

## Balancing Tradition and Modernity: Evaluating the Impact of Pesantren Leadership on Curriculum Transformation Outcomes

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### ABSTRACT

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The importance of pesantren growth has not been matched by improvements in the quality of pesantren education services. One of the policies focuses produces a transformation of the pesantren curriculum. This study will examine at how tradition and modernity interact in the pesantren curriculum management system. The study was conducted in two pesantren in Aceh Tenggara, Darul Amin and Darul Azhar. The research methodology was qualitative, with a descriptive survey technique. Data were gathered from seven informants, including the leader, curriculum deputy, and several pesantren teachers. The research data was analyzed using a data comparative model. The findings demonstrated the efficacy of combining traditional management with contemporary management, with a focus on improving the core of pesantren education services, specifically the pesantren curriculum. The identification of Buya Pesantren's leadership style results in transformative and charismatic leadership styles. The process of curriculum transformation culminates in an integrative pattern between the dayah-salafy-KMI curriculum. The curriculum transformation policy is also implemented through extracurricular activities aimed at improving Santri's soft and hard skills. While learning is conducted instructionally and in accordance with technological advancements, the selection of learning materials is broad in scope. The findings have implications for santri skills and competitiveness in society, particularly in the workplace.



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## INTRODUCTION

Four phases are necessary for the successful implementation of pesantren education policies: policy reflection activities, the comprehension of the pesantren's vision and objectives, the efficacy of the managerial functions, and the subsequent enhancements of the implemented process (Karim et al., 2023; Kawakip, 2020; Zainal et al., 2022). The distinction between traditional and modern ideologies is yet another problem that arises in pesantren (Rohman et al., 2023). The modern term is actually manifested in the application of the managerial system, rather than the fundamental values of Islamic-based pesantren (Zarkasyi, 2015a). The curriculum problem is observed during the curriculum integration process within the scope of the research. Pesantren do not acknowledge the national curriculum; however, they require the legality of formal education, including junior and senior high school (Hanif et al., 2024). This issue has impeded formal and informal collaboration, resulting in discrepancies in the interpretation and meaning of the integrated curriculum.

Pesantren, traditional Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, have been instrumental in the education of many generations (Hanafiah, 2018). As the world undergoes rapid modernization, there's an increasing need for these institutions to strike a balance between preserving tradition and embracing modernity (Pasi et al., 2020). This study delves into the effectiveness of the Pesantren curriculum in achieving this balance and its subsequent impact on student outcomes (Raya, 2021; Zarkasyi, 2015b).

The successful implementation of pesantren education theory involves studying in four phases, including reflection activities, abstract conceptualization, concrete experience, and experience activities, which is connected with the conduct, sensing, observing, reflecting, thinking, and planning (Muhammad et al., 2021; Subandi et al., 2021). The issue of intervention by formal actors in implementing an integrated curriculum constitutes a significant challenge in the educational landscape (Isbah, 2020). This problem has impeded the collaboration between formal and informal actors, thereby leading to differing interpretations and meanings of the integrated curriculum among implementing agencies (Wargadinata et al., 2020; Zuhri & Sibaweh, 2023).

Indonesia has witnessed a considerable expansion of pesantren curricula transformation (PCT) over the last two decades, and research has shown that Buya leadership (BL) is an essential aspect of providing quality education in pesantren. Pesantren curricula transformation (PCT) are increasingly important in parts of the world that have previously relied on the public sector. One of them is Aceh, a growth that contributes to providing more balanced and more modern system pesantren education (Arif et al., 2020; Pasi et al., 2020).

The learning environment, teacher performance, learning media, and organizational behavior are the primary areas of research in the pesantren curriculum (Nurul Azizah et al., 2023). In the interim, there is still a significant lack of research that investigates the significance of Kyai's leadership relationship in relation to curriculum integration (Makruf & Asrori, 2022). Curriculum integration is, in fact, associated with policy. Furthermore, it is crucial to comprehend the perspectives of educators regarding teaching and learning within the pesantren education system. Additionally, it is crucial to investigate the correlation between Kyai's leadership and the quality of his instruction. Consequently, the objective of this investigation is to evaluate the efficacy of Kyai's leadership in the transformation of the pesantren curriculum (Lutfauziah et al., 2023).

The Indonesian government amended the Private Pesantren Education Law in 2019. The main aim of this reform was to enhance private pesantren's autonomy. However, when we examine the comparative situations of those teaching, appointments in Aceh Southeast public PCT are usually for life; by contrast, pesantren job appointments in private PCT include part-time, probationary, and temporary contracts. The lack of job stability, low salaries, and major obstacles to professional development make teaching at private PCT a less attractive career option in Aceh, especially in Southeast Aceh. Because teachers are the frontline agents of any educational reform, they serve as the drivers of HEIs' improvement plans. Thus, improving the teachers' quality is crucial in raising the overall quality of Aceh Southeast private PCT.

Developing leadership is key to improving teaching and learning in pesantren education. While much of the increased awareness about the importance of pesantren development is focused on the professional development of teachers' competencies, there is an increasing focus on the need for technology skills development a need that is especially strongly indicated by the results of empirical studies (Dudung, 2018; Gulikers et al., 2018; Mujiburrahman, 2019).

The objectives of this study are to evaluate the alignment of the current transformation curricula of pesantren educational institutions with the demands of the Indonesian labor market. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify the skills and competencies that are mandated by Indonesian policy "Merdeka Belajar", particularly the skill-oriented independent learning policy, for graduates of pesantren institutions.

## **METHODS**

The study combined qualitative methods with descriptive survey techniques. The study was conducted in two pesantren in Southeast Aceh, Darul Amin and

Darul Azhar. Both pesantren are key components of pesantren education in Southeast Aceh. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with several informants. The identification of informants is related to the data requirements. Seven informants included the dayah office manager, the pesantren leader, the curriculum deputy, and a number of senior pesantren teachers. Research data were also gathered from group discussions about the curriculum integration model's implementation in pesantren. Data was also gathered through evaluation records of the learning process, which were completed weekly. Meanwhile, observations were made as a participant in the implementation of the pesantren education and teaching system. The data was then analyzed using thematic synthesis and narrative analysis methods. The process allows for the categorization of obtained data. Data analysis is carried out using a system for transcribing, coding, and categorizing data. To identify novel aspects, data research leads to the transformation and integration model of the pesantren curriculum. The research also discovered that the implemented curriculum was suitable and efficient. To ensure the validity of the research data, VOS Viewer was used to conduct a keyword search on the innovation model and the integration of the pesantren curriculum.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership style in pesantren draws upon professional powers derived from expertise and authority within their respective disciplines and non-power factors such as personal qualities and relationships. The proposed definition emphasizes the multifaceted character of Buya Leadership by including both formal and informal roles held by teachers. By adopting this all-encompassing viewpoint on Buya Leadership, researchers can understand its dynamics within the Pesantren Curriculum Transformation. This comprehensive definition clarifies the scope and impact of Buya Leadership while recognizing its multifaceted nature, which is influenced by professional expertise, interpersonal skills, and active participation in the pesantren community. A brief overview of the Pesantren system, tracing its evolution from purely traditional centers of Islamic learning to institutions grappling with the incorporation of modern educational techniques.

### The Modern Challenges and Adjustments

Curriculum as materials, curriculum as a product, and curriculum as a process were the three approaches to the curriculum utilized in the learning development of pesantren education in Indonesia until 2030 (Lutfauziah et al., 2023). The curriculum demonstrates the achievement of competency standards and the demonstrated

performance of vocational graduates in Indonesia in the era of free trade in 2022 (Fathani et al., 2022).

Based on the curriculum's contextual praxis, additional learning development was designed. Praxis is the practice, application, or realization of a theory, lesson, or skill. A new curriculum understanding is sought for the expansion of the concept of the curriculum as a process with the addition of the need for a common commitment to agree (among the authors of education) on activities that are required (as part of the learning process) to attain specific goals that have been established. Buya in Pesantren also refers to instructors' abilities to demonstrate leadership in their own teaching and the learning of their students, both inside and outside the classroom.

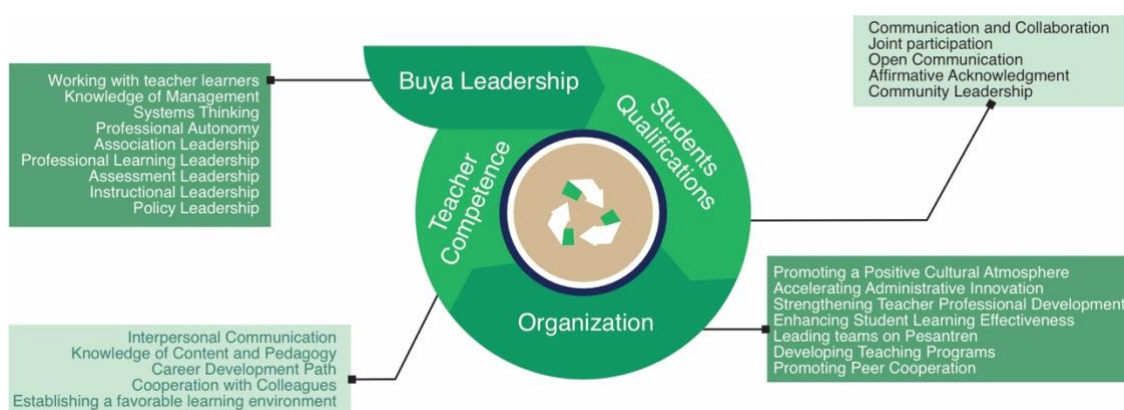


Figure 1: Leadership and Pesantren Curriculum Development

The Pesantren Curriculum, a crucial instrument in the transformation of fundamental competencies in education, is undergoing revision currently. It is envisaged that this process will significantly affect the orientation of instruction. Specifically, it is anticipated that workshop-based instruction, prevalent in 2000, will give way to laboratory-based instruction. This change will necessitate not only knowledgeable but also effective communicators among educators.

The Pesantren Curriculum, a critical tool in the transformation of fundamental competencies in education, is currently under revision. This process is expected to have a significant impact on the instructional orientation (Listrianti & Mundry, 2020). Specifically, it is expected that workshop-based instruction, which was popular in 2000, will give way to laboratory-based instruction. Educators will need to be both knowledgeable and effective communicators as a result of this change.

The ability of teachers to communicate effectively is critical to the educational process. A good educator meticulously plans their presentations and demonstrations to ensure that the information is conveyed clearly and engagingly (Kim et al., 2024). As a result of this shifting educational landscape, teachers' roles are becoming increasingly important.

However, recent studies have revealed a significant gap between the courses offered under Pesantren institutions' transforming curricula and market demands. Students' acquired skills do not meet current industry requirements.

The regulations governing Pesantren education recognize instructors as critical success factors. However, according to Prasetyo's findings, there does not appear to be a clear distinction between those teaching theories and those teaching practicum in terms of pedagogical abilities – a point to consider for the future development of Indonesia's Pesantren education system.

The strict guidelines established by the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Dayah (BADA) are primarily responsible for this mismatch between curriculum content and market demands. These regulations give universities little room to create curriculums tailored to market demands, widening the gap.

Furthermore, it has been argued that the current exam-based assessment methods used by Pesantren institutions contribute significantly to the widening of the gap between academic and industry expectations.

Hence, to close this gap and better equip students with the skills required by the current labor market, Pesantrens should be given more autonomy in determining the curriculum for their transformation programs. In addition, these institutions' accounting curricula should be revised immediately to align with current market demands.

*A teacher in the Pesantren education system might say, "Our focus is on teaching something that is both appropriate and efficient for society. We want our students to understand how their learning applies to the real world." (Inf 02)*

*A curriculum planner could state, "In selecting learning materials, we take a wide perspective to ensure that our students are exposed to diverse fields of knowledge."*

*An effective teacher might declare, "Our role extends beyond just imparting knowledge; we demonstrate its practical application in everyday life." (Inf 01)*

*A technology teacher could affirm, "Demonstration is one of the most effective methods for us as technology teachers; it provides students with tangible examples that can clarify abstract concepts." (Inf 01)*

*An educator in a Pesantren institution might express: "We aim to balance practical and theoretical instruction so as to equip students with expert competencies relevant to their future careers while ensuring these concepts are easily comprehensible." (Inf 03)*

This interview examines the essential role of curriculum in the Pesantren education system and the need to equip students with skills relevant to the current labor market. To address existing skills gaps, it is crucial for Pesantrens to have greater autonomy in designing their transformation program curricula, particularly in revising the accounting curriculum to ensure alignment with contemporary market demands. Educators emphasize the importance of contextualized learning that connects theoretical knowledge to real-world applications, fostering a deeper understanding of how education translates into practical skills.

Furthermore, a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to curriculum development is advocated, allowing students to engage with diverse fields of knowledge ([“Literacy, Globalization, and Technology of Education Quality for Preparing the Society 5.0,” 2020](#); [Wargadinata et al., 2020](#)). Effective teaching strategies, such as demonstration and experiential learning, are highlighted as key methods to facilitate student comprehension and engagement. Ultimately, enhancing curricular autonomy and adapting educational content to align with evolving labor market dynamics will empower students to acquire the practical competencies necessary for success in their future careers.

### **Strategy Solution**

Pesantren education requires the awareness and concern of society, students, and villagers. In the meantime, future pesantren education must include comprehensive instruction. Extracurricular programs evaluate skilled individuals who can adapt to a variety of environments based not only on their academic achievements, but also on their concern for energy resources. Pesantren education focuses on practical instruction to develop technical skills and theoretical knowledge in the fields of technology and engineering related to energy extraction. As a result, both practical and theoretical guidance should be capable of providing students with employment-relevant expertise while also being easily understandable to students.

Consequently, the resultant policies for providing education seem insufficient in reflecting the unique privileges of Acehnese education. The results of current research reveal the absence of a derivative policy that delineates the formulation of an Islamic values-based curriculum in greater detail. To better understand the dynamics underlying this issue, this study employs actor analysis and a typology of political strategies composed of positional, power, player, and perception strategies. The positional strategy focuses on the roles and positions of various stakeholders in determining the direction and outcomes of policy formulation.

Power strategy delves into the influence and authority of individual actors in shaping the policy process. Player strategy examines the interactions and alliances among stakeholders, and how their collective actions contribute to policy outcomes.

Lastly, the perception strategy sheds light on the ideas, beliefs, and values that inform actors' decision-making processes. By incorporating these perspectives, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate process behind policy formation and the ensuing implications of the unrealized implementation of an Islamic values-based Aceh education. Furthermore, the study seeks to address the knowledge gaps among various parties concerning these critical aspects of educational policy.

Ultimately, the findings from this study are anticipated to inform future efforts in overcoming these challenges, paving the way for a more efficacious and contextually relevant integration of Islamic values into Acehese education.

### **The Goal of Curriculum in Pesantren**

The Pesantren education system aims to impart knowledge that is appropriate and useful for society (Azra, 2018). Its pedagogy is instructive and aligned with the prevalent technological advances in society. The selection of learning materials is extensive, encompassing a variety of perspectives while ensuring that students are aware of job market relevance (Dellyana & Sudrajad, 2020).

The integration of life skills education with the application of learning plays a crucial role in the role played by competent educators with a rich tapestry of disposition, knowledge, and abilities. The essence of effective lesson planning and instructional objectives is their capacity to illustrate the application, clarification, and far-reaching effects of technology for students. Notably, demonstration emerges as the most effective method technology educators utilise. Consequently, combining practical and theoretical instruction should produce expert competencies that aid students in their professional endeavours while remaining accessible and understandable.

#### *Life Skill Curriculum*

The Pesantren education system, a paradigm of Islamic education distinct to Indonesia, is intended to emphasize social relevance and efficiency. The pedagogical approach is based on societal realities, with a strong understanding of how technological advancements shape the world. This emphasis keeps the curriculum dynamic and responsive to students' and society's changing needs.

In this system, learning materials are selected with a broad perspective. This approach ensures that students are exposed to various fields of knowledge and have a thorough understanding. Furthermore, it instils an appreciation for real-world applications of their learning - a crucial aspect that enhances their fitness for employment.



Effective teachers who possess a variety of dispositions, knowledge bases, and abilities play a crucial role in this educational structure. In addition to imparting knowledge, they must also demonstrate its practical applicability in daily life. They must create lesson plans with instructional objectives that reflect the intersection of theoretical concepts and their practical applications.

Given the pervasive influence of technology on contemporary society, Pesantren instructors must be adept at incorporating technology into their teaching methods. It has been determined that demonstration is one of the most effective techniques for technology instructors, as it provides students with concrete examples that can clarify abstract concepts.

Therefore, practical, and theoretical instruction should strive to equip students with expert skills pertinent to their future careers while remaining easily understandable. This balance ensures that students acquire a solid theoretical foundation while concurrently developing the practical skills required to navigate real-world challenges, exemplifying the essence of life skill education envisioned by Pesantren as educational institution institutions.

### **Establishing Curriculum Framework for Solutions**

Following the establishment of the curriculum framework, determining the broad overall outcomes of the program, and engaging with a variety of stakeholders, several strategic and structural issues must be considered and decisions made before delving into the detailed development of the program (Putri et al., 2024).

This research focuses on setting the educational process in the national and international context. This will facilitate travel of students during their programme and achieve international recognition of professional qualifications on completion. To achieve the second of these, it is necessary that the equivalence of professional qualifications from different countries can be demonstrated, and it is considered that teachers should have some understanding of the structures and processes involved.

Modern education curriculum standards are shaped by four main characteristics, each pivotal in tuning how education is delivered and assessed. Firstly, these standards are characterized as performance standards. This characteristic implies their primary objective is to achieve certain predefined goals, such as specific learning outcomes. The focus here is not merely on the learning process but also on demonstrating knowledge and skills acquired. This performance-based approach ensures that students are evaluated based on their ability to apply what they have learned in practical contexts.

Secondly, these standards are designed as generic, not tied to any specific content or subject matter. Despite the unique nature of each degree program, it should be regulated by Qualifications Frameworks (QFs) and grounded in learning

outcomes. This design ensures flexibility and adaptability across different disciplines while maintaining a uniform benchmark for pesantren quality assurance (AD & ART).

Thirdly, all these standards are interlocked with one another. They do not simply exist in isolation or maintain loose connections; instead, they function like cogs in a machine where adopting one standard inevitably leads to the adoption of all others. This interconnectedness fosters coherence across various elements of an educational program and promotes a holistic approach towards education delivery.

These new curriculum standards are designed to transgress national boundaries and individual institutional regulations like those at pesantren. In an increasingly globalized world where knowledge exchange transcends borders, such design encourages international comparability and compatibility among qualifications from different countries or institutions.

In essence, these four characteristics - performance orientation, generic design detached from specific content, interlocking nature among standards themselves, and transcendence over national boundaries - shape contemporary education curriculum standards into dynamic tools for effective teaching-learning processes.

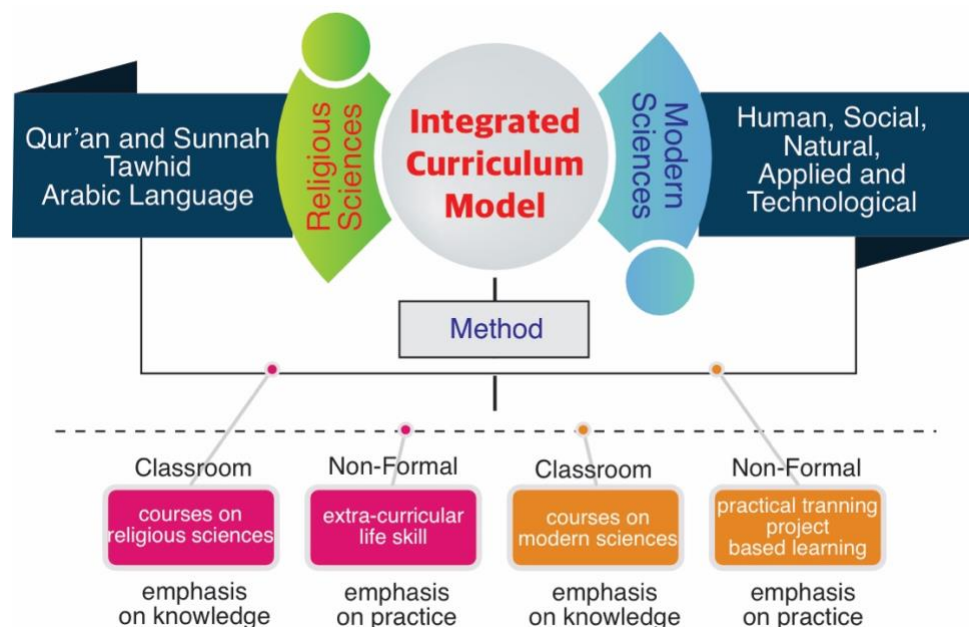


Figure 2: Pesantren Curriculum Development Model

The pesantren curriculum integration model, illustrated in Figure 1, integrates Islamic knowledge with science. More specifically, Islamic knowledge encompasses Arabic, fiqh, and akidah. Meanwhile, the term "science" denotes the utilization of technology. Pesantren persist in their efforts to recruit teachers, enhance technological infrastructure, and engage in active collaboration with stakeholders,

despite their limited human resources for science teachers. The collaborative effort is focused on the enhancement of the academic qualifications of pesantren cadres. At Darunnajah University Jakarta, six pesantren teachers were awarded scholarships by Lazis Asfa Foundation to pursue their education in the science department. The hope is that the expansion of human resources in the field of science will result in improvements in the efficacy of curriculum integration in preschools over the next few years.

Administrative issues are less intricate than leadership functions and roles. In the research case, the identification of leadership styles results in transformative and innovative styles. The aspect of professionalism in leadership is that effective policies are developed through a process and in accordance with the facts. Empirical data is the foundation of policy determination, rather than emotional considerations. Nevertheless, each leader in the pesantren possesses an inherent quality, namely personal charisma, which contributes its own policy value to a decision.

Pesantren education system are the most important property of PCT. Not only does teacher quality have statistically significant effects on student learning, it is also critical to a pesantren pursuit of quality. Buya leadership (BL) broadly affects teacher professional development, creativity, student learning engagement, pesantren decision-making, and for pesantren sustainability improvement (Humaisi et al., 2019; Siregar & Prasetyo, 2023).

Further, in order to demonstrate professionalism in decision-making, Buya invites senior teachers to present ideas and concepts concerning the direction of the pesantren curriculum. Ideal and proportional decision-making are influenced by the same educational background and level of education. The pesantren curriculum aspect is a comprehensive concept that encompasses interrelated components of the pesantren education system. Education is defined as "what is seen, heard, and felt by santri" in terms of values. In the interim, the curriculum integration that has been implemented serves as an illustration of the santri's character.

Moreover, character building is another benefit of the pesantren education system, and pesantren has become an alternative place for the elderly to live. Even so, there are some problems with the pesantren institution. Among them are the curriculum, financial management, administration, infrastructure, and keeping the pesantren going after the teacher's death.

Conceptually, integration is an element of transformation. Consequently, this investigation delves into the concept of leadership in the context of curriculum transformation in pesantren by utilizing an integrative approach and drawing on prior research. This definition acknowledges the unique teaching-oriented characteristics of pesantren teachers. The definition of Buya leadership as proposed in this study is the all-encompassing influence that teachers have on their peers,

students, and other members of the pesantren community. The Leader (read Buya) in the participatory leadership style model serves as an illustration of the influence on teachers. Buya's involvement in the learning process is manifested through monitoring and evaluation of learning community activities.

## CONCLUSION

Pesantren institutions face the challenge of preserving their traditional roots in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. Preliminary findings indicate that a balanced approach can yield positive academic and personal outcomes for students. Pesantren envisions itself as a “preschool” for educators. Consequently, graduates are expected to possess the qualities of an educator in any professional setting. Curriculum integration between Islamic science and *kitab turats* is a critical component of a more comprehensive pesantren education curriculum. Additionally, extracurricular activities facilitated by pesantren serve as a concealed curriculum that fosters life skills and critical thinking. In this model, the religious component is essential for the development of positive changes in character and personality. The modern science component is a life skill. The quality of graduates is influenced by the certainty of systematic and sustainable curriculum implementation, which enables them to compete and be effective. This study reviews the broader implications of these findings for the Indonesian education system, suggesting potential refinements to the pesantren curriculum and offering recommendations for other educational institutions worldwide that seek to balance tradition and modernity. The study suggests avenues for further investigation, including longitudinal studies on the long-term impacts of the pesantren education system and comparative studies with other traditional education systems globally.

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