

## Kiai's Strategies for Internalizing Honesty, Discipline, and Responsibility in Female Islamic Boarding Students

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**Abstract.** The urgency of this research arises from the growing concern that character education in Islamic boarding schools has not been systematically examined in terms of concrete strategies used by kiai to internalize honesty, discipline, and responsibility among female students. This study aims to describe and analytically interpret the kiai's strategies for internalizing these core moral values at Pondok Pesantren Putri Sabiurrosyad Malang. A qualitative single-case study design was employed, involving the caregiver (kiai), boarding school management, and female students as research subjects. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires, and were analyzed using a pattern-matching technique to compare empirical findings with theoretically expected patterns. The findings indicate that honesty is internalized through continuous advice, habituation in daily activities, motivational reinforcement, and the kiai's personal role modelling. Discipline is fostered by clear rules and regulations, intensive guidance, sustained motivation, and the application of educational sanctions for rule violations. Responsibility is cultivated through direct guidance, moral exhortation, exemplary behaviour of the kiai, and structured obligations such as timely completion of tasks, memorization assignments, and participation in communal worship and environmental care. Overall, these strategies form an integrated moral education system that effectively supports value internalization. The novelty of this research lies in its focused, in-depth mapping of kiai's strategic roles as director, model, educator, and mentor in a female-only pesantren context using a pattern-matching approach. This study contributes theoretically to Islamic education and character education discourse, and practically offers a contextualized strategic framework for strengthening value-based leadership in Islamic boarding schools.

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**Keywords:** Character Education; Value Internalization; Islamic Boarding School; Kiai Leadership; Female Students

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### INTRODUCTION

Research on character education has gained increasing global attention due to rising concerns about moral degradation, weakening social responsibility, and violations of integrity in educational settings. In Indonesia, these concerns intersect with broader national efforts to strengthen values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility as core components of students' personal and civic identities (Arifuddin et al., 2023; Budiyono, 2024; Harun et al., 2020; Hidayati et al., 2020; Mahmud, 2023; Riani et al., 2025). A growing body of literature emphasizes that character formation must be embedded in authentic learning processes, local cultural wisdom, and everyday institutional practices rather than treated as an add-on to cognitive instruction (Arifin et al., 2025; Budiastuti & Puad, 2023; Bulkani et al., 2025; Komalasari & Indrawadi, 2023; Lestari et al., 2024; Purnomo et al., 2025; Sugiantoro et al., 2022). Within this discourse, Islamic educational institutions are frequently highlighted as strategic arenas for cultivating moral virtues

and social responsibility among young Muslims (Maksum et al., 2025; Saidi et al., 2025; Tsani & In'am, 2024).

Indonesia, as a Muslim-majority country, has a long-standing tradition of Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) that serve as community-based institutions tasked with instilling faith, piety, and noble character (Lusiana & Mesra, 2024; Mujahidin, 2021; Mustofa, 2020). Law No. 18 of 2019 formally recognizes pesantren as institutions responsible for forming Islamic personalities that are humble, tolerant, moderate, and firmly rooted in national values through education, da'wah, role modelling, and community empowerment (Mustofa, 2020). Pesantren life is typically characterized by communal living, simplicity, mutual cooperation, and egalitarian relations among students that, in principle, provide fertile ground for internalizing honesty, discipline, and responsibility as everyday habits (Lusiana & Mesra, 2024; Sugiantoro et al., 2022). Recent studies show that pesantren continue to play a significant role in preserving religious traditions and strengthening students' moral commitments while simultaneously negotiating the pressures of modernization and socio-cultural change (Azizah et al., 2023; Prasetyo et al., 2020; Purwanto et al., 2020, 2021; Syai et al., 2024).

Despite this strategic position, serious challenges remain regarding the consistency of students' moral behaviour, including issues related to dishonesty, indiscipline, and weak sense of responsibility in both formal and non-formal educational contexts (Ms et al., 2022; Smith, 2024). Concerns about academic integrity, compliance with institutional rules, and adherence to communal ethical norms have been documented in higher education and school settings, indicating that moral knowledge does not automatically translate into moral conduct (Denney & Roberts, 2024; Indartono, 2021; Smith, 2024; Zotova et al., 2021). Within Islamic education, studies have reported various forms of rule violations, resistance to institutional discipline, and inconsistency between students' religious knowledge and daily practices, suggesting gaps in the effectiveness of character education efforts (Desrayanti, 2021; Jamaludin, 2025; Mahmud, 2023; Ngazizah & Syafi, 2021). These phenomena highlight a fundamental research problem: how can Islamic boarding schools, as value-driven institutions, operationalize and sustain effective strategies for internalizing honesty, discipline, and responsibility in the lived experience of students?

A range of general solutions has been proposed in the broader character education literature, including value-integrated curricula, authentic assessment, local wisdom-based instruction, and holistic learning models that combine cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions (Arifin et al., 2025; Arifuddin et al., 2023; Budiyono, 2024; Bulkani et al., 2025; Harun et al., 2020; Komalasari & Indrawadi, 2023; Lestari et al., 2024; Purnomo et al., 2025). In the Indonesian

context, studies demonstrate that integrating character values into classroom activities, co-curricular programs, and community engagement can positively influence students' moral sensitivity and prosocial behaviour (Budistuti & Puad, 2023; Hidayati et al., 2020; Riani et al., 2025; Sugiantoro et al., 2022). International research similarly emphasizes that ethical codes, structured mentoring, and experiential learning are important mechanisms for reinforcing honesty and responsibility in professional and educational environments. However, these approaches often focus on curricular or programmatic interventions and pay less attention to the everyday leadership practices and relational dynamics that may be decisive in residential religious institutions such as pesantren (Semenyshyn & Semenova, 2023).

More targeted solutions have emerged from empirical studies on pesantren that highlight the pivotal role of the *kyai* (religious leader) in shaping students' character. The *kyai* is frequently described as a teacher, caregiver, and moral authority whose personal example, guidance, and decisions structure the moral ecology of the boarding school (Aminoto, 2022; Habibie, 2025; Rusydi, 2025; Soemantri et al., 2025; Usman, 2025). Several studies document specific strategies used by *kyai* to instil honesty, including consistent exhortation, personal counselling, and exemplary conduct that demonstrates truthfulness in speech and action (Haryanti & Luluk, 2022; Nuraeni & H., 2022a; Nuraeni & H., 2022b; Rohmat & Dewi, 2021; Tabroni & D., 2021; Tabroni & B., 2021). Other research focuses on disciplinary practices, such as the design and enforcement of internal regulations, structured routines, and *ta'zīr* (educational sanctions) to cultivate obedience, punctuality, and respect for communal rules (Hadisi, 2022; Intan & P., 2025; Khusnan, 2025; Nuriah, 2023). Studies on responsibility emphasize that *kyai* often delegate organizational tasks, encourage participation in worship and community service, and use *da'wah* strategies to frame responsibility as a religious obligation (Ahmad & Agustang, 2023; Azizah & Iswahyudi, 2022; Desrayanti, 2021; Mujahidin, 2021; Solehah & Afifah, 2024; Yusup & Acip, 2023).

At the same time, a number of works have begun to examine more complex configurations of *kyai* leadership and pesantren governance, including visionary leadership, charismatic authority, and personal branding in relation to institutional development and religious moderation (Azizah et al., 2023; Prasetyo et al., 2020; Rojak & N., 2021; Rusydi, 2025; Soemantri et al., 2025; Taufiq et al., 2024; Tumanan, 2025; Usman, 2025). These studies suggest that *kyai* leadership operates not only at the level of personal example but also through strategic management, communication, and engagement with broader social and political networks (Anis, 2025; Indiana, 2025; Jamaludin, 2025; Mahmud, 2023; Solehah & Afifah, 2024). Furthermore, the majority of empirical work has been conducted in mixed-gender or male-dominated pesantren,

leaving the dynamics of value internalization in female-only boarding schools relatively underexplored (Azizah et al., 2023; Indiana, 2025; Yusup & Acip, 2023).

Taken together, the literature on character education and pesantren leadership indicates substantial progress but also reveals significant gaps. First, while many studies address individual values—such as honesty, discipline, or responsibility—these values are often examined in isolation, without an integrative framework that captures their interdependence in students' moral development (Ahmad & Agustang, 2023; Hadisi, 2022; Haryanti & Luluk, 2022; Khusnan, 2025; Nuraeni & H., 2022a, 2022b). Second, empirical accounts of kyai strategies are frequently descriptive and normative, providing rich narratives but limited systematic analysis of how different strategies cohere into a comprehensive approach to value internalization (Aminoto, 2022; Desrayanti, 2021; Habibie, 2025; Rohmat & Dewi, 2021; Tabroni & D., 2021; Tabroni & B., 2021). Third, there is a paucity of methodologically rigorous case studies that focus specifically on female Islamic boarding schools, despite growing recognition that gendered experiences and institutional cultures may shape how values are interpreted and embodied (Azizah et al., 2023; Indiana, 2025; Ngazizah & Syafi, 2021; Yusup & Acip, 2023). These gaps underscore the need for context-sensitive, analytically robust research that can clarify how kyai strategies operate as integrated systems of moral education in female pesantren.

This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the kyai's strategies for internalizing honesty, discipline, and responsibility among female students at Pondok Pesantren Putri Sabilurrosyad Malang. The novelty of the research lies in its integrative conceptualization of the kyai's roles as director, role model, educator, and mentor, and in its systematic mapping of how these roles translate into concrete pedagogical, organizational, and disciplinary practices in a female-only pesantren. The research is theoretically grounded in the view that moral character is formed through the interaction of institutional culture, leadership practices, and students' everyday participation in structured routines and relationships (Arifin et al., 2025; Harun et al., 2020; Mahmud, 2023). Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative single-case design with pattern-matching analysis, which is particularly suited to capturing complex configurations of strategies and comparing them with theoretically expected patterns (Khan, 2022; Liamputpong, 2022; Servaes, 2020; Sugiyono, 2020). The scope of the research encompasses the kyai's leadership and pedagogical practices, the formal and informal regulations of the pesantren, and the lived experiences of female students in internalizing the targeted values.

Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to describe and analytically interpret how kyai leadership strategies foster the internalization of honesty, discipline, and responsibility among female students at Pondok Pesantren Putri Sabilurrosyad Malang. Specifically, the

research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How does the kyai design and implement strategies to internalize honesty in the daily life of female students? (2) In what ways are discipline-oriented strategies—such as rules, routines, and sanctions—mobilized to cultivate disciplined behaviour? and (3) How does the kyai encourage and monitor the development of students' sense of responsibility in religious, academic, and social domains? By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to the theoretical refinement of Islamic character education and to provide a practical strategic framework that can inform value-based leadership and policy development in Islamic boarding schools.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Research Design and Approach

This study employed a qualitative research design with a single-case study approach to obtain a rich, contextualized, and in-depth understanding of the kyai's strategies for internalizing honesty, discipline, and responsibility among female students at an Islamic boarding school. Qualitative designs are particularly appropriate for exploring complex social phenomena, capturing participants' lived experiences, and interpreting meaning within natural settings (Faria & Dodge, 2022; Kamya, 2022; Liamputong, 2022; Mihas, 2022; Pasque & Alexander, 2022). The choice of a single-case design was guided by the need to preserve the integrity of the case and to examine the interplay between leadership practices, institutional culture, and students' character formation in a holistic manner (Khan, 2022; Servaes, 2020; Sugiyono, 2020). A descriptive case-study orientation was adopted in order to present a detailed portrayal of the kyai's leadership and pedagogical strategies without manipulating the research setting (Achtenhagen & Cestino, 2020; Brennen, 2021; Forward & Levin, 2021).

### Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Putri Sabilurrosyad Malang, a female Islamic boarding school that combines traditional pesantren traditions with contemporary educational demands. The primary research subjects comprised the kyai (as caregiver and institutional leader), the boarding school management (chairperson and senior administrators), and selected female students who were directly involved in, and affected by, the character-education processes. Participants were recruited using purposive and criterion-based sampling to ensure that they possessed rich, relevant experience of the phenomena under study (Court & Abbas, 2022; Edwards & Holland, 2023; Liamputong, 2022; Neale, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2024). The sampling strategy took into account diversity in students' length of stay, academic level, and

organizational responsibilities, thereby enhancing the breadth of perspectives and supporting analytic depth (Akpan, 2024; Dunk-West & Saxton, 2024; Langmia et al., 2024; Southerton et al., 2022). The number of participants was determined based on information power and the achievement of thematic saturation rather than statistical representativeness (Borcsa & Willig, 2021; Willig & Borcsa, 2021).

### Research Procedures

Data collection followed a sequenced procedure comprising preparation, field implementation, and consolidation. In the preparation phase, the researcher negotiated access with institutional gatekeepers, clarified ethical procedures, and refined data-collection instruments through expert review and limited piloting (Cohenmiller, 2023; Kleinlein, 2023; McBeath & Bager-Charleson, 2020; Ruth et al., 2023). During the field implementation phase, three primary methods were used: non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires. The consolidation phase involved organizing field notes, transcribing interviews, checking the completeness of questionnaire data, and preparing the dataset for systematic analysis (Creamer, 2024; Heinrich et al., 2024; Mueller et al., 2024; Wallace, 2022).

### Materials and Instruments

The materials and instruments used in this study included an observation guide, interview protocols, and a questionnaire specifically developed to assess manifestations of honesty, discipline, and responsibility in the pesantren context. The construction of these instruments was informed by prior research on character education, moral behaviour, and value-based assessment in educational settings (Arifin et al., 2025; Arifuddin et al., 2023; Budiastuti & Puad, 2023; Budiyono, 2024; Purnomo et al., 2025). Items measuring honesty drew on constructs related to truthfulness and integrity in academic and everyday interactions, items on discipline reflected punctuality, rule compliance, and self-regulation, and items on responsibility encompassed task completion, communal obligations, and accountability for actions (Harun et al., 2020; Hidayati et al., 2020; Ms et al., 2022; Sugiantoro et al., 2022). Instrument content validity was enhanced through expert judgment involving scholars of Islamic education and character education, while clarity and cultural appropriateness were checked through cognitive interviewing with a small group of students (Daniyati et al., 2020; Iq Bali, 2020; Sari et al., 2022).

## **Data Collection Techniques**

Three complementary data-collection techniques were employed: observation, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires. Observation focused on daily routines, worship activities, disciplinary practices, and interactions between kyai, staff, and students, enabling the researcher to capture naturally occurring behaviour and institutional norms (Elhamma, 2024; Elhami et al., 2024; Wallace, 2022; Southerton et al., 2022). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the kyai, management, and students to explore their understandings of honesty, discipline, and responsibility, as well as the perceived effectiveness of leadership strategies (Edwards & Holland, 2023; McGregor & Fernández, 2022; Mihas, 2022; Tsani & In'am, 2024). A structured questionnaire was administered to a broader group of students to obtain descriptive quantitative indications of value internalization, which were then integrated with qualitative findings in a qualitatively driven design (Carling, 2024; Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2020; Rihoux et al., 2021; Winters, 2024).

## **Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis employed a descriptive pattern-matching technique in three iterative stages. First, an expected pattern of kyai strategies for internalizing honesty, discipline, and responsibility was constructed based on the research questions and the theoretical and empirical literature on Islamic character education and pesantren leadership (Ahmad & Agustang, 2023; Aminoto, 2022; Azizah & Iswahyudi, 2022; Desrayanti, 2021; Habibie, 2025; Mahmud, 2023; Usman, 2025). This stage involved translating the conceptual dimensions of the three target values into analytically tractable categories and subcategories. Second, empirical data from observation, interviews, and questionnaires were systematically coded and grouped according to these categories, while remaining open to emergent themes that did not fit the initial framework (Amaradasa, 2023; Fife, 2020; Mihas, 2022; Putman, 2024; Reuber, 2025; Throne, 2024). Coded segments were then compared across data sources and participants to identify converging and diverging patterns (Belk & Otnes, 2024; Davison, 2023; Davison et al., 2023; Gustafsson & Lartey, 2024; Rihoux et al., 2021). Third, the researcher refined and simplified the pattern structure, developed narrative explanations linking leadership strategies to observed outcomes, and compared the resulting pattern with the theoretically expected one to assess the degree of correspondence, elaboration, or contradiction (Farivar, 2023; Gerzso & Riedl, 2024; Khan, 2022; Neale, 2024; Servaes, 2020). Visual displays such as matrices and schematic diagrams were used to support comparison and to clarify relationships between strategies and dimensions of value internalization (Creamer, 2024; Heinrich et al., 2024; Mueller et al., 2024; Wallace, 2022).

## Data Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data, multiple strategies were employed consistent with qualitative research standards. Method triangulation was achieved by combining observation, interviews, and questionnaires, thereby enabling cross-checking of information from different sources and modalities (Court & Abbas, 2022; Liamputtong, 2022; Servaes, 2020; Southerton et al., 2022). Source triangulation involved comparing perspectives from the kyai, management, and students, while theory triangulation drew on both character-education and Islamic-education frameworks (Arifin et al., 2025; Bulkani et al., 2025; Mahmud, 2023; Saidi et al., 2025). Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with key participants to verify accuracy and resonance, and peer debriefing was carried out through discussions with colleagues experienced in qualitative and Islamic-education research (Bager-Charleson & McBeath, 2020; Guyotte et al., 2023; Martiens, 2025; Muzongondi, 2025; Pasque, 2025; Samier, 2023). An audit trail was maintained through systematic documentation of decisions, field notes, and analytic memos, which facilitated transparency and reflexivity (Borcsa & Willig, 2021; Kara & Khoo, 2021; McMahon & McGannon, 2024; Sunday & Fulton, 2024). Thick description of the institutional context and participants' experiences was provided to support transferability, while careful attention to ethical considerations—including informed consent, confidentiality, and sensitivity to power relations—was maintained throughout the research process (Langmia et al., 2024; Manhique & Amos, 2024; Roshan & Elhami, 2024; Wallace, 2022).

## RESULT

### Overview of Findings

The analysis of observation notes, interview transcripts, and questionnaire data revealed a coherent pattern of four interrelated kyai roles—director, role model, educator, and mentor—in the internalization of honesty, discipline, and responsibility among female students at Pondok Pesantren Putri Sabilurrosyad Malang. These roles were operationalized through concrete regulatory, pedagogical, and supervisory practices that structured students' everyday routines and responses to institutional expectations, consistent with the centrality of leadership and institutional culture in character formation highlighted in previous research on Islamic and general character education (Arifin et al., 2025; Arifuddin et al., 2023; Bulkani et al., 2025; Harun et al., 2020; Hidayati et al., 2020; Mahmud, 2023). Quantitative questionnaire scores indicated that the three target values were generally internalized at a “good” level, with behavioural indicators tending to be slightly stronger than verbal or attitudinal indicators—an empirical pattern also noted in studies of moral conduct, academic integrity, and self-discipline in other educational

settings (Denney & Roberts, 2024; Ms et al., 2022; Smith, 2024; Zotova et al., 2021). Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3 summarize the descriptive statistics for each value, while Figure 1 presents a concept map that integrates the four kyai roles with the dimensions of honesty, discipline, and responsibility.

### **Kyai's Strategies for Internalizing Honesty**

As director, the kyai formulated and reinforced institutional expectations that positioned honesty as a non-negotiable moral standard in all aspects of pesantren life. This directorial role was visible in explicit prohibitions against using others' belongings without permission and in the insistence that students report accurately on their activities and infractions. These expectations were embedded into house rules, informal guidance, and routine reminders, ensuring that honesty was consistently presented as a core normative standard in the boarding-school environment. As a role model, the kyai demonstrated honesty in everyday interactions—such as transparent communication, keeping promises, and acknowledging personal limitations—thereby providing a living example of truthful speech and action, in line with findings that exemplary leadership is a powerful medium for transmitting honesty in pesantren and other value-based institutions (Aminoto, 2022; Nuraeni & H., 2022; Tabroni & D., 2021; Tabroni & B., 2021; Usman, 2025; Yusup & Acip, 2023).

The educator role was expressed through systematic guidance and teaching that linked honesty to Islamic theological and ethical foundations, particularly Qur'anic injunctions and prophetic traditions concerning truthfulness. In formal lessons, sermons, and mau'izhah (advice) sessions, the kyai framed honesty as both a religious obligation (amanah) and a core component of trustworthy personhood, thereby connecting doctrinal knowledge with expected behaviour—a pattern consistent with prior work on value-based instruction in Islamic boarding schools (Desrayanti, 2021; Haryanti & Luluk, 2022; Ngazizah & Syafi, 2021; Nuraeni & H., 2022; Rohmat & Dewi, 2021). As mentor, the kyai supervised students' moral conduct by encouraging them to admit mistakes, confess rule violations, and accept educational sanctions (ta'zīr) when dishonesty occurred. Sanctions ranged from mild reprimands to more serious corrective measures, always framed as moral coaching rather than purely punitive action, in line with research on ta'zīr as a pedagogical tool for character formation (Hadisi, 2022; Intan & P., 2025; Khusnan, 2025; Nuriah, 2023).

Questionnaire findings indicated that honesty in action—such as not taking others' belongings and fulfilling commitments as promised—obtained a total score of 612 with a mean of 70, categorizing students' behavioural honesty as good. Honesty in words—such as telling the

truth in reporting activities and acknowledging faults—scored 536 with a mean of 66, also categorized as good but slightly lower than behavioural honesty. This discrepancy suggests that while students generally refrain from dishonest acts, they may still face challenges in consistently expressing uncomfortable truths verbally, a nuance echoed in studies reporting gaps between internal attitudes, verbal expression, and overt behaviour in moral domains (Hidayati et al., 2020).

Table 1 Summary of Questionnaire Scores for Honesty

Indicator	Total Score	Mean	Category
Honesty in actions	612	70	Good
Honesty in words (verbal)	536	66	Good

### Kyai's Strategies for Internalizing Discipline

In relation to discipline, the kyai as director collaborated with ustaz and ustazah to design and codify a comprehensive set of boarding-school regulations (tata tertib) that specified students' rights, obligations, and corresponding sanctions. These rules covered worship routines, study schedules, dormitory life, and communal responsibilities, thereby structuring time, space, and behaviour in a way that supports the development of punctuality and obedience. Violations were systematically categorized into light, moderate, and severe, each associated with distinct *ta'zīr* measures intended to prevent recurrence and cultivate self-control. This regulatory framework resonates with studies that describe how structured rules and graded sanctions in pesantren and schools contribute to disciplined habits when consistently implemented (Hadisi, 2022; Intan & P., 2025; Khusnan, 2025; Nuriah, 2023; Sugiantoro et al., 2022).

As a role model, the kyai emphasized personal discipline by maintaining consistent attendance at communal prayers, respecting institutional schedules, and demonstrating seriousness in fulfilling leadership duties. Students repeatedly referred to the kyai's punctuality and regular presence in religious and educational activities as a key source of motivation to comply with regulations, echoing findings that disciplined leadership behavior inspires similar patterns among followers (Aminoto, 2022; Rojak & N., 2021; Rusydi, 2025; Soemantri et al., 2025). In his educator role, the kyai provided direction and motivational talks that reinterpreted disciplinary rules not as mere restrictions but as pathways to personal growth, spiritual maturity, and academic success, consistent with research that links positive framing of discipline to students' internal acceptance of rules (Budiyono, 2024; Harun et al., 2020; Komalasari & Indrawadi, 2023; Lestari et al., 2024). The mentor role was visible in continuous monitoring and direct supervision, particularly in the application of *ta'zīr* when students failed to comply with regulations. Sanctions were applied in a graduated manner and often accompanied by reflective

conversations, aligning with the use of guided reflection and restorative practices in character-education programs (Ahmad & Agustang, 2023; Desrayanti, 2021; Ms et al., 2022; Ngazizah & Syafi, 2021).

Questionnaire data showed that the orderliness component—covering compliance with schedules, dormitory cleanliness, and proper use of facilities—obtained a total score of 590 with a mean of 69, while the obedience component—related to adherence to rules, attendance at mandatory activities, and respect for authority—scored 589 with a mean of 69. Both indicators were categorized as good, suggesting that students generally exhibit disciplined behaviour in alignment with the institutional expectations formulated by the kyai and staff. These quantitative patterns mirror studies reporting moderate-to-high levels of self-discipline where clear rules, consistent supervision, and value-based communication are present (Indartono, 2021; Sugiantoro et al., 2022).

Table 2 Summary of Questionnaire Scores for Discipline

Indicator	Total Score	Mean	Category
Order	590	69	Good
Obedience	589	69	Good

### Kyai's Strategies for Internalizing Responsibility

With regard to responsibility, the kyai as director articulated clear expectations that students must assume ownership of their actions, tasks, and communal obligations. Direction was provided on matters such as acknowledging mistakes and accepting their consequences, returning borrowed items on time, maintaining personal and shared spaces, and, centrally, observing the five daily prayers with full consciousness. These directives framed responsibility as a comprehensive ethical orientation rather than a narrow task-specific requirement, consistent with conceptualizations of responsibility as accountability to God, self, and community in Islamic character-education literature (Ahmad & Agustang, 2023; Azizah & Iswahyudi, 2022; Mahmud, 2023; Solehah & Afifah, 2024). As role model, the kyai paid particular attention to new junior-level students, offering warmth and availability while simultaneously modelling consistent fulfilment of religious, educational, and managerial responsibilities. Senior students were likewise guided and entrusted with specific duties, such as supervising dormitory groups and organizing activities, aligning with findings that delegated responsibilities can strengthen students' sense of ownership and leadership (Azizah & Iswahyudi, 2022; Indiana, 2025; Mujahidin, 2021; Yusup & Acip, 2023).

In his educator role, the kyai used advice, direct demonstration, and structured habituation to foster responsibility in everyday practices. Students were encouraged and monitored to complete school assignments on time, submit memorization (setoran hafalan) regularly to ustaz and ustazah, manage their personal belongings, and participate in cleaning and organizing the pesantren environment. These routines institutionalized responsible behavior as repeated practice, echoing pedagogical approaches that view habituation as a core mechanism for internalizing values (Hidayati et al., 2020; Purnomo et al., 2025; Sugiantoro et al., 2022). As mentor, the kyai and the administrative team enforced sanctions for irresponsible behaviour, particularly when students neglected assigned tasks, failed to submit memorization on time, or violated communal obligations. Ta‘zīr was again applied in graduated form by administrators, with the explicit intention of generating a deterrent effect and encouraging students to reconsider their commitments—an approach consistent with research on responsibility formation through corrective discipline and guided reflection (Ahmad & Agustang, 2023; Desrayanti, 2021; Intan & P., 2025; Khusnan, 2025; Nuriah, 2023).

Questionnaire results showed that the component “submitting memorization or tasks on time” obtained a total score of 662 with a mean of 73, indicating a high level of responsibility in managing academic and religious obligations. The component “being responsible for every action” scored 585 with a mean of 69, classified as good, suggesting that students generally acknowledge and accept the consequences of their conduct in daily life. These findings demonstrate that responsibility has been effectively internalized as both task-oriented and relational accountability, paralleling empirical studies that report positive outcomes when responsibility is embedded in structured routines, delegated roles, and clear value communication (Arifin et al., 2025; Arifuddin et al., 2023; Budiastuti & Puad, 2023; Lestari et al., 2024; Ms et al., 2022; Riani et al., 2025).

Table 3 Summary of Questionnaire Scores for Responsibility

Indicator	Total Score	Mean	Category
Submitting memorization/tasks on time	662	73	Good-High
Responsibility for every action	585	69	Good

### Conceptual Synthesis of Findings

To synthesize these results, Figure 1 presents a concept map that visually links the four kyai roles (director, role model, educator, mentor) with the three target values (honesty, discipline, responsibility) and their operative strategies (regulation, modelling, instruction, supervision, and ta‘zīr-based coaching). The map illustrates how regulatory frameworks and sanctions are

consistently supported by exemplary conduct, value-based teaching, and relational mentoring, forming an integrated system of character education. This systemic pattern resonates with broader discussions on holistic and integrative approaches to value education in Islamic and general educational contexts (Arifin et al., 2025; Bulkani et al., 2025; Komalasari & Indrawadi, 2023; Mahmud, 2023; Purnomo et al., 2025; Saidi et al., 2025).

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the kyai's strategic roles as director, role model, educator, and mentor form an integrated system for internalizing honesty, discipline, and responsibility among female students in Pondok Pesantren Putri Sabilurrosyad Malang. This configuration confirms theoretical perspectives that conceptualize character formation as a function of institutional culture, value-based leadership, and repeated moral practice rather than mere cognitive transmission of religious knowledge (Arifin et al., 2025; Bulkani et al., 2025; Harun et al., 2020; Hidayati et al., 2020; Mahmud, 2023). From the standpoint of Islamic education, the kyai's leadership actualizes the pesantren mandate as codified in Law No. 18/2019, namely to cultivate faith, piety, and noble character through education, da'wah, role modelling, and community empowerment (Lusiana & Mesra, 2024; Mustofa, 2020). The generally "good" levels of honesty, discipline, and responsibility indicated by questionnaire scores suggest that this leadership model is substantively effective, while the nuanced differences between behavioural and verbal indicators highlight areas requiring further pedagogical refinement (Smith, 2024; Zotova et al., 2021).

### Honesty as a Core Moral Value

The configuration of strategies for internalizing honesty—norm-setting, modelling, theological grounding, and corrective mentoring—corresponds closely to character-education theories that emphasize the interplay of explicit values, exemplars, and habituation. As director, the kyai institutionalizes honesty as a non-negotiable norm through rules prohibiting the use of others' belongings without permission and requiring truthful reporting of behaviour. At the same time, the kyai's direct involvement in communicating these norms reflects pesantren traditions in which moral directives are personalized through close leader-student interaction (Mujahidin, 2021).

The kyai's role as a moral exemplar further aligns with studies that highlight the centrality of *uswah hasanah* (good example) in Islamic boarding school leadership. Previous research has documented how kyai who consistently demonstrate honesty in speech, financial dealings, and

institutional decisions exert a powerful formative influence on students' moral perceptions (Aminoto, 2022; Habibie, 2025; Solehah & Afifah, 2024; Yusup & Acip, 2023). The present findings corroborate these insights: students frequently referenced the kyai's truthful communication and reliability as reasons for their own efforts to avoid lying or concealing mistakes. This resonates with broader work on value transmission through modelling in family, school, and community contexts (Arifuddin et al., 2023; Riani et al., 2025).

The educator role, in which honesty is systematically linked to Qur'anic and prophetic teachings, accords with scholarship that stresses the necessity of integrating doctrinal content with ethical practice in Islamic education (Desrayanti, 2021; Haryanti & Luluk, 2022; Ngazizah & Syafi, 2021; Nuraeni & H., 2022; Rohmat & Dewi, 2021; Tsani & In'am, 2024). By framing honesty as *amanah* and a condition of trustworthiness, the kyai helps students interpret truthful behaviour as integral to religious identity, not merely institutional compliance. This is in line with Mahmud's (2023) argument that character education grounded in *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* enables students to perceive moral conduct as part of worship and social responsibility.

The slightly lower mean score for honesty in words (66) compared with honesty in actions (70) suggests that students are more consistent in avoiding overtly dishonest acts than in articulating uncomfortable truths. Similar gaps between moral behaviour and verbal openness have been reported in studies of academic integrity and self-disclosure, where fear of sanctions, shame, or relational disruption may inhibit truthful speech (Denney & Roberts, 2024; Ms et al., 2022; Smith, 2024). The kyai's mentor role—encouraging confession of mistakes and accepting *ta'zīr* as moral coaching—partially addresses this gap by providing structured opportunities for honest self-reporting (Hadisi, 2022; Intan & P., 2025; Khusnan, 2025; Nuriah, 2023). Nonetheless, the results indicate the need to further develop dialogic spaces in which students can safely discuss moral dilemmas and failures without fear of stigmatization, echoing recommendations from dialogic and restorative approaches to academic integrity education (Budiyono, 2024; Smith, 2024).

### Discipline as Structured Freedom

The findings on discipline show that the kyai's strategies combine detailed regulation, consistent modelling, motivational framing, and graded sanctions. This multi-layered approach supports the view that effective discipline in educational institutions requires both structural and relational components (Indartono, 2021; Sugiantoro et al., 2022). The compilation of *tata tertib* specifying students' rights, obligations, and proportional sanctions echoes previous studies where kyai and pesantren management jointly design rules to guide all dimensions of boarding-school

life (Desrayanti, 2021; Hadisi, 2022). By categorizing violations into light, moderate, and severe, the institution applies *ta'zīr* in a differentiated way, consistent with ethical principles of fairness and educational intent (Intan & P., 2025; Khusnan, 2025; Nuriah, 2023).

As role model, the kyai demonstrates punctuality, attendance, and seriousness in fulfilling institutional responsibilities, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of disciplinary expectations. Research in other pesantren similarly notes that students are more likely to internalize discipline when they observe their leaders exemplifying the same standards, particularly in worship and time management (Aminoto, 2022; Haryanti & Luluk, 2022; Rojak & N., 2021; Rusydi, 2025; Soemantri et al., 2025). The present findings extend this by showing how students explicitly link their own adherence to schedules and rules with the kyai's consistent presence in communal prayers and learning sessions.

The educator and mentor roles work together to transform external discipline into internal self-regulation. The kyai's regular reminders that rules are designed to support spiritual growth, academic focus, and communal harmony reflect insights from character-education programs that reframe discipline as a positive pathway to personal development rather than mere constraint (Budiyono, 2024; Harun et al., 2020; Komalasari & Indrawadi, 2023; Lestari et al., 2024; Purnomo et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the use of *ta'zīr* as graduated, reflective punishment parallels approaches in both Islamic and secular contexts where sanctions are accompanied by reflection to foster understanding of consequences (Ahmad & Agustang, 2023; Desrayanti, 2021; Ms et al., 2022). The good mean scores for order (69) and obedience (69) suggest that this combination is effective and associated with higher levels of self-discipline in the pesantren context.

From a broader leadership perspective, these disciplinary strategies reflect a form of visionary and managerial leadership documented in pesantren where kyai integrate moral, organizational, and communicative functions (Azizah et al., 2023; Rusydi, 2025; Soemantri et al., 2025; Taufiq et al., 2024; Usman, 2025). The present study contributes by detailing how such leadership operates at the micro level of daily routines and sanctions in a female-only boarding school, a context less frequently explored in previous work (Azizah et al., 2023; Indiana, 2025; Yusup & Acip, 2023).

### **Responsibility as Relational Accountability**

The internalization of responsibility in this study encompasses personal, academic, religious, and communal dimensions, in line with conceptualizations of responsibility in Islamic character education as accountability to God, self, others, and the environment (Ahmad & Agustang, 2023; Mahmud, 2023; Solehah & Afifah, 2024). As director, the kyai articulates

concrete expectations—acknowledging mistakes, accepting consequences, returning borrowed property punctually, and performing the five daily prayers with full awareness—thereby translating abstract notions of responsibility into observable behaviours. This operationalization corresponds with findings that character values must be defined behaviourally to be effectively taught and assessed (Arifin et al., 2025; Riani et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2022).

The role-model dimension is especially prominent in the mentoring of new junior-level students, who require intensive guidance to adapt to strict boarding-school rules. The kyai and caregivers' efforts to combine warmth with firm expectations mirror approaches in which emotional support and structure jointly foster responsible behaviour and adjustment in new environments (Azizah & Iswahyudi, 2022; Indiana, 2025; Susila et al., 2022). For senior students, the delegation of leadership tasks and supervision of peers' memorization and worship activities further promotes responsibility as shared stewardship rather than merely individual compliance, consistent with studies on student leadership in pesantren and other religious institutions (Azizah & Iswahyudi, 2022; Mujahidin, 2021; Yusup & Acip, 2023).

As educator, the kyai emphasizes habituation (*ta 'wīd*) of responsible conduct in everyday tasks: completing school assignments on time, submitting memorization regularly, maintaining personal belongings, and participating in cleaning routines. This aligns with pedagogical views, both Islamic and general, that repeated practice under guidance is central to value internalization (Hidayati et al., 2020; Lestari et al., 2024; Purnomo et al., 2025; Sugiantoro et al., 2022). The quantitative results—high mean score for timely submission of memorization/tasks (73) and good mean score for responsibility for every action (69)—indicate that students have largely internalized responsibility as both task management and moral accountability. These outcomes parallel findings in studies where structured routines, clear role allocation, and consistent feedback lead to strong responsibility indicators in educational settings (Arifuddin et al., 2023; Budiastuti & Puad, 2023; Ms et al., 2022).

The mentor role, particularly through *ta 'zīr* for neglecting duties, complements habituation by ensuring that lapses are addressed promptly and constructively. Research on *ta 'zīr* in pesantren confirms its function as an educative tool aimed at developing conscience and long-term responsibility rather than inflicting mere suffering (Intan & P., 2025; Khusnan, 2025; Ngazizah & Syafi, 2021; Nuriah, 2023; Solehah & Afifah, 2024). In this study, punishment is accompanied by reminders and guidance, echoing recommendations that sanctions be embedded within a broader mentoring relationship to avoid fostering fear-based compliance (Ahmad & Agustang, 2023; Desrayanti, 2021; Solehah & Afifah, 2024).

Drawing on these findings, this article argues that the kyai's fourfold role—director, role model, educator, and mentor—constitutes a holistic leadership framework that effectively supports the internalization of honesty, discipline, and responsibility in a female Islamic boarding school. This framework operationalizes the notion of holistic and integrative character education advocated in recent literature, which calls for the simultaneous engagement of cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains within a coherent institutional culture (Arifin et al., 2025; Bulkani et al., 2025; Harun et al., 2020; Komalasari & Indrawadi, 2023; Purnomo et al., 2025). The study's position is that neither rules and sanctions alone nor role modelling and instruction alone are sufficient; rather, their integration within stable leadership and communal practices is what yields robust character outcomes.

Theoretically, the results support Mahmud's (2023) view that character education grounded in *maqāṣid al-shari‘ah* requires institutional structures that translate higher objectives—such as protection of faith, intellect, and social order—into daily routines, expectations, and sanctions. The kyai's strategies at Pondok Pesantren Putri Sabilurrosyad Malang exemplify how these objectives can be embedded in concrete practices: honesty as trustworthiness, discipline as ordered worship and learning, and responsibility as accountability in multiple spheres. At the same time, the observed gap between behavioural and verbal honesty suggests that character education must also address communicative and critical dimensions, for example by encouraging students to articulate doubts, admit failures, and reflect on moral complexity, as suggested in dialogic approaches to value formation (Budiyono, 2024; Smith, 2024).

Practically, the study has several implications for Islamic boarding schools and policy-makers. First, it underscores the importance of investing in kyai leadership development that includes not only religious scholarship but also pedagogical, managerial, and mentoring competences (Aminoto, 2022; Habibie, 2025; Rusydi, 2025; Soemantri et al., 2025; Usman, 2025). Second, the structured integration of rules, routines, and *ta‘zīr* with value-based teaching and modelling suggests that character-education frameworks in pesantren should explicitly recognize and support these interlocking components (Mustofa, 2020; Saidi et al., 2025). Third, the positive responsibility scores associated with delegated student roles and task-based routines indicate that expanding student leadership opportunities—especially for female students—can further strengthen character formation and agency (Azizah et al., 2023; Azizah & Iswahyudi, 2022; Indiana, 2025; Yusup & Acip, 2023).

In response to ongoing challenges and the nuanced quantitative patterns, several recommendations can be proposed. To enhance honesty, particularly verbal honesty, pesantren may incorporate structured reflection sessions, peer discussions, and case-based learning on moral

dilemmas, drawing on dialogic and restorative practices from integrity education (Denney & Roberts, 2024; Smith, 2024). These activities should complement, not replace, existing sermons and advice, thus deepening students' capacity to express truth while maintaining respect and relational harmony.

To consolidate discipline, institutions should periodically review and socialize their *tata tertib* with active student participation, ensuring that rules remain contextually relevant, clearly understood, and perceived as jointly owned by the community (Desrayanti, 2021; Hadisi, 2022). Professional development for *ustadz* and *ustadzah* on consistent, fair, and educative application of *ta'zīr* would also help prevent arbitrary or overly punitive practices (Intan & P., 2025; Khusnan, 2025; Nuriah, 2023).

With regard to responsibility, extending structured opportunities for project-based learning, community service, and peer mentoring could further strengthen students' sense of accountability beyond routine tasks, aligning with broader trends in experiential and service learning for character development (Arifuddin et al., 2023; Budiastuti & Puad, 2023; Hidayati et al., 2020; Lestari et al., 2024; Purnomo et al., 2025). Collaboration with parents and local communities would also help create continuity between pesantren-based responsibilities and responsibilities in the home and societal environments (Harun et al., 2020; Maksum et al., 2025; Riani et al., 2025).

Finally, future research could extend this single-case study by employing comparative designs across male, female, and mixed-gender pesantren, and by integrating longitudinal and mixed methods to track changes in character indicators over time (Carling, 2024; Neale, 2024; Rihoux et al., 2021; Throne, 2024). Such work would deepen understanding of how different institutional cultures and leadership styles shape value internalization and would contribute to the refinement of theory and practice in Islamic character education.

## CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the *kyai*'s strategic roles as director, role model, educator, and mentor form an integrated leadership framework that effectively supports the internalization of honesty, discipline, and responsibility among female students at Pondok Pesantren Putri Sabilurrosyad Malang. The findings show that these three core values are generally internalized at a good level, as reflected in students' behaviours and self-reported attitudes, indicating that the combination of clear regulations, exemplary conduct, value-based instruction, habituation, and educational sanctions constitutes a coherent and effective system of character education.

The key implication of these results is that value-based leadership in Islamic boarding schools cannot be reduced to either symbolic authority or formal rules alone; rather, the sustained

alignment of institutional norms, everyday practice, and personalised mentoring is crucial for cultivating stable moral dispositions in students. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering a detailed, empirically grounded account of *kyai* strategies in a female-only pesantren context and by conceptualising the fourfold *kyai* role as a holistic framework for Islamic character education. Future research could investigate supporting and hindering factors in the internalization of values from the perspectives of students, families, and policy makers, employ comparative designs across different types of pesantren, and adopt longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to trace changes in character development over time.

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