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The Influence of Leadership Style and Work Culture on Employee Performance: Evidence from an Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

Objective: *This study aims to examine the influence of leadership style and work culture on employee performance at Sabilun Najah Islamic Boarding School, Sampang, Indonesia, with particular attention to the organizational characteristics of the pesantren context.* ***Method****: This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design involving 35 employees selected using a total sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured closed-ended questionnaire consisting of measurement items for leadership style, work culture, and employee performance, with responses measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The instrument was assessed for validity and reliability before the data were analyzed using multiple linear regression. Classical assumption tests and hypothesis testing using the t-test, F-test, and coefficient of determination were also conducted.* ***Results:*** *The findings show that leadership style has a positive and significant influence on employee performance (t = 3.013, p = 0.004), while work culture also has a positive and significant influence on employee performance (t = 2.468, p = 0.019). Simultaneously, leadership style and work culture significantly influence employee performance (F = 4.150, p = 0.025). The regression model explains 20.6% of the variance in employee performance, while the remaining 79.4% is associated with other factors outside the model.* ***Novelty****: This study contributes empirical evidence on the relationship between leadership style, work culture, and employee performance within an Islamic boarding school setting, where organizational practices combine formal management processes with religious, spiritual, and communal values. The findings provide context-specific evidence on how these organizational factors relate to employee performance in the pesantren environment.*

INTRODUCTION

The performance of employees within an organization, whether in the public or private sector, is a fundamental element used to measure the extent to which the institution's vision and mission have been achieved. To accomplish this, high-quality human resources are required, supported by an optimal and substantial institutional system, both in terms of infrastructure and regulations. Therefore, strategic efforts must be implemented to ensure that every employee can perform optimally in executing the tasks delegated to them.

In the context of Islamic educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools, employee performance plays a vital strategic role in supporting the operational continuity of the institution. A *pesantren* functions not only as a center for religious education (*tafaqquh fiddin*) but also as a social institution, a moral guide, and **a** hub for community character building. The success of a *pesantren* is no longer determined exclusively by the quality of the *kiai* (head of the boarding school) or teaching staff; it is also significantly influenced by the performance effectiveness of the employees involved

in the institution's administrative structure and operational management.(Al-Sada et al., 2020; Alamsah et al., 2022; Alshuhumi et al., 2025).

"In the context of Islamic educational institutions, optimizing employee performance is inseparable from the implementation of effective management practices. As emphasized by Muhaimin (2023) and Zarkasyi (2024), the management of *pondok pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in the modern era requires governance that integrates spiritual values with professional management principles to ensure the institution remains relevant and competitive (Anwar et al., 2022); (Azmy et al., 2023). Furthermore, Nata (2022) notes that the primary challenge in Islamic education today is overcoming managerial weaknesses that often hinder productivity; therefore, a systematic performance evaluation is essential, as suggested by Mangkunegara (2022) and Fahmi (2023); Zulfikar & & Nurbaeti, (2023) to ensure that every organizational instrument functions at its full potential

The phenomenon underlying this research indicates that employee performance at *Pesantren Sabilun Najah* Sampang Preliminary observations conducted at Pesantren Sabilun Najah Sampang indicated several issues related to employee performance, particularly in communication, employee involvement, work motivation, and the implementation of professional work practices. These initial observations suggest that employee performance is not only related to individual capabilities but may also be associated with the organizational conditions in which employees perform their responsibilities. Therefore, leadership practices and work culture require further examination to determine their role in shaping employee performance within the pesantren environment.(Bushiri & Halim, 2021; Dayanti & Nurchayati, 2023).

Leadership style and work culture are conceptually interrelated in shaping employee performance. Leadership style influences employee performance by providing direction, communicating expectations, supervising task implementation, and demonstrating organizational standards through leadership behavior (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2024; Hanina et al., 2024). Meanwhile, work culture shapes the shared values, norms, and habitual patterns that guide employees in carrying out their responsibilities. In the pesantren context, leadership provides formal and relational direction, while work culture provides the normative environment that influences how employees interpret and perform their duties (Hendriarto et al., 2025; Hidayat & Patras, 2021). When leadership practices provide clear direction and support and are reinforced by a work culture that emphasizes discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and devotion, employees are more likely to demonstrate effective work behavior and higher performance(Hikmawati et al., 2024; Karim, 2025). Thus, both leadership style and work culture are expected to contribute to employee performance, both independently and simultaneously.(Ikhwan & Yuniana, 2022; Khairani & Us, 2023).

Based on preliminary observations at *Pesantren Sabilun Najah*, the implementation of leadership styles has not yet been optimal. Within the traditional *pesantren* structure, leadership styles are generally centered absolutely on the figure of the *kiai* or the highest leader, who holds full authority over decision-making. This charismatic and authoritative leadership pattern indeed plays an important role in maintaining the authority and order of the *pesantren*. However, if it is not balanced with an open communication system, emotional support, staff empowerment, and the provision of adequate work motivation,

such a leadership model has the potential to become less effective in driving daily employee productivity (Laksmita, 2024; Le & Le, 2021).

In addition to leadership factors, work culture also plays a crucial role in the fluctuations of employee performance. Work culture refers to the shared system of values, norms, and working habits derived from leadership as well as interactions among colleagues.(Nguyen et al., 2023). The work culture at *Pesantren Sabilun Najah* strongly emphasizes values of obedience, spiritual discipline, and deep respect for the *kiai* or the school's leadership. Nevertheless, in practice, the established work culture appears passive and is not yet fully oriented toward values of professionalism and measurable work accountability.(A. S. Zarkasyi, 2021; Zubaidah & Rahmawati, 2022). This is reflected in the minimal involvement of employees in developing innovative working methods and the absence of clear standard operating procedures to serve as indicators for performance achievement. Based on the aforementioned background, this study aims to empirically examine and analyze "The Influence of Leadership Style and Work Culture on Employee Performance at *Pesantren Sabilun Najah* Sampang."

For research gap, previous studies have generally reported that leadership style and organizational or work culture are associated with employee performance in educational and organizational settings. However, the existing literature remains limited in several respects. First, many previous studies focus on teachers, educational personnel, or employees in conventional educational institutions, while empirical evidence concerning employees in the operational and administrative context of Islamic boarding schools is still relatively limited.(Widodo & Suprobo, 2023; Xiong et al., 2023) Second, previous studies tend to examine leadership or organizational culture from a general organizational perspective, while the pesantren environment combines formal organizational practices with religious values, authority relationships, and service-oriented traditions.(Yahya, 2024; Zainal & Ramly, 2022). Third, limited attention has been given to examining leadership style and work culture simultaneously in relation to employee performance within a specific pesantren setting. Therefore, further empirical investigation is required to understand whether these two organizational factors significantly influence employee performance in the distinctive context of an Islamic boarding school.(Wahyudi & Setyawan, 2024; Wairisal, 2023).

The novelty of this study lies in examining leadership style and work culture simultaneously in relation to employee performance within an Islamic boarding school setting. The study specifically considers a pesantren organizational environment in which formal management practices coexist with religiously oriented values such as obedience, ikhlas, khidmah, discipline, and respect for the kiai. By focusing on employees at Pesantren Sabilun Najah Sampang, this study provides empirical evidence from a specific pesantren context and extends previous discussions of leadership and work culture beyond conventional educational and organizational settings.

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

Employee Performance

According to Dessler's (2023), employee performance refers to the actual performance of an employee in executing the tasks and responsibilities assigned within their scope of work, encompassing aspects of effectiveness, efficiency, and the quality of work outcomes. Herman (2023) defines performance as an individual's contribution that is

aligned with the strategic goals of the organization through a systematic performance management process. Meanwhile, Byrne (2022) asserts that employee performance is the final product of consistent engagement levels and an individual's ability to adapt to the dynamics of task demands. From these experts' perspectives, it can be concluded that employee performance is the accumulation of actual work results that reflect the employee's motivation, competence, and dedication in ensuring organizational productivity.(Priadana & Sunarsi, 2021; Priyanto, 2021).

Effective leadership serves as the primary driver of organizational effectiveness within educational institutions (Rivai & Mulyadi, 2023; Wahjosumidjo 2024). A leader does not merely act as a decision-maker but also functions as the architect of organizational culture. In line with this, Sutrisno (2024) explains that a strong and well-internalized organizational culture provides a behavioral foundation capable of continuously enhancing employee commitment and performance. The factors influencing employee performance, according to Moderin & Asri (2024), include organizational culture, competence level, leadership style, level of discipline, work environment conditions, and employee work motivation. To measure performance achievement, (Jannah et al., 2025) formulated several key dimensions and indicators, namely: quality of work (accuracy and adherence to standards), timeliness in task completion, personal initiative, technical competence, and the effectiveness of communication between organizational components.

Leadership Style

Leadership style is defined as the pattern of behavior, characteristics, and systematic strategies frequently applied by a leader in their efforts to influence, direct, and coordinate subordinates so that they are willing to cooperate toward the achievement of established organizational goals Arif (2024). Oktarina (2023) add that an effective leadership style must be able to adapt to the psychosocial context of the work environment in order to create a conducive work atmosphere (Raharja, 2022; Smith et al., 2018; Suryanto et al., 2025; Usman & Haryadi, 2023).

The dimensions and indicators of leadership style, according to Gunawan & Arifin, (2024); include: (1) the ability to make precise and responsible decisions; (2) the ability for clear two-way communication; (3) the ability to direct and supervise the workflow; and (4) the aspect of leading by example in terms of discipline and professional ethics.

Work Culture

Work culture serves as the foundational framework in which values, norms, beliefs, and daily operational practices are internalized by all members of an organization to shape their ways of thinking and acting Northouse (2021). Batara & Putra (2024) suggest that a strong work culture functions as a social glue that unites individual vision with institutional vision. Within *pesantren* institutions, work culture generally integrates spiritual religious values with the demands of professional work Purnomo (2023), Robbins (2024) outlines five key dimensions that constitute work culture: (1) innovation and risk-taking; (2) attention to detail in quality; (3) outcome orientation toward target achievement; (4) service orientation toward customer satisfaction (in this context, students and their parents); and (5) clarity of leadership and organizational structure.

Hypothesis Development

Based on the theoretical review and the relationships between variables, the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H1: Leadership style has a positive and significant influence on employee performance at *Pesantren Sabilun Najah* Sampang.

H2: Work culture has a positive and significant influence on employee performance at *Pesantren Sabilun Najah* Sampang.

H3: Leadership style and work culture simultaneously have a significant influence on employee performance at *Pesantren Sabilun Najah* Sampang.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative approach with a causal-descriptive design to examine the cause-and-effect relationships between variables. The independent variables consist of Leadership Style (X_1) and Work Culture (X_2), while the dependent variable is Employee Performance (Y).

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all active employees working at Pesantren Sabilun Najah Sampang, comprising 35 individuals. The employees included in the population were those involved in the operational and administrative activities of the pesantren during the research period. Because the population was relatively small and all members of the population could be accessed by the researchers, a total sampling (census) technique was employed. Consequently, all 35 employees were included as respondents. The use of total sampling eliminates the need to select a smaller sample from the population and allows the analysis to represent the characteristics of the entire employee population of Pesantren Sabilun Najah Sampang during the study period.

The sample size should also be considered in relation to the statistical model (Arifin et al., 2023). The regression model in this study contains two independent variables, namely leadership style and work culture, and one dependent variable, namely employee performance. Because the study uses the entire accessible population rather than a subsample, the sample of 35 respondents represents the complete population under investigation. However, the relatively small number of observations limits the statistical power and the generalizability of the findings beyond Pesantren Sabilun Najah Sampang. Therefore, the regression results are interpreted specifically within the institutional context examined in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Overview and Organizational Structure

Pesantren Sabilun Najah is an integrated Islamic educational institution located in Srapong Hamlet, Gulbung Village, Pangarengan District, Sampang Regency, East Java Province. The management of the *pesantren* is governed by a formal organizational structure, with Lora Mahrus Zamroni serving as the Person in Charge (person in charge), KH. Adrai Basuni as the Head of the *Pesantren* and Ny. Maimunatur Rorah as the Head of the Madrasah (Head of Madrasah). Daily administrative operations and financial management are fully supported by Ust. Ali Mubarok as the Secretary and Ust. Sudi Silalahi as the Treasurer, both of whom coordinate directly with the Council of Teachers (Council of Religious Teachers) and the Student Council.

Respondent Characteristics

The demographic profiles of the 35 participating employee respondents are described in detail in the following tables:

Table 1. Characteristics of R espondents by Gender

GENDER	TOTAL (PEOPLE)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Male	15	43%
Female	20	57%
Total	35	100%

Source: Processed by the authors using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.

Table 2. Characteristics of Respondents by Age

AGE RANGE	TOTAL (PEOPLE)	PERCENTAGE (%)
17 - 25 Yars old	20	57%
26 - 35 Years old	9	26%
36 - 45 Years old	4	11%
> 45 Years old	2	6%
Total	35	100%

Source: Processed by the authors using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.

Table 3. Characteristics of Respondents by Years of Service

YEARS OF SERVICE	TOTAL (PEOPLE)	PERCENTAGE (%)
< 1 Years	3	9%
1 - 3 Years	18	51%
4 - 6 Years	10	29%
> 6 Years	4	11%
Total	35	100%

Source: Processed by the authors using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.

Instrument Feasibility Test (Validity and Reliability)

The validity test was conducted by comparing the Pearson Correlation (r_count) value of each item against the r_table value at a 5% significance level with degrees of freedom $df = N - 2 = 33, resulting in an r_table value of 0.3338. Based on the test results, all statement indicators for the variables of Leadership Style (X_1), Work Culture (X_2), and Employee Performance (Y) showed r_{count} > 0.3338 with a significance value of p < 0.001, indicating that all instrument items are considered valid. The reliability test was performed by evaluating the Cronbach's Alpha value. The results indicate that the alpha values for variable X_1 is 0.933, for variable X_2 is 0.934, and for variable Y is 0.942. Since all alpha values significantly exceed the minimum threshold of 0.60, the research instrument is declared reliable and consistent for further analysis.

Classical Assumption Tests

The normality test was evaluated using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The test results indicate that the significance values (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) for Leadership Style (X_1), Work Culture (X_2), and Employee Performance (Y) are 0.200, 0.174, and 0.087, respectively. Since all significance values are greater than \alpha = 0.05, it can be concluded that the residual data are normally distributed. The multicollinearity test aims to determine whether there is a correlation between the independent variables in the regression model. The results show that the Tolerance value for both variables X_1 and

X_2 is 0.850 (greater than 0.10), and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value is 1.177 (well below 10.00). Thus, the regression model is declared free from multicollinearity issues. The heteroskedasticity test was conducted using the Glesjer test method by regressing the absolute residual values against the independent variables. The data processing results show a significance value of 0.392 for Leadership Style and 0.560 for Work Culture. Since the p-value for both variables is greater than 0.05, it is concluded that there are no symptoms of heteroskedasticity in this regression model.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Multiple linear regression analysis is employed to mathematically determine the influence of the independent variables. Based on the data processing results, the following regression coefficients were obtained:

$$Y = 44.531 + 0.168X_1 + 0.140X_2 + e$$

The equation indicates a constant value of 44.531, implying that if leadership style (X_1) and work culture (X_2) are assumed to be constant (zero), the employee performance index will remain at 44.531. The positive coefficients for leadership style (0.168) and work culture (0.140) indicate a positive relationship, where every increase in the independent variables will lead to an improvement in employee performance achievement.

Table 4. Results of Partial Hypothesis Testing (t-test)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	COEFFICIENT (B)	T-COUNT	T-TABLE	SIGNIFICANCE	CONCLUSION
Leadership Style (X1)	0.168	3.013	2.037	0.004	H1 Accepted (Significant)
Work Culture (X2)	0.140	2.468	2.037	0.019	H2 Accepted (Significant)

Source: Processed by the authors using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.

Based on the data in Table 4, the results of the partial t-test are described as follows: (1) The influence of X_1 on Y yielded a t_count value (3.013) greater than t_able (2.037) with a significance of 0.004 < 0.05; therefore, H1 is accepted. This confirms that leadership style has a positive and significant influence on employee performance. (2) The influence of X_2 on Y yielded a t_count value (2.468) greater than t_table (2.037) with a significance of 0.019 < 0.05; therefore, H2 is accepted. This confirms that work culture has a positive and significant partial influence on employee performance.

Table 5. Results of Simultaneous Hypothesis Testing (F-test)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares		Mean Square	F-count	F-table	Significance
Regression (Model)	394.580	2	197.290	4.15	3.30	0.025
Residual (Error)	1521.078	32	47.534			
Total	1915.658	34				

Source: Processed by the authors using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.

Based on Table 5, the simultaneous F-test results show an F-count value of 4.15, which is greater than the F-table value of 3.30, with a significance level of 0.025 ($p < 0.05$). These results indicate that Leadership Style (X1) and Work Culture (X2), when considered simultaneously, are significantly associated with Employee Performance (Y) at Pesantren Sabilun Najah Sampang. Therefore, H3 is supported.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) obtained from the model summary analysis is 0.206. This indicates that Leadership Style and Work Culture jointly account for 20.6% of the variance in Employee Performance within the observed sample. The remaining 79.4% represents variation in Employee Performance that is not explained by the predictors included in the regression model. This remaining proportion may be related to other factors that were not examined in this study. Therefore, the R^2 value is interpreted descriptively as the proportion of variance in Employee Performance explained by the two predictors in the model, without classifying it as a low, moderate, or high level of influence.

Discussion

The statistical test results empirically prove that leadership style significantly contributes to influencing employee performance within the *Pesantren Sabilun Najah* Sampang environment. In the *pesantren* ecosystem, leadership is centered on the primary figures (the *Kiai* and *Nyai*). A supportive and humanistic leadership approach, while still maintaining firm discipline, is capable of boosting the work morale of *ustadz*, Female religious teacher, and administrative staff. This finding is consistent with Leadership Style theory and confirms the empirical results of previous studies by Nani (2021) as well as Suryani & Muhtadin (2024); which state that the tangible exemplary behavior of leadership figures in *pesantren* institutions correlates positively and linearly with the escalation of their employees' work performance quality.(Handayani et al., 2021; Widawati & Arifin, 2021).

On the other hand, the work culture at *Pesantren Sabilun Najah* is also proven to have a positive and significant influence on employee productivity. The distinct characteristics of the *pesantren* culture which integrate values of sincerity (*ikhlas*), spiritual devotion (*khidmah*), obedience, and close kinship ties trigger an internal transformation within employees, wherein work activities are internalized as a form of sincere worship (Tareq, 2023; Thomas, 2025). This manifestation of spiritual values fosters a strong, resilient work ethic and minimizes internal interpersonal conflicts. These research results align with findings from Marsofiyati & Wolor (2023) and Kulsum & Indrarini (2023), which assert that strengthening organizational culture and the internalization of the institution's noble values can effectively stimulate discipline and optimal work efficiency. When tested simultaneously, the interaction between effective leadership style and a conducive work culture produces a powerful acceleration effect on the collective improvement of employee performance.(Sarinah et al., 2024); (Sari et al., 2023) Transformational leadership acts as the director of external policies, while a *khidmah*-based work culture serves as an internal motivational stimulus for employees. The harmonization of these two elements creates a *pesantren* work environment that is highly productive and adaptive in achieving the quality targets of Islamic boarding school education. (Hikmawati et al., 2024; Supriyanto et al., 2020; Talimbo, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study examined the relationships between leadership style, work culture, and employee performance at Pesantren Sabilun Najah Sampang. The empirical results indicate that leadership style is positively and significantly associated with employee performance, while work culture also shows a positive and significant relationship with employee performance. When examined simultaneously, leadership style and work culture significantly contribute to variation in employee performance. The regression model explains 20.6% of the variance in employee performance, indicating that other factors outside the model also contribute to employee performance. These findings indicate that leadership practices and work culture are relevant organizational factors in understanding employee performance in the pesantren context. **Implication:** In practical terms, pesantren management may strengthen employee performance by improving two-way communication, providing clear direction and supervision, encouraging employee involvement, and reinforcing a work culture that combines religious values with professional standards and measurable responsibilities. **Limitation:** This study has several limitations. First, the study involved only 35 employees from a single Islamic boarding school, so the findings should be interpreted within the context of Pesantren Sabilun Najah Sampang and should not be generalized automatically to other pesantren or educational institutions. Second, the cross-sectional design captures the relationships among the variables during the study period and does not establish definitive causal relationships. Third, the study examined only leadership style and work culture, while the remaining 79.4% of the variance in employee performance indicates that other factors were not included in the model. Future research could involve larger samples and multiple pesantren with different organizational characteristics to improve the transferability of the findings. **Future Research:** Further studies could also examine additional variables such as job satisfaction, motivation, compensation, workload, organizational commitment, or work environment, and may employ longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of employee performance in Islamic boarding school organizations.

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