

Spiritual Leadership and Mental Wellbeing: The Role of *Kiai* in Maintaining *Santri* Mental Health

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Abstract

This study explores the managerial role of the *Kiai* in maintaining the mental health of *santri* at Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Qodiri 02, an institution known for integrating religious teachings with psychological support. Using a qualitative case study approach, data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis over six months. The findings reveal that the *Kiai* enhances *santri*'s mental health by offering emotional connections and spiritual guidance and fostering a nurturing environment. The *Kiai* also serves as a role model, teaching values such as patience, perseverance, and devotion to Allah, which promote psychological resilience and character development. However, the study's focus on a single *pesantren* limits its generalizability to other institutions with different leadership structures and cultural dynamics. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative data may not capture broader trends in mental health across *pesantren*. The study emphasizes the need for *pesantren* administrators to create a supportive ecosystem that strengthens *Kiai*'s role in fostering mental well-being and equips *santri* with life skills for challenges beyond the *pesantren* setting.

Keywords

Islamic Boarding School; *Kiai*; Mental Health; Spiritual Guidance

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in attention to mental health in educational environments, including religious institutions such as *pesantren* (Khodijah dkk., 2024). The latest survey data from Indonesia, the National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS), reveals that approximately 34.9% of Indonesian adolescents-equivalent to 15.5 million people-experience mental health issues, with anxiety being one of the most common disorders, with anxiety being one of the most common. Adolescent girls show a higher prevalence of anxiety (28.2%) compared to boys (25.4%), while hyperactivity and attention-deficit disorders are more frequently experienced by boys (12.3%). In addition, 64.7% of teenagers face relationship conflicts with their families, and 41.1% struggle to build relationships with peers. These facts indicate that mental health issues have a significant impact on the potential of the younger generation, including *santri*, in achieving the vision of Indonesia's golden generation in 2045 (Makalao & Yusuf, 2024; Pasaribu dkk., 2024; Yusutria dkk., 2024).



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In *pesantren*, mental health issues are often considered a secondary concern, even though psychological well-being greatly impacts the ability of *santri* to learn and develop (Irsyadi dkk., 2024; Nawas dkk., 2024; Sholihah dkk., 2024). The *pesantren* life, which focuses on religious education and moral strengthening, often overlooks the importance of mental health as an integral part of character-building (“Character Education through Philosophical Values in Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools,” 2023; Farhan & Shobahiya, 2024; Ikhwanul Abrori dkk., 2024). In reality, the *pesantren* environment, with its strict traditions and intense routines, can trigger psychological stress for some *santri* (Aji, 2024). However, while existing research has primarily focused on medical or clinical interventions, there remains a conceptual gap in understanding how *pesantren*’s unique leadership, particularly the role of the *Kiai*, contributes to mental health support. Given that the *Kiai* serve not only as a religious authority but also as a mentor and role model, their influence on the emotional and psychological resilience of *santri* warrants further exploration. A deeper examination of how spiritual leadership fosters mental well-being within the *pesantren* context is crucial to bridging this gap and establishing a clear scientific framework that links religious guidance with psychological outcomes. This study addresses this issue by investigating how *Kiai*’s leadership shapes *Santri*’s mental resilience, offering a holistic perspective beyond conventional clinical approaches.

Previous studies have laid a crucial foundation for understanding the relationship between spiritual leadership and mental health. However, its direct relevance to *pesantren* as a distinctive educational and religious institution remains underexplored, particularly in how *Kiai* actively shapes the psychological well-being of *santri* through structured spiritual practices, personal mentorship, and institutional support systems. Research by Azhar and Dian, for instance, demonstrates that spiritual leadership fosters a conducive learning environment and supports the character development of *santri* (Azhar & Suryana, 2024; Dian dkk., 2024). Similarly, Wulandari concludes that *mujahadah*—a spiritual practice mandated and led by the *Kiai* at Pondok Pesantren Anwaarul Hidayah—contributes to the mental well-being of *santri* by instilling a sense of tranquility, allowing them to face challenges with composure and reduced psychological (Wulandari, t.t.). The role of the *Kiai* is undeniably central within *pesantren*, as he serves not only as a spiritual guide but also as a mentor and protector for *santri*, particularly those facing personal difficulties that may hinder their academic progress (M Faris Annabili & Shobihus Surur, 2025).

Further research highlights specific strategies employed to foster *Santri*’s mental well-being. Ningsih, Salamah, and Zainuddin identify key mentoring techniques in Pondok Pesantren Raudhatul Ulum Lumajang, including group organization, physical-based approaches, and spiritual-based approaches, all of which rely significantly on the leadership of the *Kiai* and teaching staff (Ningsih & Salamah, 2024). Kibtiyah emphasizes the importance of counseling services in *pesantren*, given the numerous psychological challenges faced by *santri*, which, if left unaddressed, may lead to ineffective learning or even premature departure from the institution (Kibtiyah dkk., t.t.). They argue that a comprehensive support system involving the *Kiai*, administrators, and educators is essential in mitigating these issues. Likewise, Setiawan and Nur analyze how Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Putri 5 implements *Tau’iyyah Diniyyah*—a religious guidance program designed to instill *pesantren* values while nurturing *santri*’s mental resilience. In this context, the *Kiai*, alongside teachers and dormitory supervisors, acts as a *qudwah hasanah* (role model), serving as a mentor, educator, and protector to ensure the holistic well-being of *santri* (Setiawan & Nur, t.t.).

This study explores *Kiai*’s role in promoting the psychological well-being of *santri* at Pondok Pesantren Darut Tholibin Al-Qodiri 02 Jember, addressing a significant gap in existing research on mental health within *pesantren*. Unlike previous studies that treat spiritual leadership as a given, this research critically examines *Kiai*’s tangible impact on *santri*’s mental health through religious guidance, personal mentorship, and moral exemplification. Using a qualitative case study approach, it investigates leadership strategies, challenges in addressing mental health, and the measurable effects on *Santri*’s resilience, grounded in psychological and leadership theories. The findings aim to

contribute to the development of a spiritually integrated mental health support system in *pesantren* and enhance broader discussions on mental health in Islamic education.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative case study research design to provide an in-depth analysis of the role of *Kiai* in supporting the mental health of *santri* at *Pondok Pesantren Darut Tholibin Al-Qodiri 02 Jember*. The case study method is chosen because it offers a detailed exploration of complex social phenomena within their real-life context. Given that *Pesantren* is a unique educational and religious institution, a case study approach enables a focused investigation of how spiritual leadership is applied in managing mental health challenges among *santri*. This method allows the researcher to capture the lived experiences of the *Kiai*, *pesantren* administrators, and *santri*, providing a rich understanding of leadership strategies and their psychological impact.

The research was conducted at *Pondok Pesantren Darut Tholibin Al-Qodiri 02 Jember*, located in East Java. This *pesantren* was selected due to its distinctive application of spiritual leadership in addressing the psychological well-being of its *santri*. The institution has established religious and educational programs integrating spiritual guidance with mental health support, making it a relevant case for this study (Gafur dkk., 2024). Understanding the specific context of this *pesantren* is essential in highlighting the effectiveness and challenges of spiritual leadership in maintaining mental resilience among *santri*.

Data collection methods in this study include observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis (Karunarathna dkk., t.t.). Observations are conducted to directly examine the spiritual leadership practices and the interactions between the *Kiai* and *santri* concerning mental health management. In-depth interviews are conducted with *Kiai*, *pesantren* administrators, and selected *santri* to gain deeper insights into the leadership strategies employed to foster psychological resilience. Document analysis is performed on *pesantren* policies, activity guidelines, and mental health records to complement the findings from observations and interviews.

Multiple validation strategies are applied to ensure the data's validity and reliability. The credibility of the data is ensured through triangulation, which involves comparing findings from different data sources and collection methods (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2024; Manouilidou dkk., 2024; Morgan, 2024). Transferability is addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, enabling the potential application to similar *pesantren* settings. Dependability is maintained by systematically documenting the research process, allowing consistency and replication. Confirmability is achieved by maintaining an audit trail, which includes interview transcripts, field notes, and documented reflections to ensure that interpretations remain grounded in the data (Fain, 2024).

The data analysis process follows four key stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Initially, all collected data from observations, interviews, and documents are compiled and organized systematically. Data reduction is conducted by categorizing information into themes aligned with the research objectives. Thematic analysis is applied to identify patterns related to spiritual leadership and mental health support strategies (Sharma dkk., 2024; Vedula & Agrawal, 2024). Data presentation is carried out through a structured narrative, providing a clear and systematic account of the research findings (Naeem dkk., 2024; Nasarian dkk., 2024). Finally, conclusions are drawn by interpreting the analyzed data in response to the research questions.

This study follows an established research roadmap to enhance the clarity of the research structure. The study begins with a theoretical review of spiritual leadership and mental health in *pesantren* settings, followed by field data collection and thematic analysis. The findings are then integrated with existing theoretical frameworks to comprehensively understand *Kiai's* role in mental

health support. This structured approach ensures that each research stage is scientifically grounded and contributes meaningfully to the academic discourse on mental health within Islamic education.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Spiritual Leadership of the Kiai at Pondok Pesantren Al-Qodiri 02 Gumukmas

Spiritual leadership is a leadership paradigm that emphasizes spirituality, morality, and religious values in managing and influencing individuals and communities. In the context of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), the spiritual leadership practiced by a *Kiai* is uniquely characterized by its dual role: not only as an administrator but also as a spiritual guide, guardian of Islamic scholarly traditions, and a role model of noble character (Taufiq dkk., 2024). A *Kiai* in *pesantren* becomes a central figure who is respected not only for intellectual capacity but also for the moral and spiritual authority inherent in them. Therefore, the spiritual leadership of a *Kiai* is a combination of formal, traditional, and charismatic authority rooted in Islamic values.

In this study, interviews with *santri* and *Pesantren* administrators revealed that the *Kiai* is regarded as a figure who embodies both intellectual and moral authority. One *santri* stated, "The *Kiai* is not just a teacher, but he is also a role model for us in everything we do. He leads by example, showing us how to be patient and humble even in difficult situations," echoed others. From an Islamic perspective, spiritual leadership is rooted in strong theological principles, where the *Kiai* ensures that decisions reflect Islamic values such as justice, honesty, and compassion, as emphasized in the Qur'an (QS. Al-Baqarah: 247, QS. An-Nisa: 58). The *Kiai* is not only an administrative leader but also a *murabbi*, guiding the *santri* in living according to Islamic law. In an interview, *Kiai* explained, "In leading the *pesantren*, I believe that it is essential to guide not only the minds of the *santri* but also their hearts. Every policy we make here must reflect the values of honesty, integrity, and care for each other," illustrating how his leadership blends administrative and spiritual mentorship to foster holistic development in the *pesantren*.

One fundamental aspect of the spiritual leadership of a *Kiai* is the embodiment and internalization of religious values in every aspect of life (Elmontadzery dkk., 2024; Hudori dkk., t.t.; Ibrahim, t.t.; Muhammad Jamil, 2024). A *Kiai* does not merely provide advice and teachings but also practices Islamic values in daily life. In this context, a *Kiai* becomes an *uswatun hasanah* (a good role model) for the students. This role modeling encompasses patience, humility, and compassion, directly influencing the students' character formation. Students receive formal education and character-building through direct interaction with the *Kiai*. Thus, the spiritual leadership of a *Kiai* strongly incorporates a dimension of character education.

Observations conducted in the *pesantren* corroborate this point, showing how the *Kiai's* daily actions—whether in group prayers, counseling sessions, or casual interactions—demonstrate patience and humility. For example, during an observation of a group *dhikr* session, one of the *santri* remarked, "The *Kiai* always reminds us to be patient when we face problems, and he is always the first one to stay calm in difficult situations." Such behaviors, which the researcher repeatedly observed, are integral in shaping the students' character and spiritual development.

In conclusion, the spiritual leadership of a *Kiai* in *pesantren* is a multifaceted paradigm that blends intellectual authority with moral and spiritual guidance. The *Kiai's* role extends beyond administrative duties, embodying Islamic values in formal teachings and personal conduct, which deeply influences the character and spiritual development of the *santri*. Through direct role modeling, the *Kiai* instills patience, humility, and compassion, fostering holistic growth. This approach not only shapes the students' religious practices but also guides them in navigating the challenges of everyday

life with integrity and resilience, making *Kiai*'s leadership transformative in nurturing both the minds and hearts of the *santri*.

Mental Health of Santri at Pondok Pesantren Al-Qodiri 02 Gumukmas

Mental health in *pesantren* is crucial, encompassing the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of *santri* during their critical developmental phase. It requires a holistic approach rooted in Islamic values, balancing spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being. *Santri* faces challenges such as academic pressures, social interactions, and high moral expectations, which are mitigated by Islamic teachings like patience, sincerity, and trust in Allah. Supportive relationships with *Kiai*, Ustaz, and peers provide emotional support while a conducive environment of fairness, respect, and spiritual practices such as prayer and dhikr further nurture mental health. However, external pressures like family issues or socioeconomic struggles can lead to mental health challenges, emphasizing the need for spiritual mentorship and potential collaboration with mental health professionals. To enhance mental health, *pesantren* can implement preventive measures like emotional skills training, counseling, and the reinforcement of religious values. An administrator stated, "We integrate emotional skills training alongside religious teachings, ensuring that *santri* not only grows spiritually but also develops the emotional strength to cope with life's difficulties." This approach was affirmed by a senior *santri*, who said, "Since the emotional skills sessions started, I feel more confident in handling pressure, whether it is in my studies or personal issues. It has helped me become more resilient." These programs improve individual resilience and strengthen the overall well-being of the *pesantren* community.

Santri's mental health also has implications for their future success. Those with good mental health are more likely to face life's challenges, maintain harmonious relationships, and contribute positively to society (Ismail dkk., 2024; Muttaqin dkk., 2024; Putra Halilintar & Rafiqah, 2024; Rahmawati & Suud, t.t.). As observed in the *pesantren*, students who participate in counseling and religious activities often exhibit greater emotional stability and a more positive outlook. One *Kiai* noted during an observation, "A healthy mind in the *santri* ensures a peaceful heart, which contributes to their growth in both spiritual and worldly matters."

Therefore, safeguarding *santri*'s mental health is not only the responsibility of the *pesantren* but also an investment in building a resilient and virtuous generation. This was reflected in the daily routines observed at the *pesantren*, where emphasis was placed on spiritual guidance, personal well-being, and communal support. The *Kiai* mentioned, "In our *pesantren*, we believe that mental health is as important as spiritual development. It is interconnected, and we strive to ensure our students are mentally prepared to face life's trials."

In addressing modern challenges, such as the influence of social media and globalization pressures, *pesantren* need to adapt their approaches to support *santri*'s mental health. Digital literacy education, for instance, can help *santri* understand the impact of technology on their well-being and develop healthy habits in using social media (Mahmud & Sakinah, t.t.; Nudin, t.t.; Purwaningtyas dkk., 2024; Sheva Bayu Firmansyah & Zaenal Abidin, 2024). A *santri* who had participated in the digital literacy program stated, "Learning about the effects of social media on our mental health has been eye-opening. Now, I am more conscious of how much time I spend on my phone and how it affects my mood."

Overall, the concept of *santri*'s mental health is integral to holistic *pesantren* education. With an approach rooted in Islamic values, community support, and adaptation to contemporary needs, *pesantren* can optimally support the mental well-being of *santri*. This aligns with the primary goal of Islamic education: to nurture individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also mentally healthy and spiritually upright. As observed, integrating religious guidance with mental health support allows *santri* to grow in their faith and resilience, preparing them to contribute meaningfully to society.

The Role of the Kiai in Maintaining the Mental Health of Santri at PP. Al-Qodiri 02 Jember

The role of the *Kiai* in maintaining the mental health of *santri* is crucial in Islamic boarding schools, particularly in creating a balanced environment that nurtures both spiritual and psychological well-being. In Islamic educational institutions, especially *pesantren*, the *Kiai* serves as a religious leader and a mentor in personal and social development. The close relationship between the *Kiai* and the *santri* is characterized by direct interaction, mutual trust, and respect. This relationship allows the *Kiai* to act as a guide who provides mentorship not only in religious matters but also in addressing the personal and emotional challenges that *santri* faces during their time at the *pesantren*.

At Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Qodiri 02 Jember, the *Kiai*'s role extends beyond teaching religious knowledge to foster the mental resilience of the *santri*. Through observations and interviews, it was evident that *Kiai* Habibullah, as the *pesantren*'s caretaker, is significant in helping *santri* cope with stress and challenges in their spiritual and academic journeys. *Kiai* Habibullah explained during an interview, "I view my role not only as a teacher but also as a mentor who helps students navigate their emotional and spiritual struggles." This involvement creates a supportive environment where *santri* is encouraged to grow intellectually and emotionally. The mental health of *santri* was a vital aspect of their overall development, with many students acknowledging how *Kiai* Habibullah's spiritual guidance and attention have helped them better manage personal difficulties. A *santri* stated, "Kiai Habibullah has always been there for us, offering advice on how to stay calm in difficult situations, whether school-related stress or personal matters." Therefore, *Kiai* Habibullah's involvement is crucial in nurturing both the mind and soul, which is central to the well-being and holistic development of the *santri*.

This study examines the various roles of the *Kiai* in supporting the mental health of *santri* at PP. Al-Qodiri 02 Jember, which is located at Jalan Umbulsari No. 03, Kribet, Gumukmas District, Jember Regency. The *pesantren* is led by *Kiai* H. Muhammad Habibullah Khomsun Syamsuri, commonly known as *Kiai* Khomsun. This research highlights six key ways the *Kiai* contributes to maintaining the mental well-being of the *santri*: building emotional bonds, instilling positive values, providing spiritual guidance, creating a conducive environment, serving as a role model, and fostering a strong community. Each of these roles is essential in ensuring that the *santri* are equipped to face life's pressures and grow into individuals with deep faith and mental resilience.

a. Building Strong Emotional Bonds

At Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Qodiri 02 Jember, the *Kiai* foster emotional connections with the *santri* through personal interactions and consistent engagement. Informal question-and-answer sessions after lectures provide a safe space for the *santri* to share personal concerns, fostering trust and a sense of belonging. By actively greeting and interacting with the *santri*, the *Kiai* demonstrates care beyond his spiritual leadership, helping the *santri* feel valued and supported, which is essential for their emotional well-being. One *santri* mentioned, "The *Kiai*'s presence in our daily lives makes us feel heard and cared for, which boosts our confidence and trust."

The *Kiai*'s emotional approach is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, which guide the *santri* through life's challenges. By reminding them that every trial holds wisdom from Allah, the *Kiai* encourages the *santri* to view difficulties as opportunities for growth rather than insurmountable obstacles. His teachings on patience (*sabar*) and trust in Allah (*tawakal*) provide emotional stability and resilience, helping the *santri* navigate stress with a sense of purpose and spiritual perspective. This spiritual foundation strengthens their ability to cope with personal and academic pressures.

The emotional bonds cultivated by the *Kiai* are interpersonal and deeply spiritual, creating an environment where *santri* feel comfortable expressing their struggles and receiving the support they need. This nurturing relationship enhances the *santri*'s mental well-being and facilitates personal and spiritual growth. As observed in the daily activities and reinforced by interviews, the integration of

emotional support and spiritual guidance is a cornerstone of the *pesantren's* philosophy, helping *santri* maintain balance and resilience, particularly during stressful times.

b. Instilling Positive Values

The *Kiai's* role in instilling positive values at Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Qodiri 02 Jember significantly shapes the mental health and character of the *santri*. Interviews and observations highlight that honesty, hard work, and gratitude are central to the *pesantren's* daily life. As one *santri* shared, "The *Kiai's* teachings about honesty have helped me stay true to my values, even when others around me might be making the wrong choices." These values were reinforced during group discussions, where the *santri* reflected on their importance in personal and communal contexts.

Honesty is a core value that *Kiai* consistently emphasizes, not just in words but in all aspects of life. During an interview, *Kiai* Habibullah stated, "Honesty is key to shaping the character of the *santri*. It is about telling the truth and being transparent and trustworthy in all situations." This approach aligns with the *pesantren's* policies promoting integrity and openness within the community. As one *santri* mentioned, "Whenever there was peer pressure to act against our teachings, I remembered *Kiai's* lesson on honesty, which helped me stay true to myself."

In addition to honesty, the *Kiai* teaches the importance of hard work and gratitude. The *Kiai* reinforces these values through daily routines and direct engagement with the *santri*. One *santri* explained, "The *Kiai* always emphasizes that gratitude helps us remain positive, even when faced with difficulties." This attitude of gratitude contributes to the mental well-being of the *santri*, helping them stay focused on the positive even in challenging times.

The *Kiai* also instills mutual respect and cooperation values, which are reflected in the *pesantren's* daily lives and clear rules. These values are practiced through conflict resolution methods that encourage constructive communication and forgiveness. One *santri* shared, "When we disagreed, the *Kiai* would encourage us to talk it out, forgive, and move forward together. It changed how we handle conflicts."

In summary, *Kiai's* teachings of honesty, hard work, gratitude, and mutual respect profoundly impact the mental health and character development of the *santri*. Combining these values enables the *santri* to navigate personal and social challenges with resilience, making them academically successful and mentally and emotionally strong. Through interviews, observations, and document analysis, it is evident that these values contribute to the holistic development of the *santri*, fostering a harmonious and supportive environment within the *pesantren*.

c. Providing Spiritual Guidance

The *Kiai's* spiritual guidance plays a crucial role in supporting the mental health of the *santri* at Pondok *Pesantren* Al-Qodiri 02 Jember. Through interviews with *santri* and observations of their daily routines, it became clear that *Kiai's* teachings impart religious knowledge and provide spiritual tools to cope with life's challenges. Ahmad, a male *santri*, shared, "The *Kiai's* spiritual guidance has been a lifeline for me. His teachings taught me how to cope with stress by turning to my faith." This reflects how spirituality has helped the *santri* manage academic and personal pressures.

A key spiritual practice the *Kiai* emphasizes is *dhikr*, or the remembrance of Allah, which *santri* use to calm their minds and reduce anxiety. Fatimah, a female *santri*, explained, "When I was feeling overwhelmed, the *Kiai* encouraged me to engage in *dhikr*. It helped me feel calm and connected to Allah, which reduced my anxiety." *Kiai's* teaching on *dhikr* is a spiritual practice and a mental relaxation technique, helping the *santri* regain focus during stressful times. Ahmad also noted, "Whenever I feel anxious before an exam, I do *dhikr*, which helps clear my mind and calm my nerves."

The *Kiai* also emphasizes the importance of regular worship, particularly the night prayer

(tahajjud), to build spiritual and emotional resilience. Observations showed that many *santri* have adopted this practice, feeling more centered and calm afterward. Farhan, a male *santri*, shared, "When I pray tahajjud, I feel closer to Allah, and it helps me face my daily struggles with more patience." This practice and Kiai's encouragement have become essential for managing stress and fostering emotional stability.

In addition to group practices, the *Kiai* offers personalized guidance to *santri* facing specific challenges. For example, Siti, a *santri* struggling with academic pressure, received advice from the *Kiai* to increase her night prayers and recite the Qur'an more often. Siti reflected, "After my conversation with the *Kiai*, I felt at peace and more determined to work through my problems." This personalized approach highlights *Kiai*'s commitment to addressing emotional and spiritual needs.

In conclusion, *Kiai*'s spiritual guidance is vital in promoting mental well-being at Pondok Pesantren Al-Qodiri 02. Integrating spiritual practices such as dhikr, tahajjud, and Qur'anic recitation provides the *santri* with the tools to manage stress, build emotional resilience, and find peace amidst life's challenges. Ahmad summarized, "The *Kiai* teaches us that each challenge is a test from Allah, and through patience and prayer, we can grow stronger in our faith and resolve." This comprehensive spiritual approach is crucial in supporting the center's mental health and emotional well-being.

d. Creating a Supportive Environment

A conducive environment at Pondok Pesantren Al-Qodiri 02 plays a crucial role in supporting the mental health of the *santri*. Based on interviews with *santri* and observational data, it is evident that the *Kiai* ensures the fair application of rules, creating a sense of security and belonging among the *santri*. Ahmad, a male *santri*, explained, "The fairness in the rules here makes me feel secure. I know I am treated equally, which helps me focus on my studies without worrying about unfair treatment." This approach significantly reduces stress and fosters a supportive atmosphere for academic and personal growth.

The *Kiai*'s fair application of rules helps alleviate tension and anxiety, as the *santri* feel respected and valued. Farhan, another male *santri*, shared, "When I see that everyone is treated with respect, it motivates me to be more disciplined and focused. The *Kiai*'s approach builds trust among the *santri*." This approach reduces feelings of uncertainty and encourages positive engagement in academic and social activities.

In addition to fair rules, the *Kiai* motivates the *santri* to participate in group activities such as community service, sports, and social events, which play a key role in building solidarity. These activities help reduce stress and strengthen interpersonal relationships. Fatimah, a female *santri*, reflected, "I felt very isolated when I first arrived, but after participating in group activities, I began to feel more comfortable and accepted. It made me more confident in my daily interactions."

The *Kiai* also fosters a sense of belonging through these activities. Siti, a *santri* who initially struggled with loneliness, shared, "I did not feel like I belonged at first, but after joining the community service activities, I became closer to my peers, and now I feel supported and less anxious." This demonstrates how *Kiai*'s encouragement of social activities helps the *santri* overcome isolation, positively affecting their mental health.

In conclusion, *Kiai*'s role in creating a supportive and fair environment at Pondok Pesantren Al-Qodiri 02 is instrumental in promoting the mental health of the *santri*. The fair application of rules, encouragement of group activities, and a nurturing atmosphere help *santri* cope with life's challenges and foster their emotional and social well-being. Ahmad stated, "The *Kiai* allows us to express ourselves but also teaches us how to balance that with our responsibility to the community. It helps me grow both personally and academically."

e. Being a Role Model

The *Kiai* at Pondok Pesantren Al-Qodiri 02 plays a significant role model for the *santri*, influencing their behavior and approach to various aspects of life. His embodiment of humility, compassion, and perseverance is a practical example for the *santri*. Abdul, a male *santri*, shared, “The *Kiai* always treats us respectfully, no matter our background. It shows me how important humility is, especially when in a position of authority.” This reflects *Kiai*’s approach to leadership, which is rooted in the core values he demonstrates daily.

In addition to humility, *Kiai*’s compassion and perseverance are impactful in shaping *Santri*’s behavior. Sarah, a female *santri*, explained, “The *Kiai* teaches us to be kind to others, and I have seen him help many people with genuine care, whether it is with their studies or personal problems.” The *Kiai*’s patience and trust in Allah, particularly during challenges, also inspire the *santri*. Fatimah, another female *santri*, mentioned, “When I see the *Kiai* remain calm in difficult situations, it gives me strength to deal with my problems.”

The *Kiai*’s ability to balance his religious duties with his social responsibilities is a powerful example of the *santri*. Hassan, a male *santri*, noted, “The *Kiai* shows us how to balance our religious duties, like praying and studying, with helping others. I used to think they were separate, but now I see how they go hand in hand.” This example encourages the *santri* to integrate faith with their daily responsibilities, fostering a holistic approach to life.

Moreover, *Kiai*’s ability to balance worship with community service shapes *Santri*’s time management and priorities. Aminah, a female *santri*, shared, “Seeing how the *Kiai* balances his time between worship and helping others has taught me how to manage my time better. It helps me focus on both my faith and my community.” This balance fosters both spiritual growth and social responsibility among the *santri*.

In conclusion, *Kiai*’s role as a role model is crucial in guiding the *santri* to embody values such as humility, compassion, and perseverance. Through his example, the *santri* learn religious principles and develop the mental resilience to face life’s challenges with strength and hope. As Ahmad, a male *santri*, said, “The *Kiai*’s calmness in the face of adversity teaches me not to give up. It is not about avoiding problems, but facing them with faith.”

f. Building a Strong Community

The *Kiai* at Pondok Pesantren Al-Qodiri 02 is vital in building a supportive community within the *pesantren*. Through organizing activities such as group discussions, informal meetings, and collaborative social initiatives, the *Kiai* fosters a sense of unity and collective responsibility among the *santri*. These activities create opportunities for the *santri* to connect, share experiences, and support one another. Aminah, a female *santri*, expressed, “These discussions help me feel more connected with others. I know my struggles are not mine alone, and we can work through things together.”

In addition to group discussions, the *Kiai* promotes teamwork through collaborative social events and group work, which significantly impact the *santri*’s ability to cooperate. Hassan, a male *santri*, shared, “Working together on projects here has helped me understand how important it is to rely on others. It is not just about personal achievement but about collective success.” These efforts have helped reinforce the communal values of cooperation and mutual support within the *pesantren*.

Kiai’s emphasis on community-building also plays a crucial role in supporting the mental health of the *santri*. *Santri* feels comfortable sharing their struggles with peers when facing personal or academic challenges. Yusuf, a male *santri*, mentioned, “When I had trouble adjusting to the *pesantren*, I could talk about it with my peers. The *Kiai* also helped guide us through that process, which made me feel accepted and less anxious about my situation.” This supportive environment helps reduce anxiety and fosters emotional well-being.

Furthermore, the *Kiai* encourages empathy and care for others, strengthening the bonds within the *pesantren*. Sarah, a female *santri*, noted, "I have learned to be more understanding and offer help to my struggling friends. When we support each other, it makes the challenges feel less heavy." This culture of care not only nurtures the mental health of the *santri* but also contributes to a positive and accepting atmosphere.

In conclusion, the *Kiai* at PP. Al-Qodiri 02 has played a pivotal role in creating a supportive community that benefits the mental health and well-being of the *santri*. Through fostering cooperation, empathy, and mutual support, the *Kiai* has helped build an environment where the *santri* feel connected, valued, and equipped to face challenges together. This sense of belonging and collective responsibility enhances their emotional resilience and prepares them for life beyond the *pesantren*.

The following table summarizes the key ways the *Kiai* contributes to the mental health of the *santri*, highlighting the activities and approaches used, their impact, and the implementation methods.

Key Role	Description of Activities/Approach	Impact on Santri's Mental Health	Method of Implementation
Building Strong Emotional Bonds	Establishing trust and strong relationships between the <i>Kiai</i> and the <i>santri</i> through personal attention and emotional support.	Reduces feelings of loneliness and isolation, enhances emotional security, and builds trust in leadership.	Personal interactions, one-on-one counseling, and group discussions.
Instilling Positive Values	Teaching humility, compassion, perseverance, and other core values as fundamental aspects of personal and social development.	Encourages a positive mindset, resilience, and self-improvement, strengthening mental health and self-awareness.	Lectures, examples of <i>Kiai's</i> conduct, and discussions on values.
Providing Spiritual Guidance	Offering teachings on the importance of dhikr (remembrance of Allah), regular worship, and spiritual practices.	Helps the <i>santri</i> manage stress, anxiety, and emotional challenges through connection with faith, fostering inner peace and emotional balance.	Regular prayer sessions, spiritual teachings, and individualized guidance.
Creating a Supportive Environment	Ensuring fair application of rules, creating a non-authoritarian atmosphere, and promoting security.	Reduces anxiety from unfair treatment, promotes trust and a sense of equality, enhancing mental comfort and stability.	Consistent rule application, open communication, and regular feedback.
Being a Role Model	Acting as a living example of the values and behavior the <i>Kiai</i> teaches, including patience, empathy, and perseverance.	Serves as a source of inspiration and a model for handling stress, adversity, and challenges with resilience.	Leading by example, addressing challenges with patience, and maintaining composure.
Building a Strong Community	Organizing community-building activities like group work, social events, and peer support to enhance togetherness.	Strengthens social bonds and reduces feelings of isolation, promoting emotional and social well-being.	Group activities, community service, and collaborative events led by the <i>Kiai</i> .

4. CONCLUSION

The role of the *Kiai* in maintaining the mental health of the *santri* at PP. Al-Qodiri 02 is crucial and encompasses various interconnected dimensions, from emotional bonds built through personal approaches to profound spiritual guidance. The *Kiai* creates an environment of care and security for the *santri*. It instills positive values such as honesty, hard work, and gratitude, which help shape the character and strengthen mental resilience. By providing a direct example in daily life, the *Kiai* is a role model, inspiring the *santri* to face life's challenges with patience and trust in Allah while always drawing closer to Allah through worship. Furthermore, through the fair application of rules and supportive social activities, the *Kiai* fosters a conducive environment within the *pesantren*, filled with solidarity and mutual support, providing a space for the *santri* to share and seek solutions to their difficulties. Overall, *Kiai's* leadership at PP. Al-Qodiri 02 not only focuses on spiritual aspects but also creates an ecosystem that supports the mental well-being of the *santri*, making the *pesantren* a place that equips them with valuable life values, both within the *pesantren* and beyond.

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