

Integration of transcendental values: The functions and roles of spiritual leadership in the development of pondok pesantren

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the functions and roles of spiritual leadership in the development of Pondok Pesantren Ma'had Ulum as-Syar'iyah Yanbu'ul Qur'an (MUS-YQ) Lil Banin Kudus as a model for integrating transcendental values within pesantren education. Pesantrens represent strategic institutions for character formation and the transmission of Islamic scholarship, where the quality of Kyai leadership is a key factor in institutional sustainability and transformation. This research employs a qualitative approach using an intrinsic case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving the Kyai, the council of teachers (asatidz), administrators, and students. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, and trustworthiness was ensured using Lincoln and Guba's criteria. The findings indicate that the Kyai's spiritual leadership at MUS-YQ functions as the guardian of the transcendental vision, "fluency in tilawah and proficiency in amaliyah," which strengthens students' hope/faith in managing a dual curriculum and fosters a culture of khidmah and exemplary conduct in character formation. The integration of spiritual values with modern management contributes to curriculum development, institutional strengthening, and increased public trust without compromising the pesantren's salafiyah identity.

Keywords: spiritual leadership; kyai; pesantren education; salafiyah pesantren; transcendence

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis fungsi dan peran kepemimpinan spiritual dalam pengembangan Pondok Pesantren Ma'had Ulum as-Syar'iyah Yanbu'ul Qur'an (MUS-YQ) Lil Banin Kudus sebagai model integrasi nilai transendental dalam pendidikan pesantren. Pesantren merupakan institusi strategis dalam pembentukan karakter dan transmisi keilmuan Islam, di mana kualitas kepemimpinan Kyai menjadi faktor kunci keberlanjutan dan transformasi kelembagaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus intrinsik. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semiterstruktur, observasi partisipan, dan studi dokumentasi dengan melibatkan Kyai, dewan asatidz, pengurus, dan santri. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan model

interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña serta uji keabsahan data berdasarkan kriteria Lincoln dan Guba. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan spiritual Kyai di MUS-YQ berfungsi sebagai penjaga visi transendental “kefasihan tilawah dan kefaqihan amaliyah”, penguat hope/faith santri dalam menghadapi beban kurikulum ganda, serta penggerak budaya khidmah dan keteladanan dalam pembentukan karakter santri. Integrasi nilai spiritual dengan manajemen modern mendorong penguatan kurikulum, tata kelola kelembagaan, dan kepercayaan publik tanpa menghilangkan identitas salafiyah pesantren.

Kata kunci: kepemimpinan spiritual; kyai; pendidikan pesantren; pesantren salafiyah; transendensi

Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), as traditional Islamic educational institutions, occupy a strategic position in character formation, the transmission of religious knowledge, and the preservation of moral values within Indonesian Muslim society. Various studies confirm that the success or failure of *pesantren* institutions is primarily determined by the quality of Kyai leadership, which integrates religious, social, and managerial functions within a single figure (Hidayat, 2019). Leadership styles in *pesantren* significantly influence institutional capacity to preserve traditional culture and local wisdom values amid modernization currents (Zahraini, Amalina, & Sari, 2025, pp. 4–5). In the context of *pesantren* leadership, it cannot be understood merely as charismatic or structural leadership, but rather as spiritual leadership oriented toward meaning-making, life-purpose formation, and holistic character development of *santri* (students) (Rahman, 2025, pp. 88–89).

Recent developments in Islamic education over the past decade have demonstrated a paradigm shift from administrative leadership toward value-based, spirituality-oriented leadership (Ifani & Kartiwi, 2024, pp. 67–78). One of the most critical concepts in contemporary Islamic educational institution management is spiritual leadership, which integrates moral-religious vision, ethical dimensions, and character formation of learners (Asyha, 2025, pp. 3–4). At the global level, a systematic review spanning 21 years reveals that spiritual leadership positively contributes to organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and a meaningful work climate across various educational and organizational contexts (Lahmar, Chaouki, & Rodhain, 2023, pp. 18–19). Similar findings in Islamic schools and higher education settings indicate that spiritual leadership effectively enhances motivation, a sense of belonging, and a value orientation among teachers and lecturers.

Within the Indonesian Islamic education context, various conceptualization efforts have emerged to develop spiritual leadership models aligned with

Quranic values and scholarly traditions (Mahmud & Ramli, 2025, pp. 22–24). These include developing Islamic spiritual leadership models based on *iman* (faith), *Islam*, *ihsan* (excellence), and Al-Ghazali's values emphasizing *amanah* (trustworthiness), justice, and *ihsan* as primary pillars for madrasah quality improvement (Yakub, Patimah, Gani, & Uyuni, 2025, pp. 104–110). Spiritual leaders in Islamic education must recognize their essential nature, origins, and ultimate life purposes to lead justly, trustworthily, and humbly (Rahmawati & Supriyanto, 2023, pp. 140–142). Conversely, narrative studies on value-based leadership in Islamic education emphasize that integrating spiritual values with transformative and participatory leadership strategies is necessary to address contemporary social complexity and learner diversity (Siswadi & Jamil, 2023, pp. 298–300).

Pesantrens, residential-based educational institutions, face dual challenges: maintaining classical scholarly traditions (*turats*) while responding to the demands of modernity and globalization. Transforming religious leadership from traditional charismatic patterns toward participatory and modern managerial approaches, without abandoning spiritual roots, positively impacts curriculum renewal, professionalization of management, and digitalization of the educational system (Darain & Nurhadi, 2025, pp. 15–17). In other modern *pesantren*, leadership innovations combining visionary, democratic, paternalistic, and spiritual styles successfully create inclusive, collaborative environments while maintaining balance between traditional values and contemporary educational needs (Musoleh, 2025, pp. 6–8). These findings reinforce the assumption that spiritual leadership is not merely an additional dimension but constitutes the core of successful *pesantren* transformation in an era of rapid change.

Correspondingly, research on Kyai spiritual leadership specifically highlights the Kyai's role as a character builder, spiritual guide, and guardian of religious culture in *pesantren*. In advanced *pesantren*, Kyai spiritual leadership serves as an integrative model of *knowledge*, practice, and spirituality in forming resilient generations of Islamic scholars and thinkers (Musaddad, 2024, pp. 190–192) as evidenced in case studies of KH. Abdurrahman Nawawi's leadership at *Pesantren Al-Awwabin* reveals that his spiritual leadership characteristics, including worship exemplarity, vision consistency, and emotional closeness with santri, significantly strengthen religious culture and student discipline (Samroh et al., 2025, pp. 61–70). Zainal (2025) adds that Kyai leadership in *pesantren* extends beyond structural formality, encompassing symbolic and spiritual authority that serves as santri's primary reference in moral decision-making (Falakhina & Hernawati, 2025, pp. 14–15).

Simultaneously, empirical research demonstrates that spiritual leadership directly impacts performance, commitment, and organizational quality of life in educational institutions. Optimizing spiritual leadership in the development of Islamic educational institutions strengthens long-term orientation, increases loyalty, and deepens collective commitment to the institutional vision (Wahib, 2025, pp. 112–114). International studies in university contexts confirm that spiritual leadership positively influences organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, notably through the vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love dimensions, which encourage members' willingness to contribute beyond formal requirements. Consistent relationships exist between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment across various educational institutions, where teachers' perceptions of principals' spiritual leadership behaviors strengthen a sense of belonging and organizational retention willingness (Monanisa, Rahman, & Hariri, 2024, pp. 994–997).

Despite rapid growth in the literature on *pesantren* spiritual leadership over the past decade, several significant academic gaps remain. First, most *pesantren* spiritual leadership studies are descriptive and do not explicitly employ structured theoretical frameworks, such as Fry's model (Fry, 2003). Second, empirical studies specifically analyzing spiritual leadership functions and roles in tahfidz (Quran memorization) *pesantren* contexts integrating dual curricula (Quran memorization and classical Islamic text study) remain extremely limited (Alamin, Rahmawati, Maha, Nisa', & Zalzuli, 2024). Third, no research has comprehensively examined how spiritual leadership dimensions (transcendental vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love) contribute to *pesantren* institutional development within modern transformation contexts without losing *salafiyah* (traditional) identity (Widodo, 2025). Fourth, specific studies on PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin Kudus have never been conducted, despite this *pesantren*'s unique model of integrating tahfidz and fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), which could offer theoretical and practical contributions to the development of the Indonesian *pesantren* leadership model.

Within this landscape, *Pondok Pesantren Ma'had Ullum as-Syar'iyah Yanbu'ul Qur'an (MUS-YQ) Lil Banin Kudus* occupies a distinctive position. This *pesantren* develops an educational model integrating Quran memorization traditions and classical Islamic text study within an intensive, layered curriculum design, necessitating leadership capable of unifying Quranic vision and fiqh within a robust spiritual framework. In this context, the present research positions Kyai leadership in *tahfidz pesantren* with dual curricula, combining Quran memorization and classical Islamic text study, as a research field relatively unexplored through systematic and structured analysis using Fry's Spiritual

Leadership framework. This approach not only enables fresh readings of leadership dynamics at PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin Kudus, a *pesantren* with a distinctive curricular configuration and scholarly traditions but also opens spaces for the development of conceptual models, enriching Indonesian *pesantren* leadership discourse at both theoretical and practical levels. Referring to the above findings, the leadership model at PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin potentially represents concrete spiritual leadership within *pesantren* contexts, striving to preserve salafiyah identity while responding to modernity demands.

Building upon these findings, the leadership model at PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin can be interpreted as a concrete manifestation of spiritual leadership within the *pesantren* context: Kyai and caregivers not only manage systems and curricula but also serve as sources of meaning, hope, and altruistic love supporting santri's daily educational processes (Fida, Qois, & Hadi, 2025, pp. 151–155). However, studies specifically examining spiritual leadership functions and roles in PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin's development are minimal, necessitating in-depth research to fill this gap and make theoretical and practical contributions to the development of the Indonesian *pesantren* leadership model.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach using an intrinsic case study design. The selection of this design is based on the nature of the research, which aims to explore a unique and specific phenomenon within a real-life bounded system, namely the dynamics of spiritual leadership at Pondok *Pesantren* Ma'had Ulum as-Syar'iyah Yanbu'ul Qur'an (MUS-YQ) Lil Banin Kudus. Referring to Yin, a case study is an appropriate research strategy when the research questions focus on “how” and “why,” and when the researcher has little control over the events being examined (Yin, 2018, pp. 9–13). This approach seeks to generate a “thick description,” as conceptualized by Geertz, capturing not only the observable behaviors of the Kyais' leadership but also the underlying cultural and spiritual meanings that shape those practices (Geertz, 1973, p. 6).

The research was conducted at Pondok *Pesantren* Ma'had Ulum as-Syar'iyah Yanbu'ul Qur'an (MUS-YQ) Lil Banin, Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia, from September to December 2025. Research participants were selected through purposive sampling. As Patton explains, this technique allows researchers to select information-rich cases that provide in-depth insight into the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2015, p. 264). The informants included the Kyai (caretaker) as the primary leader, members of the teachers' council (*asatidz*), daily administrators responsible for operational management, and senior students who had undergone intensive educational processes within the *pesantren*.

Data were collected through three main techniques. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted using open-ended questions to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and understandings of spiritual leadership within the *pesantren*. Second, participant observation was conducted by engaging in daily *pesantren* activities, such as Qur'anic memorization sessions (tahfidz), studies of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), and character-building programs, to observe leadership practices in their natural context. Third, documentation analysis was undertaken by examining official *pesantren* documents, including the institution's vision and mission, organizational structure, curriculum design, activity schedules, and archival records, to substantiate findings from interviews and observations.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 2020). Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and transforming raw data from field notes, interview transcripts, and documents into more focused and organized forms. Data display was conducted through matrices, charts, and descriptive narratives to facilitate pattern recognition and relational analysis. Conclusions were drawn iteratively and verified through triangulation of sources, methods, and theoretical perspectives.

To ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the study, the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba were applied. Credibility was established through data triangulation and member checking; transferability was enhanced by providing detailed contextual descriptions; dependability was maintained through a clear audit trail; and confirmability was ensured through critical reflection on the researcher's positionality and potential biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results and Discussion

A. Profile of spiritual leadership at pondok *pesantren* MUS-YQ Lil Banin Kudus

Pondok *Pesantren* Ma'had Ulum as-Syar'iyah Yanbu'ul Qur'an (MUS-YQ) Lil Banin Kudus is an Islamic educational institution that integrates a Qur'anic memorization program (tahfidz al-Qur'an) with the in-depth study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) within a unified curricular system. This integration is not merely technical or curricular; rather, it reflects the value orientation that underlies the institution's spiritual foundation. According to official *pesantren* documentation, the institutional vision "Fluency in *Tilawah*, Proficiency in *Amaliyah*" illustrates an educational direction that balances mastery of Qur'anic

recitation with a deep understanding of fiqh and its application in daily religious life.

The leadership structure of the *pesantren* is centered on the Kyai as the primary caretaker and spiritual authority, supported by the council of teachers (*asatidz*), daily administrators, and program coordinators. This study involved 15 purposively selected informants, comprising individuals directly engaged in leadership, institutional management, and the educational process. Through this approach, the data obtained represent not only the formal institutional perspective but also the lived experiences of key educational actors within the *pesantren*.



Source: Personal Documentation

Figure 1. Leaders and caretakers of PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin Kudus in a *halaqah* forum, representing the practice of spiritual leadership grounded in exemplary conduct.

Participant observation conducted over four months (September–December 2025) indicates that *pesantren* life operates in an intensive and highly structured manner. Daily activities begin at 03:30 a.m. with congregational Tahajud prayer, followed by Qur’anic memorization submission before dawn, *kitab kuning* study sessions after Fajr and ‘Asr prayers, and *muraja’ah* (revision) in the evening. Within this context, the leadership of Kyai extends beyond formal platforms such as public lectures or institutional meetings. It is also embodied in informal interactions, including personal mentoring of students, deliberations with teachers, and direct involvement in resolving students’ daily concerns. These findings affirm that leadership at PP MUS-YQ is inherent in the daily life of the *pesantren*, fully integrated into the educational process and the holistic formation of students’ character.

B. Spiritual leadership of the kyai as guardian of the transcendental vision

In practice, the leadership of the Kyai at PP MUS-YQ is consistently positioned as a spiritual axis that safeguards the continuity of the institution’s vision, rather than functioning merely as an administrative manager. This

leadership authority is grounded in the integration of traditional, charismatic, and rational forms of authority, ensuring that the vision of Islamic education does not remain a normative document. Instead, it becomes a living source of value, legitimacy, and institutional direction. This pattern aligns with Arifin's findings, which emphasize that spiritual leadership in *pesantren* rests upon the Kyai's ability to integrate tradition, personal charisma, and institutional rationality (Arifin, 2017, pp. 291–293).

Within the context of PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin Kudus, the vision of “fluency in tilawah and proficiency in amaliyah” can be understood as a transcendental vision that integrates Qur’anic memorization (*tahfidz*) and the in-depth study of *fiqh* within a holistic framework of *tarbiyah*. This vision is not limited to academic achievement or memorization; instead, it aims to cultivate students’ religious consciousness and ethical praxis in their daily lives. This finding is consistent with studies concluding that spiritual leadership in Islamic educational institutions inherently encompasses a *moral-religious* vision that guides character formation and ethical development, extending beyond mere academic outcomes (Asyha, 2025).

Theoretically, this leadership pattern corresponds with the spiritual leadership model, which positions vision as a primary instrument for constructing meaning, fostering a sense of calling, and strengthening collective commitment within an organization. Wahib argues that optimizing spiritual leadership in Islamic educational institutions enhances long-term institutional orientation and reinforces collective loyalty and commitment to both spiritual (*ukhrawi*) and societal objectives (Wahib, 2025, pp. 112–114). Thus, the leadership of the Kyai at PP MUS-YQ functions not only as a policy director but also as a guardian of the transcendental vision that animates the entire educational dynamic of the *pesantren*.

C. The three core dimensions of spiritual leadership

The spiritual leadership model developed by Fry is built upon three interrelated dimensions that simultaneously generate distinctive organizational outcomes: vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love. These dimensions are particularly relevant for analyzing leadership practices in *pesantren*, as they align with the transcendental, moral, and relational foundations of Islamic education. In the *pesantren* context, these three dimensions do not operate independently; instead, they form an integrated leadership framework that permeates the entire educational and character-forming process.

1. Vision (transcendental vision)

Within the framework of spiritual leadership, vision is not merely a conventional statement found in institutional documents. Fry defines spiritual vision as an idealized image of the organization's future that articulates how members may experience a sense of calling in their work (Fry, 2003, p. 703). Such a vision must fulfill three essential characteristics. First, it must be *challenging*, providing intellectual and spiritual demands that mobilize the full energy and commitment of organizational members. Second, it must be *desirable*, meaning it resonates with members' intrinsic values rather than focusing solely on quantitative growth. Third, it must be *inspiring*, possessing the power to make individuals perceive their contributions as meaningful and enduring.

In the *pesantren* context, vision is often articulated through holistic educational mottos or institutional goals. At PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin, the vision of "Fluency in *Tilawah* and Proficiency in *Amaliyah*" extends beyond academic achievement in Qur'anic memorization and fiqh mastery. It represents the formation of an integral individual who understands the Qur'an as divine guidance (*hudan*) and can embody its teachings in daily life. Such a vision fosters a strong sense of calling among both students and educators, transforming the routine practice of memorization into a meaningful spiritual journey (Fry, 2003, p. 705).

2. Hope/faith

The second dimension of spiritual leadership is hope/faith, which refers to a deep confidence and expectation that the organizational vision can be achieved despite obstacles and challenges. Fry distinguishes between *hope*, a pragmatic expectation of success, and *faith*, a more profound metaphysical conviction rooted in belief in divine support or a higher power that sustains the pursuit of the vision (Fry, 2003, pp. 706–707). This distinction is particularly relevant in the *pesantren* context, where religious belief underpins educational life.

In *pesantren* education, the dimension of hope/faith is crucial. Students who simultaneously memorize the Qur'an and study classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) encounter significant cognitive and emotional demands. Without strong confidence that their efforts will yield meaningful results, both in terms of accurate memorization and profound understanding, many may struggle to persevere. In this context, the role of the Kyai (caretaker) is to continuously communicate that students' achievements are not solely the result of personal effort, but also the blessing (*barakah*) of the Qur'an and the authenticity of knowledge transmitted through a valid scholarly chain (*sanad*). This belief transforms students' perception of fatigue: academic struggle is no longer merely

a burden, but a form of *riyadhah* (spiritual discipline) that brings them closer to God.

Fry further notes that hope/faith is strengthened through two mechanisms: first, the visible testimony of the leader that the vision is genuinely meaningful; and second, followers' lived experiences of gradual progress toward that vision (Fry, 2003, p. 708). At PP MUS-YQ, these mechanisms are evident in students who complete their memorization, in teachers who consistently embody exemplary conduct, and in alumni testimonies that demonstrate their roles as hafiz and community leaders. These concrete manifestations reinforce collective confidence that the transcendental vision is both attainable and worthwhile.

3. *Altruistic love*

The third dimension of spiritual leadership is altruistic love, which Fry defines as a form of love grounded in *genuine care, concern, and appreciation* for oneself and others, resulting in a sense of membership and the feeling of being valued and understood within an organization (Fry, 2003, pp. 710–711). Unlike conventional forms of love that may contain personal motives, altruistic love in spiritual leadership is oriented toward the well-being and growth of others, even when it requires personal sacrifice on the part of the leader.

Within the *pesantren* tradition, this concept resonates closely with the values of *ikhlas* (sincerity), *khidmah* (service), and *mahabbah* (devotion to religion and community). A Kyai, or caretaker, who embodies altruistic love, does not treat students merely as objects of institutional management but as individuals with unique potential and specific needs. Such leaders devote time to personal mentoring, seek to understand students' struggles, and assist them in overcoming academic and spiritual challenges—without expecting material reward or social recognition in return.

This practice cultivates an organizational culture in which members feel genuinely appreciated and understood. As a result, students develop a strong sense of belonging and internal motivation, which reinforces their commitment to the *pesantren's* vision and values. In line with Fry's framework, altruistic love thus becomes a key driver of organizational commitment and intrinsic motivation within spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003, pp. 711–712).

4. *Hope/faith and the strengthening of students' resilience*

The dimension of hope/faith in spiritual leadership plays a crucial role in sustaining the psychological resilience of institutional members when facing intensive curricular demands and broader social changes. In Islamic educational institutions, spiritual leaders function by internalizing religious beliefs regarding the value of educational struggle, enabling members to interpret difficulties as

part of a process of worship and devotion (Asyha, 2025, pp. 7–8). Within the *pesantren* environment, this is manifested in the way the Kyai frames the discipline of Qur'anic memorization, the study of classical texts, and the observance of daily religious practices as forms of *riyadhah* (spiritual discipline) carrying eternal (*ukhrawi*) significance.

At the same time, Rahmatika's study demonstrates that strong spiritual leadership significantly influences employee performance and resilience by enhancing psychological empowerment and strengthening the belief that organizational goals can be achieved with divine support (Rahmatika, Ma'arif, & Kholifah, 2022, pp. 210–212). In the context of PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin, this suggests that the Kyai and caretakers' function not merely as regulators of institutional discipline, but as primary sources of hope and faith. Through the continuous reinforcement of religious meaning, they cultivate students' perseverance in navigating the dual curriculum of Qur'anic memorization and classical textual studies, despite its considerable cognitive demands. Consequently, hope/faith operates not only as a theological belief but also as a psychological mechanism that strengthens endurance and commitment within the *pesantren* educational system.

5. *Altruistic love, role modeling and character development of santri*

Recent literature emphasizes that altruistic love constitutes a defining characteristic of effective spiritual leadership in *pesantren* settings. Salim argues that successful leadership innovation in modern *pesantren* integrates visionary, democratic, paternalistic, and spiritual styles, with the spiritual dimension manifested through the Kyai's emotional care and close relationships with students and staff (Salim, Zaibi, Brantasari, & Ikhsan, 2025, pp. 452–454). Such paternalistic yet compassionate relationships foster an inclusive environment that supports collaboration and innovation without undermining Kyai's authority.

Kyai's spiritual leadership plays a central role in shaping students' character through moral exemplarity, spiritual guidance, and sustained encouragement toward the development of a religious and achievement-oriented personality. The Kyai's consistency in upholding the *pesantren's* vision and mission, comprehensive attention to students' development, and the creation of a vibrant religious environment collectively cultivate an educational climate that nurtures faith, noble character, and a strong motivation to excel.

Within the context of PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin, this role is concretely manifested in the culture of *khidmah* (service), personal closeness between caretakers and students, and mentoring patterns that prioritize lived example as the primary

foundation of the educational process. In this way, altruistic love functions not only as an ethical value but also as a pedagogical strategy that internalizes character formation within the everyday life of the *pesantren*.

Table 1. Dimensions of Kyai Spiritual Leadership at PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin Kudus Based on Fry's Theory (2003)

Dimension	Theoretical Indicators	Implementation at PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin	Impact on Student
Transcendental Vision	A vision that is <i>challenging, desirable, and inspiring</i> creates a sense of calling.	The vision of "Producing students who are fluent in Tilawah and proficient in Amaliyah," serves as the spiritual foundation of the integrated tahfidz and kitab kuning curriculum.	A holistic educational approach grounded in Qur'anic principles; development of a religious life orientation and awareness of learning as an act of worship
Hope/ Faith	Deep confidence that the vision is attainable; pragmatic hope and metaphysical faith	The Kyais' narratives on the blessings (<i>barakah</i>) of the Qur'an, consistent exemplary conduct, and testimonies of alumni who became <i>hafiz</i> , strengthening students' motivation	Strengthened psychological resilience, enhanced intrinsic motivation, and perseverance in managing the dual curriculum.
Altruistic Love	Genuine care, concern, and appreciation; fostering a sense of membership	A culture of <i>khidmah</i> (service), personal mentoring by the Kyai, emotional closeness between caretakers and students, and compassionate paternalistic relationships	Development of loyalty, a strong sense of belonging, and internalization of moral and Qur'anic character values

The findings of this study demonstrate conformity with several previous studies while also revealing contextual distinctions in line with the research of (Samroh et al., 2025) on the spiritual leadership of KH. Abdurrahman Nawi at *Pesantren Al-Awwabin*, the case of MUS-YQ confirms that exemplary worship, consistency in vision, and emotional closeness between the Kyai and students are key factors in shaping a strong religious culture. Likewise, these findings are consistent with (Lahmar et al., 2023) who identified a positive relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment across various educational contexts.

However, in contrast to (Widodo, 2025) who emphasizes transformational leadership in modern *pesantren* management, this study suggests that in a

tahfidz-based *pesantren* with a dual curriculum such as MUS-YQ, the dimension of hope/faith plays a more dominant role than transformational-managerial aspects. This is largely due to the high cognitive demands placed upon students, which require sustained spiritual narratives and eschatological conviction as primary mechanisms for maintaining motivation, rather than relying solely on managerial strategies.

These findings contribute to the broader discourse by suggesting that Fry's spiritual leadership model must be contextualized according to the specific characteristics of different types of *pesantren*. In particular, institutions with intensive Qur'anic memorization programs may require stronger emphasis on transcendental meaning-making and faith-based resilience to sustain both institutional development and student endurance.

6. *The integration of spiritual values with modern pesantren management*

Pesantren leadership that remains adaptive to contemporary developments tends to integrate spiritual values with modern management principles as mutually reinforcing elements. The combination of spiritual integrity and managerial effectiveness enables curriculum renewal, governance improvement, and institutional innovation without compromising the Islamic identity of the *pesantren*. Such a leadership model positions the *pesantren* as a sustainable institution oriented toward values, quality, and excellence.

A leadership approach that emphasizes an inspiring vision, intellectual capacity development, and individualized attention is compatible with the spiritual culture of the *pesantren* and contributes to strengthening the professionalism of both students and staff. Institutional transformation occurs through participatory change management, the use of technological innovation, and continuous leadership renewal, all while remaining anchored in the institution's spiritual foundations.

In the context of PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin, this integration illustrates how the development of physical infrastructure, curricular structures, and organizational systems can progress in parallel with the reinforcement of Qur'anic character formation and the preservation of the *pesantren's* salafiyah tradition. This finding suggests that modernization and spiritual authenticity need not be viewed as opposing forces, but rather as complementary dimensions within a holistic leadership framework.

7. *Theoretical and practical implications for the development of the MUS-YQ Lil Banin Bylaws*

From a theoretical perspective, recent national and international scholarship reinforces the argument that spiritual leadership in *pesantren* represents a

distinctive leadership model that integrates charismatic authority, transcendental values, and managerial rationality. Arifin demonstrates that the Kyais' spiritual leadership rests simultaneously on traditional, charismatic, and rational bases of authority, enabling *pesantren* institutions to adapt to modernity without losing legitimacy in the eyes of students and the broader community (Arifin, 2017, pp. 294–296). In a similar vein, Asyha's theoretical review emphasizes that spiritual leadership in Islamic education should be understood as a leadership framework that integrates moral–religious vision, ethical dimensions, and a strong orientation toward character formation (Asyha, 2025, pp. 9–11). Together, these perspectives situate spiritual leadership not merely as a cultural attribute but as a structured, conceptually grounded model of educational governance.

From a practical standpoint, research on spiritual and transformational leadership in *pesantren* offers several implications for the development of PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin Kudus. First, strengthening the leadership capacity of the Kyai and the caretaker team, particularly in the dimensions of vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love, will be a decisive factor in successfully integrating the *tahfidz-kitab* curriculum and reinforcing students' character formation. Second, institutional innovations such as strengthening management systems, digitalizing services, and expanding formal educational programs should be designed as expressions of the *pesantren's* spiritual vision rather than merely administrative adaptations, as suggested by studies on leadership innovation in modern *pesantren*. Accordingly, PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin may be positioned as a model for *pesantren* development that harmoniously combines the strength of Qur'anic scholarly transmission (*sanad*), depth of fiqh scholarship, and managerial professionalism within an integrated framework of spiritual leadership.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the spiritual leadership of the Kyai at PP MUS-YQ Lil Banin Kudus operates through three principal dimensions in accordance with Fry's (2003) spiritual leadership model. First, the Kyai functions as the guardian of the transcendental vision “fluency in *tilawah* and proficiency in *amaliyah*,” which serves as the spiritual foundation of all educational activities within the *pesantren*. Second, the Kyai strengthens the dimension of hope/faith among students through consistent religious narratives, exemplary conduct, and reinforcement of belief in the blessings (*barakah*) of knowledge, enabling students to endure the demanding dual curriculum of Qur'anic memorization and classical text studies. Third, the Kyai cultivates altruistic love through a culture

of *khidmah*, personal closeness, and continuous spiritual mentoring, contributing to the holistic formation of students' character. The integration of these three dimensions with modern managerial practices facilitates curriculum development, institutional strengthening, and increased public trust without compromising the *pesantren's* salafiyah identity and Qur'anic spirit. Theoretically, this study contextualizes Fry's spiritual leadership framework within the Indonesian *pesantren* tradition. Practically, it offers a *pesantren* development model that harmoniously combines Qur'anic scholarly transmission (*sanad*), depth of fiqh scholarship, and managerial professionalism within a comprehensive spiritual leadership framework.

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