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Islamic Green Leadership in Sustainable Pesantren: A Case Study of Ustadz Abu Nida

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to examine the transformation of spiritual values in forming a sustainable Islamic leadership model through the case study of Ustadz Abu Nida. The focus is directed at integrating spirituality, social ethics, and ecological awareness in Islamic boarding school governance to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **Theoretical framework:** This research builds a conceptual framework that synthesizes spirituality, sustainability, and institutional ethics as the core foundation of Islamic Green Leadership. **Literature review:** Previous studies have focused primarily on the moral and ethical aspects of Islamic leadership, with insufficient attention paid to the ecological dimension and long-term institutional sustainability. **Methods:** A qualitative descriptive approach using the figure study method was employed. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation at the Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School, Yogyakarta, and analyzed interactively using source triangulation. **Results:** The study revealed nine distinct dimensions of Islamic Green Leadership, including spiritual foundation, trust (amanah), asceticism (zuhud), civilized firmness, tolerance, and socio-ecological empowerment. **Implications:** Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) can serve as a scalable model for sustainable Islamic education by effectively harmonizing spiritual, social, and ecological missions. **Novelty:** This research offers a novel conceptual model of Islamic Green Leadership, providing an original synthesis between Islamic spirituality, ecological consciousness, and institutional sustainability.

Keywords: islamic green leadership, spiritual values, sustainable islamic boarding school, ustadz abu nida, sdgs

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in Islam is an integral concept that not only emphasizes structural aspects [1], but also contains a spiritual dimension [2], moral, social, and ecological [3]. In the framework of *Caliph fil-Ardh*, humans are seen as leaders on earth who have the responsibility to maintain the balance of life and prevent damage (*Fasād fil-ardh*). This principle shows that true Islamic leadership is inseparable from responsibility for the environment and social welfare [4]. In the context of Islamic educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding schools, the role of leadership is very important in shaping the character of students and the direction of the institution's sustainability [5]. Pesantren not only functions as a center for the transmission of religious knowledge, but also as a center for moral and cultural development and social development [6]. However, in the modern era marked by

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ethical and ecological crises, there is a need for a new leadership model that is able to synergize Islamic spiritual values with the vision of environmental and social sustainability, or known as *Islamic Green Leadership* [7].

Studies on Islamic leadership have been widely conducted by researchers before. Badawi emphasized that Islamic leadership is based on the values of trust, justice, and service to the ummah. In the context of Islamic education [8], Sahin highlights the importance of integrating spiritual values in education policy to strengthen a moral-oriented organizational culture [9]. Meanwhile, Mahsusi proposes a reformulation of salaf leadership values to answer the challenges of modernity in pesantren [10]. The Zakariyah study also emphasizes that leaders who combine the vision of Islam with a participatory approach can create educational institutions that are adaptive and resilient [11]. However, the majority of the studies still focus on normative aspects and have not specifically examined the relationship between Islamic leadership and environmental sustainability, especially in the context of pesantren [12]. In fact, pesantren, as an institution rooted in Islamic values, has great potential to become a model *Green Institution* that contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [13].

This research gap encourages the need for an empirical study of Islamic leadership practices that are able to integrate spirituality, social ethics, and ecological awareness in the pesantren governance system. This research highlights the figure of Ustadz Chomsaha Sofwan, also known as Ustadz Abu Nida, a da'wah figure and educator who has led and developed the At-Turots Al-Islamy Council Foundation in Yogyakarta. His leadership is interesting to study because it combines Islamic spiritual values, simplicity of life, social service ethos, and ecological vision in the management of educational and social institutions. Through this figure, it can be traced how spiritual values are transformed into sustainability-oriented leadership practices, or *Islamic Green Leadership*, in accordance with the spirit of the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) [14].

Based on this background, the formulation of the problem in this study is focused on the main question: how is the transformation of spiritual values manifested in the Islamic leadership practice of Ustadz Abu Nida, and to what extent do these values contribute to the realization of sustainable Islamic boarding schools according to the principles of *Islamic Green Leadership* and the SDGs? The purpose of this study is to analyze in depth the dimensions of sustainability-oriented Islamic leadership applied by Ustadz Abu Nida, as well as to develop a conceptual model of Islamic green leadership that can be used as a reference for Islamic boarding schools in managing education and social services based on Islamic spiritual values.

Theoretically, this research rests on three main frameworks. First, Spiritual Leadership Theory, which emphasizes the *Calling* (sense of the call to serve) and *Membership* (sense of spiritual attachment to the community) as the basis of worship-oriented and blessing-oriented leadership [15]. Second, Green Leadership Theory views leaders as agents of ecological change that promote resource efficiency and environmental sustainability [16]. Third, the framework of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah, which affirms that all human actions must be directed to realize the benefits (*Maslahah*) and prevent damage (*Mafsadah*), including environmental conservation (*hifz al-bi'ah*). The integration of these three frameworks results in a concept of *Islamic Green Leadership*, which is a leadership model that balances spirituality, morality, and ecological responsibility [17],[18].

Based on these theories, this research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution. Theoretically, this research expands the study of Islamic leadership by adding the dimension of environmental sustainability as part of the implementation of spiritual values. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to be an inspiration for leaders of

Islamic institutions in developing holistic leadership strategies—based on spiritual values, oriented towards social welfare, and concerned about environmental sustainability. Thus, pesantren, as Islamic educational institutions, not only function as a center for the transmission of religious knowledge, but also as an agent of social and ecological transformation that supports the achievement of the *Sustainable Development Goals* from an Islamic perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Islamic leadership has undergone significant development in the last two decades, along with the increasing attention to moral and spiritual values in organizational governance. Leadership in Islam is essentially understood as a mandate (*Trusteeship*) which must be carried out with responsibility before Allah SWT [19]. Leaders in the Islamic perspective not only function as administrative decision-makers, but also as *Murabbi* (educators) and *Qudwah* (moral example) for their community. This makes Islamic leadership an ethical and spiritual model that emphasizes a balance between worldly duties and ukhrawi responsibilities. In contrast to conventional managerial approaches, Islamic leadership emphasizes the integration of the values of faith, example, justice, and service [20].

In the context of Islamic education, especially Islamic boarding schools, various studies highlight that the leadership of kiai or ustadz is the main pillar of institutional sustainability. The leadership model of pesantren is not only based on formal authority, but also on moral and spiritual legitimacy that grows from sincerity and example [21]. A study by Misdah shows that the integration of spiritual values in Islamic education policies can strengthen organizational culture that is oriented towards morals and character formation [22]. Meanwhile, Rusydi emphasized the need to reformulate salafiyah leadership values to adapt to the challenges of the digital era and modernity, without abandoning the principles of monotheism and trust. Thus, the literature on pesantren leadership confirms that spirituality is a key element that cannot be separated from the effectiveness of the leadership of religious institutions [23].

Studies on Spiritual Leadership Theory introduced by Fry and Egel provide a conceptual framework relevant to Islamic leadership. This theory emphasizes two main dimensions—*Calling* (sense of the call to serve) and *Membership* (a sense of belonging and spiritual attachment to the community). In the context of Islam, these two dimensions are reflected in the concepts of *sincerity* and *Ukhuwah Islamiyah*. A spiritual leader is an individual who not only directs rationally, but also awakens existential meaning in his followers. Egel and Fry explain that spiritual leadership encourages spiritual well-being and sustainable intrinsic motivation in the workplace. This is in line with the leadership principles of the Prophet PBUH, which instill the meaning of worship in every leadership action [24], [25]. Thus, spiritual leadership in Islam is not just a motivational approach, but an instrument of moral transformation that forms a blessing-based organization (*Barakah-based organization*).

Meanwhile, the theory of Green Leadership evolves from the paradigm of *Sustainable Leadership* and *Ecological Management*, which emphasizes leaders' responsibility for environmental and social sustainability. According to Ferdig and Zhong, green leaders are individuals who are committed to environmental conservation, resource efficiency, and community empowerment through sustainable policies. This type of leader is not only oriented to the profitability of the institution, but also to the *planet* (environment) and *the community* (Social Welfare) [26]. In the context of religious institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, the concept of green leadership has strong relevance because Islamic teachings themselves emphasize the principle of balance (*Mizān*) and prohibition against environmental damage (*Fasād fil-ardh*) as stated in QS. Al-A'raf: 56 [27]. Thus, the integration of Islamic values

and ecological principles gives birth to a paradigm of *Islamic Green Leadership*, namely leadership that is oriented towards worship, the benefit of the people, and the preservation of the earth as a form of servitude to Allah SWT.

In addition, the Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah provides a philosophical basis for the practice of sustainable leadership in Islam. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that all human policies and actions must be directed to maintain five main things: religion (*Dīn*), soul (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), descendants (*NASL*), and property (*Sāo Paulo*). In the modern context, some contemporary scholars such as Kamali and Auda add a dimension, *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* (environmental conservation), as a new maqāsid relevant to global ecological issues [28]. Therefore, true Islamic leadership must place environmental preservation and social welfare as an integral part of its religious responsibility. This approach expands the meaning of *Maslahah* not only for humans, but also for all of God's creatures.

Literature on Management and leadership of Islamic boarding schools also shows that the institution has great potential to become a community-based sustainability model. A study by Fathurrahman highlights that modern Islamic boarding schools are beginning to integrate environmental aspects in their education systems, such as waste management, greening, and energy independence [29]. However, the implementation of green values in Islamic boarding schools still depends on leaders who have a strong ecological and spiritual vision. This shows the importance of the role of *Islamic leaders* who not only master religious science but also understand contemporary social and ecological dynamics [30].

The integration of the concepts of Islamic leadership, spiritual leadership, and green leadership resulted in a new conceptual framework called *Islamic Green Leadership*. This model emphasizes three main pillars: (1) spirituality as a source of moral and motivation for leadership, (2) ecological ethics as a form of responsibility for the environment, and (3) participatory governance as a mechanism for social sustainability. In this context, the study of Ustadz Abu Nida's leadership is significant because it represents the real practice of the integration of the three pillars in Islamic boarding schools. His leadership reflects a *servant leadership pattern* that is combined with an *eco-centric vision*, where devotion to the people and responsibility for nature are an inseparable part of worship.

From the overall literature review, it can be concluded that although Islamic leadership and sustainability theories have developed rapidly, there is still little research that examines the empirical practice of pesantren leaders that combine spirituality, social ethics, and ecological awareness in one complete leadership system. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining in depth the practice of *Islamic Green Leadership of Ustadz Abu Nida* as a real representation of sustainable spiritual leadership in the pesantren environment, which is not only oriented to religious education, but also to community development and environmental conservation [31], [32].

METHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive qualitative study with a biographical and leadership study approach that focuses on the figure of Ustadz Chomsaha Sofwan, also known as Ustadz Abu Nida, as the main subject of the research. This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal in depth the process of transformation of spiritual values in Islamic leadership practices, as well as how these values are manifested in the management system of sustainability-based pesantren institutions (*green pesantren*). This research is directed to build a conceptual understanding of Islamic Green Leadership, which is a leadership model that integrates spirituality, social ethics, and ecological awareness that are relevant to the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [33], [34].

The research was carried out at the Islamic Boarding School Bin Baz (ICBB), Piyungan, Bantul, Yogyakarta, under the auspices of the At-Turots Al-Islam Council Foundation. This location was chosen because it is an institution that reflects the implementation of Islamic spiritual values in the governance of educational and social institutions that are oriented towards sustainability. The research was carried out during the period from May to August 2025. The research population includes all elements of leadership and management of Islamic boarding schools, including foundation administrators, accompanying ustadz, and senior students. From this population, a number of informants were selected purposively, taking into consideration their direct involvement in leadership activities and institutional development. The main subject of the study was Ustadz Abu Nida, while the supporting informants included three accompanying ustadz, two senior students, and two managers of social and educational institutions under the At-Turots Al-Islam Council Foundation [35], [36].

The research data were collected through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. The interview was conducted directly with Ustadz Abu Nida to explore his values, vision, and leadership strategy, as well as with supporting informants to obtain triangulated data on the implementation of spiritual values and sustainability principles in Islamic boarding schools. Observations were carried out in a participatory manner within the ICBB Islamic Boarding School to observe daily activities, communication patterns, institutional governance, and student behavior that reflect green leadership values. Meanwhile, the documentation study was carried out by examining institutional archives, pesantren profile books, reports on da'wah and social activities, as well as administrative data of educational and health institutions under the foundation. Table 1 summarizes the data sources and their analytical roles in this qualitative study.

Table 1. Data Sources and Analytical Roles

Data source	Participants or material	Analytical role
Main interview	Ustadz Abu Nida	Explore spiritual values, leadership vision, and decision-making.
Supporting interviews	Three accompanying ustadz; two senior students; two institutional managers	Compare accounts of leadership practices and institutional development.
Participatory observations	Daily activities, communication, governance, and student behavior at ICBB	Examine how leadership values are expressed in everyday practice.
Documentation	Institutional archives, profile books, activity reports, and administrative records	Provide institutional context and complement interviews and observations.

Source: Authors' summary of the research design and data collection described in the methodology.

The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from interviews and direct observations in the field, while secondary data were obtained from official documents of the Islamic boarding school, internal publications of the foundation, and supporting literature related to Islamic leadership, *green leadership*, and the concept of *sustainable Islamic boarding schools*. The collected data were then analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman, which included three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is carried out by selecting relevant and significant information with a focus on the research. The presentation of data is carried out narratively and thematically, including direct quotes from the

resource persons to maintain the authenticity of the meaning, while the drawing of conclusions is carried out by interpreting the patterns of spiritual and ecological values in the leadership of Ustadz Abu Nida and linking them with the theoretical framework of *Islamic Green Leadership* and SDGs.

To ensure the validity and validity of the data, this study uses source and method triangulation techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, member checking is carried out by reconfirming the researcher's interpretation with the main speaker, as well as trail audits to maintain transparency and traceability of the entire research process. The analytical benchmarks used include four main aspects: the dimensions of spirituality and moral exemplarity, ecological ethics and social responsibility, participatory governance, and contribution to sustainable development (SDGs). With the design of this method, the research is expected to be able to provide a deep understanding of how Islamic spiritual values are transformed into sustainable leadership models, as well as how the practice of *Islamic Green Leadership* exemplified by Ustadz Abu Nida can be used as inspiration for the development of independent, empowered, and environmentally friendly Islamic boarding schools [37], [38].

Figure 1 presents the relationship between the data sources, interactive analysis, and credibility checks used in the study.

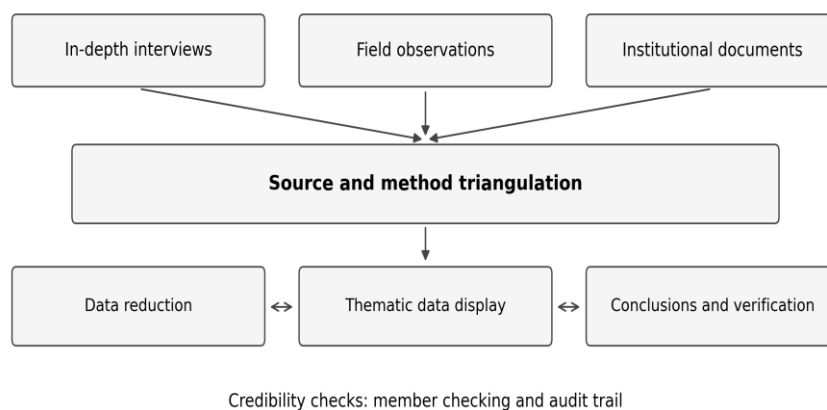


Figure 1. Data collection and interactive qualitative analysis

Source: Authors' visualization of the methodology described in this study

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile and Leadership of Ustadz Abu Nida

The main resource person in this study is Ustadz Chomsaha Sofwan, better known as Ustadz Abu Nida, a da'wah figure and educator who was born in Lamongan, East Java, in 1954 [39]. He has a very extensive educational background and da'wah experience. His basic religious education was completed at PGA Muhammadiyah Karangasem. After that, he deepened his da'wah knowledge by attending a special course at the Darul Falah Islamic Boarding School, Bogor, organized by the Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (DDII) as a program to produce dai who are ready to be sent to transmigration areas. After completing the training, he was assigned to the interior of West Kalimantan to preach and serve in the community.

This service then paved the way for him to continue his studies to a higher level. On the direct recommendation of the national figure Muhammad Natsir, he had the opportunity to study at Imam Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud University, Saudi Arabia. The experience of studying abroad further broadens the horizon and deepens religious understanding, which would later

become the main provision in his da'wah and leadership work in the country. After returning from Saudi Arabia, Ustadz Abu Nida settled in Yogyakarta and started da'wah among students through halaqah and small dauroh. In 1993, together with several dai, he founded the At-Turots Al-Islam Council Foundation. The foundation now houses various institutions, including:

- a. Jamilurrahman Islamic Boarding School, Banguntapan, Bantul.
- b. Islamic Boarding School Bin Baz Islamic Centre (ICBB), Piyungan, Bantul.
- c. ICBB Islamic boarding school branches in various regions in Indonesia.
- d. Madani College of Health Sciences (STIKES) / Madani University Yogyakarta.
- e. Tarbiyah Madani High School Yogyakarta.
- f. At-Turots Hospital in Seyegan, Sleman.
- g. At-Turots Primary Clinic in Piyungan, Bantul.
- h. Atturots Peduli Umat (APU).

With more than four decades of experience in the world of da'wah and education, Ustadz Abu Nida is a relevant resource person to explore the concept of leadership and communication in the context of pesantren [\[40\]](#).

The Beginning of the Development of the Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School

This interview took place at the Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School, Piyungan, Bantul. The atmosphere of the pesantren seemed calm, with the activities of the students continuing even though it was quite crowded that afternoon. Ustadz Abu Nida welcomed us simply, but his authority and firmness were felt from the beginning of the meeting. He sat relaxed, but the look in his eyes showed the character of an experienced leader.

When asked about the beginning of his leadership, he began to tell stories in a calm but meaningful tone, recounting the long journey of this cottage that could not be separated from various challenges. He explained that the cottage was not immediately as big as it is now, but was pioneered with patience and transfer. "This cottage was established in the 1990s. Initially, we preached in Jogja, filled out studies at UGM, then lived in Sedan, only contracting," he said while remembering the early days of da'wah, which were limited. Then, along with the development of da'wah, they moved to Jamil in the early 2000s. "The Bin Baz Islamic Center was only opened in 2001; it was originally just Ma'had Tahfidz without a name. It was only in 2003 that it became bigger than it was until now," he added. This journey shows that the success of pesantren is not an instant result, but comes through long stages with pioneers full of sacrifices.

The Meaning of Leadership as Trust and Struggle

In interpreting leadership, Ustadz Abu Nida emphasized that he had never studied management formally. However, the da'wah forging that he underwent provided a much more meaningful lesson. He admitted that he received direct leadership guidance from the Jakarta Da'wah Council, especially the direction of Muhammad Natsir. *"The leader must be disciplined and sincere without selflessness. If you are looking for money, it will not be big. You can't be disappointed,"* he said with a faint smile, as if confirming that true leadership is not a matter of materiality. He added, *"The leader must have a fighting spirit. I have not had a house for 35 years, because what we raised is da'wah,"* he said, emphasizing his life principles. From this, it is clear that Ustadz Abu Nida puts da'wah and the interests of the ummah far above personal interests.

Assertiveness and Educational Communication

When asked how he communicates in leading a large hut with thousands of students, Ustadz Abu Nida admitted that his communication style is firm, sometimes even considered

harsh. However, that assertiveness is not born without a purpose. "Communication must be firm. There was once a musyrif who was punished for finishing the prayer directly in the room, the reason for taking a book, but not returning for study. I gathered them, told them to go home with their luggage. I don't want to raise lazy people," he said straightforwardly. Nevertheless, he explained that this kind of firmness is not without a spiritual basis. According to him, a leader must have a strong relationship with Allah so that his decisions remain directed. "The leader must pray at night and ask for Allah's guidance. The Prophet, as a leader, is obliged to perform *tahajjud*, so we must do the same," he said, emphasizing the importance of the spiritual dimension in leadership.

Assertiveness and Empathy in a Communication Crisis

In facing the communication crisis situation, Ustadz Abu Nida emphasized the importance of firmness as part of leadership responsibility. However, he also set a firm limit to the misunderstanding that often occurs, namely equating assertiveness with hardness of heart. For him, a leader is required to be able to be decisive in making decisions and setting directions, especially when facing difficult conditions that require clarity and certainty of action. However, this firmness must not be separated from the values of affection, tenderness, and sincerity of intention. In his interview, Ustadz Abu Nida stated that: *"Firmness is necessary, but it does not mean harshness without affection. The leader must be firm, but his heart is gentle, remain faithful, and ask for God's guidance."* This statement shows that in the paradigm of Islamic leadership, firmness is not just authoritative, but must be framed with manners and spirituality.

The principle reflects a holistic approach to leadership, in which rational, emotional, and spiritual aspects interact with each other in a balanced manner. Assertiveness is positioned not as a form of dominance, but as a way to maintain stability, straighten the direction of the organization, and protect true values. Thus, firmness accompanied by meekness and dependence on Allah's guidance is the key to creating healthy communication and effective leadership, especially in the context of pesantren-based educational institutions.

Principles of Decision Making and Tolerance Limits

In the decision-making process in the pesantren environment, Ustadz Abu Nida emphasized that the main foundation that must be upheld is the development of the faith and morals of students, combined with the socialization of structured programs. He said that every boarding school policy must support the formation of the personality of students who are solid in their beliefs and noble in behavior. "Students must first form their personalities: their beliefs are salaf, their morals are good," he said with full confidence.

Furthermore, Ustadz Abu Nida highlighted the importance of tolerance in the Islamic educational environment, but with clear limits so as not to violate the basic principles of sharia. He said, "Tolerance is allowed, but aqidah cannot collapse. And so the priest in the church has to be able to do it. If you read bismillah in Muhammadiyah, you don't know jahar." This statement reflects an inclusive but principled approach to leadership. For him, a tolerant attitude does not mean obscuring the identity of aqidah, but respecting diversity within the limits set by Islamic law. Thus, the leadership principles that he applies are not only administrative, but also strongly based on the values of Islamic faith and manners. This is an important foothold in creating a harmonious, disciplined, but open educational environment within the limits of sharia [\[41\]](#), [\[42\]](#).

The Truth of Decision from Intention and Blessing

In an in-depth interview, Ustadz Abu Nida gave a distinctive and reflective view of the principle of accuracy in decision-making. According to him, leadership in the context of pesantren is not solely based on modern managerial theories, but rests on the principle of straight manhaj and high spiritual sensitivity to Islamic law. He emphasized, "The truth is

that we have manhaj. If it is a policy, as long as we do not violate the sharia. Knowing whether we broke it or not was after the incident." This statement emphasizes that in practice, leaders need to lean on sharia values, but still be aware of human limitations in estimating policy results in absolute terms. Furthermore, he emphasized that in the decision-making process, it is important for a leader not only to rely on rational logic, but also to strengthen his spiritual dimension. "As leaders, we have to pray a lot, dhikr... Taking decisions is like fitrah," he said. This means that an ideal leader, according to him, is a figure who is united with the values of monotheism, submits to the will of Allah, and makes prayer and dhikr the inner foundation in every important decision.

He also added that although he did not develop an academic leadership theory, the essence of the theory he adhered to was very clear: every problem that arises, if it is related to the benefit and goodness of the people, must be immediately followed up and helped. In his words: "When it comes to theory, ustadz has no theory. But once you understand, our theory is: there is a problem, for the sake of good, it must be helped." This shows that the leadership he runs is solution-oriented, responsive, and responsive to the needs of the people. Finally, he closed with a core principle that underpins all decision-making: "Our leadership runs upward, which is God." In other words, all the responsibilities and choices made by a leader must not only be accountable in the world, but also before God. This concept is deeply rooted in Islamic spiritual values, which make leadership a form of divine mandate, not just an administrative position.

Alignment of Traditional and Modern Leadership in Sharia Frameworks

Ustadz Abu Nida emphasized that the main key lies in consistency with the principles of sharia. He stated that changes in time and social context do not necessarily require a change in basic values in leadership, especially in the context of Islamic institutions such as Islamic boarding schools. "Ustadz has never studied management. Islam is actually not much different. Ustadz from then until now is still the same," he said. This statement reflects a strong belief that the core values in Islamic leadership are consistent and independent of modern management trends. Firmness in leadership is maintained, but with a gentle and proportionate approach according to the needs of the times.

In practice, Ustadz Abu Nida distinguishes between technical changes and principles that should not be changed. According to him, "In idaroh (management), there is written management, and there is policy management." Written management can adapt to the administrative needs of modern times, such as documentation and reporting systems, while policy management still refers to the values of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Leaders Needed by Today's Ummah

According to Ustadz Abu Nida, the ideal leader needed by the ummah today is a figure who not only has high responsibility, but is also able to establish harmonious communication with all elements he leads. In his view, leadership is not enough with vision and assertiveness, but must also be supported by the ability to build strong relationships both with superiors (vertical communication) and with subordinates (horizontal communication). He said, "Leaders today must be brave and responsible, communicative, able to speak Arabic, have good manners, and respect their parents. The success of the leader is good communication upwards; downwards is also good. Leaders must love their subordinates and be loved by them." This statement emphasizes that the aspects of responsibility and communication skills are important indicators of effective leadership, especially in the context of pesantren education that involves intense interpersonal relationships.

Combining Top-down and Participatory Communication

In the context of leadership communication, Ustadz Abu Nida applies a flexible and situational approach. He is not fixated on one particular communication pattern, but rather combines a top-down approach (one-way communication from leader to subordinate) and participatory (two-way communication that opens up a room for deliberation). According to him, the communication style must be adjusted to the context and type of decision taken. He emphasized, *"There is a time when top-down is for basic rules that must not be violated. But there is also discussion. If the refusal shows that you are not loyal, then you must take action,"* he said. This statement reflects the principle of balance between firmness in maintaining the core values and rules of the institution and openness to input from team members or students.

Ustadz Abu Nida's Message to the Young Generation of Prospective Leaders

As a closing in the interview session, Ustadz Abu Nida conveyed a message full of meaning and motivation for the younger generation, especially those who will take on the role of leaders in the future. In a tone full of enthusiasm and sincerity, he advised, "You must have high ideals. Ready to lead, also ready to serve. Sincerely, I want to work in front and behind. We must continue to learn and bring progress to the people. The leader must be ready for the challenges of the times but still maintain the values of Islam."

The message reflects his hope that future leaders will not only have ambition, but also mental, spiritual, and humble readiness. Qualities such as sincerity, willingness to learn and contribute in various roles, as well as the ability to respond to the challenges of the times without sacrificing Islamic principles, are the main foundations for building solid and sustainable leadership. This shows that, in his perspective, leadership is not just about position, but about great responsibilities that must be carried out with vision, values, and sincere devotion. This series of interviews clearly illustrates that for Ustadz Abu Nida, leadership is a heavy but noble mandate, which requires sincerity, educational firmness, constructive communication skills, and a balance between the values of pesantren traditions and the demands of modernity.

The Dimensions of Islamic Green Leadership in the Leadership of Ustadz Abu Nida

Spiritual Foundations as a Direction of Green Leadership

Ustadz Abu Nida's leadership was built on a solid spiritual foundation. Every strategic decision is preceded by night worship, dhikr, and istikharah. Spirituality is not only a ritual, but functions as a *governing principle* in policy-making. This is in line with Fry and Egel's (2017) Spiritual Leadership theory, which emphasizes the importance of *calling* and *membership*—the sense of being called to serve and the awareness of being part of something bigger than oneself.

In the framework of Islam, this principle is reflected in the concept of *the caliph fil ardh* (QS. Al-Baqarah: 30), where humans are entrusted to preserve the earth and uphold justice. Ustadz Abu Nida's leadership pattern shows how spirituality is the foundation of environmental and managerial ethics. By making a vertical relationship with Allah as a source of integrity, he upholds the principles of accountability and sustainability in the management of Islamic boarding schools. This spiritual foundation is aligned with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), which emphasizes governance based on integrity and justice. Green Leadership in the Islamic framework leads leaders to build institutions that are sustainable, free from deviations, and oriented towards social and ecological benefits [43], [44].

The Value of Trust and Zuhud as Ecological Ethics

The value of trust and zuhud are the two main dimensions in the character of Green Leadership of Ustadz Abu Nida. Amanah reflects moral responsibility towards the ummah and the environment, while zuhud describes an attitude away from exploitative materialism. He declared, "*I have not had a house for 35 years, because what we raised is da'wah*"—this expression confirms that true leaders are service-oriented, not personal luxuries. In Nasr's perspective, true ecological consciousness is born from a spiritual consciousness that understands nature as a manifestation of God. The simple and resource-efficient lifestyle exemplified by Abu Nida gave birth to an organizational culture that was efficient, anti-waste, and useful. This practice supports SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). This means that Islamic spiritual values can be translated into concrete ecological behavior in pesantren life.

Civilized and Educational Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a strong characteristic in the practice of Green Leadership of Ustadz Abu Nida, but it is not authoritarian. He practiced what is called *firmness with compassion*—*firmness* based on love and moral responsibility. In the interview, he asserted that a leader "must be disciplined and sincere without selflessness." This reflects the Servant Leadership approach developed by Greenleaf, but combined with the spirit of *Islamic tarbiyah*, where firmness functions as a tool of moral and social education. This concept is relevant to the Green Leadership Framework by Zhong, which emphasizes the importance of a balance between moral assertiveness and ecological concern. Civilized assertiveness creates the organizational stability needed to implement eco-friendly policies and disciplined governance—a tangible contribution to SDG 16.

Guided Tolerance and Social-Ecological Harmony

Green Leadership in the context of Islam emphasizes the balance between principle and tolerance. Ustadz Abu Nida stated, "*Tolerance is allowed, but aqidah must not collapse.*" This principle is in line with Islamic Eco-Theology, which sees social and ecological harmony as the fruit of monotheism: the realization that all creation is interconnected in a system of divine balance. With this guided tolerance approach, pesantren become a harmonious and inclusive social space without losing sharia identity. This social openness strengthens the collective participation of students and the community in socio-ecological activities such as greening, waste management, and environmental cleanliness. This approach supports SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by building social harmony and ecological solidarity in the pesantren environment.

Top-Down and Participatory Communication

Ustadz Abu Nida's leadership showed the ability to integrate two main communication styles: *directive* for matters of principle, and *participatory* for managerial and social affairs. This approach reflects the value of *shura* (deliberation), which is the foundation of the Qur'an (QS. Ash-Shura: 38). In the context of Green Leadership, participatory communication is essential to ensure that the implementation of green policies is effective. When all parties feel heard and valued, commitment to environmental programs increases naturally. This model also reflects the theory of Transformational Leadership a leader who is able to inspire, engage, and empower his subordinates. From a sustainable development perspective, this supports SDG 16 (Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals) because it creates transparent and participatory collaborative governance.

Solutive and Responsive Ethos to the Benefit of the Ummah

In many statements, Ustadz Abu Nida rejected the formality of conventional management theory and emphasized more on *the problem-solving ethos*. "If there is a problem and it is for good, it must be helped," he said. This principle contains *the value of maslahah*, which is the core of Maqashid Syariah. Within the framework of Green Leadership, this responsive attitude forms an organizational culture that is adaptive to social and ecological changes. Pesantren is not only a center for religious education, but also a center for social and environmental empowerment. This solution-oriented ethos strengthens SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by making religious institutions agents of social transformation.

Synthesis of Tradition and Modernity in the Sharia Framework

Ustadz Abu Nida emphasized that management modernization must not erase sharia values. He distinguishes between *written* management (procedural) and *policy* management (based on sharia). This approach reflects the theory of Adaptive Islamic Management, which is the ability to balance modern efficiency with Islamic spiritual principles. In the context of Green Leadership, this synthesis produces an efficient and ethical governance system. Islamic boarding schools are a model of *eco-governance*—combining a modern administrative system with moral awareness and spiritual sustainability. This model supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Strong Institutions) because it produces an education system that is adaptive, transparent, and rooted in Islamic values.

Social-Ecological Empowerment through Institutional Networks

The network of institutions developed by Ustadz Abu Nida—such as STIKES Madani, At-Turots Hospital, and APU social institutions—shows a concrete form of Green Leadership that expands the social and ecological impact of da'wah. This concept describes *Islamic social sustainability* as explained by Furqani (2021): social welfare based on the values of worship and the responsibility of the caliph. The integration of educational, health, and social institutions strengthens the role of pesantren as *a community-based ecosystem*, not just a religious institution. This program supports SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by improving people's livelihoods and strengthening social structures based on Islamic values.

Formation of Young Leaders with a Green Soul

Ustadz Abu Nida closed the interview with a message for the younger generation: "*Ready to lead, also ready to lead.*" This message reflects the vision of Long-term Green Leadership to produce a cadre of young leaders who are moral, knowledgeable, and oriented towards the benefit of the environment. The process of regeneration of students in Islamic boarding schools is based on the values of *sincerity, responsibility, and service*. This is in line with the theory of Transformational and Spiritual Leadership, where leaders not only motivate subordinates, but also cultivate moral and ecological awareness. Within the framework of the SDGs, the formation of prophetic young leaders supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Strong Institutions) by preparing a generation of leaders who have environmental, social, and spiritual awareness.

Integrative Analysis of Islamic Green Leadership and Its Contribution to the SDGs

Table 2 brings together the nine leadership dimensions, their practical expressions, theoretical interpretations, and relevance to the SDGs.

Table 2. Integrative Analysis of Ustadz Abu Nida's Islamic Green Leadership

Green Leadership Dimension	Spiritual and Social Values	Practice and Implementation	Supporting Theory Framework	Relevance to the SDGs
Spiritual Foundations	Faith, trust, night worship	Prayer and dhikr as the basis for decisions	Fry & Egel <i>Spiritual Leadership Theory</i>	SDG 16 – Institutions of integrity and fairness
Amanah and Zuhud	Anti-materialism, social responsibility	Energy-efficient, simple, efficient living	Nasr <i>Religion and Nature</i>	SDG 12 & SDG 13 – Responsible consumption, Climate action
Civilized Assertiveness	Discipline, manners, moral responsibility	Firm yet gentle and educational	Zhong <i>Green Leadership Framework</i>	SDG 16 – Peace and Justice
Guided Tolerance	Inclusive yet principled	Respecting the diversity of fiqhiyah	Sardar <i>Islamic Eco-Theology</i>	SDGs 10 & 11 – Social justice and sustainable communities
Participatory Communication	Deliberation, togetherness	A combination of top-down and shura	Bass & Riggio <i>Transformational Leadership</i>	SDG 16 & 17 – Institutional collaboration
Solution-Maslahat Ethos	Social empathy, responsiveness	Quick decisions based on benefits	Al-Ghazali <i>Maqashid Syariah</i>	SDGs 1 & 11 – Social empowerment and sustainable cities
Synthesis of Tradition–Modernity	Sharia, innovation, efficiency	Integration of modern SOPs and Islamic values	Alharbi <i>Adaptive Islamic Management</i>	SDGs 4 & 16 – Education and strong governance
Socio-Ecological Empowerment	Rahmah, the service of the ummah	Establishment of STIKES, RS, and social institutions	Furqani <i>Islamic Social Sustainability</i>	SDGs 3, 8, 11 – Health, decent work, sustainable communities
Regeneration of Young Leaders	Sincerity, responsibility, knowledge	Character education of students is environmentally oriented	Egel & Fry <i>Spiritual Leadership</i>	SDGs 4 & 16 – Education and strong institutions

Source: Authors' synthesis of the findings and theoretical discussion. SDG links indicate conceptual relevance.

The Islamic Green Leadership model run by Ustadz Abu Nida shows that Islamic spirituality can be a driving force for a sustainable leadership system. Theoretically, this

model expands the understanding of Islamic leadership by integrating three major frameworks: spiritual leadership, eco-governance, and sharia maqashid.

In practical terms, this model proves that pesantren can function as agents of sustainable development through the integration of educational, social, and environmental dimensions. The values of faith and manners are internalized into an effective, disciplined, and ecologically insightful governance system. Thus, pesantren are not only religious educational institutions, but also Islamic-based sustainable social ecosystem models that support the achievement of the SDGs from a moral and spiritual perspective.

Figure 2 synthesizes the nine dimensions into a conceptual model connecting the theoretical foundations of Islamic Green Leadership with the spiritual, social, and ecological orientation of pesantren sustainability. The arrows represent the analytical relationships proposed in this qualitative study.

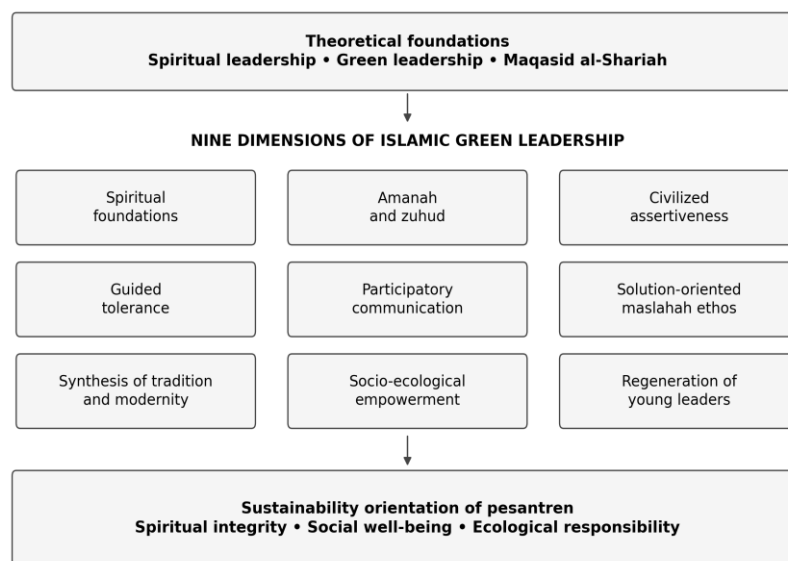


Figure 2. Conceptual Synthesis of Islamic Green Leadership

Source: Authors' synthesis of the nine leadership dimensions discussed in this study

The conceptual synthesis of Islamic Green Leadership integrates Islamic spiritual values with environmental sustainability principles across nine key leadership dimensions. This framework positions a leader as a vicegerent (khalifah) on earth who holds a sacred trust (amanah) to maintain ecological balance (mizan) and realize public interest (maslahah). This leadership grounds all ecological policies in monotheism (tawhid), social justice, and deep environmental consciousness. These nine dimensions complement one another to guide organizational strategic decisions, foster eco-friendly innovation, and strengthen natural resource governance ethics. Ultimately, this synthesis presents a transformative leadership model focused not merely on organizational performance and efficiency, but on a sustainable moral commitment to prevent environmental degradation for future generations.

Analysis

This research establishes a pivotal framework for Islamic Green Leadership by examining how spiritual values, ecological ethics, and institutional governance converge within traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Addressing a significant literature gap—where traditional Islamic leadership studies often neglect environmental dimensions—the authors synthesize Spiritual Leadership Theory, Green Leadership Theory, and Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, explicitly incorporating environmental preservation (ḥifẓ al-biʿah) into institutional governance models.

Through a comprehensive qualitative figure study of Ustadz Abu Nida at Islamic Center Bin Baz in Yogyakarta, the investigation identifies nine distinct dimensions of eco-spiritual leadership. The findings demonstrate that leadership firmly rooted in trust (*amanah*), personal asceticism (*zuhud*), and profound spiritual devotion (*tahajjud* and *dhikr*) seamlessly coexists with decisive organizational management and socio-ecological empowerment. Ustadz Abu Nida's vision operationalizes selflessness and service, effectively transforming religious authority into a dynamic catalyst for institutional self-reliance, community healthcare networks, and broader environmental stewardship.

Ultimately, this study offers a compelling academic model for aligning traditional faith-based education with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By illustrating how *pesantren* can evolve beyond basic religious instruction into sustainable green institutions, the research provides both vital theoretical advancement and practical benchmarks for contemporary religious leaders seeking to address urgent global ecological crises while upholding authentic Islamic principles.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Ustadz Abu Nida's leadership reflects the form of *Islamic Green Leadership*, which is based on Islamic spiritual values and oriented towards the sustainability of Islamic boarding schools. The values of faith, trust, *zuhud*, civilized firmness, and participatory communication are the basis for the formation of a leadership system that not only fosters personal integrity but also directs *pesantren* to efficient, ethical, and environmentally friendly governance. The results of the analysis show that spirituality is not only an aspect of individual worship, but also a managerial principle that governs decision-making, institutional development, and socio-ecological empowerment in the context of Islamic boarding schools. The Islamic Green Leadership *model* resulting from this research expands the concept of Islamic leadership by emphasizing the integration of spiritual leadership, eco-governance, and the values of *maqashid sharia* as a conceptual foundation. These findings have implications for the need to strengthen the leadership paradigm of Islamic education that places spirituality as a source of ecological and social ethics, so that *pesantren* can play a role as a center for sustainable development (*sustainable Islamic ecosystem*) in line with the values of the SDGs.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the preparation of this article, starting from the formulation of ideas, literature review, field data collection, analysis, to manuscript writing. Some writers act as coordinators, team members, funders, article translators, and final editors. All authors have read and approved the final text of this article.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in the writing, content, or publication process of this article.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

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