The Role of Leadership Style in Building a Discipline Culture in Pesantren: Facing the Challenges of Social and Technological Change

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ABSTRACT – This study aims to analyze the influence of leadership styles applied in pesantren on the implementation of a culture of discipline among santri (pesantren students) and the challenges faced by pesantren in maintaining a culture of discipline amid social and technological developments. Pesantren as religious educational institutions have characteristics that prioritize discipline as a basic value. The leadership style applied by the pesantren leader, whether authoritarian or democratic, can influence the extent to which discipline is applied in the life of the santri. However, increasingly open social change and the rapid development of technology, especially in terms of the use of social media, are a major challenge to maintaining a culture of discipline. The uncontrolled use of technology often disrupts the concentration and focus of santri, while changes in the mindset of the younger generation, who are more open to freedom, also risk reducing the level of discipline. This study shows that pesantren must be able to adapt their leadership style to the times, without sacrificing the values of discipline that have long been the basis of pesantren life. Therefore, a more flexible approach is needed to manage technology and foster relationships between pesantren leaders and students. In conclusion, discipline management in pesantren requires a balance between firmness and an approach that prioritizes humanitarian values and adaptation to the challenges of the times.

Keywords: Leadership style, pesantren, culture of discipline, challenges, technology, social change.

A. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, pesantren have long been highly respected educational institutions, especially in character building and religious understanding. One of the main values taught in pesantren is discipline, which includes discipline in learning and in aspects of daily life. This culture of discipline is a strong foundation for creating an environment conducive to the moral and spiritual development of santri (Risqi & Darmawan, 2024). However, in the midst of changing times and the increasingly massive influence of technology, the challenge of maintaining a culture of discipline in pesantren is growing (Al Hakim et al., 2022). This phenomenon shows the need for a deeper study of how pesantren leadership can influence the application of discipline within it (Jamil et al., 2023).

In pesantren, leadership plays an important role in regulating and enforcing discipline among santri. In many pesantren, the firm and authoritative leadership of a kyai or pesantren leader is often considered the key to building a culture of discipline (Ismaya et al., 2023). However, many pesantren face challenges in maintaining discipline, both due to a lack of assertiveness in leadership and external influences on santri behavior. For example, pesantren with more democratic and participatory leadership may face difficulties in enforcing consistent discipline, while pesantren with more authoritarian leaders often receive criticism for their overly harsh approach (Darmawan, 2008; Mushtofa et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to further investigate the relationship between the leadership style applied and the development of an effective culture of discipline in pesantren (Fitri et al., 2024).

One of the main problems faced by pesantren in building a culture of discipline is the mismatch between the leadership style applied and the expected values of discipline. Leadership that is too authoritarian or even strict in enforcing rules sometimes creates tension and feelings of discomfort among santri (Ardiansyah & Basuki,

2023). For example, an overly harsh approach to discipline enforcement can cause santri to feel stressed, which ultimately has a negative impact on their motivation and character development (Anasro & Darmawan, 2024). Wahyudi (2017) mentions that in some pesantren, the leader's firmness in upholding discipline without understanding the psychological condition of the santri often causes resistance, which makes discipline not well accepted by the santri.

There are also problems in the consistency of discipline enforcement in pesantren. A lack of firm and inconsistent leadership in managing discipline can create confusion and uncertainty among santri about the rules that apply. In some pesantren, even though they have respected leaders, the lack of firmness in enforcing the rules leads to repeated disciplinary violations without clear sanctions. A study by Fauzan et al. (2024) revealed that ambiguity and inconsistency in the application of discipline can reduce the effectiveness of learning and shape the santri's relaxed attitude towards existing rules.

Another problem is the influence of external factors, such as social and technological changes, which affect the culture of discipline in pesantren. Advances in information and communication technology, such as the use of smartphones and the internet, have influenced the daily lives of santri (Masnawati et al., 2023). This creates challenges for pesantren leaders to maintain discipline in the face of new disturbances that did not exist in previous eras (Kurniawan et al., 2023). Although some pesantren try to implement strict rules regarding the use of technology, others pay less attention to the impact of technological developments on the behavior and discipline of santri. Mustofa (2020) shows that the external influences on pesantren, such as the habits of santri who are exposed to technology and social media, often obscure the culture of discipline that is built in the pesantren environment.

The phenomenon of discipline in pesantren needs to be observed in depth because discipline is one of the main pillars that shape the character of santris and support the quality of education in pesantren. Discipline influences the learning process, and the formation of santris' character and morals (Wanti & Darmawan, 2024). Therefore, it is important to understand how pesantren leadership plays a role in building and maintaining a culture of discipline, given that any change in leadership style can directly affect the discipline applied in pesantren. Ignoring the importance of the role of leadership in a culture of discipline can risk a decline in the quality of education and character building, which should be the main goal of pesantren (Wahyudi, 2017).

The urgency to observe this problem is also related to the challenges faced by pesantren in keeping up with the times, especially with the presence of the influence of technology and rapid social change. The change in the lifestyle of santri who are exposed to social media and information technology makes the application of discipline increasingly complex (Al Mursyidi & Darmawan, 2023). Therefore, observation of these dynamics is important in order to identify the factors that cause a decline in the level of discipline and find more effective leadership patterns to deal with it. If not carefully observed, pesantren risk losing the traditional values that have shaped the strong character of santri, which in turn can affect the quality of education and religion taught (Mustofa, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the leadership style applied in pesantren influences the implementation of a culture of discipline among santri. This study aims to understand the relationship between types of leadership—both authoritarian and participatory—and the level of discipline created in pesantren. This study also aims to identify the challenges faced by pesantren in maintaining a culture of discipline amid the influence of social change and technological progress. The main focus of this study is to examine how pesantren leadership responds to these external changes and their impact on the sustainability of the culture of discipline that has long been maintained in pesantren environments.

B. METHOD

This study uses a literature review approach to explore various relevant references regarding the relationship between leadership and disciplinary culture in pesantren. The literature review approach is very appropriate because it aims to collect, analyze, and synthesize information from various existing primary and secondary sources, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. By relying on relevant literature reviews, this study focuses on existing theories to provide a complete picture of the role of leadership in shaping a culture of discipline in pesantren (Creswell, 2014).

The sources used in this study include books, scientific journals, research reports, and articles relevant to the topic of leadership and discipline in pesantren. These sources will provide insights into the leadership practices applied in pesantren and how they affect the santri's disciplinary culture. Articles discussing the influence of technology on the lives of santri and the organizational culture of pesantren will also be reviewed to see the external challenges faced by pesantren in maintaining discipline (Samsudin, 2018). This literature search aims to identify gaps in existing research and provide a strong theoretical foundation for further research.

The data analysis process in this literature study involves organizing and categorizing information obtained from various sources so that recurring patterns or themes can be found. With this approach, this study will identify various factors that influence the disciplinary culture in pesantren, as well as how leadership plays a role in shaping these disciplinary patterns. Previous research conducted by Yuliana (2019) and Susanto (2017) is an important reference for exploring this topic, especially for understanding the role of kyai leadership and cultural factors in supporting discipline in pesantren. Careful literature analysis will result in a clearer understanding of the role of leadership in facing the challenges of the times and maintaining a culture of discipline in pesantren.

The literature study approach also allows researchers to compare findings from various studies conducted in different pesantren, resulting in broader and more comprehensive insights. One of the main objectives of this study is to explore whether there are differences in disciplinary culture in pesantren led by kyai with authoritarian leadership styles compared to pesantren that promote more democratic leadership styles. This study will examine how the application of technology in pesantren impacts the discipline of santri in pesantren.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Influence of Leadership Style on the Implementation of a Culture of Discipline in Pesantren

The influence of leadership style on the implementation of a culture of discipline in pesantren is a relevant topic for discussion, considering that pesantren, as religious-based educational institutions, have highly-guarded traditional values, including in terms of discipline. The leadership applied by the kyai or pesantren leader plays a very important role in shaping the santri's culture of discipline. A firm and authoritative leadership style can create an environment conducive to the formation of discipline among santris. On the other hand, a leadership style that is not firm or too loose can cause uncertainty in the application of rules, making it difficult to uphold a culture of discipline (Samsudin, 2018).

In many Islamic boarding schools, authoritarian and charismatic leadership styles are very dominant. The leader of the pesantren, or kyai, is often seen as a figure with moral and spiritual authority, so the policies they make tend to be binding (Furqon, 2024). This authoritarian leadership is usually accompanied by the implementation of strict rules and clear sanctions for santri who break them. Yuliana (2019) shows that pesantren with authoritarian leadership tend to be more disciplined in regulating the daily activities of santri, from study time, worship activities, to their social behavior. This leadership style supports the formation of an orderly and disciplined lifestyle, due to the firmness in supervision and the good example set by the leader.

However, although authoritarian leadership can support the implementation of discipline, this approach is not always well received by all santri, especially those who are more open to a more democratic and participatory style of leadership. A more democratic style of leadership tends to provide space for santri to participate in decision-making, which can influence their sense of responsibility towards existing rules. Fitriani (2020) revealed that in some pesantren, more democratic leadership can improve discipline through a more humane approach, which pays attention to the voices and aspirations of santri. This type of leadership encourages santri to be more aware of the importance of discipline, not because they are afraid of sanctions, but because of a sense of responsibility that has been built together.

However, the influence of leadership style on discipline is also influenced by the organizational culture that exists in the pesantren. The pesantren culture, which tends to be hierarchical, often reinforces the application of authoritarian leadership, while pesantren with a more egalitarian and collaborative organizational culture can adopt a more participatory leadership style. In

pesantren with a more flexible and open culture, santri have more freedom to interact and discuss with leaders, which can reduce the tension that arises from overly rigid discipline enforcement (Huda et al., 2023). This is supported by Rohman et al. (2024) who state that an organizational culture that supports interaction between leaders and students in a more relaxed manner can create more harmonious relationships, which in turn facilitates the application of a culture of discipline.

However, there are also pesantren that strive to balance a firm and democratic leadership style to ensure that discipline is maintained without compromising the harmonious relationship between the leadership and the santri. Sulaiman (2018) shows that pesantren that succeed in creating a balance between authority and participation, for example by giving santri the opportunity to provide input regarding existing regulations, tend to be more successful in implementing discipline. This approach emphasizes the firmness to enforce rules, and pays attention to the aspirations of santri so that they feel more valued and more responsible for the rules that are applied.

The application of a discipline-oriented leadership style can also be influenced by external factors such as technological and social developments. For example, with the rapid advancement of information technology, pesantren must face new challenges to maintain discipline, especially in terms of the use of gadgets and social media. In this case, a more adaptive and flexible leadership style is very important to deal with these problems. Mustofa (2020) shows that pesantren that have leaders who are responsive to changing times, including regulating the use of technology, can more easily maintain discipline among santri. A leadership style that can adapt to these developments allows for more relevant and effective rules to maintain a culture of discipline.

Overall, the influence of leadership style on the culture of discipline in pesantren is very large. A firm and authoritarian leadership style can create strong discipline, but it must be balanced with an approach that prioritizes humanitarian values and participation. Democratic leadership, even though it gives space for santri to participate, still needs to be upheld with clear principles of discipline so as not to reduce discipline among santri. Therefore, it is important for pesantren leaders to adjust their leadership style to the needs and challenges that exist, as well as the organizational culture that prevails in the pesantren.

The Challenges for Pesantren to Maintain a Culture of Discipline in an Era of Social and Technological

The challenges faced by pesantren in maintaining a culture of discipline amid the influence of evolving social and technological changes are an issue of great importance to be discussed. Pesantren, as a traditional religious-based educational institution, have different characteristics from other educational institutions (Fitri et al., 2024). One of the biggest challenges faced is how to maintain the values of discipline that have been built up in pesantren society, while facing technological advances that affect the behavior and lifestyle of santri. Along with the rapid development of technology, especially in terms of the use of social media and the internet, pesantren must be able to adapt without compromising the values of discipline they adhere to (Sulaiman, 2018).

One of the most significant influences of technology is the increasingly easy and fast access to information. Many santri are starting to use digital devices such as smartphones, which allow them to connect with the outside world. This phenomenon creates a major challenge for pesantren to maintain discipline, because the use of technology can interfere with the santri's focus and concentration on undergoing educational and worship activities. Rohman et al. (2024) show that the use of social media among santri often distracts them from the main activities in pesantren, which has the potential to damage the culture of discipline that has been built with great effort. The inability of pesantren to manage the use of this technology can disrupt the quality of learning and create disorder in the daily lives of santri.

Social changes in society also affect the mindset and behavior of santri. Changes in the perspective on the authority and rules that apply in pesantren are a challenge in themselves (Kurniawan et al., 2023). Today's younger generation tends to be more open and critical of various rules that are considered rigid and irrelevant to the times. Many santri prefer to live a free lifestyle and are not bound by rules that are considered to limit their freedom. According to Fitriani (2020), the disharmony between the traditional values of pesantren and

the changing mindset of the younger generation can cause tension between pesantren leaders and santri. This tension has the potential to reduce the level of discipline that was previously a strong culture in pesantren.

Furthermore, another challenge faced by pesantren is the change in the pattern of communication between pesantren leaders and santri. Leadership, which has been more authoritarian and relied on direct control, now faces difficulties in establishing effective communication with santri amid the development of technology and social media. Technology makes it easier for santri to communicate outside the pesantren environment, but this also increases the distance between pesantren leaders and santri. Yuliana (2019) mentions that the difficulty in communicating and conveying effective disciplinary messages is a challenge in itself in maintaining the integrity of rules in pesantren.

Pesantren also face the challenge of maintaining discipline amid social pressures from an increasingly diverse outside community. Pesantren function as religious educational institutions, and as places for character building. Pesantren are expected to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent in terms of religious knowledge, but also has a strong character. However, many santri are exposed to social values that conflict with the values of discipline taught in pesantren. Increasingly open and liberal social changes, with stronger individualistic values, often conflict with the collectivist values that exist in pesantren. For example, the instant culture that is developing in the outside community can be an obstacle for pesantren to instill long-term values of hard work and discipline (Mustofa, 2020). Santri who are exposed to this culture may be influenced to choose instant solutions that have the potential to hinder the successful character building in accordance with pesantren teachings.

The next challenge is the limited resources in pesantren to respond to changing times. Most pesantren in Indonesia, especially traditional pesantren, still face problems in terms of infrastructure and technology. Many Islamic boarding schools have difficulty providing adequate educational facilities, including internet access that can be used for online learning or to supervise the use of technology by students. This creates a gap between pesantren and other more modern educational institutions, which can easily respond to social and technological changes. Sulaiman (2018) mentions that these resource limitations exacerbate the challenge of pesantren to maintain discipline amid rapid technological developments.

Finally, the last challenge faced by pesantren in maintaining a culture of discipline is the lack of training or preparation for pesantren administrators to face changing times (Jamil et al., 2023). Many pesantren leaders are accustomed to traditional leadership patterns that rely more on assertiveness, but they are often not trained to adapt to social and technological developments. Therefore, developing the ability of pesantren leaders to face the challenges of the times is very important. As stated by Fitriani (2020), pesantren leaders must have the ability to manage change and innovate so that discipline is maintained, even amid the influence of ever-evolving social and technological changes.

Overall, pesantren face a major challenge in maintaining a culture of discipline in the midst of social and technological developments. To overcome this challenge, pesantren need to adapt to changing times without neglecting the values of discipline that have long been part of their tradition. A thoughtful approach to managing technology, updating communication patterns, and providing adequate training to pesantren leaders are important steps in maintaining discipline in pesantren.

D. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion of this study shows that the leadership style in pesantren has a significant influence on the implementation of a culture of discipline among santri. Firm leadership, such as the authoritarian style applied by many kyai, often plays a role in enforcing strong discipline. However, a more democratic leadership style can also increase the sense of responsibility and discipline of santri, especially if balanced with a humanistic approach and attention to their aspirations. However, the main challenge faced by pesantren in maintaining a culture of discipline is the impact of technological developments and rapid social change. The widespread use of technology, especially social media, often disrupts the focus and discipline of santri. Freer and more individualistic social changes also challenge pesantren in maintaining discipline rooted in the values of collectivism and strict rules.

For this reason, pesantren need to take strategic steps to manage this challenge. One suggestion that can be made is the need for integration between a firm leadership style and the ability to adapt to changing times. Pesantren leaders must be able to adapt their leadership approach to technological developments without detracting from the essence of the disciplinary values taught. This includes providing better education and briefings to pesantren administrators regarding the management of technology and effective communication with santri. Pesantren also need to develop a more flexible monitoring system that is relevant to current social and technological conditions, for example by regulating the wise use of technological devices to support education, without compromising discipline.

It is also important for pesantren to create a balance between strict discipline and space for the freedom and creativity of santri. That way, santri can feel valued and responsible for the existing rules, without feeling restricted by overly restrictive authorities. A comprehensive character education, which includes the teaching of the values of discipline, ethics, and social responsibility, needs to be an integral part of the pesantren curriculum so that santri can grow into individuals who obey the rules and are able to adapt well in the midst of changing times.

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