Social Support and Leadership Effectiveness: Insights from Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Jombang

Mohammad Shofiyulloh[1][✉]**, Desi Rahmawati**[1]**, Heru Santosa**[1]**, Zidni Sugara**[2]
[1]Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Al-Azhar, Egypt
Corresponding author: Shofifadh95@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Purpose – This research explores the pivotal role of social support in augmenting leadership efficacy at Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Jombang, a prominent Islamic educational establishment in Indonesia.

Design/methods/approach – Adopting a qualitative case study approach, data was accrued through semi-structured interviews and observation. Rigorous measures, including data triangulation and member-checking, were instituted to bolster the study's credibility and authenticity.

Findings – Four core categories of social support emerged: Emotional, Instrumental, Informational, and Appraisal. These types, while distinct, collaboratively underpin leadership potency. Specifically, Emotional support markedly amplifies self-assuredness and judicious decision-making, whereas Instrumental support optimizes operational processes. Informational support is pivotal in tactical problem resolution and discerning decision-making, while Appraisal support consolidates the institution's reputation and garners community faith.

Research implications/limitations – These insights have profound ramifications for understanding leadership within Islamic educational contexts, especially in Indonesia. To fortify educational leadership, stakeholders and policy framers are urged to weave social support paradigms into overarching educational directives. Nonetheless, the research's concentration on one establishment and the absence of extended temporal data serve as its primary constraints.

1. Introduction

The role of pesantren in Indonesia's educational and religious landscape is of immense societal importance. They not only impart religious education but also shape individual character and moral values, thereby contributing significantly to the fabric of Indonesian society (Silfiyasari & Zhafi, 2020). Beyond the borders of Indonesia, pesantren contribute to the broader discourse on Islamic education and its role in social cohesion. Therefore, pesantren leadership's effectiveness is not only a local issue but also holds global implications for educational governance and religious instruction (Pohl, 2006; Rodliyah, 2019). As such, exploring factors that support effective leadership within pesantren is vital.

Historically, pesantren have been central to Islamic religious education in Indonesia, existing long before Indonesia's independence (Nasution, 2020). These institutions have been credited with preserving and promoting Islamic religious traditions (Rosyidah, 2021). The long-standing nature of pesantren education thus illustrates their resilience and cultural importance, warranting scholarly

attention. Contemporary studies have begun to examine the evolving roles of pesantren in Indonesian society. These institutions are not static but have adapted to changing socio-political environments (Akhiruddin, 2015; Putri et al., 2023). This adaptability highlights their traditional and modern capacity, a duality that is an exciting area for scholarly exploration.

The kyai, or the leader of the pesantren, plays a pivotal role in managing and developing these institutions (Hakim & Sopwandin, 2023; Syahid, 2021). Beyond teaching religious tenets, they are responsible for spiritual and moral guidance and maintaining good relations with the community (Muhakamurrohman, 2014). Their role is thus multi-faceted and laden with substantial responsibilities (Mundiri & Bariroh, 2018). Leadership effectiveness in pesantren is subject to internal and external challenges (Sagala, 2015). Previous studies have highlighted social support's significance in enhancing leadership quality in these religious educational institutions (Brunelli et al., 2016). This social support may come in various forms, such as emotional, instrumental, or informational, and can be essential for individual well-being (Taylor, 2011).

In the broader field of education and training, social support has been identified as a crucial predictor of effective leadership. For instance, research conducted among Pennsylvanian youth demonstrated that social support was the most significant predictor of leadership skills (Osmane & Brennan, 2018). Moreover, a study by revealed that individual-focused transformational leadership was positively related to the satisfaction of teachers, reinforcing the idea that social support structures could positively influence leadership outcomes (Ding & Lin, 2020). Beyond educational leadership, social support has been shown to play a pivotal role in various professional settings. Among healthcare workers, social support is critical in managing stressful situations, including emergencies, disasters, and outbreaks of infectious diseases (KIM & PARK, 2017). This line of research is significant because it establishes that the benefits of social support are not confined to one occupational sector but have broader implications.

Furthermore, social support has been examined for mental well-being and stress management across various occupations. Studies have found a negative relationship between social support and work-related stress (Fajrin, 2020), and it has been argued that social support can act as a buffer against work-related stress (Jolly et al., 2021). These studies contribute to a growing consensus that social support has various natures and broad impacts, making it a popular construct in organizational and psychological research (French et al., 2018). Despite these advancements in understanding, there is a gap in research concerning the nuanced ways social support affects leadership within the context of pesantren. Moreover, there is limited empirical evidence that connects types of social support to particular aspects of leadership efficacy, which this study aims to address. Some existing studies have also been critiqued for not fully capturing the lived experiences of kyais, thus limiting the depth of understanding (Honey et al., 2020).

The focus of the present study is to investigate the role of social support in the leadership of Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Jombang. Specifically, the study aims to explore the impact of various forms of social support on the quality of leadership and identify factors that influence the provision of such support. By doing so, this research contributes to the body of knowledge on effective leadership in educational Islamic institutions, offering insights that may have broader applicability in various religious and educational settings.

2. Methods

The present study utilized a qualitative case study approach to examine the role of social support in leadership at Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Jombang (Priya, 2021). Data were primarily collected through semi-structured interviews with pesantren leaders and members of their social support networks, supplemented by observational research within the pesantren to capture daily interactions between

these two groups (Cohen et al., 2017). Digital voice recorders and field notes served as the primary tools for data collection, facilitating a comprehensive gathering of qualitative data. Subsequently, the transcribed data from interviews and observations underwent thematic analysis, which involved identifying and interpreting patterns or themes relevant to the influence of social support on leadership (Cohen et al., 2017). Data triangulation and member-checking techniques were implemented to bolster the study's reliability and validity. Data triangulation incorporated interviews and observations to confirm findings while member-checking involved validating the summarized data with participants to enhance the credibility of the results. Overall, the study aimed to offer an in-depth understanding of how social support contributes to effective leadership within the unique context of Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Jombang.

3. Results

3.1. *Forms of Social Support for the Leadership of PP Bahrul Ulum Jombang*

Social support is pivotal in fostering leadership at the Bahrul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Jombang. Based on an interview conducted with Dr. KH Moh Hasib Wahab Hasbulloh, the chairperson of the Bahrul Ulum Islamic Boarding School Foundation, on June 14, 2023, it is evident that various forms of social support exist within this institution. One such form is emotional support provided by the board of guardians. Dr. KH Moh Hasib Wahab stated that they have individuals to whom they can express their grievances or challenges while leading the institution. Such emotional support yields positive benefits for the school's leaders as it furnishes constructive feedback that enhances their self-confidence in decision-making.

In addition, the leaders also receive emotional support in the form of compliments and affirmative words from within and outside the institution. Dr. KH Moh Hasib Wahab Hasbulloh corroborated this during the interview.

> "Yes, there is abundant support inside and outside the boarding school. External support comes from alums, parents, and the community attentive to the Bahrul Ulum Foundation. Internal support comes from the Foundation's board, teaching staff, and the broader school family. Such support usually comes in the form of compliments and positive words. This positive support acts as moral reinforcement, boosting our enthusiasm in performing our leadership duties better."

These statements indicate that external support comes from various parties, such as alumni, parents, and the community that cares for the Bahrul Ulum Foundation. Internally, they receive moral support from the Foundation's board, faculty, and the more prominent school family. Compliments and positive words significantly impact, as moral reinforcement heightens their enthusiasm for leadership tasks. This moral support is essential in elevating motivation and self-confidence, enabling them to perform their leadership duties more effectively.

Apart from emotional support, instrumental support is also vital for leadership. Leaders mention receiving physical assistance, albeit minimal, like help with moving items to better locations. Despite its limited extent, this physical support is sufficient to aid their leadership, as stated by Dr. KH Moh Hasib Wahab in the interview:

> "There is physical help, although not much, which includes assistance moving items to better places. This is already enough to support my leadership. Another example involves a third party revitalizing a burial site, which significantly aids us in maintaining valuable assets. Other forms of support include skill-based aids like computers and sewing training."

The interview snippet also shows that a third party revitalizes burial sites, significantly benefiting the boarding school's leadership. Besides physical help, they receive financial support for potential financial difficulties, although its specific impact on leadership is not elaborated upon.

In terms of instrumental support, individuals provide skill-based assistance, such as technology operations or specific skill training, like sewing. Such support is advantageous for the

leaders, as it offers new access and knowledge in technology use and specific skill development, thereby enhancing the quality and efficiency of their leadership.

Informational support also holds a crucial role, as revealed by Dr. KH Moh Hasib Wahab:
> "Someone often provides information or resources that can help resolve issues, like securing student scholarships. Usually, alums in higher education offer scholarship information, even if it does not entirely meet the number of students. However, this is already helpful."

This indicates that the leaders receive informational support through resources that can address specific issues, such as scholarship availability. Even if these are not proportionate to the student numbers, they acknowledge their positive impact on their leadership. Furthermore, they receive advice and input from the board of guardians, school administrators, alumni, and external religious schools, which aids them in resolving particular issues by acquiring new perspectives and insights.

Lastly, award-based social support plays a significant role, as stated by Dr. KH Moh Hasib Wahab:
> "Awards are mainly garnered by the religious schools under the BU Foundation due to the institution's longstanding existence, which positively affects public trust. This is reflected in the increased popularity through platforms like YouTube, websites, and social media."

This implies that the leaders receive awards or appreciation for their efforts, bolstering their motivation, self-confidence, and the institution's positive image. They also receive moral and positive support from individuals like working alums and those studying at other institutions. Award-based social support is a vital factor in creating a supportive environment that facilitates the overall development of the boarding school.

3.2. *The Role of Social Support in the Leadership of BU Jombang Islamic Boarding School*

Social support plays a significant role in enhancing leadership effectiveness within Islamic boarding schools. Through emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support, boarding school leaders can acquire the necessary resources, motivation, and understanding to address challenges better and execute their leadership responsibilities.

Emotional support positively impacts the self-confidence, enthusiasm, and motivation of boarding school leaders. Dr. KH Moh Hasib Wahab articulated this in an interview conducted on June 14, 2023:
> "The support provided enables us to handle pressure and challenges better. The compliments and positive words also offer moral support that boosts our spirits, self-confidence, and robust motivation, invigorating me to perform my leadership duties more effectively."

The interview quote indicates that emotional support from close individuals like the advisory board, alums, and boarding school family instills confidence in leaders when making decisions. Compliments and positive words also provide moral support that energizes them to carry out their leadership duties. With such emotional support, boarding school leaders can better cope with pressures and challenges.

Instrumental support in the form of physical aid, financial assistance, and skills also plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of boarding school leadership. Dr. KH Moh Hasib Wahab also mentioned this in the same interview:
> "Physical assistance, cemetery revitalization support, and skills-based aid have significantly aided us in managing the boarding school environment. Additionally, the financial assistance received greatly helps us resolve arising financial issues."

The interview quote reveals that physical assistance, such as moving goods or revitalizing facilities, aids leaders in improving the quality and efficiency of the boarding school environment. Financial assistance helps tackle any financial problems, while skills-based support broadens the

knowledge and capabilities of boarding school leaders. This instrumental support facilitates the leadership within the boarding school and strengthens the leaders' ability to execute their duties more effectively.

Informational support grants boarding school leaders access to relevant knowledge, information, and perspectives. Dr. KH Moh Hasib Wahab elaborated upon this in the same interview:

> "The information assistance from the advisory board, alumni, and other parties allows us to increase our awareness of issues and make appropriate decisions. Information about scholarships enables us to develop the boarding school more effectively by providing training for students to continue their education. All these are greatly beneficial for my role as a leader."

The interview quote suggests that information provided by related individuals like the advisory board, boarding school administrators, and alums assists leaders in solving problems and making better decisions. Informational support also enables leaders to seize opportunities and develop the boarding school more effectively. By accessing relevant informational resources, leaders can enhance their leadership effectiveness.

Appraisal support positively impacts the effectiveness of boarding school leadership. Dr. KH Moh Hasib Wahab articulated this in the same interview:

> "We feel highly proud of the awards and appreciation received for our achievements and contributions as boarding school leaders. These awards also make us feel happy and valued, thereby motivating us. Moreover, this support strengthens our self-confidence in executing leadership duties. Awards received, especially through social media, improve the image of our boarding school and reinforce community trust in our leadership."

The interview quote indicates that awards and appreciation for achievements and contributions inspire feelings of happiness, value, and motivation. Appraisal support also boosts the self-confidence of boarding school leaders in performing their leadership duties. Moreover, recognition through social media enhances the school's image and community trust in its leadership.

The role of social support in enhancing the effectiveness of boarding school leadership is evident through increased self-confidence, enthusiasm, motivation, access to resources, better understanding, and strengthening of the school's image. In various forms, social support offers benefits for boarding school leaders in overcoming challenges, improving performance, and achieving more effective school development. Therefore, boarding schools must foster an environment that supports and encourages robust social support to improve leadership effectiveness.

4. Discussion

This research aimed to explore the role of social support in effective leadership at Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Jombang, focusing mainly on the impact of such support on leadership quality and the variables that facilitate the provision of this support. The impetus for this study draws on the significance of pesantren as longstanding Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia and the pivotal role that effective leadership plays in their management and community engagement (Nasution, 2020; Sagala, 2015; Syahid, 2021). The results elucidate that social support, manifested in emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support forms, significantly enhances leadership effectiveness at Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Jombang. Leaders receiving these various forms of support demonstrated heightened self-confidence, improved motivation, and more informed strategic decision-making (Cristofaro & Giardino, 2020).

The findings align with existing literature, corroborating the broad significance of social support in contexts as varied as mental health (Grey et al., 2020), work-related stress (Fajrin, 2020), and

healthcare (Kim & Park, 2017). They particularly extend these established generalizations into the context of Islamic educational leadership, linking effective leadership in pesantren to the provisioning of multidimensional social support (Brunelli et al., 2016; French et al., 2018). An intriguing implication of the results is that fostering a robust social support system within the pesantren community can dramatically enhance leadership effectiveness. Understanding the facets of social support allows leaders to proactively cultivate a supportive environment involving emotional, instrumental, informational, and social acknowledgment aspects (Iram et al., 2020). The findings underscore the importance of robust connections among leaders, boards of guardians, teachers, alumni, and the broader community. Such relationships can increase motivation, decision-making, and leadership performance (Erakovic et al., 2020).

The study's findings revealed that emotional support, especially in the form of compliments and positive words, significantly boosts self-confidence and motivation among the leaders of Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Jombang. This emotional upliftment manifests in an enhanced ability to make informed and strategic decisions, which is crucial in leadership roles (Tus, 2020). The importance of emotional well-being in decision-making has also been emphasized in general organizational contexts, advocating for mental health as a factor that significantly influences leadership effectiveness (Grey et al., 2020). Moreover, emotional support appears to serve as a form of moral reinforcement, rejuvenating leaders and enabling them to continue their roles with renewed vigor (Kock et al., 2019). This finding aligns with the broader psychological literature, which has long recognized the role of emotional support in enhancing individual well-being and resilience (Taylor, 2011).

Instrumental and informational support also contributed significantly to leadership effectiveness in the current study. These forms of support serve as valuable resources that enable leaders to tackle practical challenges and facilitate effective decision-making. The results indicate that such forms of support are not merely supplementary but integral to leadership quality (Chammas & Hernandez, 2019). This is consistent with previous studies in different sectors, such as healthcare and corporate settings, where adequate social support has been found vital for task performance and stress management (Fajrin, 2020; Kim & Park, 2017). Consequently, these types of support contribute to the overall leadership ecosystem within Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Jombang, augmenting its capacity to adapt and excel (Muttaqin, 2020).

While the study presents a compelling case for the importance of social support in the leadership context of Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Jombang, it is crucial to interpret these findings cautiously. The impact of social support could be moderated or mediated by various contextual factors such as the pesantren's size, the student's socio-economic background, and regional cultural norms (Oludayo & Ojo Omonijo, 2020). Therefore, future research should investigate how these contextual factors interact with social support to influence leadership outcomes. Moreover, since this study is confined to one specific institution, its findings may not be universally applicable and should be tested in other settings for generalizability (Li et al., 2021).

The implications of these findings are significant for the advancement of leadership in pesantren and Islamic education in Indonesia. Similar institutions can implement appropriate interventions by recognizing the pivotal role of social support in enhancing leadership effectiveness. Policymakers and educational stakeholders should consider integrating social support programs into broader educational policies and initiatives (Afandi, 2013).

5. Conclusion

This research aimed to elucidate the role of social support in enhancing leadership at Pesantren Bahrul Ulum Jombang. Four principal types of social support were identified: Emotional, Instrumental, Informational, and Appraisal. Emotional support has a pronounced impact on self-confidence and

decision-making. Instrumental support, albeit limited, boosts operational efficiency. Informational support is pivotal for problem-solving and strategy formulation, while Appraisal support augments institutional reputation and community trust. These insights are pivotal for understanding leadership dynamics within Islamic educational contexts in Indonesia. As such, it is recommended that policymakers integrate these forms of social support into overarching educational strategies. Despite its contributions, the research is constrained by its singular institutional focus and absence of longitudinal data. Future inquiries should expand the scope by examining multiple institutions and evaluating the sustained impacts of social support on leadership in Islamic educational settings.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Mohammad Shofiyulloh conceived the presented idea. Zidni Sugara was the data taker. Desi Rahmawati and Heru Santosa developed the Shifting the Orientation of Islamic Education theory. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

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Data availability statement

The datasets generated during and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Interest's statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Additional information

Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to Shofifadh95@gmail.com

ORCID

Mohammad Shofiyulloh

Desi Rahmawati https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6430-8632

Heru Santosa https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3365-4441

Zidni sugara

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