

Connections between Religious Leaders and Communities: The Role of *Tuan Guru* in Mobilizing Community Participation in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study explores the role of religious leadership in mobilizing community participation within the context of Islamic boarding schools '*pondok pesantren*' in East Lombok, Indonesia. The focus is on understanding how the charisma and religious authority of *tuan guru* influence community engagement in the development and sustainability of these educational institutions. The significance of this research lies in addressing a gap in the literature regarding the interplay between religiosity and social participation in Islamic educational settings. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis involving key stakeholders, including *tuan guru*, *pesantren* administrators, students, and local community members. This study is analyzed using Resource Mobilization Theory, which emphasizes both societal support and constraint of social movement phenomena. Findings show that *tuan guru*'s approach to leadership—grounded in Islamic values and humility—enabled him to navigate societal resistance, inspiring both material contributions such as land and building materials and non-material contributions such as voluntary labor and moral support. Furthermore, the deeply rooted tradition of *gotong royong* 'mutual cooperation' amplified collective efforts, sustaining the *pesantren*'s progress. This research contributes to the discourse on religious leadership by highlighting how charismatic and inclusive leadership can transform community dynamics and mobilize collective resources. These findings underscore the importance of integrating cultural and religious values in leadership practices for community development.

Article History

Received: 19-01-2025

Revised: 17-03-2025

Accepted: 14-04-2025

Keywords:

Community Participation;
Islamic Education;
Religious Leadership;
Tuan Guru.



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INTRODUCTION

Religious leadership plays an important role in building and managing social institutions, especially in a society based on religious values (Karim et al., 2022). In Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools have become traditional Islamic educational institutions that function not only as centres of religious instruction, but also as places for character building and community empowerment (Hosaini et al., 2024). The success of *pesantren* in fulfilling their role is highly dependent on the ability of religious leaders (Rahtikawatie et al., 2021), such as *tuan guru*, who have great influence in the community. In the context of East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, the existence of Islamic boarding schools is often the centre of religious and social life (Hamdi et al., 2024), with *tuan guru* as a respected central figure (Hamid et al., 2024). *Tuan guru*'s religious leadership includes charismatic aspects, scholarship, and the ability to build close relationships with the community. As a leader, *tuan guru* not only provides religious guidance, but also mobilizes community participation to support the development of the *pesantrens*. This phenomenon shows that religious leadership has an impact not only on the spiritual life of individuals, but also on social dynamics and community development.

Islamic boarding schools in East Lombok play an important role in building Islamic religious education, but their sustainability and development depend heavily on community support (Royani & Noviani, 2023). In this context, *tuan guru*'s role as a religious leader is a key. *Tuan guru* is

known not only as an ulema ‘cleric’ with deep religious knowledge, but also as a charismatic figure able to mobilize widespread community participation (Sulhan & Lessy, 2022). This charisma often comes from their simplicity, sincerity, and commitment to religious values and the welfare of the people (Morris & Staggenborg, 2007). Since their inception, the boarding schools in East Lombok have demonstrated the close relationship between *tuan guru* and the community. For example, the community has voluntarily donated land, labour and funds to build educational facilities (Di Maro et al., 2024). This phenomenon reflects not only the community's respect for *tuan guru*, but also their belief in the social and spiritual benefits of *pesantren*. *Tuan guru* is often used as a living example by the community, not only in terms of worship, but also in terms of democratic and religious value-based social interactions (Hunt et al., 2024).

Tuan guru's charisma is an important element in gaining the trust of the community (Makki, 2021). The support received often does not require an explicit invitation, but rather flows from the community's love, respect and devotion to the figure. This trust is reinforced by the recognition of *tuan guru's* religious knowledge, which is acknowledged not only by the local community but also by other scholars, including those from outside the region. Community support manifests itself in various forms, such as *gotong royong* activities for the construction of *pesantren*, donations for the running of the institution, and fundraising for the educational needs of *santri*.

In the Indonesian context, Islamic boarding schools are not only centres of religious education, but also institutions with a wide social and cultural influence (Harmathilda et al., 2024). However, the sustainability of *pesantren* is often dependent on the level of community support, both materially and morally (Anwar, 2022). This is where the role of the *tuan guru* becomes very important, as a figure who is able to build trust and mobilize the community to become actively involved in supporting the *pesantren*. This research is relevant because there is a lack of in-depth studies that show how religious leadership characteristics, such as those of *tuan guru*, can be a catalyst for strengthening social cohesion and developing educational institutions. By focusing on *tuan guru's* charisma, simplicity and moral authority, this study not only provides new insights into the relationship between religious leadership and community participation, but also offers a model that can be adapted in similar contexts in other regions.

This article employs Resource Mobilization Theory (Mccarthy & Zald, 1977) as the foundational framework to understand the role of *tuan guru* in mobilizing community participation within Islamic boarding schools in East Lombok. This theory emphasizes that the success of social movements is not solely driven by societal grievances but rather by the strategic management and utilization of available resources, including human capital, social networks, financial support, and material assets. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, *tuan guru* serves as a key mobilizer who leverages these resources to foster active community engagement in religious, social, and economic initiatives. By applying this theoretical lens, the study explores how religious leadership navigates structural opportunities and constraints to effectively organize and sustain community participation. According to Morris & Staggenborg, (2007), leaders are very important in social movements, they inspire commitment, mobilize resources, create and understand opportunities, develop strategies and influence outcomes. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, the charismatic leadership style of *tuan guru* serves as a fundamental force in mobilizing community participation (Tohri et al., 2023). Their authority is deeply rooted in religious legitimacy, spiritual guidance, and strong personal connections with the community (Tohri et al., 2023). Through charismatic leadership, *tuan guru* not only fosters trust and devotion among followers but also effectively organizes and directs resources toward educational, social, and economic initiatives. This leadership style enables them to transform religious values into collective action, reinforcing the *pesantren's* role as a center for both spiritual and social empowerment.

Research on the role of religious leadership in mobilising community participation in the development of Islamic boarding schools is a very important issue in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. One of the relevant studies was conducted by Subaidi et al., (2023) who examined the leadership of the *kiai* and the changing concept of the boarding school in Ta'miril

Islam Surakarta. This research shows that the leadership of the *kiai* not only functions as a teacher, but also as a community mobilizer to participate in various activities that support the development of the boarding school. In this context, the *kiai* acts as a central figure who is able to inspire and motivate students and the community to actively participate in the boarding school's activities, both educational and social.

Furthermore, Muna & Hamam, (2020) showed that good *pesantren* management strategies, including planning and supervision, can increase community participation in various *pesantren* activities. This suggests that planned and organized leadership can create a conducive environment for community participation. Furthermore, research by Gumilang & Nurcholis, (2018) highlights the role of *pesantren* in shaping the character of *santri*, which also affects community participation. If the *pesantren* succeeds in shaping the good character of the students, the students become agents of change in the community, which in turn can increase community participation in supporting the *pesantren's* activities. In addition, research by Syahrizal & Anita, (2021) on the financial management of boarding schools shows that good financial management can increase public trust in boarding schools. When the community sees that the boarding school is managed in a transparent and accountable manner, they are more encouraged to participate in supporting the activities of the boarding school, either through donations or active participation in the programmes run. Research by Wiktorowicz, (2002) emphasize the importance of organizational resources and mobilizing structures, such as mosques and community organizations, in facilitating collective action. Islamic groups utilize these structures for recruitment, organization, and the dissemination of their messages. The study by Afzaal, (2003) highlights the link between material interests and ideal motivations in the emergence of Islam. The Qur'an addresses socio-economic inequalities, mirroring the socio-political landscape of Mecca during that period. This indicates that establishing social justice was a central issue that Prophet Muhammad aimed to tackle.

Although several studies have addressed the role of religious leadership in supporting Islamic boarding schools, there are important gaps that remain to be filled, particularly in understanding how the charisma and moral authority of religious leaders such as *tuan guru* play a role in mobilizing community participation in a sustainable way. Previous studies, such as Musta'an and Sari, highlight *kiai* leadership functions and community relations management, but do not explore in depth the dynamics of leadership based on local cultural values, as in East Lombok. Furthermore, while studies such as Gumilang & Nurcholis (2018) highlight the importance of *santri* innovation and personality development, few have explored how *tuan guru* integrate traditional values with modern leadership strategies to maintain community trust and support. This study is important because it explores the unique relationship between religiosity, charisma, and community participation in the cultural context of the East Lombok community, which can make a significant contribution to the academic literature while providing a practical model for strengthening the sustainability of *pesantren* in Indonesia.

The limited number of in-depth studies on how religious leadership functions as a driving force for community participation in *pesantren* makes this topic relevant for research. Most of the literature focuses more on the educational aspects of *pesantren* or the role of *pesantren* in society, without highlighting the leadership mechanisms used by religious leaders to build solid relationships with the community. Thus, this study aims to answer the main question: what is the religious leadership role of *Tuan Guru* in mobilizing community participation in support of Islamic boarding schools in East Lombok?

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative, phenomenological approach (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) to understand in depth the community's experiences and views of the religious leadership role of *tuan guru* in mobilizing community participation. The phenomenological approach was chosen because of its relevance in exploring the meaning of social and religious experiences felt by individuals and communities around Islamic boarding schools. The research site was set in three

Islamic boarding schools in East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, namely Darunnahdlatain NW Pancor Islamic Boarding School, Maraqitta'limat Islamic Boarding School and Darul Kamal Islamic Boarding School. These three sites were chosen because they play a strategic role in the development of Islamic education and show the great influence of *tuan guru*'s leadership on the surrounding community.

The data sources for this study included several key informants, namely *tuan guru* as the head of the boarding school, foundation administrators, madrasa or school principals, teachers and residents living in the boarding school environment. The selection of informants (table 1) was purposive to ensure that the data obtained was relevant to the focus of the research. The informants were selected on the basis of their involvement in the activities of the boarding school as well as their proximity to the social and religious dynamics that became the object of study.

Table 1. Detailing the Selection of Subjects

Name/Initial	Role	Information Obtained
<i>Tuan guru</i>	Islamic Boarding School Leader	History and development of the <i>pesantren</i> , <i>pesantren</i> management, leadership model, and human resource management.
Foundation Administrators	<i>Pesantren</i> Management & Educators	<i>Pesantren</i> programs, leadership model of Tuan Guru, and human resource management.
School/Madrasa Principals	Heads of Educational Institutions	Leadership model of Tuan Guru, educational programs, and staff management.
Rector & Lecturers	Academics at <i>Pesantren</i> -based Universities	Leadership model, educational policies, and human resource development.
Teachers	Educators in <i>Pesantren</i>	Implementation of educational programs and teacher management.
<i>Pesantren</i> Residents	<i>Santri & Pesantren</i> Community	Community support, involvement in <i>pesantren</i> management, and leadership model of Tuan Guru.

The data collection process was carried out using three main techniques, namely observation, interviews and documentation. Observations were conducted in a participatory manner to observe social interactions in the boarding school environment, the daily activities of students and the community, and the concrete forms of community support for the boarding school. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore informants' experiences, views and understanding of the religious leadership role of *tuan guru*. Documentation was also used to supplement the data through the analysis of archives, activity reports and documents relating to the activities of the boarding school.

Data validity was maintained by basing the research process on four main criteria. First, credibility (internal validity), achieved by triangulating sources and methods to ensure the consistency of information obtained from different parties. Second, transferability (external validity), achieved by providing a detailed description of the research context so that the findings can be applied to similar situations in other areas. Third, dependability, which is achieved by systematically documenting the research process so that it can be traced and repeated by other researchers using the same procedures. Finally, confirmability (objectivity) is maintained by ensuring that the interpretation of data is based on the facts collected, and by an audit trail to check the accuracy of the data analysis process.

The data collected was analysed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, (2014). The analysis process was carried out iteratively with stages

including data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions. The data reduction stage involved selecting and simplifying data relevant to the research focus. The summarised data was then presented in the form of narratives and visualisations such as matrices to facilitate interpretation. In addition, the inference process was carried out by identifying patterns, relationships and findings that answered the research questions.

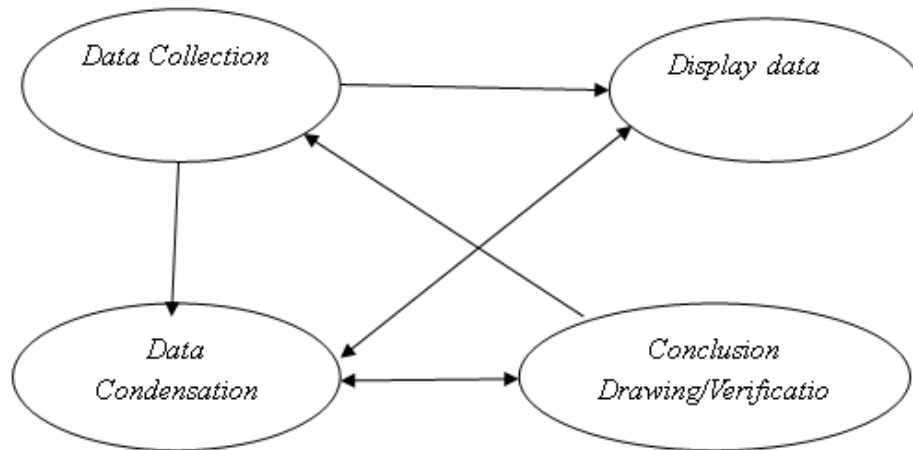


Figure 1. Component of Data Analysis: Interactive

Through this phenomenological approach and systematic analytical techniques, the research aims to understand how *tuan guru's* charisma, religious authority and leadership can influence community participation in the support and development of Islamic boarding schools in East Lombok. This model provides deep insights into the role of religious leadership in building social solidarity and sustainability of Islamic educational institutions.

This study integrates Resource Mobilization Theory (Mccarthy & Zald, 1977) with concepts of charisma and religious authority to examine how *tuan guru*, as a religious leader, mobilizes community participation in Islamic boarding schools. Drawing from a constructivist worldview and employing a phenomenological approach, this research views charisma not as an inherent trait but as a socially constructed phenomenon that emerges through interactions between *tuan guru* and the community. Religious authority, in this context, is reinforced through spiritual guidance, social networks, and institutional legitimacy, which enable the strategic mobilization of human, financial, and material resources. The operationalization of this theory involves an in-depth thematic analysis of qualitative data collected through interviews and participant observations, focusing on how *tuan guru* leverages his authority to mobilize collective action. By employing a phenomenological lens, this study captures the lived experiences of community members, analyzing how their perceptions of religious leadership influence participation dynamics and the sustainability of *pesantren*-led initiatives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tuan Guru's Charisma and Scholarly Contributions in Mobilizing Community Support

The people of East Lombok regard *tuan guru* as a religious figure who has not only deep religious knowledge but also high moral integrity. The community's trust in *tuan guru* is based on the religious knowledge acquired through formal education in the Holy Land of Mecca and his ability to apply it in social life. From the interview data, one of the interviewees, Hzh, a disciple of *tuan guru*, explained that upon his return from Mecca, *tuan guru* immediately gained the trust of the community to lead the recitation. He said:

Upon his return from the holy land of Mecca to study, *Maulana Syeh (Tuan Guru Mzam)* immediately gained the trust of the community to provide guidance and teach matters related to Islamic teachings. At that time, there was little understanding of religious matters and morals

were not in accordance with Islamic teachings. As a result, the community immediately asked him to give recitations at his house in the village of Bermi Pancor (Hzh, 2024).

Tuan guru's depth of knowledge and his ability to explain and guide people in spiritual and moral matters make him a respected figure. This is confirmed by the recognition of one of the great scholars of Mecca, Sheikh Hasan Al-Masyad, who stated, “*Tuan Guru Mzam is a person of high intelligence and broad religious insight*”. *Tuan Guru's* charisma and integrity can be seen in his ability to lead the community politely, to offer solutions based on Islamic values, and yet to embrace those who were initially sceptical of his existence. Ans, a community leader, said:

The return of *Maulana Syeh* received an overwhelming response from the community. On the other hand, there were those who were unhappy and envious of the *tuan guru*, fearing that they would lose the respect of the community. However, the *tuan guru* did not react excessively. In fact, they are invited to participate in every activity he does (Ans, 2024).

Tuan guru's presence not only educated but also united the community, especially in the socially fragmented conditions of the time. *Tuan guru's* gentle and inclusive approach, combined with his broad religious knowledge, attracted people to follow his guidance. This support came not only in the form of symbolic respect, but also in concrete forms such as donations of land, labour and funds to establish and develop Islamic boarding schools.

With the charisma that emanates from his knowledge and humble nature, *tuan guru* not only succeeded in establishing the boarding school as an educational institution, but also inspired the community to voluntarily support his vision and mission. This success is a clear demonstration of how the charisma and scholarly influence of a religious leader can move the community towards a common goal.

Material and Non-material Support from the Community as a Basis for the Islamic Boarding Schools Development

The results showed that community support for *tuan guru's* boarding school takes various forms, both tangible and intangible. Material support includes donations in the form of money, *waqf* of land and goods needed for the construction of the boarding school, while non-material support is reflected in the form of energy, thoughts and the spirit of *gotong royong* to support the programmes and sustainability of the boarding school. From the interview, one resource person, *Ustāz Hbr*, explained the important role of community support in the early stages of establishing the *pesantren*:

Maulana Syeh's desire to establish a boarding school received tremendous support from the community who studied with him. At the time of the first meeting, which was directly led by *tuan guru*, not only did he receive support in the form of enthusiasm, but one of the believers immediately donated a plot of land to be used as the site for a madrasa at the Mujahidin Islamic Boarding School, now called Pondok Pesantren Darunnadlatain NW Pancor (Hbr, 2024).

Material support is also seen in the form of fundraising and the provision of building materials by the surrounding community. According to *Ustāz Ahmd*, the head of the madrasa at one of the boarding schools, the community has been active in donating building materials:

The community makes donations for the procurement of facilities and infrastructure such as wooden furniture, chairs, ceramics, cement and many others. This support is not just now, but since the beginning of its establishment by *Maulana Syeh*, this madrasa has received tremendous support from the community in various aspects of the madrasa's needs (Ahmd, 2024).

In addition, *gotong royong* activity is a very prominent form of non-material support. In the researcher's observations, the community was seen enthusiastically supporting the construction of the boarding school, such as during the damage caused by the earthquake in 2018. They worked together to dismantle the roofs and walls of the damaged buildings, as well as providing food and drink for the volunteer workers. This community involvement is not limited to physical construction, but also includes emotional and spiritual support for teachers and students. This non-material support gives a sense of comfort and pride to the teachers who serve at the boarding school. *Ustāz Hmdn* revealed, “Once they know that we are part of the boarding school, they will be friendly and speak well to us. Because they will see us as honourable people if we are trusted to be teachers in this NW Pancor Islamic Boarding School” (*Hmdn, 2024*). The material and non-material support provided by the community indicates a strong emotional attachment to *Tuan Guru* as their religious leader. In addition, the community sees their contribution as a form of devotion and a field of charity to the leader they respect. This makes the *pesantren* not only a centre of education, but also a centre of community solidarity.

Patterns of *Tuan Guru's* Relationship with the Community: The Basis of Sustained Support and Trust

The pattern of *tuan guru's* relationship with the East Lombok community plays an important role in building sustainable support for the *pesantren*. This relationship is built through emotional, spiritual and social approaches that are inclusive. *Tuan guru* acts not only as a religious leader, but also as a protector of the community, able to understand and respond to their needs. The emotional connection between *tuan guru* and the community is reflected in his direct involvement in the daily life of the community. One interviewee, *Ans*, who is also a disciple of *tuan guru*, explained:

There is a great deal of family and community support for *Maulana Syeh*. Apart from the scientific factor, the community needs a leader who is able to bring coolness to social life. *Maulana Syeh* is a figure who is expected and believed by the community to be able to change the order of life both in the community and in relation to religion (*Ans, 2024*).

In addition to the emotional approach, *tuan guru's* spiritual relationship with the community is established through recitation activities, da'wah and religious guidance. The community sees *tuan guru* not only as a source of religious knowledge, but also as a moral role model. *Hzh*, a devotee, said, “At each meeting, we are asked to pray for the progress of the boarding school and to set aside a portion of our food to be used as additional funds for the construction of our boarding school” (*Hzh, 2024*). *Tuan guru's* social relationships with the community also demonstrate inclusivity and sensitivity to the diversity of the local community. In the face of disagreement or opposition from some parties, *Tuan Guru* demonstrates a humble and non-confrontational attitude. *ANS* explains further:

Maulana Syeh's return from the Holy Land of Mecca was greeted with great enthusiasm, but there were also those who were unhappy and envious. However, he did not react excessively to all this. On the contrary, they were invited to participate in every activity that was being carried out (*Ans, 2024*).

This approach creates a strong reciprocal relationship between *tuan guru* and the community. The community feels respected and involved in every important decision, while *tuan guru* receives moral and material support to build the *pesantren* and its programmes. This pattern of harmonious relationships became the basis for continued community support, even after *tuan guru's* death.

Resistance and Strategies for Overcoming Barriers through Courteous Leadership by *Tuan Guru*

The research found that although *tuan guru* had a great deal of support from the community, not all parties accepted his existence without resistance. The obstacles *tuan guru* faced came from a small group of people who felt their position was being disrupted by *tuan guru*'s large influence in their neighbourhood. However, with a polite, wise and religiously values-based approach, *tuan guru* was able to overcome these obstacles without causing major conflict. One of the main obstacles *tuan guru* faces is the envy and resentment of a handful of people who feel threatened by their position in society. As Ans, a community leader, explained:

The return of *Maulana Syeh*, after being instructed by his teacher in the holy city of Mecca, was greatly welcomed by the community. But on the other hand, there were those who were unhappy and envious of the Master, thinking that his presence would diminish the community's respect for them. However, *Maulana Syeh* did not react unduly to all this. In fact, they are invited to participate in every activity he conducts (Ans, 2024).

The *tuan guru's* approach to dealing with resistance shows his exemplary leadership. He did not choose confrontation, but rather embraced all parties, including those who were initially unsupportive. This *tawāḍu* 'humble' attitude inspires the community to see *tuan guru's* sincerity in every action. The interview with *Ustāz Fkr* illustrates the *tuan guru's* leadership strategy, "In social life, *tuan guru* associates with all groups, rich and poor. He does not differentiate status within the boarding school, and all the approaches he uses in his leadership cannot be separated from religious teachings and a democratic approach to decision-making" (Fkr, 2024).

In addition, obstacles are often overcome by involving the community in the activities of the boarding school, so that they feel a sense of shared responsibility for the success of the institution. This method not only resolves obstacles, but also strengthens community solidarity and support for *tuan guru* and the boarding school he runs. *Tuan guru's* courteous, inclusive and tactful approach proves that resistance can be turned into a supportive force through dialogue and respect for those who were initially sceptical. This strategy not only breaks down barriers, but also builds stronger and more harmonious relationships within the community.

The Tradition of *Gotong Royong* as a Pillar of Solidarity and Support for Islamic Boarding Schools

The results showed that the tradition and culture of *gotong royong* became one of the important foundations to support the establishment and sustainability of *tuan guru's pesantren*. *Gotong royong* not only reflects the high value of community togetherness, but also becomes a concrete form of community participation in supporting *tuan guru's* vision and mission. This tradition encompasses various forms of activity, from physical construction to the organisation of religious events, in which the community is involved voluntarily and enthusiastically. In an interview with *Ustāz Ahmd*, a madrasa principal at the *pesantren*, he explained how *gotong royong* has become a collective strength of the community:

The community participated in the *gotong royong* for the construction of the madrasa building, provided food for those involved in the *gotong royong* and donated materials such as wood, chairs, ceramics and cement. This support has continued since the establishment of the Islamic boarding school (Ahmd, 2024).

The culture of *gotong royong* was also evident in the 2018 earthquake that damaged several boarding school buildings. At that time, the community spontaneously took the initiative to help repair the damage with their labour and resources. Researchers' observations at the time noted the enthusiasm of the community who not only did physical work but also provided consumption for

the workers. This tradition is not limited to physical labour. *Ustāz* Bhri, a teacher at the *Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan* 'Vocational School' under the boarding school management, added:

The community not only helped with the physical construction but was also involved in finding and securing new students for the school. At the beginning of the establishment, the number of students was only 27, but with the support of the community, the number of students now reaches more than 200 (Bhri, 2024).

The community's mutual assistance is sincere and seen as a form of devotion to the *tuan guru*. In an interview, one of the community leaders, Msn, stated, "Whatever the *tuan guru* directs and orders, we will do our best. In *gotong royong* activities, the community is always enthusiastic, especially if the *tuan guru* is present in person, our enthusiasm doubles" (Msn, 2024). This tradition of *gotong royong* is deeply rooted in the culture of the community around the *pesantren* and is one of the important factors that strengthen the relationship between the community and *tuan guru*. By maintaining this culture, the boarding school not only manages to fulfil its operational needs, but also builds solidarity and a sense of belonging among the community.

Analysis of *Tuan Guru's* Role as a Religious Leader in Mobilizing Community Participation

The results of the research on *tuan guru's* charisma and scholarship as a source of inspiration and mobilisation of community support can be explained by referring to Max Weber's theory of leadership charisma. Weber stated that charisma is an extraordinary quality of an individual recognised by his followers, making him a leader who is considered to have more abilities than ordinary people (Rosita, 2018). In the context of *Tuan Guru* Mzam, this charisma comes not only from the religious knowledge acquired but also from the moral integrity he demonstrates in guiding the community. *Tuan guru's* ability to combine scholarship with a polite and inclusive approach strengthens the community's recognition of his spiritual authority, as expressed by Weber that charismatic authority often emerges in social contexts that require leaders with transformative abilities.

In addition, the results of this study are also in line with the concept of "transformational leader" developed by Burns (1978), in which leaders are able to inspire their followers to achieve greater goals by providing a clear vision and direction (Iqbal, 2021). *Tuan guru's* approach of prioritising Islamic values in building communities and solving social problems reflects this transformational role. *Tuan guru* not only provides religious lectures, but also creates significant changes in the social structure of the community, which was previously fragmented to become more united. This suggests that *tuan guru's* success in mobilising support depends not only on his scholarship but also on his ability to build trust and emotional connections with the community, as Burns' theory emphasises the importance of the emotional element in transformational leadership (Tkaczynski & Arli, 2018).

The results of this study are also supported by the findings of Aswasulasikin, Dwiningrum, & Sumarno, (2015) in their study of the role of *tuan guru* in Lombok which shows that the charisma and knowledge of a *tuan guru* is often a very strong source of influence in building social solidarity and collective trust of the community. Aswasulasikin, et.al. (2015) revealed that deep knowledge, especially obtained through education in the Middle East, gives *tuan guru* strong legitimacy as a spiritual and social leader (Boland & Zhu, 2012). This is in line with the East Lombok community's recognition of *Tuan Guru* Mzam, who is recognised not only for his religious insights but also his ability to implement Islamic teachings in daily life. This finding strengthens the argument that in traditional societies, religious leaders not only play a role in guiding spiritual aspects, but are also able to be effective agents of social change, creating a more harmonious and purposeful society.

The material and non-material support of the community in the construction of *pesantren* 'boarding school' indicates the existence of a close relationship between religious leaders and their communities, as has been widely stated in various studies on the role of *pesantren* in society. This

result is in line with the research of Sumpena, Dewi, & Kurniawan, (2022) which states that *pesantren* in Indonesia are often institutions that are built on the basis of strong emotional and spiritual relationships between *kiai* 'pesantren leaders' and the community. This relationship creates social ties that encourage active community participation in the form of material support such as land *waqf*, funds, and building materials, as happened in the establishment of Darunnadlatain NW Pancor Islamic Boarding School. This research confirms that material contributions from the community are not just a form of economic support, but also a representation of trust and respect for the values taught by *tuan guru* as a *pesantren* leader.

Furthermore, this result supports the findings of Wafa, Thoyyib Madani, & Subairi, (2024) which showed that *pesantren* is the oldest Islamic educational institution that has contributed to educating the community in the field of religious and social religious sciences. In this context, *pesantren* function as a place of education that not only teaches religious values, but also shapes the character and morals of *santri*, which in turn contributes to strengthening social solidarity within the community (Setyaningsih, 2016; Syafe'i, 2017). *Pesantren* also play a role in improving the quality of human resources, both in religious and social aspects. In the era of globalisation, *pesantren* have adapted to the changing times and remain relevant by providing education that integrates general and religious curricula (Samudera, 2023; Winata et al., 2022). Thus, *pesantren* not only function as educational institutions, but also as agents of social change that are able to organise people's lives in spiritual and social aspects (Fachrian, 2021; Nurtiyasari et al., 2022) This suggests that *pesantren* have the capacity to build strong social networks among their members, which is important for creating solidarity within the community.

The pattern of *tuan guru's* relationship with the community that is built through emotional, spiritual and social approaches reflects Max Weber's theory of "charismatic authority", in which the leader gains legitimacy not from formal rules but from the community's recognition of the leader's special qualities (Akinlabi, 2022). *Tuan Guru* Mzam demonstrates these characteristics of charismatic authority by being an inclusive and humble protector (Sahin & Sengul, 2025), and providing solutions to the needs of the community in both religious and social aspects. This research reinforces Geertz's (1960) findings on the role of *kiai* as spiritual leaders in Javanese society who are not only religious teachers, but also moral and social role models (Bashri, 2021). *Tuan guru's* emotional approach of being directly involved in people's daily lives shows that relationships based on empathy and attention to community needs are key to success in building sustainable support.

Moreover, this finding supports Nasriandi, Pajarianto, & Makmur, (2023) study that highlights how religious leaders in the *Nusantara* are often at the centre of social integration amidst the diversity of society. *Tuan guru's* inclusive spiritual and social approaches, such as involving the community in recitations and promoting a humble attitude in the face of resistance, reflect the ability of religious leaders to create harmony in a diverse society. The reciprocal relationship - where the community feels included and respected, while *tuan guru* receives moral and material support - reflects the dynamics of a mutually reinforcing relationship. This finding shows that this pattern of relationship not only strengthens the community's trust in *tuan guru*, but also makes the *pesantren* a sustainable institution, beyond the existence of *tuan guru* as an individual. This confirms that social relations based on religious values, inclusivity, and active community participation have a long-term impact in building solidarity and collective support.

Tuan guru's polite and inclusive approach to overcoming resistance reflects the practice of values-based leadership, which emphasises integrity, respect for differences and commitment to social harmony. This strategy is relevant to Alfoqahaa & Jones, (2020) findings on effective leadership in overcoming conflict, where leaders who promote dialogue, empathy and empowerment tend to successfully overcome obstacles without creating divisions. *Tuan guru's tawadu* 'humble' attitude, such as embracing sceptics and involving them in boarding school activities, demonstrates a transformational leadership approach. This not only eases tensions but

also transforms resistance into collaboration, strengthens social relations within the community, and encourages people to support his vision together.

This strategy is also supported by Bojovic & Jovanovic, (2020) findings that transformational leaders are able to motivate their followers through strong role modelling, creating a sense of shared belonging, and inspiring a greater purpose. In the context of *tuan guru*, his sincerity in embracing all groups, regardless of social status, creates a strong emotional bond with the community. The democratic approach to decision-making, as exemplified by *tuan guru*, builds a sense of community participation in the success of the *pesantren*. This shows that leadership strategies based on religious values and inclusiveness not only resolve obstacles, but also create harmonious relationships and sustainable support within the community. This finding strengthens the argument that resistance, when faced with a polite and thoughtful approach, can be an opportunity to strengthen community solidarity.

The culture of *gotong royong*, which is the supporting pillar of the *pesantren*, reflects the role of traditional values in building community solidarity. This finding is in line with Pajarianto, Pribad, & Sari, (2022) research which states that *gotong royong* is a fundamental aspect in the culture of Indonesian society, especially in rural areas, which prioritises the principles of collectivity and mutual devotion. In the context of *pesantren* led by *tuan guru*, *gotong royong* is not only a means to fulfil physical needs such as building and infrastructure development, but also a symbol of social participation that strengthens the emotional connection between the community and their religious leaders (Doley & Barman, 2025). The enthusiasm of the community in helping voluntarily, especially when facing crisis situations such as the 2018 earthquake, shows that *gotong royong* functions as an adaptive mechanism in facing common challenges.

In addition, the results of this study reinforce the findings of Karim, Bakhtiar, Sahrodi, & Chang (2022) study, which highlighted that community participation in *pesantren* activities reflects a deep emotional and spiritual connection with religious leaders. In this case, *Tuan guru's* presence as a central figure plays an important role in mobilising community participation through an inclusive and inspiring approach (Shen & Wu, 2024). *Tuan guru's* direct presence in *gotong royong* activities, as recounted by the interviewees, became a catalyst that increased the collective spirit of the community. This support not only helps the *pesantren* in achieving its operational goals, but also creates a strong sense of belonging among the community. Thus, the tradition of *gotong royong* becomes a key element in strengthening social solidarity and ensuring the sustainability of community support for the *pesantren*.

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications for understanding religious leadership and community mobilization. Theoretically, this research expands Resource Mobilization Theory by demonstrating how charismatic religious leadership, when combined with Islamic values and humility, can effectively mobilize both material and non-material resources within a faith-based community. It highlights the interplay between religious authority, social networks, and collective action, showing that spiritual legitimacy can be a powerful catalyst for sustained participation. Practically, these findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, religious institutions, and community leaders on leveraging charismatic leadership and traditional values like *gotong royong* to drive grassroots development initiatives. The study underscores the importance of trust, reciprocity, and shared values in fostering long-term community engagement, suggesting that similar leadership approaches could be applied to other faith-based and social movements to enhance resource mobilization and collective action.

CONCLUSION

This study found that *tuan guru's* religious leadership, through charisma, knowledge, and a polite leadership approach, was able to build deep relationships with the community that resulted in material and non-material support and collective solidarity for the *pesantren*. The surprising thing is that the resistance that arises from a handful of parties does not hinder the influence of *tuan guru*, but instead triggers the creation of a more inclusive engagement through dialogue and invitation

approaches. The combination of deep religious knowledge, *tawāḍu* ‘humble’ attitude, and the ability to read the needs of the community allows *tuan guru* to not only be a spiritual leader, but also a social mobilizer who inspires the community to actively participate in the development of the *pesantren*. The tradition of *gotong royong*, as a reflection of local culture, is the main force that supports the sustainability of the *pesantren's* mission, both physically and morally. This research strengthens transformational leadership theory that emphasises the importance of moral values, dialogue and inclusiveness in building harmonious and sustainable relationships. In addition, it adds a new perspective on how the charisma of religious leaders can be mobilized to overcome resistance and create collective solidarity through a polite and adaptive approach. This research also enriches the study of local culture, especially in the context of how the tradition of *gotong royong* can function as a pillar of solidarity in the development of faith-based educational institutions.

However, this study has limitations in that it is limited to communities in East Lombok, which may not reflect cultural and social variations from other regions. The relatively small sample also limits the generalisability of the findings. In addition, this study mostly used interviews and observations without exploring quantitative data to validate the broader impact. Further research is needed to explore more diverse contexts, including gender roles, age, and broader social strata, as well as using mixed methods to get a more comprehensive picture. With more in-depth research, relevant evidence-based policies can be formulated to support the role of religious institutions in strengthening community solidarity and development.

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