



## BUILDING GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL: SYNERGY BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNIZATION

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### Abstract

The synergy between tradition and modernization is essential for the development of pesantren that can compete on a global scale. This article aims to analyze the development of the quality of pesantren to have global competitiveness, as well as their efforts in synergizing tradition and modernization. This study uses the literature review to examine pesantren's methods for increasing global competitiveness, as well as their efforts to align tradition with modernization. This study was carried out by gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing data from a variety of relevant literature sources, such as books, scientific journals, articles, research reports, and so on. The findings of this study reveal that pesantren play a critical role in producing competitive graduates in the age of globalization. As a result, efforts must be made to improve educational quality by addressing curriculum components, teaching personnel, infrastructure, and a more professional management system. To remain relevant in a changing world, pesantren must be modernized while retaining traditional values. This step allows pesantren to continue developing as an excellent, adaptable, and innovative educational institution addressing global concerns.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the age of modernization, Islamic education in Indonesia faces difficult challenges, including the need to preserve local identity and values while adjusting to global innovations (Rahman, & Azzahra, 2024). With a strong foundation of scholarly tradition, pesantren has long played as centers for the intellectual and spiritual development of society. However, in the era of globalization, pesantren face a significant challenge in remaining relevant amidst increasingly complex changes. Pesantren are expected to continue innovating to provide significant social contributions and meet the diverse needs of society, such as by developing vocational training programs, establishing pesantren-based cooperatives, launching digital learning platforms, and initiating community health and environmental awareness campaigns (Basori, et al., 2023). In order to meet the needs of the millennial generation, pesantren are making modernization efforts. This step is realized by preparing competitive human resources and adapting to existing market needs (Suciu, et al., 2023).

Globalization also has an impact on institutional management patterns, with interactions and shifts between cultures and civilizations influencing pesantren development (Halimah, et al., 2024). In the age of globalization, pesantren are dedicated to providing an educational system that produces quality human resources with a global perspective without losing their identity, ensuring adaptability to evolving times and capable of producing students with noble character who contribute at the global scale (Budiharso, et al., 2023). To address the problems of globalization, pesantren needs to formulate and implement various ways to improve the quality of educational institutions by maximizing existing resources to attain educational quality, both in terms of process and outcome (Baharun, et al., 2021). Students need to possess strong intellectual skills and competitiveness in order to become a generation capable of creating beneficial changes for themselves and society (Azmiyah, & Astutik, 2021; Broo, et al., 2022). Thus, pesantren can become responsive institutions in addressing various societal issues through effective strategies.

Along with modernization, pesantren are expected to generate human resources capable of contributing to modern life (Mufron, 2020). Currently, many pesantren combine tradition and modernization, as the integration of these two elements create significant opportunities for pesantren to take a strategic role in the era of globalization. The human resources produced by pesantren are now being oriented toward establishing a balance of knowledge and technology while remaining relevant to the values of faith and piety (Karimah et al., 2023). This is accomplished by integrating new management programs, adding subjects important to current global developments, and organizing extracurricular activities that are aligned with the dynamics of the economy, society, technology, and several other disciplines. The synergy between tradition and modernization has become a significant factor in developing pesantren capable of competing on a global scale. This article aims to analyze the development of the quality of pesantren to have global competitiveness and the efforts of pesantren in synergizing tradition and modernization.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a literature analysis to synthesize research findings and identify areas that require additional exploration, which is critical for constructing theoretical frameworks and conceptual models. The researcher gathered a variety of resources, including articles and journals from previous investigations. The findings were then compiled to address current concerns and summarize the state of existing research.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Development of the Quality of Pesantren with Global Competitiveness

Several years, the legal basis for the implementation of pesantren education has referred to Law No. 20 of 2003, which has often been criticized for its lack of detailed discussion on pesantren education. Therefore, in 2019, the government released Law No. 18 of 2019 on pesantren, which specifically regulates various aspects related to pesantren (Istikomah et al., 2021). The law recognizes and supports the role of pesantren in education, preaching, and community empowerment (Wajdi, 2024). This regulation also provides an opportunity for pesantren to develop their potential and improve their quality to adapt to the era of globalization and the 4.0 industrial revolution.

As an Islamic educational institution, pesantren are expected to produce high-quality graduates and provide benefits to society (Fadlin, et al., 2024). Pesantren graduates are expected to achieve not just in religious disciplines, but also in skills, morality, and values that will help them in their social lives. Pesantren are expected to produce individuals who can actively contribute to society. To attain this goal, pesantren need to improve the quality of education provided, so their graduates have high competitiveness on a global scale.

Quality is a fundamental aspect that must be the main focus of every organization to be able to compete at the global level (Bashan, & Kordova, 2021; Hallencreutz, & Parmler, 2021). Global competitiveness in the field of education refers to the ability to design effective, inclusive, and high-quality systems to produce individuals who are knowledgeable, skilled, and competitive at the global level (Sholahuddin, 2024). As an Islamic educational institution, pesantren have the responsibility to produce quality graduates, provide benefits to society, have a positive impact on individuals, and be able to contribute significantly to social life. To improve their quality, pesantren must not only adhere to national education standards but also implement them through practical measures such as curriculum alignment with the national framework, teacher certification programs, standardized student assessment methods, and infrastructure improvements in accordance with government regulations. In addition, experienced educators, proper facilities, and an efficient and effective management system are required. Pesantren must also have independent funding sources through business units, as well as a structured evaluation system to ensure the quality of learning and sustainable development (Mufron, 2020).

One of the indicators of quality education is the institution's ability to produce outstanding resources who possess initiative, teamwork, professional training, assessment, effective communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, information utilization, learning strategy design, and multicultural skills. The quality of education in pesantren indicates its performance in providing educational services to pupils, which may be achieved by achieving a number of critical requirements, such as clear standards,

an inclusive curriculum, facilities, teaching personnel, and other supporting factors (Noor et al., 2023). Quality management improvements are carried out so that pesantren can develop more rapidly and be widely accepted by the community as educational institutions capable of producing competent scholars (Handoko, 2021).

The global society demands an adaptive attitude, mastery of knowledge and technology, as well as a strong work ethic (Mufron, 2020). Pesantren play a role in improving the quality and competitiveness of their graduates in the era of globalization by adhering to national education standards and Islamic values. Graduates are equipped with competencies, skills, strong character, while also internalizing Islamic, national, and humanitarian values, to contribute to the welfare of the community. (Wajdi, 2024). To enlighten the nation, pesantren need to maintain excellent traditional values while constantly producing new innovation that are relevant to the times (Oktaria et al., 2023). Pesantren education must evolve such that its graduates excel not just in religious disciplines, but also in skills relevant to the job market and global community growth (Putri et al., 2024). Islamic boarding schools must continuously innovate their educational systems in order to compete with other institutions in producing quality graduates, while also accepting greater responsibility for educating students in science and technology (IPTEK) and fostering faith and piety (IMTAQ) (Suroso, et al., 2021).

The role and function of pesantren are now changes, from previously focusing on deepening religious and spiritual knowledge, evolving into institutions that prepare students with an understanding of science and technology (Mufron, 2020). The majority of pesantren in Indonesia have responded to the challenges of educational modernization by implementing various reforms, including in the education system, curriculum, materials, teaching methods, and evaluation systems (Budiyanto et al., 2022). These pesantren adopt the madrasah education system, which refers to the system and curriculum established by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. As explained by Arifin, in (Sholahuddin, 2024) globally competitive educational institutions are determined by the quality of educators and educational staff, the teachers' skills in delivering material, as well as their discipline and responsibility as role models for students. Adequate infrastructure and the fulfillment of student needs also support the quality of education. In addition, institutions must facilitate research and community service so that students can directly contribute to social life.

Modernization and technological advancement demand that the millennial generation possess global skills, while the Muslim community desires a generation that is faithful and has good morals (Istikomah et al., 2021). In this regard, pesantren play the role of agents of change that function as connectors in promoting human resource empowerment, accelerating development in various sectors, and advancing science and technology to face the global era (Mufron, 2020). In order to have global competitiveness, the entire community needs to prepare themselves with various skills that align with the needs of the global society (Asiyai, 2022). To improve its quality, pesantren need to be adaptive and open to new systems, update the curriculum according to the times, and implement democratic leadership (Budiyanto et al., 2022).

Educational institution, including pesantren, is required to provide the best service to students, their guardians, and the community. To achieve this, pesantren needs to be supported by a good management system, such as a structured mindset and a professional attitude in carrying out tasks and responsibilities (Taufan Iswandi, 2020). Pesantren, with all its strengths and weaknesses, sets various goals and hopes to drive social change in society through service, which initially focused on the formation of religious morals, then developed in a more systematic and integrated manner in line with the times and societal needs. (Basit, 2023). Pesantren has positive structural and cultural changes in line with the times, including leadership patterns, relationships between leaders and students, communication, and decision-making, which are increasingly based on scientific management principles grounded in Islamic values. As a result, it has become a dynamic, creative, productive, effective, and innovative institution capable of adapting to and anticipating technological changes and advancements without abandoning religious values (Zainuddin, et al., 2024).

Currently, many pesantren are beginning to adopt aspects of Western education, such as methodology, management, curriculum, and others (Zainal, et al., 2022; Thoha, & Hannan, 2022). Furthermore, many pesantren are growing in a variety of disciplines, including foreign language competence, entrepreneurship, information technology, and other skills relevant to current demands (Karimah et al., 2023). Many pesantren also

adopt information technology in their teaching, allowing students to access learning resources from various locations. Some pesantren offer online learning programs that can be followed globally, allowing students from abroad to gain knowledge without having to meet in person (Noor et al., 2023). Putri et al., (2024) the findings of her research show that leading pesantren innovate by combining national and traditional curricula, leveraging technology, and enhancing students' soft skills through active learning and partnerships. This innovation improves the students' academic, religious, social, and intellectual competencies, allowing them to compete at the national and global levels. Some of these initiatives may benefit the pesantren, but modernization also brings new challenges.

### **The Synergy between Tradition and Modernization in Pesantren**

Tradition can be defined as actions that have been carried out from generation to generation and have become an integral part of a community's life (Dasopang, et al., 2023). The tradition of pesantren includes everything that has become a habit, understood, internalized, and applied in life within the pesantren environment. (Budiyanto et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the modernization of pesantren refers to the effort to change pesantren from the old model to a new one, which does not mean eliminating everything old, but rather focusing on renewal in terms of facilities and human efforts to achieve it, including aspects of understanding. The modernization of pesantren is understood as an effort to renew the pesantren so that it can meet the increasingly complex demands of society regarding the role of pesantren (Suwendi, et al., 2024). The modernization of pesantren education aims to create educational institutions that remain rooted in Indonesian cultural identity while also internalizing universal Islamic values to build the future civilization (Bukhori Muslim, et al., 2024). These modernization efforts include revitalizing the pesantren education paradigm, establishing a balance between knowledge and faith, eliminating educational dualism, reforming conventional learning techniques into a classical system, and creating a more structured curriculum.

Pesantren, as an education system deeply rooted in the Muslim community in Indonesia, has successfully maintained its existence firmly and is capable of establishing an educational model that incorporates all elements of life (Budiyanto et al., 2022). According to Bawani et al, in (Amir & Fauzan, 2021) the ideal pesantren education aims to shape students in three main areas: strengthening mental and spiritual through religious education, improving general knowledge, and providing additional skills that support students' independence. Pesantren, as dynamic educational institutions, will continue to exist in the face of globalization by upholding Islamic ideals, adjusting to modernization, and preserving local culture (Haris, 2023). Pesantren are supposed not only to shape Muslims in accordance with Islamic values, but also to contribute to social change and progress (Nasir & Maisah Maisah, 2022).

Isbah, (2020), in (Istikomah et al., 2021) explains that the response of pesantren to the modernization of education and socio-economic changes in Indonesia includes four main aspects: first, the integration of general subjects and vocational skills into the curriculum; second, changes in learning methodology from the etonan system to the classical and tiered system; third, the professional management of pesantren with good management principles; and fourth, the development of the functions of pesantren not only as educational institutions but also as social and economic functions.

Many modern pesantren are attempting to combine traditional values with a modern educational approach, specifically a classical formal teaching system and an integrated curriculum that is implemented with some adjustments based on needs (Budiyanto et al., 2022). This type of pesantren fully adopts the modern learning model, where the learning process is conducted classically with the support of technology as an aid. The subjects taught are not only limited to Islamic religious studies but also include general knowledge and practical skills to help students prepare for the future (Istikomah et al., 2021). Pesantren should provide a learning model that not only focuses on spiritual aspects but also equips students with skills based on their talents and interests in order to produce highly competitive graduates in the economic sector while also attracting public interest in pesantren education. Pesantren can take at least two strategic actions today, including adapting to the times without losing their unique identity as pesantren and strategically utilizing digital space (Oktaria et al., 2023). Furthermore, in order to face the challenges of modern society, pesantren need to reconstruct the curriculum, which includes leadership competencies, language skills, information technology literacy,

writing skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

## CONCLUSION

Pesantren play a strategic role in producing competitive graduates in the era of globalization, which consequently demands continuous efforts to improve the quality of education. These efforts encompass the development of an integrated curriculum, the enhancement of educator competence, the provision of adequate facilities, and the implementation of a more professional and systematic management system. In responding to the dynamics of contemporary change, pesantren are required to undergo modernization without abandoning their traditional values. Through this balanced approach, pesantren can maintain their identity while simultaneously evolving into adaptive, innovative, and excellent educational institutions capable of addressing global challenges.

Based on the findings, it is evident that the integration of the national curriculum with the traditional pesantren curriculum is essential to achieve equilibrium between religious knowledge and general science. This integration enables students to develop life skills more comprehensively and prepares them to engage productively in broader social and professional contexts. Furthermore, the utilization of educational technology in the learning process is increasingly important to support effective and relevant instruction. The quality of educators must also be strengthened through continuous professional development and training that align with current educational trends. In addition, the adoption of a professional management system grounded in scientific and managerial principles is crucial for pesantren to achieve sustainable educational quality and institutional effectiveness.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations, particularly in its scope, which remains largely conceptual and has not yet fully examined empirical evidence from diverse pesantren contexts. Variations in institutional characteristics, resource availability, and socio-cultural environments were not explored in depth. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct empirical studies that assess the effectiveness of integrated curricula combining religious and general knowledge within pesantren settings. Further investigations should also examine the impact of such curricular models on graduates' readiness to face the job market and global competition, as well as explore best practices in technology integration and professional management that can be adapted across different pesantren environments.

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