

## Teacher's Perspective on the Management Team at the Islamic Boarding School

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#### ABSTRACT

The background of the research arises from the need for pesantren institutions to build an effective educational governance system thru the role of institution managers who can direct program implementation. This is because the policy-making process in many educational institutions is still dominated by the main leadership, leaving little room for educators to engage in management functions and institutional decision-making. Teachers' assessments of the management of the pesantren influence the work atmosphere and discipline, so this research examines teachers' opinions on the tasks and composition of the management team, then reviews the communication process, decision-making factors that affect teachers' views, and their impact on the pesantren environment. Thru interviews, observations, and documentation, the researcher collected data from the principal, vice principal, administrative staff, and teachers at the Al-Kautsar Al-Akbar Modern Islamic Boarding School. A qualitative phenomenological approach was chosen to understand the experiences and views of teachers regarding the management of the boarding school, and the findings were analyzed to identify patterns emerging from each piece of information obtained. The research results show that the pesantren already has a fairly organized division of management tasks, although some decisions are still largely determined by the leadership. Meanwhile, the communication relationship between the managers and teachers is open, both thru meetings and digital media. Decision-making is carried out thru deliberation, although teachers more often provide suggestions. The way teachers view management is influenced by work relationships, communication patterns, pesantren culture, and their involvement in management. Additionally, the positive views of the teachers contribute to a comfortable work atmosphere, enhance discipline, and foster responsibility and professionalism in the pesantren.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The success of educational institutions is not only determined by the principal as the main leader but is also influenced by the management team's ability to organize and execute all educational activities. Meanwhile, the implementation of participatory management in modern education provides broader opportunities for teachers to engage in organizational communication, decision-making, and program evaluation, thereby creating a better work atmosphere, enhancing discipline, and strengthening the professionalism of teachers both in schools and pesantren (Likert 1967). Many educational institutions, including pesantren, still use a leadership model centered around the principal, resulting in suboptimal teacher involvement in policy-making. This situation can reduce

the sense of ownership toward institutional rules and affect teachers' work motivation, even the teachers are the main implementers of educational policies directly related to students and the school environment (Robbins & Judge 2017). Several previous studies have shown that the effectiveness of management teams is closely related to the quality of educational organizations because teachers who work in participatory management systems tend to have higher job satisfaction levels compared to authoritarian systems, while open communication and teacher involvement in decision-making positively influence school organizational effectiveness. Additionally, leadership quality is also related to teacher discipline and work commitment in schools (Gaziel 1992; Turnbull 2003; Naidoo 2019). Other research explains that collaborative decision-making can create a more supportive and inclusive school environment, while the success of educational management teams is influenced by effective communication, psychological safety, and cooperation among organizational members (Ainscow et al. 2022; Chiriac 2024). Studies on educational leadership have indeed been conducted extensively, but most of the research still places the school principal at the center of discussion, making studies that review the management team as a whole quite limited. Additionally, discussions on teachers' views toward the management team in modern pesantren environments are also scarce because previous research has often been conducted in public schools and has not linked teachers' perspectives with organizational communication, decision-making processes, work atmosphere, or discipline in pesantren. The research gap is evident in the lack of comprehensive studies discussing teachers' views on the management team of modern pesantren, particularly concerning communication, decision-making processes, and their impact on teachers' working conditions and discipline. Therefore, this study was conducted to understand how teachers perceive the structure, function, and effectiveness of the management team at Pesantren Modern Al-Kautsar Al-Akbar. This research aims to examine teachers' views on the structure, functions, and roles of the pesantren management team, then assess the effectiveness of communication and decision-making processes, identify factors influencing teachers' evaluations of management, and observe their impact on the work atmosphere and discipline within the pesantren environment.

## 2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design aimed at understanding teachers' direct experiences in interacting with the pesantren management team because this approach emphasizes the interpretation of individuals' life experiences regarding a phenomenon (Moustakas 1994). The research was conducted at Pesantren Modern Al-Kautsar Al-Akbar located at Jl Pelajar Timur No 246 Medan and started on November 12, 2025, considering that the institution has an active and well-organized management system that meets the research needs. The participants in this study consisted of six individuals selected based on recommendations from the school, including the principal, vice principal, head of administration, and three teachers who were directly involved in management activities. The selection technique used was purposive sampling, which involves determining informants based on their understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth 2018). All participants agreed to their involvement in the study, and their identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms.

Table 1. Research Informants

NO	Informant Code	Position/Role	Gender	Age	Last Education	Teaching Experience	Status

1	KS	Principal	L	63th	S1	31th	NON ASN
2	WKS	Vise principal	L	48th	S1	18th	NON ASN
3	KTU	KTU	L	30th	S1	7th	NON ASN
4	G-01	Guru	P	49th	S1	26th	NON ASN
5	G-02	Guru	P	51th	S1	16th	NON ASN
6	G-03	Guru	L	56th	S1	33th	NON ASN

The data collection techniques in this study involve semi-structured interviews and documentation studies used simultaneously to obtain a more comprehensive picture because, in qualitative research, the use of multiple techniques is considered capable of strengthening the depth of understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Meanwhile, observations were conducted directly over five days during working hours from 08:00 to 13:00 WIB with a non-participant approach focusing on managerial activities such as learning supervision meetings and daily interactions in the pesantren environment. Interviews were conducted face-to-face using Indonesian with a duration of approximately 10 to 20 minutes, and for some informants, more than once to clarify the obtained information. The semi-structured format was chosen because it provides flexibility in exploring participants' in-depth experiences (Kvale 2009), allowing conversations to flow more naturally and not rigidly, and helping to create a more familiar atmosphere between the researcher and participants. The entire interview process used Indonesian so that participants could express their experiences more freely and in detail (Bahri et al. 2025). All interview results were recorded with the participants' consent and then transcribed verbatim. To maintain data validity, verification was conducted thru member checking by providing participants the opportunity to review the transcripts that had been made (Creswell 2016), while supporting documents such as organizational structure, meeting minutes, teaching schedules, and supervision notes were also collected to strengthen the research findings. Meanwhile, data analysis was carried out using a thematic approach that focused on identifying patterns of meaning from participants' experiences thru a process of repeated reading, determining significant statements, grouping meanings, and formulating themes (Moustakas 1994; Creswell 2018). This process continued from data collection to conclusion drawing. The validity of the data is strengthened thru source and time triangulation as well as the preparation of an audit trail that systematically documents the entire research process (Lincoln & Guba 1985), while the research stages include determining the focus and location, selecting participants thru purposive sampling, data collection thru observation, interviews, and documentation, transcription and data reduction processes, thematic analysis to identify themes, data validation thru triangulation and member checking, and the final stage of drawing conclusions and preparing the research report.

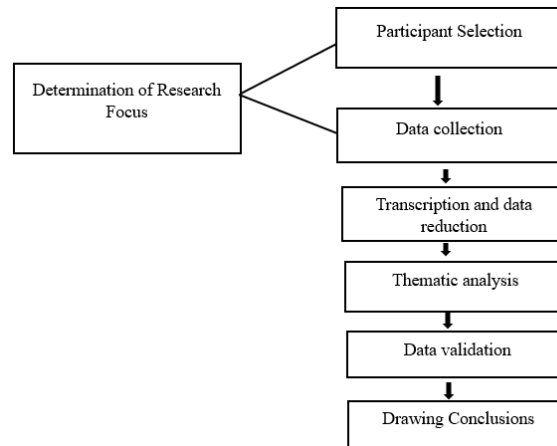


Figure 1. Methods

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### RESULTS

The research results have passed thru the stages of data reduction, coding, and category grouping, and were then organized into thematic findings. From the analysis, four main themes emerged: management structure, communication, decision-making, and work climate. All these findings are summarized in Table 2 for easier understanding.

Table 2. Summary of Research Findings

Theme	Key Indicator	Data Synthesis
Management Structure	Task distribution, coordination	Clearly formal, yet centralistic
Communication Patterns	Communication media, openness	Two-way, predominantly informal (WhatsApp)
Decision Making	Deliberation, participation	Consultative, the decision remains with the leadership
Work Environment	Work relationship, comfort	Conducive, family-based

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that all the data has been processed into thematic categories that systematically depict the conditions of pesantren management.

#### Structure and Role of the Management Team

The research results related to the structure and role of the management team were obtained thru interviews, observations, and document studies. From the interview with the principal on January 8, 2026, it was found that the organization of the pesantren had been formally structured with task divisions already established in each work area. The principal explained as follows: As the principal, all activities in the pesantren must be monitored, starting from the preparation of the semester program, annual program, to daily learning activities, which are first designed according to the institution's needs. After the planning is completed, tasks are divided into each section or field to ensure that the implementation is more directed and each party has clear responsibilities according to their roles (Principal Interview, January 8, 2026, at 10:34 AM WIB). This statement was reinforced by the results of the interview with the vice principal on January 13, 2026, which explained that each

section had tasks according to their respective work fields. In the curriculum field, the main tasks focus on managing the pesantren curriculum and general subjects, which include the processes of planning, implementation, and evaluation that fall under the responsibility of that field. Meanwhile, other deputy principals also carry out their duties according to the established division of labor (WKS Interview, January 13, 2026, at 1:04 PM). Observations from January 12 to 16, 2026, show that the principal is still actively involved in operational activities such as supervising learning, coordinating pesantren activities, and overseeing administration. Meanwhile, the deputy principals and the head of administration carry out their duties according to their respective fields, but the main coordination flow remains with the principal. These findings are in line with the official documentation of the pesantren's organizational structure, which shows a division of tasks and hierarchical positions including the principal, vice principal, head of administration, and teachers. Therefore, based on triangulation between interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be understood that the organizational structure is functioning formally, although in practice, there is still a noticeable centralization of authority with the principal.

### **Communication Patterns of the Management Team**

The research results on communication patterns were obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Preliminary interviews with teachers on January 20, 2026, revealed that official communication is conducted through monthly meetings, semester meetings, and activity evaluation forums at the pesantren. Monthly and semester meetings are usually used to discuss school activities and various learning issues (G-01 Interview January 20, 2026, at 10:15 AM WIB), while outside formal channels, communication also occurs informally through digital media such as WhatsApp, which is used to expedite the dissemination of information. If there is sudden information, it is conveyed through WhatsApp groups to ensure it is quickly received by the relevant parties (G-02 Interview January 20, 2026, at 11:02 AM WIB). Observations on January 17-18, 2026, showed that communication between leaders and teachers is actively conducted both directly and digitally, with an open space for teachers to express their opinions and learning obstacles. However, meeting documents only contain final decisions without detailed discussions, making communication open and flexible, but administrative records are still incomplete.

### **Decision-Making Process**

Research data on the decision-making process were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Meanwhile, from the interview results with the vice principal on January 13, 2026, it was revealed that every issue is first discussed in a deliberation forum before the final decision is made. All forms of desires, complaints, or suggestions from teachers are not directly conveyed to the principal but are first collected and discussed at the level of the vice principal (VP Interview January 13, 2026, at 1:15 PM). Meanwhile, the principal explained that every decision always goes through a collective discussion process because any issues that arise in the field are not immediately determined but are first brought to the meeting forum to be discussed collectively before a final decision is made (Principal Interview January 14, 2026, at 9:40 AM). The results of the internal meeting observation on January 20, 2026, show that teachers were given the space to express their opinions and input in the meeting forum, although the final decision was still determined by the pesantren leadership and the foundation. Meanwhile, the documentation of the meeting minutes indicates that the content of the document recorded more of the decision outcomes rather than a detailed description of the discussion process. Therefore, based on data triangulation from interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that the decision-making process at the pesantren took place through a consultative deliberation with the involvement of teachers at the input stage, but the final decision remained in the hands of the leadership.

### **Work Climate in the Islamic Boarding School**

Research data on the work climate were collected thru interviews, observations, and documentation, while an interview with the headmaster on January 8, 2026, revealed that the management strives to create a comfortable work environment and maintain harmonious relationships in the Islamic boarding school. The management strives to create a conducive work atmosphere by providing a comfortable learning environment and strengthening cooperation with the teachers (KS Interview January 8, 2026, at 11:11 AM WIB), while the teachers report that the relationship with the leadership is open and not rigid, and the work atmosphere in the pesantren is perceived as quite comfortable (G-01 Interview January 15, 2026, at 3:25 PM WIB). Observations on January 21-22, 2026, show a close relationship between the teachers and the pesantren leadership, with a pattern of cooperation evident in both teaching activities and other pesantren activities. This finding is supported by documentation in the form of photos of program work reports and activity archives, which demonstrate the active involvement of all organizational elements in both academic and non-academic activities. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that the work climate in the pesantren is in a conducive condition with the support of harmonious working relationships, open communication, and a strong familial culture as the main factors creating a positive work atmosphere in the pesantren environment. To clarify the interconnections between the findings, they are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Interrelationship of Research Findings.

Component	Description	Impact
Management Structure	Centralistic	Influencing communication patterns
Communication Patterns	Two-way, informal	Influencing decision-making
Decision Making	Consultative	Influencing the work climate
Work Environment	Kondusif	Improving work comfort

Table 3 shows that there is a sequential relationship between management structure, communication patterns, decision-making processes, and the work climate in the pesantren.

## DISCUSSION

### Management Team Structure from the Perspective of Participatory Management

The research results show that the management team structure at Pesantren Modern Al-Kautsar Al-Akbar has been officially organized with a clear division of tasks between the principal, vice principal, administrative director, and teachers, while each work unit has responsibilities adjusted to its respective field based on interview results. The principal explained that all educational programs are prepared in advance before being distributed to each section to ensure more directed implementation. Observational findings also indicate that each unit has been performing its functions according to its role, although the main coordination is still under the principal's control. The condition indicates that the basic principles of educational management, such as division of labor, clarity of authority, and accountability, have been implemented. However, teachers' involvement remains at a consultative level as they are only given space to provide input without participating in the final decision-making. This aligns with Somech's (2010) findings, which state that participatory management practices in schools generally remain at the consultative level, especially in strategic

decisions. Meanwhile, observational results also show a tendency toward centralization of authority with the principal, who is still actively involved in operational activities, leading teachers to play more of a role as policy implementers rather than decision-makers, in line with Rensis Likert's System 3 (consultative) concept. Moreover, this condition is also relevant to Naidoo's (2019) view, which explains that limited involvement in decision-making can reduce a sense of ownership toward policies, causing teachers to potentially carry out tasks procedurally without a strong emotional attachment to the institution's decisions. In the long run, this can affect commitment and participation in the implementation of educational programs. However, in the context of pesantren, leadership dominance is not always seen as a weakness because it relates to a central leadership character and is part of the values that maintain organizational stability. Therefore, strengthening teacher participation is not intended to diminish the role of leadership but to create a balance between authority and involvement, so that leadership remains strategically involved in decision-making while expanding the space for teacher participation, allowing them to not only be implementers but also part of the policy process. Thus, the gradual development of a more participatory decision-making model becomes important to enhance teachers' sense of ownership, commitment, and responsibility by integrating the values of deliberation and participatory management principles, ensuring that the decision-making system is not only structurally effective but also socially and culturally robust.

### **Two-Way Communication as the Foundation of Work Climate**

The research results show that communication between the management team and teachers occurs in a two-way and open manner thru formal mechanisms such as meetings and informal interactions supported by the digital media WhatsApp, which is used as a means of daily coordination. Meanwhile, field observations reveal that this communication pattern is actively engaged in various pesantren activities thru direct interactions and the use of communication technology. This condition fosters a more harmonious working relationship between leaders and teachers, and these findings align with previous research that states that participation and organizational communication influence teachers' work effectiveness (Smylie et al. 1996). The research findings also indicate that communication in the pesantren environment not only serves as a tool for conveying information but also plays a role as a means of work coordination and strengthening relationships among organizational members. In practice, this supports engagement and trust among individuals within the institution, in accordance with organizational communication theory, which explains that two-way communication patterns can enhance members' engagement and commitment to the organization (Stephen P. Robbins and Timothy A. Judge). This is further supported by the view that open communication can create a more supportive and inclusive work environment (Mel Ainscow). Documentation results show that the communication process has not been systematically documented because most meeting minutes only record the decisions made without detailing the discussion flow. This condition indicates that the communication system still tends to operate informally in certain aspects. This finding aligns with the view that the effectiveness of organizational communication is not only determined by openness but also by a clear documentation system and administrative structure so that policies can be consistently understood by all members of the organization (Miskel & Hoy 2013).

The research findings indicate that the decision-making process in the pesantren occurs thru a deliberative mechanism that begins with the discussion of each issue in a joint meeting forum before it is ultimately established as an official decision. In this process, teachers are given the space to express their opinions and inputs, although the final authority remains with the pesantren leadership and the foundation. Additionally, observations of internal meetings show that discussions are conducted openly but remain under the control of the leadership, ensuring that the direction of

the discussion remains focused and structured. The minutes documentation reveals that the notes are more concentrated on the final decision rather than the detailed discussion process. Research findings indicate that the deliberation process in pesantren provides space for teachers to participate in decision-making, although substantive authority is still predominantly held by the organization's leadership. This aligns with the view that participation in decision-making can enhance organizational member engagement when given meaningfully (Hoy and Tarter 1993) and is consistent with the consultative organization theory, which explains that organizational members can provide input but the main authority remains with the leadership (Rensis Likert). These findings also support research that states member involvement in decision-making can increase a sense of ownership toward institutional policies (Naidoo). In the context of pesantren, the dominance of leadership in decision-making is closely related to a leadership culture that places a central figure as the main director of organizational policy. Therefore, strengthening teacher participation needs to be done without eliminating the authority of the leadership to maintain the balance between hierarchical values and participation. This integration of deliberative principles and participatory management becomes an important factor in creating a more inclusive decision-making system while still aligning with the institutional character of the pesantren.

### **Work Climate in the Context of Pesantren Culture**

He research results show that the work climate in the pesantren is in good condition with a harmonious atmosphere because the teachers feel comfortable working and have positive relationships with the leadership based on interview results, while observational results also show close interactions and cooperation that run quite well among organizational members, so the work environment can be said to be stable and supportive of daily activities. These findings illustrate that the values of familial bonds and the principle of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* inherent in the culture of pesantren play a crucial role in creating a positive work atmosphere. Teachers feel like part of a cohesive community, resulting in work relationships that are not only formal but also open and mutually supportive. This aligns with the organizational climate concept, which emphasizes the importance of a sense of security, trust, and fair work relationships in creating a healthy work environment (Hoy and Miskel 2013) and (Ainscow et al. 2022). Therefore, the organizational culture in the context of pesantren has a significantly dominant influence on shaping the work climate compared to formal rules. However, an excessive reliance on familial relationships can pose the risk of reduced objectivity in assessments and decision-making because personal closeness has the potential to influence rule enforcement. Additionally, if the work patterns are too informal without clear management system support, the level of professionalism may also decline. In the long term, such conditions can impact policy consistency and organizational effectiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the work system thru clear task distribution rules and more measurable evaluation mechanisms so that work relationships are not only based on emotional closeness but also on professional principles. Thus, a balance is needed between the cultural values of the pesantren and a structured management system so that the work environment remains harmonious but also has a clear direction, allowing the organization to operate more effectively and sustainably in the long term.

### **Teacher Discipline as a Reflection of Leadership**

The research results show that the discipline of teachers in pesantren is more formed thru real examples from the leaders and the habitual values that are already embedded in daily life in the pesantren environment compared to written rules or formal sanctions. Thus, discipline is understood not only as obedience to rules but also as a personal responsibility in carrying out the duties as educators. This indicates that the pesantren culture has a strong influence in shaping the teachers' internal awareness of the importance of a disciplined attitude. The exemplary approach is effective because the leader is positioned as a reference figure in daily behavior, so when the leader

consistently adheres to punctuality and integrity in work rules, the teachers tend to follow without coercion, as the motivation comes from their own awareness formed thru the process of observing and imitating in daily life. However, this condition also has its weaknesses because if discipline relies too much on the figure of the leader, then when there is a change in leadership or a change in leadership style, a decline in discipline may occur. Therefore, a balance with a more structured system is needed so that it does not depend solely on one particular figure. In addition, the existence of clear work rules, well-organized operational procedures, and an objective evaluation system is also needed to maintain discipline in the long term. With these systems in place, work behavior is not only controlled by exemplary leadership but also by comprehensive rules, ensuring that discipline remains stable even with changes in the leadership structure.

### **Teachers' Perceptions of the Management Team and Its Implications**

Teachers' perceptions of the management team at the pesantren are formed from continuous interactions in daily activities, ranging from formal communication such as meetings to informal conversations, along with the leadership style of the head and the values of the pesantren that have become ingrained in daily life. This is in line with Robbins (2017), who explains that perception is an individual's process of processing and giving meaning to the experiences received. Therefore, in this context, teachers' views do not only arise from written rules but also from how those rules are implemented and felt in work practice. The research results show that when teachers have a positive view of the management team, it impacts their work enthusiasm, comfort while working, and adherence to institutional rules. This condition aligns with Hoy and Miskel (2013), who state that how teachers perceive leadership and management greatly influences the organizational climate and work behavior. When leaders are considered fair, easy to communicate with, and supportive, teachers tend to be more committed and disciplined in carrying out their duties. That positive perception also contributes to a more conducive work atmosphere, evident from smoother working relationships, good cooperation between teachers and management, and minimal internal conflicts. As explained by Hoy and Miskel (2013), the organizational climate is the real experience felt by members within the work environment, which then influences their attitudes and actions. Thus, in practice, teachers do not work merely out of obligation but also out of a sense of responsibility and attachment to the institution. The pesantren culture, which emphasizes family values and Islamic brotherhood, plays a significant role in shaping that perception, in accordance with Schein (2010), who explains that organizational culture consists of shared values and beliefs that guide members' behavior. This familial atmosphere makes work relationships feel closer, fostering trust and providing psychological comfort for teachers in carrying out their duties.

However, if positive perceptions are solely based on emotionally close relationships, problems may arise because Robbins (2017) also emphasizes that personal closeness within an organization can reduce objectivity, especially in decision-making. In the context of pesantren, this has the potential to blur the boundaries between personal and professional relationships, particularly in terms of work evaluation and rule enforcement. Therefore, there needs to be a balance between the pesantren culture and a more structured management system so that work relationships do not solely depend on closeness but are also supported by clear and open rules. Hoy and Miskel (2013) emphasize that teacher involvement in the decision-making process can enhance a sense of ownership over policies, making the combination of cultural values and good management the key to maintaining a healthy and stable work environment in the long term. If these two aspects run in parallel, teachers' perceptions of the management team will be formed more strongly and stably, not only based on feelings but also on a clear work system, ultimately strengthening work relationships and improving the quality of pesantren management in facing the ever-evolving demands of education. To maintain the validity of the data, the researcher conducted member checking by asking the participants to review the interview results and the interpretations made, ensuring that what was

written truly reflected their experiences. After confirmation, the participants stated that the results were in accordance with what they had conveyed, thus strengthening the trust in the research findings because the data had been directly verified by the sources.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The organizational structure at Pesantren Modern Al-Kautsar Al-Akbar is clearly defined with formal task distribution, but important decisions are still largely determined by the leadership, resulting in teachers often playing the role of policy implementers. Communication flows both ways thru formal and informal interactions, which maintain good working relationships, although informal communication is more dominant and not well-documented. Decision-making is conducted thru deliberation, allowing teachers to express their opinions, but the final decision rests with the leadership. The work environment is conducive, supported by values of family and togetherness, making teachers feel comfortable and highly loyal. However, overall, improvements are still needed in the distribution of authority, increasing teacher participation, and strengthening the formal communication system to make management more structured and effective.

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