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## Routinizing Charisma: The Rise of Gus and the Transformation of Pesantren in Jepara, Indonesia

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### Abstract

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia serve as influential socio-religious institutions deeply rooted in tradition and community life. Central to their continuity is the figure of the *kiai*, whose charismatic authority historically shapes both religious practice and institutional governance. This study aims to examine the sociological consequences of leadership transmission from *kiai* to *gus*, particularly how this transmission of charisma drives institutional transformation in response to global challenges. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research was conducted at *Pesantren Al-Mustaqim* in Jepara, Central Java. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Four informants were selected using purposive sampling, consisting of one *gus* (as the key informant), one alumni, and two members of the local community. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, encompassing data condensation, data display, and conclusion verification. The findings reveal that the hereditary transmission of leadership functions as a mechanism for both preserving charismatic legitimacy and introducing adaptive educational reforms. The *gus* emerges not merely as a successor, but as a transformative agent who bridges traditional Islamic pedagogy with institutional modernisation. The implication of this study is the importance of the routinization of charismatic authority from *kiai* to *gus*, which not only strengthens the cultural foundations of the *pesantren* but also enables for the adaptation of Islamic education to meet the demands of global challenges.

**Keywords:** Leadership Transmission; *Pesantren* Leadership; Institutional Transformation; Routinization of Charisma

*Pesantren merupakan lembaga sosial-keagamaan yang berpengaruh dan berakar kuat dalam tradisi dan kehidupan masyarakat Indonesia. Keberlanjutan pesantren bertumpu pada peran sentral kiai, yang secara historis memiliki otoritas karismatik dalam membentuk praktik keagamaan dan struktur kelembagaannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konsekuensi sosiologis dari proses transmisi kepemimpinan dari kiai ke gus, khususnya bagaimana transmisi kharisma ini mendorong transformasi kelembagaan dalam merespon tantangan global. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif berupa studi kasus, penelitian ini dilakukan di Pesantren Al-Mustaqim di Jepara, Jawa Tengah. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi partisipan, dan dokumentasi. Empat informan dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik purposive sampling, yang terdiri dari satu gus (sebagai informan kunci), satu alumni, dan dua anggota masyarakat setempat. Analisis data mengikuti model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, yang mencakup kondensasi data, tampilan data, dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa transmisi kepemimpinan yang berlangsung secara turun-temurun berfungsi sebagai mekanisme untuk melestarikan legitimasi kharismatik dan mengawali proses pendidikan yang lebih adaptif. Gus muncul bukan hanya sebagai penerus, tetapi sebagai agen transformatif yang menjembatani pedagogi Islam tradisional dengan modernisasi kelembagaan. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya proses rutinisasi kharisma dari kiai ke gus yang tidak hanya akan semakin memperkuat akar budaya pesantren, tetapi juga membuka ruang adaptasi proses pendidikan Islam yang lebih adaptif terhadap tantangan global.*

## A. INTRODUCTION

*Pesantren* function as socio-religious institutions that play a central role in shaping religious communities in Indonesia. Deeply rooted in local culture, *pesantren* serve as centers for Islamic education and act as custodians of moral and spiritual values within society (Hutahaeen 2021). One of the defining characteristics of Indonesian *pesantren* is the transmission of leadership from *kiai* to *gus*, a hereditary process based on family lineage (*durriyah*) (Zahro 2016). This tradition has been sustained across generations, largely due to the enduring charisma of the *kiai* and the community's recognition of the genealogical and spiritual legitimacy of their successors. This leadership transition frequently leads to significant shifts in the socio-religious life of the *pesantren*, including a transformation from traditional patterns toward more modern approaches (Taufik 2021).

From Max Weber's perspective, the transmission of charismatic leadership from a *kiai* to a *gus* exemplifies the process of the 'routinization of charisma' – the transformation of personal, extraordinary authority into a more structured and institutional form of leadership (Weber 1968). This process preserves charismatic legitimacy through institutionalization or inheritance, ensuring the continuity of authority even after the original charismatic figure is no longer present. Weber explains that routinization may occur through various mechanisms, including hereditary succession, appointment by a predecessor, or formal institutional frameworks that internalize charisma within their structure (Turner 1993). In the context of *pesantren*, this routinization is evident when a *gus*, as the successor, not only inherits spiritual charisma (Isaacs 2015) but also actively adapts and transforms the institution's religious education model in response to global challenges (Fozdar 2015), such as modernizing the curriculum and integrating technology into learning processes.

Previous research has addressed various aspects of leadership in *pesantren*: (1) the characteristics of *pesantren* leadership shaped by internal ideological values (Asnawi et al. 2016; Wiyoto et al. 2020; Taruna, Wahab, and Muntakhib 2022; Hadi 2021), (2) the role of *pesantren* in character formation through education and moral instruction (Husain et al. 2023; Rahmawati, Iswati, and Sujino 2023; Kosasih, Fahrullah, and Mahdi 2023; Falah 2023; Takdir et al. 2022), and (3) the role of *kiai* in promoting *pesantren*-based economic empowerment, including the development of entrepreneurship among students (Mustaan 2020; Supriyanto et al. 2022; Tsauri and Wahidah 2021). However, *pesantren* leadership also encompasses sociological dimensions that have been largely overlooked, particularly the succession from *kiai* to *gus* and its institutional implications. Recently, several interdisciplinary studies have begun to explore the modernization of *pesantren* in the context of globalization and changing patterns of religious education (Zarkasyi 2019; Hasan 2021; Alavi and Syahputra 2022).

A review of the existing literature reveals an empirical gap in studying *pesantren* leadership. Most prior research has focused on traditional leadership forms and the moral role of the *kiai* in preserving classical *pesantren* values. Few studies have explicitly examined how the transmission of leadership from *kiai* to *gus* produces sociological consequences for institutional transformation, especially about global pressures and the reform of religious education systems.

This study seeks to address that gap by examining the sociological consequences of leadership transmission within *pesantren* and its role in institutional transformation—particularly how *pesantren* adapt and respond constructively and progressively to global challenges. The research adopts a case study approach centered on Pondok Pesantren Al-Mustaqim in Jepara. In this *pesantren*, the *gus* as successor to the *kiai* has implemented significant reforms, particularly in religious education, to respond to the

demands of an increasingly globalized world. This transformation reflects an evolving model of leadership and institutional management, one that attempts to reconcile Islamic tradition with the imperatives of the modern era.

## B. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply examine the process of leadership regeneration at Pondok Pesantren Al-Mustaqim in Jepara and its sociological consequences for institutional transformation in response to global challenges. The case study method was selected because it enables the researcher to explore social phenomena within real-life contexts comprehensively and contextually, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its setting are not clearly defined (Yin 2014). Pondok Pesantren Al-Mustaqim was purposively chosen as the research site because it has undergone a leadership transition from *kiai* to *gus*, which has generated various reforms, especially in religious education.

Data was collected using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The interviews involved four informants selected through purposive sampling, based on their relevance to the research objectives. The informants included one *gus* (as the *pesantren*'s leader and key informant, I1), one *pesantren* alumnus (I2), and two local community members (I3 and I4) serving as primary informants. Participant observation was employed to understand the everyday activities and patterns of interaction within the *pesantren*. At the same time, documentation was sourced from books, academic articles, seminar papers, magazines, and online resources related to *pesantren* transformation.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), which comprises three core stages: data reduction, data

display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing raw data from interviews, observations, and documents. The reduced data were then presented in narrative and thematic formats to facilitate identifying relationships among key phenomena. Drawing conclusions was conducted simultaneously and continuously throughout the research, ensuring the validity and consistency of interpretations concerning the social realities under investigation.

### *Theoretical Framework*

The central concept employed in this study is the routinization of charisma, as developed by Max Weber. Weber distinguishes among three forms of legitimate domination in his typology of authority: traditional authority, legal-rational authority, and charismatic authority. Among these, charismatic authority is unique, as it derives from extraordinary qualities believed to reside in an individual—such as spiritual power, intellectual brilliance, or supernatural ability. Charisma often emerges during periods of crisis or social uncertainty, when people seek a figure who can offer hope and direction (Weber 1978).

However, Weber also emphasized that charisma cannot be indefinitely sustained in its original form. When a charismatic leader passes away or is no longer actively in power, a mechanism is required to preserve the authority that has been established. This is the process Weber referred to as the routinization of charisma—transforming personal, charismatic leadership into a more stable and institutionalized form. This routinization can occur through the hereditary transmission of authority, appointing a successor by the original leader, or establishing of formal systems that embed charisma within institutional structures (Weber 1978).

In the context of *pesantren*, the routinization of charisma can be observed in the transmission of leadership from a *kiai* to his son or trusted

disciple (*gus*). A *kiai* is typically revered for his scholarly authority, piety, and role in guiding the community. When a *kiai* dies or steps down, the leadership of the *pesantren* is often passed on to a *gus* to sustain charismatic legitimacy. This process is not merely administrative; it reflects a broader social recognition that the successor possesses the rightful charismatic authority to lead (Turner 1993). Thus, charisma serves both as the foundation for leadership transition and as a mechanism for maintaining social cohesion within the *pesantren*.

Bryan Turner (1993) further developed Weber's ideas by emphasizing the sociological dimensions of the routinization of charisma, particularly how charisma can be managed and embedded within social structures. Turner argues that in modern contexts, charisma does not necessarily disappear but is often adapted through the institutionalization of the values associated initially with the charismatic leader. In religious institutions, this is evident when the teachings, methods, and vision of successors carry forward the teachings, methods, and vision of the original leader through more modern systems of education, curriculum design, and administrative structures. In this way, the routinization of charisma sustains authority and facilitates institutional transformation aligned with changing historical and social contexts.

Through this theoretical lens, the transmission of leadership from *kiai* to *gus* is understood not simply as the transfer of power but as a complex sociological process—one in which charismatic legitimacy is reproduced, stabilized, and at the same time, reconfigured through institutional transformation, particularly in the educational domain. The routinization of charisma offers a key conceptual tool to understand how *pesantren* adapt to global challenges while preserving their traditional foundations. As such, this theoretical framework provides an analytical basis for exploring the relationship between leadership regeneration and social change within the *pesantren* institution.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. *The Process of Pesantren's Regeneration*

As an integral part of Indonesia's national education system, *pesantren* represents a uniquely indigenous educational institution. Emerging as early Islamic learning centers in the archipelago during the 13th century, *pesantren* have played a pivotal role in shaping Islamic education and religious life in the region (Zamarkhasyari Dhofier 2011; Zamakhsyari Dhofier 1980). They are widely recognized as the oldest form of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia and have significantly contributed to the development of Islam in the Nusantara (Thoha 1996). Martin van Bruinessen identifies *pesantren* as one of Indonesia's 'great traditions'—a reference to the transmission of classical Islamic teachings, especially in Java and other regions such as the Malay Peninsula, through institutions that center their curriculum on classical Islamic texts (Bruinessen 1995).

The existence of *pesantren* cannot be separated from five fundamental elements: the *kiai*, the dormitory (pondok), the mosque, the teaching system, and the students (*santri*) (Zamarkhasyari Dhofier 2011). Among these, the *kiai* holds the most vital role, not only in the institution's life but also in shaping its religious and moral character (Bruinessen 1995). A *kiai* is more than a religious teacher; he serves as a spiritual guide, a counselor in personal matters, a ritual leader, and an intermediary between the seen and unseen realms. The authority of a *kiai* is rooted in his mastery of Islamic knowledge, which earns him deep respect from the community (Bruinessen 2005).

Over time, the *kiai* has evolved beyond his traditional role as a religious elite to become a prominent figure in wider social, political, and economic spheres. While maintaining their status within the *pesantren*, many *kiai* have extended their influence into broader societal structures,

earning national and international recognition (Zamarkhasyari Dhofier 2011). Some have successfully expanded their authority into public discourse, offering new narratives and agendas that shape socio-political landscapes (Hikmawan, Godjali, and Indriyany 2021).

A *kiai*'s genealogy often involves spiritual knowledge, charisma, and intellectual acumen to his descendants. However, such inheritance requires considerable effort and discipline to follow the legacy of predecessors truly. Within *pesantren* culture, the concept of *dzurriyah* (genealogy or bloodline) holds great significance. Lineage, scholarly networks (*sanad*), and family ties indicate a person's legitimacy as a religious authority (Zahro 2016). As one informant (I3) explained:

"Some inherit leadership from their parents and continue developing the *pesantren* as a family legacy. Their social recognition originates from their parents' influence, whether through the *pesantren* itself or their public stature in Jepara."

The *kiai* is the central and authoritative figure behind every policy and transformation within the *pesantren*. Two key factors explain this centrality: first, leadership in *pesantren* is highly centralized in the person of the *kiai* due to his paternalistic charisma. Most *pesantren* operate under a 'mono' system—mono-management and mono-administration—where authority is not delegated to organizational subunits. Second, ownership of the institution is typically individual or familial, not communal. This reinforces the unquestionable authority of the *kiai* as both founder and caretaker of the institution. Due to the hereditary nature of *pesantren* leadership, successors are typically chosen from the *kiai*'s sons (*gus*), and such appointments are rarely contested within the *pesantren* community. This inheritance model has led to *pesantren* often being called 'small kingdoms' (Habibah and Rahmawati 2023; Shofi and Talkah 2021; Mashuri et al. 2023; Masnun 2020).



Max Weber outlined four key features of charismatic social relationships and their organizational structure. First, followers have absolute trust in the leader, and no doubt is cast upon the leader's authority. The leader demands—and receives—unquestioning obedience. Second, there is a disruption or breakdown of normative standards, where traditional behavioral expectations are suspended. The more elevated the leader's authority, the more they stand above conventional rules. Charismatic leadership is thus marked by a de-institutionalization of norms and a rejection of traditional values. Third, these conditions give rise to emotionally bonded communities centered on personal devotion to the leader. These communities are often organized by agents selected by the leader for their charisma. Finally, Weber asserted that charismatic leaders typically disregard rational economic activities and that their legitimacy hinges on success—the need to demonstrate effectiveness in their leadership claims (Weber 1968; Lepsius 1986; Breuilly 2011; Adair-Toteff 2005).

Many *kiai* perceive the *pesantren* as a personal domain of power in which they hold absolute authority. No one can challenge their rule within this structure —unless another *kiai* with greater influence emerges. This dynamic allows a dominant *kiai* to become a cultural and intellectual leader over other *pesantren*, especially smaller or mid-sized institutions (Bruinessen 1995). To preserve the institution's legacy, *kiai* have developed mechanisms to ensure continuity. These include: (1) preparing their closest male descendants (*gus*) to inherit leadership, thus reinforcing leadership as a family tradition; (2) forging endogamous marriage arrangements within *kiai* families; and (3) institutionalizing knowledge transfer among *kiai* and their kin (Zamarkhasyari Dhofier 2011).

For outsiders who aspire to be recognized as a *kiai*, the most common path is to become the favored disciple of a respected *kiai*, often through close mentorship or marriage into the *kiai*'s family. This practice is widespread

because not all *kiai* have male heirs. Alternatively, an exceptionally talented santri from a non-elite background may be groomed as a successor. However, such cases differ from the endogamous traditions typical in many *pesantren* (Feillard 1995).

A *kiai*'s charisma is not only religious but also positions him as a community figure and institutional leader. His authority extends beyond the *pesantren* to influence broader societal values, including leadership models within and outside religious life (Hariyadi 2020; Masnun 2020; Pamulang 2023; Asy'ari, Hasibuan, and Rosyad 2020; Furqon 2024; Safinah and Arifin 2021). Among Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) *kiai*, charisma often follows a hierarchical structure shaped by family lineage and scholarly affiliation. A *kiai*'s status is influenced by the charisma of his father and predecessors, as well as the authority of his teachers. Prominent *kiai* typically trace their lineage to several generations of esteemed religious scholars, whose legitimacy is publicly recognized. However, charisma alone is not inherited; it must be reinforced through personal integrity, scholarly excellence, and strong character (Feillard 1995).

## **2. Charismatic Transmission in the Leadership Regeneration Model of Pesantren: From Kiai to Gus**

*Pesantren* must undergo leadership transmission to ensure institutional continuity and development. This regeneration is typically hereditary, reflecting the internal dynamics of *pesantren* as they evolve. Several rationales underpin this process: (1) the leadership model of a *kiai* is paternalistic, charismatic, semi-democratic, and transcendentally transformative; and (2) regeneration aims to preserve the lineage (*dzurriyah*), including both direct descendants and close familial ties. This model of succession follows particular criteria: (a) the heir must be deemed competent to safeguard the religious knowledge and institutional character of the *pesantren*; (b) capable of preserving the *pesantren*'s values and family

legacy; and (c) able to maintain the *pesantren*'s ideological orientation—be it *salafiyah*, *salafiyah-khalafiyah*, or *khalafiyah* (Sidiq 2020). One informant (I1) shared his own experience:

“After finishing my studies in Yogyakarta, my father picked me up with a pickup truck, not just to visit, but to help pack my books, clothes, and belongings. We went straight to the *pesantren* where I had studied to say farewell to my teacher. The purpose was clear: my father wanted me and my brother (both sons) to continue the legacy he had entrusted to us.”

This account illustrates that as the son of a *kiai*, particularly a male heir, the *gus* had been deliberately prepared through both formal higher education and nonformal religious instruction within the *pesantren*. This dual education ensured that he would one day be responsible of continuing his father's leadership. Once deemed eligible, the *gus* was expected to fulfill the leadership role by the established norms and criteria.

A *kiai*'s charisma is often inherited from his father or predecessors and further shaped by his spiritual mentors. However, unlike renowned *kiai* whose families boast three or four generations of respected scholars, such charisma must also be reinforced through individual character and scholarly competence (Feillard 1995). A *kiai* is more than a teacher—he is a spiritual guide, a life counselor, a ritual leader, and an intermediary between the seen and unseen. His religious knowledge forms the basis of his legitimacy and the community's trust (Achmadin, Asrori, and Barizi 2024; Bruinessen 2005; Zamhari 2010).

The *kiai* thus occupies a position not only as a religious elite but also as a figure of social authority within and beyond the *pesantren*. The *kiai*'s charisma shapes leadership models and social engagement in educational and communal settings (Aisyah et al. 2022; Rahman 2022; Wajdi et al. 2022). Among *kiai* of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) tradition, charisma is hierarchical and often inherited, though it must also be earned. This deeply embedded charisma stems from the community's proximity and loyalty to the *kiai*.

According to Max Weber, charisma is an extraordinary personal quality attributed to individuals believed to possess supernatural or exceptional powers. What defines charisma is not its inherent nature but its social recognition, if people believe someone is charismatic, then that person exercises charismatic authority (Weber 1968; Habibah and Rahmawati 2023). Weber categorized authority into three forms: traditional, legal-rational, and charismatic (Spencer 1970). He further explained four dimensions of charismatic social relationships: (1) absolute trust in the leader by followers; (2) suspension of normative structures, wherein traditional rules are subordinated to the leader's authority; (3) emotional community formation around the leader, sustained by agents chosen for their loyalty; and (4) a demand for proof of legitimacy through success—charisma must be continually validated (Lepsius 1986).

In some cases, *pesantren* leadership is not passed down through hereditary lines. Leadership transitions follow different mechanisms in *pesantren* built on community endowments (*wakaf*). Even in these instances, the *kiai*'s family remains a critical part of the process, typically involving community stakeholders. Ultimately, the decision emerges from collective consensus, aiming to uphold the *pesantren*'s future (Fauzian 2020). Such transmission models reflect expectations that new leadership will be more adaptive to contemporary changes, including shifts in institutional management, pedagogy, and values. This requires more capable human resources, individuals who integrate religious scholarship with general knowledge to produce well-rounded alums.

In this context, lineage serves as a form of social capital. A *gus* benefits from the status inherited from his father, a *kiai*, whose influence continues to shape public trust and legitimacy (Abdullah 2019). As one informant (I4) noted:

"Many of the young public figures we see today owe their influence to their parents. It's common in education as well—many inherit foundations or *pesantren* established by their fathers."

Consequently, the *gus* is the most promising agent for transforming *pesantren* from traditional institutions into more modern and adaptive ones. Not only does he possess the symbolic capital of descent, but he also belongs to a digital generation, making him more attuned to contemporary issues. Ideally, he can translate this position into institutional policies that strengthen *pesantren*'s relevance in the modern era, primarily through technological integration and future-oriented curricula.

The *kiai* ensures the preservation of *pesantren* traditions by creating institutional mechanisms for succession. This includes: (1) appointing close family members—especially sons—as successors, reinforcing hereditary leadership as a cultural norm; (2) establishing informal agreements around endogamous marriage within *kiai* families; and (3) maintaining chains of religious knowledge through ongoing transmission among *kiai* and their descendants (Zamarkhasyari Dhofier 2011).

### ***3. The Impact of Leadership Regeneration on the Transformation of Pesantren***

In Jepara, where most of the population is Muslim, approximately 95% of residents are affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), *pesantren* culture is deeply embedded in everyday life. This strong cultural presence has shaped local social structures so that families of *kiai* are respected and honored across generations. As a result, the identity of being a *kiai*'s descendant is something to be maintained and even institutionalized by future generations. The *kiai*'s legacy is perpetuated through his children, whose social and intellectual standing often mirrors their predecessors. This legacy manifests across various economic, social, and political domains.

Such continuity indicates that within *pesantren* culture, the lineage of *kiai* is seen as an unbroken intellectual and spiritual chain that links one generation to the next. The persistence of this tradition in Jepara is evident in the region's high concentration of *pesantren* institutions, which are distributed widely across the regency's subdistricts. The following table illustrates the number of *pesantren* in each subdistrict of Jepara as of 2019:

Table 1.

Number of *Pesantren* by Jepara Regency District in 2019

District		Number of <i>pesantren</i>
(1)		(2)
1	Kedung	28
2	Pecangaan	9
3	Kalinyamatan	10
4	Welahan	9
5	Mayong	8
6	Nalumsari	5
7	Batealit	17
8	Tahunan	19
9	Jepara	5
10	Mlonggo	6
11	Pakis Aji	1
12	Bangsri	19
13	Kembang	3
14	Keling	1
15	Donorojo	11
16	Karimunjawa	0
Totals		151

(BPS Jepara 2021).

The large number of *pesantren* in Jepara also reflects the diversity of institutional characteristics across the region. Some *pesantren* focus on Qur'anic memorization (*tahfidz*), classical Islamic texts (*kitab*), or a combination of the two, while others emphasize esoteric wisdom (*hikmah*). Another typology categorizes *pesantren* in Jepara into *salaf* (traditional), *salafi* (purist), modern, and semi-modern institutions (Firdaus 2022). These classifications align with broader national categories of *pesantren* in Indonesia, such as: (1) *pesantren tahfidz*, (2) rehabilitation *pesantren*, (3) integrated *pesantren* that combine religious and secular sciences, (4) Sufi-oriented *pesantren*, (5) community-based *pesantren* that prepare students for leadership roles, (6) entrepreneurial *pesantren*, (7) *pesantren* specializing in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and (8) *pesantren* 'Aly that offer higher education curricula (Aryanto 2021).

As traditional educational institutions, *pesantren* have made significant contributions to the development of the Indonesian nation. Prior to independence, *pesantren* under the leadership of *kiai* played a key role in the anti-colonial struggle. Since independence, they have become an integral part of the national education system, particularly due to their role in character education. As such, *pesantren* are not only educational centers but also crucial institutions that shape Muslim youth's moral and civic values. They have educated millions of Indonesian Muslims and have stood as pillars of national development, equipping young people with the emotional and intellectual maturity needed to contribute to a visionary and resilient Indonesia. *Pesantren* must therefore be understood not only as educational institutions, but also as defenders and preservers of moral and national values in an era of widespread social disruption (Jubba et al. 2022).

According to Machali, organizational and managerial reform within *pesantren* is a form of institutional transformation aimed at responding to contemporary change. One key aspect of this reform is that

the *kiai* no longer serves as the sole decision-maker (Machali 2004). As one informant (I1) explained regarding leadership regeneration in his *pesantren*:

“I was entrusted with managing the formal education units, *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (junior secondary school) and *Madrasah Aliyah* (senior secondary school), while my younger brother was tasked with overseeing the boarding system (*muhadharah*). I even left my private university teaching job to dedicate myself to the *pesantren*'s formal education sector.”

Once the regeneration process was completed, the responsibility for running the *pesantren* fell to the new leadership. Organizational and managerial reform marked the beginning of this transformation. The *pesantren* leadership was now divided by function: the *gus* assumed responsibility for formal education, while his brother handled religious and boarding activities. In this structure, no single person held absolute authority; each leader played a distinct yet collaborative role within the institution.

In addition to modernizing its internal management, the *pesantren* also prioritized the development of its students by offering talent-based programs and extracurricular activities. These included graphic design, archery, martial arts, sports, agriculture, animal husbandry, first aid, and character-building camps. These initiatives were designed to equip students with skills needed to navigate global society (Wiyoto et al. 2020; Jahiddin 2020; Husain et al. 2023; Rahman 2022; Kamalia 2021; Falah 2023; Kosasih, Fahrullah, and Mahdi 2023; Rahmawati, Iswati, and Sujino 2023; Achmadin and Barizi 2024). One informant (I1) noted:

“In response to globalization and modernization, we tried to adapt by establishing a vocational training center (BLK), specifically in graphic design. *Alhamdulillah*, our alumni who participated in this program can now compete with graduates from any institution. Many even choose to pursue graphic design majors in university because they already feel confident in that skill set.”



Establishing of this BLK Komunitas (community-based vocational training center) represents a concrete policy shift to ensure *pesantren* remain relevant in a rapidly evolving world. Through such initiatives, student modernization becomes possible. Ideally, *pesantren* graduates will be competitive in both the job market and higher education. This initiative was implemented through a partnership between the *pesantren* and the Ministry of Manpower (Kemnaker). While this form of transformation supports institutional independence, it also increases operational costs, affecting student tuition. Another informant (I2) shared his experience as a *pesantren* alumnus:

“*Alhamdulillah*, during my time as a student, my parents could still afford the tuition. But after I graduated, I heard that the cost of attending my *pesantren* had significantly increased. Even so, the skills I gained there helped me a lot once I returned to my community.”

As centers of religious learning and missionary work (*dakwah*), *pesantren* also contribute significantly to social and cultural dynamics. In today's context, alums are expected to evolve alongside societal change. They can no longer rely solely on religious credentials; they must also possess practical skills relevant to contemporary life (Taruna, Wahab, and Muntakhib 2022). In the era of globalization, the ideal *pesantren* can harmonize traditional Islamic education with modern pedagogical models. Such institutions are able to adopt beneficial innovations while preserving their heritage—adapting without abandoning their foundations (Iskandar 2023).

A comparable shift has occurred in the Baduy Luar community, where globalization and modernization have led to socio-cultural transformations. Members of this once-insular society now engage with the outside world and benefit from its influence. This interaction has resulted

in the emergence of hybrid cultural expressions within the community (Amaliyah 2018)

#### D. CONCLUSION

This study finds that the process of leadership regeneration from *kiai* to *gus* within the *pesantren* setting is not merely a matter of genealogical inheritance but also a mechanism for institutionalizing religious charisma. As explained by Weber in his theory of the routinization of charisma, charismatic leadership requires validation through demonstrated success and social legitimacy—both of which, in the context of *pesantren*, are manifested in scholarly authority, religious-social networks, and the capacity to drive institutional transformation. The findings reveal that the *gus*, as the successor to the *kiai*, plays a pivotal role in modernizing *pesantren* management, expanding the religious curriculum, and initiating adaptive, skill-based programs in response to contemporary challenges. This regeneration unfolds within a framework of charismatic authority that gradually transforms into a more rational and adaptive institutional structure.

From a sociological perspective, the regeneration process figures that *pesantren* are not static religious institutions but dynamic social entities capable of adapting to shifting times. The transmission of charisma from *kiai* to *gus* underscores the enduring significance of lineage as a source of legitimacy, while also reflecting a hybridization of traditional and rational-legal authority within the institutional sphere. In this regard, the *gus* functions as a transformative agent who rearticulates inherited religious values into organizational forms more responsive to global developments. The regeneration of leadership in *pesantren* thus emphasizes that the sustainability of religious authority depends largely on the successor's ability to navigate social and technological change without severing ties to

the institution's spiritual foundations. This process embodies a continuing tension and negotiation between tradition and modernity in the social landscape of *pesantren*.

The implications of these findings suggest that when grounded in charisma and lineage, leadership transmission in *pesantren* should be recognized as a strategic potential for advancing institutional transformation toward a more adaptive and visionary future. The success of this process depends heavily on the *gus's* capacity to develop the *pesantren* professionally while preserving its epistemological roots. Therefore, this study recommends the importance of institutional support and policy interventions, both from government bodies and Islamic organizations, to ensure that regeneration efforts not only secure the continuity of *pesantren*, but also enhance their contribution to national educational development. Future research should further explore patterns of leadership succession across different *pesantren* and social-cultural contexts in order to generate a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

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