Actualizing Democratic Education through Organizational Development in Modern Islamic Boarding Schools

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have examined leadership and democratic values in Islamic boarding schools, including modern leadership styles and daily activities that reflect democratic principles. However, research on organizational development as a foundation for democratic education in modern pesantren remains limited. This study aims to describe the actualization of democracy education through the development of the organizational structure. This study used qualitative descriptive methods. The result of this study shows that the organizational leadership structure must adopt a democratic and collective pattern to eliminate power dominance by any single individual or group. Deliberation serves as the foundation for establishing and implementing the organizational system in modern boarding schools. The findings of this study can contribute to the scientific development of Islamic education by presenting a model of a democratic modern Islamic boarding school organizational structure, which is able to integrate democratic values into institutional practices and learning as a form of innovation in character and citizenship education.

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Introduction

The suicide bombing at the Makassar Cathedral Church on Sunday, March 28, 2021, carried out by a married couple, still leaves a strong impression on the minds of the Indonesian public (Titahelu, 2024). Just two days later, the public was once again shocked by an attack carried out by a woman who assaulted the Indonesian National Police Headquarters using an airsoft gun. Unlike the previous incident, the perpetrator this time came from the millennial generation, although the motive remained the same: jihad in the name of religion. This phenomenon once again brings to mind a series of past terror acts that also involved Islamic boarding school alums (Fanindy & Mupida, 2021).

Although there was once a prevailing belief that Islamic boarding schools served as fertile ground for the spread of radical ideologies and intolerant attitudes, this perception has gradually weakened in recent years. However, an official statement from BNPT, which indicated the presence of pesantren allegedly teaching radicalism, has reignited public concern (Sukabdi, 2021). Even so, this generalization is not entirely accurate. Several studies have shown that pesantren interpret jihad broadly and contextually, aligned with the times, far removed from violence, and even contribute to maintaining social harmony. This contrast between perception and reality raises a fundamental question: "Who is truly responsible for the surge in acts of terror and intolerance?"

Islamic boarding schools are essential in preventing intolerance by instilling democratic values (Apriliana et al., 2023; Azra, 2015). However, the involvement of its alums in terrorism shows the need to evaluate the role. As the oldest Islamic institution in Indonesia, pesantren needs to develop democracy education holistically, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Polsgrove & Lockyer, 2019). Methods such as short stories are effective for instilling tolerance values (Sufanti et al., 2021). Zamroni explains that for democratic education to be fully actualized, boarding schools must establish organizational structures, cultures, and educational processes that reflect democratic principles (Grau et al., 2017).

Previous research on Islamic boarding schools in the modern era has generally focused on leadership innovations, such as visionary, democratic, paternalistic, and spiritual leadership styles (Salim et al., 2025). In addition, democratic education in Islamic boarding schools is implemented through daily activities, including teaching and learning, social interactions, dormitory life, disciplinary measures, flag ceremonies and national holiday commemorations (Halomoan, 2023). Other studies reveal that Islamic

boarding schools inherently embody democratic values and, since their inception, have demonstrated an inclusive attitude toward social diversity (Apriliana et al., 2023; Ma'arif, 2019). Therefore, the democratic culture within Islamic boarding schools needs to be managed effectively to foster mutual understanding and respect in a pluralistic society.

The three studies above have discussed leadership and democratic values in Islamic boarding schools, including modern leadership styles and daily activities that reflect democratic principles. However, research on organizational development as a foundation for democratic education in modern Islamic boarding schools remains limited. This study aims to fill that gap by highlighting the importance of adaptive, participatory, and value-based organizational governance. Through structured management, transparent evaluation, and the involvement of all Islamic boarding schools' elements, democratic education can be systematically established in social practices and sustainable institutional structures in the modern era (Sudir, 2025).

Islamic boarding schools were originally educational institutions founded and owned by a Kiai, so all policies were in his hands, while other parties only made their decisions (Hanafi et al., 2021; Wekke, 2015). This authoritarian leadership style is commonly found in traditional Islamic boarding schools and is challenging to internalize democratic education. However, as times progressed, modern Islamic boarding schools emerged and began implementing a more democratic leadership style, creating significant opportunities to actualize democratic education in a more holistic environment. This article describes democracy education that is actualized through the formation of organizational structures in modern Islamic boarding schools in Surakarta, Indonesia. This research aims to explain the formation, system, leadership style, and history of organizational structure, which are essential elements in realizing democratic education in modern Islamic boarding schools.

Method

This study employs a qualitative paradigm aimed at analyzing and describing the reality or phenomena in detail by giving a criticism or assessment of the phenomenon (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). The object of research to be studied is a modern boarding school in Surakarta, Indonesia, which is a boarding school that actualizes its democracy education in its education system. The data consists of information related to democratic education values in the organizational formation, system, and leadership style, as well as the history of the organizational structure of modern boarding schools in Surakarta, Indonesia.

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The data was obtained from data sources that include leaders, teaching staff, impressionist staff, students, and parties involved in the democracy education of modern boarding schools. As for the collection, it uses interview methods, documentation, and observation. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. The data obtained from the research results is analyzed by studying all data, reducing data, arranging in units, categorizing the validity check of data, and the last interpretation of data (Mezmir, 2020). After the data is collected, conclusions related to the data obtained will be drawn using the inductive thinking framework. The process of inductive thinking begins with data collection. The organizational structure of modern boarding schools aligns with democratic characteristics.

Results and Discussions

This section explains four main things: the establishment of organizational structure, the organizational structure system, leadership style, and the historical evaluation of the organizational structure of modern boarding schools. These four things act as embryos of the actualization of democracy education through the organizational structure of contemporary boarding schools, which further directly transform democratic values in each student. With this approach, key factors that determine the success of Islamic boarding schools can be identified in becoming an ideological fortress against radical and intolerant ideologies.

Establishment of Organizational Structure

Based on the data obtained by the organizational structure of modern boarding schools, when viewed from the perspective of democracy, it can be said that the characteristics of democracy characterize the organizational structure. Zamroni explained that this is manifested by the absence of power dominance by one party or the top of the other part of the organizational structure (Fast & Overbeck, 2022). Modern boarding schools or Khalafiyah have a pattern of leadership that is collectively democratic. The type of leadership of modern boarding schools has two significant impacts on the development of democratic values in the contemporary boarding school environment. Directly democratic leadership affects the performance of the organizational structure system to run the organizational structure based on democratic values, further specifically implicating the understanding of democratic values in each student in their social life (Jibril Qaralleh, 2021).

This leadership style requires several negotiations and compromises. Among them is the form of modern boarding school leadership. A Kiyai generally leads boarding schools, but modern boarding school leadership puts a director in the position of Kiyai. The head of a contemporary boarding school, played by a director, aims to utilize all potential resources in their organizational structure fully. García Torres (2019) And Joo (2020) explained that this type of leadership will impact the satisfaction of all members of the organizational structure while developing democratic values through the emergence of relationships between director roles and collaboration of members of the organizational structure.

The director either plays the leader of the modern boarding school or Kiyai assumes the main task of a mu'alim (teacher), murobi (educator), and mursyid (mentor) for members of the organizational structure and the entire student body. A leader of a boarding school should not only play one or two of its three main functions. These three things are seen as a function that is mutually binding and inseparable in a Kiyai because it will impact the development of learning (Brown & Flood, 2020).

The democratic organizational structure of modern boarding schools becomes the main requirement for members of the organizational structure to behave democratically. This will be an important focus for all students in modern boarding schools. Providing a model connects and converts theoretical knowledge into practice in the educational process of democracy (Badjanova & Ilisko, 2015; Chaharbashloo et al., 2020).

Creating a democratic boarding school organizational structure has a big obstacle during this time, namely, the organizational structure of nepotism. This type of boarding school leadership will impose leadership seats only for foundation families or Kiyai families, even if they are not found among those who qualify to be leaders of boarding schools. This type of leadership subsequently resulted in establishing an organizational structure based on family interests and neglecting individual qualities. As a result, the value of democracy will not be born, let alone transformed into the boarding school community. Because basically, an organizational structure system in boarding schools that contradicts democratic values will hinder the development of democratic values in the school community (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016).

Organizational Structure System

The analysis of modern boarding schools' organizational structure system shows the characteristics of democracy, illustrated by the development of a system of

deliberation in the policy-making of boarding schools. Each party in the organizational structure has the same right to express their thoughts and ideas. Involving various parties in decision-making is the main way of fostering democratic values in an educational environment (Mitchell, 2017).

Kiai's dominance was avoided by forming a Kiyai board or another board as a board of directors. The board of directors' consideration consists of people with a specific capacity related to the issue of boarding schools appointed by modern boarding schools to provide views and considerations to the director. It is a form of development of school inclusiveness, as the development of democratic values (Alshurman, 2015).

Respect for community diversity is a key aspect of creating a democratic school structure. The organizational structure of modern boarding schools consists of various age levels, ethnicities, and economic backgrounds. This is inevitable if boarding schools want to eliminate values contrary to democracy in the educational environment (Vervaet et al., 2018). Many organizational structures seek the establishment of a democratic structure, but ignore the multicultural values in their organizational structure. This is clearly illustrated by the lack of opportunities for prospective applicants with certain physical limitations to join the institution.

The multicultural organizational structure of Education also aims to bring up diverse thinking. This thought was further facilitated by granting freedom to members of the organizational structure to develop their thinking (Hornáčková et al., 2015). The development of freedom of thought is pursued in two main ways, namely through writing or delivered directly by oral means to the relevant parties, both of which can also be done with the technology that is developing today. It aims to realize democracy with a new communication technology (Marzbali et al., 2016).

The characteristics of democracy in the organizational structure of modern boarding schools are seen in the running of its institutions' human resources recruitment system based on professionalism and proportionalism. The recruitment system of modern boarding schools begins with the planning of human resource needs, followed by the determination of educational qualifications that each applicant must meet. At the same time, the basis of proportionality is carried out by receiving new human resources in the number of formations needed by the institution. Professionalism has an impact on the development of democratic values (Yang & Taylor, 2013).

In addition to these efforts, modern boarding schools also seek solutions to the constraints felt by members of the organizational structure in developing their minds.

The first obstacle is that members of the organizational structure tend to clash with the psychological constraints of the organizational structure; members still perceive a hierarchical gap between upper and lower levels of the organizational structure. The second obstacle is that there is still growing concern about the emergence of likes and dislikes towards members of the organizational structure for the criticisms and suggestions presented.

The first solution to overcome this psychological obstacle is to hold a coordination meeting between the head of each section and its members (Behfar et al., 2016). In this meeting, each section member has the right to convey their ideas to the head of their respective section. This is expected to bridge the constraints of the organizational structure gap between members of the organizational structure who are below and those who are far above it. The results of the thought resulting from the gathering will eventually be brought by the head of the section in the weekly gathering, together with the director of the modern boarding school, to be delivered. Every thought that each section head carries and conveys is based on the fact that it represents collective rather than individual thinking. This is expected to eliminate the fear of the appearance of likes and dislikes.

Granting autonomy to every part of the organizational structure is also a way out for the above problems. Each section member has the right to innovate and improve their department's work processes or propose ways to fulfill its facilities and parts. This aims to allow each section to manage and develop its parts more freely and creatively, .in alignment with the institution's values, so that many innovations are realized in each section (Grau et al., 2017).

Leadership Style

Wahab et al. (2016) Describe school leadership as an essential aspect related to the behavior of the organizational structure of educational institutions. In addition, it turns out that the leadership style also significantly affects the progress of an educational institution (Tatlah & Iqbal, 2012). The characteristics of democracy contained in the director of modern boarding schools are illustrated in the use of Islamic boarding schools' resources based on the dynamic development of interactions between individuals in the organizational structure. The development of dynamic interactions conducted by the director of modern boarding schools is based on two main aspects. First, its institutions' organizational structure and system should be built and developed based on inclusiveness. Inclusive interactions do not result from

authoritarian thinking by one party, but the entire system is determined and executed based on mutual agreement. Furthermore, it also shows that the organizational structure system is not a patent, so it is open to changes from the old system (Yoldaş, 2015).

The second aspect is the development of reasoning from various parties. The development of interactions between individuals in organizational structures is dynamically carried out through the development of Reasoning. This reasoning requires multiple parties in the organizational structure to be able to develop reasoning, critical thinking, problem-solving and caring, and willingness to contribute their thoughts based on clear intentions and objectives, it creates a growing attitude of responsibility in each member of the organizational structure of modern boarding schools to jointly achieve the goals (Ivanova, 2016).

School leaders provide guidance and evaluate each member of their organizational structure, aiming to realize professionalism in performance (Lim & Bishen Singh, 2020). Guidance is realized in various forms, namely general guidance, direct guidance, and guidance through seminars and workshops, and it encourages each member of the organizational structure to develop their abilities in a more advanced direction. The role of the director in developing the value of professionalism in the organizational structure is actualized through reward and punishment. Promotion of positions is given to members who excel, and punishment is given to members of the organizational structure who perform poorly. Furthermore, a firm decision on dismissal will also be made if the member's ethics are not considered good and a warning has been given. The value of professionalism is actualized through the fulfillment of all facilities and infrastructures that support the maximum performance of each organizational structure.

The development of democratic values is achieved by building a working system that balances the top-down system that aims to facilitate the socialization of policies and the bottom-up approach to increase the attention and active role of members (Yuan et al., 2021). Development of a work climate oriented to cooperation between each individual in a section and between one part and another part in the organizational structure of Islamic boarding schools. It can be seen by the ingrained in the soul of each member of the organizational structure, that each department is viewed as a partner within the structure, rather than a subordinate component, but a map that works synergistically and solidly with each other to realize common ideals.

Historical Evaluation

If you look at the history of the establishment of boarding schools, it can be seen clearly that a Kiai or family foundation generally establishes modern boarding schools. The first step in developing boarding schools significantly affects the pattern of boarding school organization. As a result, it is not strange if many of the founding family's relatives are in the organizational structure of the boarding school organization.

Modern boarding schools are designed so that the organizational structure of boarding schools is characterized by democracy. It aims to instill in every society a contemporary boarding school sense of belonging and give an example to the entire modern boarding school community so that a high work ethic is born based on sincerity and the spirit of learning from the students in boarding school. The whole system eventually gave birth to and maintained a democratic, modern boarding school culture as well (Sales et al., 2017).

A boarding school that implements the boarding school system based on personal ownership is considered to have weaknesses in the management aspect. This type of boarding generally runs with closed, centralized, and familial management. Because of the right of authority over all problems and assets, boarding schools become the main right of the owner of the boarding schools. Instead, ideal management should be based on transparency, accountability, and togetherness (Adji et al., 2023). The management of the boarding school is at least related to several things, namely program planning, program implementation, and financial administration.

The institutional management of a modern boarding school can be seen from the planning of the modern boarding school program. Institutions in the organizational structure run their program plan openly according to the job description of each section through prepared forums. Planning begins from the highest institution, namely the modern boarding school foundation, to formulate programs that the director will subsequently implement.

All programs that the foundation has determined are implemented by the director along with the organizational structure under it. The deputy director controls the entire implementation of the program. Each member of the organizational structure makes a report and evaluation of the program that has been run, which will then be reported to the president's office. The president and director are obliged to report to the foundation.

Transparency in reporting programs and finance in modern boarding has not run perfectly. The program report and the finances of the boarding school from the director

to the foundation only indicate this. Meanwhile, the transparency of financial statements is not submitted to students or guardians of students. Part of the organizational structure of a boarding school is thick with family systems, but it does not necessarily indicate that the system runs in an authoritarian way. Even this research shows that modern boarding schools uphold and can properly internalize democratic values among members of the organization's organizational structure, as well as in the student environment.

Through the study of the organizational structure of modern boarding schools in depth, it can be concluded that the phenomenon is caused because the family system run by modern boarding schools is not absolute. This means that the organization's organizational structure is carried out based on democratic values through the development of a system of deliberation, tolerance, and appreciation of the views of all parties (Radkiewicz, 2021). The above is not new and astonishes all parties because long before this was found in modern boarding schools, similar things could also be seen from the Yogyakarta Sultanate in Indonesia. The Sultanate of Yogyakarta is also far from authoritarian, although the system developed in its government is monarchical (Wiszowaty & Wahyuni, 2023). However, like the modern boarding school that he runs, it is not absolute, and democratic values eventually grow in the place.

This phenomenon occurs in modern boarding schools today. Therefore, democratic values can still emerge within monarchical or familial organizational systems, as long as these systems are not absolute. So it can be concluded that absolutism is the democratic benchmark for whether a system of government or organization is run.

Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, the organizational structure of modern boarding schools has a significant role in the actualization of democracy education. There are four main requirements in the organizational structure of boarding schools with democratic characteristics. First, the form of organizational structure leadership must be a collective democratic pattern that helps eliminate power dominance by a single party or the upper echelon of the organizational structure. Second, Deliberation forms the foundation for establishing and implementing the organizational structure of boarding schools. Deliberations uphold the appreciation of community diversity by granting autonomy to each party. Furthermore, it has implications for the loss of concerns about the appearance of likes and dislikes within members of the organizational structure. Third,

the attitude of leaders of organizational structures is based on the value of inclusiveness and professionalism and the development of reasoning from various parties.

On the other hand, the work system that balances the top-down system and bottom-up becomes the style of a boarding school leader. Fourth, the organizational structure of modern boarding schools must eliminate the practice of absolute nepotism. Nepotism does not necessarily contradict democratic values, as long as it does not dominate leadership appointments or override merit-based selection in the organizational structure of modern boarding schools. The four main things in the organizational structure of contemporary boarding schools with democratic characteristics will foster democratic values in members of the organizational structure. This will be an important focus for all students in modern boarding schools. The model bridges theoretical knowledge and practical implementation in democratic education.

Holistic democracy education will not be separated from the three main elements in an educational institution: organizational structure, school culture, and the education process characterized by democracy. This research is still limited to aspects of the school's organizational structure as one of the efforts towards holistic democracy education. Concerning the organizational structure, an important aspect is the history of the establishment of boarding schools. History is an essential aspect that determines the development and the system run in it. It is therefore exciting when this can be researched more deeply by ethnographic methods. In addition, two other aspects are also fundamental to be researched and developed to achieve the objectives of holistic democracy education.

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