

## Kiai Leadership Model in Fostering the Spirit of Students Independence at Al Manshur Ma'had Bulu Balen Bojonegoro East Java

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### Abstract

*Independence is an important aspect to be embedded in educational practice. Because students will not always be accompanied when living their lives in the future. Students must be independent, able to take responsibility, perform self-management, self-adjustment and so on. However, this aspect of independence requires conditioning to grow it to its full potential. In the context of pesantren, this conditioning can be dominantly determined by the kiai's leadership model. The purpose of this study was to find the kiai's leadership model in fostering the independent spirit of students and to describe the supporting and inhibiting factors. This research is a case study at Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School, Bojonegoro, East Java. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, documentation, and focus group discussions. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman technique with steps, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. The results showed that the kiai leadership model at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School, Bojonegoro, East Java in cultivating the independent spirit of students in the form of a transformational model. This model is expected to be a reference and the basis for developing a leadership model, especially to develop aspects of the independence of students. The findings of the transformational leadership model can also be broad and not specifically about kiai leadership. This model can also be applied in learning with the condition that the goal is to increase student independence. The next results relate to the supporting and inhibiting factors which are discussed in more detail in this study.*

**Keywords:** independence; leadership; transformational leadership

### A. Introduction

Human resource factors play an important role in determining the success of education in *pesantren* (Gunawan et al., 2019), especially the success to increase the independence of students. Therefore, an appropriate human resource management strategy is needed to maximize the growth and development of the independence of the students.

Several studies have stated matters relating to human resources and increasing the independence of students in *pesantren*. Djumransjah (2001) revealed that *pesantren* have formulated their vision, mission, and goals. All of this aims to equip students with a broad spectrum of knowledge and skills, so that they can earn a living, and help them prepare for their life in the afterlife (Djumransjah, 2001); Noor (2015) expresses his conclusion that the education system and learning process in *pesantren* are basically a model of life skills education in which students learn and practice to solve and overcome various difficulties they face independently; Tanszil (2012) also explained about the model of character education

development in the *pesantren* environment in building the independence and discipline of students; even Masum & Wajdi (2018) describe how Miftahul Mubtadiin Islamic Boarding School Nganjuk launched a program called *santriprenenur* to develop the independence of students.

This study highlights that the kiai leadership model is a management strategy and it can have a significant impact on the development of *pesantren*. Halil (2020) reveals that the leadership of the kiai can play a very central role in building the *pesantren* itself, one of which is organizational teamwork; the kiai's leadership can also provide a special image for certain *pesantren*, such as the personal branding of the *pesantren* (Hakiki, 2018); the figure of the kiai becomes the determinant in terms of the economic independence of the *pesantren* and the kiai becomes an important figure as a motivator, giver of ideas, suggestions, financiers, management controllers, and decision makers in various regulations (Safiudin R. & Supriyanto, 2021); even Hidayati (2019) recommends post-standardization of leadership which is a dialectical-progressive leadership model; Isnaini (2018) also reveals that the popularity of *pesantren* is attached to the popularity of the kiai as caregivers.

On the one hand, the independence of students is also an important aspect as a provision for students to continue their lives. Independence can be referred to as capital for someone to become a lifelong learner. Independence can encourage a person to continue to learn, be responsible, self-regulate, solve problems, and be confident (Kholil et al., 2021). Thus, it is very important to ensure that the kiai's leadership model, which has such potential, is to lead to the growth and development of student's independence. The purpose of this study was to find the right kiai leadership model as a good management strategy to foster the spirit of independence of students.

## **B. Methods**

This research is qualitative research with a case study approach. Tenny et al. (2022) states that qualitative research is closely related to post-positivist philosophy. This type of research has a tendency to value the ability to formulate substantive theories. In the context of this research, substantive theory refers to the kiai leadership model.

Regarding case studies, Creswell (2002, p. 61) reveals that case studies aim to explore the depth of a case or a limited system that includes understanding an event, activity, or process of one or more people. In the context of this research, this case study explores the depth of the

concept of the kiai leadership model implemented at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School, Bojonegoro, East Java.

This research data collection technique uses observation to photograph how activities related to the kiai leadership pattern and the independence of students at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School, Bojonegoro, East Java; interviews to photograph how the kiai's leadership pattern is and what the policies are, which specifically aim to foster the independence of the students; documentation to find the flow or pattern of the kiai's leadership; and focus discussion groups to formulate the kiai's leadership pattern in growing students independence.

## C. Results and Discussion

### *Kiai's Leadership Model in Fostering Student Independence*

The research findings based on the results of observations, interviews and documentation show that the kiai's steps as leaders to foster the independence aspect of students can be described based on the following table;

**Table 1.** The kiai's steps to develop the aspect of independence

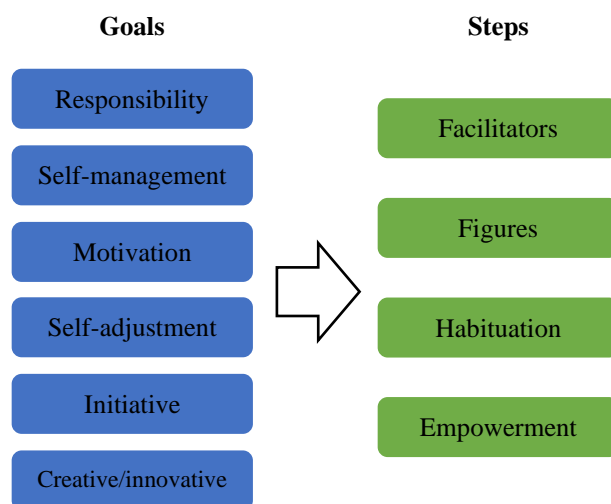
No	Aspect of Independence	Kiai's Steps as a Leader
1	Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Kiai provides facilities for managing the type of business charity.</li> <li>b. Kiai provides examples not to depend all work on others.</li> <li>c. <i>Ro an</i> or community service for the boarding school environment.</li> </ul>
2	Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Students are given the opportunity to manage time.</li> <li>b. Kiai provides opportunities for his students to manage their own finances.</li> <li>c. Kiai gives freedom to the students to be able to participate in all discussions of any kind.</li> </ul>
3	High self-motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Kiai provides provisions to his students to strengthen self-confidence.</li> <li>b. Kiai provides provisions for students about responsibility.</li> </ul>

No	Aspect of Independence	Kiai's Steps as a Leader
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Kiai provides provisions for identity, both mental and spiritual as well as physical sports knowledge.</li> <li>d. Kiai exerts a strong influence on the religious sciences and other sciences.</li> </ul>
4	Adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Kiai provides provisions and instills insight into adjustment.</li> <li>b. Kiai instills in his students about activeness in the community.</li> <li>c. Kiai provides support to all students, both achieving and those who will achieve.</li> <li>d. Kiai provides the concept of modernization to all students.</li> </ul>
5	Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Kiai builds the confidence of all students, that studying at the <i>pesantren</i> is very important in the midst of moral degradation.</li> <li>b. Kiai provides exposure and insight on how later the students will have a career.</li> <li>c. Kiai is a figure of inspiration for students.</li> </ul>
6	Creative and innovative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Kiai frees students to explore.</li> <li>b. Kiai provides new experiences to the students such as pilgrimage experiences and others.</li> <li>c. Kiai is keen to see the talents and interests of each student.</li> <li>d. Kiai gives freedom to the students and never imposes. Kiai only provides a stimulus.</li> </ul>

Based on the results of the research findings in table 1 above, it can be concluded about how the kiai's steps as leaders in growing the independence aspect of students. In conclusion, the kiai's steps are grouped into several points, including (1) providing facilities (facilitators), (2) figures, (3) habituation, and (4) empowerment.

The four steps of the kiai are based on indicators related to the aspect of independence itself, which include; (1) responsibility, (2) self-management, (3) high self-motivation, (4) self-adjustment, (5) initiative, and (6) creative and innovative (Pratiwi et al., 2020; Sumbawati et al., 2020; Widel & Ramadan, 2021). Thus, the findings on the steps of the kiai above depart from the indicators of independence itself.

If the findings of the kiai's steps as leaders in table 1 are illustrated in a simpler form, then the illustration is presented as shown in the following chart.



**Chart 1.** Illustration of the First Findings of Kiai's Leadership Model in Fostering Student Independence

The steps in chart 1 above can also be claimed as the kiai's policy to maximize the achievement of certain goals, which in this case is the development of santri independence. This is in line with Abidin's expression (2006, p. 41) which states that every policy certainly has a goal where the policy maker, in this case the kiai, should not just be random or because there is an opportunity to make a policy. These steps, which later became the kiai's policy, were deliberately aimed at developing the independence aspect of the students.

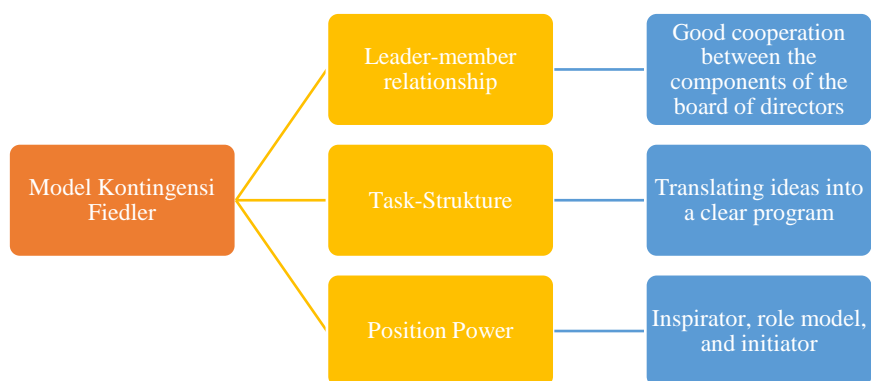
If the kiai's steps, as illustrated above, are adapted to leadership theory, then these steps lead to the Fiedler Contingency leadership model where the aspects include; (1) leader-member relations, (2) task structure, and (3) position power (Schermerhorn & Bachrach, 2020). This leadership model is also characterized by directive leader behavior to keep the work group together.

Matters relating to this directive received confirmation from H Munir, who stated; "Kiai always has interesting ideas to be applied in activities at this *pesantren*. Of course, these ideas lead to goals for the benefit of the students themselves. Thus, it is customary for the kiai

to gather advisory boards/relevant persons in charge from time to time to plan appropriate strategies for translating the kiai's ideas. The kiai gives directions then we (for example) as kiai assistants will arrange these strategic steps.

The results of the interview further confirmed that between the kiai and the advisory board/person in charge at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro have good leader-member relations, and this is an element of the first Fiedler Contingency leadership model. Furthermore, related to the second Fiedler contingency leadership element, namely the task structure which refers to the clarity of work procedures, it can be seen from how kiai create programs with clear structures. Aspects of independence such as responsibility, self-management, motivation, adjustment, initiative, and creative-innovativeness are each translated into programs or activities with clear tasks. Finally, related to the third element, namely position power which refers to how much power the leader has. This point is clearly illustrated in the kiai's steps in the point figure, that the kiai is a central figure to provide inspiration, good role models, and initiators for the ideas for developing *pesantren* itself.

Fieldler's contingency leadership model can be illustrated in the following chart;



**Chart 2.** The Fiedler contingency model at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School in Bojonegoro

Directive points on the Fiedler contingency leadership model get more attention in this study. The directive points and elements of Fiedler's contingency model actually more or less lead to creating in the transformational leadership model. A leader in this context has direct

control over the ongoing activities, what behavior is to be achieved, and how to achieve it (Bryant, 2003). Direct control of course is represented by position power; what behavior to be achieved refers to the goals that have been set previously, through developing the independence of students; and how to achieve it by creating a good leader-member relations and a clear task structure of the programs that are carried out to support the achievement of goals.

In addition to leading to the Fiedler Contingency leadership model, the leadership model displayed by the kiai of the Al Manshur Islamic Boarding School Bulu Balen Bojonegoro to foster the independence of students is of course also in accordance with the transformational leadership pattern. This leadership model refers to a leader who can motivate his followers to do more than what is expected by extending their abilities and increasing their self-confidence (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Figure and empowerment points are very close to the intent of this transformational leadership model. The figure of the kiai can provide motivation to students, as well as empowerment as described previously can increase students' self-confidence.

This is in accordance with what was expressed by one of the other students that; "Kiai became an idol for me. He often gives verbal motivation, but all of his behavior is a role model for us (students) and we always try to follow what he does in daily life. For example, from the aspect of worship, the way of speaking, generating ideas, we always try to imitate it."

Some components of transformational behavior include; (1) Idealized influence which refers to the leader as a role model; (2) Individualized consideration which refers to the behavior of leaders who are concerned, build relationships, value, or identify needs; (3) Inspirational motivation refers to the leader's behavior to always provide motivation and inspiration; and (4) Intellectual stimulation which refers to leader behavior to encourage followers to always learn, develop themselves, create creative-innovative solutions (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

The idealized influence of the kiai at Pondok Pesantren Al Manshur Bulu Balen Bojonegoro can be seen from the figure points where it is clear that a kiai becomes a role model. The kiai in this *pesantren* can even be said to be the idealized figure for the students.

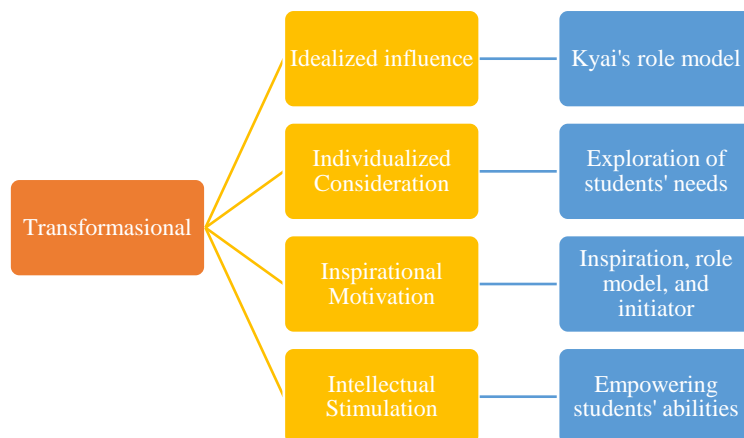
Likewise with individualized consideration, where the kiai of Pondok Pesantren Al Manshur Bulu Balen Bojonegoro has shown an attitude of respect for the students which then the students get the freedom to explore their development (creative-innovative aspects), providing a stimulus as a form of attention to the development of each student.

The inspirational motivation points of the kiai of the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Bojonegoro Islamic Boarding School are clearly visible through the kiai himself, where he



becomes a figure who inspires each student's mind. While the intellectual stimulation of the kiai can be seen in the kiai's steps in empowering students, starting from empowering aspects of knowledge, physical, insight, moral, career insight and so on.

Based on the grouping of kiai leadership patterns at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Bojonegoro Islamic Boarding School, the transformational leadership pattern can be illustrated as shown in the following chart;



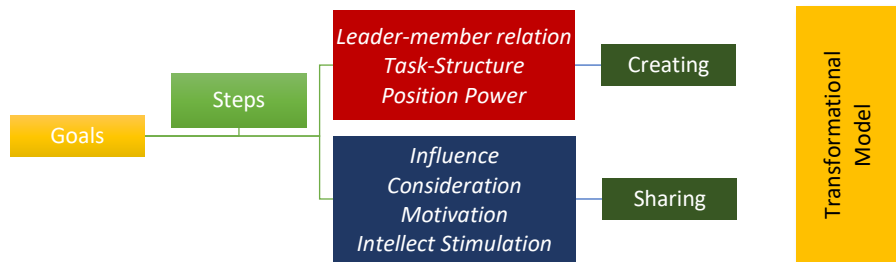
**Chart 3.** Transformational leadership model at Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro

This transformational leadership model, when viewed from its components, more or less leads to the sharing aspect in the transformational leadership model. A leader is able to share (sharing) ideal ideas and even able to be the center or source of new ideas (Bryant, 2003). A leader, who in this case is a kiai, has succeeded in sharing ideas about how to become an independent person through the kiai himself as someone who is so influential for the students, sharing various experiences so that the needs of the students are identified, providing motivation and inspirational behavior, and encourage students to continue to grow into better individuals.

Based on the description of the two kiai leadership models above, two conclusions can be drawn. First, the Fiedler contingency leadership model at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro can briefly refer to the creating category. As a leader, the kiai has direct control over ongoing activities, what behavior is to be achieved, and how to achieve it. Second, the transformational leadership model at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School Bojonegoro can briefly refer to the sharing category. As a leader, the kiai shares ideas about how to become an independent person through the figure of the kiai himself as someone who is so influential for the students.



Thus, important findings related to the kiai's leadership pattern in fostering the independence of students can be concluded as a transformational leadership pattern with two important components, namely creating and sharing. Creating, among others, consists of several aspects (1) leader-member relations, (2) task-structure, and (3) position power; while sharing consists of aspects such as (1) influence, (2) consideration, (3) motivation, and (4) intellect stimulation. This leadership model can be seen through the following chart;



**Chart 4.** Kiai's Leadership Model in Fostering Student Independence

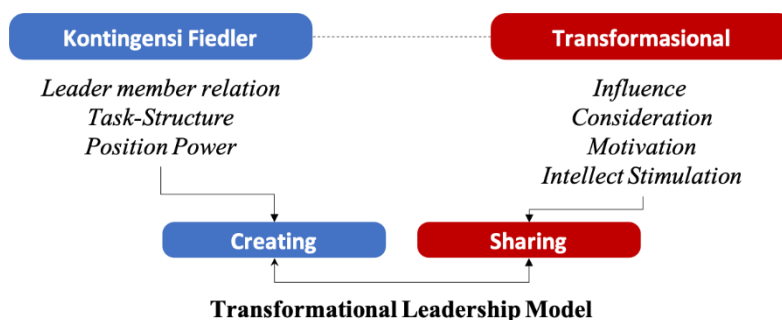
Based on chart 4 above, the findings of the transformational leadership model in this study are a combination of the two leadership models themselves, namely the Fiedler contingency leadership model which consists of leader-member relations, task structure, and position power (Schermerhorn & Bachrach, 2020); and the transformational leadership model itself which consists of influence, consideration, motivation, and intellect stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Then these two models are combined into a transformational pattern in general with two groupings, namely creating which refers to the elements of the Fiedler contingency leadership model and sharing which refers to the elements of the transformational leadership pattern. These two groupings are not without basis, because creating and sharing are two elements of the transformational leadership model initiated by Bryant (2003).

A leader can make a transformation or change from the initial condition to the expected condition by paying attention to these two aspects, creating and sharing. In theory, based on the results of this study, creating and sharing indicators can be a reference for a leader to carry out transformation in the organization he is leading. A leader who wants to transform must think about what he will build (creating) and what he will share (sharing) to bring about certain changes.

This transformational leadership model is actually very suitable for kiai who are specifically leading Islamic *pesantren*. The kiai, in this case, is the central figure in the life of the *pesantren* (Zulmuqim, 2017), then the sharing aspect has been pocketed by the kiai since the beginning as a capital. A kiai already has provisions as something he wants to share with his students to encourage students to change under certain conditions. This provision can be in

the form of a kiai figure as an ideal figure, influencer, motivator or inspiration for his students. Furthermore, a kiai needs to think carefully about what he needs to build (creating) to strengthen the sharing aspect.

The following is an illustrative chart to reinforce the findings of research on transformative leadership models.



**Chart 5.** Logical Flow of Transformational Leadership Model Research Findings

In conclusion, the transformational leadership model in this study strengthens the previous transformational model by adding new elements. The old transformational model is only limited to aspects of influence, consideration, motivation, and intellect stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994) which then this research labels these aspects as sharing aspects. The findings of this study then strengthen it by adding a new aspect category, namely creating, which consists of aspects such as leader member relations, task-structure, and position power.

### ***Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Kiai's Leadership Model in Fostering Student Independence***

#### ***Supporting factors***

The research findings reveal several factors supporting the leadership pattern of the kiai of Pondok Pesantren Al Manshur Bulu Balen Bojonegoro in fostering the independence of students. These factors include the following;

#### **1. Public trust**

Public trust in the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School in Bojonegoro is still relatively high. This is in accordance with what was expressed by one of the students who stated;

“I chose Al Manshur Islamic boarding school for my son because I believe that this Islamic boarding school provides a strong religious mental foundation. We as parents hope that our children will not be carried away by the currents of the times and the rapid advancement of

technology, our children can be independent and continue to develop but do not abandon their religious values.”

Based on the results of the interview, actually the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Bojonegoro Islamic Boarding School received a positive response from the community and the community itself ultimately placed high trust in the Islamic boarding school. The level of trust is getting stronger, if the parents of the santri are familiar with the ins and outs of the Islamic boarding school. This is proof that the leadership of the kiai of the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Bojonegoro Islamic boarding school has legitimacy from the community.

## 2. Islamic boarding school regulations

The strict regulations at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School in Bojonegoro are an implication of the kiai's effective leadership pattern. The regulations in this Islamic boarding school are upheld and must be obeyed together. Various kinds of rules have been made and have been socialized since the first time students set foot in the pesantren, so that they try their best to comply with these rules. The regulations at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Bojonegoro Islamic boarding school are not specifically written about how to grow the independence aspect of students, but aspects related to independence such as students must be responsible, manage themselves, adapt, and others are contained in the form of obligations. And prohibition.

## 3. Curriculum

The curriculum at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Bojonegoro Islamic Boarding School regarding independence can be seen from the existing programs such as the program where students can run charities and work to foster the responsibility aspect of students; programs for strengthening self-confidence, strengthening knowledge, physical, insight, science and technology, morals, career insights, and others to foster aspects of motivation, self-adjustment, and student initiative; or the regular ziaroh program where students are invited to reflect on the lessons learned through these activities and stimulate the students to take creative and innovative steps based on the ziaroh program.

## 4. The figure of the kiai and the teachers

The figure of the kiai and the ranks of the teacher council (asatid) at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Bojonegoro Islamic Boarding School has always positioned itself as a parent and the students as their children. Thus, between the kiai and the santri there is a loving relationship like the relationship between a child and his parents. Caregivers are good at positioning themselves as parents who are always paying attention to their children. Therefore, it is not surprising that the students always have such high respect for the kiai and at the same time always obey the instructions of the kiai. The kiai is not only a leader of the pesantren who

legally must be obeyed as a leader, but the santri obey the kiai because the kiai are the parents of the santri themselves.

In addition, the consistency of the kiai and the teacher council to become good role models from time to time is a supporting factor to foster the independence of the students. Kiai and teacher councils instill the values of independence not only through verbal means, but also through consistent examples. This aspect of consistency is important because in the end the students will not be confused when absorbing and witnessing the behavior of their kiai.

#### *Obstacle factor*

While the inhibiting factors for the kiai leadership pattern in growing the independence of students at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Bojonegoro Islamic boarding school tend to be relatively general. Factors such as the condition of the students themselves where not all students can follow the rules well, the nature and behavior of students who are different so that they require different handling. In addition, even though from the beginning an ideal figure was displayed in the ranks of kiai and teacher councils, it cannot be denied that kiai and teachers are also human beings who can feel fatigue and other weaknesses.

The most prominent factor in the inhibiting factor for the kiai's leadership pattern is the response of parents who do not all appreciate the rules. Parents do fully entrust their children to the Islamic boarding school to be educated, but this does not guarantee a positive response from parents to the regulations in the pesantren. Thus, the pesantren needs to provide an understanding of the rules not only to students as subjects or actors of the rules but also to parents in order to fully understand why the regulations were made and what their purpose is.

The condition of such parents gives concern, because parents who do not understand the rules in Islamic boarding schools will slowly lead to their distrust of the boarding school administrators. This was stated by one of the boarding school administrators;

“One of the obstacles is the attitude of the parents of students who still lack confidence in the boarding school, especially the administrators and sometimes blame the administrators in fostering and educating students because parents assume that the administrators are too excessive in giving punishment. Parents of students like this sometimes blame without knowing the origin of why the punishment was born, parents only hear stories from their children which may be exaggerated.”

## **D. Conclusion**

The kiai leadership model applied at the Al Manshur Bulu Balen Islamic Boarding School, Bojonegoro, East Java, in cultivating the independent spirit of santri, takes the form of a transformational leadership model. This leadership model has two important components, namely creating and sharing. Creating consists of several aspects, namely (1) leader-member relations, (2) task-

structure, and (3) position power; while sharing consists of aspects such as (1) influence, (2) consideration, (3) motivation, and (4) intellect stimulation.

Supporting factors for this transformational leadership model include public trust, the regulation of the Islamic boarding school itself, the curriculum, the figure of the kiai and the ranks of teachers (ustad). While the inhibiting factors include the changing and unpredictable conditions of the students, human error that comes from either the kiai himself or the ranks of the teachers (ustad), and the response of parents who do not all agree and appreciate the regulations in Islamic boarding schools.

This study suggests the existence of a hidden curriculum to perfect this transformational leadership model. If an Islamic boarding school can form a hidden curriculum well, the dependence on the kiai will decrease. That is, this transformative leadership pattern will run automatically.

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