



## STRENGTHENING ISLAMIC VALUES AND GRADUATE WORK READINESS: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INTEGRATIVE PESANTREN BASED VOCATIONAL EDUCATION MODEL

Minhaji<sup>1(✉)</sup>, Kholilur Rahman<sup>2</sup>, Luluk Maktumah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup>Universitas Ibrahimy Sukorejo, Situbondo, East Java, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Islam Ibrahimy Genteng Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia

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### Article History:

Received: June 2026

Accepted: July 2026

Published: August 2026

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### Keywords:

Islamic Values, Graduate Work Readiness, Integrative Vocational Education, *Pesantren*.

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(✉)Correspondence to:  
minhaji@ibrahimy.ac.id

**Abstract:** This study aimed to examine the integrative model of Islamic vocational education implemented at Vocational High School and analyze its contribution to strengthening students' religious character, vocational competence, and employability. The study employed a qualitative case study approach conducted within an Islamic boarding school-based vocational education environment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with school leaders, teachers, *pesantren* administrators, industry partners, and students, supported by participant observation and document analysis. Data were analyzed thematically through data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and triangulation to ensure the credibility of the findings. The results showed that Islamic vocational education at SMK Ibrahimy Sukorejo is developed through four interconnected dimensions: curriculum integration, spiritual and character formation, industry-oriented competency development, and collaboration with business and industrial sectors. The integration of these dimensions enables students to develop technical and professional competencies alongside discipline, responsibility, adaptability, leadership, ethical behavior, and Islamic work ethics. The findings further indicate that the *pesantren* environment functions as an integrated educational ecosystem that connects religious formation with vocational learning and workplace preparation. The study implied that integrating Islamic values with vocational education can provide a strategic model for developing graduates who are professionally competent, morally grounded, adaptive, and competitive in the global labor market. This model offers practical implications for vocational schools, *pesantren*, and policymakers.

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### Please cite this article in APA style as:

Minhaji, M., Rahman, K., & Maktumah, L. (2026). Strengthening Islamic Values and Graduate Work Readiness: The Implementation of An Integrative *Pesantren* Based Vocational Education Model. *Edureligia: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 10(2), 617-634.

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of the twenty-first century and the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era has fundamentally altered workforce qualifications, where business and industry no longer demand technical competence alone, but also soft skills, adaptability, and moral integrity (Zubaedi 2023 and Sahin 2023). Vocational education in Indonesia holds a strategic position in addressing these demands, yet it continues to face major challenges, such as a competency mismatch between graduates and labor market needs, insufficient soft skills development, and limited integration of character formation (Mulyasa 2023 and O.E.C.D. 2024). Given that technical professionalism alone does not guarantee responsible behavior amidst rapid technological changes and evolving work ethics, work readiness must be broadly understood to encompass technical, ethical, independent, and collaborative dimensions (Sappaile and Syamsuddin 2024; Yusuf and Fathurrohman 2023). Within this framework, Islamic education offers a holistic and integrative philosophical foundation by connecting professional competence with faith (*iman*), God-consciousness (*taqwa*), and ethical principles such as trustworthiness (*amanah*), honesty (*ʿidq*), fairness (*ʿadl*), excellence (*ihsan*), and professional excellence (*itqan*). Through this synthesis of intellectual, spiritual, moral, and professional dimensions, Islamic-oriented vocational education can transform ethical principles into observable habits to cultivate well-rounded graduates prepared to make positive contributions to society (Suyanto and Nizam, 2024; Schleicher, 2023).

Empirically, this phenomenon is clearly reflected in the learning process and job readiness of students at SMK Ibrahimy Sukorejo, Situbondo. Although this Islamic boarding school-based vocational high school has successfully instilled religious values and discipline, field observations indicate a persistent gap between religious knowledge and the application of professional work ethics in industry. Based on internship (PKL) evaluation results and tracer studies, a number of students still face competency mismatches with modern industry demands, particularly regarding low levels of independence, initiative, and adaptive problem-solving skills. Furthermore, the integration of Islamic character values such as *amanah*, *itqan*, and *sidq* has not been fully internalized into daily work habits, as evidenced by issues such as a lack of independent work ethic, weak digital responsibility in technology usage, and minimal professional communication when adapting to environments outside the Islamic boarding school. These empirical realities at SMK Ibrahimy underscore the urgent need for a more integrated learning approach that synthesizes vocational competence, soft skills development, and comprehensive Islamic character building.

The development of *pesantren*-based vocational education represents an important educational response to these challenges. As one of Indonesia's longstanding Islamic educational institutions, *pesantren* have demonstrated considerable capacity to adapt to social and technological changes while maintaining their religious identity. The emergence of vocational schools within

*pesantren* environments enables students to obtain formal and vocational competencies while simultaneously participating in an intensive system of religious and character formation (Afifudin et al., 2024 and Zamroni, 2024). In this context, SMK Ibrahimy Sukorejo, provides a significant empirical setting for examining such integration. The institution combines formal vocational education, *pesantren*-based character development, religious habituation, student development, and engagement with the business and industrial sectors. Its educational configuration creates an environment in which technical competencies and Islamic values can potentially develop as mutually reinforcing dimensions rather than as separate domains (U.N.I.C.E.F., 2024 and O.E.C.D., 2025). Thus, the integration of vocational education and *pesantren* education offers an alternative model for addressing the dual demands of professional competitiveness and moral integrity, producing graduates who are not only ready to work but also faithful, spiritually grounded, ethically responsible, and characterized by integrity (Waziroh et al., 2024 and Supraptono et al. 2024).

Previous studies have established the importance of curriculum relevance, competency-based education, practical learning, industrial internships, competency certification, link and match strategies, teaching factory, and partnerships with business and industry in strengthening vocational graduate employability. Meanwhile, studies in Islamic education (Cedefop, 2025 and Forum, 2023) have demonstrated that religious culture and *pesantren*-based education contribute significantly to students' discipline, responsibility, honesty, social awareness, and moral development. Research on *pesantren* modernization has further highlighted institutional transformation through formal education, entrepreneurship, digital learning, and external partnerships (Finch and Crunkilton, 2023; Hidayat and Sutrisno, 2023). However, these strands of research (Sukardi and Usman, 2023 and Sugito, 2025) have largely developed independently. Vocational education studies (Organization, 2024; U.N.E.S.C.O., 2023 and Sodikin et al., 2025) tend to conceptualize employability through technical and professional competencies, whereas Islamic education studies predominantly emphasize religious character, morality, and spirituality. Consequently, limited attention has been given to how faith formation, Islamic work ethics, character development, vocational competence, and industry-oriented learning operate together within a single educational ecosystem.

This condition reveals both a theoretical gap and an empirical gap. Theoretically, dominant vocational education perspectives, including human capital theory, competency-based education, and work-readiness frameworks, provide substantial explanations of technical and professional competency development but give relatively limited attention to spirituality and religious identity (Jackson, 2024 and Lickona, 2024). Conversely, Islamic education perspectives emphasize faith, morality, and character but have not sufficiently explained how these dimensions can be systematically transformed into competencies relevant to contemporary employment. Empirically, there remains limited research examining how a *pesantren*-based vocational institution integrates curriculum, school culture, religious habituation, character formation,

vocational practice, and industry partnerships into a coherent model of graduate development. This study therefore proposes the Integrative Islamic Vocational Education Model (IIVEM) as a conceptual contribution that positions faith formation, *pesantren* culture, vocational competence, soft skills, industry-based learning, and work readiness as interconnected dimensions. The novelty lies in conceptualizing *pesantren* not merely as a religious environment supporting vocational schooling, but as an integrated educational ecosystem capable of transforming Islamic values into professional competencies and employability.

Based on this background, the study aims to analyze how integrative Islamic vocational education is developed and implemented at SMK Ibrahimy Sukorejo; identify the key components and mechanisms that connect *pesantren* values with vocational and professional competencies; and formulate an integrative model that explains the relationship between faith formation, Islamic character, vocational competence, and work readiness. The central argument of this study is that graduate competitiveness is strengthened when technical and professional competencies are developed simultaneously with spiritual formation, Islamic work ethics, character, and industry-based learning within a supportive *pesantren* ecosystem. Accordingly, the study assumes that the integration of these dimensions can produce graduates who are not only technically competent and employable but also possess integrity, responsibility, adaptability, leadership, and a strong Islamic identity.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design (Creswell, 2023; Theobald et al., 2024; Tracy, 2024) to examine in depth the implementation of an integrative Islamic vocational education model at SMK Ibrahimy Sukorejo, Situbondo, East Java, Indonesia, which operates within the educational ecosystem of the Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School. The research subjects were selected purposively based on their knowledge, roles, and direct involvement in the implementation of vocational and *pesantren*-based education. The data sources consisted of the principal and vice principals, vocational and Islamic education teachers, *pesantren* administrators, industry partners, students, and alumni, as well as relevant institutional documents. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and document analysis. Interviews explored participants' experiences and perspectives regarding curriculum integration, character and spiritual formation, vocational competency development, industry collaboration, and graduate work readiness. Observations employed a non-participant and systematic approach, focusing on classroom learning, vocational practices, religious activities, student development, teacher-student interactions, and *pesantren* culture. Documentation included curriculum guidelines, school policies, partnership documents, competency records, learning plans, assessment documents, and *pesantren* regulations supporting the implementation of integrative Islamic vocational education.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (in Bingham, 2023; Morgan, 2024), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview transcripts, observation records, and documents were systematically coded, categorized, compared, and interpreted to identify patterns and themes related to curriculum integration, Islamic character formation, vocational competence, industry-oriented learning, and work readiness. The analysis then proceeded interpretatively to explain how *pesantren* values are transformed into professional competencies and to formulate the Integrative Islamic Vocational Education Model (IIVEM) based on empirical findings. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation, by comparing information obtained from different participants and different data collection techniques. Member checking was conducted by confirming key interpretations with selected informants, while peer debriefing and an audit trail were used to strengthen the consistency, transparency, and confirmability of the analytical process. These procedures were applied to ensure the credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of the research findings.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION\

### Result

The findings indicate that the implementation of Islamic vocational education at SMK Ibrahimy Sukorejo is developed through an integrated educational ecosystem that connects curriculum integration, character and spiritual formation, vocational competency development, and industry collaboration. These components do not operate independently but mutually reinforce students' professional competence and work readiness.

### Integration of Islamic Values into the Vocational Curriculum

Observation of vocational learning in automotive engineering, business management, and computer networking showed that teachers consistently connected technical competencies with *amanah* (trustworthiness), *itqan* (professional excellence), discipline, responsibility, honesty, and teamwork. In the Business Management Department, this integration was particularly evident in Business Services, especially customer service. Students were trained in communication, complaint handling, service procedures, and customer satisfaction while applying Islamic principles of *ṣidq* (honesty), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ʿadl* (fairness), *rifq* (gentleness), and *ihsan* (excellence). Teachers emphasized truthful communication, avoidance of deception, respect for customers, fulfillment of promises, and patience in responding to complaints. Thus, customer service competence was developed alongside ethical awareness and responsible professional behaviour.

The integration was also evident in marketing, entrepreneurship, financial administration, and retail operations. Marketing lessons emphasized avoiding *gharar* (excessive uncertainty), *tadlis* (deception), and misleading promotion, while entrepreneurship emphasized halal business practices,

fairness, social responsibility, and barakah-oriented enterprise. Financial administration emphasized accuracy, transparency, accountability, and *amanah*. Accordingly, Islamic values functioned not as supplementary religious content but as an ethical framework shaping the understanding, practice, and evaluation of vocational competencies. The resulting learning outcomes combined workplace skills with integrity, professionalism, customer orientation, and responsible decision-making.

The principal explained the primary objective of vocational education extends beyond preparing students for industry employment to developing professionals who view their skills as a divine trust (*amanah*). Consequently, vocational skills must be continuously integrated with integrity, discipline, and Islamic ethics. This statement indicated that Islamic values function as a philosophical foundation for vocational education. The Vice Principal for Curriculum reinforced this finding that the formulation of competency standards involves collaborative review between teaching staff and Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) leadership. This process evaluates not only the technical capacities students must acquire, but also the fundamental character and ethical profile required of them as Muslim professionals.

The data demonstrate that curriculum development at SMK Ibrahimy involves two interconnected orientations: industrial competency standards and Islamic character formation. Classroom observations further showed that religious habituation, including prayer, Qur'anic recitation, religious study, and moral guidance, supports students' discipline and responsibility during vocational activities.

**Table 1. Empirical Pattern of Curriculum Integration**

| Component              | Empirical Evidence                                                | Result                                                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Curriculum planning    | Alignment of vocational competencies with <i>pesantren</i> values | Professional and religious competencies are developed simultaneously |
| Classroom learning     | Islamic values embedded in technical instruction                  | Technical skills accompanied by ethical awareness                    |
| Practical learning     | Discipline, teamwork, responsibility, and <i>amanah</i>           | Improved professional behavior                                       |
| Internship preparation | Professional ethics and Islamic work ethics                       | Improved workplace readiness                                         |

Table 1 shows that integration occurs systematically across different stages of education. The pattern indicates that Islamic values are not positioned as additional content but are embedded in the process of developing vocational competence. This finding suggests that the *pesantren* environment provides a cultural mechanism through which religious values are continuously transformed into observable professional behaviors. Therefore, curriculum integration constitutes the first pillar of the Integrative Islamic Vocational Education Model (IIVEM). The Integrative Islamic Vocational Education Model (IIVEM) refers to an educational framework that systematically integrates Islamic values with vocational knowledge, practical skills, character formation,

and workplace competencies. It aims to produce graduates who are technically competent, ethically responsible, spiritually grounded, professionally disciplined, and prepared to respond effectively to contemporary industry demands while maintaining Islamic identity and integrity.

### Character and Spiritual Formation as the Foundation of Work Readiness

The second finding demonstrates that students' work readiness is developed through continuous character and spiritual formation. The character outcomes were observable in students' work discipline, responsibility, honesty, cooperation, independence, and professional commitment. A vocational teacher explained the vocational curriculum is structured around government regulations, vocational standards, industry needs, and stakeholder feedback. While the *pesantren* does not directly formulate the technical syllabus, its cultural environment plays a critical role in reinforcing the spiritual foundation and character development of the students.

The implementation was reflected in students' daily schedules, which combined religious activities, classroom learning, vocational practice, organizational activities, independent study, and rest. During vocational practice, students demonstrated work discipline by arriving on time, following workshop procedures, maintaining equipment, completing assignments according to deadlines, and complying with occupational safety requirements. Their work ethic was also evident in their persistence in completing practical tasks, willingness to correct mistakes, cooperation with peers, and responsibility for assigned duties. A workshop instructor stated student evaluation extends beyond the technical completion of tasks to encompass their overall work ethic and behavior. The assessment criteria specifically emphasize punctuality, meticulousness, responsibility toward equipment, collaborative effort, and the capacity to complete assigned duties thoroughly.

A *pesantren* administrator stated the organizational rules within the *pesantren* enforce essential habits such as punctuality, congregational prayer, cleanliness, respectful interpersonal conduct, and adherence to institutional governance. These daily practices directly reinforce the structural discipline and behavioral standards required in vocational education. Thus, vocational education remains under the authority of the school, while the *pesantren* functions as a complementary character-forming ecosystem. The interaction between these two environments enables students to internalize professional discipline and Islamic work ethics through repeated practice and daily habituation.

**Table 2. Character Formation and Work Readiness**

| Character Dimension | Educational Practice                          | Observed Outcome                |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Discipline</b>   | Religious routines and scheduled activities   | Punctuality and time management |
| <i>Amanah</i>       | Task responsibility and supervision           | Reliability and accountability  |
| <b>Honesty</b>      | Religious mentoring and institutional culture | Integrity and trustworthiness   |
| <i>Ta'awun</i>      | Group projects and communal activities        | Teamwork and                    |

|                            |                                                  |                                                                 |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Leadership</b>          | Student organizations and project activities     | communication                                                   |
| <b>Islamic work ethics</b> | Religious instruction and internship preparation | Initiative and decision-making<br>Ethical professional behavior |

Table 2 demonstrates a clear pattern: character formation is developed through habituation and lived experience, rather than through theoretical instruction alone. Teachers also function as role models by demonstrating punctuality, professionalism, respectful communication, and responsibility. Consequently, Islamic values such as *amanah*, *ta'awun*, and *ihsan* become behavioral competencies that can be observed in students' academic and professional activities. The interpretation of these findings indicates that spiritual formation contributes to work readiness by strengthening behavioral and interpersonal competencies. Thus, work readiness in the SMK Ibrahimy context extends beyond technical capability to include integrity, discipline, emotional maturity, communication, adaptability, and ethical responsibility. Character and spiritual formation therefore constitute the second pillar of IIVEM.

### **Industrial Collaboration and the Development of Integrated Employability**

The third finding concerns the role of collaboration between SMK Ibrahimy, *pesantren* administrators, and business and industrial sectors (DUDI): The findings show that industrial collaboration is not limited to student internships but begins with curriculum synchronization, competency mapping, workplace preparation, supervision, and graduate evaluation. The Vice Principal for Industrial Relations stated while industry partners assist in identifying current workplace competency demands, all curriculum adjustments are deliberated alongside *pesantren* leaders to ensure technical skill development remains aligned with Islamic principles. This finding demonstrated a dual orientation in institutional decision-making. Industry provides information regarding current professional competencies, while *pesantren* leaders ensure that vocational development remains consistent with Islamic educational principles. Before entering industrial internships, students receive preparation concerning workplace discipline, professional communication, occupational safety, teamwork, problem-solving, and Islamic business ethics. Industry supervisors also evaluate not only technical performance but students' discipline, communication, responsibility, and adaptability.

An industrial supervisor stated that graduates demonstrate rapid technical adaptability due to their solid vocational foundation, while also distinguishing themselves through core personal qualities such as honesty, respect, discipline, and openness to constructive feedback. The statement confirms that employers recognize both technical and character competencies among Ibrahimy students. Document analysis and interviews similarly indicate that industrial partners value graduates' discipline, teamwork, communication, honesty, and adaptability.

**Table 3. Integrated Model of Islamic Vocational Education**

| <b>Component</b>           | <b>Empirical Evidence</b>                           | <b>Contribution</b>                    |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Curriculum integration     | Vocational competencies aligned with Islamic values | Balanced competence and character      |
| Spiritual formation        | Religious habituation and role modeling             | Integrity and discipline               |
| Vocational learning        | Workshops and practical projects                    | Technical competence                   |
| Industry collaboration     | Curriculum synchronization and internships          | Employability and workplace adaptation |
| <i>Pesantren</i> ecosystem | School, <i>pesantren</i> , and industry cooperation | Holistic and sustainable development   |

Table 3 illustrates the overall relationship among the research findings. Curriculum integration provides the conceptual foundation, character formation establishes ethical behavior, vocational learning develops technical expertise, and industrial collaboration connects students' competencies with real workplace demands. The *pesantren* ecosystem functions as the integrating environment that connects all components.

Overall, the findings support the development of the Integrative Islamic Vocational Education Model (IIVEM), in which Islamic values → character and spiritual formation → vocational competence → industry-based learning → work readiness operate as interconnected processes. The model demonstrates that *pesantren*-based vocational education can move beyond the dichotomy between religious education and professional preparation. Islamic values are transformed into practical competencies that strengthen students' discipline, integrity, adaptability, teamwork, leadership, and professional ethics. Thus, the educational model developed at SMK Ibrahimy Sukorejo positions faith formation and vocational excellence as complementary dimensions in preparing graduates who are technically competent, ethically responsible, and ready to compete in the contemporary labor market.

## Discussion

### Integration of Islamic Values into the Vocational Curriculum

The findings demonstrate that Islamic values at SMK Ibrahimy Sukorejo are integrated into vocational education through curriculum planning, classroom instruction, practical learning, internship preparation, and institutional culture. This finding is consistent with the broader perspective of Islamic education, which views education as a process that integrates intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social development rather than separating religious and professional domains (Rosyid and Mukhibat, 2023 and Pavlova, 2025). Previous studies on Islamic education (Enggal et al., 2026; Yuliana et al., 2025) have emphasized that curriculum integration becomes meaningful when religious values are embedded in learning experiences rather than presented only as independent

subjects. Therefore, the integration between faith and vocational competence contributes to Similarly, research on vocational education indicates that curriculum relevance is strengthened when competency development is connected with students' personal values, professional attitudes, and workplace expectations (Gregory et al., 2023 and Omar et al., 2024). The present findings therefore reinforce the argument that curriculum integration should move beyond structural integration toward substantive integration in which values influence how vocational knowledge is learned and practiced (Hamad and Abdelrahim, 2024; Ababio et al., 2023).

The finding can be explained by the distinctive educational structure of SMK Ibrahimy as a vocational institution operating within the *pesantren* environment. Islamic values are continuously reinforced across different learning spaces, including classrooms, workshops, religious activities, and institutional routines. Because students encounter the same principles in multiple contexts, values such as amanah, discipline, honesty, itqan, and responsibility are not treated as isolated learning outcomes. Instead, they become interpretive frameworks through which students understand technical competence and professional behavior. The repeated connection between technical tasks and Islamic responsibility also reduces the conceptual distance between religious learning and vocational learning. Students consequently understand that technical expertise is not merely a means of obtaining employment but also a responsibility that must be exercised ethically.

### **Character and Spiritual Formation as the Foundation of Work Readiness**

The second finding shows that character and spiritual formation constitute an important foundation of students' work readiness (Prabowo et al., 2025 and Ratnasari and Indriani, 2026). The observed development of discipline, responsibility, honesty, cooperation, leadership, and self-management is consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of character education and habituation in Islamic boarding schools. *Pesantren* education has traditionally developed students' discipline, independence, cooperation, and moral responsibility through continuous routines, religious practices, and exemplary leadership (Rusmiyati et al., 2023 and Saputra et al., 2024). This finding also corresponds with contemporary employability literature (Bulqis & Fachri, 2025; Sailin et al., 2024), which identifies communication, adaptability, teamwork, responsibility, and self-regulation as important components of workplace readiness. However, the present study extends these perspectives by demonstrating that such employability competencies can be cultivated through a religiously structured educational environment.

The occurrence of this finding can be explained by the continuous nature of character formation in the *pesantren* environment. Students do not encounter discipline only when they attend vocational classes. They experience scheduled religious activities, communal responsibilities, institutional regulations, practical assignments, and interpersonal interactions throughout their daily lives. This continuity creates repeated opportunities to practice desired behaviors. Initially,

punctuality, responsibility, and obedience may operate as externally regulated behaviors, but repeated practice gradually transforms them into personal habits. Teacher role modeling strengthens this process because students observe the behavioral consistency expected from them in the conduct of educators and *pesantren* administrators. Consequently, character formation becomes experiential rather than merely cognitive.

### **Vocational Competency Development through Practical and Experiential Learning**

The third finding concerns the development of vocational competence through workshops, practical projects, competency-oriented learning, and preparation for industrial practice. This finding corresponds with vocational education theories emphasizing experiential learning and the importance of authentic practice in developing occupational competence (Wulandari et al. 2025 and Abrori and Mahmud, 2024). Contemporary vocational education increasingly emphasized the relationship between classroom knowledge and practical workplace experience because technical knowledge becomes more meaningful when students can apply it to authentic problems and occupational situations. Research on competency-based vocational education likewise emphasizes the integration of technical knowledge, practical skills, problem-solving, communication, and professional attitudes as essential dimensions of graduate competence (Feifei & Norbaya, 2024; Jaedun et al., 2024; Liando et al., 2025).

The present finding differs from a narrow understanding of vocational competence because technical skills at SMK Ibrahimy are developed simultaneously with ethical and behavioral expectations. The workshop is therefore not simply a place for students to practice technical procedures. It also becomes a context in which students learn to manage equipment responsibly, collaborate with peers, comply with safety procedures, complete assignments, solve problems, and demonstrate professional discipline. The practical environment provides an opportunity for students to translate abstract values into concrete actions. For example, *amanah* becomes responsibility for equipment and assigned tasks, *ta'awun* becomes cooperation during technical projects, and *itqan* becomes commitment to producing quality work. The reason this integration occurs is that vocational learning is organized within an educational environment where technical competence and character are treated as mutually dependent: Students are not separated into different learning identities-religious students in one context and vocational students in another. Instead, the same student is expected to demonstrate technical proficiency and ethical responsibility simultaneously. Practical learning therefore becomes a process of both skill acquisition and professional identity formation.

### **Industry Collaboration and the Development of Integrated Employability**

The fourth finding demonstrates that collaboration between SMK Ibrahimy, the *pesantren*, and business and industrial sectors (DUDI) extends

beyond internship placement. It includes curriculum synchronization, competency mapping, workplace preparation, supervision, and evaluation. This finding is consistent with vocational education research (Indry Ayu Yuliana, 2025; Jomegi et al., 2024) emphasizing link and match, employer engagement, industrial internships, and workplace-based learning as important mechanisms for improving graduate employability. Previous studies have shown that meaningful interaction between educational institutions and industry enables vocational curricula to remain responsive to changing labor-market requirements and allows students to experience authentic professional environments (Yusuf & Fathurrohman, 2023; Bank, 2025; Zamroni, 2024). Similarly, employability research emphasized that employers increasingly value communication, adaptability, teamwork, ethical behavior, and willingness to learn alongside technical skills.

The findings of this study extend these perspectives by showing that industry collaboration can simultaneously function as a mechanism for validating both technical competence and Islamic professional character. Industry supervisors in the present study recognized students' technical abilities while also emphasizing honesty, discipline, respect, responsibility, communication, and willingness to accept feedback. This indicates that employability is constructed through the interaction between what students learn at school and how those competencies are tested in authentic workplace settings. The finding can be explained by the continuous relationship established between the school and industrial partners. Industry is involved before students enter the workplace, while the school continues to monitor students during industrial practice. Consequently, students receive a relatively coherent transition from classroom learning to professional practice. The pre-internship preparation also reduces the gap between educational expectations and workplace requirements by allowing students to understand professional communication, safety, discipline, teamwork, and ethical conduct before encountering actual industrial situations. The *pesantren* background strengthens this transition because students have already experienced structured routines and behavioral expectations in their daily lives.

### **The *Pesantren* Ecosystem as the Integrating Mechanism of IIVEM**

The fifth finding demonstrates that the effectiveness of curriculum integration, character formation, vocational learning, and industry collaboration depends on the broader *pesantren* ecosystem. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing that educational outcomes are influenced not only by formal curriculum but also by institutional culture, leadership, social relationships, and learning environments (Cedefop, 2025; Düzgünçınar, 2025). Studies of *pesantren* modernization have shown that *pesantren* institutions can respond to contemporary educational and economic demands while maintaining their religious identity. At the same time, research on organizational learning and employability emphasized the importance of learning environments that

provide continuity between knowledge acquisition, social interaction, and professional practice (Jackson, 2024; Omar et al., 2024).

Curriculum values are reinforced through daily religious routines; character formation is strengthened through communal life; vocational competencies are practiced through workshops and projects; and professional competencies are tested through industrial collaboration. These processes form a continuous educational chain rather than independent programs. This finding can be explained by the continuity of students' educational experiences within the *pesantren* environment. Because formal schooling and *pesantren* life are connected, students repeatedly encounter similar expectations regarding discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and ethical conduct. The consistency of these expectations allows values developed in one educational context to be transferred into another. For example, discipline developed through religious routines can influence punctuality in vocational classes, while responsibility developed through communal activities can influence students' management of workshop equipment. When these habits are subsequently tested during industrial practice, they become visible as workplace behaviors. The ecosystem therefore creates continuity between value formation, competence development, and professional application.

Taken together, the five findings demonstrate that work readiness at SMK Ibrahimy Sukorejo emerges from an interconnected educational process rather than from vocational training alone. Islamic values provide the normative foundation; character and spiritual formation transform these values into habitual behaviors; vocational learning develops technical competence; industrial collaboration tests and refines these competencies in authentic professional contexts; and the *pesantren* ecosystem connects the entire process into a continuous educational experience. The principal contribution of this study is therefore the development of IIVEM as an integrated conceptual framework for Islamic vocational education. The model moves beyond the separation of religious education and vocational preparation by demonstrating that faith, character, technical competence, and employability can be developed as mutually reinforcing dimensions. Its practical implication is that Islamic vocational institutions should not place religious education, vocational learning, character formation, and industry engagement in separate programmatic compartments. Instead, these elements should be designed as an interconnected system supported by institutional leadership, teacher role modeling, experiential learning, and sustained industry partnerships.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Integrative Islamic Vocational Education Model (IIVEM) at SMK Ibrahimy Sukorejo demonstrates that work readiness can be developed more comprehensively when Islamic values, character and spiritual formation, vocational competency development, and industry collaboration are integrated within a *pesantren*-based educational ecosystem. The most important insight of the study is that employability is not merely the ability

to perform technical tasks but a holistic competence in which technical expertise is strengthened by amanah, discipline, integrity, responsibility, teamwork, adaptability, leadership, and Islamic work ethics; thus, faith and vocational excellence function as complementary rather than competing educational objectives. A major strength of the study is its use of multiple qualitative data sources (interviews, observations, and document analysis) to capture the integration of values, competencies, and workplace preparation within an authentic educational context. However, the study is limited by its single-case design and qualitative orientation, which restrict the transferability of the findings and do not allow statistical examination of relationships among curriculum integration, character formation, vocational competence, and employability. Future research should therefore validate IIVEM through mixed-method and quantitative studies involving multiple *pesantren*-based vocational schools, comparative research across different institutional and regional contexts, and longitudinal studies tracking graduates' career development, workplace performance, ethical decision-making, and leadership development to determine the model's sustainability and broader applicability.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to **Universitas Ibrahimy** for its continuous academic support and encouragement throughout this research. Appreciation is also extended to all institutional partners, particularly SMK Ibrahimy Sukorejo and its collaborating industry partners, for their valuable cooperation, access to research data, and constructive participation. Their commitment and support have significantly contributed to the successful completion of this study and the advancement of Islamic vocational education research.

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