



MODERNIZATION OF ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL: ADAPTATION OF TRADITIONAL VALUES IN CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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Abstract:

This study aims to describe the dynamics of modernization within Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), the strategies adopted to preserve traditional values in the modern era, and the challenges as well as implications of these changes for their Islamic identity. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach through literature review and document analysis. The findings indicate that the modernization of *pesantren* occurs dynamically through transformations in systems, curricula, and educational orientations while maintaining core Islamic values. In responding to modern developments, *pesantren* have adopted integrative strategies such as combining religious and general education, implementing digital technology, and improving management practices based on transparency and efficiency. However, modernization also presents challenges, particularly concerns about the erosion of simplicity and spirituality that characterize *pesantren* life. Nevertheless, *pesantren* have demonstrated their ability to adapt selectively, preserving their Islamic identity and scholarly tradition amid ongoing social change.

Keywords: *Modernization Of Islamic Boarding Schools, Traditional Values, Islamic Education, Adaptation, Islamic Identity*

INTRODUCTION

The changing times, marked by technological advancements and globalization, have brought rapid change to various aspects of life, including education (Sari, 2024). Modernization has become an inevitability that cannot be avoided by any educational institution, including Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) (Nazilah et al., 2024). As educational institutions with long historical roots in producing a generation of morals, Islamic boarding schools now face the significant challenge of adapting to the demands of the times without losing the traditional values that define their identity (Khusnuridlo et al., 2024). Amidst the strong currents of modernization, Islamic boarding schools play a crucial role in maintaining the balance between transformation and the preservation of Islamic values (H. Ramadhani et al., 2025).

Islamic boarding schools are now at a crucial stage in their development. Institutions once synonymous with traditional educational patterns based on yellow books and personal interactions between *kiai* (Islamic scholars) and students (*santri*), are now beginning to innovate in various aspects (Maulana et al., 2025). Many Islamic boarding schools are opening formal educational institutions, integrating general curricula with religious studies, and implementing more modern management systems. Furthermore, the use of

information technology in learning and administration is a sign that Islamic boarding schools are playing a role in the digital era. However, these modernization efforts do not necessarily eliminate the fundamental values of Islamic boarding schools, such as etiquette, respect for teachers, and the development of the religious character of students. This demonstrates a dynamic adaptation process between traditional values and the demands of the modern world (Harmathilda et al., 2024).

In the Indonesian context, Islamic boarding school modernization is a crucial issue because these institutions play a strategic role in human resource development (Maulidah et al., 2024). However, the reality on the ground shows that a gap still exists between traditional Islamic boarding schools and modern demands (Azizah, 2024). Some Islamic boarding schools face difficulties in adapting their curriculum, infrastructure, and institutional management to meet national education standards. Concerns have also arisen that overly rapid modernization could erode the distinctive character of Islamic boarding schools and weaken the Islamic identity of students. These issues are relevant to examine to find the ideal adaptation pattern between traditional values and the demands of modernity.

As a theoretical basis, this research is based on the theory of social modernization, as discussed by Huntington in his work "Political Modernization: America vs. Europe" (1966). Modernization encompasses aspects of structural change in political and social systems, including the rationalization of authority, structural differentiation, and increased participation. This interpretation is expanded upon in classical modernization literature, which identifies changes in values, mindsets, and cultural orientations as part of the modernization process. In the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), modernization can be understood as an effort to adapt the Islamic education system to current developments without abandoning the essence of Islamic values (Komala et al., 2021).

Several previous studies have addressed similar themes. For example, research on "Islamic Boarding School Traditions" explains the role of Islamic boarding schools as centers for the transmission of religious knowledge and morality (Dike Asta Rini, Naima Audia Rahmah, 2024). Meanwhile, "Islamic Education: Tradition and Modernization Amidst Challenges" examines how Islamic boarding schools integrate general education with the traditional Islamic system (Muid et al., 2024). Other research also shows that modernizing Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) is necessary for these institutions to compete in the global era (Hizbulloh et al., 2023). However, most of this research focuses on the educational system and management; few have examined in depth how Islamic boarding schools adapt traditional cultural and spiritual values within a contemporary educational context.

Based on initial observations at several Islamic boarding schools in East Java, a strong trend toward a more modern education system is evident. Islamic boarding schools are not only places for religious study but also implement skills, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy programs. For example, some Islamic boarding schools have implemented technology-based learning systems such as e-learning, digital marketing training, and student involvement in social media platforms for Islamic propagation. Nevertheless, some groups still strive to maintain the traditions of reading the holy book, deliberation, and student etiquette toward the kiai (Islamic teacher) as a means of preserving classical values. This phenomenon is interesting to examine further as a form of adapting

traditional values amidst the currents of modernization.

The research gap lies in the paucity of studies that comprehensively address the relationship between the modernization of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and the simultaneous preservation of traditional values. Most studies focus solely on the changing educational system, while the values, ethics, and spirituality of the students receive less attention. Yet, the essence of Islamic boarding schools lies in their values, which are their primary distinguishing feature from conventional educational institutions. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how Islamic boarding schools adapt traditional values amidst the modernization of Islamic education.

The novelty of this article lies in its approach, which highlights modernization not only as a structural change but also as a cultural process involving the spiritual and social values unique to Islamic boarding schools. By placing traditional values at the heart of adaptation, this study confirms that Islamic boarding schools do not simply follow the flow of modernization but also provide color and direction for a contemporary Islamic education model that maintains an Islamic character.

This article aims to describe the dynamics of modernization in Islamic boarding school educational institutions, Islamic boarding school strategies in adapting traditional values in the modern era, as well as the challenges and implications of modernization on the Islamic identity of Islamic boarding schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a qualitative approach with a library research approach. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on analyzing concepts and ideas found in various literature discussing the modernization of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and the adaptation of traditional values to contemporary Islamic education. Through this method, the researcher sought to explore the ideas and findings of previous research to gain a deeper understanding of how Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) position classical values amidst social change and the demands of educational modernization. The data sources used in this study came from relevant reading materials, including books, scientific journals, and academic articles related to the study theme.

Data collection was conducted by reviewing, recording, and categorizing information from various literature related to the research theme. Each source was critically reviewed to ensure that only relevant, valid, and credible data were used in the discussion. The collected data were then analyzed using content analysis, interpreting the meaning from various sources descriptively and analytically. This analysis process included data reduction, theme classification, and interpretation of the meaning contained in the texts to identify forms of Islamic boarding school adaptation to the modernization of Islamic education. Through this approach, research is expected to provide a more complete picture of how Islamic boarding schools maintain a balance between deeply rooted traditional values and the ever-growing need for innovation and modernization in today's Islamic education system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's findings indicate that the modernization of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) is a dynamic process involving not only changes in

institutional form but also renewal of educational orientation and methods that remain grounded in traditional Islamic values. Pesantren now emerge as institutions capable of adapting to changing times without losing their identity as centers of religious education and character formation. Modernization within pesantren does not mean abandoning tradition, but rather actualizing old values to maintain their relevance in the context of contemporary Islamic education.

Based on the literature review and data analysis, it was found that the process of pesantren modernization has several important dimensions that demonstrate a balance between innovation and the preservation of traditional values. The first dimension relates to the dynamics of modernization within pesantren educational institutions, encompassing changes in systems, curricula, and educational orientation. Pesantren have undergone significant transformation, establishing formal institutions such as madrasahs, secondary schools, and universities that are integrated with the national education system. This demonstrates a growing awareness of participating in the globalization of education without abandoning the Islamic spirit that characterizes pesantren. As explained by Mukhamat Saini (2024), modernization in Islamic education is a form of social adaptation that maintains core spiritual values.

The second dimension is the strategy of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in adapting traditional values to the modern era. Islamic boarding schools employ various methods to maintain noble values while adopting new innovations. One key strategy is the integration of religious and general curricula. Today, Islamic boarding schools not only teach the yellow texts (kitab kuning) but also introduce science, technology, and life skills. This step aims to ensure that students possess competencies relevant to the needs of the times. Furthermore, Islamic boarding schools have begun implementing modern management systems through the use of information technology in administration, digital learning systems, and transparent financial management. However, all of these innovations remain grounded in traditional values such as the central role of the kiai (Islamic teacher), the close relationship between teachers and students, and the culture of simplicity that is the pesantren's identity.

The third dimension is the implications of modernization on the Islamic identity of Islamic boarding schools. Modernization brings a number of challenges, such as concerns about the decline of values of simplicity, sincerity, and spirituality amidst technological advances. The presence of digital culture, if not balanced with value controls, can shift the orientation of education from character building to solely academic achievement. However, research shows that modernization can actually strengthen the Islamic identity of Islamic boarding schools if implemented selectively and proportionally. Islamic boarding schools remain centers of moral, spiritual, and intellectual development, while also serving as agents of social change in modern society.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the modernization of Islamic boarding schools is not a deviation from tradition, but rather a continuation of a creative adaptation process rooted in Islamic values. Islamic boarding schools that maintain a balance between tradition and innovation will remain relevant in the face of social change and global challenges. By upholding core values such as humility, brotherhood, and independence, Islamic boarding schools can continue to be moral strongholds and centers of Islamic civilization with high competitiveness in the modern era.

CONCLUSION

The modernization of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) is a dynamic process of renewal without eliminating traditional values. Pesantren are able to adapt to current developments through the integration of religious and general education systems, institutional management reforms, and the use of technology in learning and preaching activities. The study results show that pesantren have successfully maintained a balance between innovation and the preservation of tradition. Values such as sincerity, simplicity, and independence remain the main foundation for every change made. Modernization in pesantren is not interpreted as the elimination of tradition, but rather as the strengthening of Islamic values to maintain their relevance in the contemporary educational context. However, modernization also poses challenges, particularly related to concerns about the erosion of spirituality and the unique character of students. Therefore, pesantren need to continuously strengthen their Islamic identity so that innovations remain within the corridor of Islamic values. With this balance, pesantren have proven capable of becoming modern Islamic educational institutions while remaining firmly rooted in tradition.

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