

# The Role of Sufistic-Based *Kiai* Leadership in Developing the Character of Santri in the Pesantren

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## Info Artikel

## Abstract

Keywords:  
*Sufistic-based Kiai leadership;*  
*The character of the Santri;*  
*Pesantren*

This study aims to describe Sufistic-based Kiai leadership's role in shaping Santri character at the Pesantren Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo. This research is a case study qualitative approach, with Kiai as the subject. We collected data using interview, documentation, and observation techniques, then analyzed using reduction techniques, presenting data, and drawing conclusions. The results showed that the Sufistic-based Kiai's leadership had an essential role in fostering the character of the Santri. The study results indicate that the Sufistic-based Kiai leadership has a vital role in promoting the surface of the Santri. Kiai is a person who gives influence in building character with Uswah (Modelling). This study also found that the factors that influence low morale are that Santri has a common understanding of the latest technological developments. In Sufistic-based leadership, there are four things that a leader must possess: 1) The *Tawasuth*, 2) The nature of *I'tidal*, 3) The *Tawazun*, and 4) The *Tasamuh*.

Kata kunci:  
*Kepemimpinan kiai berbasistasawuf;*  
*Karactersantri;*  
*Pesantren*

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan peran kepemimpinan kiai berbasis sufistik dalam membina karakter santri di Pesantren Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari Pengasuh Pondok Pesantren Nurul Jadid. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan wawancara, dokumentasi, observasi. Teknik analisis data menggunakan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan kiai berbasis sufistik sangat berperan dalam membina karakter santri. Kiai di kategorikan sangat berpengaruh dalam membina karakter karena dalam pembinaan santri kiai memberikan uswah (teladan) terhadap santrinya dengan hal itu kepemimpinan kiai dalam membina karakter santri sangat berpengaruh. Faktor yang mempengaruhi merosotnya moral santri adalah minimnya pengetahuan dan berkembangnya teknologi pada masa sekarang ini. Dalam kepemimpinan berbasis sufistik terdapat empat hal yang harus tercermin dalam diri seorang pemimpin. 1. Sifat tawasuth 2. Sifat I'tidal 3. Sifat tawazun 4. Sifat tasamuh.

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## INTRODUCTION

The character of a nation is identical to the nation's morals (Prodi et al., 2017). A nation of nature is a nation that has virtuous character. On the other hand, a nation with no standardized norms and good behaviour is called a nation without feeling (Muali et al., 2020). Some research results state that the social conditions of society have experienced a cultural shift, issues of human dignity and worth (Fatmawati et al., 2020), morals, solidarity, and morality (Alfath, 2020). The daily life of *Santri* experiences this kind of condition (Rahmatullah & Said, 2019). Abdul et al. (2020) explained that character education is crucial to be applied at every level of education, considering the socio-cultural conditions of the community have treaded on an alarming phase. Character education is one of the strategic efforts in solving moral problems that lead to forming national characteristics. Education is the main focus in developing the character of *Santri* because education is about the transfer of knowledge and horizontal in moral and moral formation through character building (Yaqin, 2020).

According to Hapsari (2014), character, nature, morals, and personality, which is then called character, becomes the person's actual condition so that it becomes a differentiator of individual behaviour from the behaviour of other individuals. Rahmatullah & Said (2019) mention character as the values of human behaviour related to God Almighty, oneself, fellow human beings, the environment, and nationality manifested in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions based on religious norms, law, manners, culture, and customs. Character values with noble character should be the primary goal in implementing education in Indonesia and are mandated to formal and non-formal educational institutions. Nurul Romdoni & Malihah (2020) assess Pesantren as alternative educational institutions to build personality and improve morals. In addition, education in pesantren does not have a time limit as the pattern of learning outside of pesantren. Moreover, the learning pattern to formal, informal, and non-formal education. Pesantren in educational institutions, da'wah, community guidance, and even struggle (Nurul Romdoni & Malihah, 2020). Fatmawati et al. (2020) mention pesantren as a religious institution providing education and teaching and developing and spreading Islamic teachings. Pesantren is one of the institutions in society that has an essential role in improving the quality of character and morals. Pesantren education provides knowledge and skills and instils moral and religious values (Muali, 2017).

Pesantren is an Indonesian Islamic education system that has demonstrated its role by making a significant contribution to the development of a whole person. In addition to pesantren as an educational institution that prioritizes "*tafaqquh-fi-al-din*". Pesantren can integrate morality into the education system on an enormous scale (Zamakhsyari, 1984) and contribute significantly to the birth of new educational institutions in the world of Islamic education. The aspect of modernity quickly integrated into the pesantren tradition is indicated by the development of formal educational institutions; In pesantren institutions. Almost 70% of Pesantren have provided formal schools/madrasas and universities (Zamakhsyari, 1984). For almost 400 years, education and learning in Pesantren have adhered to the traditional education pattern. From 1998-2008, education and learning in Pesantren have shown significant developments. It is beginning to form an education system that leads to formal and modern education. Pesantren has contributed significantly to the development of qualified human resources and the development of quality national character.

*Pesantren*, as an educational institution. Its existence is required to improve the pattern of life in its environment. If education is a process, it will achieve the goals (Ifendi, 2020). In general, the goals achieved by *Pesantren* are changes in behaviour and morality. At the same time, *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (purifying the heart), approaching God through *Mujahadah*, is the specific goal (Maslachah et al., 2021). Syafe'i (2017) explains that *Pesantren* provides a vehicle for the nation's children to face an increasingly complicated life. One of them is by increasing the understanding that Santri can

develop and solve problems in a religious context, choose appropriate actions, and be aware of the consequences of their actions, both related to themselves, society, and Allah SWT.

As the most influential figure in the *Pesantren*, *Kiai* does not transfer knowledge and religious skills only. *Kiai* is also a role model for his *Santri*. In *Pesantren*, *Kiai* always directs *Santri* to be on the right path and benefit their environment (Prodi et al., 2017). Naturally, the *Kiai* has high expectations for the excellent behaviour of a *Santri*. With the consideration that *Santri* will socialize directly with the community and carry out preaching (Munfaridah, 2019). In carrying out their duties, *Santri* will encounter various portraits of human life that do not lie in mastery and understanding of God's relationship with humans. Based on this opinion, *Kiai* plays an essential role in shaping and fostering the morals of *Santri* to become human beings with morals and independent knowledge so that their behaviour or daily experience is carried out following religious norms (Prodi et al., 2017). The target to be achieved by *Kiai* is to foster the morals of *Santri* so that they become human beings who are knowledgeable and have good morals and have the artistic value of independence (Apud et al., 2020).

Research Amaludin et al. (2020) proves that *Kiai* has the highest position in the *Pesantren* and directly has the authority in making important decisions in the management system of the *Pesantren*. We have seen in the pattern of relations between *Kiai*, *Santri*, and the community around the *Pesantren*. *Santri's* obedience to *Kiai* is called *sami'na wa atho'na* (we hear and we obey) (we hear, and we obey) (Wawan Juandi & Juwairiyah, 2019). *Kiai* guides and teaches *Santri* and the surrounding community using a situational approach (Apud et al., 2020), which can be seen in the interaction between *Kiai* and *Santri* when educating, teaching books, giving advice consulting, and even forming *Santries* with character (Alfath, 2020). Sometimes *Kiai* is like parents as well as teachers and can be found indefinitely. This condition shows that *Kiai's* leadership is full of responsibility, attention, attractiveness, and influence. *Kiai's* behaviour can be imitated and interpreted by his followers (directly) in daily interactions.

Steenbrink (1986) argues that society has a different view of someone who is considered a *Kiai*. Some believe that the community must accept *Kiai* to ask for advice or entrust their children to study. Some studies say that great *Kiai* has knowledge, piety, lineage, and the number of *Santri*. (Rozaki, 2004) mentions that the leadership of charismatic *Kiai* is obtained given, or there is a genealogy with the previous charismatic *Kiai*. It is strengthened by the statement of (Rohmaniyah & Woodward, 2012), which explains that *Kiai's* leadership is obtained from two combinations, between Islamic education and inherited charisma.

In contrast to several previous studies, this study describes the role of Sufistic-based *Kiai* leadership in fostering the character of *Santri*. The *Kiai* as a role model in a *pesantren*, plays a significant role in shaping the character of the *Santri*. A *Kiai* must have the proper nature and attitude to carry out his mandate correctly and adequately. Sufistic-based leadership is needed in facing the era of industrialization as a counterbalance to the development of an all-technological era.

## **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative case study approach exploring cultural technology with descriptive data types and analysis (Mukhtar et al., 2020). This research was carried out from March to June 2021. The subjects in this study were *Pesantren* Nurul Jadid Probolinggo East Java, Indonesia. Data was obtained by observation and interview techniques, and the interviews were conducted on one of the *Kiai* in the *Pesantren* Nurul Jadid and several regional administrators.

It was analyzed by data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions, and testing the validity of the data carried out by testing the credibility of the data through data verification to the same source with different techniques. The purpose of this study was to determine the role of *Kiai* in shaping the character of *Santri* at the *Pesantren* Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo. Use of the method disclosed so that the truth can be accounted for and have scientific evidence that is accurate

and trustworthy. Interviews were conducted with one of the Kiai who was in the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School and several regional administrators.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Tebba (2004) proved that Pupils in *Pesantren* have high levels of intellectual intelligence (IQ), Emotional Intelligence (EQ), and spiritual intelligence (SQ) are integral. It is due to *Pesantren* educational institutions with the same sound quality as other educational institutions. Imagine, a graduate of *Pesantren*, *Santri* proved to have characteristics consistent with the nation's educational goals aspired to Indonesia, namely faith, piety, character, health, knowledge, creativity, independence and democracy, and responsible, as mandated by Law no. 20 of 2003.

Character education is a fundamental issue in *Pesantren*. *Santri* was introduced to moral education from an early age, then continued with other problems such as Fiqh, Nahwu Sharaf, and Islamic Dates through learning classical books (*Kitab Kuning*). In this aspect, it has instilled the belief that Allah raised the degree of human knowledge,

اللَّهُ يَرْفَعُ فَنَشْرُوهَا أَنْشُرُوا قِيلَ وَإِذَا لَكُمْ اللَّهُ يَفْسَحُ فَأَفْسَحُوا الْمَجَالِسِ فِي تَفَسَّحُوا لَكُمْ قِيلَ إِذَا ءَامَنُوا الَّذِينَ يَأْتِيهَا  
حَبِيرٌ تَعْمَلُونَ بِمَا وَاللَّهُ ۖ دَرَجَاتٍ الْعِلْمِ أَوْتُوا وَالَّذِينَ مِنْكُمْ ءَامَنُوا الَّذِينَ

*“O believers! When you are asked to make room in your meetings, make room, Allah will make room for you in the Hereafter. And if you are told to rise up, then rise up: Allah will raise to higher ranks those of you who have faith and knowledge. Allah is aware of all your actions.” (Al Mujadalah:11).*

The *Pesantren* education system is unique and complex because it adheres to the principles of 1) Theocentric, 2) devotion, 3) wisdom, 4) simplicity, 5) collaboration, 6) guided freedom, 7) independence and 8) centralized to the Kiai. *Pesantren* has strong traditional resistance, including learning resources using classical books (*Kitab Kuning*), conventional learning models (traditional), and the use of learning *Watonan* and *Sorogan* strategies (Rofik, 2012). Haedari (2004) identified this education system as having an impact; 1) good relationship between *Kiai* and *Santri*, 2) The *Santri's* tradition of obedience to *Kiai*, 3) simple life, 4) independence, 5) create a climate of mutual help and brotherhood, 6) discipline, 7) struggle to achieve goals, and 8) created an atmosphere of high religiosity.

Implementing national education goals as mandated by the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003 has been running for a long time in *Pesantren*, such as 1) character development in the scientific field, 2) morals, and 3) character development in the social field. Haedari (2004) explains that education in *Pesantren* has a role in building and developing the character of *Santri* in the field of science by learning basic Islamic knowledge through the use of classical books (*Kitab Kuning*) as a source of learning. *Santri* have special skills needed to strengthen their understanding of the classical books (*Kitab Kuning*) through rote learning patterns (*Tahfidz*), *hüwar* (deliberation), *mudzakaroh*, *fathul Kitab* (reading the book), *muqaranah* (comparison), and *muhawaran* (speaking practice).

The *pesantren* education system has an essential role in developing character education in the field of morals. *Pesantren* education has the principle of *tafaqquh fiddin* (understanding religion), which aims to build and shape the morality of *Santri* (Yusuf, 2003). Character education in the field of morality is built based on monotheism and the formation of religious *Santries*. Morals to the environment are also taught to *Santri* through habituation to recognize, love, and take advantage of it for the benefit. Yusuf (2003) states that morals towards the environment mean maintaining and preventing environmental damage that impacts humans themselves. Forming a moral character in the environment has brought *Santri* to live with a pattern of loving the environment and becoming a guide later in society.

Pesantren's education in shaping and building the character of *Santri* in the social field aims to strengthen *Santri*'s understanding of the importance of socializing and provide complete awareness of humans as social beings. Rofik (2012) states that Pesantren as religious, educational institutions include the objective reality of society in order to be able to answer the challenges of the times in the future. Haedari (2004) refers to Pesantren as an educational institution with a quality comparable to other educational institutions. Pesantren has an essential role as an agent of social change. Pesantren is a synergy between education and the world of work based on the cultural and social structure of the community.

For the organization's benefit, a leader is a person whom many people embrace in achieving common goals (Apud et al., 2020). The person has authority, power, or influence (Faris, 2015). The study of leadership is significant. On the other hand, the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad with the characteristics of *Sidiq*, *Tabligt*, *Amanah*, and *Fatanah* is only a promotion or lure for the community and people who fantasize about prosperity and entertainment. If not achieved, the leader has declared a failure, or at least primary education to the community on the standard of leadership must be given. Being a leader is not easy. The figure of a leader when carrying out policies, creating progress, and having a positive impact is the desired leader figure and vice versa. Islam wants to progress and change in character. It is natural for Muslims to establish leaders who are capable of spirituality, knowledge, common sense, clean souls, commendable morals, and can understand problems and solve them.

*Pesantren* is a place to foster, shape, and change the character of *Santri*. With an emphasis on aspects of good improvement, training, and heightening the spirit, respecting spiritual and human values. Teach honest and moral attitudes and behaviour and prepare *Santries* to live clean and straightforward hearts (Kiai et al., 2020). The importance of morals in the life of humankind is so crucial that Allah SWT sent his messengers to perfect bad morals because morals are the foundation of Islamic teachings to be used as benchmarks in Islamic teaching as a form of Islamic character. *Kiai* is an essential factor in determining policies and even strategies to address problematic matters.

The role of the *Kiai* in shaping the character of the *Santri* is a very essential and fundamental component. The *Kiai* is the central figure that regulates the continuity of an Islamic boarding school. *Kiai* is the highest policymaker in developing the local wisdom of the *Pesantren* he manages (Faris, 2015). The growth and development of Islamic boarding schools depend on the personal qualities of the *Kiai* himself (Ifendi, 2020). *Kiai* should create a generation of pious Muslims, as Islam teaches to reflect on the Prophets and Ulama continually. In other words, character building is entirely the responsibility of the *Kiai*, where good is a symbol of Islam, the foundation of religion, and becomes the perfection of people who have this trait. There are several roles that *Kiai* plays in empowering his role as an essential person in the formation of the character of his students.

*Kiai* has an essential role in shaping the character of the *Santri* at the Pesantren Nurul Jadid. *Kiai* does not work alone, and there is a role in carrying out the task of translating *Kiai*'s will. The Board of *Pesantren* also contributed significantly in helping *Kiai*'s performance.

According to Sali Aswi:

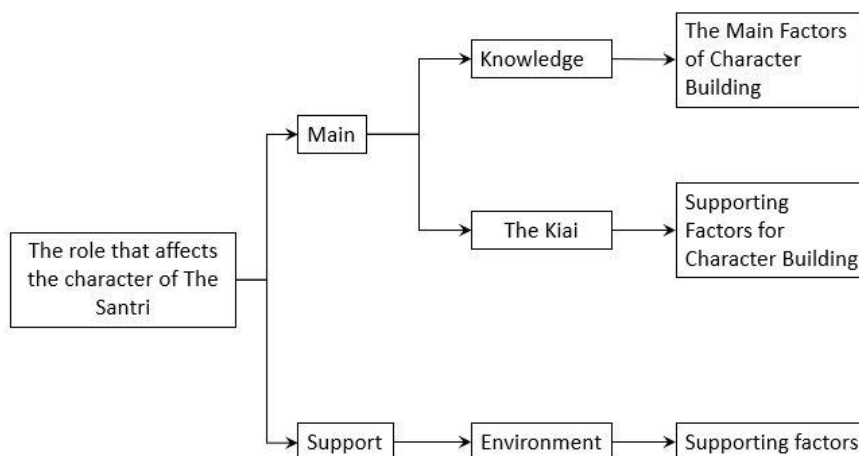
*as one of the Pesantren administrators, Kiai played a significant role in shaping the character of Santri, directly or indirectly. The authority of the Kiai as a central figure in Islamic boarding schools is one of the main factors and becomes the center of attention in creating students with good character (Interview, 2020).*

According to Imdad Rabbani:

*the head of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School Bureau explained that the main factor causing the decline in the students' character was the students' understanding of science, religious education, and technological developments. The Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School makes rules and policies that prohibit the use of technological devices in pesantren, such as smartphones, laptops, and televisions (Interview, 2020).*

Not intending to justify the latest technological developments, Imdad Rabbani sees with a different perspective the impact of information technology developments on the development and character formation of *Santri*. They need *Kiai's* guidance, which can have a significant impact on the behaviour of *Santri* in the future when they come to the community.

The role of *Kiai* leadership in creating the character and morals of the *Santri* is as presented in the following figure.



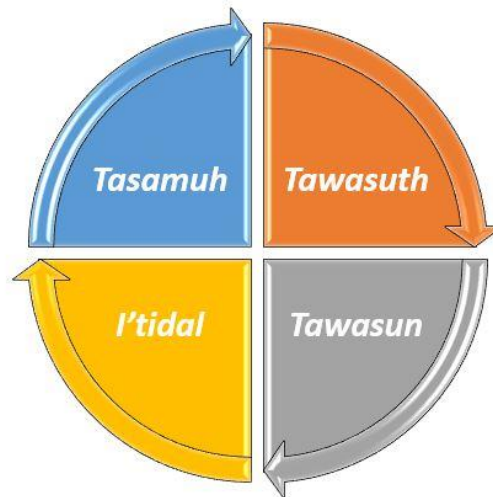
**Figure 1. Kiai's Leadership Role**

In the Sufistic view, the certainty of a person will be *Riyadhah* and *Mujahadah* to achieve *Ihsan*. People who are already *Ihsan* are Sufistic, or Sufism is a necessity (Ainul, 2017), even though *Akhlaqi Sufism*, *Amali Sufism*, or philosophy Until reaching the ranks of *Ihsan* must pass through *Maqamat* and early. Al Ghazali explained the mechanism for gaining inspiration through Sufism (Ansori et al., 2019). After completing this knowledge, the concentration of the Sufi path begins with knowledge and charity (Mollah et al., 2020). It can be seen that one of their characteristics is the knowledge that the learning process cannot achieve, but must be *Dzauq* (feelings), *Hal* (spiritual behaviour), and changes in self-nature (Akmansyah, 2016). The path of purification of the heart that leads to inspiration is called knowledge and charity combined. According to Al-Ghazali, the levels (*maqamat*) must be passed by a Sufi, including repentance, patience, poverty, *Zuhud*, *Tawakal*, and *Ma'rifat*. This *Ma'rifat* then gives *Mahabbah* (love of God) (Ansori et al., 2019). On the other hand, it discusses feelings of getting closer to Allah, about feelings such as *Khauf* (fear), *Ridho*, and sincerity, in the context of worshiping Allah (Istiani & Islamy, 2018). *Hal* or *Ahwal* is a gift, unseen and can only be felt by every person and every Sufi who returns Allah the purpose, motivation, and taste. *Ahwal* itself cannot be attained through effort, desire, or invitation.

In the Sufi view, every *Maqam* has a beginning and an end. Between the two, there is a thing or *Ahwal* (Jannah, Kholid, 2021). Each *Maqam* has a symbol and must be designated through a sign. *Maqam* is longer than *Hal* when it lasts, and *Maqam* is permanent, and *Ahwal* or *Hal* is alternating. *Ahwal* is often encountered in Sufi travel circles, including *Muhasabah* (introspection), *Muraqabah* (alert), *Qarb* (closeness), *Hub* (love), *Khauf* (fear), *Raja'* (hope), *Syauq* (longing), *Uns* (intimate), *Thuma'ninah* (peaceful), *Musyhadah* (witness), and *Yaqin* (belief). People who have *Ihsan*, there is no doubt that they have received the gift of grace.

At the same time, *Iman* and *Islam* have been brought (Akmansyah, 2016). *Ihsan* is obtained when *Ahwal* is serious and organized his heart, and *Istiqamah* with *Riyadhah* and *Mujahadah* (Munirah, 2019). *Ihsan* is people who practice Sufism or study Sufism and try to maintain *Hablumminallah*, *Hablumminnannas*, and *Hablumminalardu* (Rofi et al., 2019). Sufism occupies its position as the actualization of the dimension of *Ihsan*.

Sufism in leadership ideas is often a factor in various conflicts and protests (Rahman, 2011). It is not true that Sufism people hope for a position or something about the world they strive for to love it. Kiai did not do this, but his Sufism was only for himself and was implemented in movements and struggles (Istiani & Islamy, 2018). The concept of Sufistic-based leadership can be described as follows.



**Figure 2. Four Sufistic-based Leadership Concepts**

### **Tawasuth**

Moderate, not extreme, and neutral attitude is another part of Sufistic leadership. This inner Sufi leader is neutral and impartial even though he defends what is correct but does not overthrow what is wrong but tries to be fair and proper. Likewise, at the *Pesantren* Nurul Jadid, the *Kiai* has an attitude as inner leaders who do not defend any interests other than the interests of Santri and Islam.

### **Tawasun**

This Sufi leadership has the nature of trying to reconcile and balance. If the matter is balanced, it means that it is not excessive and fulfilled.

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ

*“Indeed, we have sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and We have sent down with them the Book and the Balance (justice) so that people may act justly. Furthermore, we created iron which has strength, great power, and many benefits for humankind, and that Allah may know who helps (religion) Him and His messenger even though (Allah) does not see it. Verily Allah is Mighty.”*

A balanced attitude in serving (serving), harmonizing *Khidmah* to Allah SWT, and the environment align the past, present, and future interests to be accepted in a group properly and coexist with others. One is encouraged to be assertive. A balanced attitude is an attitude that can respect or prioritize the interests of others without neglecting their interests. By having a balanced attitude, it is hoped that it will not harm others by pushing for one's interests. Assertive attitude, although easy to say but tough to do. When humans have a balanced attitude, their lives will try their best to be helpful and empathize with others without neglecting themselves. The *Kiai* of the *Pesantren* Nurul Jadid has a balanced attitude, serving *Santri* and guests who come to a stop by and consult with him. On the other hand. Sometimes, the *Kiai* at the *Pesantren* Nurul Jadid is assertive while still prioritizing the interests of others.

## ***I'tidal***

This Sufi leadership is almost like Tawassuth. If Tawassuth is in behaviour and personal, while *I'tidal* is more directed at policy, a mediator when conflicts and disputes occur within the *Pesantren*. *Kiai* tries to bridge the gap to understand that the older generation must love the young and respect the old. The *Kiai* also intervened between the *Santri* and the *Abangan* by inviting Muslims to preach peace and gentleness. *Kiai* cares about the unity of the people.

## ***Tasamuh***

Tasamuh is a feature of respecting differences and respecting people who have different life principles. In Sufistic leadership, tolerance is very much required. The relationship between leaders in launching a vision in various views is not the same thing. It is not a problem to launch a vision but a tolerant nature based on *Hablumminnannas*.

## **CONCLUSION**

The leadership of the Sufistic-based *Kiai* at the *Pesantren Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo* in shaping the character of the *Santri* plays a significant role in character change. It is measured by the daily life of the *Kiai*, who reflects the *Uswah* (Modelling) of the *Santri* so that from the decline in moral values, the *Santri* can still set an example of good morals. The leadership of the *Kiai* can shape the character of the *Santri* in the *Pesantren*. Factors that influence the formation of the character of *Santri*, namely: 1) The lack of knowledge, and 2) the development of technology that changes the character of the *Santri* at the *Pesantren Nurul Jadid*.

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