

The Influence of Leadership and Communication Strategies on Public Trust in Pesantren: Insights from the PEDATREN Platform

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Abstract – The study explores how Leadership practices and institutional communication approaches delivered through the PEDATREN platform influence stakeholder confidence in Islamic boarding schools. The research employed a quantitative framework, and data were obtained through online questionnaires completed by 260 participants, comprising students and homeroom teachers from grades 7 and 8 at Nurul Jadid Middle School. Data processing was carried out using SPSS, which involved validity, reliability, and normality testing, followed by simple and multiple linear regression analyses. The findings reveal that the implementation of PEDATREN contributes positively and significantly to strengthening institutional confidence (Y), both through the independent effects of Leadership (X1) and communication approaches (X2), and through their combined influence. The regression model shows a strong statistical relationship, with Leadership identified as the most influential predictor of institutional trust (Beta = 0.932).

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These results demonstrate that capable Leadership supported by clear and consistent digital communication plays a key role in building trust within technology-supported pesantren environments. These findings imply that digital governance platforms such as PEDATREN can enhance transparency, accountability, and long-term public trust when integrated with effective Leadership and strategic communication in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords – Leadership, communication, public trust, PEDATREN.

1. Introduction

Leadership and communication strategies are crucial in forming and maintaining public trust in the pesantren environment [1], [2]. Pesantren are value-based and community-based institutions where social relations and trust are the main foundations for educational, religious, and social functions [3]. Strong leadership and effective communication methods greatly determine public perception of the credibility of pesantren [4]. Various studies show that pesantren led by authoritative and communicative figures are more easily accepted by the community [5]. The innovation of using the PEDATREN application as a medium for communication and management of student data is one form of digital adaptation that can strengthen the transparency and accountability of pesantren leadership [6], [7]. This makes it easier for guardians of students and the community to access information, thereby increasing public trust [8], [9]. The combination of leadership and digital communication strategies through the PEDATREN application can effectively strengthen public trust in pesantren, especially amidst the demands of modernization and openness of information.

Studies that directly link leadership and digital communication strategies' influence on public trust in pesantren are still minimal. Most of the existing literature still highlights the role of Islamic boarding school leadership from traditional aspects, such as the charisma of the Kiai (Traditional Islamic Religious Leader in Indonesian Pesantren) and the spiritual approach, without considering the transformation of communication through digital media. Digitalization has become essential in management and social relations in educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools [10], [11]. Research on technology applications generally only discusses its function as an administrative tool and has not been studied strategically as a leadership communication medium that influences public trust [12]. Thus, this creates various gaps according to the dynamics of social change in Islamic boarding school institutions. Therefore, this study aims to answer these gaps through an interdisciplinary approach that connects the influence of leadership style, digital communication strategies, and public trust in the Islamic boarding school education system by utilizing applications such as PEDATREN. Therefore, most previous studies have only focused on one aspect, such as the leadership style of Kiai, interpersonal communication in Islamic boarding schools, or the effectiveness of using digital applications administratively [13].

The existing literature shows that each variable has been examined separately, yet not systematically connected to assess its combined effect on public trust [14], [15]. First, research in [16] suggests that Leadership styles responsive to social and technological change positively influence student and community loyalty. Second, findings in [17] emphasize the role of persuasive and dialogical communication in strengthening the institutional image of Islamic boarding schools. Digital applications improve the effectiveness of management services in pesantren-based institutions, thereby increasing public trust [18], [19].

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the roles of Leadership, communication, and technology in Islamic boarding school settings, the discussions remain fragmented and are not presented as an integrated framework [20]. To date, no research has examined how Leadership and digital communication strategies through the PEDATREN application influence public trust. This research gap creates an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive understanding and generate theoretical and practical contributions to digital-based Islamic education management.

This study introduces a new analytical framework by integrating three core components: Leadership influence, communication strategy, and the use of the PEDATREN digital application to examine how public trust develops in Islamic boarding school environments.

Existing literature on pesantren education generally discusses these elements separately. Leadership studies tend to emphasize the authority and role of the Kiai, while research on communication or digital platforms such as PEDATREN is usually explored in isolation. To date, no study has examined how these three dimensions operate as an interconnected system in shaping public trust. This marks a shift toward digitally assisted Leadership practices and provides a broader lens for understanding how technology-supported governance functions within Islamic boarding school institutions.

To address the existing research gap, this study employs an interdisciplinary lens that connects localized institutional practices with ongoing digital transformation. The key contribution of this work is its integrated framework, which brings together Leadership behavior, digital messaging approaches, and stakeholder confidence, with a specific emphasis on the use of the PEDATREN system within a pesantren context.

More broadly, the investigation examines how Leadership approaches influence community confidence when supported by digital service platforms such as PEDATREN. Beyond its empirical scope, the research is expected to contribute to theoretical discussions on digital governance in pesantren administration and to propose a practical model that strengthens transparency and institutional accountability through communication technology. In essence, the study aims to assist Islamic boarding schools in maintaining and improving long-term institutional trust and credibility.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews relevant theories and empirical studies related to leadership, communication strategies, public trust, and digital governance in Islamic educational institutions. The literature review aims to establish a conceptual foundation for the study by examining previous findings and identifying research gaps that justify the present investigation.

2.1. Leadership Style in Pesantren

Leadership is a key element that shapes the direction, progress, and overall performance of an organization, including religious and educational settings such as pesantren [13]. Within such contexts, a leader is not only responsible for making decisions but also for inspiring, motivating, and facilitating change across the institution [21]. Rather than being defined solely by position or authority, effective leadership is reflected through the capacity to guide, influence, and encourage members of the organization toward shared goals [22], [23]. The present study seeks to enrich perspectives on leadership theory and its application by examining approaches that may be aligned with the operational realities and cultural dynamics of Islamic boarding school environments [24].

The essence of leadership is understood as a process that influences, inspires, and motivates the actions and behavior of individuals or groups in achieving organizational goals, especially in Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, leadership is a relational and dynamic phenomenon between individuals and organizations. Thus, this view emphasizes the importance of interpersonal style and influence in a leader [25], such as trait theory, which highlights the nature and personality of a leader believed to distinguish them from non-leaders, including integrity, self-confidence, and charisma [26]. Although very popular, this approach has also received criticism for ignoring the context and social situation [27].

In practice, this behavior is observed by focusing on the actions of the leader and identifying leadership styles based on task orientation and relationship orientation [28]. Furthermore, in situational leadership theory [29], therefore the effectiveness of leadership is very dependent on a leader to adjust his style according to the maturity, ability, and behavior of his followers [30], developed the theory of transformational and transactional leadership, distinguishing leaders based on how they inspire and manage followers. Transformational leadership is more effective in creating long-term change because it involves values, vision, and emotional commitment [31]. Successful educational leaders can create a collaborative, participatory, and quality-improvement-oriented learning environment [32].

2.2. Communication

Communication strategies in leadership are important for building effective relationships between individuals or organizations and their audiences, especially in Islamic boarding school education [33].

A planned and targeted communication strategy can enable an organization to convey messages accurately and correctly to manage public perception and build public trust [34], [35]. Planned and targeted communication allows organizations to convey messages appropriately, manage public perception, and build trust [29]. Without a clear communication strategy, messages can be misunderstood, cause resistance, or even damage the institution's image [36]. In the information and digital technology era, communication strategies are becoming increasingly complex because they must consider channels, content, and characteristics of diverse audiences [37].

Communication strategy is a planned process for conveying messages through various channels to specific audiences to achieve particular goals [38]. This strategy involves message planning, media selection, timing of communication, and measuring effectiveness [39], [40], explains that strategic communication includes aligning organizational goals with public expectations through a targeted communication process.

In an institutional context, such as educational organizations or Islamic boarding schools, an effective communication strategy can bridge internal values with the external demands of society [41], [42]. The social and cultural context greatly influences communication strategy, so understanding the audience is the primary key to successful communication [43], [44]. In an educational or religious environment, communication is about conveying information and instilling values, forming an image, and building trust [45], [46]. Therefore, communication strategies must consider the source's credibility, clarity of the message, consistency, and two-way interaction [47].

2.3. Public Trust

Public trust is fundamental in building an institution's legitimacy, sustainability, and effectiveness in government, social institutions, or educational and religious institutions such as Islamic boarding schools [48]. Public trust influences the extent to which individuals or groups are willing to accept information, follow directions, and be actively involved in programs or policies offered by an institution [49]. When trust is built, a productive reciprocal relationship will be created, with minimal resistance and more open to innovation and collaboration [50].

According to [51], trust is a perception of another party's competence, integrity, and good intentions. In the context of an organization, public trust grows when the community views the institution as being able to meet expectations consistently and responsibly [52], [53].

Trust is a social lubricant that enables cooperation without strict supervision and high transaction costs [54], [55]. Meanwhile, trust in institutions is closely related to perceptions of procedural justice, transparency, and participation [56]. In Islamic boarding school educational institutions [57], [58], public trust must start from administrative aspects and other dimensions, such as morality and spirituality.

Pesantren education has traditionally been associated with the cultivation of moral values and character. Alongside technological development and increasing access to information, public expectations toward transparency and accountability in pesantren governance have also grown. Communities now seek open communication, timely responses, and consistent institutional behavior as indicators of credibility and reliability. In this context, digital communication channels help shape public perception by expanding access to information and demonstrating institutional openness. Trust in Islamic boarding schools is dynamic rather than fixed. It may strengthen, remain stable, or decline depending on institutional conduct and the quality of interaction experienced between the pesantren and the wider community.

2.4. PEDATREN Application

The PEDATREN application as a pesantren data management system is a form of digitalization of administration and communication in religious-based educational institutions, aiming to increase efficiency, transparency, and public information openness [59]. Digitalization of religious institutions such as pesantren is needed to answer the challenges of the times that demand accountability and fast access to information. Applications such as PEDATREN provide solutions to the complexity of managing student data, curriculum, finances, and reporting to the government and the community. In addition to increasing internal efficiency, using this application also has the potential to strengthen public trust in pesantren. A digital-based management information system helps organizations make faster, more accurate, and data-based decisions [60]. This system facilitates academic management, administration, and relations with stakeholders in education.

The PEDATREN application was developed by the Ministry of Religion as part of an effort to digitize institutional data for Islamic boarding schools [61]. This application contains essential features such as Islamic boarding school registration, student data, teacher data, activity reports, and integration with EMIS (*Education Management Information System*). The implementation of PEDATREN aims to create a national database that can be accessed in real-time. It can be used as a basis for education policy.

Therefore, Islamic boarding school education information technology supports operational efficiency and accelerates the distribution of information to guardians of students, the government, and the community [62]. In addition, the digitalization of PEDATREN can also build and improve the quality of public services and transparency. However, the success of implementing applications such as PEDATREN is highly dependent on an adaptive leadership style and an inclusive, humanistic, and open communication strategy [63].

3. Methodology

In practice, this study employs a quantitative approach, which refers to facts, symptoms, or events that occur in the field, making them easier to observe and measure. Therefore, researchers collect various information about these symptoms by designing a method to collect data and compile it into a research report. This research was conducted in an educational unit affiliated with the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School in Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia. The selection of the research location was based on its reputation and experience in managing well-developed institutions.

The adoption of the PEDATREN platform in this study's setting enables observation of how digital tools shape Leadership behaviour and institutional communication practices. In this context, the system was applied at Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, Paiton Probolinggo, a pesantren with multiple educational levels and a diverse student body. A practical illustration of its use is the transition from manual administrative procedures to real-time digital access, enabling leaders to monitor attendance records, tuition payments, and academic progress in real time. This digital shift enables faster decision-making and improves transparency in communication with internal and external stakeholders. The varied characteristics of the respondents contribute to a balanced dataset, strengthening the credibility and interpretive accuracy of the results. These conditions support the overall analysis and reinforce the conclusions regarding stakeholder assurance and institutional confidence in digitally supported pesantren governance.

The population in this study was 758 users of the PEDATREN application in Islamic boarding schools, taken from students and homeroom teachers of grades 7 and 8 of Nurul Jadid Middle School. The research sample used the Slovin formula of 275 respondents.

The research hypotheses are formulated as follows: Ho: Leadership through PEDATREN (X1) has no positive effect on Public Trust (Y).

Ha: Leadership through the PEDATREN application (X1) positively affects public trust (Y).

Ho: Communication strategy through the PEDATREN application (X2) does not have a positive effect on public trust (Y).

Ha: Communication strategy through the PEDATREN application (X2) has a positive effect on public trust (Y).

Ho: Leadership (X1) and communication Strategy (X2) through the PEDATREN application do not have a positive effect on public trust (Y).

Ha: Leadership (X1) and communication strategy (X2) through the PEDATREN application have a positive effect on public trust (Y).

There are two independent variables, namely leadership (X1) and communication strategy (X2), and one dependent variable in the form of public trust in the PEDATREN application (Y). Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire instrument with a total of 22 statements based on a Likert scale. Variable X1 consists of six question items, variable X2 has eight items, and variable Y also contains eight question items. Each variable is given a scoring system for statistical analysis purposes, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Indicators of each variable

No	Variable	Indicators	Number
1	Leadership	Vision and Innovation	1
		Exemplary	2,14
		Decision Making	3,15
		Support for digitalization	4
2	Communication Strategy	Information transparency	5,16
		Clarity of message	6,17
		Interactivity	7,18
		Digital media	8,19
3	Public Trust	Transparency	9,21
		Accountability	10,22
		Credibility	11
		Consistency	12
		Reputation	13,20

The data for this study were collected through an online questionnaire distributed using Google Forms. Respondents completed and submitted their answers directly through the platform, and the responses were then compiled and prepared for statistical analysis.

The analysis was conducted using SPSS and included both t-tests and multiple linear regression, allowing the researcher to assess the individual and combined influence of the measured variables.

Instrument testing consisted of two stages: validity and reliability analysis. The validity test examined whether each item accurately represented the intended variables, while the reliability test assessed the stability and consistency of responses across items measuring similar constructs. This ensures that the instrument used in the study meets methodological standards and produces credible measurement outcomes. The summary of the validity testing for all questionnaire items is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Validity test summary

Classification	Count (N)	Percentage
Included in analysis	275	100%
Excluded cases	0	0%
Total responses	275	100%

Note: All responses were processed using a listwise inclusion approach.

Based on the output table, the total number of valid responses is $N = 275$. This indicates that all questionnaires returned by respondents were complete and usable for analysis, representing a 100 percent response validity rate. The reliability of the research instrument was examined using Cronbach's alpha, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability assessment results

Measurement Indicator	Value
Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha)	0.721
Number of questionnaire items	22

Based on the N value in the Table 3, the internal consistency of the instrument is supported by a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.721, a value well above the commonly accepted minimum threshold for reliability. The reliability output also shows that each item within the three measured variables demonstrates sufficient consistency, with scores exceeding 0.60. This confirms adequate internal consistency and indicates that the questionnaire is suitable for use in this study. To examine whether the dataset meets the assumption of normal distribution, a One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was conducted, and the results are displayed in the Table 4.

Table 4. Normality test

One-Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov Test				
		Leadership Influence	Communication Strategy	Public Trust
N		275	275	275
Normal Parameters ^a	Mean	22.35	40.12	25.47
	Std. Deviation	4.492	6.104	4.182
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.078	.102	.111
	Positive	.046	.068	.109
	Negative	-.078	-.102	-.097
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.182	1.302	1.241
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.114	.067	.092

a. Test distribution is normal.

The results indicate that the Leadership variable (X1) has a Z value of 1.182 and a p-value of 0.114, well above the minimum threshold of 0.05, suggesting the data are typically distributed. For the communication strategy variable (X2), the Z value is 1.302, and the p-value is 0.067. Since this value is also greater than 0.05, the communication strategy data meet the normality assumption. The public trust variable (Y) shows a Z value of 1.241 with a p-value of 0.092, which also exceeds the required threshold. This confirms that all variables follow a typical distribution pattern, indicating that the dataset is statistically appropriate for regression analysis.

4. Results

This section presents the statistical results of the data analysis conducted to test the proposed research hypotheses. The findings are organized according to the influence of leadership and communication strategies through the PEDATREN application on public trust, as examined using regression analysis.

4.1. The Influence of Leadership through PEDATREN on Public Trust

The testing of Hypothesis 1 examined whether leadership style positively influences public trust in the use of the PEDATREN application within Islamic boarding school educational settings. A simple regression analysis was applied to evaluate this relationship, as the method enables the assessment of the effect of a single independent variable on a dependent variable within a linear prediction model.

The analysis was processed using SPSS Statistics to maintain accuracy and consistency. This suggests that leadership functions not only as a managerial component but also as a determining factor in shaping public perception toward digital service adoption. The summary of the simple linear regression results between variables X1 and Y is presented in the following section.

Table 5. The influence of leadership on public trust

Coefficients ^a				
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
1 (Constant)	2.145	2.882		.744
Leadership	.761	.067	.932	11.356

a. Dependent Variable: Public Trust

Table 5 summarizes the statistical test conducted to evaluate how leadership style contributes to stakeholder confidence in the institution. The analysis was performed using a t-test with data from 275 participants, resulting in 273 degrees of freedom. The obtained t-value was 11.356, which is considerably higher than the reference comparison value of approximately 1.96. The significance level recorded at 0.000 falls well below the 0.05 criterion. Based on this outcome, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is confirmed. The results demonstrate that Leadership style exerts a meaningful influence on community confidence and plays an important role in shaping institutional credibility.

The simple linear regression analysis further supports this conclusion, showing a regression coefficient of 0.761 with a significance value of 0.000. The magnitude of the t-value confirms that leadership style positively and significantly contributes to strengthening public trust. In practical terms, the better leadership is implemented within an institution, including Islamic boarding schools, the higher the level of trust built among stakeholders.

The standardized Beta coefficient of 0.932 suggests that leadership style is a dominant predictor in shaping public trust. The strength of this model demonstrates that the findings may serve as a basis for developing leadership approaches that enhance institutional credibility, particularly in value-based educational environments such as Islamic boarding schools.

4.2. The Influence of Communication Strategy through PEDATREN on Public Trust

Hypothesis 2 evaluates whether the communication strategy positively influences public trust in the PEDATREN application. To assess this assumption, a simple regression analysis was used, as this method allows the researcher to measure the effect of a single independent variable on a dependent variable within a linear prediction framework while maintaining analytical clarity. The analysis was performed using SPSS Statistics, and the results indicate the predictive strength of communication in shaping trust toward digital adoption in pesantren-based administrative systems.

Table 6. The influence of communication strategy on public trust

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardize	Standardized		t	Sig.
	d Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-5.432	5.912		-.918	.359
¹ Communication Strategy	1.082	.136	.863	7.947	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Public Trust

Table 6 outlines the statistical analysis used to evaluate how the institution's communication approach influences stakeholder confidence. The test was performed using a t-test based on responses from 275 participants, resulting in 273 degrees of freedom. The obtained t-value exceeded the required comparison threshold of 1.969, and the significance level was lower than 0.05. Based on these indicators, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is supported, indicating that the institution's communication model plays a meaningful and measurable role in shaping perceptions of credibility.

Further analysis strengthens this interpretation. The t-test yielded a p-value of 7.947, indicating a strong statistical association. The regression output also supports the finding, with a coefficient of 1.082 and a Beta score of 0.863. These values suggest that communication practices are an important predictor of community members' confidence. In practice, clear, consistent, and accessible communication is likely to enhance institutional reputation and strengthen trust in the organization.

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, an effective communication strategy strengthens institutional credibility and creates a more transparent relationship with the community. Consistent messaging, timely responses, and accessible information become key elements in maintaining and developing public trust.

4.3. The Influence of Leadership and Communication Strategy through PEDATREN on Public Trust

Hypothesis 3 evaluates whether leadership (X1) and communication strategies through PEDATREN (X2) positively influence public trust (Y). The assumption in this hypothesis is that strong leadership and structured digital communication may strengthen public confidence in pesantren-based administrative services. To test this relationship, the study applied a multiple regression analysis, allowing both independent variables to be examined simultaneously in predicting variations in the dependent variable. This method was selected because it offers a broader analytical perspective compared to single-variable testing. The data were processed using SPSS Statistics to maintain accuracy and consistency during analysis.

Table 7. The influence of leadership and communication strategy on public trust

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Std. Error		Beta		
	B				
(Constant)	- 4.215	3.721		-1.133	.258
1 Leadership (X1)	.705	.109	.709	6.472	.000
Communication Strategy (X2)	.372	.147	.281	2.528	.012

a. Dependent Variable: Public Trust

Table 7 presents the statistical analysis of the effects of Leadership and communication strategies on public trust. To evaluate this relationship, a t-test was used to determine whether the independent variables (X) contributed meaningfully to the dependent variable (Y). The analysis was based on responses from 275 participants. Using the formula for degrees of freedom ($df = N - 2$), the calculated value was $df = 273$, and the comparison standard was taken from the commonly used reference value of 1.969 for the t-distribution. The results of Hypothesis 3 show that Leadership and communication strategies both demonstrate a positive, significant association with public trust, indicating that these variables meaningfully contribute to public confidence in the institution.

The multiple linear regression analysis provides further confirmation. Leadership emerged as the most influential factor with a Beta coefficient of 0.709, while communication strategy contributed with a Beta value of 0.281. These results highlight that credible, consistent, and capable leadership plays a central role in shaping trust, particularly in institutional settings where moral legitimacy and governance integrity are closely scrutinized, such as Islamic educational institutions or pesantren.

However, communication strategy also remains an essential component because message clarity, transparency, and consistent delivery strengthen confidence among stakeholders. Taken together, the findings demonstrate that public trust becomes stronger and more sustainable when effective leadership is accompanied by a well-structured communication approach.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study show that Leadership and communication strategies both contribute significantly to building confidence in the institution. Results from the simple linear regression confirm that each predictor has a meaningful effect, reinforcing previous theoretical discussions on how Leadership behavior and communication practices support trust formation within organizational settings [64], [65], [66]. In the pesantren environment, Leadership characterized by transparency, clear direction, and accountability plays a substantial role in shaping how the community perceives the institution's credibility [67]. Likewise, communication approaches that prioritize openness and accessible information help foster stronger engagement between pesantren management and its stakeholders.

Although these results align with earlier studies, several distinctions emerge. Prior work by Yi and Jamil has demonstrated that interactive and two-way communication can strengthen confidence in public sector institutions [68], [69]. However, the present study highlights that, within Islamic boarding schools, proactive Leadership behavior exerts a more dominant influence than communication actions alone. This suggests that authority grounded in ethical character and moral responsibility may carry more weight in trust development than informational messaging. Similar conclusions have been reported in research on value-oriented and religious educational environments, where Leadership tends to exert a more substantial influence on organizational credibility than other governance components [70], [71].

The implications of these findings suggest that Islamic boarding schools should prioritize developing leadership that reflects transparency, moral values, and strong community engagement. An effective leadership approach has the potential to enhance public trust, which may also strengthen the institutional role of Islamic boarding schools in society. The results of this study highlight the importance of not only designing effective communication programs but also building leadership capacity within the institution. Authentic, value-based leadership enables Islamic boarding schools to communicate clearly with the public and cultivate a stronger sense of trust.

On the other hand, although communication strategies also significantly impact public trust, their influence is not as significant as leadership. This may be due to Islamic boarding schools' limitations in accessing and utilizing more modern communication technology.

Communication strategies that rely solely on conventional or limited channels may not be sufficient to build the level of emotional connection required to strengthen public trust more broadly. The findings suggest the need for a more integrated approach, combining leadership and communication supported by advanced information and communication technology (ICT) to reach a wider audience. This insight also provides practical implications for Islamic boarding schools, particularly in planning and implementing communication strategies. Institutions need to allocate time and resources to ensure that communication practices reflect their core values. At the same time, leadership capacity should be utilized to position the institution as a trusted and respected educational provider. These findings also create opportunities for further research, particularly on how a more dynamic combination of leadership and communication can influence public trust in other value-driven organizations. The study shows that maintaining public trust requires effective communication and strong, credible leadership.

6. Conclusion

Based on the analysis conducted on the three hypotheses, the variables of leadership and communication strategy positively and significantly influence public trust both partially and simultaneously. Leadership partially influences public trust, indicated by a high regression coefficient value, a very low significance level, and a significant standard beta value. This shows that the higher the quality of leadership, the greater the level of trust given by the public. Likewise, communication strategy has also been proven to significantly influence public trust. Communication strategies that are designed and implemented effectively can increase public trust in a leader or institution. Although its impact is relatively lower than leadership's, its contribution remains significant in building public trust. Thus, simultaneously, both variables -*Leadership and Communication Strategy*- contribute to improving a positive image and building public trust. Leadership has a dominant influence, supported by a communication strategy that continues to support it significantly. Therefore, effective leadership and strategic communication are the primary keys to forming and strengthening public trust in an institution or leader.

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