construction, and other social activities.

Resettlement in the trust aspect can be seen from the renewal of the pesantren's strategy in building and maintaining public trust through a more transparent, accountable, and exemplary public approach. The Kiai emphasized that openness is not only about managing funds, but also a fair and consistent

attitude in making decisions, including in resolving internal and external conflicts. Alumni stated that their trust in the pesantren was not merely because of emotional ties, but because they witnessed for themselves that the integrity of the caretakers was maintained even after they graduated. In this case, the pesantren's public relations plays a strategic role through open reporting, publication of activities, and strengthening the moral narrative about the role of the pesantren in society.

The community is not only symbolically loyal, but also actively entrusts their children's education and supports the pesantren in the form of financial contributions, manpower, and institutional promotion. Thus, resettlement in the trust aspect is not only aimed at maintaining social legitimacy, but also to adapt public trust in the context of changing times that demand higher transparency and accountability. This process shows that the trust built by Islamic boarding schools is not something static, but is continuously renewed through relevant and meaningful social practices. This finding shows that Islamic boarding schools have succeeded in managing trust as strategic social capital that simultaneously strengthens the sustainability of social and institutional relations.

Discussion

This study elaborates the forms of actualization of the kiai's social capital systematically and interprets its implications for the direction of transformation and development of pesantren, both in the current context and in the long-term perspective (Maulidia, 2023; Suyudi et al., 2022). Thus, the kiai's social modality is not merely a symbol of social relations, but rather a connotative and strategic scientific instrument in building the foundation of the sustainability and progress of pesantren amidst the dynamics of modern society.

Social networking is an essential component in the construction of social capital that reflects the capacity of individuals and collectives to build, maintain, and optimize productive and mutually beneficial social relationships (Aidulsyah, 2023; Anggadwita et al., 2021; Azmi et al., 2022). In the context of social institutions, networking is not merely understood as an activity of establishing interpersonal relationships, but rather as a strategic process that is systemic in forming reciprocal, trust-based, and sustainable connectivity.

Social capital consists of networks, norms, and social trust that enable more efficient coordination and cooperation in a society (Nurasyiah et al., 2021). Networking, in this case, is a central dimension of social capital that provides space for collaboration between parties and facilitates a more equitable distribution of information and resources. Social networks function as "resources embedded in social structures," which can be mobilized to achieve collective and individual goals.

The principle of reciprocity or reciprocal exchange is the main foundation in social relations that reflects the existence of giving and receiving fairly between individuals and groups in a community (Faisal et al., 2022). In the study of social capital, reciprocity is not only understood in the material dimension, but also includes social, emotional, and moral aspects that are mutually binding. The values of justice, solidarity, and reciprocal appreciation, where each individual feels a moral obligation to repay the kindness received, either directly (direct reciprocity) or indirectly (indirect reciprocity).

In the context of institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, the practice of reciprocity is manifested in the relationship between *kiai* and *santri*, between Islamic boarding schools and the surrounding community, and between alumni and the institutions where they are now working. The community provides support to Islamic boarding schools in the form of labor, food, donations, or social loyalty (Supriyanto et al., 2022; Syamsuri et al., 2023). In return, Islamic boarding schools contribute through educational services, moral development, and socio-religious activities that are open to all groups. This reciprocal relationship creates a sense of attachment, long-term trust, and social legitimacy of the Islamic boarding school in the eyes of the public.

Trust is a fundamental element in the structure of social capital that acts as the main foundation in building and maintaining stable, harmonious, and sustainable social relations (Anjar & ZA, 2021; Aziz et al., 2021). Trust reflects an individual's belief in the integrity, competence, and good intentions of other parties in carrying out their social roles. Trust is not only interpersonal, but also institutional, where society places trust in institutions or public figures who are considered capable of consistently fulfilling social expectations and responsibilities.

In the scope of Islamic boarding schools, trust is the main foundation in building strong relations between *kiai*, students, alumni, and the community. Public trust in *kiai* as an authoritative figure is not formed instantly, but through the accumulation of exemplary behavior, honesty, and consistency of service in the educational, social, and religious spheres. This trust allows Islamic boarding schools to play a significant role as a center for moral formation as well as a social institution that gains broad legitimacy from society.

CONCLUSION

The social modality of the *kiai* plays a crucial role in the development of Islamic boarding schools, especially in terms of building social networks, increasing community trust, and encouraging collective participation. Important findings from the case study at the Burhanul Abrar Islamic Boarding School show that high trust in the *kiai* is able to mobilize the social potential of the

surrounding community to actively support the sustainability of the Islamic boarding school. The values of reciprocity, alumni loyalty, and the role of the kiai in socio-religious forums become collective forces that not only strengthen the existence of the Islamic boarding school but also encourage social transformation based on local wisdom. This is an important lesson that non-material forces such as trust, social networks, and collective norms can be optimized as strategic instruments for the development of Islamic boarding school institutions.

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