

Pesantren Strategies in Maintaining Islamic Education Traditions and Shaping Santri Social Identity in the Midst of Social Change

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Abstract

Keywords:

Pesantren, Islamic educational tradition, social identity, social change, educational resilience.

Pesantren is a traditional Islamic educational institution currently facing significant pressure from globalization and modernization, which disrupt conventional values. This study aims to analyze the strategies employed by pesantren in preserving Islamic educational traditions while examining the process of shaping students' (santri) social identity amidst dynamic social changes. This research utilized a descriptive qualitative approach within Creswell's framework. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with leaders (Kyai) and teachers, participatory observation within the pesantren environment, and documentation of curriculum transitions. The results reveal that pesantren implement a hybrid strategy by maintaining kitab kuning (classical texts) learning and the sorogan and bandongan systems as the primary spiritual foundation. Adaptation to social change is achieved through the integration of the national curriculum, digital skills training, and strengthening santri entrepreneurship. The Kyai plays a central role as a charismatic authority figure who balances authentic traditional values with the necessity of modern innovation. The social identity of santri is formed through the internalization of sincerity, simplicity, and independence, practiced collectively in daily life. The study concludes that pesantren demonstrate high resilience in maintaining their Islamic identity despite structural adjustments. The implications of this research highlight the importance of value-based education models as a reference for developing other Islamic educational institutions in facing global challenges without losing their cultural and spiritual roots.

Abstrak

Kata kunci:

pesantren, tradisi pendidikan Islam, identitas sosial, perubahan sosial, resiliensi pendidikan

Pesantren merupakan lembaga pendidikan Islam tradisional yang kini menghadapi tekanan besar akibat arus globalisasi dan modernisasi yang mendisrupsi nilai-nilai konvensional. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi pesantren dalam mempertahankan tradisi pendidikan Islam sekaligus membedah proses pembentukan identitas sosial santri di tengah perubahan sosial yang dinamis. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan kerangka kerja Creswell. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap pengasuh dan pengajar, observasi partisipatif di lingkungan pesantren, serta studi dokumentasi kurikulum. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa pesantren menerapkan strategi hibrida dengan tetap menjadikan pembelajaran kitab kuning serta sistem sorogan dan bandongan sebagai fondasi spiritualitas utama. Adaptasi terhadap perubahan sosial dilakukan melalui integrasi kurikulum umum, pelatihan keterampilan digital, dan penguatan jiwa kewirausahaan santri. Peran Kiai menjadi sentral sebagai pemegang otoritas karismatik yang menyeimbangkan antara nilai autentik tradisi dan kebutuhan inovasi modern. Identitas sosial santri terbentuk melalui internalisasi nilai keikhlasan, kesederhanaan, dan kemandirian yang dipraktikkan secara kolektif dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pesantren memiliki resiliensi tinggi dalam menjaga jati diri keislamannya meskipun melakukan penyesuaian struktural. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menunjukkan pentingnya model

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pendidikan berbasis nilai (value-based education) sebagai referensi bagi pengembangan institusi pendidikan Islam lainnya dalam menghadapi tantangan global tanpa kehilangan akar budaya dan spiritualnya.

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INTRODUCTION

Pesantren is the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia that has played a central role in the formation of the character, spirituality, and morality of Muslims (Mustikamah et al., 2025; Niswah et al., 2025; Permadi et al., 2025) From the pre-independence period to the modern era, pesantren became a forum for the transmission of Islamic sciences as well as a fortress of the community's religious culture. The scientific tradition based on the yellow book, the parenting system in the form of *ta'lim wa tarbiyah*, and the paternalistic kiai-santri relationship are the characteristics that distinguish pesantren from other educational institutions (Baihaqi et al., 2023; Fauzi et al., 2025; Yusri, 2020) The function of pesantren is not only as a place to study religious knowledge, but also as a center for moral and social development that is firmly rooted in traditional Islamic values. Its existence helps to create a holistic educational environment, where the learning process includes intellectual, spiritual, and moral aspects in a balanced manner (Fatah et al., 2025; Kardi et al., 2023; Syaifuddin & Ahwan, 2024). Pesantren also play a role as agents of social transformation that instill moderate Islamic values, independence, and social concern in facing the challenges of globalization (Fahmi, 2020; Hamdanah et al., 2025; Ma`arif et al., 2025; Miftahuddin et al., 2024) These values are realized through religious activities, mutual cooperation, and morality-based leadership which are the foundation for the formation of student character (Ahwan & Karfida, 2025; Aryasutha et al., 2025; Fahrurrozi et al., 2025; Indasari et al., 2025). The strategic role of pesantren in fostering a generation with noble morals and at the same time insightful shows that this institution remains relevant and adaptive to the development of the times without losing its Islamic identity (Hannan, 2022).

Rapid social changes due to globalization, information technology, and modernization trends bring great challenges to the world of Islamic boarding schools. Islamic values that have been maintained through the traditional education system are now facing external influences that can affect the mindset, behavior, and lifestyle of students (Hanif et al., 2025; Iskandar, 2023; Ramadhan & Albab, 2025) The flow of globalization opens up unlimited access to information that can enrich insights, but also has the potential to blur the boundaries between religious values and modern culture. This social transformation makes pesantren need to have an adaptive strategy in order to be able to maintain its relevance as an educational institution rooted in Islamic values (Jannah et al., 2023; Muksin & Mudlofir, 2024; Sarbini et al., 2025; Tsani & Ali, 2024). The adaptation process not only requires innovation in the learning system, but also updates in more professional institutional management without losing the spiritual touch typical of pesantren. The modernization of education, which is characterized by the integration of the national curriculum, the use of digital technology, and the expansion of the role of pesantren in society, poses its own challenges for managers and teachers (Rosyidah, 2024). On the one hand, pesantren are expected to be able to produce competitive graduates in the midst of the progress of the times, but on the other hand, pesantren must maintain the authenticity of traditional values such as adab, obedience to kiai, and ukhuwah-based collective life (Kurniadi et al., 2025). This tension between tradition and

modernity creates a negotiation process that continues to take place in the practice of pesantren education. Efforts to maintain a balance between the two require wisdom and a strong vision from the leaders of the pesantren so that this institution remains a moral fortress as well as a learning center that is adaptive to dynamic social change.

The phenomenon of the emergence of modern Islamic boarding schools, integrated Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic boarding schools that open public programs is a reflection of the process of adapting Islamic boarding schools to social dynamics and increasingly complex needs of the times. This shift cannot be separated from the public's demand for Islamic educational institutions that are able to produce a religious generation that is at the same time competent in the field of science and technology. The existence of modern Islamic boarding schools shows that classical Islamic values can coexist with progressive educational innovations (Dendi, 2023). The integrated education model presents a synthesis between the traditional system based on the yellow book and the modern system based on the national curriculum, so that students obtain a balance between spiritual intelligence and intellectual abilities that are contextual to the development of the global era (Ibrahim & Mukhsin, 2025). Kiai and pesantren managers play a strategic role in maintaining harmony between traditional heritage and the needs of modernity (Ali & Kawakip, 2025). Efforts to maintain classic methods such as *bandongan*, *sorogan*, and book recitation are carried out along with the implementation of professional education management, general curriculum updates, and digital technology training for students (Yusuf & Ali, 2025). This step reflects a new paradigm of pesantren education that is not only oriented towards the preservation of values, but also on the creation of an adaptive and productive generation. This transformation proves that pesantren is not a static institution confined by the past, but a social entity that is dynamic, resilient, and has the ability to transform without losing its Islamic identity.

The social identity of students is an important phenomenon in understanding the impact of social change on Islamic educational institutions. Students are not only religious students, but also social agents who channel Islamic values to an increasingly modern and pluralistic society. Their lifestyle, way of thinking, and social interaction reflect the internalization of pesantren values combined with the influence of modernity, creating a balance between tradition and contemporary social context (Khofifah & Amrulloh, 2025). Islamic values such as simplicity, independence, sincerity, and discipline became the foundation in the formation of the social identity of the students, which then developed into a characteristic that distinguished them from non-pesantren students. The role of social identity is increasingly important when students face a plural, open, and full environment with global information flows. Students are required to be able to maintain inherent traditional values, as well as develop adaptability and actively participate in social life. The process of internalizing Islamic values and interacting with modern reality produces a unique profile of students: religious, characterful, independent, and responsive to change (Pratama et al., 2025). This social identity not only serves as a differentiator, but also as an instrument for the formation of leadership, solidarity, and positive contributions of students in the wider community. Although many previous studies have discussed the adaptation of pesantren to modernity, most of these studies still tend to focus on managerial changes and partial curriculum integration. There is still a *research gap* regarding how pesantren specifically negotiate between the preservation of classical teaching methods (*sorogan* and *bandongan*) and the formation of a resilient social identity of students in the midst of the pressure of social change that disrupts character. The above research has not explored

how the charismatic authority of the kiai functions as an ideological filter in the process of forming such identities in the digital era.

Therefore, this study aims to describe in depth the strategies applied by Islamic boarding schools in maintaining the sustainability of Islamic educational traditions in the midst of the dynamics of the times. In addition, this study aims to analyze the process of internalizing pesantren values in shaping the social identity of students so that they are able to adapt without losing their spiritual roots.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a *case study* approach as developed by Cresswell (2014), which is oriented towards understanding the deep meaning of social phenomena in a natural context. This approach was chosen to describe the strategy of pesantren in maintaining Islamic educational traditions and forming the social identity of students in the midst of social change. The focus of the research is directed at the real experiences of actors in the pesantren environment, including kiai, ustaz, students, and institutional managers. The researcher acts as the main instrument that interacts directly with the subject and the research environment to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Data collection techniques are carried out through three main methods: *in-depth* interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted in a structured and semi-structured manner with kiai and managers to explore strategic policies, as well as with students to understand the formation of their identity. Participatory observation is used to directly observe traditional educational practices such as sorogan and bandongan as well as the daily behavior of students. Meanwhile, documentation is used to study curriculum archives, activity records, and the history of pesantren development.

Data analysis refers to the model developed by Yin (2019), which uses strategies such as pattern matching to compare findings with existing patterns or theories, explanation building to build a gradual causal explanation from case to case, and time-series analysis to analyze changes or trends based on the time sequence, so that the entire analysis process not only describes the phenomenon but also explains the relationship and the deep meaning behind the data.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the study show that pesantren have a strong strategy in maintaining the tradition of Islamic education even in the midst of rapid social change. The tradition of learning the yellow book, routine recitation, and religious activities such as *mujahadah*, *tahlilan*, and *prayer* remain the core of the pesantren education system. Parenting based on the relationship between kiai and students is still maintained as a form of character formation and spirituality. One of the main informants, namely Kiai as the caretaker of the Islamic boarding school, said that the pesantren should not lose its traditional roots because that is where the strength of Islamic education lies. He stated,

"If the pesantren no longer teaches the classic book and practices the religious traditions inherited by the previous scholars, then the pesantren will lose its spirit. We can be modern, but don't let those values be lost, because that's what makes students different from other students."

The results of the interview with Kiai as a caretaker of the pesantren emphasized that the preservation of tradition is the top priority in the pesantren education system.

The tradition of learning the yellow book, routine recitation, and religious practices such as mujahadah, tahlilan, and prayer are maintained as the core of the learning process, because it is believed to be able to shape the character, spirituality, and identity of students. Kiai emphasized that modernization should not shift the classical values that are the root of Islamic education, because it is a source of strength and distinguishes students from students in other institutions. This awareness reflects the caregiver's commitment to maintaining a balance between innovation and tradition, ensuring that pesantren remain relevant in an era of social change without losing identity, while instilling an understanding that historical values are the main foundation in shaping a religious and character generation.

Figure 1. The Tradition of the Yellow Book in Islamic Boarding Schools



Findings in the field also show that pesantren have adapted to social changes through education system innovation without neglecting the aspect of spirituality. Pesantren integrate general curriculum into the teaching system, such as science, technology, and foreign language subjects, to prepare students for the modern world. One of the teachers said that the pesantren is now trying to balance religious education and modern skills. He said,

"Now we are not only focusing on religious science, but also providing practical skills such as computers, English, and entrepreneurship. Students still have to memorize books, but they must also be ready to live in the midst of a modern society that is all digital."

The statement emphasized that pesantren innovate education by balancing the mastery of religious knowledge and practical skills that are relevant to the demands of modern society. The learning program now not only emphasizes book memorization, but also skills in the fields of computers, English, and entrepreneurship, so that students have readiness to face an all-digital social and economic life. This approach shows that the development of practical competencies is carried out without ignoring Islamic identity and traditional values that are characteristic of Islamic boarding schools, so that students are able to become a religious, skilled, and adaptive generation to changing times.

The process of forming students' social identity is also the main focus in every educational activity. The pesantren seeks to shape the character of students through the discipline of daily life, such as *the monkok system*, manners towards teachers, and mutual cooperation activities. The social identity of students is formed from the process of internalizing the values of sincerity, simplicity, and independence that are applied consistently in the life of the pesantren. One of the senior students shared his experience,

"We are taught here to live independently. Not only learning religion, but also how to manage time, serve others, and respect teachers. All of this made us realize that being a student is not just about learning, but also shaping ourselves to benefit the community."

The quote illustrates that pesantren instill strong social values in the educational process, so that students not only understand religious knowledge, but also learn life skills, discipline, and social ethics. Teaching about independence, time management, concern for others, and respect for teachers form the mindset of students as individuals with strong identities and awareness of social responsibility. These values encourage students to internalize religious teachings in daily life and make it the basis for contributing positively to society, so that pesantren education plays a role not only in the formation of religious character, but also in building active social awareness.

The study also found that kiai have a dominant role in maintaining a balance between tradition and innovation. The kiai's charisma is the main factor in maintaining order and directing students not to be affected by negative social changes. The decision to introduce digital technology, for example, is always through the direction and consideration of the kiai so that it remains in accordance with Islamic values. One of the pesantren administrators, said,

"We adapt to the times, but everyone must get permission from the kiai. For example, the use of social media for da'wah or the promotion of pesantren activities is still regulated so that it does not go out of the values of manners and morals."

The quote emphasizes that modernization in Islamic boarding schools is carried out in a directed and controlled manner, not as a form of value liberalization. The use of social media or digital technology for da'wah and the promotion of pesantren activities remains under the supervision of kiai, so that every innovation must be in line with the principles of manners, morals, and Islamic values that are the foundation of the institution. This approach shows that pesantren are able to adapt to the development of the times without sacrificing their traditional identity, so that innovation and modernization are a means to strengthen, not weaken, the educational values and character of students.

The results of the study show that pesantren are able to maintain a balance between preserving tradition and adapting to rapid social change. The tradition of yellow book-based education, routine recitation, and religious activities remains the main foundation, while innovations in the mastery of practical skills, digitization of learning, and strengthening the general curriculum are carried out without neglecting Islamic identity. Social values such as independence, discipline, concern for others, and respect for teachers foster the mindset of students as individuals with strong character and oriented towards social service. The kiai supervision of each form of modernization ensures that the adaptation carried out remains in harmony with the principles of adab and morals, so that pesantren remains relevant in the era of globalization while maintaining its traditional identity and values. This finding confirms that pesantren is a dynamic, resilient, and able educational institution that is able to form a generation of students who are religious, competent, and ready to face the challenges of modern society.

Table 1. Summary of the Interview

Research Aspects	Key Findings	Interview
Preservation of Educational Traditions	Islamic boarding schools maintain the tradition of the yellow book, routine recitation, mujahadah, tahlilan, and prayer as the core of education.	Kiai: "If the pesantren no longer teaches classical books... We can be modern, but don't let those values be lost."

Modern Educational Innovation	Integration of the general curriculum: science, technology, foreign languages, computer skills and entrepreneurship without neglecting religion.	Teacher: "Now we not only focus on religious science, but also provide practical skills such as computers, English, and entrepreneurship."
Formation of Social Identity of Students	Discipline, Discipline, and Discipline; instilling independence, care, and respect for teachers.	Senior student: "We were taught to live independently... All of this made us realize that being a student is not just about learning, but also shaping ourselves to benefit the community."
The Role of Kiai in Modernization	Kiai supervises and directs the use of technology and digital media to be in accordance with Islamic values; Controlled modernization.	Islamic boarding school administrators: "All must get permission from the kiai... The use of social media is still regulated so that it does not go out of the values of manners and morals."
Balance of Tradition and Adaptation	Pesantren are able to balance the preservation of traditional values with modern educational innovations, forming religious, competent, and adaptive students.	Traditions are maintained, innovations are implemented, the character and identity of students are formed, and kiai supervision ensures that values are maintained.

Discussion

The results of the study show that pesantren still plays a central role in maintaining the tradition of Islamic education even in the midst of rapid social change. Classical scientific traditions such as the teaching of the yellow book, the bandongan and sorogan system, and respect for kiai are still maintained as religious cultural heritage of high value. This shows that pesantren has a strong social mechanism in maintaining the continuity of Islamic traditions. According to Emile Durkheim's social theory, tradition serves to maintain integration and solidarity in society (Fathoni, 2024). In Islamic boarding schools, this tradition becomes a social media that strengthens relationships between individuals, especially between kiai, ustaz, and students. The continuity of this tradition forms a religious habitus that is not only ritual, but also moral and social, which then affirms the identity of the pesantren as an educational institution based on spiritual values. The tradition that continues to be practiced in the pesantren environment does not only function as an educational activity, but also as a means of reproducing religious values and authority between generations (Anggraeni et al., 2025; Haqqi et al., 2025; Lailiyah et al., 2024) The practice of bandongan and sorogan creates an intense interaction space between teachers and students that allows the internalization of manners, ethics, and religious ways of thinking typical of Islamic boarding schools. This pattern of relations strengthens the social structure based on respect for the kiai as a central figure, so that scientific authority is recognized not only intellectually, but also culturally (Aziz et al., 2024; Desmiati et al., 2023; Ma'arif et al., 2025). The social space of the pesantren also builds collective solidarity through the communal life of the students, who instill discipline, simplicity, and social responsibility as part of the formation of religious character. The identity of pesantren is formed from the continuity of scientific, social, and spiritual practices that are consistently inherited, making it remain strong as a tradition-based educational institution in the midst of societal changes (Qotrunada et al., 2025).

Modernization and globalization bring great challenges to pesantren because they both present a change in mindset and lifestyle that is different from traditional values (Qotrunada et al., 2025). However, the results of the study show that pesantren do not reject change absolutely, but adapt it selectively. The adaptations carried out include integrating the general curriculum, the use of technology in learning, and the development of student skills to be relevant to the needs of the times. Social institutions can survive if they are able to adapt their structure and practices to environmental changes without losing their basic function (Sara & Pujiati, 2025). Pesantren adapt through balance-based educational innovations, where religious values remain the main foundation even though aspects of modernity are beginning to be accommodated.

The adaptation process shows that pesantren have the ability to negotiate cultural between tradition and modernity. The integrated general curriculum does not replace religious lessons, but expands the intellectual horizons of students to be able to interact with an increasingly complex society. The use of learning technology also shows a change in methods without eliminating the scientific authority of kiai and ustaz, so that modernization is positioned as a tool, not as a substitute for values. The development of students' life skills is an indicator that pesantren read social needs realistically (Yusuf & Ali, 2025). Entrepreneurship training, digital literacy, and communication skills strengthen students' readiness to face the world of work while maintaining their religious identity. Character education is still directed at the formation of morals, discipline, and social responsibility, so that the pragmatic orientation does not shift the spiritual goals of pesantren education. The balance between tradition and innovation forms an adaptive but deeply rooted educational model. Pesantren appear as institutions that are not trapped in the romanticism of the past, but also do not dissolve in the flow of globalization without control (Jamil, 2021). The selective strategy shows that the sustainability of pesantren depends on its ability to maintain the core of religious values while responding creatively and measurably to the demands of the times.

The role of the kiai is the most influential element in maintaining a balance between tradition and innovation. Kiai plays a role not only as a religious teacher, but also as a spiritual leader, policy maker, and moral guardian in the pesantren environment (Fanani, 2022; Ho et al., 2025; Idrus & Abd. Ghani, 2023). The charisma and social legitimacy possessed by the kiai make every educational policy taken remain rooted in Islamic values. In Max Weber's theory of authority, the position of the kiai is included in the category of charismatic authority which is based on people's belief in the spiritual and moral abilities of a leader (Arifin, 2017). Kiai uses this authority to guide the modernization process so that it remains within the corridor of religious values. This phenomenon shows that the power of leadership based on religious values is a fortress of pesantren from the negative influence of social change.

The leadership of the kiai works through the example that is seen in the practice of daily life. Students not only receive formal teaching, but also imitate the attitudes, mindsets, and ethics exemplified by the kiai (Nurahmah & Misno, 2025). The process of imitation forms a pesantren culture that places morality as the core of education. The charismatic authority inherent in the kiai strengthens the obedience of the students without structural coercion, because the relationships formed are emotional and spiritual. The strategic role of the kiai is also seen in its ability to be a mediator between the pesantren and the wider community. Kiai is often a social reference in responding to modern issues, so that the decisions taken not only have an internal impact, but also affect public perception of Islamic boarding schools. This position makes kiai a key actor

in maintaining the image of the pesantren as an institution that is adaptive and consistent with religious values. Charisma-based leadership power creates social stability within the pesantren. This stability allows educational innovation to run without causing sharp value conflicts. Modernization directed by the kiai tends to be accepted as part of efforts to strengthen the ummah, not as a threat to tradition. Religious leadership ultimately functions as a social control mechanism that keeps the direction of change in line with the spiritual education goals of the pesantren.

The formation of the social identity of students is another aspect that affirms the power of pesantren in producing a generation of character. The identity of the students is not formed instantly, but through the process of internalizing the values of sincerity, simplicity, and independence that take place in daily life. Living in a pesantren teaches students to manage their time, respect their teachers, and interact collectively through religious and social activities (Alfi et al., 2023). Herbert Blumer's theory of symbolic interactionism can explain how the process of interaction in the pesantren environment shapes the meaning and social identity of students (Pernandi, 2018). The values obtained through the practice of pesantren life are internalized into the students and form behaviors that reflect their distinctive identity as individuals with morals, discipline, and devotion orientation (Suhartini, 2016).

The pesantren environment functions as a social space full of symbols, rules, and rituals that are constantly repeated. Each activity, from the way of dressing, the use of language, to the manners towards the teacher, contains a symbolic meaning that directs students to understand their position in the community (Firmansyah et al., 2024). Interactions that take place intensely make values not only understood cognitively, but experienced as a habit of life. This habit strengthens the collective identity of students as part of a religious community that has common moral standards. The process of identity formation is also closely related to communal life experiences. Students learn to share space, responsibility, and limited facilities, which fosters empathy and social solidarity. The experience builds awareness that personal life is always connected to common interests. The identity of the students is ultimately not only individual, but also social, because it is formed through continuous relationships with peers and pesantren authorities. The consistency of value practice in daily life makes the identity of students relatively stable even though they are faced with a diverse external environment. Internalized values serve as a moral compass when students return to society. Islamic boarding schools do not only produce graduates who master religious knowledge, but produce individuals who bring a socio-religious identity into the public sphere through behavior, life choices, and ways of interacting with others.

The involvement of Islamic boarding schools in social change also shows the dual role of educational institutions and agents of community transformation. The pesantren seeks to prepare students to be able to face global challenges without leaving their spiritual roots. Modernization is not only understood as a threat, but also an opportunity to expand da'wah and the social role of Islamic boarding schools. Through strengthening the general curriculum, skills training, and the use of digital media, pesantren transform into adaptive and relevant institutions in the modern era (Khoeron et al., 2025). The success of pesantren in maintaining a balance between tradition and modernity shows the ability of this institution to carry out social functions as described in Talcott Parsons' theory of structural functionalism, which is to maintain social stability through adaptation, integration, and preservation of values (Adiyono et al., 2025; Hasnadi & Inayatillah, 2022).

The role of social transformation of pesantren can be seen in its involvement in empowering the surrounding community. Many Islamic boarding schools develop creative economy programs, community education, and social activities that bridge local needs with religious values. Students are trained not only to be personally pious individuals, but also agents of change who are able to contribute to social development (Aisalmiyah et al., 2025). This service orientation expands the function of the pesantren from an internal education space to a community empowerment center. The relationship between pesantren and the community forms a social network that strengthens each other. The community provides legitimacy and cultural support, while pesantren provide moral guidance and education. The pattern of mutual relations maintains the sustainability of the institution while strengthening social cohesion in the surrounding environment. Pesantren is a meeting space between traditional values and contemporary social needs that continue to develop. The transformation carried out by the pesantren shows the ability to read changes without losing spiritual orientation. Educational innovation is directed to expand social benefits, not just to pursue the recognition of modernity. This adaptive character affirms the position of pesantren as an institution that lives, moves, and continues to adapt while maintaining the basic values that are the source of its moral legitimacy.

The general overview of the research results shows that pesantren have a multi-layered strategy in dealing with social change. The tradition of Islamic education remains at the heart of the teaching system, while modern adaptations are made to answer the needs of the times. The combination of the two forms an educational model that is not only oriented towards the transfer of knowledge, but also the formation of character and social identity. The resulting students not only have academic and religious abilities, but also high social awareness and readiness to face the modern world without losing spiritual value. Pesantren has proven to be an educational institution that is able to maintain a balance between the authenticity of tradition and the demands for change, so that it remains relevant and influential in shaping the social identity of the Muslim generation in Indonesia. The layered model works through the continuity between strengthening religious values, habituating the discipline of communal life, and opening access to modern knowledge that is selectively managed. The educational structure of the pesantren places morality as the foundation that directs all innovation, so that modernization does not shift the main goal of education, but expands the capacity of students to play an active role in the public space. The identity formed from this process produces an adaptive person, has moral resilience, and is able to bridge religious traditions with contemporary social reality. Pesantren finally appears as an educational space that not only preserves the intellectual heritage of Islam, but also produces social agents who are able to respond to societal changes critically, ethically, and responsibly.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that pesantren have a very strong role in maintaining the tradition of Islamic education while adapting to social changes. Classical learning traditions such as the teaching of the yellow book, religious activities, and parenting based on kiai-santri relationships remain the main foundation of education. Adaptation to modernization is carried out selectively through the development of a general curriculum, skills training, and the use of digital technology, without eliminating the spiritual values that have become the identity of the Islamic boarding school. Kiai plays a key role as a guardian of values and directs the modernization process so that it remains in accordance with Islamic principles. The social identity of students is formed

through the internalization of the values of sincerity, independence, simplicity, and discipline that are the hallmarks of pesantren life.

This research makes a theoretical contribution to the study of the sociology of Islamic education, especially in understanding how traditional institutions such as pesantren are able to survive and adapt in the midst of modern social changes. These findings enrich the literature on the concept of adaptation of educational institutions based on strong spiritual and social values. Practically, this research can be a reference for pesantren managers to develop educational strategies that remain rooted in tradition while taking positive advantage of technological advances and modernization. This research also opens up space for Islamic education policymakers to see pesantren as a strategic partner in strengthening the character of the young generation based on religious values.

This research is still limited to observations and interviews in one pesantren area, so the results have not been able to comprehensively describe the variety of pesantren strategies in various regions. The relatively short research time also makes it difficult for researchers to explore in depth long-term changes in educational patterns and the formation of social identity of students. Further research can expand the scope of locations, involve more pesantren from various typologies, and combine quantitative approaches so that the results are more representative and able to show the relationships between variables in a more measurable way.

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