



# The Role of Islamic Boarding Schools in Developing Student Leadership in Society

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic boarding schools in developing *santri* leadership in society. As Islamic educational institutions, *pesantren* not only function to teach religious knowledge, but also to shape the character and leadership spirit of *santri*. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach, through literature analysis and observation of leadership practices in the *pesantren* environment. The results of the study show that Islamic boarding schools have two main roles in building student leadership. First, Islamic boarding schools serve as role models through the figures of *kyai* and *ustadz* who demonstrate leadership based on Islamic values. Second, Islamic boarding schools act as motivators by encouraging students to be active in organizational and social activities. The implications of this research confirm that Islamic boarding schools make an important contribution to producing a generation of leaders with noble character, integrity, and the ability to act as agents of change in society.

## Article Information:

Received October 21, 2025

Revised November 28, 2025

Accepted December 30, 2025

**Keywords:** *Islamic boarding school, leadership, students, motivator*

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership literally comes from the term lead. The term lead encompasses the meanings of directing, nurturing, organizing, guiding, as well as demonstrating or influencing (Fazillah, 2023; Sahabuddin & Syahrani, 2022). A leader has both physical and spiritual responsibility for the success of the work of those he or she leads, so being a leader is not easy and not everyone is equally capable of fulfilling the role of leader (Khumaini & Wiranata, 2019; Waedoloh et al., 2022).

Leadership is the ability of a person to influence others to take actions that support the achievement of certain goals (Hanafi et al., 2018; Seni, 2021). The role of the *Kiai* as a leader of Islamic boarding schools and the community includes wise judgment and broad insight, expertise in religious matters, serving as a role model in ethical attitudes and behavior, and having a close relationship with God (Falakhina & Hernawati, 2025). The legitimacy of the *Kiai*'s leadership comes from the community, which considers the *Kiai* to have expertise in Islamic religious knowledge, authority demonstrated through his knowledge, and good attitude and character (Syarifudin & Priyadi, 2023). The ideal *Kiai* in the eyes of the *pesantren* community is considered a central figure who represents them, acting as a mediator, dynamizer, catalyst, motivator, and driver for the community he leads to protect the interests of the community and the *pesantren*.

**How to cite:** Marfiyanti, M., Handriadi, H., Rojana, E., Arifin, Z., Hidayat, R., Putri, D. (2025). The Role of Islamic Boarding Schools in Developing Student Leadership in Society. *Ahlussunnah: Journal of Islamic Education*, 4(3), 887-894.

**E-ISSN:** 2827-9573

**Published by:** The Institute for Research and Community Service

The word pondok comes from the Arabic word funduq, which means bedroom, dormitory, or simple dwelling. This is because boarding school are used as accommodation for students or santri who come from far away. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, pesantren is defined as a place of residence or dormitory for santri, as well as a location for students who study the Quran. In terms of terminology, a pesantren is an Islamic educational institution where santri live in a dormitory and study classical and general texts. The aim of this education is to gain a deep understanding of Islamic religious knowledge and to practice it as a guide in daily life, with an emphasis on moral values in society. Pesantren are also considered part of national education with their own characteristics and identity unique to Indonesia. With their independence, pesantren can function as autonomous educational institutions, both in terms of teaching systems and funding sources. Thus, pesantren can be defined as a place of residence and a location for santri to study, especially in the field of religion (Raharjo, 2024).

Pesantren is the oldest form of education today and is considered part of Indonesia's indigenous culture. This form of education has existed since the 13th century. Several centuries later, this education system became more organized with the emergence of places of study. This form then developed into a place of residence for students (*santri*), known as pesantren (Sudrajat, 2017).

Islamic boarding schools play a very important role as educational institutions in the field of religion. If education is understood as a process, then that process will lead to the achievement of predetermined goals. In general, the purpose of Islamic boarding schools is to foster good behavior or akhlakul karimah, while specifically, the goal is tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the heart) and to draw closer to Allah through mujahadah. Basically, this is a concretization of the ideal values formed within each individual, including at the Miftahul Iqrar Islamic Boarding School in Batu Mengaum, Sungai Geringging.

Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic Boarding School is one of the boarding schools with a mission to create a generation of Muslim men and women who are well-versed in religious knowledge and capable of actively participating in community development activities according to their respective expertise. This is evident from the various programs and organizations within the boarding school, such as the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Boarding School Management and the Learning Guidance Institute, which are facilities provided for students to develop their skills and knowledge, both in religious and general fields. In this regard, there are specific strategies and steps taken by the leadership (*Buya*) to teach, guide, and motivate students to develop their leadership skills.

In accordance with the provisions set forth in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2019, it is explained that the areas covered by Islamic boarding schools include education, preaching, and community empowerment. One of the objectives of the Islamic boarding school is to create individuals who excel in various fields, who know and practice the values of their religious teachings, and who become experts in religious knowledge who are faithful, pious, have good character, are knowledgeable, independent, helpful, balanced, and moderate (Ardiansyah & Basuki, 2023; Attijani et al., 2025; Hidayat et al., 2025). Considering that santri are an important part of pesantren to be shaped into outstanding individuals, it is very important to instill basic leadership values in order to shape a generation that is responsible, disciplined, independent, and strong-minded. Although it starts with small actions, such as taking the initiative to wake up friends in the morning so they can attend dawn prayers together, *santri* also need to understand well what an ideal leader is like.

In this context, self-leadership needs to be understood by students. According to Jackson, self-leadership is the process of influencing oneself to provide direction for oneself and motivate oneself as necessary to act and behave appropriately. Self-leadership demonstrates the importance of individual control over motivation, cognition, and actions in order to properly carry out one's responsibilities. The learning methods, habits, and programs implemented in Islamic boarding schools greatly influence the students' readiness to face the future. If leadership skills can be successfully applied, it is hoped that students will develop independence and, upon graduating from the boarding school, will not only be capable of becoming leaders, but also leaders who are *siddiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fathanah* (Abidin & Sirojuddin, 2024).

## METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. This method was chosen because it is suitable for describing in depth the phenomena occurring at the Miftahul Iqrar Islamic Boarding School in Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging, particularly regarding the role of Islamic boarding schools in developing student leadership in the community. The qualitative approach allows researchers to understand social reality holistically, emphasizing the meaning, process, and experiences of the research subjects (Afifuddin, 2022; Aryasutha et al., 2025; Busral et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2022, 2023, 2025; Hamdi & Desvia, 2025; Hariyadi, 2020; Jaafar et al., 2025; Sugandi et al., 2017).

The data sources in this study consist of primary informants and supporting informants. The main informants are Islamic boarding school leaders, kyai, ustadz, and santri who are directly involved in leadership activities in the Islamic boarding school environment. Meanwhile, supporting informants include Islamic boarding school administrators and the surrounding community who are related to Islamic boarding school activities. Informants were selected purposively, based on their relevance and involvement in the research object.

The research instrument used was the researcher himself as the key instrument (human instrument). In qualitative research, the researcher plays an active role in planning, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. To support the data collection process, the researcher also used interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation as additional instruments.

Data collection techniques were carried out in three main ways. First, observation, which involved directly observing leadership activities in the pesantren environment, both in teaching and learning activities and in the santri organization. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with pesantren leaders, ustadz, and santri to obtain information about leadership strategies and the role of pesantren in shaping leadership spirit. Third, documentation, which involved collecting archives, activity records, photographs, and official pesantren documents relevant to the research.

The data obtained was then analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques. The analysis was carried out in three stages according to Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and simplifying data relevant to the research focus. Data presentation was carried out in the form of a systematic narrative so that it was easy to understand. Next, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the data to find meaning and answer the research questions.

This research was conducted at the Miftahul Iqrar Islamic Boarding School in Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging, Padang Pariaman, West Sumatra, Indonesia. This location was chosen because the boarding school plays an important role in shaping

the leadership of students through the example set by the kyai and ustaz and the motivation given to students to be active in organizations and social activities.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Islamic boarding schools serve as role models in developing student leadership in the community**

Imron Arifin, quoted by Hariyanto, states that the role of Islamic boarding school leaders in managing these institutions is an interesting topic to explore. This is due to the real responsibilities of Islamic boarding school leaders, which are not limited to curriculum development, but also include providing tools for evaluation and institutional regulations. The leader of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school plays an important role in organizing the life of the boarding school community and acts as a community leader (Hariyanto, 2016). In Law No. 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools, Chapter II, Article 9, paragraph 2 states that the leader of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school acts as the highest leader in the boarding school, who can function as a caregiver, role model, and example in managing the boarding school. This law also emphasizes that Islamic boarding schools encompass the aspects of education, da'wah, and community empowerment. One of the objectives of Islamic boarding schools is to produce high-quality individuals in various fields who understand and apply religious values, as well as become religious scholars who are obedient, have good character, are knowledgeable, independent, supportive, balanced, and moderate (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools).

The results of the study also show that the leader of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school has a unique way of creating outstanding students. One of the methods used is to provide facilities such as laboratories for hands-on practice, which aim to hone the talents of students through organizations within the boarding school. With the existence of organizations, it is hoped that this will assist in the process of developing their leadership skills, because naturally students learn about leadership and organization in the boarding school environment. The role of the head of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school as a leader is also crucial in providing guidance, direction, and efficient management to students so that organizational activities can run well and minimize various challenges that may arise in these activities.

### **Islamic boarding schools play a role as innovators in developing student leadership in the community**

In addition to performing their duties as leaders, the leaders of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school also have a responsibility to be initiators of change within the organizations or institutions they lead. Every year, these organizations or institutions are expected to make progress, which is the hope and goal for the continued advancement of the institution.

Similarly, the head of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school, as the head of the boarding school, is expected to be able to generate many ideas and concepts so that the boarding school can excel in the future. A leader needs to continue to pay attention to innovation for the advancement of quality educational institutions or Islamic boarding schools. The principle of mutual support in competition must be maintained so that other educational institutions can also develop well. This is what is meant by the leader of an educational institution as an initiator of innovation.

In an effort to achieve the vision of advancing Islamic boarding schools, each leader (Head of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school) has and applies a different approach to the advancement of the

institution. With the rapid development of technology, the Head of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school is expected to be able to implement new ideas. One example is innovation in the teaching and learning process (KBM) at Islamic boarding schools, such as updating the learning system, improving the boarding school environment, and combining formal education with traditional education. The curriculum at Islamic boarding schools still involves learning from classical Islamic texts written by previous scholars, which often gives the impression that Islamic boarding schools are outdated.

The results of the study also show that the leadership of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school uses a different approach and method from previous studies, namely by conducting monthly evaluations with the boarding school administrators and several members of the student organization to discuss the programs that have been implemented and the challenges that may hinder their continuation. On this occasion, the leadership of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school provided feedback and direction for the next steps, as well as guidance on how to implement the program so that it remains effective in various situations, ensuring that the existing program continues to benefit the santri. The head of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school also provided space for administrators and students to think critically in solving these problems. One of the innovations made was to improve the quality of the Madrasah Diniyah teachers at the boarding school.

### **The Strategy of the Leadership of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic Boarding School as a Motivator in Building the Leadership Spirit of Students**

The role of the leadership of Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic Boarding School as a driving force in building the leadership spirit of students is expected to provide useful ideas or recommendations for teachers, staff, educators, institution managers, students, the community, and government officials, all of whom play a role in the performance and success of an institution or organization. Especially, the encouragement from a leader who can motivate as the main decision-maker in the organization. If the members being led are inspired to increase their initiative and productivity, then it can be concluded that the leader has successfully fulfilled their role as an inspirer (Hariyadi, 2020; Mahrus & Ratnaningsih, 2024; Subekti & Fauzi, 2018).

The role of the leadership of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school as a driving force is very influential in the implementation of programs at the boarding school. One of the tasks of the leadership of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school is to inspire students to remain enthusiastic about learning. In addition, the leadership of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school also needs to encourage the teachers by providing constructive feedback to improve their work ethic and performance in the educational process at the boarding school. In shaping leadership skills among students, the support of the head of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school is crucial. The approach applied may also vary in each boarding school.

From the results of the study, it is known that the leader of the Miftahul Iqrar Batu Mengaum Sungai Geringging Islamic boarding school also does the same thing in boosting the enthusiasm of students to develop leadership skills using different strategies. When given the opportunity to deliver a speech and *mauidloh hasanah* at the opening ceremony, he always conveys motivational or interesting messages to the students. In addition, when motivating students, he also showed real examples of the results that could be achieved and the benefits of such actions, with the aim of convincing and encouraging students to be more enthusiastic in organizing activities

at the boarding school while continuing to serve and care for the boarding school.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Islamic boarding schools play a strategic role in developing *santri* leadership in society. The objective of the study to analyze the role of Islamic boarding schools was proven by the discovery of two main functions, namely as role models through the figures of *kyai* and *ustadz*, and as motivators who encourage *santri* to be active in organizations and social activities. These two roles show that *santri* leadership is not only formed through formal learning, but also through the habit of Islamic values and practical experiences in the Islamic boarding school environment.

The implication of these findings is that Islamic boarding schools can become models of leadership education based on spiritual and social values that are relevant for application in the wider community. *Santri* who are accustomed to role models and motivation in Islamic boarding schools have the potential to become leaders with integrity, noble character, and the ability to face the challenges of the times. Therefore, it is recommended that *pesantren* continue to strengthen their leadership role through the development of *santri* organizations, improving the quality of *ustadz*, and innovating teaching methods. With these steps, *pesantren* will not only produce scholars, but also community leaders who are able to integrate Islamic values with contemporary social needs.

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Ahlussunnah: Journal of Islamic Education

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