

The Role of Kiai Leadership and Service Quality in Shaping the Reputation of Pesantren

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ABSTRACT. The reputation of a pesantren is closely linked to its Leadership and the quality of its educational services. The Kiai plays a central role as a moral, spiritual, and social leader, while service quality reflects the institution's ability to meet stakeholder expectations. This study aims to examine the influence of the Kiai's figure and service quality on the reputation of Islamic boarding schools, both partially and simultaneously. This study used a quantitative, survey-based approach. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 280 respondents; 224 valid responses were analyzed using simple and multiple regression tests using SPSS. The results of the study indicate that the figure of the kiai has a positive and significant influence on the reputation of Islamic boarding schools, with regression coefficients of 0.563 and 0.521 and a significance value of 0.000. Simultaneously, the figures for Kiai and service quality have a significant influence on the reputation of Islamic boarding schools (Sig. F = 0.000), explaining 41.4% of the variance in their reputation (Adjusted R² = 0.414). The standardized beta coefficient shows that the figure of the kiai ($\beta = 0.448$) has a more dominant influence than service quality ($\beta = 0.368$). The findings suggest that the synergy between strong religious Leadership and high-quality educational services shapes a pesantren's reputation. Therefore, strengthening the role of the kiai, along with continuous improvement in service quality, is crucial to maintaining the pesantren's reputation.

Keywords: *Kiai Figure, Service Quality, Pesantren Reputation, Islamic Boarding School*

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, known for its cosmopolitan and religious population, Islamic boarding schools shape personalities and spread Islamic religious beliefs. According to Islamic beliefs, Islamic boarding schools systematically shape personalities and develop high-quality people (Malisi et al., 2024; Mujahid, 2021) (Ihsan et al., 2025; Safriadi et al., 2023). (Assa'idi, 2021) stated that Islamic boarding schools are places for religious teaching and agents of social change that build society. Kiai are important because they set an example for students and society (Ma'arif et al., 2025; Marzuki, 2023; Sartika et al., 2025). Kiai are praised for their visionary leadership, intelligence in dealing with social problems, and theological knowledge (Arif et al., 2024; Saharani & Diana, 2024; Sary et al., 2024; Yuliana et al., 2025) (Fauzah & Faizi, 2024; Wahyudin et al., 2024). Due to economic globalization, society's expectations of the excellence of pesantren have changed. Thus, strengthening the reputation of Pesantren is both an opportunity and a challenge for their survival in society.

Pesantren, a traditional Islamic school, has long shaped Indonesian society, culture, and religion (Abas et al., 2025; Hasan et al., 2024; Muzayana, 2024; Rohmad et al., 2024). Pesantren contains complex Islamic leadership, learning, and culture (Aini et al., 2021; Suwendi et al., 2024; Zamroni et al., 2023). Kiai, a key figure in the pesantren community, provides moral and spiritual guidance (Roqib, 2021), his charm is the most significant determinant of popular confidence (Islamic et al., 2024). Along with this, the quality of pesantren services, which includes the dimensions of education quality (Efendi, 2022), management of facilities (Suro & Anggraeni, 2024; Wahyudin et al., 2024), and social interaction (Ataman et al., 2024), is also a topic that is often studied in various studies (Rodliyah et al., 2024).

Pesantren have a special connection with the surrounding community environment and are difficult to separate (Irawan, 2022; Kardi et al., 2023; Miftahuddin et al., 2024; Suwendi et al., 2024; Widiana et al., 2023). The issues faced by pesantren and the advancement of modernity are inherently interconnected with these processes. (Mujahid, 2021) asserted that pesantren must enhance, adapt, and synergize with all beneficial and pertinent traditions and fundamentals about contemporary circumstances. In the progression of a more modern era, pesantren encounter novel obstacles in preserving their significance and reputation within society (Khoiri & Aryati, 2021; Malisi et al., 2024). As the oldest Islamic educational institution, (F. Rohman, 2022) conveyed that pesantren is an educational model that is as old as the existence of Islam in Indonesia; it has explicitly survived and even developed to this day. So, to develop Islamic boarding schools, a young generation is needed who can advance the country or nation.

This raises a research gap, which indicates that previous papers discuss aspects of leadership separately without comprehensively explaining how the two factors affect each other. This research is a novelty in terms of a comprehensive approach that relates the role of kiai leadership and service quality to public perception of Pesantren. Thus, this research makes a theoretical contribution and offers practical implications for managing pesantren in the future.

This study aims to analyze the extent to which the figure of the kiai and the quality of pesantren services affect the improvement of the image of the Nurul Jadid Paiton Islamic Boarding School in the eyes of the public. This paper argues that combining kiai figures with superior service quality can create a positive perception of pesantren as an educational institution relevant to the public in the global era. The research hypothesis is whether the figure of the kiai and the quality of service have a significant influence on the image of the Pesantren. The research is expected to provide an original contribution to the importance of synergy between the figure of the kiai spiritually and the quality of service in building the reputation of the Pesantren that can last in the long term.

METHOD

Research Framework

To find out how much influence the figure of the kiai and the quality of service as the research objective have on the pesantren reputation. The kiai figure is the pesantren leader's moral and spiritual strength (Karim et al., 2022). The level of success offered is based on the quality of service in terms of facilities, administration, teaching, and student services (Efendi, 2022; Muthoifin et al., 2024).

The main variables in this study are Kiai figure (X1), service quality (X2), and the image or reputation of the Pesantren (Y). The idea that Kiai leadership and first-rate services cooperate to improve Pesantren's reputation guides the interaction among these factors. Linking these factors, the conceptual framework suggests that the Kiai figure and service quality directly influence the image of the institution (Y) (see Figure 1). Studies indicate that good leadership is essential for the

delivery of services and that it can improve the quality of given ones. Consequently, the organization's public image is projected to be dually affected by Kiai leadership and service quality.

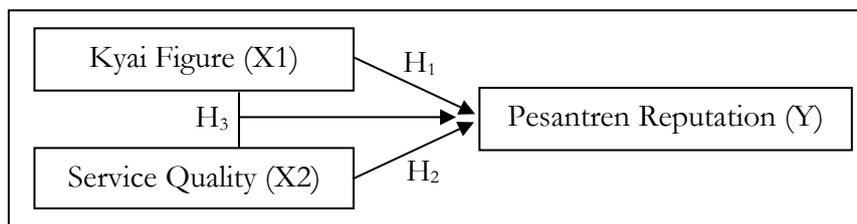


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

The hypotheses in this study assume that both the kiai figure and service quality play significant roles in shaping the reputation of pesantren. H1 posits that the kiai figure positively influences the pesantren's reputation, highlighting the importance of the kiai's moral and spiritual Leadership in enhancing the institution's image. H2 suggests that service quality, encompassing facilities, administration, teaching, and student services, also positively influences the pesantren's reputation, underscoring the critical role of high-quality services in stakeholder satisfaction. Finally, H3 asserts that both the kiai figure and service quality, when considered together, positively influence the pesantren's reputation, indicating that the synergy between effective Leadership and high-quality services is essential for strengthening the institution's public image.

Research Design

To measure the magnitude of Kiai's and service quality on the pesantren reputation at Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, this study uses a quantitative method with a descriptive type. The descriptive quantitative approach is a research method that can refer to reality, symptoms, or phenomena that are consistent, concrete, observable, measurable, and causal. In the design of the approach and data collection, researchers seek information about existing symptoms as material for making research results (Ghanad, 2023).

Research Variables

The variables of this study consist of independent variables, namely Kiai Figure (X1) and Service Quality (X2). The dependent variable is the Pesantren reputation (Y). The operational definition of variable X1 is related to the figure of kiai, and variable X2 is associated with the quality of service to improve the reputation of the pesantren. Research variables are elements or concepts that can be measured, observed, or controlled to understand the relationship between the studied elements or phenomena (Plonsky & Gass, 2011).

Respondents and Instruments and Data Collection

The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with an error rate of 0.05 (Mulisa, 2022). From 280 distributed questionnaires involving active students, alumni, and students' guardians at Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, 224 valid responses met the criteria and were used for data analysis (see Table 1). The research instrument used was a questionnaire containing 20 items using a Likert scale with values of 1-5. Variable X1 comprises eight items, while variable X2 consists of six things. The Y variable includes six components. Each variable X1, X2, and Y employs a score to perform the statistical computation. The instruments used in this investigation are delineated in the subsequent Table 2. Data was collected by sending online questionnaires to respondents through Google Forms, which were distributed through groups and/or personal messages with WhatsApp and Telegram.

Table 1 Respondent Characteristics

Respondent Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Active Students	112	50.0%
Alumni	67	29.9%
Students' Guardians	45	20.1%
Total	224	100.0%

Table 2 Research Instruments

Dimension	Indicator	Questionnaire
Kiai Figure	Kiai Leadership	1,2,3
	Kiai's Character and Integrity	4,5
	Kiai's involvement in Islamic boarding school activities	6,7,8
Quality of Service	Quality of Educational Facilities	9,10,11
	Curriculum and Teaching Quality	12,13
	Administrative and Communication Services	14
Pesantren Reputation	General perception of Islamic boarding schools	15,16
	Attraction and Satisfaction	17,18
	The Influence of Kiai Figures and Service Quality on the Image of Pesantren	19,20

Data Analysis

After all data were collected via Google Forms, they were summarized to produce raw data for statistical analysis. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 25, including regression analyses (Duckett, 2021). Instrument testing was divided into two parts: validity and reliability. Validity testing aimed to assess the questionnaire's validity. Meanwhile, reliability testing aimed to measure the stability of the questionnaire's measurements and the consistency of respondents' responses.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics

Variabel	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Kiai Figure (X1)	224	3,10	5,00	4,32	0,48
Service Quality (X2)	224	2,95	5,00	4,18	0,52
Pesantren Reputation (Y)	224	3,20	5,00	4,25	0,50
Valid N (listwise)	224				

Table 3, the kiai figure (X1) shows a very positive and homogeneous perception ($M = 4.32$; $SD = 0.48$), service quality (X2) is perceived as good to very good ($M = 4.18$; $SD = 0.52$), and pesantren reputation (Y) is evaluated as strong and positive ($M = 4.25$; $SD = 0.50$). The relatively low standard deviations indicate minimal variability, confirming the data's suitability for inferential analysis. This confirms that the questionnaire items were completed correctly and are suitable for further statistical analysis.

Table 4 Validity Test

Item No.	Corrected Item– Total Correlation	r-table ($\alpha = 0.05$)	Validity
X1.1	0,612	0.130	Valid
X1.2	0,645	0.130	Valid
X1.3	0,589	0.130	Valid
X1.4	0,671	0.130	Valid
X1.5	0,704	0.130	Valid
X1.6	0,558	0.130	Valid
X1.7	0,632	0.130	Valid
X1.8	0,686	0.130	Valid
X2.1	0,593	0.130	Valid
X2.2	0,628	0.130	Valid
X2.3	0,661	0.130	Valid
X2.4	0,574	0.130	Valid
X2.5	0,690	0.130	Valid

X2.6	0,647	0.130	Valid
Y1	0,622	0.130	Valid
Y2	0,654	0.130	Valid
Y3	0,681	0.130	Valid
Y4	0,596	0.130	Valid
Y5	0,708	0.130	Valid
Y6	0,667	0.130	Valid

Table 4, the item validity test was conducted using the Corrected Item–Total Correlation method. The results indicate that all 20 questionnaire items have correlation coefficients exceeding the r-table value (0.130), confirming that each item is valid and appropriate for measuring the research variables. The One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was conducted to assess the normality of the data in Table 5.

Table 5 Normality Test
One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Kiai Figure	Quality of Service	Pesantren Reputation
N		224	224	224
Normal Parameters ^a	Mean	4.32	4.18	4.25
	Std. Deviation	0.48	0.52	0.50
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0.061	0.058	0.055
	Positive	0.044	0.042	0.039
	Negative	-0.061	-0.058	-0.055
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		0.061	0.058	0.055
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		0.082	0.094	0.121

a. Test distribution is Normal.

Table 5 shows that the kiai figure variable (X1) has a significance value of 0.082, the service quality variable (X2) of 0.094, and the pesantren reputation variable (Y) of 0.121. All significance values are greater than 0.05, so it can be concluded that the data for each variable is normally distributed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Influence of The Kiai Figure on The Pesantren Reputation

Hypothesis 1 tests whether there is a positive influence of Kiai Figures on the reputation of pesantren. Simple regression tests are used to determine the influence between independent variables on dependent variables. The test aims to determine the extent to which perceptions of leadership and exemplary behavior of kiai can influence the image and reputation of Pesantren with the analysis results in Table 6.

Table 6 The Influence of the Kiai Figure on the Pesantren reputation
Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.124	0.211		5.331	0.000
Kiai Figure (X1)	0.563	0.057	0.610	9.874	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Pesantren Reputation (Y)
Source: SPSS 25 Primary Data Processing

Table 6, The kiai figure variable (X1) shows a regression coefficient value of 0.563 with a significance value of 0.000, which is smaller than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the kiai figure has a positive and significant influence on the reputation of the Islamic boarding school. The coefficient value indicates that every increase in perception of the kiai figure will be followed by an increase in the reputation of the Islamic boarding school. Thus, H1 is accepted, which means that the kiai figure has an important role in shaping and strengthening the reputation of the Islamic boarding school in the eyes of students, alumni, and guardians of students.

The Influence of Service Quality on The Pesantren Reputation

Hypothesis 2 examines the positive impact of service quality on pesantren reputation. The researcher employed a simple regression analysis to evaluate the hypothesis. Furthermore, it will determine the existence of a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables, thus utilizing linear regression analysis for the evaluation.

Table 7 The Effect of Service Quality on Pesantren reputation
Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.032	0.207		4.982	0.000
Service Quality (X2)	0.521	0.058	0.575	8.916	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Pesantren Reputation (Y)
Source: SPSS 25 Primary Data Processing

Table 7 show that the service quality variable (X2) has a regression coefficient of 0.521 with a significance value of 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05. This finding indicates that service quality has a positive and significant effect on the reputation of Islamic boarding schools. This means that the better the service quality perceived by respondents, the higher the reputation of the Islamic boarding school formed. Therefore, H2 is accepted, which confirms that service quality is an important factor in building the image and public trust in Islamic boarding schools.

The Influence of Kiai Figures and Service Quality on Pesantren Reputation

The assumption that there is a positive influence between the figure of the kiai and the quality of service on pesantren reputation is the aim of hypothesis 3. To test, a multiple regression test was used; multiple regression tests predict how two or more independent variables affect bound variables.

Table 8 The Influence of Kiai Figures and Service Quality on Pesantren Reputation
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Reputation	(Constant)	0.842	0.213		3.951	0.000
	Figure Kiai (X1)	0.412	0.058	0.448	7.103	0.000
	Service Quality (X2)	0.356	0.061	0.368	5.836	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Pesantren Reputation (Y)
Source: SPSS 25 Primary Data Processing

Table 8 presents the results of multiple linear regression analysis with a significance value of 0.000 obtained from the F test, which is smaller than 0.05. This indicates that the figure of the kiai and service quality simultaneously have a significant effect on the reputation of the Islamic boarding school. Partially, the figure of the kiai has a beta coefficient value of 0.448, while the quality of service has a beta coefficient value of 0.368, which indicates that the figure of the kiai has a more dominant influence than the quality of service. Therefore, it can be concluded that H3

is accepted with the combination of kiai leadership and good service quality being the main factors in strengthening the reputation of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School.

The results of the hypothesis test showed that the figure of kiai (H1) and the quality of service (H2) respectively had a positive and significant influence on the reputation of the pesantren. Partially, the kiai figure has a regression coefficient of 0.563 with a significance value of 0.000, which confirms that the kiai figure is the main factor in forming a positive perception of the pesantren. The kiai figure not only plays the role of a religious leader, but also as a symbol of the belief and social legitimacy of the Islamic boarding school. Meanwhile, the quality of service also showed a significant influence on the reputation of the pesantren with a regression coefficient of 0.521 and a significance value of 0.000. The improvement in the quality of services felt by students, alumni, and guardians of students will have a direct impact on strengthening the reputation of the pesantren.

Table 9 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.651	0.424	0.414	0.487

a. Predictors: (Constant), Kiai Figure (X1), Service Quality (X2)

b. Dependent Variable: Pesantren Reputation (Y)

Source: SPSS 25 Primary Data Processing

Simultaneous hypothesis testing showed that kiai figures and service quality together had a significant effect on the reputation of the pesantren with an F test significance value of 0.000 and an Adjusted R² value of 0.414. This means that 41.4% of the variation in pesantren reputation can be explained by a combination of kiai figures and service quality, while the rest is influenced by other factors outside the research model (see Table 9). The standardized beta coefficient value showed that the kiai figure ($\beta = 0.448$) had a more dominant influence than the quality of service ($\beta = 0.368$) comparatively. The findings indicate that although the quality of service is an important factor in the modern institutional context, the role of kiai figures remains the main foundation in shaping the reputation of the pesantren. The results of the analysis confirm that the reputation of the pesantren is built through the synergy between strong kiai leadership and the implementation of quality educational services, so both need to be managed in an ongoing manner to increase the competitiveness and public trust in the pesantren.

Discussion

The pesantren's shape and preservation depend on Kiai's leadership and role model. (Mujahid, 2021) Integrity, leadership, and Kiai involvement in Pesantren events shape community perceptions. This is because competent and honest kiai usually reflect the education and values of the Pesantren (Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020; Muhammad et al., 2024). Because of this, Islamic boarding schools' reputations are often related to Kiai's.

The Kiai is a spiritual leader and social and cultural advisor. The Kiai, known for his moral leadership and theological understanding, inspires students and symbolizes strength (Hikmatul Hidayah et al., 2024; Karim et al., 2022). The public's impression of the Kiai's leadership influences the reputation of the Islamic boarding school. Morality, communication, spirituality, and charm determine the Kiai's personality. The Kiai's request strengthens public trust in the Islamic boarding school, thus influencing him. Because it determines the vision and direction of the pesantren, the Kiai can influence public opinion (Daulay et al., 2024; Ezzani et al., 2023).

The spiritual and moral leader of the Islamic boarding school, the Kiai, builds the reputation of the Islamic boarding school by following Muslim ideals. (Rahtikawatie et al., 2021) found that public trust in pesantren influences the attractiveness and reputation. The Kiai can create an atmosphere that can improve the reputation, thereby improving the quality of education (Baharun et al., 2025) (Elice et al., 2025; Sugandi et al., 2025). Because it influenced the reputation of the

pesantren, the leadership style of the kiai became very important. The management and reputation of the pesantren cannot be separated from the kiai.

The kiai figure shapes the pesantren's image and reputation (Asror et al., 2023; Baharun et al., 2023). As spiritual and educational leaders, kiai manage religious and academic activities and embody pesantren values and customs. Outside the classroom, the kiai shapes the pesantren's vision of the neighbourhood and society (Bahri et al., 2024; Hadi, 2023). Islamic boarding schools will grow as study and moral development centres due to the Kiai's respect for intellect and piety (Budiharso et al., 2023; Safitri, 2024). Thus, pesantren run by reputable kiais are considered more respectable and credible. Thus, they attract students and families seeking an Islamic education. This dynamic shows the kiai's role in maintaining and improving the pesantren's image and the necessity of leadership in teaching.

Public perception and reputation of pesantrens depend on service quality. (Williams & Tierney, 2023) state that an institution's infrastructure, quality of education, and administrative services directly influence the views of students, parents, and the community towards an institution. A pesantren improves learning by providing modern facilities, a well-organized curriculum that meets current challenges, and professional leadership. A well-rounded education helps students succeed academically and socially. This education teaches faith, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving.

Islamic boarding schools' service quality is essential to their image. Thus, service quality is how well a service meets or exceeds service users' expectations—parents and students. Service quality includes dependability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Islamic boarding schools demonstrate this service character in their instruction, facilities, and teacher-student interactions (Budiharso et al., 2023; A. Rohman & Muhtamiroh, 2022) (Safrida et al., 2025; Taufikin & Nurhayati, 2025). How instructional materials are offered, the availability of learning facilities, and how the Islamic boarding school meets students' emotional and spiritual needs also determine its quality (Purwanto & Wafa, 2023; Sanjani et al., 2024). Therefore, good service quality helps Islamic boarding schools improve their reputation and offer themselves to society.

Service quality is linked to the disconfirmation model in management theory, which states that consumer happiness depends on how well the service experience meets expectations. (Muhammad et al., 2024) found that good service improves user satisfaction and corporate brand. Poor service at Islamic boarding schools can diminish parents' and students' happiness, hurting their reputation (Karim et al., 2022; Thohir, 2024). High-quality service can improve Islamic boarding schools' public image academically and non-academically (Utama & Akbar, 2023; Zaini & Fahmi, 2023). Thus, the lack of studies linking Islamic boarding school quality to arbitrary factors like Kiai's impact weakens the study. In conclusion, service quality affects Islamic boarding schools' image, but further research is needed to examine other factors.

Islamic boarding schools' image is shaped by pesantren services, including administrative services, curriculum quality, and educational institutions, according to (Efendi, 2022). Good service can boost student and parent satisfaction and the public's view of Islamic boarding schools. Good service quality as good facilities, educational methods, and administration. All of these aspects promote the pesantren's image (Onia & Hussien, 2024) (Khomairoh et al., 2025) (Hidayati et al., 2025) (Ulfa & Hina, 2025). The impression of Islamic boarding schools' excellence by students and society determines their service quality.

Kiai Figure and Islamic boarding school services are crucial to the community's reputation. Kiai and his spiritual leadership manage Islamic boarding schools, ensuring service quality. For instance, a sensible and motivated Kiai often guarantees that educational services and facilities meet realistic requirements (Ridlo & Yanti, 2024; Supriani et al., 2023) (Hidayah et al., 2024; Saleha, 2023). Kiai Figure and service quality are interconnected and impact one other to improve Islamic boarding

schools' image. This blend emphasizes honesty, concern, and student well-being in school management. A visionary leader, Kiai would increase service quality and the pesantren reputation.

Leadership and service marketing theory applies; this notion states that a capable leader affects an organization's performance and service quality (Hilton et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2021)(Ilmani et al., 2024). (Futaqi & Mashuri, 2022) indicated that Islamic boarding schools with strong Kiai leadership provide better services to their students. Islamic boarding schools' success depends on the Kiai and how he works with the teaching team to provide the best service (Rahtikawatie et al., 2021; Rohmad et al., 2024). (Suryadi et al., 2024) suggest that Kiai's commitment to quality service, including facility improvements and staff training, directly impacts the public perception of the Pesantren. Research the gap in how Kiai leadership and spirituality interact with service quality to cultivating a favourable pesantren reputation.

Both the Kiai figure and the service quality boost Islamic boarding schools' reputations in complementary ways. As a spiritual and intellectual leader, the Kiai persona is crucial to Islamic boarding school moral and intellectual development (Alfarisi & Nuvi, 2021; Purhasanah, 2024). The quality of services, including education, facilities, and pesantren administration, also shapes public impressions. Parents and the community will value parents with a creative, relevant curriculum, proper facilities, and efficient management (Astuti et al., 2024; Gupta et al., 2022). Not only are Islamic boarding schools centres of religious education, but they also create graduates with skills that match the times (Mundiri & Muthmainnah, 2021). Islamic boarding schools can do both because of the authoritative Kiai figure and good service quality. Due to Kiai's leadership and service quality, Islamic boarding schools are depicted more accurately.

This study supports the idea that the leadership of the Kiai creates a good learning environment, which improves pesantren education. According to (Akrim & Umiarso, 2023), Kiai's charisma and dominance create a pleasant work atmosphere, which boosts instructors' job satisfaction and confidence. In addition to Kiai's main role, the quality of services determines whether pesantren try to improve their reputation.

The research findings contribute theoretically to the development of Islamic education management studies, particularly in the context of pesantren. The findings confirm that the reputation of Islamic boarding schools is shaped not only by structural and systemic aspects, but also by the personal and symbolic dimensions inherent in the figure of the kiai. The significant influence of service quality on the reputation of pesantren enriches the literature on the theory of service quality in religious-based educational institutions, which shows that service dimensions such as facilities, administration, learning processes, and student services remain relevant even though Islamic boarding schools are rooted in classical educational traditions. Practically, the research findings provide strategic recommendations for Islamic boarding school managers in efforts to improve the reputation of the institution. The synergy between strong kiai leadership and the provision of quality educational services is expected to build the reputation of Islamic boarding schools sustainably and expand public trust in Islamic boarding schools as superior Islamic educational institutions that are relevant to the needs of the times.

CONCLUSION

The figure of the kiai (Islamic boarding school) and the quality of services are strategic factors in shaping the reputation of Islamic boarding schools. Research findings indicate that strong kiai leadership, characterized by moral exemplarity, charisma, and spiritual legitimacy, has a dominant influence on the perception of a boarding school's reputation. Furthermore, the quality of educational services, including facilities, administration, the learning process, and student services, also contributes significantly to strengthening the institution's image. The results of this study indicate that the reputation of an Islamic boarding school is built through the synergy between the values of traditional leadership and the application of professional educational service principles.

Therefore, these findings can be generalized to a limited extent to Islamic boarding schools with similar institutional characteristics.

However, this study has limitations that should be considered: the use of a quantitative approach based on respondents' perceptions has the potential to introduce subjective bias, and the research model does not fully capture all factors that can influence an Islamic boarding school's reputation. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the research variables, employ a mixed-methods approach, and involve a more diverse research population to increase the generalizability of the findings. The research results recommend the importance of strengthening the role of the kiai figure as a representation of the values and identity of Islamic boarding schools, as well as improving the quality of educational services on an ongoing basis so that the reputation of Islamic boarding schools can be maintained and developed in accordance with the demands of society and the dynamics of Islamic education.

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