

THE LEADERSHIP MODEL OF KH IMAM BARMAWI BURHAN IN PRESERVING ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the leadership model of KH Imam Barmawi Burhan (KHIBB) in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of leadership practices within the pesantren context. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, and were analyzed using an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and systematic conclusion drawing. The findings reveal four key elements of KHIBB's leadership model in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan: (1) the model of preserving Islamic traditions; (2) strategies for maintaining Islamic traditions amid modernization; (3) the utilization of technological media in disseminating Islamic traditions; and (4) the formation of students' Islamic character. In terms of the preservation model, KHIBB emphasizes religious routines, including congregational prayers, veneration of the Qur'an, and the recitation of *shalawat*. This leadership model demonstrates the integration of preserving religious traditions, adapting to technological developments, and fostering moderate religious character among students. This study contributes to the development of Islamic educational leadership studies by highlighting the crucial role of *kiai* leadership in sustaining Islamic traditions within pesantren while maintaining their relevance in the face of contemporary societal changes.

Keywords: *kiai* leadership, preservation of Islamic traditions, pesantren, Islam Nusantara, Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis model kepemimpinan KHIBB dalam melestarikan tradisi Islam di PPI Nurul Burhan. Penelitian ini menggunakan

pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang mendalam mengenai praktik kepemimpinan dalam konteks pesantren. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan kesimpulan secara sistematis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat empat unsur model kepemimpinan KHIBB dalam melestarikan tradisi Islam di PPI Nurul Burhan, yakni 1) model pelestarian tradisi Islam; 2) strategi dalam menjaga kelestarian tradisi Islam di tengah modernisasi; 3) pemanfaatan media teknologi dalam menyiarkan tradisi Islam; dan 4) pembentukan karakter Islami. Dalam konteks model pelestarian tradisi Islam, KHIBB menekankan rutinitas, yakni sholat berjamaah, mengangungkan Al-Qur'an, dan pembacaan sholawat. Model kepemimpinan ini memperlihatkan integrasi antara pelestarian tradisi keagamaan, adaptasi terhadap perkembangan teknologi, dan pembentukan karakter religius yang moderat. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada penguatan kajian kepemimpinan pendidikan Islam dengan menegaskan pentingnya peran kepemimpinan kiai dalam menjaga keberlanjutan tradisi Islam di pesantren sekaligus menjadikannya tetap relevan dalam menghadapi perubahan zaman.

Kata kunci: kepemimpinan kiai, pelestarian tradisi Islam, pesantren, Islam Nusantara, Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah

A. INTRODUCTION

Leadership in Islamic educational institutions does not merely function as an administrative mechanism; it also operates as a cultural force that shapes the continuity of value transmission, scholarly authority, and religious practices within Muslim societies (Siregar et al., 2023; Azzuhri & Nuha, 2024; Sari & Sunhaji, 2025; Alwiyah et al., 2025; and Prahara et al., 2026). In the context of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), the *kiai* holds a strategic position as a spiritual leader, educational guide, and agent of the reproduction of Islamic traditions that are sustained through the *sanad* system, ritual practices, and the formation of students' character. Thus, *pesantren* are not merely educational institutions, but also socio-cultural spaces that maintain the continuity of Islamic traditions across generations (Dhofier, 2011 and Lukens-Bull, 2010).

Social changes resulting from globalization, the modernization of education, and the penetration of digital technology present new challenges for the sustainability of Islamic traditions in *pesantren* (Adnan & Susilo, 2025; Nuryana et al., 2025; Zainul et al., 2025; and Cholid et al., 2026). The transformation of youth values, shifts in patterns of religious authority, and the increasing rationalization of education require leadership models capable of balancing the preservation of tradition with adaptation to social change (Azra, 2015 and Hefner, 2009). In such circumstances, the ability of *pesantren* to maintain their traditional identity often depends on the leadership capacity of the *kiai* to manage change without losing religious and cultural legitimacy (Ghafar, 2022 and Al-Mada et al.,

2025). Studies on Islamic educational leadership indicate that pesantren leadership possesses distinctive characteristics that combine charismatic, moral, and pedagogical dimensions. Unlike modern bureaucratic leadership models, the leadership of the *kiai* is grounded in scholarly authority, personal example, and strong emotional relationships between teachers and students (Bush & Glover, 2014; Raihani, 2012). However, previous studies have largely focused on the general typology of pesantren leadership, while research that examines in depth the practices of individual leadership in the context of preserving Islamic traditions remains relatively limited.

This phenomenon becomes particularly interesting when observed in the leadership practices of KH Imam Barmawi Burhan (KHIBB) at Pondok Pesantren Islam (PPI) Nurul Burhan. Amid the dynamics of modernization in Islamic education, this pesantren continues to maintain traditions of *turats*-based learning, the strengthening of students' ethical conduct (*adab*), and collective religious practices rooted in the tradition of *Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah*. The continuity of these traditions indicates the presence of a leadership model that is not merely conservative but also adaptive capable of integrating the continuity of tradition with contemporary social needs. This perspective aligns with the view that tradition within pesantren is a dynamic construct continuously reproduced through social practices and institutional leadership (Daun & Arjmand, 2021; Tan, 2014). The urgency of this study lies in the need to develop a conceptual model of pesantren leadership that can empirically explain the mechanisms for preserving Islamic traditions. In the context of cultural disruption and rapid social change, the preservation of tradition should not be understood merely as resistance to change, but rather as a process of creative negotiation between inherited scholarly traditions and emerging social realities (Asad, 2009; Zaman, 2012). Therefore, analyzing concrete leadership practices becomes essential to understanding how Islamic traditions continue to live and remain relevant in contemporary society.

To date, no study has specifically examined the transformational leadership of KHIBB in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan. Nevertheless, several previous studies are relevant to the focus of this research. Studies on transformational leadership have been conducted by Bass and Riggio (2006), Bashori (2019), Khoirunnisa' and Maunah (2021), and Islamiati et al. (2025). Bass and Riggio (2006) explain that transformational leadership refers to a leadership style oriented toward the ability to inspire, motivate, and encourage positive change through a clear vision, effective communication, and moral example. This concept has subsequently been widely adopted in the context of Islamic educational institutions to explain how leaders are able to maintain while simultaneously developing traditional values.

Bashori (2019) highlights the role of the *kyai* as a transformative leader within pesantren. The study identifies four main dimensions of the *kyai's* transformational leadership: (1) charismatic leadership, in which the *kyai* becomes

a role model for followers; (2) inspirational motivation, referring to the ability to inspire and motivate members of the pesantren community toward shared goals; (3) intellectual stimulation, which encourages the emergence of new ideas and innovations for institutional development; and (4) individualized consideration, reflecting the *kya'i*'s openness to listening to aspirations and input from others for the advancement of the educational organization. Similarly, Khoirunnisa' and Maunah (2021) argue that transformational leadership characteristics in both traditional and modern pesantren include: (1) developing creative ideas through a clear vision and mission while serving as a role model for subordinates; (2) providing inspiration and motivation oriented toward collective goals; (3) encouraging members to identify effective solutions to institutional challenges; and (4) paying attention to the needs, achievements, and personal development of followers. Meanwhile, Islamiati et al. (2025) emphasize the strategic role of *ulama* in promoting the concept of *Islam Nusantara* as an inclusive and moderate Islamic perspective capable of responding to the challenges of globalization.

On the other hand, studies on *Islam Nusantara* have been widely conducted by Luthfi (2016), Bilfagih (2016), Susanto and Karimullah (2016), Ghofur (2021), and Amtiran and Kriswibowo (2024). Luthfi (2016) found that *Islam Nusantara* employs eight approaches that position Islam as a dialogical force interacting constructively with local culture. Bilfagih (2016) emphasizes the role of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in preserving national cultural heritage from the pressures of globalization through the framework of *Islam Nusantara*. Furthermore, Susanto and Karimullah (2016) demonstrate that *Islam Nusantara* represents a medium for presenting a moderate and tolerant face of Islam, while also functioning as an antithesis to transnational Islamic movements characterized by puritan and scripturalist tendencies. Ghofur (2021) argues that Islam in the Indonesian archipelago developed through an accommodative approach toward pre-existing local cultures, resulting in distinctive forms of Islamic expression in different regions. Thus, these studies collectively highlight the significance of transformational leadership within Islamic education and the relevance of *Islam Nusantara* as a religious identity characterized by moderation, tolerance, and strong cultural roots. However, research that specifically connects these two aspects through the leadership of KHIBB in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan has not yet been conducted.

Amtiran and Kriswibowo (2024) further find that: (1) religious moderation is understood as a principle of justice, balance, and tolerance that plays an essential role in preventing conflict and maintaining harmony in multicultural societies; (2) religious leadership holds a strategic role in promoting moderation through inclusive religious education, the cultivation of tolerance, and interfaith dialogue; (3) interreligious dialogue is increasingly necessary to foster mutual understanding, respect religious freedom, and strengthen tolerance through open and constructive engagement; and (4) integrating the values of religious moderation into educational curricula is crucial for shaping a moderate younger

generation and supporting the development of harmonious multicultural societies. These findings emphasize that *Islam Nusantara* embodies values of moderation, tolerance, and local wisdom, creating a balanced relationship between Islam and culture.

Meanwhile, research specifically concerning KHIBB has been conducted by Musholli (2019) and Fadlilah (2022). Musholli (2019) finds that KHIBB serves as a primary source (*mashādir*) and inspiration for the growth and development of education. KHIBB carefully interprets these dynamics and formulates an ideal educational concept that he implements at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Bondowoso by positioning education as inseparable from the values of the Qur'an. Fadlilah (2022), on the other hand, shows that KHIBB's policies have produced significant positive impacts on the development of the madrasah. These include the transformation of MAN Bondowoso through the integration of pesantren culture, the implementation of gender-separated areas for male and female students, the infaq program, the discipline and cleanliness movement (*IDB*), the Religious Field Practice Program (*PKLA*) aimed at strengthening Islamic character formation, as well as programs emphasizing greetings, social bonding, congregational prayer, and Qur'anic engagement (*S3Q*). Collectively, these studies highlight KHIBB's policies, educational concepts, and inspirational role in advancing madrasah education in Bondowoso.

Based on the review of previous studies, no research has been found that specifically examines the transformational leadership of KHIBB in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan. This study offers a novelty that distinguishes it from earlier research on leadership and Islamic education. The focus of this research is directed specifically toward the figure of KHIBB at PPI Nurul Burhan, a charismatic local leader who has received limited attention in academic scholarship. Through his leadership, he not only performs managerial functions but also plays a visionary role in preserving Islamic values within the pesantren environment. This aspect becomes an important contribution because most previous studies have primarily emphasized the general concept of transformational leadership without sufficiently considering local contexts and cultural wisdom.

This research introduces novelty through an in-depth analysis of KHIBB's leadership model in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan. Unlike previous studies that tend to focus on managerial aspects or the institutional modernization of pesantren, this study places the preservation of Islamic traditions as the central focus of leadership practices. The leadership model implemented by KHIBB is not merely oriented toward institutional management, but also toward the transmission of values, the strengthening of Islamic identity, and the internalization of pesantren traditions in the daily lives of students. The novelty of this study lies in emphasizing that KHIBB's leadership functions as a bridge between the continuity of Islamic traditions and contemporary social dynamics. Through personal example, a strong religious vision, and systematic

mentoring strategies, he is able to maintain the continuity of religious practices, the culture of ethical conduct (*adab*), and the *turats*-based learning system at PPI Nurul Burhan. Therefore, the leadership examined in this study is not only administrative but also cultural and ideological in nature, as it is oriented toward the reproduction of values and the resilience of tradition.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the scholarship on pesantren leadership by presenting a contextual model grounded in empirical practice. From a practical perspective, the findings provide a concrete illustration of how a *kiai* integrates scholarly authority, moral example, and institutional strategies to sustain Islamic traditions so that they remain alive, relevant, and sustainable amid social change. Consequently, this study represents a relatively new contribution to the field and thus warrants scholarly attention. Based on this background, the study aims to analyze the leadership model of KHIBB in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan. Specifically, it seeks to answer three main research questions: (1) what are the characteristics of the leadership model implemented; (2) what leadership strategies are employed to maintain the sustainability of Islamic traditions; and (3) how does this leadership model contribute to the cultural resilience of the pesantren amid social change. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of Islamic educational leadership by presenting a model derived from the empirical practices of Indonesian pesantren. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for pesantren leaders and Islamic educational institutions in designing leadership models that maintain the authenticity of tradition while remaining responsive to contemporary challenges.

To address these research questions, this study employs the theory of transformational leadership as its analytical framework. Transformational leadership theory positions leaders as agents of change who not only direct their followers but also transform their values, awareness, and commitment toward higher collective goals. This concept originates from the work of James MacGregor Burns (1978) and was further developed operationally by Bernard M. Bass (1985; 1999) through four principal dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In the context of religious leadership and Islamic education, transformational leadership is particularly relevant because it explains how a *kiai* can build moral exemplarity, instill a vision for the continuity of tradition, encourage innovation without abandoning the values of *turats*, and provide personal guidance to students and institutional members. Through charismatic influence and a transformative vision, the leader does not merely preserve tradition but internalizes it as a living collective consciousness that remains adaptive to social change. Therefore, transformational leadership theory serves as an appropriate analytical lens for understanding KHIBB's leadership model in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan, as it emphasizes the integration of value-based vision, moral example, empowerment, and the transformation of institutional culture.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design aimed at providing an in-depth description of the forms, strategies, and implications of transformational leadership implemented by KHIBB in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan. A qualitative approach is chosen because this study seeks to understand social and religious phenomena contextually, comprehensively, and holistically (Creswell, 2018). The research adopts a constructivist paradigm in which reality is viewed as a social construction shaped by the experiences, values, and interpretations of social actors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data in this study consist of narratives describing KHIBB's leadership model, while the data sources include KHIBB, *lora*, *ning*, *ustadz*, *ustadzah*, students (*santri*), parents of students, alumni, and members of the surrounding community.

Data collection was conducted through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were carried out through face-to-face interactions using a semi-structured interview guide to allow flexible exploration of information (Patton, 2015). The interview questions focused on the experiences, perspectives, and leadership strategies of KHIBB in sustaining Islamic traditions amid the challenges of modernization and globalization. Participant observation was conducted by directly attending religious activities and traditional practices led by KHIBB, such as the recitation of *Shalawat Diba'* on Thursday nights, the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Maulid Nabi*), and pilgrimage visits to the graves of local *ulama*. This observation enabled the researcher to capture the nuances of social interactions, cultural symbols, and leadership communication styles that might not be fully revealed through interviews. Documentation was used to collect photographic archives, video recordings, official madrasah documents, and historical records related to the preservation of these traditions (Bowen, 2009).

The primary research instrument was the researcher as a human instrument who functioned as planner, executor, data collector, and data analyst (Moleong, 2021). To enhance reliability, supporting instruments such as interview guidelines, observation sheets, and document recording formats were also employed. During the data collection process, detailed field notes were compiled, including descriptions of situations, direct quotations from informants, and reflective notes arising during interactions. Data validity was ensured through triangulation techniques encompassing source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation (Denzin, 2012). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants, while technique triangulation integrated findings from interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Time triangulation was conducted by repeating interviews at different times to test the consistency of responses. In addition, member checking was applied by asking informants to confirm summaries of the data and interpretations generated

by the researcher in order to ensure accuracy and appropriateness of meaning (Birt et al., 2016).

Data analysis was conducted interactively following the model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data into relevant thematic categories, such as the dimensions of transformational leadership idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration as introduced by Bass and Avolio (1994). Data display was presented in the form of descriptive narratives complemented by direct quotations from informants, relational diagrams, and chronological descriptions of events. Finally, conclusions were drawn gradually by examining relationships among categories, identifying patterns and tendencies, and linking them with the theoretical framework of transformational leadership and the concept of *Islam Nusantara*.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the leadership of KHIBB in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan is constructed through three main dimensions: the preservation of religious practices, adaptive strategies toward modernization, and the formation of students' Islamic character. In the first dimension, the preservation of Islamic traditions is manifested through the strengthening of various religious practices that constitute the identity of the pesantren, such as the implementation of congregational prayers, veneration of the Qur'an, and the recitation of *shalawat*. Congregational prayers are performed regularly and with discipline as a form of practicing the Sunnah of the Prophet while simultaneously serving as a means of fostering students' spiritual development and discipline. Meanwhile, appreciation of the Qur'an is not only expressed through *tahfidz* and *tilawah* activities but also through learning to read, write, and understand the meanings of Qur'anic verses. Through this approach, students are expected not only to read the Qur'an correctly but also to comprehend and internalize its values in their daily lives. In addition, the tradition of reciting *shalawat* is carried out regularly as an expression of love for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and as a medium for strengthening collective spirituality within the pesantren environment.

In the second dimension, the preservation of Islamic traditions is carried out through adaptive strategies in responding to modernization. One of the key strategies is the exemplary leadership demonstrated by the pesantren leader in practicing and maintaining religious traditions. Through this approach, students do not merely receive teachings theoretically but also directly observe the practical embodiment of these values in the leader's conduct. Furthermore, the cultivation of *Islam Nusantara* values serves as an important approach in maintaining the continuity of religious traditions characterized by moderation, tolerance, and harmony with local cultural contexts. In addition, the pesantren

utilizes technological media as a means of strengthening the presence of Islamic traditions in the digital era. The use of technology is implemented selectively, both to support the learning of Islamic knowledge and to expand the dissemination of pesantren traditions through various digital platforms. Moreover, Islamic traditions within the pesantren are promoted through technology-based branding strategies to ensure that they remain widely recognized and relevant in contemporary society.

In the third dimension, the preservation of Islamic traditions is oriented toward the formation of students' Islamic character grounded in the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah*. These values emphasize moderation, respect for religious traditions, and a strong sense of national identity and patriotism. Through this approach, Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan are not merely maintained as ritual religious practices but also function as instruments of character education that shape students into individuals who are religious, moderate, and possess strong national awareness. Therefore, the model of preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan demonstrates an integration between the strengthening of religious practices, adaptation to technological developments, and the formation of Islamic character rooted in the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah*.

Table A. 1: Model of Islamic Tradition Preservation at PPI Nurul Burhan

Model of Islamic Tradition Preservation	Maintaining Islamic Traditions Amid Modernization	Utilization of Technology to Popularize Islamic Traditions	Formation of Students' Islamic Character
Congregational prayer (<i>Sholat berjama'ah</i>)	Providing exemplary leadership for students	Utilizing technological media	Based on the values of <i>Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah</i>
Veneration of the Qur'an	Instilling the character of <i>Islam Nusantara</i>	Branding Islamic traditions	
Recitation of <i>Sholawat</i>			

The table above illustrates that the model of preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan is constructed through an integration of religious practices, adaptive strategies toward modernization, the utilization of technology, and the formation of students' character. In terms of traditional practices, the pesantren consistently maintains various religious activities such as congregational prayers, appreciation of the Qur'an, and the recitation of *shalawat*, which function as the spiritual identity of the institution. The preservation of these traditions is further

strengthened through strategies aimed at sustaining them amid modernization, including the leader's exemplary conduct toward students and the cultivation of *Islam Nusantara* values characterized by moderation and harmony with local cultural traditions. At the same time, the pesantren utilizes technological developments to expand the influence of Islamic traditions, both through the use of digital media in learning processes and through efforts to brand Islamic traditions so that they remain widely recognized and relevant in the digital era. Ultimately, these integrated efforts are directed toward the formation of students' Islamic character based on the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah*. Through this approach, Islamic traditions are not only preserved as ritual practices but also function as the foundation for shaping students who are religious, moderate, and possess strong national awareness.

1. Consistency in Preserving Islamic Traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan

A. Congregational prayer (*Sholat berjama'ah*)

"Islamic traditions are consistently practiced in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) as a means of preserving and implementing the exemplary practices (sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad. One of the most emphasized traditions is congregational prayer (*ṣalāt al-jamā'ah*), which is regarded as an essential religious obligation rooted in the prophetic tradition. This practice is maintained because the Prophet himself strongly encouraged communal worship and expressed serious disapproval toward those who deliberately neglected congregational prayer. In response to this prophetic example, strict discipline is applied within the pesantren environment to ensure that all students participate in communal prayers. Students who arrive late and miss even a small portion of the prayer (*masbūq*) are subject to educational sanctions (*ta'zīr*), such as standing until the completion of the post-prayer litany (*wirid*). This disciplinary approach reflects the pesantren's commitment to cultivating religious discipline, obedience, and collective spiritual responsibility among students".

The statement above indicates that the implementation of congregational prayer (*sholat berjamaah*) at PPI Nurul Burhan is not merely positioned as a ritual obligation, but also as an institutional strategy for preserving Islamic traditions rooted in the exemplary practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The emphasis on the phrase *lanpanah Kanjeng Nabi* highlights the pesantren's orientation toward making the Prophet's Sunnah the foundation for cultivating the religious culture of the students. In this context, congregational prayer is understood not only as an individual act of worship but also as a collective practice that shapes the spiritual identity and religious culture of the pesantren community. This tradition becomes part of a value system that is consciously transmitted across generations through guidance, habituation, and the reinforcement of religious norms in the daily lives of the students.

The consistency of this tradition is reflected in the strict and continuous regulations governing the implementation of congregational prayer. The

imposition of *ta'zir* (disciplinary sanctions) on students who arrive late for the prayer congregation, even when categorized as *masbuq*, indicates the existence of a disciplinary mechanism designed to ensure that this collective act of worship is carried out in an orderly and consistent manner. This approach demonstrates that the preservation of tradition is not carried out solely through normative advice or religious symbolism, but also through a structured system of habituation embedded within the daily life of the pesantren. Thus, congregational prayer functions not only as a religious ritual but also as an instrument of character education that instills discipline, obedience, and commitment to Islamic teachings.

From a leadership perspective, this policy reflects the leadership model of KHIBB which places Islamic traditions as the fundamental basis for managing the life of the pesantren. His leadership extends beyond the administrative management of the institution to ensuring the continuity of religious values through exemplary conduct, continuous mentoring, and the strengthening of religious culture. Through this approach, leadership acts as a cultural force capable of transforming the values of the Sunnah into living social practices embedded in the daily lives of the students. Therefore, the implementation of congregational prayer at PPI Nurul Burhan not only represents a form of worship but also reflects the effectiveness of KHIBB's leadership in establishing a sustainable system for preserving Islamic traditions that is deeply rooted in the culture of the pesantren.

B. Veneration of the Qur'an

"In this pesantren, the Qur'an occupies a central and highly revered position within the educational tradition. Its instruction is not limited to *tahfiz* (memorization) and *tilawah* (recitation), but is further enriched through the implementation of the *Baca Tulis Terjemah Al-Qur'an* (BTTQ) method, or the Reading, Writing, and Translation of the Qur'an. This method is strongly emphasized because it is regarded as a distinctive and intellectually meaningful approach to Qur'anic learning. Through this practice, many students produce handwritten copies of Qur'anic verses along with their translations, which are personally verified (*taṣḥīḥ*) by the kiai. As a result, the pesantren has cultivated a strong scholarly culture that has contributed to the emergence of numerous intellectual works and publications related to Qur'anic studies".

The statement above indicates that appreciation of the Qur'an at PPI Nurul Burhan is not merely expressed through ritualistic learning practices such as *tahfidz* (memorization) and *tilawah* (recitation), but is also implemented through a more comprehensive pedagogical approach, namely the *Baca Tulis Terjemah Al-Qur'an* (BTTQ) method. This approach reflects a systematic effort to preserve the Islamic scholarly tradition by positioning the Qur'an not only as an object of memorization but also as a source of knowledge that must be read, written, translated, and deeply understood. The emphasis on writing and translating Qur'anic verses demonstrates the continuity of the pesantren's intellectual tradition, which is rooted in the culture of *talaqqi*, *tashih*, and the direct

transmission of knowledge between the *kiai* and the students. This tradition is further strengthened through the practice of direct *tashih* conducted by KHIBB on the Qur'anic notes written by the students, ensuring that the learning process not only produces religious understanding but also cultivates academic discipline and scholarly responsibility in studying the sacred text.

Moreover, the emergence of various written works and books related to the Qur'an from within the pesantren environment indicates that the preservation of tradition does not stop at the level of ritual practice but develops into a tradition of literacy and scholarly production. In the context of leadership, this policy reflects KHIBB's leadership model, which places the Qur'an at the center of the pesantren's intellectual culture. Such leadership not only encourages students to honor the Qur'an spiritually but also promotes the internalization of Qur'anic values through systematic learning processes, direct mentoring, and the development of Islamic literacy traditions. Therefore, the practice of Qur'anic learning through the BTTQ method at PPI Nurul Burhan can be understood as a form of consistent preservation of Islamic tradition that not only maintains the classical practices of pesantren education but also develops them into a productive and sustainable learning model under the leadership of KHIBB.

C. Recitation of Sholawat

"In this pesantren, I consistently uphold the tradition of reciting *ṣalawāt* as a spiritual expression of devotion, connection, and love for the Prophet Muhammad. As part of the daily religious discipline, students are encouraged to recite *ṣalawāt* up to one thousand times each day. In addition, the recitation of *Ṣalawāt Jibrīl* is regularly practiced as an integral component of the pesantren's spiritual activities. Beyond these daily practices, the institution also organizes a large-scale devotional gathering known as the Pesta Sholawat (Festival of *Ṣalawāt* Recitation), which has been conducted continuously for more than a decade. This long-standing tradition reflects the pesantren's commitment to nurturing spiritual consciousness, strengthening prophetic values, and fostering collective religious devotion among students and the wider community."

The statement above indicates that the tradition of *sholawat* recitation at PPI Nurul Burhan constitutes an integral component of efforts to preserve Islamic traditions oriented toward cultivating love for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The routine practice of reciting *sholawat*, even reaching up to one thousand recitations daily, reflects a structured spiritual habituation designed to nurture the religious consciousness of the students while strengthening their emotional attachment to the Prophet. Furthermore, the recitation of *Sholawat Jibril* and the organization of collective events known as *pesta sholawat* demonstrate that this tradition is not merely practiced individually but also functions as a socio-religious activity that reinforces spiritual solidarity within the pesantren community.

The continuity of these activities for more than a decade indicates a strong institutional commitment to maintaining religious traditions that have become part of the pesantren's cultural identity. From a leadership perspective, this policy reflects the leadership model of KHIBB, who positions the tradition of *sholawat* as a medium for spiritual development as well as an instrument for preserving Islamic culture rooted in the tradition of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah*. His leadership not only directs students to perform religious rituals formally but also fosters a living religious culture through habituation, collective participation, and the strengthening of values centered on love for the Prophet. Consequently, the tradition of *sholawat* recitation at PPI Nurul Burhan can be understood as a manifestation of leadership that emphasizes the reinforcement of spirituality while simultaneously serving as a cultural strategy for sustaining Islamic traditions within the pesantren environment.

2. KHIBB's Strategy in Maintaining the Sustainability of Islamic Traditions amid Modernization

A. Providing Exemplary Conduct for Students

"Every activity carried out within the pesantren represents the institution's *bandrul* its foundational values and guiding traditions. Therefore, the significance of these practices does not lie in whether they are economically costly or inexpensive, but rather in their function as the roots, symbols, and collective identity of the pesantren. These traditions embody the philosophical and cultural essence that sustains the continuity of the institution across generations. Furthermore, preserving the sustainability of pesantren traditions requires the principle of *ifdā' binafsih*, namely leading through personal example. Caregivers and religious leaders are expected not only to instruct students verbally, but also to accompany and actively participate with them in the daily routines of the pesantren. Through this exemplary approach, students gradually internalize the values and practices embedded within the institutional culture, allowing these traditions to be transmitted naturally and continuously from one generation to the next".

The statement above indicates that the primary strategy for maintaining the sustainability of Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan lies in the exemplary conduct of the leader as the foundation for shaping the pesantren's cultural environment. KHIBB emphasizes that every activity carried out within the pesantren functions as a *bandrul* or symbolic marker of the institution's identity, whose value is not measured in material terms but in the meaning it carries as a representation of the pesantren's traditions. Consequently, the preservation of tradition cannot rely solely on formal regulations but must be manifested through the principle of *ifda' binafsih*, namely providing direct personal example to the students and accompanying them in performing various religious activities within the pesantren. This approach reflects a leadership strategy grounded in role modeling and direct engagement, where the leader does not merely function as a

policy director but also as a figure who brings traditional practices to life in everyday pesantren life.

In the context of modernization, which often introduces shifts in values and lifestyles, such a strategy becomes an essential mechanism to ensure that Islamic traditions remain internalized within the students through processes of habituation and shared collective experiences. Through this approach, students do not only learn religious traditions conceptually but also experience them directly as part of their daily routines within the pesantren environment. Therefore, KHIBB's leadership model in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan can be understood as a form of value-transformative leadership that emphasizes exemplary conduct, togetherness, and practical engagement. Through this model, pesantren traditions are not merely maintained symbolically but continue to thrive as a living religious culture deeply rooted in the daily lives of the students.

B. Instilling the Character of Islam Nusantara

"In my view, there are no particularly significant challenges in preserving these traditions, because we live within a community whose cultural foundation is deeply rooted in the values of Islam Nusantara. The situation would likely be different in regions where the cultural orientation toward Islam Nusantara has not been firmly established. In our context, however, the surrounding society already embraces these traditions as part of its social and religious identity, making the process considerably less difficult. In fact, this cultural environment serves as a reinforcing factor in achieving our educational and spiritual objectives, as the community is characterized by courtesy, social flexibility, and harmonious interpersonal relations".

The statement above indicates that the cultivation of *Islam Nusantara* character constitutes one of KHIBB's key strategies in maintaining the sustainability of Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan amid the dynamics of modernization. In his view, the presence of the pesantren within a community that strongly embodies the cultural values of *Islam Nusantara* serves as a supportive factor in preserving religious traditions. The values associated with *Islam Nusantara* characterized by courtesy, flexibility, moderation, and openness toward local cultural expressions create a conducive social environment for the internalization of Islamic traditions within the pesantren. Such a social context facilitates the formation of students' character because the values taught in the pesantren are aligned with the religious culture practiced by the surrounding community.

Consequently, the preservation of Islamic traditions does not occur solely within the formal educational setting of the pesantren but is also reinforced by the religious practices and cultural traditions embedded in the broader community. From a leadership perspective, this strategy reflects KHIBB's capacity to interpret social realities and effectively utilize local cultural potential as a foundation for

strengthening Islamic values. This leadership orientation demonstrates a cultural approach that does not separate pesantren education from community life but instead integrates both into a single religious ecosystem that mutually reinforces one another. Therefore, the cultivation of *Islam Nusantara* character at PPI Nurul Burhan can be understood as an effective cultural strategy for sustaining Islamic traditions while simultaneously strengthening the pesantren's identity as an educational institution rooted in the principles of moderation, local wisdom, and social harmony.

3. Utilization of Technological Media in Popularizing the Preservation of Islamic Traditions in the Pesantren

A. Utilizing Technological Media

"In our perspective, technology can become a strong supporting instrument when it is utilized wisely and selectively. In the current era of globalization, technological literacy is undeniably essential. Nevertheless, this pesantren implements a structured policy regarding the use of digital devices. Only students at the university level are permitted to use smartphones, while students at the junior and senior secondary levels are encouraged to focus primarily on the *wazifah* and educational discipline of the pesantren. For university-level students, technology is integrated into learning activities, particularly in the study of *falakiyah* (Islamic astronomy), which is highly compatible with Android-based applications and digital platforms. This demonstrates that the pesantren does not reject technological advancement; rather, it seeks to engage with technology critically and responsibly. At the same time, we remain highly selective in filtering information sources, including contemporary AI-based media that are increasingly widespread. Thus, the emphasis is not on restricting access to knowledge, but on cultivating critical awareness regarding the credibility and authority of information sources. This principle is consistent with the Prophetic teaching that 'knowledge is part of religion and shapes one's character; therefore, one must carefully consider from whom knowledge is acquired.'"

The statement above indicates that the utilization of technological media at PPI Nurul Burhan is viewed as a strategic instrument in supporting the preservation of Islamic traditions amid the dynamics of globalization. KHIBB perceives technology not as a threat to pesantren traditions, but rather as a medium that can strengthen the processes of learning and disseminating Islamic values when used wisely and selectively. Nevertheless, its implementation is carried out in a controlled manner through institutional policies that restrict the use of mobile phones only to students at the university level, while junior and senior high school students are directed to focus on fulfilling *wadifah*—the pesantren's structured obligations aimed at nurturing character formation and religious discipline. This approach reflects a balanced orientation between openness to technological advancement and a commitment to maintaining students' concentration on the cultivation of the pesantren's scholarly traditions.

Furthermore, the utilization of technology is also reflected in the use of Android-based applications in the field of *falaqiyah* (Islamic astronomy), demonstrating an effort to integrate classical Islamic intellectual traditions with the development of digital technology. From a leadership perspective, this policy reflects KHIBB's leadership model, which is adaptive to contemporary developments while maintaining a principle of prudence in filtering sources of knowledge, including those derived from artificial intelligence-based media. This principle of selectivity resonates with the message of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which emphasizes the importance of carefully considering the sources of knowledge because knowledge has a profound influence on shaping an individual's character. Therefore, the utilization of technology at PPI Nurul Burhan is not merely directed toward facilitating access to information but also toward strengthening a scholarly tradition that is critical, selective, and firmly rooted in Islamic values. This approach demonstrates that KHIBB's leadership is capable of integrating pesantren traditions with modern technological developments in a balanced manner, ensuring that the preservation of Islamic traditions remains intact while continuing to be relevant to the demands of the contemporary era.

B. Branding Islamic Traditions through Technological Media

"In the era of globalization, Islam must become more visible and influential through the effective utilization of digital technology, rather than allowing public attention to be dominated solely by secular entertainment media. Therefore, technological platforms should be employed as instruments for disseminating and strengthening Islamic traditions in ways that are more engaging, relevant, and accessible to contemporary society. Islam should not merely remain at the level of discourse or imagination; rather, its teachings must be translated into concrete practice within everyday life. In this context, religious knowledge should be both practical ('ilmuhu 'amaliyyah) and scientifically grounded ('amalu 'ilmiyyah), meaning that every practice must be based on sound knowledge, while knowledge itself should generate meaningful action. Accordingly, individuals must develop critical awareness in selecting and evaluating information sources to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the knowledge they consume and disseminate. Ambiguous or speculative religious information (shubhat) should not be transmitted irresponsibly. Educational content delivered to students must also be adjusted to their intellectual and social needs. For example, male students are encouraged not only to study general religious education, but also to understand issues related to women's jurisprudence, such as menstruation (ḥaid), childbirth (wilādah), and postpartum bleeding (nifās), because they will eventually assume the role of qawwāmūna 'ala al-nisā' (leaders and protectors within the family structure). From this perspective, a truly knowledgeable person will naturally feel uncomfortable practicing something without a proper intellectual foundation. This reflects the principle that knowledge must lead to action, and action must remain

grounded in knowledge. As stated by Ibn Ruslan, “Whoever acts without knowledge, his deeds will be rejected and not accepted.” Therefore, students (santri) are encouraged to continuously update, expand, and deepen their knowledge in response to ongoing social and intellectual developments”.

The statement above indicates that the utilization of technological media at PPI Nurul Burhan functions not only as a means of communication or access to information but also as a cultural strategy to brand and popularize Islamic traditions amid the currents of globalization. KHIBB emphasizes that the development of digital technology should be harnessed to strengthen Islamic propagation (*syiar*) and reinforce the presence of Islamic values in the public sphere, ensuring that religious traditions remain visible and influential in comparison with the abundance of entertainment-oriented content circulating in digital spaces. Within this perspective, technological media is viewed as a strategic arena for presenting a form of Islam that is dynamic, practical, and relevant to contemporary social life. A central principle emphasized in this approach is the integration of knowledge and religious practice, reflected in the idea that knowledge must be *amaliah* (manifested in practice) and that religious practice must be grounded in sound knowledge. This principle implies that every religious practice taught to the students should be supported by a solid scholarly foundation, while the knowledge they acquire must be translated into tangible actions in everyday life. Through this integration, Islamic traditions are not merely preserved as symbolic rituals but are continually revitalized through meaningful practice and intellectual understanding.

At the same time, KHIBB highlights the importance of maintaining a selective and critical attitude toward the vast amount of information circulating in digital media. Information that is ambiguous (*syubhat*) or whose authenticity cannot be verified should not be disseminated, ensuring that the learning process remains anchored in credible and academically accountable sources of knowledge. This cautious approach is also reflected in educational policies that emphasize the broadening of students’ intellectual horizons. For instance, male students are introduced to knowledge related to *fiqh al-mar’ah* (Islamic jurisprudence concerning women) to prepare them for future social and familial responsibilities. From a leadership perspective, this strategy reflects KHIBB’s leadership model, which is adaptive, visionary, and rooted in the integration of classical pesantren scholarly traditions with the development of modern technology. Consequently, the utilization of technological media is not limited to serving as a platform for publication or dissemination, but also operates as a medium for value transformation that strengthens the preservation of Islamic traditions while simultaneously expanding their influence in the digital era.

4. Formation of Students' Islamic Character through Pesantren Islamic Traditions

A. Based on Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah

"At present, one of the major strengths of our pesantren lies in its foundation upon the principles of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah an-Nahdliyah. This theological orientation represents a moderate path that mediates between various theological extremes and intellectual contestations, such as those associated with the Qadariyah, Mu'tazilah, and other doctrinal groups. Within the Indonesian context, Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah has proven to be highly relevant and socially necessary because it promotes a balanced relationship between Islamic teachings and the realities of national life. Consequently, practicing Islam does not require individuals to adopt a particular foreign cultural identity, such as becoming culturally Arab, but instead allows Islam to grow harmoniously within the cultural framework of Indonesian society. Within the pesantren environment, these values are manifested through the cultivation of gratitude for being part of the Indonesian nation and through the strengthening of patriotism toward the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Traditions such as the commemoration of National Santri Day and Islamic student camp activities serve as educational media for instilling the awareness that Indonesia is a shared homeland that must be protected and preserved collectively. Historical evidence also demonstrates that Muslim scholars, particularly those affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama, played a significant role in the struggle for independence and the development of the nation. Prominent figures such as Hasyim Asy'ari, Wahab Hasbullah, and As'ad Syamsul Arifin have been officially recognized as national heroes due to their substantial contributions to both religion and the state. Therefore, strengthening the values of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah an-Nahdliyah remains essential in contemporary Islamic education. This orientation promotes a moderate understanding of Islam, respects local traditions, and fosters loyalty to the Indonesian nation-state. As a result, Islamic preaching and education become more inclusive, contextual, and socially relevant within the pluralistic landscape of Indonesian society."

The statement above indicates that the formation of students' Islamic character at PPI Nurul Burhan is strongly grounded in the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah*, which serve as the ideological, theological, and cultural foundation of the pesantren's educational system. Within this perspective, *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* is understood as a path of moderation that positions Islam proportionally among the various theological currents that have emerged throughout Islamic intellectual history, including Qadariyah, Mu'tazilah, and other schools of thought. This moderate position renders *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* highly relevant to the Indonesian social context, which is characterized by plurality and multiculturalism. It enables a balanced integration between the authenticity of Islamic teachings and the realities of national social life. Consequently, Islam is not perceived as an exclusive cultural identity but rather as a universal set of

values capable of harmoniously developing within the framework of Indonesia's local cultures.

At PPI Nurul Burhan, the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah* are not merely delivered through formal religious instruction but are also internalized through a variety of traditions and educational practices that comprehensively shape the students' character. This process of internalization is carried out through the cultivation of moderation, tolerance, respect for religious traditions, and the strengthening of social responsibility as part of national and civic life. In this regard, the pesantren functions not only as an institution for transmitting Islamic knowledge but also as a space for nurturing national consciousness rooted in religious values. Such awareness is manifested through various educational and cultural activities, including the commemoration of *Hari Santri* and student camping programs, which aim to instill gratitude for being part of the Indonesian nation while fostering love for the homeland.

These traditions play a strategic role in shaping the identity of students as members of a religious yet nationally conscious Indonesian society. Through these activities, students are encouraged to understand that Indonesia is a shared home that must be preserved through collective commitment and mutual responsibility. Historical narratives concerning the contributions of Nahdlatul Ulama scholars to Indonesia's independence and national development also form an important part of this character-building process. Figures such as KH Hasyim Asy'ari, KH Wahab Hasbullah, and KH As'ad Syamsul Arifin are frequently presented as role models demonstrating how religious scholars can integrate deep religious commitment with national responsibility. The recognition of these figures as national heroes further confirms the significant role of pesantren scholars in shaping Indonesia's historical trajectory.

In the context of pesantren leadership, the reinforcement of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah* values by KHIBB reflects a leadership model oriented toward strengthening Islamic moderation, respecting religious traditions, and cultivating national values. Such leadership extends beyond the managerial aspects of educational administration and functions as a guiding force that ensures all educational activities within the pesantren remain aligned with the principles of moderate Islam that are compatible with local culture and Indonesian social life. Consequently, the Islamic traditions developed at PPI Nurul Burhan function as strategic instruments for producing a generation of students who possess not only spiritual and intellectual depth but also moderate attitudes, tolerance, and a strong commitment to the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

This research provides a significant contribution to the development of leadership studies in Islamic education, particularly in understanding the strategic role of *kiai* leadership in sustaining Islamic traditions within pesantren institutions. The findings demonstrate that the leadership of KHIBB operates not only within the managerial dimension of institutional governance but also as a cultural force

that directs, maintains, and transmits Islamic traditional values to the pesantren community. This leadership model is reflected through the integration of exemplary leadership, the strengthening of religious practices such as congregational prayer, appreciation of the Qur'an, and the recitation of *sholawat*, as well as the ability to adapt to the dynamics of modernity through the utilization of technology and the reinforcement of *Islam Nusantara* values. Through this approach, Islamic traditions are not merely preserved as ritual practices but are developed as living, contextual, and sustainable religious cultures within pesantren life.

From a theoretical perspective, this research enriches the literature on Islamic educational leadership by emphasizing that the sustainability of religious traditions in pesantren is strongly influenced by leadership models that prioritize exemplary conduct, value internalization, and the strengthening of organizational culture. The findings demonstrate that the leadership of *kiai* plays a transformational role in integrating Islamic values with social practices that shape the institutional identity of pesantren. Moreover, this research expands the understanding of the relationship between transformational leadership and the preservation of Islamic traditions, particularly within pesantren contexts grounded in the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah* and the tradition of *Islam Nusantara* as a foundation for religious moderation.

Practically, the findings of this research offer important implications for the management of Islamic educational institutions in formulating strategies to preserve religious traditions amid the challenges of modernization and globalization. The leadership model implemented at PPI Nurul Burhan demonstrates that the preservation of tradition can be effectively sustained when supported by exemplary leadership, structured systems of habituation, reinforcement of Islamic moderation values, and the selective and productive utilization of technology. Thus, this study offers both a conceptual framework and a practical model of leadership that can serve as a reference for pesantren leaders and other Islamic educational institutions in developing leadership approaches capable of sustaining Islamic traditions while remaining adaptive to contemporary developments.

D. CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the leadership model of KHIBB in preserving Islamic traditions at PPI Nurul Burhan. The findings reveal four key elements that characterize KHIBB's leadership model in sustaining Islamic traditions within the pesantren environment: (1) the model of preserving Islamic traditions; (2) strategies for maintaining these traditions amid modernization; (3) the utilization of technological media in disseminating Islamic traditions; and (4) the formation of students' Islamic character. In terms of the preservation model, KHIBB emphasizes the institutionalization of routine religious practices, including congregational prayer, reverence for the Qur'an, and the regular recitation of

sholawat. In maintaining the sustainability of Islamic traditions in the context of modernization, KHIBB adopts two principal approaches: providing exemplary leadership for students and instilling the values of *Islam Nusantara*. Furthermore, in relation to the use of technological media to popularize Islamic traditions, two approaches are implemented, namely utilizing digital media as a means of dissemination and employing it as a tool for branding Islamic traditions in the public sphere. Finally, the formation of students' Islamic character is consistently grounded in the values of *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah an-Nahdliyah*, which serve as the ideological and cultural foundation of the pesantren's educational system.

Future research is recommended to expand this line of inquiry through comparative studies across different pesantren in order to identify variations in *kiai* leadership models in preserving Islamic traditions. Further studies should also explore the integration between pesantren leadership and the utilization of digital technology in strengthening Islamic propagation (*syiar*) and sustaining religious traditions. In addition, the application of more diverse methodological approaches, such as quantitative or mixed-methods designs, would be valuable for empirically measuring the influence of leadership models on the formation of students' religious character and the internalization of religious moderation values. Through such developments, future research is expected to enrich the scholarship on Islamic educational leadership while strengthening the role of pesantren in maintaining Islamic traditions that are moderate and relevant to the dynamics of contemporary society.

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