

## Spiritual Leadership in Developing the Human Resources at the Sorong Raya Islamic Boarding Schools

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**Abstract:** This study examines the role of Kiai's spiritual leadership in developing human resources within Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Sorong Raya. Spiritual leadership, rooted in Islamic values, emphasizes moral integrity, exemplary behaviour, and religious devotion as key elements in shaping students' character and competencies. This research employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis. The population consists of 756 students, with a sample of 76 students (10%), and 8 selected participants interviewed (10% of the sample). Data collection utilized a 40-item Likert-scale questionnaire and 6 structured interview questions. The quantitative findings reveal that Kiai's spiritual leadership significantly contributes to students' discipline, motivation, and ethical awareness, though challenges remain in adapting leadership styles to modern educational demands. Qualitative findings further highlight the consistency of Kiai as a role model, the influence of spiritual practices on student development, and the need for structured skill-based training. Respondents expressed both shared and differing perspectives regarding leadership effectiveness, particularly in balancing traditional values with contemporary human resource needs. The study concludes that spiritual leadership remains a powerful foundation for human resource development, yet requires integration with modern pedagogical approaches to maximize its impact. Strengthening institutional management, improving curriculum relevance, and enhancing leadership adaptability are recommended to optimize outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Spiritual Leadership, Kiai, Human Resource Development, Islamic Boarding Schools, Sorong Raya*

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools, widely known as Pesantren, have long played a central role in shaping the moral, intellectual, and spiritual character of Muslim communities in Indonesia (Subair et al., 2024; Kartiko et al., 2026). In Sorong Raya, these institutions are not only centres of religious learning but also serve as foundational environments for human resource development. At the core of these institutions is the Kiai, whose leadership extends beyond administrative duties into the spiritual and moral guidance of students. The concept of spiritual leadership, therefore, becomes a crucial framework for understanding how Pesantren contribute to the formation of disciplined, ethical, and competent individuals (Yaumi et al., 2018; and Kartiko et al., 2026).

Spiritual leadership in the pesantren context is characterized by the integration of religious teachings, personal example, and emotional connection between the leader and followers (Madya et al., 2026; and Nasikin et al., 2024). A Kiai is often perceived not only as a teacher but also as a moral authority and spiritual guide. This leadership model emphasizes sincerity (*ikhlas*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), and wisdom (*hikmah*), which are deeply embedded in Islamic teachings. Through daily interactions, rituals, and guidance, the Kiai instills values that shape students' behaviour and worldview (Satir & Akidah, Sri, 2025).

However, despite its strengths, spiritual leadership in Islamic boarding schools faces several challenges. One of the primary weaknesses is the potential lack of adaptability to modern educational and professional demands. While pesantren excel in moral and religious education, they sometimes lag in equipping students with the practical skills required in contemporary society. This gap highlights the need to balance spiritual guidance with technical and professional competencies (Hasbullah et al., 2023; and Shidiq et al., 2025).

Another limitation lies in the centralized nature of leadership. The strong authority of the Kiai, while beneficial for maintaining discipline and unity, can sometimes hinder participatory decision-making and innovation. Students and teachers may become overly dependent on the Kiai's direction, limiting their initiative and creativity. This dynamic may affect the development of critical thinking and leadership skills among students, which are essential for human resource development in a competitive global environment (Maelan et al., 2025).

On the other hand, the strengths of spiritual leadership are significant. The strong moral foundation provided by the Kiai fosters discipline, resilience, and a sense of purpose among students. These qualities are essential components of human resource development, as they contribute to the formation of individuals who are not only skilled but also ethical and responsible. Furthermore, the close relationship between the Kiai and students creates a supportive learning environment that enhances motivation and personal growth (Dzulkifli Isadaud et al., 2022; and Wahyudin & Akbar, 2025).

The integration of spiritual values into daily life also distinguishes pesantren from other educational institutions. Activities such as communal prayers, Quranic recitation, and religious discussions reinforce a sense of community and shared purpose. This environment nurtures emotional intelligence and social cohesion, which are critical aspects of human resource development. Students learn to collaborate, respect diversity, and contribute positively to society (Dzulkifli Isadaud

et al., 2022).

Despite these advantages, a gap remains between the traditional model of spiritual leadership and the evolving needs of human resource development (Wahyudin & Akbar, 2025). The rapid advancement of technology, globalization, and changing labour market demands require pesantren graduates to possess not only religious knowledge but also practical skills and adaptability (Rahanyamtel, 2024; and Hairani, 2025). This gap raises questions about how spiritual leadership can be enhanced to address contemporary challenges.

One potential solution is integrating modern educational practices with traditional spiritual leadership. This approach involves incorporating vocational training, digital literacy, and critical thinking skills into the Pesantren curriculum (Fadli et al., 2025; and Hairani, 2025). By doing so, Pesantren can produce graduates who are both spiritually grounded and professionally competent (Madya et al., 2026). The role of the Kiai in this transformation is crucial, as they must embrace innovation while preserving the core values of Islamic teachings.

Another solution is the development of participatory leadership models within pesantren. Encouraging collaboration among teachers, students, and administrators can foster a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment. This approach can enhance creativity, problem-solving skills, and leadership development among students, contributing to more effective human resource development (Wibawa et al., 2024).

Furthermore, capacity-building programs for Kiai and educators can help bridge the gap between traditional and modern leadership practices. Training in educational management, technology integration, and leadership skills can enhance their ability to guide students in a rapidly changing world. This investment in leadership development is essential for ensuring the sustainability and relevance of pesantren (Riduansyah & Saleh, 2026).

In conclusion, spiritual leadership plays a vital role in the development of human resources in Islamic boarding schools in Sorong Raya (Hairani, 2025). While it offers significant strengths in moral and character formation, it also faces challenges in adapting to modern demands (Subair et al., 2024). Addressing these weaknesses through innovation, collaboration, and capacity building can enhance the effectiveness of spiritual leadership and contribute to the holistic development of students.

## METHOD

### *Data Analysis*

This study applied a mixed-method data analysis technique, integrating quantitative statistical analysis with qualitative thematic interpretation to ensure comprehensive and valid findings (Creswell & Clark, 2011; and Mustakim et al., 2025).

### *Quantitative Data Analysis*

Quantitative data were collected through a 40-item Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 76 respondents. Each item was measured using a five-point scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate descriptive and

reliability statistics (Okpatrioka, 2025).

### a. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis was conducted to determine the mean score (M) and percentage (%) for each variable (Sarwono, 2011). The mean score was calculated using the formula:

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

where  $\sum X$  represents the total score of all responses and  $N$  represents the number of respondents.

The interpretation of mean scores followed a standardized classification:

Mean Interval Interpretation	
1.00 - 1.80	Very Low
1.81 - 2.60	Low
2.61 - 3.40	Moderate
3.41 - 4.20	High
4.21 - 5.00	Very High

In addition, the percentage of agreement was calculated using:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

where  $f$  is the frequency of respondents selecting "Agree" and "Strongly Agree," and  $N$  is the total number of respondents. This approach allows for the identification of both central tendency (mean) and response distribution (percentage), providing a robust description of students' perceptions.

### b. Validity Testing

Instrument validity was assessed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation technique. Each questionnaire item was correlated with the total score (item-total correlation). An item was considered valid if the correlation coefficient  $r_{count}$  exceeded the critical value  $r_{table}$  at a significance level of 0.05.

The analysis results indicated that all 40 items had  $r_{count} > r_{table}(0.227)$ , confirming that all items were statistically valid and suitable for further analysis.

### c. Reliability Testing

Reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to evaluate internal consistency. The reliability criteria are as follows:

Cronbach's Alpha Interpretation	
$\geq 0.90$	Excellent
0.80 - 0.89	Good
0.70 - 0.79	Acceptable
0.60 - 0.69	Marginal
$< 0.60$	Poor

The analysis produced a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.89, indicating that the instrument has high reliability (good internal consistency). This means that the questionnaire items consistently measure the construct of spiritual leadership and

human resource development.

#### *d. SPSS-Based Reporting*

Based on SPSS output, the descriptive statistics show that the overall mean score for spiritual leadership variables ranged from 3.2 to 4.3, indicating a moderate to very high level of agreement among respondents. The highest mean score ( $M = 4.3$ ) was found in the *role model of Kiai* and *moral guidance* variables, while the lowest mean score ( $M = 3.2$ ) was observed in *innovation and career preparation*.

The frequency distribution further indicates that more than 70% of respondents agreed with statements related to moral and spiritual aspects, while only 58–60% agreed with statements related to skill development and innovation. This statistical pattern highlights a significant disparity between spiritual strength and practical competency development.

#### *Qualitative Data Analysis*

Qualitative data from 8 in-depth interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis process involved: transcription of interview data into textual form, data reduction to focus on relevant responses, open coding to identify key concepts, axial coding to group similar themes, thematic categorization based on interview questions, and interpretation of patterns, similarities, and differences (Phan, 2026). The findings were structured into eight thematic results, reflecting: shared perceptions (similar opinions), divergent viewpoints (differences), and recurring dominant ideas (common themes).

#### *Data Triangulation*

To enhance the validity and credibility of the findings, this study employed methodological triangulation by comparing quantitative and qualitative results. Quantitative data provided measurable trends, while qualitative data offered deeper contextual understanding.

The integration of both datasets confirms that spiritual leadership is strong in moral and character formation, and there is a consistent gap in skill-based human resource development. This triangulation strengthens the overall conclusion and ensures that the findings are both statistically reliable and contextually meaningful.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### *Results*

The quantitative results indicate that 78% of respondents agreed that Kiai's spiritual leadership positively influences their discipline and moral behaviour. Approximately 72% reported increased motivation in learning due to spiritual guidance. However, only 58% felt that the leadership adequately supports skill development relevant to modern careers, highlighting a gap in practical competencies.

The analysis of questionnaire items shows strong agreement in areas related to moral guidance, religious commitment, and emotional support. Students rated the Kiai highly as role models, with an average score of 4.3 out of 5. Nevertheless, lower scores were observed in items related to innovation and career preparation, averaging 3.2. This suggests that while spiritual leadership is effective in character

building, it requires enhancement in practical skill development.

In terms of strengths, spiritual leadership fosters discipline, unity, and ethical awareness. Students benefit from a structured environment that emphasizes responsibility and self-control. The presence of a respected Kiai also strengthens institutional identity and student loyalty.

However, weaknesses include limited exposure to modern knowledge systems and reliance on traditional teaching methods. This can restrict students' readiness for higher education or employment. Additionally, the hierarchical structure may limit student participation in decision-making processes.

Table 1: *Quantitative Findings on Spiritual Leadership and Human Resource Development*

No	Element of Spiritual Leadership & HR Development	Agreement (%)	Mean Score (1-5)	Category Interpretation
1.	Discipline & Moral Behaviour	78%	4.2	High
2.	Learning Motivation	72%	4.0	High
3.	Skill Development (Modern Careers)	58%	3.3	Moderate
4.	Moral Guidance	80%	4.3	Very High
5.	Religious Commitment	79%	4.2	High
6.	Emotional Support	77%	4.1	High
7.	Role Model of Kiai	85%	4.3	Very High
8.	Innovation & Career Preparation	60%	3.2	Moderate

Scale Interpretation (Mean Score):

1.00–1.80 = *Very Low* | 1.81–2.60 = *Low* | 2.61–3.40 = *Moderate* | 3.41–4.20 = *High* | 4.21–5.00 = *Very High*

The findings in the table above demonstrate that Kiai's spiritual leadership has a strong and statistically meaningful influence on students' character formation and internal motivation. This is evident from the high agreement percentages and mean scores in key dimensions such as moral guidance (80%, mean 4.3) and role modelling (85%, mean 4.3), both categorized as *very high*. These results indicate that students perceive the Kiai not only as an authority figure but also as a central moral exemplar whose behavior significantly shapes their ethical development.

Similarly, elements such as discipline and moral behavior (78%, mean 4.2), religious commitment (79%, mean 4.2), and emotional support (77%, mean 4.1) fall within the *high* category. This suggests that spiritual leadership effectively fosters a structured and supportive environment, reinforcing internal values such as responsibility, self-control, and spiritual awareness. The relatively strong score for learning motivation (72%, mean 4.0) further confirms that spiritual practices and guidance contribute positively to students' engagement in the learning process.

However, the data also reveal significant limitations in areas directly related to human resource competitiveness and modern skill readiness. The elements of skill development for modern careers (58%, mean 3.3) and innovation and career preparation (60%, mean 3.2) are categorized as *moderate*, representing the lowest scores among all measured variables. These findings indicate a clear gap between the strength of spiritual formation and the development of practical competencies required in contemporary contexts.

This imbalance suggests that while spiritual leadership is highly effective in building soft skills (ethics, discipline, identity, and emotional intelligence), it is comparatively less effective in developing hard skills (technical competence,

innovation, and career readiness). The moderate ratings in these areas imply that students may feel insufficiently prepared to face challenges in higher education or the labor market.

Overall, the findings confirm that Kiai's spiritual leadership constitutes a strong foundation for human resource development, particularly in moral and character dimensions. Nevertheless, the results highlight the urgent need for integration between spiritual values and modern educational practices, especially in enhancing skill-based training and innovation capacity. This integration is essential to ensure that graduates of Islamic boarding schools in Sorong Raya are not only morally grounded but also professionally competitive.

The qualitative findings are categorized into eight key results based on interview responses. *First*, all respondents agreed that the Kiai serves as a moral exemplar. *Second*, most respondents emphasized the importance of daily spiritual practices in shaping behaviour. *Third*, several respondents noted a lack of technological integration in learning. *Fourth*, opinions varied regarding leadership flexibility, with some perceiving it as rigid while others viewed it as consistent.

*Fifth*, respondents shared similar views on the importance of discipline enforced by the Kiai. *Sixth*, differences emerged regarding opportunities for skill development, with some students reporting positive experiences and others expressing dissatisfaction. *Seventh*, all respondents acknowledged the emotional support provided by the Kiai. *Eighth*, there was a shared desire for more career-oriented programs within the pesantren.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that spiritual leadership has a strong positive impact on character development but requires adaptation to meet contemporary human resource needs.

### ***Discussion***

The quantitative results indicate that 78% of respondents agreed that Kiai's spiritual leadership positively influences their discipline and moral behavior. Approximately 72% reported increased motivation in learning due to spiritual guidance. However, only 58% felt that the leadership adequately supports skill development relevant to modern careers, highlighting a gap in practical competencies.

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The findings confirm that spiritual leadership plays a crucial role in shaping

students' moral and ethical values. The high level of agreement among respondents indicates that the Kiai's influence extends beyond academic instruction into personal development. The strong emphasis on discipline aligns with the traditional objectives of pesantren education. This discipline contributes to the formation of responsible individuals, which is a key aspect of human resource development.

However, the relatively lower scores in skill development highlight a significant challenge. In the context of globalization, students need competencies that enable them to compete in diverse professional environments.

The qualitative findings provide deeper insights into students' experiences. The consistent recognition of the Kiai as a role model underscores the importance of exemplary leadership in educational settings. At the same time, differing opinions on leadership flexibility suggest the need for a more adaptive approach. Balancing consistency with innovation is essential for effective leadership.

The lack of technological integration identified by respondents reflects a broader issue in traditional educational institutions. Addressing this gap is critical for enhancing learning outcomes. The hierarchical structure of leadership, while beneficial for maintaining order, may limit student engagement. Encouraging participatory practices can enhance critical thinking and leadership skills.

Emotional support from the Kiai is a significant advantage, as it fosters a sense of belonging and motivation. This aspect of leadership should be maintained and strengthened. The demand for career-oriented programs indicates a shift in students' expectations. Integrating vocational training can address this need and improve employability. Overall, the discussion highlights the need for a balanced approach that combines spiritual values with practical skills. Such an approach can enhance the effectiveness of spiritual leadership in developing well-rounded human resources.

## CONCLUSION

Spiritual leadership by the Kiai plays a vital role in shaping the character and discipline of students in Islamic boarding schools in Sorong Raya. The study demonstrates that this leadership model is highly effective in fostering moral values and emotional well-being.

However, challenges remain in aligning spiritual leadership with modern educational demands. The lack of emphasis on practical skills and technological integration limits the potential of students in a competitive environment.

Therefore, enhancing spiritual leadership through innovation and collaboration is essential. By integrating modern approaches with traditional values, pesantren can achieve holistic human resource development.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Islamic boarding schools in Sorong Raya adopt a more integrated approach to education by combining spiritual leadership with modern skill development programs. Training for Kiai and educators in leadership and technology, along with curriculum reform that includes vocational and digital competencies, will significantly enhance the quality of human resources produced.

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