



JSP: Jurnal Studi Pesantren

Published by the Magister's Program in Islamic Education,
Postgraduate of Annuqayah University, Sumenep, Indonesia

Vol. 3, No. 2, September 2024. Hal. 48 – 60

E-ISSN: 3062 – 6552

DOI: <https://10.59005/jsp.v3i2.585>

Internalizing Exemplary Values Through Kiai Leadership: A Study of KH. A. Zubairi Mz in Building Santri's Learning Motivation

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Article History

Submitted : 07-07-2024

Revised : 12-08-2024

Accepted : 24-08-2024

Published : 17-09-2024

Abstract

This study examines the moral exemplarity (uswah hasanah) of KH. A. Zubairi Mz and its role in fostering santri's learning motivation at Pondok Pesantren Nasy'atul Muta'allimin. Employing a qualitative field research design with a descriptive-analytic approach, this study draws on Edwin Guthrie's behaviorist theory to analyze the underlying factors and manifestations of his exemplary conduct, as well as the ways in which santri internalize his values. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that KH. A. Zubairi Mz's moral exemplarity was fundamentally rooted in his profound love of knowledge (hubb al-'ilm). Its manifestations include sincere teaching, cultivating familial bonds with santri, heart-centered pedagogy through persistent supplication, and consistent practice of Islamic humility (tawādu'). Santri internalized these values through scholarly engagement, oral testimonies from senior santri, preservation of his legacy, and written documentation of his life and teachings. This study concludes that moral exemplarity grounded in sincere spiritual values constitutes a powerful mechanism for fostering intrinsic learning motivation within the pesantren educational tradition.

Key Word:

Internalizing Exemplary
Values,
Kiai Leadership
Santri's Learning
Motivation

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren represents one of the oldest indigenous educational institutions in the Indonesian archipelago, predating national independence by several centuries. Long before the colonial era, various forms of Islamic educational establishments existed across the region under different names — meunasah in Aceh, surau in West Sumatra, and pesantren in Java — each serving as a center for the transmission of Islamic knowledge within their respective communities (Dhofier, 1982; Azra, 2004). Historians trace the formal origins of the Javanese pesantren tradition to the Walisongo, particularly to Sunan Ampel, whose Pesantren Ampel Delta in East Java is widely regarded as the

earliest model of this educational system in Indonesia (Mastuhu, 1994; Van Bruinessen, 1995).

As a center of community learning, pesantren has historically provided instruction ranging from classical Arabic grammar (nahwu) to Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir), functioning not merely as an educational institution but as a civilizational center through which Islamic values have been transmitted across generations. What distinguishes pesantren from other educational models is its indigenous character — it emerged organically from within Indonesian Muslim society, shaped by local cultural traditions and rooted in the values of Islamic scholarship (Ziemek, 1986; Lukens-Bull, 2005).

Over time, pesantren has demonstrated remarkable adaptability. The introduction of colonial-era formal schooling did not marginalize the pesantren system; rather, pesantren leaders selectively incorporated general academic curricula alongside religious instruction, a development notably advanced by Wahid Hasyim, who pioneered the integration of secular subjects into the pesantren curriculum (Steenbrink, 1994; Wahid, 2001). This capacity for self-renewal has allowed pesantren to remain relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of Indonesian Muslim society, even as it navigates the tensions between modernization and traditional values (Hasan, 2015).

Central to the identity and direction of any pesantren is the figure of the kiai — the founding scholar and spiritual leader whose vision, character, and conduct fundamentally shape the institution's educational culture. Within the pesantren community, the kiai functions not only as an administrator and teacher, but as a living moral exemplar (uswah hasanah) whose every action carries pedagogical significance (Dhofier, 1982; Horikoshi, 1976). All institutional decisions are guided by the kiai's wisdom and blessing (nyo'on edhi), reinforcing the centrality of moral exemplarity in pesantren leadership (Turmudi, 2006).

KH. A. Zubairi Mz stands as one of the most significant educational figures in Sumenep, East Java. Raised entirely within the pesantren tradition, he embodied an insatiable love of knowledge, earning recognition among his contemporaries as a wandering seeker of scholarship (santri kelana) who dedicated his life to learning from multiple ulama across the region. This intellectual devotion ultimately materialized in the establishment of Pondok Pesantren Nasy'atul Muta'allimin — an institution that continues to serve as a living testament to his educational legacy. Despite his profound influence, the life and exemplary conduct of KH. A. Zubairi Mz remain insufficiently documented, leaving subsequent generations of santri without accessible accounts of his scholarly journey and moral character.

This research gap is both academically significant and practically urgent. In the broader tradition of Islamic education, the documentation of exemplary figures serves a

pedagogical function analogous to the transmission of prophetic tradition — the ulama and kiai serve as inheritors and carriers of prophetic values within local educational communities (Al-Attas, 1979; Nata, 2016). The moral exemplarity of a kiai, when systematically studied and documented, becomes a sustained resource for character formation that extends far beyond his immediate circle of students (Muhaimin, 2012).

Accordingly, this study examines the moral exemplarity of KH. A. Zubairi Mz in its relationship to santri's learning motivation, guided by three research questions: (1) What are the underlying factors that shaped KH. A. Zubairi Mz's moral exemplarity in motivating santri to learn? (2) What are the concrete manifestations of his moral exemplarity in fostering santri's learning motivation? (3) How do santri internalize and replicate his exemplary values in their own pursuit of learning?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design, commonly referred to as naturalistic inquiry, in which data are collected and analyzed within their natural settings without experimental manipulation (Sugiyono, 2018). The qualitative approach was selected because the central focus of this study — the moral exemplarity of KH. A. Zubairi Mz and its influence on *santri's* learning motivation — constitutes a phenomenon that is fundamentally social, relational, and experiential in nature, and therefore demands an interpretive methodology capable of capturing its depth and complexity. Within qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary instrument of inquiry, bearing responsibility for posing questions, building rapport with informants, analyzing emergent data, and constructing meaningful interpretations of the phenomena under investigation (Sugiyono, 2018). This positioning requires sustained reflexivity and empathetic engagement throughout the research process.

This study is further characterized as a field research (*penelitian lapangan*) employing a descriptive-qualitative approach, in which the research design remains open and adaptive to field conditions, allowing for methodological and theoretical adjustments as the investigation progresses (Sugiyono, 2018). Given that KH. A. Zubairi Mz has passed away, the study additionally incorporates elements of historical research to reconstruct his life, scholarly journey, and exemplary conduct. Data pertaining to his character and educational values were traced through preserved manuscripts, documented teachings, and institutional records where available, as well as through the living memory of individuals who interacted with him directly during his lifetime (Moleong, 2017).

The research subjects comprise two categories of informants. Primary data sources include family members of KH. A. Zubairi Mz and *santri* who lived and studied in close proximity to him, particularly *pangladhin* — a term denoting *santri* who resided within

the kiai's household (*dhalem*) on a daily basis, attending to the needs of the kiai's family and thereby occupying a uniquely intimate vantage point from which to observe his personal conduct, scholarly habits, and moral character. Secondary data sources include community figures, senior alumni, and individuals associated with the broader educational and religious activities of KH. A. Zubairi Mz. Data were collected through three principal methods: semi-structured interviews (*wawancara semi standar*), in which key thematic questions guided the conversation while allowing informants freedom to elaborate organically beyond predetermined question sequences (Satiri, 2014); documentary analysis of written works, correspondence, and institutional records associated with KH. A. Zubairi Mz; and observation within the institutional environment of Pondok Pesantren Nasy'atul Muta'allimin where contextually relevant (Moleong, 2017).

Data analysis follows Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model, comprising three concurrent and iterative stages: data reduction, in which raw data were systematically condensed and focused to preserve analytical relevance; data display, in which organized information was presented in narrative form to facilitate pattern recognition; and conclusion drawing and verification, in which tentative findings were cross-checked against multiple data sources. To further strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was applied across sources, methods, and informants throughout the analytical process (Salim & Syahrums, 2012)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study identifies three principal findings corresponding to the three research questions: the underlying factors of KH. A. Zubairi Mz's moral exemplarity, its concrete manifestations, and the ways in which *santri* internalize his exemplary values. The following presents these findings supported by direct field data, including interview excerpts and observational records gathered at Pondok Pesantren Nasy'atul Muta'allimin.

The Underlying Factors of KH. A. Zubairi Mz's Moral Exemplarity

The findings reveal that the moral exemplarity of KH. A. Zubairi Mz was fundamentally rooted in his lifelong and unconditional love of knowledge (*hubb al-'ilm*). This disposition was not a latent intellectual tendency but a consciously cultivated spiritual value that pervaded every dimension of his life as a learner, teacher, and institutional leader. KH. Ilyas Siraj, one of the senior informants of this study, stated unambiguously during interview: "KH. A. Zubairi Mz adalah seorang yang cinta ilmu

pengetahuan — beliau tidak pernah berhenti belajar meskipun sudah memiliki banyak santri." This characterization was independently corroborated by multiple informants across generational lines, from senior *santri* to members of his immediate family, indicating that his love of knowledge was a defining and publicly recognized trait rather than a privately held value.

This love of knowledge was further reinforced by the spiritual counsel (*wasiat*) of his principal teacher, KH. Moh. Ilyas Syarqawi of Pondok Pesantren Annuqayah, who instructed him upon graduation to dedicate himself unreservedly to teaching and serving the community. KH. Munif Zubairi, the third son of KH. A. Zubairi Mz, recounted: "*Abah selalu menyebut pesan Kiai Ilyas itu sebagai amanah yang tidak boleh diabaikan — mengajar masyarakat adalah kewajiban, bukan pilihan.*" This *wasiat* functioned as a lifelong motivational anchor, transforming his personal passion for learning into a communal responsibility that compelled him to continuously deepen his knowledge in order to fulfill his educational obligations.

The Manifestations of KH. A. Zubairi Mz's Moral Exemplarity

The most prominent manifestation of KH. A. Zubairi Mz's moral exemplarity was his simultaneous and sustained commitment to both teaching (*ta'lim*) and learning (*ta'allum*) throughout his life. Even after establishing Pondok Pesantren Nasy'atul Muta'allimin and accumulating a substantial community of *santri*, he continued to seek knowledge from multiple *ulama* across Sumenep and beyond. He visited KH. Sirajuddin at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Islam Karangcempaka Bluto regularly for several decades, combining scholarly visits with the delivery of roof tiles (*genteng*) from his own trade. KH. Ilyas Siraj recalled his mother's words upon witnessing these visits: "*Jareya Bindhara Amrawi dari Gappora, ngaji ka Abana, ngaji Faraidl*" — that is Bindhara Amrawi from Gapura, attending instruction in inheritance law under her husband. Every Ramadan without exception, KH. A. Zubairi Mz spent the entire month residing at Pondok Pesantren Annuqayah to participate in scholarly circles conducted by senior *masyaikh*. KH. Munif Zubairi confirmed: "*Setiap Ramadan, Abah pasti ke Annuqayah — itu sudah seperti kewajiban tahunan beliau, tidak pernah ditinggalkan.*"

His commitment to teaching was equally disciplined. KH. A. Zubairi Mz consistently prepared lesson materials in advance (*motola'ah*) before entering any classroom — a practice that, as KH. Afifuddin observed, "*sudah beliau lakukan sejak sebelum istilah RPP dikenal di madrasah-madrasah kita.*" He personally monitored classrooms each day from the *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* through the *Madrasah Aliyah*, substituting unhesitatingly for absent teachers. The researcher, who studied at Pondok Pesantren Nasy'atul Muta'allimin during KH. A. Zubairi Mz's lifetime, directly

witnessed this on two occasions — once during a Tajwid lesson in grade six, and again during a classroom leadership election in grade two of the *Madrasah Tsanawiyah*, when KH. A. Zubairi Mz personally addressed the students: “*Mele pemimpin reya banni ja’ gaja’an, tape bada tanggung jawab se kodu elaksana’aki*” — choosing a leader is not a matter of whim; it carries responsibilities that must be genuinely fulfilled.

Beyond formal instruction, KH. A. Zubairi Mz cultivated a familial bond with his *santri* that extended well beyond the walls of the institution. He established Keluarga Besar Alumni Nasy'atul Muta'allimin (KABANAS) in 1999, an alumni organization whose very name — *keluarga besar* (extended family) — expressed his conviction that the kiai-santri relationship endures across time and beyond institutional membership. He affirmed this directly before his *santri*: “*Ba’na e diya reya reng toawana sengko’*” — here, I am your parent. KH. Roji Fawaid Baidlawi, who proposed the formation of KABANAS, recalled: “*Ketika saya usulkan pembentukan forum alumni itu, saya tidak menyangka beliau akan langsung menyetujui dan memberikan mandat — ternyata beliau sudah lama memikirkan hal yang sama.*” From its initial three regional branches (*rayon*), KABANAS has since expanded to eight active rayons spanning multiple sub-districts, a tangible measure of the relational culture KH. A. Zubairi Mz cultivated over decades.

His moral exemplarity was further expressed through consistent practice of Islamic humility (*tawādu*) and ethical conduct (*ahwal*) in daily life. He taught classical ethical texts including *Ta’limul Muta’allim* and *Taisirul Khollaq*, but more significantly he embodied these values personally — maintaining simplicity in dress, requiring *santri* to observe proper social propriety in their appearance, and insisting on *santri* independence in daily tasks. He also mandated a two-year post-graduation service period (*pengabdian*) for all *santri* completing the *Madrasah Aliyah*. KH. Afifuddin recounted: “*Beliau berani menceritakan kondisi ekonomi beliau yang serba kekurangan, karena beliau ingin kami semua tahu bahwa keterbatasan bukan alasan untuk tidak mengabdikan — itu adalah uswah yang luar biasa.*”

A final and particularly distinctive manifestation was his heart-centered pedagogy — an approach to education grounded in spiritual intercession on behalf of his *santri*. He performed nightly supplications for every *santri* under his care, and on particular occasions recited Surah Yasin one thousand times as an act of spiritual investment in their welfare. Saiful, a former *santri*, recalled being personally summoned and told: “*Jika kamu tidak bisa shalat malam, cukup kamu bangun dan mengangkat tangan sembari membaca amin. Saya setiap malam doakan semua santri-santri saya, baik yang masih aktif maupun yang sudah menjadi alumni.*” One *santri* who struggled with Qur'anic recitation was observed consistently positioning himself behind KH. A. Zubairi Mz during congregational prayers. It was later discovered that KH. A. Zubairi Mz had been privately tutoring this

santri at the *langgar dhalem* without public announcement — a quiet, individualized attention that embodies the essence of his heart-centered approach.

Table 1 Summary of Research Findings on the Moral Exemplarity of KH. A. Zubairi Mz

Aspect	Category	Key Finding
Underlying Factors	Love of knowledge	Lifelong <i>ḥubb al-'ilm</i> as intrinsic motivation
	Teacher's <i>wasiat</i>	Mandate from KH. Moh. Ilyas Syarqawi as lifelong obligation
Manifestations	Teaching & learning	Simultaneous <i>ta'lim</i> and <i>ta'allum</i> sustained until late in life
	Sincere teaching	<i>Motola'ah</i> , classroom monitoring, direct substitution
	Familial bond	Establishment of KABANAS; " <i>Ba'na e diya reng toawana sengko'</i> "
	<i>Ahwal & tawādu'</i>	Ethical conduct, simplicity, <i>pengabdian</i> tradition
	Heart-centered pedagogy	Nightly <i>doa</i> , private tutoring, spiritual intercession

Discussion

The Underlying Factors of KH. A. Zubairi Mz's Moral Exemplarity

The first finding of this study establishes that the moral exemplarity of KH. A. Zubairi Mz was fundamentally rooted in his lifelong and unconditional love of knowledge (*ḥubb al-'ilm*), a disposition that pervaded every dimension of his life as a learner, teacher, and institutional leader. This finding confirms and deepens existing arguments in Islamic educational philosophy regarding the relationship between intrinsic motivation and scholarly conduct. Al-Attas (1979) identified love of knowledge as the animating principle of the Islamic educational ideal, while Nata (2016) argued that this principle must be embodied rather than merely professed if it is to exert genuine pedagogical influence. The life of KH. A. Zubairi Mz offers a compelling empirical illustration of this theoretical claim: his love of knowledge was not a rhetorical posture but a behavioral reality, sustained across six decades of continuous learning and teaching, and witnessed firsthand by multiple generations of santri. It is this consistency between declared value and lived conduct that transformed a personal disposition into a motivationally powerful exemplar within his educational community.

The role of the teacher's wasiat as a second formative factor merits particular theoretical attention. Previous studies on kiai leadership have emphasized the authority of the kiai as a source of institutional direction and community cohesion (Dhofier, 2019; Turmudi, 2006), but fewer have examined the ways in which a kiai's own sense of obligation to his teacher shapes his educational conduct across an entire lifetime. The present finding suggests that the kiai-guru relationship functions not only as a chain of knowledge transmission (sanad) but as a chain of motivational obligation — each generation of scholars being driven by the weight of inherited responsibility from the previous one. KH. A. Zubairi Mz's reception of KH. Moh. Ilyas Syarqawi's wasiat as a sacred and lifelong mandate exemplifies this dynamic: the more he was called to teach, the more acutely he felt the imperative to deepen his own knowledge. This finding extends Muhaimin's (2012) analysis of Islamic educational values by demonstrating that moral exemplarity in the pesantren context is as much an inherited obligation as it is an individually cultivated character trait.

Analyzed through Edwin Guthrie's contiguity theory of learning, which holds that behavior is conditioned through the repeated and consistent pairing of stimuli and responses (Hill, 2012), these underlying factors — ḥubb al-'ilm and the internalized wasiat — functioned as the foundational motivational architecture from which all observable manifestations of his exemplary conduct emerged. Without this interior foundation, the external behavioral patterns that santri observed and internalized would have lacked the coherence and consistency necessary to generate lasting motivational effects (Uno, 2016; Sardiman, 2018).

The Manifestations of KH. A. Zubairi Mz's Moral Exemplarity

The second finding reveals that the moral exemplarity of KH. A. Zubairi Mz manifested across four interconnected dimensions: scholarly, relational, moral, and spiritual. This multi-dimensional character of his exemplarity invites a reconceptualization of pesantren pedagogy that moves beyond instructional models focused exclusively on knowledge transmission. Previous studies on pesantren education have tended to emphasize either the charismatic authority of the kiai as a social and political figure (Dhofier, 2019) or the formal curricular dimensions of pesantren learning (Mastuhu, 1994; Hasan, 2015). The present findings suggest that neither framework adequately captures the full pedagogical significance of the kiai's exemplary conduct, which operates simultaneously at the level of visible behavior, institutional structure, ethical embodiment, and spiritual practice.

Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory provides a useful complementary lens for understanding why these manifestations were so motivationally effective. Bandura

argued that the impact of a model is greatest when the observer perceives the model as credible, competent, and consistent, and when the modeled behavior is seen to yield meaningful outcomes. KH. A. Zubairi Mz satisfied all three conditions: he was widely regarded as a scholar of recognized depth, his commitment to learning produced tangible institutional outcomes, and his behavioral consistency was attested by informants across generational lines. His simultaneous commitment to ta'lim and ta'allum — teaching while continuing to learn, combining the delivery of roof tiles with scholarly visits to KH. Sirajuddin, and spending every Ramadan at Pondok Pesantren Annuqayah — rendered him a model of exceptional motivational salience (Kompri, 2016; Sardiman, 2018).

The heart-centered pedagogy identified in this study — characterized by nightly supplication, private informal mentorship, and spiritual intercession — represents a dimension of pesantren education that has received limited attention in existing literature. Wahid (2018) argued that the kiai's most powerful pedagogical instrument is not curriculum but person, and the present findings substantiate this claim in concrete detail. The nightly recitation of Surah Yasin one thousand times for the benefit of santri, and the private Qur'anic tutoring extended quietly to a santri of limited ability without institutional formality, represent forms of educational investment that operate entirely outside the boundaries of formal pedagogy as conventionally understood. This finding is consistent with Tafsir's (2017) argument that Islamic education is inherently holistic, encompassing the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of human development as an integrated whole, and contributes a concrete empirical illustration of what such holism looks like in practice within a living pesantren community.

Santri's Internalization of KH. A. Zubairi Mz's Exemplary Values

The third finding — concerning the ways in which santri internalize and replicate KH. A. Zubairi Mz's exemplary values — points toward a process of value transmission that operates through multiple channels simultaneously: active scholarly engagement, oral testimony from senior santri, deliberate preservation of institutional traditions, and written documentation of the kiai's life and teachings. This multi-channel transmission model resonates with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural tools in the internalization of values, and with Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of communities of practice, in which knowledge and values are transmitted through participation in shared activities rather than through explicit instruction alone. The santri of KH. A. Zubairi Mz did not internalize his values by being told about them; they internalized them by inhabiting an

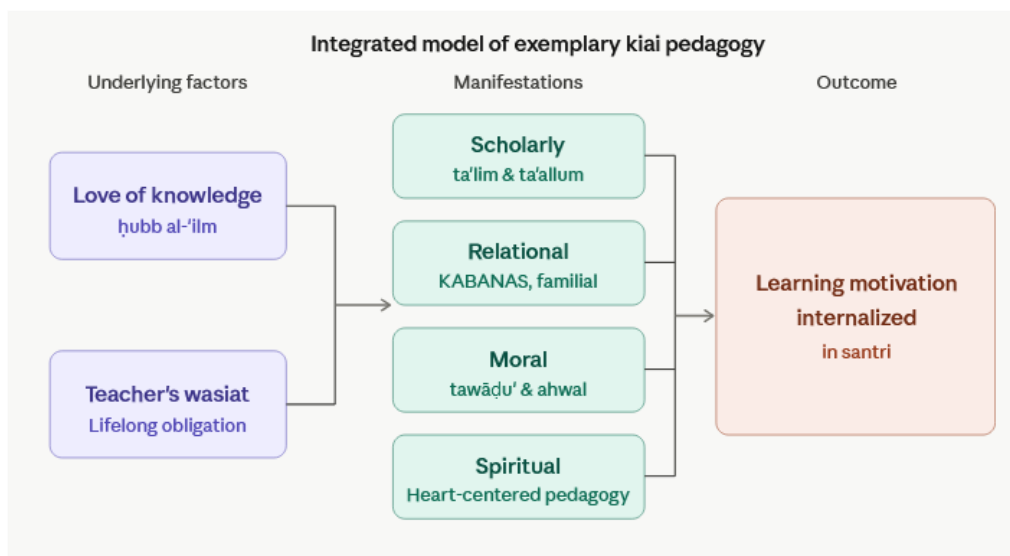
institutional culture saturated with those values and by engaging directly with the living bearers of his legacy (Qomar, 2015; Yusuf, 2021).

The establishment of KABANAS as a structural mechanism for sustaining motivational influence beyond formal enrollment represents a structurally innovative response to a challenge widely documented in pesantren literature — namely, the weakening of alumni ties in the context of modernization and geographic mobility (Hasan, 2015; Masud, 2019). By naming the organization keluarga besar and explicitly framing himself as a parental figure, KH. A. Zubairi Mz effectively extended the motivational reach of his exemplary conduct across time and space, ensuring that his influence persisted in the lives of santri long after their formal period of study had ended. This finding suggests that the sustainability of moral exemplarity as a motivational force depends not only on the personal qualities of the exemplary figure but on the institutional structures through which those qualities are transmitted and preserved across generations (Muhaimin, 2012; Wahid, 2018).

Taken together, the three findings of this study propose an integrated model of exemplary kiai pedagogy that operates across scholarly, relational, moral, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously, and that sustains its motivational impact through both personal conduct and institutional structuring. This model, represented in Figure 2 below, constitutes the principal theoretical contribution of this study. It challenges reductive accounts of pesantren pedagogy and offers a richer framework for understanding how moral exemplarity functions as a sustained mechanism of educational motivation within the Islamic boarding school tradition.

Figure 2

Integrated Model of Exemplary Kiai Pedagogy in Fostering Santri's Learning Motivation



CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the moral exemplarity of KH. A. Zubairi Mz and its relationship to *santri*'s learning motivation at Pondok Pesantren Nasy'atul Muta'allimin, guided by three research questions concerning its underlying factors, concrete manifestations, and the ways in which *santri* internalize his exemplary values. The findings yield three substantive conclusions that collectively advance the understanding of moral exemplarity as a pedagogical force within the pesantren educational tradition.

First, the moral exemplarity of KH. A. Zubairi Mz was fundamentally rooted in his lifelong love of knowledge (*hubb al-'ilm*) and reinforced by the spiritual mandate (*wasiat*) of his principal teacher, KH. Moh. Ilyas Syarqawi. These two factors functioned as the interior motivational architecture from which all observable manifestations of his exemplary conduct emerged. This finding affirms that genuine moral exemplarity in the Islamic educational tradition is not a performative quality but a deeply internalized value sustained across a lifetime of consistent conduct.

Second, his moral exemplarity manifested across four interdependent dimensions — scholarly, relational, moral, and spiritual — constituting what this study proposes as an integrated model of exemplary kiai pedagogy. Each dimension operated at a distinct but interconnected level: simultaneous commitment to teaching and learning, cultivation of familial bonds with *santri* through the establishment of KABANAS, embodiment of Islamic humility and ethical conduct, and heart-centered pedagogy grounded in nightly supplication and private mentorship. Taken together, these manifestations demonstrate that the kiai's most powerful pedagogical instrument is not curriculum but person — a living embodiment of the values he seeks to transmit.

Third, *santri* internalized KH. A. Zubairi Mz's exemplary values through multiple channels simultaneously: active scholarly engagement, oral testimonies from senior *santri*, deliberate preservation of institutional traditions, and written documentation of his life and teachings. This multi-channel transmission process ensured the sustainability of his motivational influence beyond his lifetime, evidenced by the continued expansion of KABANAS and the enduring institutional culture of Pondok Pesantren Nasy'atul Muta'allimin.

These findings carry significant implications for both theory and practice in Islamic educational management. Theoretically, this study proposes that pesantren moral exemplarity constitutes a distinct and undertheorized pedagogical mode that warrants dedicated scholarly attention, particularly as pesantren institutions navigate the pressures of modernization and digital transformation. Practically, the findings suggest that sustainable motivational cultures in Islamic educational institutions depend not only on the personal qualities of their leaders but on the institutional mechanisms —

such as alumni organizations, service traditions, and oral transmission practices — through which those qualities are preserved and transmitted across generations.

This study acknowledges several limitations. The research was conducted within a single institutional context, limiting the generalizability of its findings. The retrospective nature of the data, necessitated by the subject's passing, means that all accounts are mediated through memory and oral tradition, which may introduce selectivity. Future research should examine the moral exemplarity of living kiai figures across multiple pesantren institutions, employ longitudinal designs to track the long-term motivational impact of exemplary leadership, and explore the ways in which digital platforms and social media are transforming the transmission of kiai exemplarity in contemporary pesantren communities.

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