

## LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES IN RESPONDING TO THE DECLINE OF NEW STUDENT ENROLLMENT AT PESANTREN TAHFIDZ SATU QUR'AN JAMBI

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the leadership strategies employed to address and respond to the decline in student enrollment. The research adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design, involving the pesantren's leadership and asatidz as key informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and were subsequently analyzed interactively through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that leadership strategies are implemented in an integrated manner, encompassing the application of effective learning methods, enhancement of educational quality, assurance of competent human resources and teaching staff, active promotion through social media and school visits, as well as collaborative involvement of asatidz. The success of these strategies is supported not only by promotional activities but also by the quality of students' learning experiences, which foster satisfaction, parental trust, and a positive reputation for the pesantren through word-of-mouth recommendations. The involvement of both leadership and asatidz reflects a participatory leadership model that synergizes quality management and institutional reputation, strategies aimed at addressing declining student enrollment and strengthening institutional attractiveness.

**Keywords:** *Participatory Leadership; Islamic Boarding School; Student Recruitment; Educational Quality; Educational Marketing.*

### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi kepemimpinan yang diterapkan dalam menghadapi dan merespons penurunan jumlah peserta didik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, melibatkan pimpinan pesantren dan para asatidz sebagai informan utama. Data dikumpulkan melalui*



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wawancara mendalam, observasi, serta analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis secara interaktif melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi kepemimpinan dilaksanakan secara terpadu, mencakup penerapan metode pembelajaran yang efektif, peningkatan mutu pendidikan, penjaminan sumber daya manusia dan tenaga pengajar yang kompeten, promosi aktif melalui media sosial dan kunjungan sekolah, serta keterlibatan kolaboratif para asatidz. Keberhasilan strategi tersebut tidak hanya ditopang oleh aktivitas promosi, tetapi juga oleh kualitas pengalaman belajar peserta didik yang menumbuhkan kepuasan, kepercayaan orang tua, serta reputasi positif pesantren melalui rekomendasi dari mulut ke mulut. Keterlibatan pimpinan dan asatidz mencerminkan model kepemimpinan partisipatif yang mensinergikan manajemen mutu dan reputasi kelembagaan, sebagai strategi untuk mengatasi penurunan jumlah peserta didik sekaligus memperkuat daya tarik institusi.

**Kata Kunci:** *Kepemimpinan Partisipatif; Pesantren; Rekrutmen Peserta Didik; Mutu Pendidikan; Pemasaran Pendidikan.*

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) represent distinctive Indonesian educational institutions that have historically grown and developed within society while consistently demonstrating institutional independence (Rohman et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2024). Beyond functioning as formal educational institutions, pesantren also serve as socio-religious centers that actively shape and reinforce local community norms and values (Ma'rufah, 2025; Hartanto et al., 2025). In their early formation, pesantren operated in relatively simple forms, with instructional activities conducted in mosques or *surau* as primary learning spaces (Furqan, 2019). Over time, pesantren underwent significant institutional transformation, particularly through the establishment of dormitory systems that accommodated *santri* as resident learners within more structured educational environments. This development reflects the historical adaptability of pesantren in responding to the evolving demands of modern education (Rohmah et al., 2023). Emerging concurrently with the spread of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, pesantren have consistently emphasized traditional Islamic education, focusing on the transmission of classical Islamic texts and the cultivation of moral character. Through classical pedagogical methods and the internalization of enduring religious values, pesantren play a central role in shaping the ethical and spiritual character of their students (Eva Nurazizah et al., 2025; Syafaq et al., 2026).

Pesantren education aims to shape character, cultivate noble morals, and ensure mastery of religious knowledge, so that graduates are expected to possess faith, knowledge, and devotion to Almighty God (Allah SWT), while also becoming

successors and upholders of religion and the state (Sabil & Diantoro, 2021; Saleh, 2025). Some pesantren have specific objectives, such as producing Qur'an memorizers or graduates who are proficient in Arabic and English, which indicates a diversification of educational goals in accordance with community needs and global challenges.

The development of science, technology, and competition among educational institutions requires pesantren to be innovative, creative, and to possess effective strategies in attracting public interest (Juhaidi, 2024; Mahmud et al., 2026). Educational marketing has become a strategic aspect that needs to be strengthened, including promotional planning, the use of digital media, and the development of the pesantren's image through a marketing mix approach (Jannah et al., 2023). Leadership strategies, particularly those related to educational quality, communication, and promotion, are key to the success of pesantren in maintaining their existence amid increasingly intense competition (Comai, 2025; Gómez-Bayona et al., 2024). Pesantren can implement innovative promotional efforts by empowering students (*santri*) as institutional ambassadors, strengthening alumni networks, and organizing both internal and external activities that build a positive image within the community (Sunardi, 2025).

A number of previous studies provide a foundation regarding strategies to increase the number of new students (*santri*) in pesantren. Research conducted by Letavia et al., (2025) emphasizes the importance of value-based educational service marketing, integrating both digital and traditional approaches to enhance institutional competitiveness. Meanwhile, the study by (Huda et al., 2025) states that marketing strategies and service quality significantly influence prospective students' decisions in choosing a pesantren. Furthermore, research by Liriwati et al., (2024), highlights that the harmonization of religious values and marketing technology can strengthen the institution's image and attractiveness. These previous studies underline the necessity of integrating educational, service, and promotional aspects in strategies aimed at increasing the number of students.

Pondok Pesantren *Tahfidz Satu Qur'an* Jambi is an Islamic educational institution that focuses on *Qur'an* memorization and the cultivation of noble character. In recent years, the number of new students (*santri*) has experienced a significant decline: 78 students in 2022, 95 in 2023, 53 in 2024, and only 16 in 2025. Based on interviews with the pesantren leader and *asatidz* (teachers), four main strategies were identified as efforts to increase the number of new students: (1) the implementation of the most effective learning methods to help students better understand the material and achieve memorization targets, (2) the overall improvement of educational quality, including the learning process, facilities, and

student outcomes, (3) ensuring the quality of human resources and competent teaching staff, and (4) active promotion through social media and direct visits to schools in various regions. These strategies are implemented in an integrated manner, involving the leadership and all teaching staff.

Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi is an Islamic educational institution that focuses on Qur'an memorization and the cultivation of noble character. In recent years, the number of new students (*santri*) has shown a fluctuating yet ultimately declining trend, increasing from 78 students in 2022 to 95 in 2023, but then dropping significantly to 53 in 2024 and further decreasing to 16 in 2025. This pattern indicates a critical challenge for the sustainability of the institution, particularly in maintaining its attractiveness amid increasing competition among educational institutions.

The decline may be associated with several factors, including intensified competition with other Islamic and general educational institutions, changing parental preferences, and the effectiveness of institutional promotion strategies. It is also important to note that the 2025 figure represents a partial count at the time of data collection, which may reflect ongoing challenges rather than a finalized annual total.

In response to this condition, based on interviews with the pesantren leader and *asatidz* (teachers), several key strategies have been identified as efforts to address the decline in student enrollment: (1) the implementation of effective learning methods to support students' memorization achievement, (2) the improvement of overall educational quality, including the learning process, facilities, and student outcomes, (3) ensuring the quality of human resources and competent teaching staff, and (4) active promotion through social media and direct visits to schools in various regions. These strategies are implemented in an integrated manner, involving both leadership and teaching staff.

Although previous studies have highlighted aspects of marketing, service quality, and the harmonization of religious values with marketing technology, there remains a gap in understanding the concrete practices of pesantren leadership in addressing the decline in the number of new students. Earlier studies tend to be general or theoretical in nature; therefore, the interaction between leadership strategies, educational quality improvement, teacher competence, and both *online* and *offline* promotion has not been comprehensively explored. This gap forms the primary focus of the present research. In this study, the researcher seeks to reveal leadership strategies in a direct and integrative manner within the context of local competition and the modernization of pesantren education.

Accordingly, this research is focused on leadership strategies in increasing the number of new students at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi. It is expected to provide practical recommendations for the development of future promotional strategies, while also addressing the limitations of previous studies that have been partial and insufficiently comprehensive.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of leadership strategies in addressing the decline in new student enrollment at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi, which requires a comprehensive exploration of meaning, processes, and context (Creswell, 2015). The case study design is utilized to examine the phenomenon comprehensively within a specific institutional context, thereby enabling the researcher to obtain a holistic understanding of the strategies implemented by the leadership and teaching staff (Cohen et al., 2017).

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi from January to February 2026. The research subjects consisted of one pesantren leader and several *asatidz* (teachers) who were directly involved in planning and implementing strategies related to student enrollment. The informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on specific criteria, including their active involvement in decision-making processes, their roles in educational and promotional activities, and their experience within the institution.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and documentation. The interviews allowed informants to elaborate on the strategies implemented, their experiences, and the challenges encountered. Observations were conducted to understand the learning processes, promotional activities, and the dynamics of educator involvement. Documentation included institutional records, student enrollment data, and promotional materials.

Data analysis was conducted interactively through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and focusing on information relevant to the theme of strategies for addressing declining student enrollment. Data display was presented in the form of systematic descriptive narratives according to the identified strategic categories. Subsequently, conclusions were drawn gradually by comparing field findings with relevant theories and previous studies in order to obtain in-depth interpretations.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and method triangulation techniques (Moleong, 2014). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the pesantren leader and the asatidz, while method triangulation was carried out by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, the researcher conducted member checking with informants to ensure that the data interpretations accurately reflected the meanings conveyed by the participants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Implementation of the Best Learning Methods

The implementation of effective learning methods serves as the primary foundation in supporting students' success and has a direct impact on public trust in the pesantren. In an interview, the Pesantren Leader stated:

*"First, we ensure that the learning methods used are the best and easy for students to understand so that they can achieve their goal of memorizing the Qur'an properly and correctly. Because if the method is not appropriate, students will face difficulties, and this will affect the community's trust in our pesantren."* (Interview, February 11, 2026).

This finding is supported by direct observation during the learning process, where students were actively engaged in structured memorization sessions using guided repetition and teacher feedback. The learning activities were organized systematically, allowing students to progress according to their individual abilities.

In addition, documentation in the form of learning schedules and memorization progress records shows that the pesantren has implemented a structured system to monitor students' achievement. These documents indicate that learning methods are not applied randomly, but are systematically designed to support students' memorization targets.

The implementation of effective learning methods is key to ensuring that students are able to memorize the Qur'an properly and to building public trust in the pesantren. One ustadz explained:

*"We always adjust the learning methods to the students' abilities. With a systematic and easy-to-understand approach, students memorize the Qur'an more quickly, and parents feel confident in the quality of education we provide. By implementing the best learning methods, we also strengthen the pesantren's reputation through*

*recommendations from families and the surrounding community.”*  
(Interview, February 13, 2026).

One ustadzah also emphasized that:

*“The methods we apply are designed to be easy to understand and engaging, so that students feel motivated to learn. When they experience the benefits, families and the community will naturally perceive the pesantren as a quality educational institution.”*  
(Interview, February 13, 2026).

Effective learning methods not only facilitate mastery of the material but also build public trust in the quality of pesantren education, which in turn contributes to an increase in the number of applicants.

### **Improvement of Educational Quality**

The second strategy emphasizes the comprehensive improvement of educational quality, including the quality of the learning process, facilities, and student outcomes. The pesantren leader stated:

*“Second, we maintain the overall quality of education, covering the quality of methods, teachers, and available facilities. Because the increase in the number of students is directly proportional to student satisfaction while studying here. If students are satisfied and experience the benefits, they will share their experiences with their families and people around them.”* (Interview, February 11, 2026).

This statement is supported by field observations showing that the learning environment is conducive, with organized classroom settings and adequate facilities that support students' daily learning activities. Furthermore, documentation such as facility records and student activity reports indicates continuous efforts to improve educational quality, including the provision of learning resources and the maintenance of infrastructure.

The researcher also interviewed one of the *ustadz*, who stated:

*“From my teaching experience, when the teaching methods are engaging, the teachers are competent, and the facilities are supportive, students feel comfortable and enjoy learning. Satisfied students usually share their experiences with family and friends, which indirectly helps the pesantren attract new students.”*  
(Interview, February 13, 2026).

The strategy of comprehensively improving educational quality in the pesantren demonstrates that educational quality and student satisfaction are closely interconnected, and both serve as key factors in building the institution's reputation and supporting sustainable growth in student enrollment.

### **Ensuring the Quality of Human Resources and Teaching Staff**

The third strategy is to ensure the competence of human resources and teaching staff who interact directly with the students. The pesantren leader emphasized:

*"We ensure the quality of competent human resources and teaching staff so that students feel comfortable in learning. The teachers we select must be truly competent and possess accountable knowledge, because they are the ones who interact directly with the students every day."* (Interview, February 11, 2026).

Observation results show that teachers actively interact with students during the learning process, providing guidance, feedback, and motivation to support students' memorization progress. In addition, documentation related to teacher assignments and institutional records indicates that the pesantren maintains a structured system in managing teaching staff, ensuring that competent educators are involved in the learning process.

This statement was reinforced by Rizky Romadhon, S.Si., one of the asatidz of the pesantren, who stated:

*"I always strive to provide the best teaching to the students and ensure they feel comfortable while learning. Because students' comfort is the key to helping them feel at home and achieve their memorization targets successfully."* (Interview, February 11, 2026).

This strategy demonstrates that the quality of teaching staff serves as an essential foundation for educational success, while also functioning as a promotional strategy based on students' positive learning experiences.

### **Active Promotion through Social Media and Direct School Visits**

The fourth strategy involves conducting active promotion through both online (social media) and offline (direct school visits) approaches. The offline strategy began to be implemented in 2026. The pesantren leader explained:

*"We are also actively promoting the pesantren through social media as well as direct visits to schools in various regions such as Tebo, Bungo, Bangko, Sarolangun, Tungkal, Merlung, and surrounding"*

*areas. There, we conduct outreach activities mainly targeting elementary (SD), junior high (SMP), and Islamic junior high school (MTs) students, as they will soon continue to the next level of education. During each visit, we also distribute brochures and calendars. Because no matter how good our pesantren is, if it is not known by the community, students will not come on their own.” (Interview, February 11, 2026).*

This is supported by documentation in the form of promotional materials, including brochures, banners, and social media content published through the pesantren’s official accounts. Observation during outreach activities shows that the asatidz directly interacted with prospective students in various schools, providing information about the pesantren and distributing promotional materials, which reflects the integration of online and offline promotional strategies.

This is further supported by a statement from Suci Rosmida, who was directly involved in the promotional activities. She stated:

*“I personally participated in conducting outreach and school visits in various regions. There, we introduced the pesantren to students who would continue to the next level of education, both through social media and offline activities.” (Interview, February 11, 2026).*

a. Online Promotion (Social Media)

Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur’an Jambi utilizes various social media platforms as an effective digital promotional strategy to reach prospective students and parents more broadly. The use of social media enables the pesantren to disseminate information related to its educational programs, the strengths of its *tahfidz* learning system, student activities, and alumni testimonials in real time. Through this approach, the pesantren is able to build a positive public image and enhance community trust.

This online promotional strategy also functions as a content-based marketing tool that aligns with the characteristics of younger generations who are more active on digital platforms. Through this approach, the pesantren can maximize its geographical reach, attract prospective students from various regions, and visually present tangible evidence of its educational quality, including videos of Qur’an memorization activities, learning methods, and testimonials from students and parents. The official social media accounts used as promotional media include: YouTube: [@pesantrensatuquranjambi](#) which is used to broadcast learning activity videos, student testimonials, and documentation of *tahfidz* programs. TikTok: [@pesantren.satuquran](#) which is

utilized for short, engaging content aimed at capturing the attention of younger audiences through quick information and interactive visuals. Instagram: [@pesantren.satuquran](https://www.instagram.com/pesantren.satuquran) which features photos of student activities, announcements, and direct interaction with prospective students and parents through comments and direct messages; and WhatsApp (WA), which functions to support educational management and communication, both internally and externally.

The utilization of social media as a promotional medium by Pesantren Satu Qur'an Jambi demonstrates that the institution does not rely solely on conventional promotion but also adapts modern communication strategies to strengthen its attractiveness, build its institutional image, and effectively increase the number of new students.

b. Offline Promotion (Direct School Visits)

In addition to social media, the pesantren also conducts offline promotion through direct visits to schools in various regions. These activities are carried out by installing banners for new student admissions and distributing calendars to the schools. The following is documentation of these offline promotional activities:



**Figure 1.** Banner for New Student Admission at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi



**Figure 2.** Distribution of Calendars to Schools as a Promotional Medium

### **Involvement of Asatidz in the Implementation of Strategies**

The implementation of strategies to increase the number of new students at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi is not solely the responsibility of the leader, but also actively involves all teaching staff. Based on the interview results, the pesantren leader, H. Abdurrachman Baharuddin, Lc., Al-Hafidz, emphasized:

*"In implementing strategies to increase the number of new students, I am directly involved starting from planning, monitoring the learning process, to promotional activities. We ensure that all strategies run in harmony between improving educational quality and introducing the pesantren to the community. This involvement is important so that every strategic step can be well integrated and produce maximum results."* (Interview, February 11, 2026).

Field observations indicate that asatidz are actively involved not only in teaching activities but also in promotional efforts, including school visits and social media engagement. This is further supported by documentation of outreach activities and internal coordination records, which show that the involvement of teaching staff is systematically organized as part of the institutional strategy.

In addition to the leader, the teaching staff (asatidz) also play an active role in implementing the strategy, both in the learning process and in online and offline promotional activities. Suci Rosmaida, one of the asatidz who was directly involved, stated:

*"My involvement in implementing the strategy to increase the number of new students is quite direct. I personally went into the field to conduct outreach activities in various regions. In addition, I was also involved in promotional activities through social media as well"*

*as offline. And of course, I continue to carry out my main role as a teacher at this pesantren, because the quality of teaching is also an important part of the pesantren's strategy in attracting and retaining students." (Interview, February 11, 2026).*

The leadership strategy is collaborative and comprehensive, in which the leader and teaching staff work together synergistically. The active involvement of the *asatidz* not only ensures that educational quality is maintained, but also supports the effectiveness of the pesantren's promotion, enabling prospective students and parents to obtain clear and convincing information about the quality of education offered.

## **Discussion**

### **Implementation of the Best Learning Methods**

The implementation of effective learning methods serves as the primary foundation for attracting and retaining students in the pesantren. Methods that are easy to understand and capable of enabling students to optimally achieve Qur'an memorization targets directly enhance public trust in the quality of education, thereby becoming an important indicator of the institution's reputation in the eyes of parents. Constructivist learning principles emphasize that active learning experiences, tailored to students' capacities, can improve understanding and retention of material (Ugwuozor, 2020).

The implementation of effective learning methods at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi not only impacts students' academic achievement, but also functions as a form of natural promotion. Students who experience the benefits of the learning process tend to share their experiences with family members, neighbors, and the surrounding community, allowing the pesantren's reputation to grow through word-of-mouth testimonials. This strategy serves as an influential interpersonal recommendation that significantly affects parents' decisions in choosing Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi.

This strategy serves as an interpersonal recommendation that significantly influences parents' decisions in choosing Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi, which implements effective learning methods. According to Juswan et al., (2024), satisfaction with teaching methods is the most significant factor influencing parents' decisions in selecting an educational institution for their children. This indicates that the quality of the learning process not only enhances students' academic achievement but also strengthens promotional effects through personal experiences and recommendations from other parents. This finding is further

supported by research conducted by Hussin et al., (2022), which shows that the success of learning methods significantly affects parents' decisions in choosing a school. Therefore, the implementation of the best learning methods represents a key strategy that integrates pedagogical aspects with experience-based marketing.

Then, the application of the best learning methods at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi constitutes one of the primary strategies that combines pedagogical principles with experience-based marketing. This strategy not only improves educational quality but also expands the institution's reputation and attractiveness through organic testimonials from students and parents, positioning effective learning methods as a strategic instrument for pesantren development.

Beyond confirming previous studies, this finding contributes to the conceptual understanding that effective learning methods in pesantren function not only as pedagogical tools but also as experiential marketing mechanisms. In this context, students' learning experiences become a primary source of institutional reputation, which indirectly influences enrollment decisions through word-of-mouth communication. This indicates that pedagogical quality and marketing outcomes are closely interconnected within faith-based educational institutions.

### **Improvement of Educational Quality**

The improvement of educational quality at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi is implemented in a comprehensive and strategic manner by emphasizing the quality of learning services, teacher competence, educational facilities, and a conducive educational management system. According to Dangaiso & Tsvere, (2025), comprehensiveness in educational service quality is essential, as the quality of academic services and the learning environment serve as important predictors of students' perceptions of overall institutional quality at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi.

*Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi* emphasizes the quality of learning methods that are effectively designed and tailored to the students' capacities, enabling them to understand the material more quickly and achieve Qur'an memorization targets optimally. As indicated by research conducted by Jerlinder et al., (2025), students' perceptions of learning quality are directly related to their learning satisfaction, where relevant and effective methods enhance learning outcomes and foster positive perceptions of the educational institution.

The competent and dedicated teachers at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi play roles not only as academic facilitators but also as personal mentors who create an enjoyable and conducive learning experience for students. This is reinforced by research conducted by Nurgaliyeva et al., (2025), which

indicates that the quality of educational services and instructional support from teachers are significant factors correlated with student satisfaction.

The educational facilities, including representative classrooms, comfortable dormitories, and other supporting infrastructure, also contribute to the effectiveness of the learning process. The combination of effective learning methods, qualified teachers, and adequate facilities creates a conducive educational environment, which ultimately has a positive impact on student satisfaction at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi.

Student satisfaction is not merely a subjective experience, according to (Surya Bahadur et al., 2024), the quality of academic services and academic support has a significant relationship with students' levels of satisfaction within educational environments. When students feel satisfied with their learning experiences, both academically and non-academically, they tend to share positive experiences with their families and the wider community. This indirectly strengthens public perception of the pesantren and contributes to an increase in new applicants.

Institutional quality development must involve the integration of various educational components, including learning methods, teacher competence, facilities, and effective human resource management, to create a sustainable impact (Harvey, 2022). This multidimensional approach not only improves academic achievement and student retention but also reinforces the image of Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi as a high-quality institution, which ultimately affects sustainable growth in new student enrollment. Thus, educational quality becomes a strategic foundation in achieving long-term educational goals at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi, while also functioning as an effective and credible experience-based promotional mechanism.

This study extends previous research by demonstrating that educational quality in pesantren operates as a multidimensional construct that integrates academic services, learning environment, and institutional management. More importantly, it shows that educational quality does not only affect student satisfaction but also plays a strategic role in shaping institutional attractiveness in competitive educational markets. This highlights the dual function of quality as both an internal improvement mechanism and an external positioning strategy.

### **Ensuring the Quality of Human Resources (HR) and Teaching Staff**

Ensuring the quality of human resources (HR) and teaching staff is a key strategy in improving educational quality at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi. Competent teachers who are responsible for carrying out their duties create a comfortable and effective learning atmosphere, enabling students to achieve their

Qur'an memorization targets successfully. Teacher competence significantly influences the overall quality of instruction and student learning outcomes. As indicated by research conducted by (Siri et al., 2020), teachers who possess strong pedagogical, professional, and interpersonal competencies tend to build more meaningful and effective learning interactions, which in turn enhance students' performance and satisfaction with their learning experiences.

The implementation of competence based education shows that the level of teacher competence is positively correlated with students' perceptions of satisfaction with the learning process, where high quality teaching can enhance learning motivation and student engagement in instructional activities (van Griethuijsen et al., 2020). This is supported by Jerlinder et al., (2025), who state that teacher competence, which includes mastery of subject matter, classroom management, and the ability to deliver material effectively, is a primary predictor of student learning success and satisfaction with educational services. In the context of Islamic boarding schools or pesantren, competent teachers act not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as personal mentors, creating a more enjoyable, motivating, and meaningful learning experience for students or santri.

The quality of teaching staff not only impacts academic learning outcomes but also contributes to the psychological comfort of students within the educational environment. According to Puja, (2024), good instructional quality is associated with increased student motivation, which indirectly strengthens their satisfaction and engagement in the learning process. At *Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi*, teachers develop not only the cognitive aspects of students but also their emotional and spiritual dimensions. The involvement of caring and competent teachers tends to create positive emotional bonds between students and the pesantren, which in turn affects student loyalty and encourages recommendations to prospective students.

Structurally, human resources also contribute to the overall effectiveness of learning. Teacher competence in a systematic manner, including collaborative skills, effective communication, and continuous professional development, can improve teaching quality and positively influence students' perceptions of educational services (van Griethuijsen et al., 2020). Therefore, ensuring the quality of human resources at *Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi* requires not only strict initial selection but also ongoing professional training and development to address pedagogical challenges and the evolving needs of students.

The strategy for ensuring the quality of human resources and teaching staff in Islamic boarding schools can be understood through a comprehensive educational quality management perspective, in which teacher competence is a crucial

component in improving overall educational quality. Teaching quality is one of the most important indicators in assessing educational effectiveness, as well as student satisfaction and outcomes, especially at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi, which upholds both academic and spiritual standards. Teacher involvement in every aspect of education, from the learning process to character development, contributes not only to the achievement of academic goals but also functions as an indirect promotional force, as positive personal experiences of students become strong references in attracting new students.

Thus, ensuring the quality of human resources and teaching staff is not a secondary strategy, but a fundamental one that supports the long term success of *Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi*. Investment in teacher competence is directly linked to increased student satisfaction, institutional reputation, and sustainable growth in student enrollment, making this strategy not merely operational but also strategic within the context of contemporary education.

In addition, this study provides a conceptual contribution by positioning teaching staff not only as educational actors but also as strategic agents of institutional reputation. The dual role of teachers—as facilitators of learning and as representatives of the institution—suggests that human resource quality directly influences both educational outcomes and institutional branding. This expands the perspective of teacher competence from purely pedagogical dimensions to include its strategic value in educational sustainability.

### **Active Promotion Through Social Media and Direct School Visits**

The active promotional strategy implemented by *Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi* combines digital approaches through social media with direct face to face efforts by visiting schools to increase the number of new students. The approach reflects an understanding that educational promotion cannot rely solely on conventional methods, but must respond to changes in communication dynamics and the behavior of modern audiences who are increasingly digitally connected. In his research, Pawar (2024) states that social media is effective in increasing engagement among prospective students, building institutional branding, and supporting enrollment decisions through attractive content and continuous interaction between educational institutions and their public.

The online promotional approach carried out by Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi includes video content of learning activities, student testimonials, and program information shared through platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp. This demonstrates the utilization of social media as a promotional channel that adapts to the characteristics of the younger generation.

This is in line with the findings of Juhaidi, (2024), which state that *social media marketing* can influence prospective students' decisions in choosing an educational institution by increasing visibility, engagement, and strengthening positive perceptions of the institution.

In addition, offline promotion conducted by *Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi* through direct visits to schools in various regions represents a strategic effort to build personal relationships between the pesantren and prospective students. These visits expand the dissemination of information to elementary and junior secondary students who are planning to continue their education, while also providing an opportunity for the pesantren to comprehensively explain the advantages of its tahfidz program. Personal interaction through intensive outreach and direct visits can increase parents' and prospective students' understanding of the institution, thereby influencing enrollment decisions. This is reinforced by the research of Mandopa & Hasibuan, (2024), which emphasizes that the combination of social media and face to face approaches can broaden the promotional reach of educational institutions.

The focus on offline promotion also includes the use of direct promotional materials such as brochures, banners, and calendars distributed during school visits. This effort supports stronger *brand recall of Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi* within the local community, which can increase awareness among prospective applicants and their parents, especially in educational communities that maintain strong family-based communication traditions. The combination of digital and offline activities reflects an *effective integrated marketing communications approach*, in which consistent messages are delivered through multiple channels to reach the target audience more broadly and deeply. The promotional strategy implemented by Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi integrates relevant visual content, audience engagement, and real time interaction, thereby significantly influencing the perceptions and decisions of prospective students, particularly those categorized as digital natives.

Thus, the active promotion carried out by Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi reflects the application of a modern marketing strategy. The combined approach of digital promotion and face-to-face visits means that the pesantren not only builds visibility in the broader digital space but also strengthens direct relationships with educational stakeholders through personal engagement, ultimately leading to a significant increase in new student enrollment.

This finding contributes to the literature by illustrating that pesantren promotion is most effective when it integrates digital engagement with direct interpersonal communication. The combination of social media and face-to-face

outreach forms an integrated communication strategy that strengthens both visibility and trust. This suggests that hybrid promotional models are particularly relevant for traditional educational institutions adapting to modern communication environments.

### **The Involvement of Asatidz in Strategy Implementation**

The strategy to increase the number of new students at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi is carried out through a collaborative approach that actively involves the leader and all asatidz. The involvement of the leader in planning, monitoring the learning process, and promotional activities reflects a model of strategic leadership that integrates educational quality improvement with the strengthening of the institution's presence within the community. This strategy does not separate academic functions from institutional functions, but rather synergizes them within a comprehensive management framework.

The participation of asatidz in outreach activities, school visits, social media promotion, while consistently maintaining the quality of instruction, demonstrates that educators play a dual role as implementers of the academic process and as representatives of the institution. This role indicates that the credibility of the pesantren's promotion is grounded in the actual quality delivered by its educators. Therefore, the strategy for increasing new student enrollment is based on authentic educational experiences rather than merely persuasive communication.

These findings are consistent with the research of Gómez-Bayona et al., (2024), which highlights that educators play a strategic role as relationship builders. Teachers not only transfer knowledge but also cultivate long-term relationships with stakeholders through credible interactions based on authentic experiences. In this study, the role of asatidz in maintaining teaching quality while also participating in promotional activities reflects a practice of relationship marketing grounded in the quality of educational services.

Analytically, the involvement of asatidz in strategies to increase new student enrollment can be understood as an integration of quality management and reputation management. Consistent learning quality serves as the main foundation, while active communication by educators acts as a channel for distributing the institution's value to the community. This synergy builds trust, strengthens positive perceptions, and encourages natural word-of-mouth recommendations, which are the most credible form of promotion in trust-based educational contexts such as pesantren.

Thus, the results of this study affirm that the active involvement of asatidz is not merely operational support for leadership strategies, but a strategic element

determining the effectiveness of increasing new student enrollment. Collaboration between leadership and teaching staff reflects a participatory, integrated, and relationship-based educational management model, capable of maintaining academic quality while sustainably strengthening the pesantren's reputation.

Furthermore, this study offers a conceptual insight into participatory leadership in pesantren, where strategic decision-making and implementation are distributed among leadership and teaching staff. This collaborative model demonstrates that institutional effectiveness is enhanced when all members contribute to both academic and promotional functions. It reinforces the idea that participatory leadership is not only a management approach but also a strategic mechanism for sustaining institutional growth.

Overall, this study highlights that leadership strategies in pesantren are not isolated practices, but rather interconnected systems that integrate educational quality, human resources, and promotional efforts. The findings suggest that addressing declining enrollment requires a holistic approach in which internal quality improvement and external communication strategies are aligned. This integrative perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of how Islamic boarding schools can remain competitive and sustainable in contemporary educational contexts.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that leadership strategies in addressing the decline in new student enrollment at Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Satu Qur'an Jambi are implemented through an integrated approach that combines the improvement of educational quality with the strengthening of institutional promotion. These strategies include the application of effective learning methods, the enhancement of educational service quality, the assurance of competent human resources, active promotion through both digital platforms and direct school visits, and the collaborative involvement of *asatidz*. The findings indicate that student enrollment is not solely influenced by promotional efforts, but is strongly shaped by the quality of the learning experience, which fosters student satisfaction, parental trust, and a positive institutional reputation.

From a practical perspective, this study provides important implications for pesantren leaders and educational practitioners. Efforts to address declining enrollment should not rely only on promotional activities, but must be supported by continuous improvement in educational quality, teacher competence, and student experience. In addition, the integration of digital and face-to-face promotional

strategies is essential to effectively reach prospective students in the contemporary educational landscape.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that leadership strategies in Islamic boarding schools operate as an integrated system that connects pedagogical quality, human resource management, and institutional marketing. It also highlights the role of participatory leadership as a strategic mechanism that enhances both internal effectiveness and external institutional attractiveness.

However, this study has several limitations. First, it is based on a single case study, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the data rely primarily on qualitative approaches, which focus on depth rather than statistical generalization. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve multiple pesantren contexts and to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of strategies for addressing student enrollment challenges.

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