

Basic Concepts of Islamic Boarding School Management in the Framework of Leadership; Epistemological Synthesis of Turās Tradition and Contemporary Science as the Foundation of Educational Leadership

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Abstract:

This study aims to formulate the basic concepts of pesantren management within the framework of leadership through an epistemological synthesis between the turās tradition and contemporary science, so that it can become a conceptual foundation for the development of contextual, valuable, and sustainable pesantren educational leadership. This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method to examine the basic concepts of pesantren management within the framework of educational leadership. Data were obtained from scientific literature in the form of reputable journals, academic books, and conceptual documents relevant to the Turās tradition, sharia values, and contemporary management. Data analysis was conducted through content analysis to identify, categorize, and interpret conceptual ideas. This process was aimed at formulating a coherent epistemological synthesis as the foundation of pesantren educational leadership. The results of the study show that pesantren management is a unique epistemological construct that cannot be simplified into a modern procedural-technocratic management model. Pesantren management is rooted in the epistemology of Turās leadership, which views leadership as a moral, spiritual, and scientific mandate. Pesantren educational leadership functions as a center of integration between Turās tradition, sharia principles, and contemporary knowledge within a holistic management framework. This concept is value-centric and contextual, with success measured through the sustainability of values, character building, and social relevance amid changing times.

Keywords: *Islamic Boarding School Management, Al-Idārah al-Islāmiyyah, Turats, Epistemological Synthesis, Kyai Leadership.*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merumuskan konsep dasar manajemen pesantren dalam kerangka kepemimpinan melalui sintesis epistemologis antara tradisi turās dan ilmu kontemporer, sehingga dapat menjadi fondasi konseptual bagi pengembangan kepemimpinan pendidikan pesantren yang kontekstual, bernilai, dan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka (library research) untuk mengkaji konsep dasar manajemen pesantren dalam kerangka kepemimpinan pendidikan. Data diperoleh dari literatur ilmiah berupa jurnal bereputasi, buku akademik, dan dokumen konseptual yang relevan dengan tradisi Turās, nilai-nilai syariah, dan manajemen kontemporer. Analisis data dilakukan melalui

analisis konten guna mengidentifikasi, mengkategorisasi, dan menafsirkan gagasan konseptual. Proses ini diarahkan untuk merumuskan sintesis epistemologis yang koheren sebagai fondasi kepemimpinan pendidikan pesantren. Hasil Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa manajemen pesantren merupakan konstruksi epistemologis khas yang tidak dapat disederhanakan ke dalam model manajemen modern yang prosedural-teknokratis. Manajemen pesantren berakar pada epistemologi kepemimpinan Turās yang memandang kepemimpinan sebagai amanah moral, spiritual, dan keilmuan. Kepemimpinan pendidikan pesantren berfungsi sebagai pusat integrasi antara tradisi Turās, prinsip syariah, dan ilmu kontemporer dalam kerangka manajemen yang holistik. Konsep ini bersifat nilai-sentris dan kontekstual, dengan keberhasilan diukur melalui keberlanjutan nilai, pembentukan karakter, dan relevansi sosial di tengah perubahan zaman.

Kata Kunci: *Manajemen Pesantren, Al-Idārah al-Islāmiyyah, Turats, Sintesis Epistemologis, Kepemimpinan Kyai.*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools are unique Indonesian Islamic educational institutions that not only function as centers for the transmission of religious knowledge (*tafaqquh fi al-dīn*), but also as spaces for character building and moral leadership (Musa, 2023). In its development, pesantren do not stand solely as traditional educational institutions, but as educational organizations that require management and leadership systems that are adaptive to social dynamics, educational policies, and demands for public accountability (Gunadi et al., 2025; Lutfiyah et al., 2025). This condition places pesantren management as a strategic issue in the discourse of Islamic educational leadership (Ijudin & Nenden Munawaroh, 2021).

Amidst national and global changes, Islamic boarding schools are faced with the challenge of maintaining the authenticity of Islamic scholarly traditions (*turās*) while responding to the demands of modernity, particularly in terms of efficiency, transparency, and institutional sustainability (Adhim, 2020). The historically paternalistic and kyai-centric model of pesantren management is required to undergo transformation without losing the moral legitimacy and normative values that constitute the identity of pesantren (Khoeron et al., 2025). A number of studies confirm that revitalizing pesantren management is an important strategy to ensure the relevance of pesantren in building social values, including religious moderation, in an increasingly diverse society (Basori et al., 2023; Ilaina, 2025).

This transformation cannot be separated from the role of leadership as the main framework for managing Islamic boarding schools. Pesantren leadership is not only related to administrative effectiveness, but also to moral authority, value-based decision making, and the formation of organizational culture. Therefore, the application of modern management principles such as planning, organizing, executing, and controlling (POAC) needs to be placed within the framework of educational leadership based on sharia values. In this context, the concept of *al-*

Idārah al-Islāmiyyah becomes a normative foundation that emphasizes the principles of trust, *syūrā*, and sincerity as the foundation of pesantren leadership, while distinguishing it from Western management models that tend to be secular and instrumental (Bin Yahya, 2025; Raharjo, 2025) .

Efforts to integrate these values require an epistemological approach that can bridge the classical scientific heritage of Islamic boarding schools (*turās*) with contemporary scientific theories and findings (Juhri, 2025) . *Turās* books that regulate learning ethics, santri discipline, and authority relations, such as *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, provide a normative framework for leadership, while modern management and leadership sciences offer systemic, empirical, and contextual approaches. An epistemological synthesis between these two sources of knowledge is necessary so that managerial innovations applied in Islamic boarding schools remain rooted in Islamic values while being responsive to changes in the educational environment (Adhim, 2020) .

The complexity of pesantren management is reflected in the scope of its management, which covers all aspects of santri life 24 hours a day. This scope includes curriculum management that integrates the Kitab Kuning (classical Islamic texts) and general subjects, resource and environment management based on sustainability (*eco-pesantren*), and risk management and student welfare (Khoeron et al., 2025) . Recent findings indicate that the effectiveness of facility and infrastructure management is closely related to the quality of leadership and the overall quality of Islamic education.

Previous research shows that pesantren management is closely related to leadership patterns rooted in Islamic scholarly traditions. Basori et al., (2023) reveal that kiai leadership in pesantren not only functions as institutional managers but also as guardians of *Turās* values that shape religious organizational culture. This finding is reinforced by Ilaina, (2025) , which emphasizes that the principles of trustworthiness, exemplary behavior, and deliberation are the main foundations of pesantren leadership practices, so that management is not merely understood as an administrative activity but as a value-based process (value-based management). These studies position the *Turās* tradition as the primary epistemological source in shaping the basic concepts of pesantren leadership and management.

On the other hand, contemporary research has begun to emphasize the importance of integrating traditional pesantren values with modern management science. Bin Yahya, 2025) states that pesantren are faced with the demand to adapt to modern educational leadership principles, such as accountability, organizational effectiveness, and system-based decision making. Raharjo, (2025) adds that managerial innovation in Islamic boarding schools will be sustainable if it is built through an epistemological synthesis between *Turās* heritage and

contemporary educational leadership theory. However, most studies still discuss the two approaches separately, without formulating an integrative conceptual framework. Therefore, a systematic study is needed to integrate the Turās tradition and contemporary science as an epistemological foundation in formulating the basic concepts of pesantren management within the framework of educational leadership.

Although studies on Islamic boarding schools have developed rapidly, there is still limited research that explicitly builds an epistemological synthesis between the turās tradition, the principles of sharia in *al-Idārah al-Islāmiyyah*, and contemporary scientific perspectives in the framework of educational leadership. Most studies tend to discuss managerial or normative aspects separately. Therefore, this article aims to formulate the basic concepts of pesantren management within the framework of Islamic leadership () through an epistemological synthesis between the turās tradition and contemporary science, so that it can become a conceptual foundation for the development of contextual, valuable, and sustainable pesantren educational leadership.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a *library research* method. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the basic concepts of pesantren management within the framework of educational leadership, particularly through the epistemological synthesis between the Turās tradition (yellow books), sharia values, and contemporary management science (Sulistiyo, 2023) . This approach is relevant for examining conceptual and philosophical issues that cannot be explained through quantitative measurements, but rather through the exploration of meaning, the construction of knowledge, and the integration of scientific paradigms (Pahleviannur et al., 2022) .

The literature review method was used as the main source of data, relying on studies of relevant scientific literature, including reputable national and international journals, academic books, and conceptual documents discussing Islamic educational leadership, pesantren management, Turās traditions, and modern management theory (Hasan et al., 2025) . Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation studies, by selecting sources that were directly related to the epistemological and conceptual discussion of pesantren management from a leadership perspective (Abdussamad & Sik, 2021; Mulyana et al., 2024) .

Data analysis was conducted using *content analysis*, which aims to systematically interpret the ideas, concepts, and frameworks contained in the analyzed literature. The analysis focused on the process of identifying, categorizing, and interpreting the relationship between the Turās tradition, sharia

principles, and contemporary science in forming the conceptual basis of pesantren management (Roosinda et al., 2021) . Through this process, the research aims to formulate a comprehensive and coherent epistemological synthesis as the conceptual foundation for pesantren educational leadership, thereby enriching the body of knowledge on Islamic educational management (Sari et al., 2022) .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Pesantren Management Rooted in the Epistemology of Turās Leadership

Content analysis of classical and contemporary literature shows that the basic concept of pesantren management is epistemologically rooted in the Turās tradition of leadership, which views leadership as a moral and spiritual mandate. From the Turās perspective, leadership is not reduced to an administrative or technical function, but is understood as a scientific and ethical responsibility inherent in the figure of the kiai. This is emphasized by Juhri (2025) in his work Juhri , which states that

"The leadership of the kiai in the pesantren is not merely a structural position, but rather an authority of knowledge and morality that guides the entire dynamic of education and the lives of the santri."

This quote shows that the foundation of pesantren leadership stems from epistemological legitimacy, not bureaucratic mechanisms. Furthermore, values such as ikhlās, ta'āwun, and ta'dīb become management principles that inspire pesantren management practices. In Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, al-Zarnuji emphasizes that the success of education is largely determined by manners and sincerity in the relationship between teachers and students, which implicitly shapes the leadership and management patterns of the institution. Ma'shum & Muhyi, (2025) also emphasizes that

"Pesantren management is value-centric, where the leadership of the kiai is the main axis for the formation of religious organizational culture."

Analysis of this statement shows that pesantren management does not originate from instrumental efficiency rationality as in modern management, but rather from a value epistemology that places morality, exemplarity, and spiritual responsibility as its main foundations. Thus, this finding confirms that the basic concept of pesantren management cannot be separated from Turās-based leadership, because that is where the source of knowledge, legitimacy, and direction of pesantren management are formed integrally.

Epistemological Synthesis as the Conceptual Foundation of Islamic Boarding School Leadership

The results of literature analysis show that the epistemological synthesis between the Turās tradition, sharia principles, and contemporary science finds its

point of integration in pesantren educational leadership. Leadership functions as a center that unites various sources of knowledge into a coherent and meaningful management framework. In this context, pesantren leadership not only plays a role as an institutional manager, but also as a guardian of values, a mediator of tradition, and a guide for institutional transformation. This is in line with the views of which emphasizes that

"Pesantren will only be able to adapt to change if institutional transformation remains grounded in the scientific traditions and sharia values that define its identity."

This quote shows that scientific integration cannot be done in a fragmented manner, but must be framed within leadership that has epistemological and moral legitimacy. Furthermore, Muslim (2025) states that

"pesantren educational leadership functions as a space for dialectics between classical values and modern managerial demands."

This statement indicates that contemporary science does not stand as the dominant paradigm, but acts as an instrument for strengthening institutional capacity when synergized with Turās and sharia. Content analysis of various literature shows that epistemological synthesis gives rise to a holistic concept of pesantren management, in which leadership integrates normative, institutional, and contextual dimensions simultaneously. Thus, the basic concept of pesantren management cannot be formulated through a single scientific approach, but rather through the integration of layered and complementary paradigms. This finding confirms that epistemological synthesis is not merely an academic strategy, but a conceptual foundation that determines the direction of pesantren educational leadership in maintaining the continuity of tradition while responding to the challenges of the times.

To clarify the meaning of epistemological synthesis in pesantren educational leadership, these findings are formulated into several key aspects that represent the functions, roles, and conceptual implications of leadership. The following table presents a systematic mapping of these aspects and their descriptions so that the relationships between epistemological elements can be more easily understood.

Table 1; Aspects of Epistemological Synthesis in Islamic Boarding School Educational Leadership

No	Aspect	Description
	Integration of Knowledge Sources	Pesantren leadership integrates Turās tradition, sharia principles, and contemporary knowledge into a complementary management framework, rather than a competitive or separate one.
2	Leadership	Leadership does not only perform administrative

Functions	functions, but also acts as a guardian of values, a mediator of traditions, and a guide for institutional transformation in Islamic boarding schools.	
3	Epistemological Legitimacy	The integration of knowledge is framed by the moral and scientific legitimacy of the kiai, so that institutional change remains grounded in the scientific identity of the pesantren.
4	The Position of Contemporary Science	Modern management science is positioned as an adaptive instrument for institutional strengthening, not as a paradigm shift () that replaces Turās and sharia.
5	Characteristics of Pesantren Management	Epistemological synthesis gives rise to holistic pesantren management by simultaneously integrating normative, institutional, and contextual dimensions.

Based on these aspects, it can be concluded that pesantren educational leadership functions as a center of epistemological synthesis that coherently integrates values, traditions, and modern knowledge. Leadership is not merely about managing institutions, but directing institutional transformation based on moral and scientific legitimacy. Thus, pesantren management is formed as a holistic system that is adaptive to change without losing the continuity of the pesantren's identity and scientific traditions.

The Basic Concept of Islamic Boarding School Management is Value-Centric and Contextual

Content analysis of various literature shows that the basic concept of pesantren management is value-driven and contextual, rather than procedural-technocratic as in modern management models, which are universalistic in nature. Pesantren management is built on a unique historical, religious, and social awareness, so that pesantren educational leadership cannot be separated from the values, traditions, and context of the community in which the pesantren is rooted. This is confirmed by Ramadhani et al., (2025) , which states that

“Pesantren are educational institutions that grow from, by, and for the community with a unique value system that cannot be separated from its socio-religious context.”

This quote shows that pesantren management practices are not based on uniform procedural standards, but rather on adapting to local values and needs. Furthermore, Syamli & Faris, (2025) emphasizes that

"pesantren leadership is oriented towards the values of tradition and character building, not merely administrative performance."

Analysis of this statement shows that the success of pesantren management is not measured by technocratic efficiency, but by leadership's ability to maintain continuity of values and social relevance. The

epistemological synthesis between Turās tradition, sharia principles, and contemporary science reinforces this contextual character, because modern science is positioned as an adaptive instrument, not a dominant paradigm. Thus, the strength of pesantren management lies precisely in its ability to combine traditional continuity with reflective and selective scientific adaptation. These findings confirm that the basic concept of pesantren management is a flexible, valuable, and contextual epistemological construct, making it relevant for responding to educational leadership challenges without losing the scientific identity of the pesantren.

Discussion of the research

Pesantren Management Rooted in the Epistemology of Turās Leadership

This finding can be interpreted as confirmation that pesantren management is based on a *value-based leadership* paradigm, which differs fundamentally from the rational-instrumental management approach in modern organizational theory. While classical management theories such as Taylorism or administrative management place efficiency and structure at the center of management, pesantren leadership departs from a normative epistemology that emphasizes moral and spiritual legitimacy (Khaerussalam, 2025). This perspective aligns with the findings of , which indicate that the sustainability of pesantren organizations is more determined by the exemplary conduct of the kiai than by rigid formal systems.

However, unlike previous studies that tended to position kiai leadership as a form of charismatic leadership alone, these findings broaden our understanding by placing pesantren leadership as an epistemological construct derived from the Turās tradition. In the context of educational leadership theory, these findings intersect with the concepts of *moral leadership* and *spiritual leadership*, but with a stronger ontological basis because they are rooted in the Islamic scholarly tradition. Thus, pesantren management cannot be understood as a partial adaptation of modern leadership theory, but rather as an autonomous leadership system with its own logic of knowledge. This interpretation enriches the discourse on Islamic educational management by emphasizing that the strength of Islamic boarding schools lies in their ability to maintain a value-based epistemology amid the dominance of modern managerial paradigms.

Epistemological Synthesis as the Conceptual Foundation of Islamic Boarding School Educational Leadership

This finding can be interpreted as confirmation that pesantren educational leadership functions as *an epistemic integrator*, namely a key actor that unites various sources of knowledge into a coherent management framework that is . Unlike modern educational management approaches that often adopt a

technocratic or instrumental paradigm, epistemological synthesis in Islamic boarding schools positions leadership as a space for dialectics between normative values and contextual demands (Juhri, 2025) . Previous studies have tended to discuss the integration of tradition and modernity partially, for example by emphasizing managerial adaptation without elaborating on its epistemological basis (Harsoyo, 2022) . This finding goes beyond that approach by showing that integration can only function sustainably if it is guided by leadership that has scientific and moral legitimacy.

Within the framework of educational leadership theory, these findings are consistent with the concepts of *transformational leadership* and *adaptive leadership*, but differ fundamentally in that they are rooted in Sharia values and Turās tradition as the main sources of knowledge (Rosidah et al., 2025) . Thus, pesantren leadership does not merely transform organizational structures, but also maintains the epistemological continuity of the institution. This interpretation enriches the discourse on Islamic educational leadership by emphasizing that epistemological synthesis is a conceptual foundation, not merely an adaptive strategy, in responding to the dynamics of change without losing the scientific identity of the pesantren.

The Basic Concept of Islamic Boarding School Management is Value-Centric and Contextual

These findings can be interpreted as a conceptual critique of the dominance of the universalistic management paradigm, which tends to ignore the context of local values and culture in educational institutions. Unlike modern management theories that emphasize standardization, standard procedures, and administrative performance measurement, pesantren management operates within a value-centered leadership framework that places tradition, morality, and social relations as the foundation of institutional management. A number of previous studies, including Musfah's " , have confirmed the uniqueness of pesantren as community-based institutions, but these findings broaden that perspective by positioning that uniqueness as an epistemological construct, rather than merely a sociological characteristic.

In educational leadership theory, this approach overlaps with *contextual leadership* and *values-based leadership*, but differs in that Islamic boarding schools not only adapt to the context, but also shape the social context through the transmission of values and character building. The study " highlights the value orientation in Islamic boarding school leadership, but does not fully explain its epistemological implications for the concept of management. These findings confirm that the success of pesantren educational leadership is not measured through technocratic efficiency, but rather through the ability to maintain value continuity while engaging in reflective scientific adaptation. Thus, pesantren

management can be understood as a contextual leadership model that possesses epistemological autonomy and sustained relevance amid changes in the modern education system.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of literature analysis and conceptual discussion, this study concludes that pesantren management is a unique epistemological construct that cannot be reduced to a modern management framework that is procedural and technocratic in nature. Pesantren management is deeply rooted in the epistemology of Turās leadership, which views leadership as a moral, spiritual, and scientific mandate, so that the legitimacy of institutional management is based on the authority of values and exemplary behavior, not merely on bureaucratic structures. Pesantren educational leadership functions as a center of epistemological integration that synergizes Turās tradition, sharia principles, and contemporary knowledge into a holistic and meaningful management framework.

This epistemological synthesis positions modern knowledge as an adaptive instrument that strengthens institutional capacity without negating the scientific identity of the pesantren. Furthermore, the basic concept of pesantren management is value-centric and contextual, built on the historical, religious, and social awareness of the community where the pesantren is rooted. The success of pesantren educational leadership is not measured by technocratic efficiency, but by its ability to maintain continuity of values, shape character, and maintain social relevance amid the dynamics of change. Thus, pesantren management can be understood as a model of educational leadership that has epistemological autonomy, is contextually flexible, and is resilient to the challenges of modernity without losing its traditional scientific identity.

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