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Decoding Leadership Pedagogy in Lutung Kasarung: A Semiotic Analysis of Constitutionalism and Religious Moderation

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Abstrak

Krisis kepemimpinan di Indonesia ditandai dengan melemahnya integritas moral, dominasi kepentingan elit, rendahnya akuntabilitas demokratis, polarisasi sosial, serta tantangan dalam mengelola keberagaman. Meski studi tentang kepemimpinan dan moderasi beragama telah berkembang, integrasi kearifan lokal Sunda dengan paradigma kepemimpinan moderat masih terbatas. Riset ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis makna simbolik legenda Lutung Kasarung serta merumuskan konstruksi kepemimpinan otentik yang relevan dengan moderasi beragama. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan sumber utama berupa karya Ajip Rosidi (2023) serta literatur satu dekade terakhir. Data dianalisis secara deskriptif-tematik melalui semiotika mitologis Roland Barthes. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa tokoh Kamandaka merepresentasikan integritas, keadilan, kerendahan hati, empati, musyawarah, dan tanggung jawab kolektif yang sejalan dengan prinsip moderasi beragama: tawassuṭ, tawāzun, tasāmuḥ, dan i'tidāl. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi semiotika, kearifan lokal, nilai konstitusional, dan moderasi beragama dalam pedagogi kepemimpinan kontekstual. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa narasi lokal dapat menjadi sumber pembelajaran alternatif untuk memperkuat kepemimpinan inklusif dalam pendidikan Islam.

Kata kunci: *Kepemimpinan, Konstitusi Indonesia, Legenda Kasarung, Moderasi Beragama, Semiotika Mitologis*



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Abstract

The crisis of leadership in Indonesia is marked by a weakening of moral integrity, the dominance of elite interests, low democratic accountability, social polarization, and the challenge of managing diversity. Although the study of religious leadership and moderation has advanced, the integration of Sundanese local wisdom with the moderate leadership paradigm remains limited. This research aims to analyze the symbolic meaning of the Lutung Kasarung legend and to formulate an authentic leadership framework relevant to religious moderation. The research uses a qualitative approach based on literature studies with the main source of Ajip Rosidi's work (2023) and literature from the last decade. The data were analyzed descriptively through Roland Barthes' mythological semiotics. The results show that Kamandaka figures embody integrity, justice, humility, empathy, deliberation, and collective responsibility, which align with the principles of religious moderation: *tawassuṭ*, *tawāzun*, *tasāmuḥ*, and *i'tidāl*. The novelty of the research lies in integrating semiotics, local wisdom, constitutional values, and religious moderation into a contextual leadership pedagogy. These findings confirm that local narratives can be an alternative learning resource to strengthen inclusive leadership in Islamic education.

Keywords: *Indonesia's and Constitution, Leadership, Lutung Kasarung, Mythological Semiotics, Religious Moderation*

INTRODUCTION

Today, Indonesia requires leaders capable of managing its vast cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity while transforming pluralism into a strategic asset for national development (Sabran et al., 2024). However, the country continues to face multidimensional challenges stemming from weak leadership, including inconsistent public policies, limited responsiveness to societal needs, ineffective management of structural problems, rising unemployment, economic inequality, declining social cohesion, and increasing intolerance (Fauzan Giyandri et al., 2024). These conditions threaten national harmony and undermine the ideals of Pancasila and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, particularly amid growing tensions and mistrust among religious communities (Wahid et al., 2025). Addressing these challenges requires ethical, inclusive, and socially responsive leadership that promotes dialogue, justice, and democratic participation while preserving local wisdom and strengthening peaceful coexistence within Indonesia's pluralistic society (Akhtar, 2021; Macpherson, 2025).

The government and various stakeholders must formulate firm, solution-oriented, and sustainable policies to address Indonesia's multidimensional crises. In

this context, religious moderation serves not only to maintain tolerance in a multicultural society but also as a strategic foundation for building inclusive, adaptive, and transformative leadership (Imamah, 2023). Through the principles of *tawassuṭ* (moderation), *tawāzun* (balance), *tasāamuh* (tolerance), and *i'tidāl* (justice), religious moderation directs leaders to reject extremism, authoritarianism, and polarizing policies that threaten social harmony and national unity (Monang et al., 2022).

The meeting point between leadership and religious moderation lies in their common commitment to justice, stability, social cohesion, and collective welfare. Effective leadership requires managing diversity wisely, formulating balanced policies, and prioritizing dialogue and consensus amid differences. Therefore, leaders who internalize the values of religious moderation tend to demonstrate inclusive decision-making, empathy toward social realities, openness to diversity, and commitment to democratic and humanitarian principles. In the midst of polarization, identity politics, intolerance, and social fragmentation, leadership rooted in religious moderation becomes an essential instrument for transforming crises into opportunities to build a more equitable, stable, harmonious, and globally competitive Indonesia (Wijaya, 2025).

The Indonesian democratic system requires the leaders who ideally uphold the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as the basis for all decision-making and policy-making (Rosyad & Maarif, 2020). Pancasila and the constitution are not only symbols of state sovereignty, but also moral and legal guidelines that direct the government to remain on the side of the people (Subakir & S, 2024). However, in reality, many leaders still deviate from these values, especially for personal or group interests. Violations of the fourth and fifth principles (which uphold deliberation and social justice) often take the form of unilateral policies adopted without regard for society's aspirations as a whole.

Contemporary leadership in Indonesia faces significant challenges due to elitist and centralized policy-making that often limits public participation and weakens democratic accountability. Many policies fail to address societal needs, exacerbating inequality and prioritizing elite interests over collective welfare (Williams & Tierney, 2023). This condition reflects the erosion of transparency,

inclusiveness, empathy, and people-centred governance, distancing leadership from democratic and social justice principles. Consequently, public sovereignty is increasingly reduced to political legitimization, generating an ethical and ideological crisis that undermines public trust, democratic sustainability, and national stability.

Based on this context, the role of educational leadership is crucial as the foundation for systemic transformation. Educational institutions are not merely factories for producing workers (Sabat, 2021), but a place where leaders with moral integrity and ethical intelligence are born. Educational leadership must be able to integrate the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution not only as theoretical discussions but also as practical guidelines for shaping a nation sensitive to social justice (E. Rahmawati & Hanafi, 2022).

Policy makers, both in the public bureaucracy and educational institutions, have a moral mandate to consistently and responsibly implement constitutional principles (Qulsum & Hermanto, 2022). In this context, educational leadership does not merely function as administrative management but also serves as a visionary intellectual catalyst. Educational leaders are required to integrate the nation's noble values into the curriculum and organizational culture to produce a generation with a strong sense of citizenship that upholds the values of moderation.

The synergy between educational vision and inclusive public policy is essential for leadership that prioritizes public welfare, ethical responsibility, and constitutional values rather than merely technocratic objectives. In this context, *Lutung Kasarung* faces enduring leadership challenges, including power struggles, manipulation, injustice, and the tendency to judge leaders by status and appearance rather than by integrity and moral character (Mandray et al., 2025; Rosadi, 2023). Therefore, folklore should be understood not only as a cultural narrative but also as a social and ethical text that conveys principles of justice, legitimacy, responsibility, and public morality relevant to contemporary leadership discourse.

The integrity crisis among contemporary leaders, characterized by weak moral commitment, social polarization, intolerance, and declining public trust, underscores the need to reconstruct leadership foundations grounded in culturally relevant values. Folklore provides a valid source for leadership pedagogy because it serves as collective moral education, preserving ethical principles, social ideals, and

contextual models of leadership across generations through narratives and symbols. Unlike abstract leadership theories, folklore offers culturally meaningful and pedagogically accessible lessons that facilitate the internalization of leadership values. Among Indonesian folk narratives, *Lutung Kasarung* is particularly relevant for Islamic education and religious moderation because the character of Kamandaka embodies humility, wisdom, justice, self-control, compassion, integrity, and dedication to the common good. These virtues closely reflect the principles of *tawassuṭ*, *tawāzun*, *tasāmuḥ*, and *i'tidāl*, positioning the narrative as a culturally relevant framework for fostering inclusive, ethical, democratic, and moderate leadership within Indonesia's pluralistic society (Hosseini, 2023; Lawrence, 2025).

This study is particularly relevant to educational leadership, which requires not only managerial competence but also moral integrity, spiritual awareness, and social empathy. The character of Kamandaka in *Lutung Kasarung* embodies these qualities, offering a model of ethical and people-oriented leadership (Purnama et al., 2022). Through Roland Barthes' mythological semiotics, this research examines the symbolic constructions within the narrative and explores how its leadership values can be reconstructed into a contemporary paradigm integrated with religious moderation. Accordingly, the study positions *Lutung Kasarung* as a source of local wisdom and leadership pedagogy for formulating an authentic, inclusive, and democratic leadership model that responds to contemporary moral challenges and leadership crises in Indonesian education and society.

Previous research relevant to this study are: (1) "Digital Storytelling Trends in Early Childhood Education in Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review" by Purnama et al. (2022) found that digital storytelling enhances learning engagement at PAUD in Indonesian, while highlighting methodological and practical improvements in its implementation, (2) "Scotland: An Introduction to Modern Sundanese Studies" by Watson & Moriyama (2025), highlights the scarcity of international academic attention on Sundanese customs, serving to introduce Sundanese culture to global. (3) "Transformed Images of Women in a Sundanese Magazine: A Corpus Linguistics Perspective" by Wacana et al. (2025), the representation of Sundanese women in *Manglé* magazine, reveals the prevalence of the term *wanoja*, which reflects women's growing confidence in the public sphere and demonstrates the usefulness of corpus

linguistics for analyzing Indonesian regional texts. All studies reveal a research gap: despite the presence of symbolic elements in the *Lutung Kasarung* story, no prior research has explored the formulation of a socio-anthropologically and politically grounded leadership paradigm within the Indonesian context.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative library research design that draws on both primary and secondary sources (Mun'im, 2022). The primary source is *The Legend of Lutung Kasarung* compiled by Rosadi (2023), selected for its comprehensive narrative structure, cultural richness, and clear mythological symbolism that facilitates semiotic interpretation. Secondary data consist of recent publications indexed by Scopus and SINTA 2–3, focusing on mythology, leadership, local wisdom, and religious moderation. These sources provide the theoretical and contextual foundations necessary for interpreting the narrative and situating its meanings within contemporary leadership discourse.

Data were analyzed through a descriptive-thematic approach using Roland Barthes' mythological semiotics (Hafizh, 2024; Hernawati et al., 2023). The analysis began with an intensive reading of *Lutung Kasarung* to identify narrative units relevant to leadership, including characters, dialogues, conflicts, decisions, settings, symbolic objects, and significant events. These narrative units were subsequently reduced, coded, and selected based on their relevance to leadership values, religious moderation, and socio-cultural ethics. The selected data were then organized into a semiotic matrix consisting of signifiers (observable forms or symbols), signifieds (conceptual meanings), and signs (the integrated meaning produced by their relationship). Following Barthes' framework, (1) involved a denotative analysis to describe the literal meaning of narrative events and character actions. (2) Employed connotative analysis to interpret the symbolic, cultural, and social meanings embedded within the narrative, such as Kamandaka's disguise as an ordinary citizen, which signifies humility, social empathy, and direct engagement with the people. (3) Involved mythological analysis to uncover the ideological structures and collective cultural values underlying the story, including justice, legitimacy, ethical authority,

deliberation, sacrifice, responsibility, and public welfare (Adiansyah et al., 2023; Hidayah & Firdausi, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lutung Kasarung Legend and Rolland Barthes's Myths

The story is set in the *Pajajaran* Kingdom, where Prabu Siliwangi intends to appoint his eldest son, Raden Banyak Catra (Kamandaka), as successor, contingent on marriage. Struggling to find a partner matching his idealized vision of womanhood, Kamandaka leaves the palace to seek self-discovery. Guided by his mentor, Ki Ajar Wirangrong, he journeys to Pasirluhur under the alias Kamandaka and gains the trust of Patih Reksanata by saving him from an accident, earning adoption (Rosadi, 2023). While living in the palace, Kamandaka meets Dewi Ciptarasa, and their initial encounter blossoms into a concealed romantic bond, complicated by social status and his hidden identity.

The secret romance between Kamandaka and Dewi Ciptarasa is exposed when he is caught sneaking into the princesses' quarters, though he escapes using magic. The Duke of Kandadaha, enraged, orders Patih Reksanata to capture Kamandaka dead or alive (I. S. Rahmawati et al., 2023). Confronted by his adopted son, Patih Reksanata struggles with loyalty versus affection and ultimately spares Kamandaka, deceiving the duke by claiming Kamandaka had fallen into an abyss. Kamandaka then arrives in a welcoming village, where Rekajaya and Mbok Kertasura treat him as family. His prowess in cockfighting gains fame, eventually drawing the attention of his younger brother, Banyak Ngampar, who, disguised as Silihwarni, locates him in the village (Rosadi, 2023).

The siblings' reunion began with conflict, as Silihwarni, unaware that Kamandaka was her brother, challenged him to a fierce battle. Kamandaka was wounded by the Kujang Pamungkas heirloom, revealing his true identity. Surprised and moved, Silihwarni pleaded for him to return to the palace, but he chose to remain in disguise, prompting her to report his disappearance (Syihabbuddin, 2023). Seeking to reunite with Dewi Ciptarasa, Kamandaka followed a supernatural vision that led him to disguise himself as a langur. With Rekajaya as a bat, he obtained magical costumes in Batur Agung Forest and, through a secret letter, drew Dewi Ciptarasa to

the palace, where she unknowingly nurtured her transformed lover, gradually restoring their emotional bond in a mystical form (Rosadi, 2023).

The Pasirluhur palace faced turmoil when Prabu Pulebahas of Nusakambangan proposed to Dewi Ciptarasa, threatening military action if refused. To protect the duchy, she reluctantly consented. On the day of the pre-wedding ceremony, *Lutung Kasarung* attacked and killed Prabu Pulebahas, then revealed his true identity as Raden Kamandaka, reclaiming his love. Following this, Prabu Siliwangi formally proposed to Dewi Ciptarasa, and their wedding was celebrated grandly, with Kamandaka welcomed by the royal family. However, during the procession, Siliwangi noticed an old scar from the Kujang Pamungkas heirloom, rendering Kamandaka ineligible for kingship under Pajajaran traditions.

Although disappointed, Kamandaka accepted his ineligibility for the throne and chose personal happiness with Dewi Ciptarasa over political ambition, thereby demonstrating the wisdom he had gained from his journey (Rosadi, 2023). Prabu Siliwangi then offered the throne to his second son, Banyak Ngampar, who declined, having committed to a spiritual life and rejecting worldly power. Ultimately, the crown passed to the third son, Banyak Blebur, who, despite his youth, unmarried status, and inexperience, accepted the responsibility for the kingdom's welfare. With Prabu Siliwangi's blessing, Banyak Blebur was crowned King of Pajajaran, inaugurating a new era of devoted and conscientious leadership (Rosadi, 2023; Sugiarti et al., 2022).

Lutung Kasarung story uses symbols, especially the langur, to convey moral values, social norms, and hidden wisdom, which can be deeply understood through semiotic analysis, as follows:

Table 1. Analysis and Classification of Rolland Barthes Semiotic

Element Story	Sign		Denotation	Conotation	Myth
	Signifier	Signified			
Banyak catra as the king's successor	The crown prince	Successor to power	Power that is not yet intact	Highly Dedicated in education to become King	The prince must has king's integrity and good attitude

Banyak Catra disguised as Kamandaka	Banyak Catra in commoner's clothes	Simple and representative of the people's anxiety	A prince disguised himself as an ordinary citizen	The ideal leader knows citizen's conditions	Leaders must listen to the opinions and suggestions of the people
Banyak Catra meets Patih Reksanata	Patih Reksanata's horse wild	Patih Reksanata is having trouble controlling a riding horse	Helping others in emerged condition	Sensitive and useful for the environment	All problems can be solved with <i>akhlāq al-karīmah</i>
Kamandaka meets Rekajaya	Meeting on the riverbank after being expelled from Pasir Luhur	The meeting was the start of a good story	Their meeting was the beginning of friendship and kinship without blood relationship	Despite the negative accusations against Kamandaka, they are always good for others	Make friends with people who are like you and don't bother others
The wounds of the last crusade	Scars in Banyak Catra's body	Signs of wounds, deformities and imperfections	Wounds from heirloom weapons during a fight	Wound is a symbol of brave, struggle, and sacrifice	Brave, struggle, and sacrifice evidence is more noble than perfection
Acquisition of unseen clothes	<i>Lutung Kasarung</i> and bats	Bad behavior and unfriendliness with others	Man who turns into an animal that no one likes	Animals and humans have environmental sensitivity, feelings of love, and kindness in each individual	True love and affection are able to transcend the boundaries of physical form and status, Likewise, the goodness of each individual

and his
sacrifice
does not
depend on
appearance

Correlation of Leadership and Religious Moderation Acts

Leadership is strategically vital in applying effective styles and strategies, particularly in shaping individual and social relationships to foster cultural understanding and moderate religious values in Indonesia. Contemporary scholarship increasingly highlights leadership education in pluralistic societies as essential for preparing leaders capable of managing diversity and promoting social cohesion (Macpherson, 2025). Research in educational leadership underscores that development should extend beyond managerial skills to include ethical awareness, intercultural competence, and civic responsibility (Williams & Tierney, 2023). Consequently, leadership education must equip future leaders with the intellectual and moral capacities necessary to sustain harmony among diverse religious communities.

Recent studies highlight religious moderation as an essential framework for leadership in multicultural societies, promoting a balanced approach that rejects radicalism and exclusivism while encouraging dialogue, inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence (Sarbin et al., 2025). Leaders who internalize values of moderation tend to demonstrate justice, empathy, honesty, responsibility, and respect for human dignity, thereby strengthening integrity-based leadership. In educational contexts, integrating religious moderation fosters inclusive, culturally sensitive, and socially responsible leaders with strong intercultural competence and interfaith engagement. Consequently, leadership education should cultivate tolerance, mutual respect, and ethical responsibility, enabling future leaders to manage diversity effectively and promote peace, social justice, and the common good (Wahab et al., 2024).

Several studies in leadership and multicultural education propose that leadership development models should combine conceptual knowledge with value formation (Azis & Samad, 2024). Within this perspective, the educational process is not merely aimed at transferring information about diversity, but also at shaping the attitudes and dispositions necessary for responsible leadership (Sabran et al., 2024).

Through reflective learning and dialogical engagement, students can develop a deeper understanding of religious plurality and the ethical importance of maintaining peaceful interreligious relations (Qoumas et al., 2024).

Leadership pedagogy is commonly framed through three interrelated dimensions: cognitive, affective, and practical (Zami et al., 2024). The cognitive dimension develops knowledge about social diversity, religious traditions, and the philosophical basis of moderation, enabling leaders to understand complex social relations (Alfisyah et al., 2024). The affective dimension emphasizes the internalization of values such as tolerance, empathy, and openness, which are crucial for peaceful coexistence in plural societies and can be cultivated through dialogue and reflective learning. Meanwhile, the practical dimension focuses on applying leadership competencies in real-world contexts, including conflict mediation, facilitating interfaith dialogue, and leading collaborative initiatives. Together, these dimensions equip leaders to translate the principles of religious moderation into concrete actions that sustain social harmony (Monang et al., 2022; Sulvinajayanti et al., 2024).

In the Indonesian context, leadership education is closely linked to national policies promoting religious moderation. Aligning educational programs with this agenda fosters tolerance, respect for local cultures, non-violence, and commitment to national identity (Goenaga, 2024). By embedding these principles, institutions can cultivate leaders who uphold democratic values, strengthen national unity, and advance sustainable interreligious harmony in the country's multicultural society (Kruja, 2022).

Correlation Of Folklore, Leadership, And Society

The legend of *Lutung Kasarung* depicts ideal leadership through its main characters, such as Prabu Siliwangi, Kamandaka, and Dewi Ciptarasa, by emphasizing three main aspects: morality, sacrifice, and social responsibility. Prabu Siliwangi demonstrated strong moral leadership by giving Kamandaka the freedom to choose his own way of life, even though he had to face a bitter reality. The decision reflects a leader's responsibility to educate and guide his successors, as well as prioritizing the continuity of moral leadership (Soraya, 2022). Meanwhile,

Kamandaka, despite being depressed, chose not to marry haphazardly, but only with true love, showing that true leaders prioritize moral principles and personal sacrifice.

The ideal leadership in this legend is also emphasized through Kamandaka's personal sacrifice, who is willing to transform into *Lutung Kasarung* and overcome various obstacles for the sake of their true love. This shows that the ideal leader not only prioritizes personal interests but also is willing to sacrifice to achieve a higher goal: the welfare and happiness of the community (Nur et al., 2024). Social responsibility also emerged when Kamandaka finally revealed her true form as the crown prince, who is responsible not only for his personal happiness but also for the kingdom's fate. The decision to protect Pasirluhur from the threat of Nusakambangan shows that the ideal leader must have the courage to protect their people for the common welfare. This also applies in the world of education.

This legend also describes the dynamics of leadership in people's social relations. Dewi Ciptarasa, as a symbol of the people, underscores the community's important role in selecting leaders. Dewi Ciptarasa's decision to choose *Lutung Kasarung* suggests the community's involvement in shaping the direction of democratic leadership (Permatahati et al., 2022). The conflict between Kamandaka and Patih Reksanata illustrates the tension between a just leader and an authoritarian power system. This story teaches the leadership (Ahmadi et al., 2021). The ideal depends not only on formal power but also on the ability to maintain social balance and honesty, as reflected in Kamandaka's adherence to the principle of justice despite great challenges.

Leadership Paradigm Based on Indonesia Constitution

The journey of Kamandaka illustrates deliberative democracy and ethical leadership integrated with religious moderation values (Febriani et al., 2024). When Siliwangi offered him the throne, Kamandaka was free to decide, reflecting respect for consultation consistent with the fourth principle of Pancasila (Witro & Alamin, 2021). Furthermore, religious moderation emphasizes *shūrā*, addressing social issues (Qs. Āli 'Imrān/3:159), advocates a balanced leadership approach that combines firmness, gentleness, and deliberation in decision-making (S. Arifin et al., 2025). His refusal showed moral and political maturity, as he prioritized ethical responsibility, cultural values, and social stability over personal ambition (Rachmadany, 2021).

Leadership is portrayed as grounded in conscience, justice, moderation, and collective welfare, while Banyak Blebur's succession through deliberation and voluntary concession reflects consultative governance, fair power distribution, and people-centred leadership (A. L. Arifin, 2021; Macpherson, 2025).

Prabu Siliwangi's decision to postpone Kamandaka's coronation and allow him to choose his own path reflects deliberative leadership grounded in moral reflection, justice, and respect for individual dignity rather than mere authority. Likewise, Banyak Blebur's accession through collective deliberation and voluntary concession demonstrates that leadership legitimacy derives from consensus and public welfare rather than lineage or ambition. These narratives embody constitutional values and the principles of religious moderation—*al-'adālah*, *tawassuṭ*, *tasāmuḥ*, and *shūrā*—highlighting leadership based on inclusivity, dialogue, balanced authority, and the common good. Thus, *Lutung Kasarung* presents a normative model of ethical and people-centred governance relevant to contemporary democratic societies (Bhat & Nabi, 2024; Ilahin & Kunci, 2025; Mahdiyyah Harahap et al., 2025).

The Legend of *Lutung Kasarung*, based on Kamandaka Characters, illustrates the values of deliberative democracy, which are reflected in the *Pancasila* and the 1945 UUD. Prabu Siliwangi's restraint in succession and Kamandaka's renunciation of power exemplify leadership grounded in custom, consensus, participation, and cultural respect within religious moderation. In the Indonesian context, these values align with Article 1(2) on popular sovereignty and Article 28D concerning justice and fairness in political processes. Kamandaka's personal journey of self-development further reflects Article 28C(1), which guarantees every citizen the right to cultivate their potential and contribute meaningfully to national life (A. A. Arifin & Kholis, 2025). The family-based appointment of Banyak Blebur highlights collective, ethical leadership grounded in wisdom, justice, integrity, and religious moderation (Hafizh & Mujib Hidayat, 2025).

Kamandaka's decision to disguise himself as an ordinary citizen reflects a leadership model grounded in empathy, humility, and social justice. By experiencing the hardships of common people and refusing to exploit his royal status, he demonstrates the importance of understanding public suffering and prioritizing

collective welfare. His unjust expulsion from the palace further critiques governance that values status and appearance over integrity and truth, revealing the absence of *tawassuṭ* and *‘adālah* (Monang et al., 2022).

At the same time, Patih Reksanata’s refusal to execute Kamandaka illustrates moral courage (Rosadi, 2023), *tasāmuḥ*, and ethical responsibility above blind obedience to authority. Likewise, Kamandaka’s rejection of the throne due to his physical condition challenges leadership paradigms that prioritize external perfection over trustworthiness and moral integrity. Collectively, these episodes affirm that legitimate leadership should be grounded in justice, inclusivity, human dignity, and ethical substance rather than in formal status, power, or symbolic appearance (Astuti et al., 2023; Ruhullah & Ushama, 2024; Zulkipli et al., 2022).

The relevance of *Lutung Kasarung* remains evident amid contemporary social inequality and leadership practices often detached from public realities. Kamandaka’s discrimination symbolizes governance failures rooted in bias and lack of empathy, while Patih Reksanata exemplifies moderate leadership guided by conscience, *‘adālah*, *shūrā*, and moral accountability. Collectively, the narrative promotes a leadership model grounded in democracy, social justice, integrity, and people-centred governance, emphasizing deliberation, public participation, and responsiveness to societal needs. Leadership legitimacy is derived not from power or formal authority alone, but from ethical conduct, accountability, public trust, and commitment to collective welfare, reflecting both constitutional principles and the values of religious moderation in governing a pluralistic society (Macpherson, 2025; Qoumas et al., 2024).

Leadership Pedagogy Through Religious Moderation

Based on the overall conceptual framework outlined above, leadership pedagogy in Islamic educational institutions can be operationalized as an integrative model that combines the values of religious moderation, constitutional principles, and local wisdom within the context of Islamic education. The leadership education is not limited to theoretical instruction but is embedded in curricular and co-curricular programs that foster ethical awareness, spiritual maturity, and social responsibility (Hernawati, Hafizh, et al., 2024; Saepudin, 2025). Values such as *tawasuṭ*, *i’tidāl*, *tasāmuḥ*, and *shūrā* are integrated into classroom discussions, student

organizations, and community engagement initiatives, positioning leadership as a moral trust that must be exercised with balance and accountability in real-life contexts (Geller, 2021; Sabran et al., 2024).

Furthermore, this pedagogical model emphasizes integrating Islamic values with national principles through structured programs such as civic education, interfaith dialogue forums, and leadership training modules aligned with Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. Islamic Institutions have implemented interdisciplinary curricula that connect Islamic ethics with democratic values such as social justice, equality before the law, and public accountability. Through these initiatives, students are encouraged to critically engage with Indonesia's pluralistic reality while embodying Islamic concepts such as *al-'adalah* and *amanah*. Folklore narratives like *Lutung Kasarung* are also utilized in humanities and leadership courses to contextualize ethical dilemmas and leadership ideals within culturally resonant frameworks (Parhusip, 2024; Qoumas et al., 2024).

Leadership pedagogy in Islamic education integrates cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions through complementary learning strategies. The cognitive dimension is strengthened through interdisciplinary courses on leadership ethics, religious moderation, and governance, fostering a critical understanding of pluralism and justice. The affective dimension is developed through reflection, mentoring, and interfaith dialogue, while the practical dimension is realized through community service, conflict-resolution training, and student governance, enabling students to apply moderation values in real-life leadership contexts (Supriatna, 2025; Supriyono et al., 2025).

Contextual and culturally grounded approaches are also evident in higher Islamic education. Pesantren-based universities and hybrid institutions such as Universitas Pesantren Tinggi Darul Ulum integrate classical Islamic scholarship with modern pedagogical methods, including narrative analysis, case studies, and community engagement (Nor et al., 2024). Through these approaches, students examine stories such as *Lutung Kasarung* using semiotic and ethical frameworks, linking symbolic meanings to contemporary issues such as social injustice, discrimination, and leadership accountability. This approach strengthens critical

thinking while ensuring that leadership education remains directly relevant to contemporary societal challenges (Dina et al., 2023; Hernawati, Hafizh, et al., 2024).

Ultimately, by embedding this integrative leadership pedagogy within contemporary institutions, Islamic education can produce leaders who are intellectually capable, ethically grounded, and socially responsive (Ikhwan et al., 2025). These leaders are trained not only to understand diversity but to actively manage it through inclusive, just, and humane approaches (Prasetyowati et al., 2025). The combination of religious moderation values, constitutional principles, and contemporary educational practices ensures that graduates are prepared to contribute meaningfully to society, uphold democratic ideals, and promote sustainable peace (Cholid et al., n.d.; Hernawati, Nofik, et al., 2024). In this way, through the folklore of *Lutung Kasarung* integrated into leadership pedagogy rooted in religious moderation, it becomes a strategic instrument for shaping future leaders who embody integrity, cultural sensitivity, and a strong commitment to the common good in an increasingly complex global landscape (Hadi et al., 2025; Syaffi, 2025)

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that *Lutung Kasarung* contains symbolic representations of leadership grounded in wisdom, moral integrity, social empathy, justice, perseverance, and collective responsibility. Through Roland Barthes' mythological semiotics, the narrative portrays a leadership model that combines democratic values, deliberation, ethical legitimacy, and public welfare, reflected in Kamandaka's renunciation of power and Banyak Blebur's consensual succession. These values align with religious moderation, constitutional principles, local wisdom, and national unity, making the story relevant to contemporary leadership challenges in Indonesia's pluralistic society. The study further proposes a contextual leadership pedagogy model for Islamic educational institutions by integrating semiotics, religious moderation, constitutional values, and local culture to cultivate ethical, inclusive, and socially responsible leaders. Nevertheless, the study is limited by the absence of a formally structured curriculum framework for implementing this model in educational practice.

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