



Beyond Administrative Supervision: A Relational-Transformational Supervision Cycle for *Santri* Talent Development in an Indonesian *Pesantren*

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Abstract

Purpose – This study examines how leadership supervision supports student talent and interest development at Pondok *Pesantren* Ar-Riyadh Palembang. It focuses on how supervisory practices move beyond administrative control toward developmental guidance.

Design/methods/approach – The study employs a qualitative single-case design conducted from September to November 2024. Data were collected through interviews, direct observation, and document analysis involving the *mudir*, program mentors, students, and parents. Data were analyzed through interactive qualitative analysis and process-oriented thematic interpretation.

Findings – The study identifies four interconnected supervisory mechanisms: trust-based delegation, monitoring and mentoring, performance-based evaluation, and recognition and opportunity. These mechanisms enable mentors to exercise operational autonomy while remaining connected to leadership guidance and accountability. Monthly competitions support progress evaluation, while recognition, external participation, community *da'wah*, and digital media activities expand developmental opportunities. The process contributes to program continuity and student development.

Research implications/limitations – The findings offer a process-oriented framework for talent-development supervision in *pesantren*. However, the single-case design does not establish causal relationships and requires further examination across different institutional contexts.

Originality/value – The study proposes the Relational-Transformational Supervision Cycle for *Santri* Talent Development, explaining how supervisory routines grounded in *pesantren* values connect delegation, mentoring, evaluation, recognition, and developmental opportunity.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) have long played a multidimensional role in Indonesian Islamic education by combining religious learning, character formation, socialization, and community engagement. Contemporary *pesantren*, however, are increasingly expected not only to preserve their religious and intellectual traditions but also to develop students' diverse capacities in response to changing social, educational, and technological environments. This broader educational responsibility has placed student talent and interest development alongside formal religious instruction as an important component of holistic *pesantren* education. Activities such as public speaking, Islamic arts, sports, writing, digital media, and religious performance provide spaces through which *santri* can develop personal abilities, social confidence, creativity, and forms of competence that may later support their participation in society.

The effectiveness of such programs depends substantially on leadership. *Pesantren* leadership is distinctive because institutional authority often combines managerial, pedagogical, spiritual, and relational dimensions. Recent studies increasingly show that effective leadership in Islamic boarding schools cannot be reduced to administrative authority. Anggraini & Aimah (2026), for example, identify a multidimensional model integrating spiritual, social, managerial, and pedagogical leadership, while Himsyah & Aulia (2026) demonstrate how transformational, spiritual, and nurturing dimensions can operate simultaneously in supporting student development. Abdurrahman et al. (2026) similarly emphasize the importance of contextual leadership in *pesantren*, whereas Mubarak (2025) highlights servant-oriented leadership as a mechanism for combining institutional excellence with the distinctive culture of Islamic boarding schools. Together, these studies indicate a broader shift from leader-centered authority toward leadership understood as the organization of relationships, development, and institutional capacity.

Within this broader leadership process, supervision occupies an important but often underexamined position. Educational supervision is not limited to inspecting whether activities are implemented as planned. It can also function as a developmental mechanism through which leaders delegate responsibility, monitor implementation, provide mentoring, evaluate progress, resolve problems, and encourage organizational learning. Iskandar et al. (2026), in examining the role of a *mudir* in student character development, show that supervision, coordination, continuous evaluation, motivation, and educational rewards form an interconnected process rather than isolated managerial practices. Studies of coaching-based and developmental supervision similarly emphasize that supervision becomes more productive when it moves from inspection toward mentoring, reflection, feedback, and professional support (Hrp & Fadhli, 2026; Kustamaji & Abdurrahman, 2026).

Such a developmental orientation is particularly relevant to talent programs because the abilities of students cannot be developed through one-time instruction or administrative control. Talent development requires opportunities for practice, sustained guidance, feedback, evaluation, recognition, and increasingly challenging experiences. The leader's role, therefore, is not necessarily to directly supervise every activity, but to create a system through which responsibility is distributed to capable mentors while maintaining institutional direction and accountability. This is consistent with emerging literature on collective and distributed dimensions of Islamic educational leadership. Arifianto & Wafa (2025), for instance,

demonstrate the importance of collective leadership in strengthening organizational participation, while Qomariah (2026) shows how *pesantren*-based leadership can embed responsibility, organizational culture, and value-based accountability into institutional management.

Trust is central to this process. In *pesantren* contexts, delegation is often inseparable from ethical and relational expectations such as *amanah*, responsibility, loyalty, exemplary conduct, and mutual respect. Qomariah (2026) indicates that *pesantren* values can become organizational mechanisms through which responsibility and leadership are distributed while remaining connected to institutional culture. Supervision under such conditions is therefore not simply hierarchical control. It can function as a relational process in which leaders give responsibility to mentors, monitor their work, provide guidance, and maintain accountability without eliminating autonomy. This relational dimension differentiates developmental supervision from tightly centralized supervision.

Mentoring and recognition constitute another important dimension. Afi & Mat (2026), in their study of Islamic boarding schools, identify leadership modeling, mentorship, relational bonding, calibrated praise, structured rewards, and institutional commitment as mutually reinforcing mechanisms of student development. Halimatussa'diyah et al. (2025) similarly demonstrate how boarding-school leadership can cultivate moral development through participatory supervision, relational interaction, and distributed responsibility. These findings suggest that student development is strengthened when supervision provides not only correction but also encouragement, recognition, and opportunities for learners to demonstrate growth.

Transformational leadership offers a useful lens for interpreting these processes. Studies in *pesantren* and Islamic educational institutions have repeatedly associated transformational leadership with motivation, innovation, institutional change, student quality, independence, and character development (Alawiyah et al., 2023; Humaisi et al., 2024; Masrur & Falah, 2026; Supriatna, 2025). Transformational leaders communicate direction, motivate organizational members, stimulate innovation, and support individual development. Nevertheless, identifying transformational characteristics alone does not fully explain how leadership is translated into routine supervisory practices that directly sustain student development programs.

This distinction represents an important gap in the literature. Existing studies have generated substantial knowledge about transformational, spiritual, servant, nurturing, prophetic, and multidimensional leadership in Islamic educational institutions. Other studies have examined supervision primarily in relation to teacher competence, instructional quality, character education, or institutional performance. Much less attention has been directed toward the supervisory process through which *pesantren* leaders organize the development of students' talents and interests, particularly the relationship among delegation, mentoring, performance evaluation, recognition, and access to developmental opportunities. Consequently, leadership and supervision are often discussed as separate domains, while the mechanisms connecting leadership vision to everyday talent-development practices remain less explicit.

Pondok *Pesantren* Ar-Riyadh Palembang provides a relevant case for examining this mechanism. The *pesantren* organizes structured student-development programs in *hadrah*,

sports, calligraphy, wall-magazine writing, da'wah, and digital media. Rather than personally managing all activities, the *pesantren* leader delegates responsibility to program mentors, conducts periodic monitoring and mentoring, uses monthly competitions as a mechanism for evaluating development, and provides recognition and opportunities for students to participate beyond the *pesantren*. The original field data further indicate that these practices are associated with consistent program implementation and a range of student achievements at city and national levels (Kustamaji & Abdurrahman, 2026; Setiyono et al., 2026).

These practices suggest that supervision at Ar-Riyadh operates not as a set of independent leadership roles but as an interconnected developmental cycle. This study conceptualizes that pattern as a Relational-Transformational Supervision Cycle, consisting of four interconnected mechanisms: trust-based delegation, monitoring and mentoring, performance-based evaluation, and recognition and opportunity. The term *relational* highlights trust, guidance, personal interaction, and delegated responsibility, while *transformational* refers to motivation, empowerment, innovation, and the orientation toward developing students' potential. Rather than treating transformational leadership as the final finding, the concept is used here as an explanatory perspective for understanding how leadership values are translated into supervisory practice.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how the leader of Pondok *Pesantren* Ar-Riyadh Palembang supervises student talent and interest development programs and to explain the mechanisms through which supervision supports program continuity and student development. Specifically, the study examines the leader's supervisory roles and strategies, the interaction between delegation, mentoring, evaluation, recognition, and developmental opportunities, and the ways in which these practices reflect relational and transformational dimensions of *pesantren* leadership. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute a process-oriented understanding of *pesantren* supervision and proposes the Relational-Transformational Supervision Cycle for *Santri* Talent Development as a conceptual interpretation grounded in the case of Ar-Riyadh Palembang.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine leadership supervision in the development of students' talents and interests at Pondok *Pesantren* Ar-Riyadh Palembang. A case study approach was considered appropriate because the research sought to understand supervisory practices within the social, organizational, and cultural context of a single *pesantren*. The study emphasized how supervisory roles, interactions, and developmental processes were experienced and implemented by the *pesantren* leader, program mentors, students (*santri*), and other stakeholders, rather than measuring leadership behavior quantitatively. The study was conducted at Pondok *Pesantren* Ar-Riyadh, located on KH. Ahmad Dahlan Street, 13 Ulu, Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia. Fieldwork took place from September to November 2024, covering preliminary observation, data collection, and verification. The *pesantren* was selected because it implements structured talent and interest development programs in areas such as hadrah, sports, calligraphy, wall-magazine writing, da'wah, and digital media, all under direct supervisory involvement of the leadership.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement and knowledge of the programs. The primary informant was Al-Habib Hamid bin Umar Al-Habsyi,

the *Mudir* of the *pesantren*. Supporting informants included three program mentors: Ustaz Syauqi (da'wah), Ustaz Ghoni (sports), and Ustaz Hasan (digital media). Student informants included Salman, Ahmad, Yusuf, and Dimas, while parents or guardians were included to provide external perspectives on program impact. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and document analysis. Interviews explored leadership roles, delegation, mentoring, evaluation, and recognition. Observations were conducted during program activities to examine real-time supervisory practices. Documents included schedules, reports, activity records, and achievement data. The researcher acted as the primary instrument, supported by interview guides, observation sheets, and documentation checklists (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data were first reduced and categorized according to leadership roles, delegation, monitoring, mentoring, evaluation, motivation, recognition, and student development. Cross-source comparison was then conducted to identify patterns and differences. Finally, findings were interpreted through transformational and relational leadership perspectives. Analysis moved toward a process-oriented interpretation, identifying recurring supervisory mechanisms across data sources (Miles et al., 2014). Four interconnected patterns emerged: trust-based delegation, monitoring and mentoring, performance-based evaluation, and recognition and opportunity. These were developed inductively from field data rather than predetermined categories. Transformational leadership explained motivation, empowerment, and innovation, while relational leadership highlighted trust, interaction, and appreciation.

To ensure credibility, the study applied source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking. Data from leaders, mentors, students, and parents were compared, alongside interviews, observations, and documents. Key informants also verified interpretations to reduce misrepresentation. As a single-case study, the findings are intended for analytical rather than statistical generalization. The proposed Relational-Transformational Supervision Cycle is therefore context-bound to Pondok Pesantren Ar-Riyadh and serves as a conceptual interpretation derived from this specific case.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Student Talent Development and Leadership Direction at Ar-Riyadh

Pondok Pesantren Ar-Riyadh organizes six principal areas of student talent and interest development: hadrah, sports, calligraphy, wall-magazine writing (*mading*), da'wah, and digital media. Each activity has a distinct developmental orientation, ranging from Islamic artistic expression and physical competence to literacy, public speaking, religious outreach, and digital communication. The programs are implemented through regular schedules and supported by mentors responsible for their respective fields. The field data therefore indicate that talent development constitutes a structured component of student formation rather than an occasional extracurricular activity.

The diversity of these programs reflects a broader understanding of *pesantren* education in which student development extends beyond mastery of religious knowledge. Contemporary scholarship similarly shows that *pesantren* leadership increasingly combines spiritual, managerial, pedagogical, and social responsibilities. Anggraini & Aimah (2026)

describe *pesantren* leadership as multidimensional, while Himsyah and Aulia (2026) demonstrate how transformational, spiritual, and nurturing dimensions can operate simultaneously in supporting student development. Abdurrahman et al. (2026) further emphasize that contemporary *pesantren* leadership remains strongly shaped by cultural and relational values while responding to changing educational demands.

Table 1. Student Talent and Interest Development Programs at Pondok Pesantren Ar-Riyadh

Program	Main Developmental Orientation	Supervisory Focus
Hadrah	Islamic arts, teamwork, and da'wah expression	Practice consistency and performance
Sports	Physical competence, discipline, and sportsmanship	Training, competition, and achievement
Calligraphy	Creativity and Qur'anic visual arts	Technical development and performance
Wall Magazine (<i>Mading</i>)	Literacy, writing, and communication	Productivity and student participation
Da'wah	Public speaking, religious communication, and confidence	Practice, outreach, and presentation
Digital Media	Digital competence and <i>pesantren</i> publication	Production, communication, and innovation

At Ar-Riyadh, the *mudir* provides the general direction for the talent-development system rather than directly operating each program. Field data indicate that leadership involvement includes determining program orientation, assigning mentors, encouraging innovation, monitoring implementation, facilitating student participation, and establishing monthly competitions as a mechanism for observing progress. One particularly significant role is the creation of performance opportunities that allow students to demonstrate abilities developed through regular practice. Leadership direction therefore functions as the starting point of the supervisory process. The central issue is not how frequently a leader intervenes directly, but how effectively leadership structures the environment in which development occurs (Rahmatullah, 2026). The role of the *mudir* at Ar-Riyadh is therefore better understood as developmental direction-setting rather than operational centralization. This distinction provides the foundation for the supervisory mechanisms that follow: program responsibility is delegated, but the leader remains involved through continuing guidance, monitoring, and evaluation.

Trust-Based Delegation and Developmental Supervision

A central pattern emerging from the data is the delegation of operational responsibility to mentors with competence in particular talent areas. The *mudir* does not personally conduct every training session or student activity. Instead, program responsibility is entrusted to designated mentors while general direction and accountability remain connected to *pesantren* leadership. This pattern can be described as trust-based delegation. It involves more than administrative task assignment. Mentors are given sufficient autonomy to organize activities, respond to student needs, and develop program practices, while remaining responsible for maintaining the educational objectives established by the *pesantren* (Burhanuddin, 2025).

The relational basis of this delegation is particularly important in the *pesantren* environment. Responsibility is embedded in ethical expectations such as *amanah*, commitment, loyalty, and accountability. Qomariah (2026) similarly demonstrates that *pesantren* values can function as organizational principles through which leadership responsibility is distributed without separating delegation from moral accountability. Studies of collective leadership likewise indicate that institutional capacity can be strengthened when responsibility is shared among organizational actors rather than concentrated exclusively in the formal leader.

Delegation at Ar-Riyadh, however, does not result in leadership withdrawal. The field data show that the *mudir* follows up program implementation through monthly monitoring, internal meetings, reports, and direct communication with mentors. This arrangement produces a balance between mentor autonomy and continuing leadership involvement.

Supervision also extends beyond checking program implementation. The leader provides developmental guidance regarding how programs can be strengthened or expanded. The mentor responsible for da'wah reported that students were encouraged to practice public speaking after congregational prayers and to participate in da'wah activities in community prayer spaces. The sports mentor similarly described leadership support for consistent practice, sparring, and engagement with competitors outside the *pesantren*.

These findings demonstrate that monitoring and mentoring operate as complementary dimensions of supervision. Monitoring maintains program accountability and continuity, whereas mentoring provides direction, problem solving, motivation, and support for improvement. The supervisory relationship therefore moves beyond administrative inspection toward developmental interaction.

Recent literature supports this interpretation. Iskandar et al. (2026) found that the role of a *mudir* in student development combines supervision, coordination, evaluation, motivation, and educational rewards. Similarly, studies of developmental supervision emphasize that supervision becomes more productive when it includes guidance, reflection, and capacity building rather than functioning only as inspection.

The pattern identified at Ar-Riyadh can therefore be understood as autonomy with relational accountability. Mentors are trusted to act and innovate within their respective areas, but responsibility remains connected to communication, mentoring, and institutional expectations. This balance enables leadership to distribute operational work without losing educational coherence.

Performance-Based Evaluation, Recognition, and Developmental Opportunity

One of the most distinctive features of supervision at Ar-Riyadh is the use of monthly competitions to evaluate student development. Competitions are organized across different talent areas and function not merely as ceremonial events, but as structured opportunities for observing progress, identifying emerging abilities, and motivating continued practice. Field documentation indicates that these competitions simultaneously serve evaluative, motivational, and talent-identification purposes.

This mechanism can be understood as performance-based evaluation. Many of the competencies cultivated through the *pesantren*'s programs, including public speaking, calligraphy, hadrah, sports, religious recitation, and digital production, cannot be evaluated

adequately through written reports alone. Their development becomes more visible when students are given opportunities to demonstrate what they can actually perform.

Monthly competition therefore provides a form of performance exposure through which training outcomes become observable to mentors, leaders, peers, and students themselves. Its educational significance lies not merely in determining winners, but in providing evidence of progress and creating occasions for feedback and further development.

This finding resonates with Iskandar et al. (2026), who emphasize the role of continuous evaluation and motivational reinforcement in *pesantren*-based student development. Evaluation becomes developmental when it is integrated with continued guidance rather than positioned as the final stage of a program. At Ar-Riyadh, evaluation is closely connected to recognition. Students who demonstrate competence or achievement may receive appreciation, rewards, public acknowledgement, or promotion of their achievements through *pesantren* communication channels. Recognition therefore gives social and motivational meaning to assessment.

Afi and Mat (2026) identify a similar relationship between mentorship, relational bonding, calibrated praise, and structured rewards in Islamic boarding-school education. Their findings suggest that recognition has stronger developmental value when embedded in sustained educational relationships rather than used as a stand-alone motivational technique. Recognition at Ar-Riyadh is also connected to developmental opportunity. Students who demonstrate potential may be given opportunities to participate in external competitions, community activities, da'wah programs, or other settings beyond routine *pesantren* activities. One student explained that participation in outside sports competitions provided an opportunity to assess his abilities relative to students from other institutions. Da'wah activities similarly extend development beyond the *pesantren* by providing students with authentic opportunities to practice religious communication in local communities. Such opportunities transform emerging competence into real-world experience (Ajhuri, 2024; T & Rizal, 2025).

Digital media represent another form of developmental expansion. The media mentor reported that leadership encouraged the *pesantren* to use YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and other digital platforms to strengthen religious outreach and institutional communication. In this context, digitalization is not merely an institutional publicity strategy; it also provides students with opportunities to develop digital production and communication skills while contributing to the *pesantren*'s da'wah mission. The findings therefore suggest that evaluation, recognition, and opportunity form an integrated developmental mechanism. Performance enables progress to be observed, recognition reinforces achievement, and further opportunity allows students to expand their competence in increasingly authentic contexts.

Program Continuity and Student Development Outcomes

The field findings indicate two major outcomes associated with the supervisory practices at Ar-Riyadh: program continuity and student development.

First, observations and institutional documentation indicate that weekly talent-development programs were implemented with relative regularity and structure. This continuity is significant because talent-development activities can easily become episodic when responsibility, supervision, and follow-up are weak. At Ar-Riyadh, delegated

responsibility supported by periodic monitoring and mentoring appears to contribute to maintaining consistent program implementation.

Second, documentary evidence records multiple student achievements at city and national levels. These include achievements in *baca kitab*, calligraphy, preaching, Qur'anic recitation, and martial arts. These records indicate that students participating in the development programs were able to demonstrate their abilities beyond internal *pesantren* settings. The relationship between supervision and achievement should nevertheless be interpreted carefully. The qualitative design of this study does not allow a direct causal conclusion that supervisory practices alone produced competition results. Student achievement can also be influenced by prior ability, mentor competence, training intensity, family support, and access to developmental opportunities. The evidence more appropriately supports the conclusion that the supervisory system contributed to the organizational and relational conditions that enabled sustained practice, developmental exposure, and student performance. This distinction is theoretically important. Educational leadership rarely produces student outcomes directly. Its contribution often occurs by shaping the environment within which teaching, mentoring, practice, evaluation, and development take place.

Stakeholder perceptions further support this interpretation. Students reported that leadership support helped them recognize and develop their abilities, while a parent explained that monthly competitions helped students discover talents that could later become useful in community contexts. These findings suggest that student development at Ar-Riyadh should not be reduced to competition awards. Outcomes also include participation, confidence, recognition of individual potential, opportunities to perform, and the ability to apply competence within *pesantren* and community environments (Husaini, 2025; Rofiah et al., n.d.). This broader interpretation corresponds with the educational orientation of *pesantren*, where personal ability is often connected with social and religious contribution. Competence in *da'wah*, Islamic arts, literacy, sports, and digital media becomes educationally meaningful when students are able to use it in service of the institution and wider society. Supervision therefore contributes not merely to program implementation but to an environment in which student potential can progressively become visible, cultivated, assessed, recognized, and extended.

The Relational-Transformational Supervision Cycle for *Santri* Talent Development

When the findings from the preceding sections are considered collectively, supervision at Ar-Riyadh can be understood as an interconnected developmental system rather than a collection of separate leadership roles. Based on recurring patterns across interviews, observations, and documentation, this study conceptualizes this system as the Relational-Transformational Supervision Cycle for *Santri* Talent Development, illustrated in Figure 1. As shown in Figure 1, the model contains four interdependent supervisory mechanisms: trust-based delegation, monitoring and mentoring, performance-based evaluation, and recognition and opportunity. These mechanisms collectively support talent development and program continuity while remaining embedded within the values and leadership culture of the *pesantren*.

The first mechanism, trust-based delegation, establishes distributed responsibility by entrusting program implementation to competent mentors. This enables specialized activities to operate with sufficient autonomy while maintaining alignment with the broader

educational direction of the *pesantren*. The second mechanism, monitoring and mentoring, ensures that delegation does not become organizational detachment. Continuing communication allows the leader to maintain accountability, respond to problems, provide guidance, and support mentor development. Supervision therefore functions both as oversight and as a relational process of assistance. The third mechanism, performance-based evaluation, creates visible opportunities for students to demonstrate developmental progress. Monthly competitions and related performance contexts enable leaders and mentors to observe ability, provide feedback, identify potential, and motivate students to continue improving. The fourth mechanism, recognition and opportunity, extends evaluation into further development. Appreciation, reward, external competitions, community *da'wah*, and digital media activities provide students with opportunities to transform emerging competence into broader participation and achievement.

Figure 1. Relational-Transformational Supervision Cycle for Santri Talent Development at Pondok Pesantren Ar-Riyadh

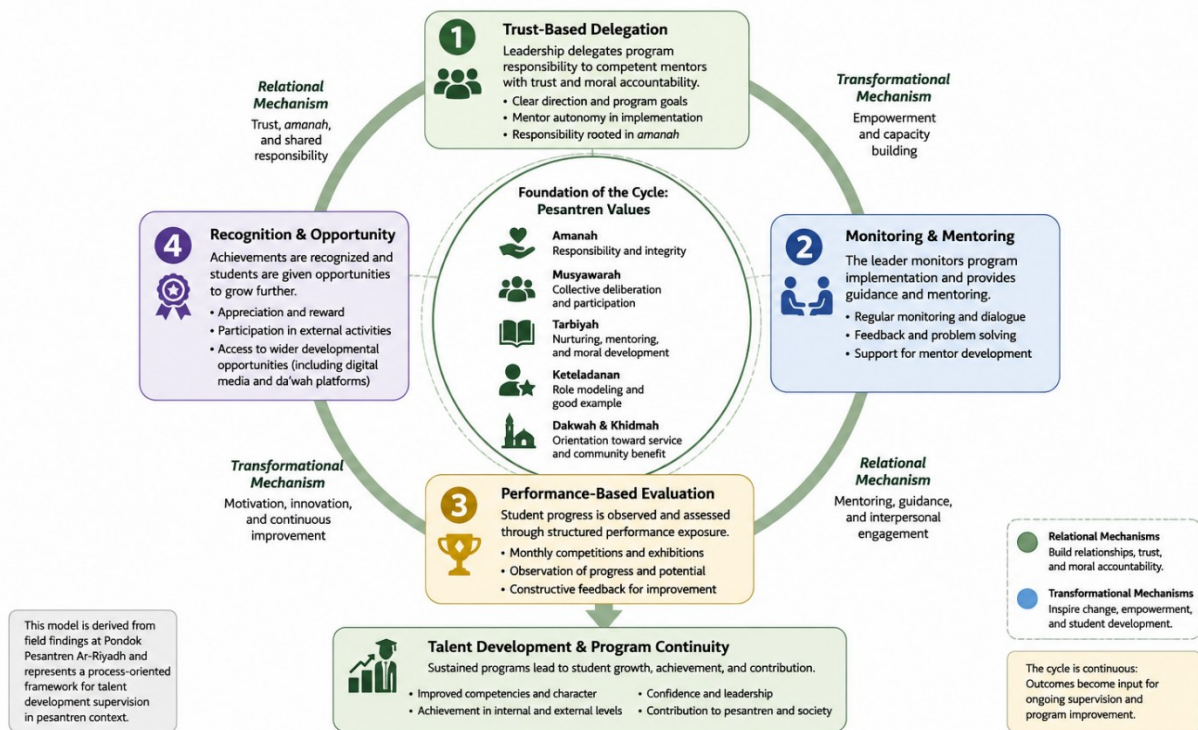


Figure 1. Relational-Transformational Supervision Cycle for Santri Talent Development at Pondok Pesantren Ar-Riyadh

The cyclical form of Figure 1 is particularly important. The model does not assume that supervision ends when students receive recognition or achieve particular outcomes. Information arising from student performance, program implementation, and developmental outcomes informs subsequent mentoring, program adjustment, evaluation, and opportunity provision. Supervision is therefore continuous and adaptive. Figure 1 also identifies *pesantren* values as the foundation of the cycle. Values such as *amanah*, *musyawarah*, *tarbiyah*, *keteladanan*, and orientations toward *da'wah* and *khidmah* shape how supervision is

understood and practiced. These values are not peripheral cultural symbols. They provide ethical meaning to delegated responsibility, mentoring, accountability, recognition, and the expected social use of student competence.

The concept of *amanah*, for example, helps explain why delegation can coexist with accountability. Mentors receive responsibility not simply as an organizational task but as a moral trust. *Tarbiyah* provides a developmental orientation to supervision, emphasizing guidance and formation rather than correction alone. *Keteladanan* positions leadership behavior itself as part of the educational environment, while *da'wah* and *khidmah* orient talent development toward contribution beyond individual achievement. This interpretation is consistent with Qomariah (2026), who demonstrates that *pesantren* values can operate as organizational principles within leadership and governance. Abdurrahman et al. (2026) similarly show that *pesantren* leadership cannot be separated from spiritual, cultural, and relational contexts. The findings at Ar-Riyadh extend these insights specifically into the field of talent-development supervision.

The framework is described as relational-transformational because two mechanisms operate simultaneously across the supervisory cycle. The relational dimension is evident in trust, mentoring, interpersonal guidance, appreciation, shared responsibility, and sustained interaction between leaders, mentors, and students. The transformational dimension appears in empowerment, motivation, innovation, capacity building, and the expansion of developmental possibilities. These two dimensions are mutually reinforcing. Trust makes delegation developmental rather than merely administrative. Mentoring transforms monitoring from surveillance into guidance. Recognition turns evaluation into encouragement, while opportunity allows motivation to become further experience and growth.

This interpretation also refines the use of transformational leadership theory. Existing studies have demonstrated the relevance of transformational leadership to innovation, student development, independence, and institutional improvement in *pesantren* and Islamic educational organizations. The present findings do not simply repeat that the leader displays transformational characteristics. Rather, they specify the supervisory processes through which transformational orientations become operational. Empowerment is visible in the distribution of responsibility to mentors. Motivation is enacted through encouragement and recognition. Innovation is manifested in the expansion of *da'wah* activities, external participation, and digital media use. Individual development is facilitated through mentoring, feedback, and opportunities corresponding to students' emerging abilities.

The main conceptual contribution of the study therefore lies in shifting the analysis from leadership traits to supervisory processes. The Relational-Transformational Supervision Cycle explains how leadership direction is translated into recurring organizational practices that connect responsibility, guidance, evaluation, recognition, and developmental opportunity. The model should nevertheless be understood as a process-oriented interpretation derived from a single case. It is not presented as a universal formula for all *pesantren*. Organizational size, leadership tradition, available resources, mentor competence, and institutional culture may shape supervision differently in other settings. Comparative studies are therefore needed to examine whether similar mechanisms emerge across different forms of Islamic boarding schools.

Within the Ar-Riyadh case, however, the findings indicate that effective talent-development supervision is neither purely centralized nor completely decentralized. Its distinctive feature is structured relational accountability: responsibility is distributed, leadership remains engaged through monitoring and mentoring, performance is made visible through evaluation, achievement is recognized, and further opportunities are created for continued development. In this sense, supervision moves beyond administrative control. It becomes an institutional and educational process through which student potential is progressively transformed into participation, competence, achievement, and contribution to *pesantren* and society.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that supervision of student talent and interest development at Pondok *Pesantren* Ar-Riyadh operates as a developmental process rather than merely an administrative control function. The *mudir* provides strategic direction while delegating program implementation to competent mentors, maintaining involvement through monitoring and mentoring, evaluating student development through performance-based activities, and extending recognition and developmental opportunities. These practices contribute to program continuity and create organizational and relational conditions in which students can identify, practice, demonstrate, and further develop their abilities.

The main contribution of this study is the Relational-Transformational Supervision Cycle for *Santri* Talent Development, which conceptualizes supervision through four interconnected mechanisms: trust-based delegation, monitoring and mentoring, performance-based evaluation, and recognition and opportunity. The cycle is relational because it is sustained by trust, *amanah*, guidance, interaction, appreciation, and shared responsibility, and transformational because it promotes empowerment, motivation, innovation, and capacity development. *Pesantren* values, particularly *amanah*, *musyawarah*, *tarbiyah*, *keteladanan*, and orientations toward *da'wah* and *khidmah*, provide the ethical and cultural foundation through which these supervisory mechanisms acquire meaning.

As a single-case qualitative study, the findings are contextually grounded and should not be generalized as a universal model for all *pesantren*. Future research could examine the proposed cycle across different types and sizes of Islamic boarding schools, compare leadership and supervisory practices across institutional contexts, and investigate how mentor competence, organizational culture, resources, and student characteristics influence talent-development processes. Such studies may further test and refine the applicability of relational-transformational supervision as a process-oriented framework for student development in Islamic residential education.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

Gemini and ChatGPT were used to assist with language editing, readability, and manuscript organization. All AI-assisted outputs were reviewed and revised by the author, who takes full responsibility for the final content.

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