

Institutional Adaptation of Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia: Balancing Tradition and Modern Education

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v9i3.11585>

Received: 09 June 2025

Revised: 25 August 2025

Accepted: 22 September 2025

Abstract:

This study examines the institutional adaptation of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia in response to social, cultural, and educational changes. The primary focus of this research is the dynamics of change in governance, curriculum, and organisational practices in Islamic boarding schools. This research uses a qualitative design with a phenomenological-sociological approach. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with kiai, administrators, teachers, students, and alumni, as well as institutional archival documentation and direct observation. Data analysis was conducted using the adaptive strategy framework, institutional change theory, and Philip A. Woods' four elements of adaptation: amplification, instrumental artifacts, freedom as a capability, and resource mobilisation. The results show that amplification is rooted in reforms that affirm the core values of Islamic boarding schools, while instrumental artifacts are evident in formal education and alumni collaboration. Freedom is reflected in governance that allows for limited space for innovation, and resource mobilisation combines symbolic and material capital to support change. Islamic boarding school adaptation is selective, employing a strategy of "resisting while following," which maintains cultural authenticity while competing in modern education. This research provides implications that Islamic boarding schools are selective in maintaining cultural authenticity and competitiveness in the modern education landscape.

Keywords: *Institutional Adaptation, Islamic Boarding Schools, Governance, Adaptive Strategy*

Abstrak:

Studi ini mengkaji adaptasi institusional pesantren di Indonesia dalam menghadapi perubahan sosial, budaya, dan pendidikan. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah dinamika perubahan tata kelola, kurikulum, dan praktik organisasional di pesantren. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis-sosiologis. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan kiai, pengurus, guru, santri, alumni, serta dokumentasi arsip kelembagaan dan observasi langsung. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan kerangka strategi adaptif, teori perubahan institusional, dan empat elemen adaptasi menurut Philip A. Woods: amplifikasi, artefak instrumental, kebebasan sebagai kapabilitas, dan mobilisasi sumber daya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa amplifikasi berakar pada reformasi yang menegaskan nilai inti pesantren, sementara artefak instrumental terlihat dalam pendidikan formal dan kolaborasi alumni. Kebebasan tercermin dalam tata kelola yang memberi ruang inovasi terbatas, dan mobilisasi sumber daya menggabungkan modal simbolik serta material untuk mendukung perubahan. Adaptasi pesantren bersifat selektif, dengan strategi "menolak sambil mengikuti," menjaga otentisitas budaya dan daya saing dalam pendidikan modern. Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi bahwa pesantren bersifat selektif dalam menjaga otentisitas budaya dan daya saing dalam pendidikan modern.

Kata Kunci: *Adaptasi Institusional, Pesantren, Tata Kelola, Strategi Adaptif*

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren, the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, occupy a distinctive position in the country's educational and cultural landscape. Since their inception, pesantren have functioned not only as centres for transmitting classical Islamic sciences but also as social institutions that shape collective identity. Their endurance is inseparable from their capacity to adapt to ongoing social, cultural, and educational changes (Malik et al., 2025).

Scholars have analyzed the transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia using varied terms. Kultsum, et al. (2022) distinguish two institutional models, namely schooling Islam (e.g., integrated Islamic schools or Muhammadiyah schools in urban areas) and school-based culture (exemplified by elite madrasah such as MAN in Indonesia (Rofi, 2025)). In a related context, Alam et al. (2023) introduce the concept of *santrinisasi* to describe the increasing preference among the urban middle class for elite Islamic schools. According to them, the core motivation is not only academic quality but also a desire to provide their children with moral and religious education.

Mun'im Sirri's study in Surabaya records similar expectations – Islamic schooling is urged to provide academic competence and cultivate religious character (Sirry, 2024). Mujahidah et al. (2023) highlight how pesantren that integrate elite-school systems with pesantren traditions gain a differentiating edge over conventional Islamic schools. Further, Asrori and Ismail identify a progressive dialectic between pesantren and colonialism. His work underscores that institutional adaptation is not exclusive to Islamic schools; pesantren led by *kiai* – with strong authority to steer organizational change – also adapt decisively (Asrori & Ismail, 2024).

A cognate framework is evident in Abdurrahman Wahid's (also known as Gus Dur's) call for the modernization of curricula, institutions, and leadership. According to him, pesantren should selectively adopt external values without compromising their cultural-religious identity (Islam, 2025). This resonates with Ridlwan Nasir's findings in Jombang. Pesantrens are open to external educational systems while remaining closed on matters of *'aqidah* and *shari'ah* to preserve tradition (Hasyim et al., 2024).

Other studies propose labels for pesantren adaptation. Ibrahim et al. (2024) find that Pesantren Lirboyo (Kediri) undergoes a gradual transformation in leadership, pedagogy, and institutional forms while maintaining *the kiai* lineage as the basis of traditional legitimacy. Muzammil et al. (2022) studied fifteen pesantren in West Borneo, emphasising an adaptive-accommodative character – receiving new elements through strict filtering. Kawakip & Sulanam (2023) found that Pesantren demonstrates creative adaptation through role distribution, internal management strengthening, and human resource development, while preserving core traditions such as *ta'dhīm* and *tawādu*.

From these findings, it becomes clear that pesantren do not undertake radical transformations like many modern educational institutions. Instead, they pursue adaptation through what Azyumardi Azra and Karel Steenbrink describe

as “resisting while following” in Hasyim et. al. (2024) – a selective stance toward the currents of change. This adaptive posture enables pesantren to remain relevant amid contemporary demands while safeguarding their cultural identity.

This article explores such adaptive strategies in depth. As outlined by Woods (Dewey, 2024), adaptation can be understood through four interrelated elements: amplification, building on instrumental artefacts, valuing freedom as a capability, and mobilising resources. These four dimensions form the analytical framework that will be elaborated in detail throughout this study.

This study focuses on two pesantren in Lumajang – Pondok Pesantren Kiai Syarifuddin (Kedungjajang) and Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum (Krai) – which have experienced significant change. Kiai Syarifuddin has expanded formal education from early childhood to higher education, pioneering a local campus in 2004. Bustanul Ulum also manages formal schools and a higher education institution, as well as runs social and religious units. In both cases, major decisions are deliberated collectively by councils of caregivers, foundation boards, and alumni.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological-sociological framework to explore the adaptive strategies of pesantren. Phenomenology was chosen to capture the lived experiences of actors (Boyle & Stew, 2024) – ranging from kiai and administrators to santri – without intrusive intervention, while the sociological dimension enables the analysis of social interactions, inter-actor relations, and the construction of institutional realities. The research sites were selected purposively, focusing on two pesantren in Lumajang, East Java: Pondok Pesantren Kiai Syarifuddin (Kedungjajang) and Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum (Krai). These institutions represent significant trajectories of institutional transformation. Kiai Syarifuddin has expanded its formal education system from early childhood to higher education since 2004, while Bustanul Ulum not only manages schools and a higher education institution but also operates various socio-religious units. In both cases, strategic decisions are made collectively through deliberations involving the councils of caregivers, foundation boards, and alumni networks, providing a rich setting for examining organisational learning and adaptation.

Data were collected through three primary techniques, namely participant observation, semi-structured conversations, and document analysis. Participant observation allowed the researcher to be directly involved in pesantren activities with varying levels of participation, enabling a critical dialogue between emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspectives. Semi-structured conversations were employed to ensure both flexibility and depth, thereby capturing the nuanced perspectives of actors regarding institutional strategies, decision-making processes, and adaptive practices. Document analysis was conducted by examining archival records, meeting minutes, institutional profiles, and pesantren publications relevant to organisational adaptation.

The data analysis followed an iterative coding process combined with thematic analysis. Initial codes were generated from interview transcripts, field

notes, and documentary materials, and subsequently organised into categories that highlighted emerging patterns (McGill et al., 2023). These themes were then examined to link individual experiences with broader institutional dynamics and social contexts. The analysis was guided by theoretical perspectives on strategy and organisational learning, viewing pesantren adaptation as a product of interconnections between social conditions, environmental contexts, and everyday practices (Bianchi et al., 2022). Triangulation across multiple data sources, combined with the researcher's reflexive engagement throughout the study, enhanced the credibility and validity of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

As previously outlined, four essential elements must be examined to capture the adaptive strategies of pesantren fully. These elements are not isolated; instead, they are deeply interrelated and mutually reinforcing in shaping the institutional responses to change. Each of these dimensions provides a distinctive lens through which the resilience and flexibility of pesantren can be understood, ranging from the preservation of religious tradition to the incorporation of innovative practices.

In the context of this study, the four elements are not merely theoretical constructs but observable strategies that have been consistently implemented by both pesantren under investigation in Lumajang: Pesantren Bustanul Ulum and Pesantren Kiai Syarifuddin. Their simultaneous application demonstrates how pesantren maintain equilibrium between continuity and transformation, ensuring that adaptation does not erode the core values of the institution. Instead, it enables pesantren to navigate contemporary challenges while remaining firmly grounded in their historical and cultural foundations.

First, the amplification of pesantren's strategy. At the amplification stage, pesantren reaffirm the founding vision and philosophy as the core foundation of adaptation. The maxim *al-muḥāfaẓah' ala al-qadīm al-ṣāliḥ wa al-akhdhu bi al-jadīd al-aṣlah* ensures that innovation remains rooted in sound Islamic tradition. Pesantren's metaphor of learning to "write from left to right" illustrates openness to modern education while maintaining the identity of *tafaqquh fī al-dīn* – similarly, KH. Affan Malik emphasised the importance of emulating large pesantren that had successfully transformed, orienting Bustanul Ulum toward readiness for change from the outset.

An interview with KH. Abdul Mughits Naufal of Bustanul Ulum illustrates this principle, "We do not fear change, but change must always follow our identity as pesantren. From the beginning, we orient ourselves toward readiness, while learning from the great pesantren such as Sukorejo and Nurul Jadid that have succeeded in embracing modernity without losing their soul."

Documentation data strengthens this. In the student handbook issued by Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum – particularly in the section entitled *Ikrar Santri* (Student Pledge) – it is stated that the santri declare their readiness to become learned persons, to be open-minded, to adhere to *Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'ah*, and to strive to renounce deviation and harm continually (2024 edition). These documents codify sincerity and modern openness as twin commitments.

Observation confirms these values in practice. Morning assemblies include *mau'idhah*, emphasising sincerity, while the weekly *gotong royong* illustrates collective solidarity. Thus, amplification is both textual (recorded in statutes) and practical (observed in rituals). The strength of this strategy lies in reinforcing core values such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), solidarity, and self-reliance as the soul of the institution. These prophetic values are consistently instilled, cultivating a mindset that change is not a threat but a continuation of the founders' vision. Adaptation thus renews collective energy without severing pesantren from its historical roots, keeping it both relevant and trusted by society.

Second, building on instrumental artefacts. The second strategy focuses on forming instrumental artefacts—structures, forums, and new facilities—as vehicles of adaptation. At Bustanul Ulum, archival documents indicate that the establishment of MTs Bustanul Ulum (1985) was legalised through *SK Depag Lumajang No. w.m. 06.02/ 928/ B / Ket./ 1985*. The *AD/ART Yayasan Bustanul Ulum* outlines an integrative policy: all students of formal schools are obliged to live in pesantren dormitories. In an interview, a senior teacher explained, "These rules are not symbolic. The dormitory obligation is written into the foundation's constitution so that formal education never drifts from pesantren identity."

At the Kiai Syarifuddin Islamic Boarding School, minutes of the Periodic Conference reveal the establishment of the *Mutaba'ah* form as a compulsory monthly evaluation. The document reads: "*The Mutaba'ah* form functions as a form of mentoring and personal reflection for each student and administrator."

Observation of orientation activities (OSABA at Bustanul Ulum, OSPEKSTREN at Kiai Syarifuddin) showed how documentation becomes lived experience. New santri receive printed booklets on covering prayer punctuality, dress codes, and the prohibition of mobile phones.

These artefacts—both physical (schools, dormitories) and textual (constitutions, regulations)—demonstrate how adaptation is institutionalised and not left to chance. Both pesantrens in Lumajang developed formal education units, alumni organisations, and student orientation programs to strengthen networks and instil an adaptive culture. Cross-unit deliberations, alumni gatherings, and orientation programs serve as arenas that link inherited values with contemporary contexts, fostering collective ownership.

Beyond forums, pesantren established formal schools and universities in response to societal needs. Formal curricula were integrated with pesantren traditions so that graduates retained the character of *santri*. Bustanul Ulum's integrative policy, which requires formal-school students to reside in dormitories, exemplifies its commitment to the pesantren identity, even at the risk of reduced enrollment. Such institutional artefacts both reinforce existence and sustain a balance between modernisation and traditional identity.

Third, valuing freedom as a capability. Adaptation also depends on structured freedom as an institutional capability. At Kiai Syarifuddin, a Dormitory Regulation (2022) grants caretakers autonomy to design special memorisation programs, while requiring them to submit monthly reports to the pesantren leadership. In an interview, one caretaker said, "We are given space, but also

responsibility. The handbook clearly states: Freedom is limited by the pesantren's vision."

Observation confirmed this. In Madinatul Qur'an dormitory, santri followed customised tahfidz schedules that differed from those in other dormitories. At Bustanul Ulum, freedom took another form. The 2015 Integrated Curriculum Policy (documented in the official curriculum handbook) mandated that teachers integrate Islamic studies across general subjects. For example, a science teacher must highlight Qur'anic references to nature. During a teachers' conference observed in 2023, administrators discussed digitalising these integrative modules.

Documentation of the 2022 Alumni Meeting reveals that alumni participation indicates a collective ownership of innovation. The note reads, "Several alumni proposed that Islamic boarding school-based entrepreneurship content be included and taught in the Bustanul Ulum curriculum." Thus, freedom as a capability is safeguarded by clear documentation—policies, guides, and conference minutes—that structure creativity without losing alignment.

This element highlights that pesantren adaptation depends not only on structures but also on creating freedom as an institutional capability. Freedom was realised through bounded autonomy for students, teachers, and *kiai* families to manage dormitories, classes, or special programs. At Kiai Syarifuddin, a multi-dormitory policy encouraged diverse innovations—from Qur'an memorisation to technology development. This nurtured healthy competition among units to innovate within the broader pesantren vision.

At Bustanul Ulum, freedom was oriented toward institutional consolidation through a centralised dormitory model. Innovation occurred in the design of integrative curricula and teacher development. Regular conferences provided platforms for administrators and alumni to formulate new strategies. Thus, freedom was not mere individual autonomy but a collective asset that generated directed innovation aligned with tradition.

Fourth, mobilising of resources. The final strategy concerns the mobilisation of resources—human, financial, and social. Documentation shows that alumni contributions are regularly recorded. Documentation shows that alumni contributions are regularly recorded. The IKSABU Financial Report for 2022 alone recorded alumni donations of IDR 55 million for the development of the Islamic boarding school. The Bustanul Ulum Waqf Book lists land parcels donated by alumni families since the 1980s.

In an interview, the chairman of IKSABU explained, "We created a transparent system. Every donation is written in our annual report and audited. This makes alumni feel safe and proud to contribute." Observation confirmed the mobilisation of resources in daily life. At Kiai Syarifuddin, a cooperative store (Kopontren) supplies the needs of santri, while also funding scholarships. Documentation from the RAT (Annual Member Meeting) explicitly states that annual profits must also be allocated for education subsidies."

Official permits also supported entrepreneurial initiatives. This pesantren Clinic operates under the name Poskestren. The KBIH (Hajj guidance) is licensed

by Kemenag 3836 /2016. These official documents show adaptation through legal recognition, enabling pesantren enterprises to operate sustainably.

Thus, resource mobilisation is both relational (through alumni and santri labour) and institutional (through documented enterprises and waqf records). The final strategy involves mobilising resources to support change. Both Islamic boarding schools optimise human resources, social networks, and financial and land assets guided by reciprocity and self-reliance. Students and alumni contributed ideas, labour, and financial support. Outbound and inbound interactions – for example, sending students to other Islamic boarding schools and welcoming general-school graduates into Islamic boarding school universities – broadened perspectives and enriched networks.

Resource mobilisation also occurred through independent enterprises, such as business units, cooperatives, clinics, and Hajj guidance groups (KBIH), which generated funding for educational programs. Alumni played significant roles in advocacy, donations, and external networking, ensuring Islamic boarding schools are not wholly dependent on a single donor. This strategy demonstrates that pesantren sustainability rests on combining internal economic independence with broad external social support.

The four strategic elements—vision amplification, development of instrumental artefacts, cultivation of freedom as institutional capability, and mobilisation of resources—operate in an integrated manner to sustain a balance between tradition and modernity within pesantren. For further details, please refer to Table 1 below.

Table 1. Elements of Pesantren's Strategy

Element	Sub-items
Amplification of Pesantren's Strategy	1. Affirmation of Founders Vision (Al-Muḥāfazah 'Ala Al-Qadīm Al-Ṣāliḥ Wa Al-Akhdhu Bi Al-Jadīd Al-Aṣḥaḥ). 2. Inclusive Learning, Example, "writing from left to right" as a metaphor for openness to modern education. 3. Guidance from KH. Affan malik to emulate successful pesantren (Sukorejo, Nurul Jadid). \ 4. Strengthening of core values: sincerity (ikhlaṣ), solidarity (gotong royong), islamic spirit, and self-reliance.
Building on Instrumental Artefacts	1. Establishment of formal institutions (madrasah, schools, university). 2. lumni associations (IKAPIN, IKSABU). 3. Student orientation programs (OSABA, OSPEKTREN). 4. Disciplinary and cultural artefacts (mutaba'ah at Kiai Syarifuddin; etiquette guidelines at Bustanul Ulum). 5. Integration of pesantren and formal school curricula.
Valuing Freedom as Capability	1. Innovation freedom grounded in musyāwarah (deliberation). 2. At Kiai Syarifuddin: multiple semi-autonomous dormitories (tahfidz, family dorms, madinatul qur'an). 3. At Bustanul Ulum: centralized dormitory system; innovation directed toward integrative curriculum. 4. Periodic conferences and workshops for strategic evaluation. 5. Directed freedom generates collective capability rather than individualism.
Mobilising of Resources	1. Optimization of human resources: sending students to study elsewhere, intergenerational knowledge sharing.

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2. Formal Alumni Networks (IKAPIN, IKSABU) as social capital.
 3. Entrepreneurial units (kiosks, cooperatives, clinics, KBIH, Pesantren-Owned Shops).
 4. Productive land management to finance pesantren.
 5. Economic self-reliance combined with external support (alumni, government, community).
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Discussion

Pesantren, as Indonesia's oldest Islamic educational institution, embodies both continuity and change within a shifting social and cultural landscape. Their capacity to adapt has ensured survival over centuries, despite recurring pressures from modernisation, state educational reforms, and community expectations. This study demonstrates that adaptation in pesantren is not a matter of abrupt transformation, but rather one of selective negotiation, drawing upon a foundation of prophetic values, symbolic resources, and pragmatic strategies. In the theoretical framework of organisational strategy, Bryson et al. (2024) conceptualise strategy as a set of decisions encompassing formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Formulation involves mapping internal needs and external threats; implementation requires operationalising strategic choices; and evaluation functions as feedback to ensure sustainability. In the pesantren context, strategy carries dual implications, namely that it is normatively tied to religious missions, while simultaneously contending with pragmatic demands such as accreditation, standardised curricula, employment markets, and political shifts (Mumtaz et al., 2024). Thus, pesantren strategies must be understood as cultural and ideological processes as much as technical or managerial ones.

When strategy is integrated with adaptation, the emphasis shifts from organisational planning to lived social interaction. Adaptation here means more than policy shifts. It represents how pesantren socialises values, externalises ideas into the public sphere, and internalises new norms into institutional structures. Karma Sherif emphasises that adaptation involves cultivating knowledge, adjusting to internal diversity, identifying best practices from other institutions, and integrating them into local realities. This approach becomes a collective behaviour, manifest in daily life across pesantren communities. Douglas North's institutional change theory also illuminates the pesantren experience. Every organisation operates within a field of formal rules—laws, regulations, and government policies—and informal norms—values, traditions, and cultural codes (North, 1990). Pesantren sit precisely at this intersection, where compliance with state educational frameworks must be balanced with fidelity to religious identity. Their adaptive strategies demonstrate how institutions navigate external pressures while maintaining internal authenticity.

Agency is central to this adaptive capacity. Kiai, teachers, administrators, and students act as change agents, mediating between formal strategies and ground realities (Dian et al., 2024). Their skills, authority, and social sensibilities ensure that adaptation is not limited to policy documents but enacted as living practice. The absence of strong agency would reduce strategies to symbolic gestures. However, in pesantren, the authority of the kiai and the participatory ethos of musyāwarah enable adaptation to function as an organic process. Here,

organisational theory intersects with religious authority, showing that leadership legitimacy amplifies institutional resilience.

Woods (2011) offers an alternative theoretical perspective on adaptive strategy, one that is grounded not in business logic but in educational transformation. Woods defines adaptive strategy as a deliberate attempt to resist the dominance of instrumental rationality and to expand participatory space within and across institutions. Its feasibility rests on what he calls “adaptive rationality” – the organisational ability to move flexibly, balancing technical processes with substantive values and collective participation. Woods identifies four interconnected elements: amplification, building on instrumental artefacts, valuing freedom as capability, and mobilising resources. These elements provide a lens through which the dynamics of pesantren adaptation can be understood. As shown in the Figure 1.

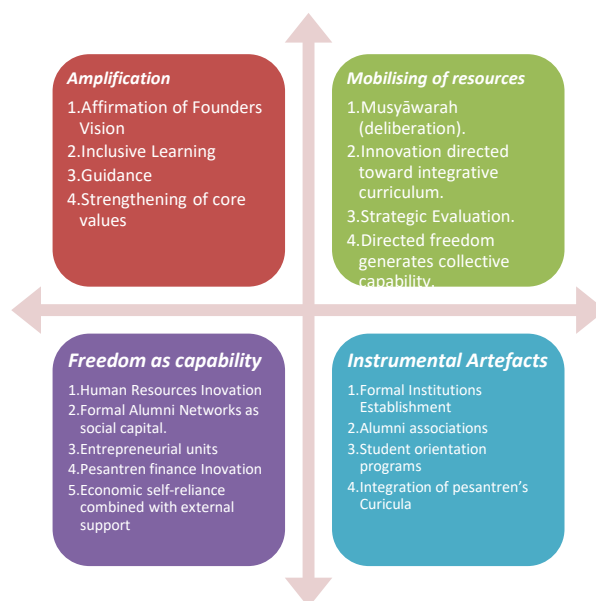


Figure 1. Framework of Pesantren's Adaptive Strategy

Amplification refers to strengthening and articulating core values as the foundation of change. In pesantren, the principle *al-muḥāfaẓah 'ala al-qadīm al-ṣāliḥ wa al-akhḍu bi al-jadīd al-aṣlah* – to preserve the good of the old while adopting the better of the new – anchors adaptation (Safitri dkk., 2025). Pesantren's metaphor of learning to “write from left to right” exemplifies openness to modernity without forsaking the essence of *tafaqquh fī al-dīn* – similarly, KH. Affan Malik emphasised emulating successful pesantren such as Sukorejo and Nurul Jadid, embedding the vision that Bustanul Ulum must remain ready to adapt. Amplification in these contexts is not rhetorical but practical: it instils prophetic values of sincerity, solidarity, spiritual devotion, and self-reliance into the lifeblood of the institution. By strengthening these foundations, pesantren ensure that adaptation does not sever them from history but renews their energy for relevance and credibility.

The second element, building on instrumental artefacts, refers to the creation of tangible mechanisms through which adaptation takes shape (Buur et al., 2023). Both Kyai Syarifuddin and Bustanul Ulum pesantren expanded into formal education sectors, establishing madrasahs, schools, and universities. They

developed alumni organizations (IKAPIN and IKSABU) and student orientation programs (OSABA, OSPEKTREN), alongside disciplinary artefacts such as mutaba'ah forms or etiquette codes. These artefacts function as institutional anchors, embedding adaptation into everyday routines and providing platforms for collaboration across stakeholders (Goldschmeding et al., 2025). For example, Bustanul Ulum's integrative policy, which requires formal school students to reside in pesantren dormitories, represents an artefact that ensures Islamic formation remains central even as modern curricula expand. Artefacts bridge tradition with innovation, translating abstract commitments into durable practices.

Valuing Freedom as a capability constitutes the third element. Pesantren practice freedom not as unfettered autonomy but as relational capability structured through deliberation (Nuryazidi, 2024). At Kyai Syarifuddin, the multi-dormitory system provides semi-autonomous space for innovation—from Qur'an memorization programs to technology training—fostering competition within a shared vision. Bustanul Ulum, by contrast, consolidates all students into centralised dormitories, channelling Freedom into curriculum integration and teacher development. Both models reflect Woods's insight in Berraies dkk. (2025) that Freedom must be collective and relational, not atomised, echoing Amartya Sen's capability approach (Wasito, 2023). Freedom, in these contexts, allows pesantren actors to articulate aspirations while aligning them with communal goals, ensuring that innovation strengthens rather than fragments identity.

The fourth element, mobilizing resources, is the most visible in pesantren practice. Symbolic resources, such as the authority of the kiai, spiritual traditions, and communal legitimacy, combine with material strategies, including campus expansion, cooperative businesses, clinics, KBIH units, and alumni networks. Alumni provide financial support, advocate for accreditation, and contribute to capacity-building programs. This finding aligns with Jenkins's theory of resource mobilisation, which emphasises that organisations rely on social networks for their sustainability. It also aligns with Sherif's adaptive knowledge strategies (Salehi et al., 2021), wherein institutions absorb and contextualize external practices. In pesantren, internal entrepreneurship complements external alliances with government and community, creating a hybrid model of resilience that ensures long-term sustainability.

The four elements do not function in isolation but interact systemically. Amplification legitimizes artefacts by grounding them in prophetic values. Artefacts channel participatory Freedom by embedding new practices into collective routines. Freedom, when structured as capability, generates innovations that are then sustained through mobilised resources. This cyclical interaction embodies Woods's "adaptive rationality" (Ziliotti, 2025) and demonstrates how pesantren fuse technical adaptation with substantive value commitments. It also exemplifies North's observation (Vilhena et al., 2025) that institutional change occurs at the junction of formal and informal rules, with pesantren mediating between national education policies and local religious traditions.

These findings also bear comparison with Islamic education beyond Indonesia. In Malaysia, for example, pondok institutions have undergone similar

processes of curriculum integration, but state intervention has often led to greater homogenization (Tayeb, 2024). In Pakistan, madrasa reform programs struggle with balancing state oversight and community legitimacy, often resulting in resistance (Sattar, 2023). Compared to these cases, Indonesian pesantren demonstrate a more participatory and community-driven mode of adaptation, where alumni networks and local communities play significant roles. This suggests that pesantren adaptation offers lessons for Islamic educational institutions globally. Resilience requires not only compliance with external pressures but also strong internal legitimacy rooted in values and networks.

Ultimately, pesantren adaptation is a holistic process where continuity and change are dialectically intertwined. It begins with resistance, evolves through selective acceptance, and crystallizes in institutions that are simultaneously traditional and modern. By articulating values, building artefacts, nurturing participatory Freedom, and mobilising resources, pesantren embody a model of adaptation that sustains cultural authenticity while ensuring educational competitiveness. This study thus contributes to the broader theoretical discourse on organisational strategy and institutional change, demonstrating how religious educational institutions in Indonesia navigate modernization without compromising their identity. In doing so, pesantren provide not only an Indonesian narrative of adaptation but also a globally relevant framework for understanding how tradition and modernity can coexist within dynamic institutional change.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study illustrate a holistic framework of adaptive strategy in pesantren. In the amplification stage, the vision of change is woven from the founders' values, ensuring that adaptation maintains its direction. Through building on instrumental artefacts, innovation is materialised in the establishment of formal institutions and new cultural practices that support transformation—valuing Freedom as a capability guarantees that every component of the pesantren can contribute ideas, creating a creative atmosphere essential for addressing contemporary challenges. Ultimately, the mobilization of resources ensures that change is sustained by providing adequate human resources, facilities, and funding through the empowerment of internal assets and external networks. The synergy of these four elements enables traditional pesantren to remain both existent and relevant in the modern era without betraying their identity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We sincerely thank all parties who supported this research. Our deepest gratitude goes to the academic supervisors for their guidance and feedback. We also appreciate the leadership, administrators, teachers, and students of Pondok Pesantren Kiai Syarifuddin and Bustanul Ulum in Lumajang for sharing their time and insights. Special thanks to the institutional boards and alumni associations (IKAPIN and IKSABU) for facilitating access to data and records.

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