

Strategic Management of Pesantren Organisational Resilience in a Plural Society Through Multicultural Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT. This study aims to explore the role of strategic management in enhancing the organizational resilience of Pesantren Miftahul Qulub, an Islamic boarding school operating in a socially and religiously plural environment. Using a qualitative, ethnographic approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The research reveals that the pesantren's resilience is not solely rooted in religious tradition or charismatic leadership but is significantly influenced by strategic management practices. These include continuous internal and external environmental analysis, the institutionalization of multicultural Islamic values, and adaptive decision-making that fosters social capital and internal cohesion. Leadership at the pesantren continuously adapts its strategic orientation to the social dynamics of its plural environment, focusing on values like openness, equality, humanism, and local wisdom. By embedding these values into daily governance and operations, the pesantren can sustain public legitimacy, strengthen relationships with diverse stakeholders, and navigate the challenges of social and religious diversity. The novelty of this research lies in its integrated model that links strategic management, multicultural Islamic commitments, and organizational resilience in plural societies. Unlike previous studies that treat these concepts in isolation, this study demonstrates their co-evolution within pesantren governance. The findings highlight the importance of three interconnected governance practices: systematic environmental scanning, institutionalization of multicultural values, and resilience-building through routines that maintain legitimacy and cohesion. This framework not only provides practical guidance for pesantren leaders but also contributes to comparative research on religious organizations in diverse settings, emphasizing the transferability of these findings to other contexts.

Keywords: Strategic Management, Organisational Resilience, Multicultural Islamic Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) have long occupied a central position in Indonesian Islamic education, particularly in nurturing students (*santri*) with deep religious understanding (*tafaqquh fi al-din*), strong personal character, and moral integrity (Nasir, 2021); (Ismail et al., 2024); (Suwendi et al., 2024); (Siregar & Yusron, 2024). Such outcomes are shaped through an integrated educational tradition that combines mastery of Islamic knowledge, the internalisation of religious values, and the authoritative leadership of the *kiai* (Aly, 2011; Sirojuddin et al., 2025; Salim et al., 2024; Sirojuddin et al., 2022). However, these achievements cannot be attributed solely to pedagogical processes. Pesantren also operate as organisational entities whose continuity and social

relevance depend on how leadership, institutional culture, and relations with the broader community are managed. In this sense, pesantrens need to be approached not merely as religious-educational institutions, but as organisations that require strategic management to remain responsive to ongoing social change. (Madjid, 1997; Dhofier, 2019; Wahid, 2010).

The need for such a strategic perspective becomes more evident as pesantren increasingly function within socially and religiously plural environments. Indonesia's experience of rising ethnic and religious contestation has reshaped expectations for religious educational institutions. As Baidhawiy notes, the legacy of state-oriented religious education, which lacked sensitivity to diversity, has left many institutions insufficiently prepared to manage difference in the post-authoritarian period (Baidhawiy, 2007). At the same time, the expansion of religious identity expression after the New Order has exposed the limitations of prevailing multicultural frameworks, which often emphasise ethnic diversity while inadequately addressing religious difference as an institutional concern (Hoon, 2017). Empirical studies further reveal persistent discrepancies between multicultural education policies and their implementation, mainly due to weak governance capacity and the absence of a clear strategic direction (Raihani, 2018; Rozanita et al., 2026; Sechandini et al., 2023; Sodikin et al., 2026). Under these conditions, pesantren can no longer rely solely on normative authority or pedagogical routines; they must undertake deliberate organisational transformation through strategic management that integrates Islamic values, social competence, and civic responsibility. (Nuha et al., 2024); (Supendi et al., 2018); (Baidhawiy, 2005; Banks, 2014; Umar et al., 2024); (Banks & Cherry A. Banks, 2010)

Recent scholarship on strategic management in pesantren-based Islamic education reflects growing awareness of these challenges. Saepurohman et al., for instance, demonstrate that strategically designed digital literacy management can improve students' cognitive, practical, and ethical competencies (Hakim et al., 2026; Juwaini et al., 2025; Nuryana & Sirojuddin, 2025). However, their analysis remains program-oriented mainly and does not yet address strategic planning at the institutional level. (Saepurohman et al., 2025). Huda et al. emphasise that pesantren transformation is influenced by global competition, reinforcement of institutional values, and demands for organisational effectiveness, but their discussion primarily focuses on macro-level dynamics. (M. N. Huda et al., 2025). Studies by Mawardi and Dina et al. underline the importance of strategic planning and internal-external environmental analysis in educational management. (Mawardi et al., 2023); (Dina et al., 2023), while Ghafar highlights the pivotal role of *kiai* leadership in enhancing the quality of pesantren. Taken together, these studies provide valuable insights, yet they tend to approach strategic management in a fragmented way and rarely place social and religious plurality at the centre of pesantren governance (Ghafar, 2022).

This situation points to a clear research gap. Existing literature has not sufficiently explored how pesantren strategically manage plural social environments by embedding multicultural Islamic values within their core management processes. Strategic management is often reduced to technical adjustments or leadership effectiveness, without a coherent framework that explains how value-based strategies are formulated and implemented to address religious and cultural diversity. (Hidayati et al., 2025; M. Huda & Sabani, 2018). Consequently, the interrelationship between strategic management, multicultural Islamic education, and organisational resilience in pesantren remains insufficiently examined, particularly in contexts marked by social heterogeneity. (Zakaria et al., 2025). The study aims to analyse how strategic management contributes to strengthening organisational resilience, sustaining public legitimacy, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of pesantren in plural societies.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research design with an ethnographic orientation to explore the strategic management practices that underpin organisational resilience in pesantrens operating within a plural social setting. The research was conducted at Pesantren Miftahul Qulub in Polagan Village, Galis Sub-district, Pamekasan, a pesantren embedded in a socially and religiously diverse community. An ethnographic approach was considered appropriate because it allows close engagement with organisational life, enabling the researcher to observe how managerial practices, value orientations, and institutional routines are enacted in everyday settings. As noted by Creswell and further elaborated by Ghony, ethnography facilitates the interpretation of behavioural patterns, beliefs, and organisational culture within a specific social group. In line with the perspective of Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges, this approach is also well-suited for organizational studies, particularly for examining how strategic planning and value-based adaptation are practiced by institutional actors (Genzok, 2003); (Ghony, 2022). The analysis in this study was guided by the Organizational Resilience framework proposed by Hamel and Välikangas, which provided an analytical lens for understanding how strategic management supports institutional sustainability amid environmental complexity (Hamel G, 2003).

Data collection combined participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to capture a comprehensive picture of pesantren strategic management. Participant observation involved direct engagement with daily educational, managerial, and social activities within the pesantren, with particular attention to interactions and practices related to multicultural engagement and strategic decision-making. In-depth interviews were conducted openly and flexibly with key informants, including pesantren leaders, teachers, and selected community members, in order to elicit nuanced perspectives on organisational strategy and resilience. (Maskuri, 2013); (Moleong, 2013).

Document analysis complemented these methods by examining institutional policies, curricula, strategic documents, and relevant archival records. (Sugiyono, 2017). Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (2002), encompassing data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion drawing as interrelated processes. (Miles, 2002). To strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources, research methods, and theoretical perspectives, thereby ensuring the consistency and robustness of interpretations concerning strategic management practices at Pesantren Miftahul Qulub within its plural social environment. (Sugiyono, 2017).

Table 1. Research Participants

Code	Informant Category	Participant	Information
I-K1	Key Informant	Pesantren Leader (<i>Kiai</i>)	Holds primary authority in determining strategic direction and institutional policies
I-P2	Main Informant	Deputy Leader/pengurus	Oversees day-to-day operations and translates strategic decisions into managerial practice
I-K3	Main Informant	Head of Madrasah/kepala sekolah/madrasah	Oversees day-to-day operations and translates strategic decisions into managerial practice
I-G4	Supporting Informant	Teacher	Responsible for implementing strategic policies in academic management
I-T5	External Informant	Community Leader/Tokoh masyarakat	Represents community perceptions and the pesantren's relationship with a plural social environment
I-W6	External Informant	Parent of <i>Santri/Wali Santri</i>	Offers parental perspectives on pesantren policies and institutional legitimacy

Source: Data Collection, 2025

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Strategic Orientation and Environmental Analysis in a Plural Society

Field observations indicate that this strategic orientation is translated into routine participation in community forums and cross-group social activities as part of the pesantren's institutional engagement with its plural environment. This is further supported by institutional documents showing that community relations and social cooperation have been formally incorporated into strategic planning and program agendas. Taken together, these findings indicate that an internal–external environmental analysis serves as a strategic foundation for strengthening organisational resilience.

The findings reveal that the strategic orientation of pesantren Miftahul Qulub is shaped by a clear institutional awareness of its position within a socially and religiously plural environment. Diversity is not perceived as a threat to the pesantren's Islamic identity, but rather as an external contextual condition that requires deliberate and adaptive strategic management. This orientation is reflected in leadership deliberations that consistently incorporate social dynamics into institutional decision-making and program formulation.

Moreover, Pesantren Miftahul Qulub demonstrates organisational resilience by developing adaptive mechanisms based on a deep understanding of the social and religious conditions surrounding it. This understanding allows the pesantren to not only survive in the face of rapid social change but also to leverage it as an opportunity to strengthen inter-community relationships. In this regard, the pesantren does not rely solely on internal policies but is also committed to open dialogue with various social actors, including religious leaders from other faiths, community organisations, and local government. This makes the pesantren a key actor in fostering a harmonious and mutually respectful atmosphere amidst diversity. This strategic awareness is reinforced by the perspectives of pesantren leadership and daily management, as reflected in the following interview excerpts:

“The pesantren does not position itself as an exclusive institution. We realise that Polagan is a plural village, so the pesantren must be able to adapt and build relationships with the surrounding community without losing its Islamic identity.”(I-K1). “From the management side, daily operations are always adjusted to social conditions around the pesantren. Strategic decisions are taken by considering community dynamics so that the pesantren can develop without creating social distance.”(I-P2).

Furthermore, the internal and external environmental analysis conducted by the pesantren employs a highly contextual approach, in which any changes in the social or political dynamics surrounding the pesantren are carefully evaluated. By considering all aspects that shape the social and religious environment, the pesantren can adjust its policies and programs to remain relevant and practical. Through this approach, the pesantren not only maintains its existence but also builds long-term resilience, allowing it to thrive amid the complexities of a continuously evolving pluralistic society.



Figure 1. Strategic Orientation and Environmental Analysis of Pesantren in a Plural Society

The institutional documents also reveal that the pesantren's strategic planning integrates a participatory approach, involving various stakeholders from both internal and external environments. This participatory process ensures that the decisions made reflect not only the needs and aspirations of the pesantren's internal community but also the expectations and concerns of the broader society. For instance, regular meetings with local community leaders, interfaith dialogue sessions, and collaboration with local government initiatives are formalised within the pesantren's strategic framework. By engaging in these collaborative efforts, the pesantren strengthens its role as an inclusive institution that fosters mutual understanding and cooperation across different social and religious groups.

Furthermore, the pesantren's commitment to adapting its strategic orientation to a plural environment is evident in its emphasis on developing students' social competencies alongside religious knowledge. The curriculum and extracurricular activities are designed to promote multicultural values, critical thinking, and civic responsibility, equipping students to navigate and contribute positively to a diverse society. This forward-thinking approach helps the pesantren maintain its relevance, ensuring that its educational and organisational practices continue to meet the evolving demands of both the Islamic community and the larger plural society.

Value-Based Strategic Management in Governing Social Plurality

Observations within the pesantren indicate that integrating multicultural Islamic values into daily practices is not merely a theoretical exercise but a lived reality in interactions among students, teachers, and the broader community. During routine activities such as morning assemblies, community service, and interfaith dialogues, these values are visibly put into practice. For instance, students from diverse cultural backgrounds are encouraged to share their traditions, and this interaction is celebrated as a form of mutual learning rather than a source of division. Teachers also emphasise that the pesantren's teachings go beyond religious boundaries, highlighting the importance of empathy, cooperation, and respect for all individuals, regardless of their background or beliefs. These practices foster a sense of belonging and equality, allowing students to feel valued and included within the pesantren community.

Additionally, field observations suggest that these values extend to the management and operational aspects of the pesantren. Leadership and staff model openness and inclusivity in their decision-making, ensuring that policies reflect the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders. For example, when allocating resources, leadership consistently considers how to support students from marginalised backgrounds, ensuring equal access to educational opportunities. This value-driven approach is reflected in the pesantren's day-to-day operations, where decisions are not solely based on institutional efficiency but also on principles of justice and social equity, reinforcing the pesantren's commitment to governing with a strong foundation of multicultural Islamic values.

Another key finding concerns the role of value-based strategic management in governing social plurality. Pesantren Miftahul Qulub integrates multicultural Islamic values, such as openness, equality, humanism, contextual orientation, and local wisdom (*setlong dâra* dan *tarêtan dbibi*) into its governance framework. These values are not treated as abstract ideals but are operationalised as strategic principles that guide policy formulation, academic management, and institutional interaction within a diverse social setting. This value-based orientation is consistently articulated by educational managers and subject teachers, as illustrated in the following interview excerpts:

“In managing the educational units, openness and equality are the main considerations. Policies are designed so that all santri feel included regardless of their social or cultural background.”(I-K3)

“In Al-Qur'an Hadith lessons, we emphasise that Islamic teachings encourage respect, justice, and peaceful coexistence. These values are not only taught conceptually, but are also linked to the social realities surrounding the pesantren.”(I-G4)

“Through Islamic Cultural History (SKI), students learn that Islam has long interacted with plural societies. Historical examples are used to strengthen students' understanding of diversity as an integral part of Islamic civilisation.”(I-G4).

These principles of openness, equality, and humanism are not only emphasised in theory but are actively practised throughout the pesantren's daily routines. For example, in classroom settings, teachers encourage students to engage in discussions that explore different perspectives, helping them to develop a broader understanding of social diversity. This approach allows students to recognise the value of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, which are crucial for fostering a harmonious society. By weaving these values into the fabric of the educational process, the pesantren ensures that students internalise them as integral parts of their personal and social identities, enabling them to carry these principles beyond the pesantren environment.

Moreover, the pesantren's commitment to multicultural values is reflected in its long-term strategic planning. Policies and programs that promote tolerance and inclusivity are consistently reviewed and updated to ensure they remain relevant to the dynamic needs of the surrounding community. This proactive approach is evident in the pesantren's efforts to collaborate with local leaders, religious figures, and other community organisations, reinforcing its role as a community centre that bridges cultural and religious divides. As such, the pesantren's strategic management, rooted in multicultural Islamic values, not only strengthens internal cohesion but also ensures its continued engagement and legitimacy in a plural society.



Figure 2. Value-Based Strategic Management Framework

The photograph captures a moment during a community event in which students from diverse backgrounds come together, illustrating the pesantren's commitment to promoting multicultural values. In this visual representation, students are seen engaging in collaborative activities, exchanging ideas, and celebrating cultural diversity through shared experiences. This image is not just a snapshot of a single event but a testament to the ongoing efforts of the pesantren to integrate multicultural Islamic values into its everyday practices. The harmony and inclusivity depicted in the photo reflect the pesantren's strategic direction to foster an environment where all students, regardless of their social or cultural background, feel welcomed and respected. This visual evidence aligns with the findings from both the interviews and observational data, underscoring how these values are lived out in both educational and social contexts within the pesantren.

Strategic Management Outcomes and Organisational Resilience

Field observations further highlight the significance of Pesantren Miftahul Qulub's strategic engagement with its social and religious environment. During community events, the pesantren consistently demonstrates its commitment to building strong, lasting relationships with local leaders, government officials, and community organisations. For instance, at a recent interfaith gathering in the village, pesantren leaders actively participated in discussions aimed at fostering mutual understanding among religious groups. This kind of interaction, coupled with the

pesantren's transparent communication with local authorities, reinforces its role as a stabilising force within the community. The mutual trust built through such efforts enables the pesantren to address potential social tensions proactively, ensuring that any challenges are met with constructive dialogue rather than conflict.

Additionally, the pesantren's resilience is further demonstrated by its ability to adapt to shifting community dynamics while remaining true to its core values. For example, when the village faced a surge in social issues related to youth engagement, the pesantren responded by enhancing its community outreach programs and providing spaces for youth discussions. This not only helped address the immediate concerns but also strengthened the pesantren's legitimacy in the eyes of residents. Through these initiatives, the pesantren has become a key player in shaping the village's social fabric, ensuring it remains a trusted institution capable of navigating complex social dynamics. These efforts, consistently captured in field observations, affirm that the strategic management practices embedded in multicultural Islamic values are central to the pesantren's organisational resilience, allowing it to maintain its role as a unifying force in a diverse society.

These observations align with data from interviews with local stakeholders, who consistently praise the pesantren for its active role in maintaining social harmony. The long-term impact of these strategies is evident not only in the positive perceptions of the pesantren among its stakeholders but also in the institution's continuous engagement with the surrounding community. As such, the resilience of Pesantren Miftahul Qulub is not merely a result of its internal organisational strength but also its deep-rooted commitment to fostering collaborative relationships with the diverse social actors in its environment. These strategic outcomes are acknowledged by various external stakeholders, as reflected in the following interview excerpts:

"Pesantren Miftahul Qulub plays an important role in maintaining harmony in Polagan. Its openness and involvement in interfaith and community activities contribute to social stability. We feel confident sending our children to this pesantren because it teaches them to respect differences while maintaining strong religious values"(I-T5, I-W6)

"The pesantren consistently cooperates with the village government and security elements. This collaboration helps prevent social tension and supports harmony among residents.

"From the security perspective, the pesantren's involvement in social and religious activities strengthens mutual trust and helps maintain a peaceful environment despite differences."(I-K15, I-P2).

These perspectives are further substantiated by field observations, which highlight the ongoing and effective cross-community collaboration facilitated by Pesantren Miftahul Qulub. For instance, regular community meetings and interfaith activities organised by the pesantren demonstrate its proactive role in fostering dialogue and mutual understanding among diverse groups. These collaborative efforts are not only reflected in the peaceful interactions among different religious and social groups but also in the pesantren's ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships with local authorities, thereby enhancing its role as a key pillar of social stability. Institutional documents corroborate these observations, showing that such community engagement is formally embedded in the pesantren's strategic planning, ensuring that these initiatives are sustained and developed over time.

Furthermore, the continuity of strategic programs and governance structures within the pesantren, as indicated in both the interviews and official records, reinforces the idea that its organisational resilience is closely tied to a well-structured, value-based approach. Strategic management practices, deeply rooted in environmental analysis and the integration of multicultural Islamic values, have enabled the pesantren to adapt to social changes while maintaining its Islamic identity. The commitment to values such as openness, equality, and humanism, coupled with a strong governance framework, ensures that the pesantren not only survives but thrives in a plural society. These findings collectively affirm that the pesantren's resilience is not an incidental outcome but a deliberate, ongoing process, facilitated by strategic management that aligns with the needs of a diverse and evolving community.

Table 2. Table of Research Results

Aspects	Findings	Validation
Strategic Orientation and Environmental Analysis in a Plural Society	The findings show that Pesantren Miftahul Qulub approaches social and religious plurality as a strategic contextual condition rather than a challenge to its Islamic identity. Awareness of the plural environment is embedded in leadership deliberations, routine engagement with the surrounding community, and the formulation of institutional plans. Through this process, internal–external environmental analysis becomes an integral part of strategic decision-making.	In-depth interviews (I-K1, I-P2); participant observation; institutional documents
Value-Based Strategic Management in Governing Social Plurality	Multicultural Islamic values, such as openness, equality, humanism, contextual orientation, and local wisdom, are translated into concrete managerial principles. These values inform policy formulation, academic governance, and patterns of interaction between the pesantren and the wider society, allowing diversity to be addressed through ethical and strategic considerations rather than ad hoc responses.	In-depth interviews (I-K3, I-G4); observation; curriculum and policy documents
Strategic Orientation and Environmental Analysis in a Plural Society	Organisational resilience is reflected in the pesantren’s ability to sustain public trust, maintain internal cohesion, and nurture constructive relationships with diverse external stakeholders. These outcomes indicate that strategic management practices enable institutional continuity and adaptation without compromising the pesantren’s core Islamic character.	In-depth interviews (I-T5, I-W6); observation; strategic and governance documents

Source: Data Collection, 2025

Discussion

Reconceptualising Pesantren as Strategically Managed Religious Organisations

The findings of this study point to the necessity of rethinking how pesantren are positioned within contemporary academic discourse. Rather than being understood solely as religious-educational institutions, pesantren need to be approached as religious organisations whose continuity and relevance are shaped by conscious and strategic managerial practices. Classical scholarship has convincingly documented the historical role of pesantren in transmitting Islamic knowledge, cultivating moral character, and reproducing religious authority through the leadership of the kiai and the persistence of pesantren traditions (Abidin & Sirojuddin, 2024; Baihaqi et al., 2023; Dhofier, 2019; Madjid, 1997; Nugroho et al., 2025).

Evidence from pesantren Miftahul Qulub suggests a notable shift in institutional self-understanding. Pesantren actors increasingly perceive their institutions not merely as pedagogical or spiritual spaces, but as organisational actors embedded within a complex and dynamic social environment. (Madjid, 1997)). The pesantren is experienced as an institution exposed to public scrutiny, legitimacy expectations, and ongoing demands to maintain constructive relations with diverse stakeholders. This shift is analytically significant because it reshapes how leaders define organisational challenges, determine acceptable courses of action, and justify strategic decisions. Within this framework, strategic management emerges as an interpretive lens for understanding pesantren continuity as an organisational achievement rather than a purely normative outcome of religious authority. (Dhofier, 2019; Haqqi et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2025).

This finding extends earlier scholarship that emphasises the integration of Islamic values and kiai leadership in pesantren development (Nasir, 2021; Sirojuddin et al., 2022, 2025; Yuliana et al., 2025). While these studies underscore the normative foundations of pesantren authority, the present research demonstrates that such foundations become organizationally effective only when translated into strategic orientations, governance routines, and decision-making structures. Values, by themselves, do not automatically generate strategic capacity (Nasir, 2021). They acquire institutional force when embedded in rules, procedures, priorities, and social relationships that guide collective action over time. In this sense, pesantren authority and organisational effectiveness converge when moral commitments are operationalised as strategic commitments (Tracey, 2012).

From a theoretical standpoint, this interpretation resonates with Tracey's observation that management scholarship has long treated religion as too distant or too sensitive to examine systematically. As a result, the organisational dynamics of religious institutions have remained underexplored. (Tracey, 2012). The case of pesantren Miftahul Qulub illustrates why this gap is consequential. Religious organisations operate with distinctive identity claims, moral obligations, and stakeholder expectations that fundamentally shape how strategy is formulated and enacted. Approaching pesantren as strategically managed organisations, therefore, not only broadens the scope of strategic management research but also enhances the analytical depth of pesantren studies.

Strategic management literature further helps clarify this reconceptualisation. Bryson argues that public and nonprofit organisations, including faith-based institutions, require deliberate strategic planning to sustain legitimacy, accountability, and long-term viability. (Bryson, 2018). Pesantren Miftahul Qulub confirms this argument, while also complicating it productively. Strategic direction within the pesantren is not derived exclusively from formal planning documents. Instead, it is sustained through deliberative leadership practices, routinised governance mechanisms, and continuous interaction with the surrounding community. (Sirojuddin et al., 2025)). In this respect, the pesantren echoes Mintzberg's critique of rigid, technocratic planning models. Strategy here is often emergent, negotiated, and context sensitive. What becomes evident is not an absence of strategy, but a distinct mode of strategy making, one that remains anchored in religious identity while remaining responsive to social realities. (Mintzberg, 1994).

This reconceptualisation also clarifies why pesantren achievements cannot be separated from processes of ongoing institutional transformation. Recognition of pesantren contributions to Islamic learning and character formation must be accompanied by sustained organisational adaptation, particularly in plural societies that demand social competence, civic responsibility, peaceful coexistence, and the rejection of violence. (Nuha et al., 2024); (Banks, 2014; Supendi et al., 2018)). The central strategic question, therefore, is not whether pesantren remain Islamic, but how Islamic commitments are institutionalised in ways that preserve relevance, public trust, and organisational viability amid shifting social expectations. (Banks & Cherry A. Banks, 2010); (Umar et al., 2024).

Strategy Formation under Plurality: Environmental Analysis as a Governance Capability

A central contribution of this study is to demonstrate that social and religious plurality is approached as a strategic environment rather than as a disruption to pesantren identity. This finding offers an empirical response to Baidhawy's critique that religious educational institutions have often displayed limited sensitivity toward diversity. (Baidhawy, 2007). It also extends Hoon's argument that dominant multicultural frameworks tend to prioritise ethnic diversity while insufficiently engaging religious difference as a governance concern. (Hoon, 2017). In pesantren Miftahul Qulub, plurality is not simply acknowledged; it becomes an object of governance through systematic interpretation of risks, opportunities, and stakeholder dynamics.

The findings suggest that environmental analysis is institutionalised through leadership deliberation, sustained engagement with community actors, and the consistent incorporation of social considerations into organisational planning. This observation reinforces (Raihani, 2018) emphasis on governance capacity as the critical link between multicultural ideals and practical implementation. In concrete terms, pesantren leaders treat plural social conditions as information

that must be continuously processed: which social networks require reinforcement, which community concerns demand response, which alliances contribute to social stability, and which practices risk generating social distance if left unattended (Raihani, 2018).

Strategic management theory provides a useful conceptual vocabulary for interpreting these practices. Bryson identifies environmental scanning as a core function for organisations operating in complex public settings (Bryson, 2018). Poister, Edwards, and Pasha further demonstrate that strategic planning enhances organisational effectiveness when embedded in adaptive, incremental decision-making processes. (Poister, Theodore H, Edwards, Lauren Hamilton, Pasha, Obed Q, & Edwards, 2014). Pesantren Miftahul Qulub exemplifies this embeddedness. Strategy is not reduced to a static document; it is enacted through repeated interactions with external actors, ongoing assessment of social dynamics, and incremental adjustments that prevent minor frictions from escalating into open conflict (Poister, Theodore H, Edwards, Lauren Hamilton, Pasha, Obed Q, & Edwards, 2014).

At the same time, this case calls for an important conceptual refinement. Environmental analysis within pesantren is not value-neutral. Decisions concerning intergroup engagement, cooperation across differences, and the maintenance of institutional authority are consistently filtered through Islamic ethical principles and local cultural norms. (Tracey, 2012)). This insight is analytically significant because it demonstrates that strategic capacity is built not only through technical analysis but also through moral reasoning. In this respect, the pesantren provides a concrete illustration of religion functioning as an organisational resource, consistent with Tracey and Tracey, Phillips, and Lounsbury, who argue that religion shapes meaning systems, legitimacy claims, and organisational practices. (Tracey, 2012); (Tracey, P., Phillips, N., & Lounsbury, 2014).

It is therefore necessary to distinguish strategic environmental analysis from mere social participation. In many institutional contexts, community involvement remains symbolic and primarily serves reputational purposes. What differentiates pesantren Miftahul Qulub is that community engagement operates as a governance mechanism. It provides real-time information, tests institutional legitimacy in the public sphere, and builds relational infrastructure that can be mobilised when social tensions arise. This pattern aligns with responsible leadership perspectives that conceptualise leadership as relational work involving multiple stakeholders rather than a closed leader-follower relationship. (Maak & Pless, 2006). Under conditions of plurality, the pesantren strategy is enacted through stakeholder governance rather than unilateral authority.

This governance capability also addresses limitations in program-oriented studies that emphasise innovation or digital literacy without situating such initiatives within an institution-wide strategic framework. (Saepurohman et al., 2025). It likewise complements macro-level accounts of pesantren transformation driven by globalisation and competitiveness, which often lack a detailed analysis of how strategy is practised in everyday organisational life. (M. N. Huda et al., 2025). The present study demonstrates that in plural environments, strategic management is not optional. It becomes a structural condition for sustaining social acceptance and preventing identity polarisation.

Values as Strategic Infrastructure: Embedding Multicultural Islamic Commitments into Governance

The findings further reveal that multicultural Islamic values, openness, equality, humanism, contextual orientation, and local wisdom (*settong dârâ and tarêtan dhibi*) are embedded systematically within governance processes rather than remaining at the level of rhetorical affirmation. This distinction is analytically important. While many institutions articulate multicultural values as normative ideals, such values often carry limited managerial implications. At pesantren Miftahul Qulub, values function as a strategic infrastructure. They guide policy formulation, shape managerial routines, and structure interaction with diverse social actors.

This finding extends Banks by locating multicultural commitments not only in curriculum content but also in organisational governance itself (Banks & Cherry A. Banks, 2010). It also complements Supendi et al. by demonstrating how multicultural values can be operationalised into institutional routines that stabilise interaction across differences. Strategically, this suggests that

values are not secondary to strategy (Supendi et al., 2018). Instead, they constitute the medium through which strategy acquires legitimacy and coherence, particularly within religious organisations where moral authority remains central to public trust.

Organisational culture theory further strengthens this interpretation. Schein emphasises that core values shape organisational culture by influencing leadership attention, decision justification, and the normalisation of particular behaviours (Amalia, 2026; Ma'arif et al., 2025; Schein, 2010). The pesantren case illustrates how Islamic commitments and local wisdom operate as cultural anchors that shape governance patterns. Importantly, these anchors do not immobilise institutional identity. Instead, they provide stability while enabling adaptive responses to social change. This observation aligns with Gioia et al.'s argument that organisational identity is continuously formed and reformed through the interaction between internal self-definitions and external pressures. (Gioia, D. A., Patvardhan, S. D., Hamilton, A. L., & Corley, 2013). At pesantren Miftahul Qulub, Islamic identity remains central, yet it is interpreted in ways that support civic engagement and social openness rather than withdrawal.

Responsible leadership theory adds another layer of explanation. Maak and Pless conceptualise responsible leadership as a relational and ethical practice involving multiple stakeholders (Maak & Pless, 2006). Pesantren Miftahul Qulub exemplifies this orientation. The pesantren is accountable not only to its internal community, but also to the broader social environment in which it operates. This stakeholder orientation does not weaken religious authority. On the contrary, it protects that authority by preventing the institution from being perceived as socially detached or politically exclusive (Weaver, 2002).

By foregrounding values as strategic infrastructure, this perspective moves beyond the frequent reduction of strategic management to technical adjustment or managerial efficiency. Strategy, in this context, is value-based, identity-conscious, and socially negotiated. This is precisely the kind of empirical insight anticipated by organisation theory when religion is treated as an integral dimension of organisational life: values shape legitimacy, frame responses to external demands, and sustain internal cohesion (Tracey, 2012; Tracey, P., Phillips, N., & Lounsbury, 2014).

From Strategy to Resilience: Explaining Institutional Sustainability as a Meta-Capability

The findings indicate that organisational resilience at Pesantren Miftahul Qulub emerges as a direct outcome of integrated strategic management. Resilience is not limited to institutional survival. It refers to the capacity to anticipate change, cope with social pressures, and adapt governance arrangements without eroding core identity. This interpretation reinforces Hamel and Välikangas's argument that resilience entails avoiding strategic stagnation (Hamel G, 2003). It also deepens Duchek's conception of resilience as a meta-capability encompassing anticipation, coping, and adaptation (Duchek, 2020).

Empirically, the pesantren demonstrates anticipation through continuous interpretation of its social environment and sustained monitoring of community dynamics. Coping is evident in relational governance practices that prioritise trust-building and conflict prevention through stakeholder engagement. Adaptation is reflected in incremental renewal of governance routines and institutional programs that remain faithful to Islamic commitments while responsive to plural social realities (Fatah et al., 2025). Together, these dimensions illustrate resilience not as an episodic reaction to crisis, but as an ongoing organisational process.

This interpretation is consistent with Boin and van Eeten's argument that resilience depends more on institutional processes and leadership practices than on abstract claims of "bouncing back" (Boin, A., & van Eeten, 2013). At pesantren Miftahul Qulub, resilience is cultivated through routine interaction, stable governance norms, and durable relational networks. It also resonates with Lengnick-Hall and Beck's argument that resilience capacity is developed through the strategic management of organisational competencies. Although this study does not explicitly focus on human resource systems, the findings imply that resilience is closely tied to the development of internal competencies, such as social sensitivity, ethical judgment, and collaborative capacity, among educators and managers. (Lengnick-Hall, C. A., Beck, T. E., & Lengnick-Hall, 2011).

The findings also nuance existing leadership-centred accounts of pesantren resilience. Ghafar highlights the pivotal role of kiai leadership in enhancing the quality of pesantrens (Ghafar, 2022). The present study does not contest this claim, but it demonstrates that resilience cannot be reduced to leader charisma alone. Instead, resilience is structurally embedded in governance systems, value-based organisational culture, and stakeholder relationships that endure beyond individual leadership figures. This insight is strategically significant, particularly in contexts where leadership transition may otherwise threaten institutional continuity (Duchek, 2020).

Table 2. Theoretical Analysis and Research Contributions

Dimensions	Findings	Related Theories	Research Contributions
Reconceptualisation of Pesantren as Organisations	Pesantren Miftahul Qulub is understood and governed as an organisational actor embedded in a complex social environment, rather than merely as a religious educational institution relying on traditional authority. Institutional continuity is actively produced through strategic governance.	1. Organisational Strategy in Public and Nonprofit Organisations (Bryson, 2018) 2. Religion and Organisation (Tracey, 2012) 3. Organisational Identity (Gioia et al., 2013)	This study reconceptualises pesantren as strategically managed religious organisations, shifting pesantren analysis from normative pedagogical explanations toward organisational strategy as a key explanatory lens. This provides a new analytical position in pesantren studies.
Strategic Management and Organisational Resilience	Organisational resilience is reflected in sustained legitimacy, internal cohesion, adaptive governance, and durable trust across social and religious boundaries. Resilience is cultivated continuously, not only during crises.	1. Organisational Resilience (Hamel & Välikangas, 2003; Duchek, 2020) 2. Resilient Organisations (Boin & van Eeten, 2013) 3. Strategic HR and Capabilities (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011)	This study conceptualises pesantren resilience as an institutional meta-capability emerging from strategic management and value-based governance, rather than as a by-product of tradition or individual leadership.
Integrated Strategic Governance Model of Pesantren	Strategic management, multicultural Islamic values, and resilience are interconnected and co-evolve within everyday pesantren governance practices.	1. Strategic Management Integration, Organisational Identity and Change (Gioia et al., 2013) 2. Religion in Organisation Theory (Tracey, 2012)	The study offers an integrated analytical framework explaining how strategy, values, and resilience interact in pesantren governance. This framework constitutes the core novelty and is transferable to other religious organisations in plural societies.

Source: Data Collection, 2025

Theoretically, this research contributes to Islamic education and management scholarship by shifting the analytic focus from instructional effectiveness toward the strategic governance of religious organisations. It responds directly to Tracey et al.'s call for organisation studies to engage religion seriously, not as a peripheral variable but as a central institutional domain shaping organisational forms, values, and strategic behaviour. (Tracey, 2012; Tracey, P., Phillips, N., & Lounsbury, 2014). The findings demonstrate that pesantren are not merely educational settings in

which multicultural values are taught. They are religious organisations in which values actively structure strategy, governance, and resilience. (Tracey, P., Phillips, N., & Lounsbury, 2014).

Empirically, the study offers a governance model for pesantren operating in plural social contexts. It complements program-oriented research on innovation and digital literacy. (Saepurohman et al., 2025) and macro-level analyses of pesantren transformation and competitiveness (M. N. Huda et al., 2025) by providing a micro-level account of how strategy is enacted in everyday organisational life: through environmental analysis, value-embedded governance, and stakeholder-oriented leadership (Aryasutha et al., 2025; Budiyo et al., 2024).

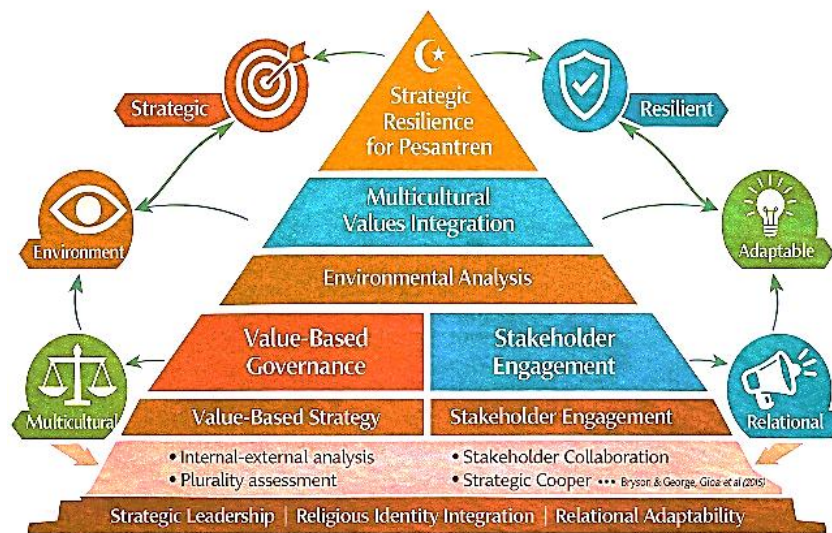


Figure 1. Strategic Management Model of Pesantren Organisational Resilience in a Plural Society

This figure illustrates the interconnection between strategic environmental analysis, value-based governance, and organisational resilience in pesantren operating within a socially plural context. It highlights how **environmental** analysis acts as a central managerial practice, enabling pesantren to understand and respond to social and religious diversity. These insights are then implemented through value-based governance, in which multicultural Islamic values guide decision-making and foster ongoing stakeholder engagement (Ahwan & Karfida, 2025; Asrori et al., 2025; Cahyani et al., 2026). Organisational resilience is framed not as a reactive crisis response, but as a cumulative outcome built through continuous governance practices.

The novelty of this research lies in its exploration of the organic relationship between strategic management, multicultural Islamic commitments, and organisational resilience in plural societies. The study integrates these concepts, demonstrating their co-evolution within pesantren governance, thereby addressing a gap in the literature on the link between value-based strategies and governance practices across diverse contexts. The findings suggest that pesantren in plural environments should focus on three interconnected governance capacities: systematic environmental scanning, institutionalisation of values as actionable principles, and resilience-building through routines that maintain legitimacy and cohesion. This framework offers practical guidance for pesantren leaders and can be applied to comparative research on religious organisations in complex social settings.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the organisational resilience of Pesantren Miftahul Qulub is a product of deliberate, integrated strategic management rather than a mere result of religious tradition or charismatic authority. The findings highlight that pesantren situated in socially and religiously plural contexts can maintain institutional legitimacy and continuity by approaching social and religious diversity as a strategic environmental factor. Resilience is fostered through three

interrelated elements: *first*, a strategic orientation based on ongoing internal and external environmental analysis; *second*, the institutionalisation of multicultural Islamic values that guide governance practices; and *third*, adaptive strategies that enhance social capital, foster internal cohesion, and promote positive interactions with diverse stakeholders. These elements allow the pesantren to preserve its Islamic identity while being responsive, inclusive, and resilient in a socially diverse environment, ensuring long-term sustainability and engagement with its broader community.

Despite these significant contributions, this study has several limitations that future research should address. The research focuses on a single qualitative case, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other pesantren with different historical, organisational, or socio-cultural characteristics. Moreover, while the study explores strategic management at the organisational level, it does not thoroughly examine how these strategies are internalised and applied by various actor groups within the pesantren over time. Future research could benefit from comparative studies across multiple pesantren to assess the transferability of this strategic management model in different settings. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable to track how strategic orientation, value-based governance, and organisational resilience evolve in response to leadership transitions and shifting social dynamics. Such future research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of pesantren governance and resilience within plural societies, enhancing our knowledge of how religious organisations adapt and thrive in diverse social contexts.

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