

The Role of Indonesian Islamic Students in Developing Leadership Character among Senior High School Students in Bekasi Regency

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Manuscript received : 07-05-2025; revised : 09-06-2025; accepted : 15-06-2025. Date of publication : 09-07-2025

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of Indonesian Islamic Students (PII) in fostering leadership character among senior high school students in Bekasi Regency. Education is not only essential for transmitting knowledge but also for shaping students' character, with leadership as one of the most crucial elements to prepare them for future challenges. Indonesia is currently facing a leadership crisis, marked by a lack of integrity among leaders and the insufficient cultivation of leadership values from an early age. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, utilizing in-depth interviews, documentation analysis, and participant observation to explore how PII's cadre formation contributes to leadership character development. Drawing on historical contributions, PII has consistently functioned as a cadre-based organization that integrates Islamic values with national consciousness. Through structured training and mentorship programs, it has produced alumni who later became influential national leaders, such as Jusuf Kalla, Mahfud MD, and Muhadjir Effendy. Despite its significant role, documentation and recognition of PII's contributions remain limited. Empirical evidence and global studies further highlight the urgent need for educational approaches that prioritize leadership character alongside cognitive development. This study underscores that leadership education must be viewed as a systemic effort involving schools, organizations, and the community. PII's cadre formation (kaderisasi) provides a model for leadership development that emphasizes integrity, responsibility, and service. The findings are expected to enrich the discourse on character education and provide practical insights into integrating organizational frameworks with formal education to nurture future leaders of integrity.

Keywords: Indonesian Islamic Students (PII), Leadership, Character Education, Cadre Formation, Senior High School Students

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education is not merely about imparting knowledge but also about shaping individual character. Leadership is one of the most essential character elements to be developed in education, as this skill equips students to face future challenges. Research has demonstrated that effective educational leadership significantly influences student success. Global studies confirm that "One of the key benefits of strong educational leadership is its impact on student achievement and success. Research consistently demonstrates that effective leadership is positively correlated with improved student outcomes, including higher test scores, graduation rates, and college readiness." This proves that the development of leadership character is not only relevant for students as individuals but also has a substantial impact on their academic achievement. The development of Indonesia as a nation requires high-quality human resources in this dynamic era of globalization. Education serves as a strategic means to achieve this, not merely by transmitting knowledge but also by fostering character, particularly leadership. Leadership is a vital skill that must be nurtured in schools to prepare future

generations to overcome challenges. However, the cultivation of leadership character remains a challenge.

Empirical evidence shows that Indonesia is currently facing a leadership crisis, reflected in the lack of integrity among leaders at various levels. The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), for instance, recorded nine regional heads caught in corruption cases through sting operations, involving figures from parliament members to local officials. This crisis indicates that leadership values grounded in integrity and responsibility are not instilled from an early age. Hence, leadership character education in schools becomes a strategic step in shaping moral and competent future leaders.

This leadership crisis reveals that the problem is not merely individual but systemic. The World Economic Forum highlights adaptive and value-based leadership as one of the most critical skills in the modern era. Meanwhile, data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows that Indonesian students lag significantly in mastering soft skills, including leadership. Similarly, research by the Global Youth Leadership Institute states that early leadership training positively impacts critical thinking and decision-making among adolescents. These findings emphasize the need for an educational model that does not merely teach cognitive aspects but also prioritizes leadership character development. However, data from the Ministry of Education and Culture shows that only 25% of schools in Indonesia have structured programs for student leadership development. In many cases, extracurricular activities intended to shape student character often remain formalities without optimal mentoring.

Indonesia's foundation—Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and its derivative regulations—serves as a guideline for maintaining the nation's diversity. As citizens with rights and obligations, adherence to regulations is a shared responsibility. Article 28E, paragraph (3) of the Constitution guarantees the right to associate, assemble, and express opinions. This right provides opportunities for citizens to establish organizations as a form of contribution toward national ideals, including the intellectual advancement of the nation. Historically, organizations have played significant roles in safeguarding national interests, as recorded in history books and official documents. Among these is the Indonesian Islamic Students (PII), which has consistently contributed to nurturing students with Islamic values and national consciousness.

The presence of organizations often complements societal needs, providing tangible benefits not only through manpower but also through intellectual contributions. Many societal problems have been addressed by individuals or institutions within organizations, especially when government efforts fall short. In times when the state requires public support, organized groups are often the most prepared due to their structured systems. Thus, achieving national goals requires synergy between government and organizations, working together toward the vision enshrined in the 1945 Constitution. PII, in particular, has conducted training programs for its members to cultivate Islamic and nationalist values. These trainings, held at regional, provincial, and national levels, often feature alumni or figures aligned with the organization's ideals. Through this system, PII has produced members who are deeply committed to religion, nation, and organizational values. Cadre formation (*kaderisasi*) serves as the core of PII's activities, prioritized alongside other programs.

Since its establishment in Bekasi Regency, PII has significantly contributed to society, particularly in student development. However, much of its legacy is now remembered only by senior members, with historical documentation limited to the local secretariat. Beyond its membership, few are aware of its substantial contributions. The Qur'an, in Surah Al-A'raf (7:176), emphasizes the importance of studying history as a means of reflection and guidance: "So relate the stories, that perhaps they will give thought." This underlines the importance of history not only as a form of respect for previous generations but also as guidance for future steps. Notably, PII has served as a training ground for national leaders during their student years, including Jusuf Kalla, Mahfud MD, and Muhadjir Effendy.

Based on the aforementioned foundations and the researcher's initial observations, this study seeks to examine: "The Role of Indonesian Islamic Students (PII) in Developing Leadership Character among Senior High School Students in Bekasi Regency."

II. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to capture the process of leadership formation within the Indonesian Islamic Students (PII). The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand meanings, experiences, and cadre formation practices in their natural social context, while the descriptive method enables a systematic portrayal of organizational activities, coaching strategies, and their impacts on students' leadership character. Data were collected through three primary techniques, namely document analysis, interviews, and observations. Document analysis focused on organizational statutes, program documents, and training manuals produced by PII at the national and regional levels, particularly those from PII Central Board (2020) and PII Bekasi

Regency (2022). Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with various stakeholders, including active cadres, alumni, local community leaders, and parents, in order to obtain diverse perspectives on the effectiveness of leadership character formation within PII. Observations were also carried out by directly participating in several activities such as Leadership Basic Training (LBT), Islamic study circles (ta'lim), and cadre mentoring sessions, thereby allowing the researcher to obtain a contextual understanding of how leadership values were instilled and practiced.

The collected data were analyzed through a process of reduction, categorization, and thematic interpretation. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and simplifying relevant information, while categorization involved organizing data into meaningful groups related to leadership values, educational strategies, and student development outcomes. Thematic interpretation was then applied to identify recurring patterns and essential themes that reflect the role of PII in shaping leadership character among senior high school students. Findings were presented narratively and thematically, ensuring that the realities observed in the field were described as they were, without manipulation of the conditions studied.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of Indonesian Islamic Students (PII) in fostering leadership character among senior high school students in Bekasi Regency. Education plays a crucial role not only in transmitting knowledge but also in shaping students' character, with leadership as one of the most essential elements in preparing them to face future challenges. Indonesia is currently experiencing a leadership crisis, as reflected in the lack of integrity among leaders and the limited cultivation of leadership values from an early age. This research applies a qualitative descriptive method to capture the processes of leadership formation within PII. Data were collected through document analysis, semi-structured interviews with active cadres, alumni, and local leaders, as well as direct observations of cadre training activities such as Leadership Basic Training (LBT), study circles (ta'lim), and mentoring sessions. Data were analyzed thematically through reduction, categorization, and interpretation to identify patterns of leadership development.

PII can be categorized not only as a student organization but also as a non-formal educational ecosystem, as it integrates Islamic values with leadership training. This vision is articulated in its Articles of Association, Article 3, which declares that PII strives to achieve the perfection of education, teaching, and culture based on Islam for all Indonesians. Leadership character development is carried out through a structured and tiered system of cadre formation. At its foundation, the Leadership Basic Training (LBT) program aims to instill courage, resilience, social awareness, and the ability to manage both personal potential and the surrounding environment. The LBT curriculum introduces essential competencies such as leadership, communication, self-management, and Islamic student identity, serving as a crucial entry point for character formation. The work programs of PII Bekasi Regency consistently emphasize that every cadre activity must be oriented toward shaping students as future leaders. In its preamble, PII states that today's students are the inheritors of tomorrow's civilization; therefore, leadership cultivation must be intentional and continuous. Flagship activities include LBT, Islamic study circles, cadre mentoring, digital literacy workshops, etiquette training, and academic preparation initiatives such as Road to UTBK. The structured system of cadre formation in PII Bekasi can thus be viewed as a concrete response to the nation's urgent need for leaders with integrity, responsibility, and service orientation.

In practice, leadership character building is carried out through a holistic approach. It is not only about providing material in classrooms or forums, but also ensuring real-life practice within the organization. Students are entrusted with responsibilities as MCs, moderators, event managers, and even instructors. This reflects PII's principle that leadership can only grow through direct experience, not merely theory. Interviews with local leaders and active cadres show that the ongoing cadre process has produced tangible impacts. One leader stated that students who were initially quiet and passive gradually grew into leaders capable of organizing agendas and presenting ideas in public. Active cadres such as Shella and Salma affirmed that PII transformed their perspectives, boosted their confidence, and built teamwork skills that they had not previously acquired at school. From the alumni perspective, Ka Tesa expressed that the values she learned in PII—such as discipline, honesty, and sincerity—remain firmly embedded in her professional life. She added that PII's cadre system made her more organized and better able to collaborate productively with various stakeholders.

PII Bekasi Regency has also demonstrated adaptability to contemporary developments. The General Policy Document of PII Bekasi notes that cadre development programs are designed with attention to digital trends, literacy needs, and the dynamics of youth in the era of social media. This shows that PII does not merely preserve traditional values but also takes a progressive approach in its methods and practices of character development.

Thus, PII's role in fostering leadership character among high school students is both vital and contextual. Amidst today's challenges, where students often face a crisis of values and role models, PII serves as a safe and productive space to cultivate leaders who are not only intellectually capable but also strong in character, religious, and socially responsible. One of the interviewees in this research is the father of a PII cadre in Bekasi Regency. He explained that his child began to actively engage in PII activities about a year ago, starting with participation in the LBT held at SMP Terpadu Nahdhotul Ikhwan Sukatani. Following LBT, his child became eager to take part in organizing subsequent activities. According to him, interactions with seniors and fellow cadres were enjoyable and motivating, encouraging his child to remain involved. He further observed that after joining PII, his child's social interactions widened while still maintaining healthy boundaries. Even when faced with peer interest from the opposite gender, his child maintained distance and upheld Islamic values. In terms of independence, although his child was already fairly independent before joining, PII helped develop greater confidence in speaking and taking initiative. His child often shared inspiring stories about activities, from fatigue due to packed schedules, physical challenges, and teamwork exercises, to symbolic experiences such as walking on burning embers. These stories reflected that character-building in PII goes beyond lectures, extending into habits and mental training that build resilience. He stressed that PII's activities are crucial for today's students, particularly in shaping responsibility, discipline, and leadership. However, he emphasized that a single training is not sufficient; continuous guidance and parental collaboration are necessary to support students in sustaining their involvement.

The reflections from these interviews show that parents have a crucial role in supporting their children's character development through student organizations like PII. Their hopes and observations serve as valuable feedback for the sustainability of the cadre process. By involving parents actively, character development programs can become more effective and bridge the values taught by the organization with those practiced at home. [The text continues with detailed accounts of cadres, instructors, and alumni testimonies, all of which consistently highlight that PII's structured cadre system nurtures leadership, discipline, integrity, and social awareness through a blend of Islamic values, experiential learning, and organizational practice.] In conclusion, Indonesian Islamic Students (PII) plays a strategic role in shaping student leadership through a comprehensive, values-based cadre formation system. Amidst the crisis of role models and limited non-formal character education spaces, PII emerges as an alternative ecosystem that integrates Islamic values, social responsibility, and practical leadership skills for today's students.

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to explore the leadership formation process within the Indonesian Islamic Students (PII) in Bekasi Regency. Data were collected through document analysis, interviews, and direct observations of cadre training programs. The qualitative approach was chosen to capture the meaning and dynamics of cadre development in its natural context, while the descriptive method provides a systematic portrayal of activities, strategies, and their impacts on students' leadership character. Leadership formation within PII is systematically carried out through a tiered cadre development system. At its foundation lies the Leadership Basic Training (LBT), which is designed to equip students with courage, resilience, social awareness, and the ability to manage both personal potential and their surrounding environment. The LBT curriculum covers leadership, communication, self-management, and Islamic student identity, thereby serving as an essential entry point for leadership character building. The work programs of PII Bekasi Regency emphasize that every cadre activity must be directed toward preparing students as future leaders. Its general statement asserts that today's students are the inheritors of tomorrow's civilization; therefore, leadership cultivation must be intentional and continuous. Flagship activities include LBT, Islamic study circles (ta'lim), cadre mentoring, digital literacy workshops, etiquette training, and academic preparation initiatives such as Road to UTBK. The structured system of cadre formation implemented by PII Bekasi represents a concrete response to the nation's urgent need for leaders with integrity, responsibility, and a strong sense of service. PII employs a holistic approach: leadership formation is not confined to classroom learning but extends to real-life organizational practice. Cadres are entrusted with responsibilities as MCs, moderators, event coordinators, and even instructors, reflecting PII's conviction that leadership emerges through direct experience rather than theoretical instruction alone. Field interviews confirm the impact of this system. Local leaders reported that previously passive students gradually transformed into confident individuals capable of managing events and articulating ideas publicly. Active cadres affirmed that PII broadened their perspectives, enhanced their confidence, and cultivated teamwork skills often absent in formal schooling. Alumni testimonies further reinforce this outcome; one alumna, for instance, noted that values such as discipline, honesty, and sincerity, instilled during her years in PII, remain central to her professional life.

PII Bekasi has also demonstrated adaptability to contemporary challenges. Its General Policy Document highlights the integration of digital literacy, social media dynamics, and youth culture into its

cadre programs, signaling a progressive approach that combines traditional Islamic values with modern student needs. The involvement of parents provides further validation. One interviewee, the father of an active cadre, observed that his child, after joining PII, became more socially engaged, self-confident, and disciplined while upholding Islamic values in interactions. He emphasized that while initial training is important, sustained guidance and parental collaboration are essential for long-term character development. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that PII's cadre system fosters not only intellectual capacity but also moral integrity, resilience, and social responsibility. By integrating Islamic values with experiential learning, PII offers a distinctive model of leadership education that responds to the crisis of role models among today's youth and provides an alternative non-formal ecosystem for holistic character formation.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Indonesian Islamic Students (PII) of Bekasi Regency demonstrates that student organizations can function as effective platforms for leadership development. Through a cadre-based system grounded in Islamic values, PII provides students with opportunities for self-discovery, emotional regulation, public speaking, and social responsibility. However, the sustainability of this model depends on continuous mentoring, consistent program implementation, and supportive family and community environments. PII thus offers an alternative leadership education model that bridges the gap between formal schooling and the moral-ethical needs of contemporary youth. Its integration of Islamic values with practical leadership training makes it a valuable case study for student leadership development in Indonesia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks for MAN 1 Bekasi and PII Bekasi for the involvement of the research.

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