

Transforming traditional Islamic boarding schools into modern educational institutions: a Systematic Literature Review

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Received:	Revised:	Accepted:
31 May 2026	12 July 2026	23 July 2026

ABSTRACT

Purpose – Traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are required to adapt to educational modernization, technological advancement, and changing societal needs while preserving their Islamic identity. This study aims to analyze the transformation of traditional *pesantren* into modern educational institutions and to develop a conceptual synthesis of the relationships among Islamic educational transformation, institutional transformation, educational quality, and student well-being.

Method – This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Literature was retrieved from the Scopus and Google Scholar databases. Eligible studies were critically appraised using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklist, resulting in 27 articles that were analyzed through thematic analysis.

Findings – The synthesis identified five major themes: Islamic educational transformation, institutional transformation, the modernization of *pesantren*, educational quality, and student well-being. The findings indicate that the transformation of *pesantren* is a gradual, multidimensional, and integrated process in which educational transformation serves as the foundation for institutional strengthening, governance modernization, educational quality improvement, and the enhancement of student well-being. Rather than replacing traditional Islamic values, modernization integrates Islamic educational traditions with the demands of contemporary education. The novelty of this study lies in the development of a comprehensive conceptual synthesis that integrates these five dimensions into a unified framework, providing a more holistic perspective on the transformation of *pesantren* than previous studies.

Keywords: Islamic boarding school transformation; educational modernization; educational quality; student well-being; systematic literature review.

How to cite:

Saefullah, M., Raharjo, R., Fihris, F., Mulyah, M. S., & Qolbi, S. K. (2026). Transforming traditional Islamic boarding schools into modern educational institutions: A systematic literature review. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Management and Leadership*, 4(1), 335-357. <https://doi.org/10.51214/ijemal.v4i1.2001>

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are among the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, with a history that predates the country's independence. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Indonesia currently has approximately 36,600 *pesantren*, accommodating around 3.4 million students (*santri*) and supported by nearly 370,000 Islamic scholars and teachers (*kiai and ustadz*) (Ramadhani, 2022). These figures position *pesantren* as one of the largest faith-based educational networks in the world, serving not only as centers for the transmission of Islamic knowledge but also as important agents of social transformation and community empowerment. As community-based educational institutions, *pesantren* have become an integral part of Indonesia's national education system and have played a significant role in producing prominent religious scholars, national leaders, and community figures. Their long-standing existence demonstrates the capacity of Islamic educational institutions to preserve their religious identity while continuously adapting to social change and the evolving needs of society (Saini, 2024). More broadly, *pesantren* education is rooted in the preservation of Islamic values and traditions, thereby contributing to the development of religious scholars, ethical leaders, and future generations capable of addressing contemporary societal challenges.

In general, *pesantren* can be classified into two main categories: *salafiyah* (traditional) and *khalafiyah* (modern). *Salafiyah pesantren* primarily emphasize the study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) as the principal source of religious instruction (Hisniati et al., 2024). The learning process typically employs traditional instructional methods, such as *bandongan* and *sorogan*, which facilitate the transmission of classical Islamic scholarship from teachers to students. In contrast, *khalafiyah* or modern *pesantren* represent the evolution of traditional *pesantren* by integrating Islamic religious education with general education, a more structured curriculum, and the development of competencies required to meet the demands of contemporary society (Hisniati et al., 2024).

The transformation of Islamic education refers to the process by which Islamic educational institutions adapt to advances in science and technology as well as changing societal needs while preserving the fundamental Islamic values that constitute their institutional identity. This transformation encompasses curriculum reform, innovation in teaching and learning methods, the strengthening of twenty-first-century competencies, the integration of digital technologies, and the development of technology-based educational infrastructure to enhance the relevance and competitiveness of Islamic education in the Society 5.0 era (Badriyah et al., 2025). In Indonesia, the transformation of Islamic education has evolved since the establishment of *madrasah* as a form of educational modernization that integrates the traditional *pesantren* system with the modern school system. The emergence of *madrasah* illustrates that Islamic education is not a static institution but one that continuously adapts to societal changes and contemporary educational demands. This modernization has been characterized by the adoption of a graded education system, structured classroom-based instruction, improved

learning facilities, and the integration of Islamic and general sciences within the curriculum (Syarifuddin, 2017).

Alongside technological advancements, the transformation of Islamic education has also accelerated the digitalization of educational systems through the integration of information and communication technologies, which have reshaped teaching and learning practices, institutional governance, and the organizational culture of Islamic educational institutions (Abu A'la & Makhshun, 2022). These developments demonstrate that the transformation of Islamic education extends beyond pedagogical innovation to encompass institutional reform and capacity building aimed at enhancing the ability of Islamic educational institutions to produce globally competitive graduates while maintaining their foundation in Islamic values. Therefore, the transformation of Islamic education can be understood as a continuous process of preserving the enduring traditions of Islamic education while strengthening institutional capacity to respond effectively to the social, economic, and technological challenges of the modern era.

Educational quality refers to the ability of an educational institution to effectively manage its educational resources and processes in order to produce competent graduates who are capable of meeting the demands of an evolving society. In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0), educational quality is no longer determined solely by students' learning outcomes but is also influenced by the digital transformation of educational management, including human resource development, curriculum design, teaching and learning processes, financial management, educational facilities and infrastructure, community engagement, and graduate competencies (Mahmudah & Putra, 2021). Furthermore, educational quality is closely associated with the quality of instructional processes, information systems, educational services, institutional support, and the active roles of educators and learners in creating effective learning environments (Al-Fraihat et al., 2020). Therefore, educational quality can be understood as the capacity of educational institutions to provide relevant, adaptive, and high-quality educational services that equip learners with the competencies required to address contemporary societal needs and technological advancements.

Student well-being refers to a holistic condition that reflects students' overall quality of life, encompassing psychological, social, emotional, and environmental dimensions that support their optimal development. It is closely associated with students' satisfaction with school life, engagement in learning activities, and their ability to maintain positive mental health and social functioning (Iannah et al., 2021). Student well-being is influenced by both internal and external factors, including adaptive capacity, learning orientation, teacher–student relationships, family support, peer interactions, and a supportive school environment. Previous research has shown that family economic stability, social support, and strong parent–child relationships serve as protective factors that mitigate students' anxiety, whereas economic hardship, disruptions to learning activities, and changes in daily routines are positively associated with increased levels of anxiety among students (Cao et al., 2020). Therefore, student well-being can be understood as a multidimensional state of

physical, psychological, social, and emotional well-being that enables students to develop optimally and supports the achievement of positive educational outcomes.

Institutional transformation refers to the process of adapting organizational structures, functions, governance, and management systems in response to changing social environments and evolving societal needs. In the context of Islamic education, institutional transformation is reflected in the evolution of pesantren from traditional Islamic boarding schools into educational institutions that are more responsive and adaptive to contemporary challenges. Modernization has driven changes in leadership, curriculum, teaching and learning practices, organizational management, and the establishment of formal educational units within pesantren. These developments have reshaped the structural and cultural dimensions of traditional Islamic educational institutions while preserving their fundamental Islamic values. Such transformation is evident in the growing number of pesantren that have expanded beyond providing diniyah (religious) education to establish madrasah, general schools, and even higher education institutions in response to the increasing demands of modern society ([Bashori, 2017](#)). Therefore, institutional transformation can be understood as a continuous process of organizational renewal aimed at enhancing the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of Islamic educational institutions.

The modernization of religious schools refers to the process of renewing faith-based educational institutions to enable them to respond to global developments while preserving their religious identity and core values. In the context of Islamic education, modernization should not be equated with secularization; rather, it represents the acceptance and adaptation of global developments in educational competencies, curriculum, and institutional management within the framework of Islamic principles and values. Through this process, Islamic educational institutions are able to integrate globally recognized educational ideas and practices that align with their mission, religious values, and local cultural context ([Tan & Abbas, 2026](#)). Therefore, the modernization of religious schools can be understood as a strategic effort to balance the demands of educational change with the preservation of religious identity, ensuring that Islamic educational institutions remain relevant and sustainable in responding to the challenges of contemporary society.

The overview of pesantren education highlights the strategic importance of ensuring the sustainability and relevance of Islamic boarding schools in the modern era. However, data released by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs indicate a significant decline in student enrollment at pesantren between the 2022 and 2025 academic years. During the 2022/2023 academic year, the number of santri reached 4,074,011 in the first semester and increased to 4,845,317 in the second semester. In contrast, enrollment declined substantially in the 2023/2024 academic year, with the number of santri decreasing to 3,143,555 in the first semester. The downward trend continued in the 2024/2025 academic year, with approximately 3.2 million santri enrolled in the first semester, falling further to around 1.6 million in the second semester. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, demographic changes, educational mobility, and the growing public preference for formal

schools have contributed to this decline. In addition, many pesantren still face challenges in adapting to digital learning systems, which has become an important factor in maintaining their competitiveness and long-term sustainability (Irawati, 2025).

The educational system implemented in pesantren is founded on the principle that all activities undertaken within the institution constitute acts of worship. Nevertheless, students' psychological well-being plays a significant role in shaping their character development. Consequently, ensuring the psychological well-being of santri has become a key concern for *pesantren* administrators, as it directly supports both educational effectiveness and personal development. Despite its importance, most studies and transformation initiatives in pesantren have predominantly focused on institutional and curricular reforms, while paying relatively limited attention to student well-being as a fundamental outcome and central objective of the educational process (Julianti, 2026).

Regulatory and policy issues also constitute a critical dimension of pesantren transformation. The enactment of Law No. 18 of 2019 on Islamic Boarding Schools (*Pesantren*) marked a significant milestone in the formal recognition of pesantren within Indonesia's national education system. The law grants pesantren greater autonomy in managing their curricula and institutional governance while expanding their access to government financial support. However, its implementation has encountered several challenges, including the potential for excessive government intervention, limited institutional and human resource capacity, and tensions between preserving local traditions and complying with national educational standards. This dynamic interplay between modernization and the preservation of religious and cultural values has made the transformation of *pesantren* an increasingly complex yet highly relevant area of scholarly inquiry (Thontawi & Huriati, 2024).

Several previous studies have examined the transformation of pesantren from different perspectives; however, most of them remain partial in scope. Imamuddin, in the article entitled "*Transformasi Kurikulum Pesantren: Studi Literatur tentang Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Kebutuhan Zaman*," found that the pesantren curriculum has evolved from a traditional system centered on kitab kuning (classical Islamic texts) toward the integration of general education and vocational competencies. This transformation is guided by the philosophical principle of al-muhafazah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah (preserving beneficial traditions while adopting better innovations). However, the study employed a descriptive–narrative literature review without a structured review protocol or systematic study selection process (Imamuddin, 2025). Similarly, Harmathilda, Yuli, Arief Rahman Hakim, Damayanti, and Cecep Supriyadi (2024), in the article entitled "Transformasi Pendidikan Pesantren di Era Modern: Antara Tradisi dan Inovasi," conducted a single-case study at MA Sa'id Yusuf Depok and found that the transformation of pesantren requires a careful balance between preserving its traditional identity particularly the use of kitab kuning as the primary reference for educational and institutional decision-making and selectively adopting modern technologies. Their findings further highlighted that the leadership of the kiai is a determining factor in the success of the transformation process (Harmathilda, Rahman Hakim, et al., 2024).

The present study shares similarities with the studies conducted by [Imamuddin \(2025\)](#) and [Harmathilda et al. \(2024\)](#) in that all examine the transformation of pesantren education in response to contemporary educational and societal demands. However, those studies primarily addressed the transformation process from partial perspectives, focusing either on curriculum reform or on balancing tradition and innovation. In contrast, the present study extends the existing body of knowledge by providing a more comprehensive synthesis of the interrelationships among Islamic educational transformation, institutional transformation, the modernization of religious schools, educational quality, and student well-being within an integrated conceptual framework.

The novelty of this study lies in the development of a conceptual synthesis that integrates the five major dimensions of pesantren transformation Islamic educational transformation, institutional transformation, the modernization of religious schools, educational quality, and student well-being into a unified analytical framework. By employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study provides a more comprehensive perspective on how traditional pesantren transform into modern educational institutions. The proposed framework contributes to the existing literature by explaining the interconnections among these dimensions and may serve as a foundation for future empirical research as well as evidence-based policymaking for the development of *pesantren* education.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the transformation of traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) into modern educational institutions through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). Specifically, it seeks to synthesize the relationships among Islamic educational transformation, institutional transformation, the modernization of religious schools, educational quality, and student well-being in order to develop an integrated conceptual framework that supports the sustainable development of *pesantren* education in the modern era.

METHOD

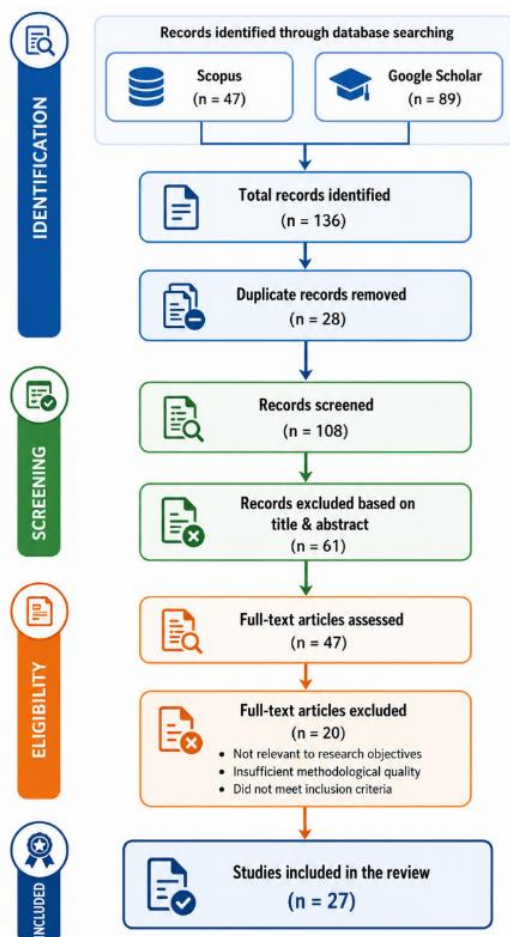
This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize previous studies on the transformation of traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) into modern educational institutions, with particular emphasis on the transformation of Islamic education, institutional change, modernization of religious schools, educational quality, and student well-being. The SLR approach was selected because it enables a systematic, transparent, and reproducible synthesis of existing knowledge through a structured process of literature identification, selection, appraisal, and synthesis ([Snyder, 2019](#))([van Dinter et al., 2021](#)). *Proses tinjauan literatur mengikuti pedoman Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) yang meliputi empat tahapan utama: identification, screening, eligibility, dan inclusion (Page et al., 2021).* *Penelusuran literatur dilakukan melalui tiga basis data akademik, yaitu Scopus dan Google Scho* The literature search was conducted using two academic databases, namely Scopus and Google Scholar. The search strategy employed a combination of the following keywords: traditional Islamic boarding school transformation,

Islamic boarding school modernization, modern Islamic boarding school, educational quality in *pesantren*, student well-being in Islamic boarding schools, *transformasi pondok pesantren tradisional*, *modernisasi pondok pesantren*, *mutu pendidikan pesantren*, and *kesejahteraan santri*. These keywords were searched individually and in combination using the Boolean operators AND and OR to retrieve literature relevant to the research objectives.

The study selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram. The initial search identified 136 records, comprising 47 articles retrieved from Scopus and 89 articles from Google Scholar. After the removal of 28 duplicate records, 108 articles remained for title and abstract screening. During this stage, 61 articles were excluded because they were not relevant to the research objectives. Subsequently, the full texts of 47 articles were assessed for eligibility using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklist, with the appraisal criteria adjusted according to the methodological design of each study. The quality assessment evaluated the clarity of the research objectives, the appropriateness of the research design, the validity of data collection and analysis methods, and the consistency between the findings and conclusions. A total of 20 articles were excluded because they did not meet the required methodological quality or inclusion criteria. Consequently, 27 studies satisfied all eligibility criteria and were included in the final thematic synthesis.

Figure 1.

PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Literature Selection Process



The inclusion criteria comprised journal articles, conference proceedings, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations published between 2022 and 2026, available in full-text format, and addressing the transformation of Islamic education, institutional change, modernization of religious schools, educational quality, or student well-being. Publications that were not relevant to the research objectives, duplicate records, unavailable in full-text format, or failed to meet the methodological quality standards based on the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklist were excluded from the synthesis. Data extracted from each included study comprised the authors, year of publication, research objectives, research methods, study focus, and principal findings.

The extracted data were subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke. The analysis involved four sequential stages: data coding, category development, theme identification, and interpretation of the relationships among the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis resulted in five major themes: (1) Islamic education transformation, (2) institutional transformation, (3) modernization of Islamic boarding schools, (4) educational quality, and (5) student well-being. The interrelationships among these themes were then synthesized to construct a conceptual framework illustrating the transformation of traditional Islamic boarding schools into modern educational institutions and its implications for enhancing educational quality and student well-being.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Characteristics of the Included Studies

The synthesis of the 27 included studies identified five major themes that directly address the objectives of this review: Islamic educational transformation, institutional transformation, the modernization of *pesantren*, educational quality, and student well-being. These five themes represent the principal dimensions of the transformation of traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) into modern educational institutions. Accordingly, the findings are presented according to these thematic categories to provide a structured synthesis of the evidence addressing the research objectives.

The 27 included studies were published between 2022 and 2026, indicating a growing scholarly interest in the transformation of *pesantren* over recent years. Of these, seven studies were indexed in Scopus, while the remaining twenty were retrieved from Google Scholar, providing a broad representation of current research on the transformation of *pesantren* education.

Regarding research design, the included studies were predominantly qualitative, followed by Systematic Literature Reviews (SLRs), literature reviews, policy studies, historical research, philosophical analyses, quantitative studies, and multiple-case studies. This methodological diversity demonstrates that the transformation of *pesantren* has been investigated from multiple perspectives, encompassing pedagogical practices, institutional development, educational policy, and student well-being.

The included studies were subsequently classified into five thematic categories according to their primary research focus. The first theme, Islamic educational transformation, comprised eight studies examining changes in teaching and learning systems, educational digitalization, curriculum reform, and the integration of religious and general knowledge. The second theme, institutional transformation, consisted of six studies focusing on governance reform, leadership, institutional accountability, and organizational development within *pesantren*. The third theme, the modernization of religious schools, included six studies addressing curriculum modernization, educational innovation, and policy reforms in *pesantren* education. The fourth theme, educational quality, comprised five studies investigating quality management, quality assurance systems, and educational leadership. Finally, the fifth theme, student well-being, consisted of two studies specifically examining psychological well-being, mental health, and factors influencing the well-being of *santri*.

Tabel 1. Characteristics of the Included Studies

No	Author(s) & Year	Article Title	Research Method	Database
1	Suresman et al. (2025)	From Sorogan to Digital Learning: SLNA of <i>Pesantren</i> Learning Models	SLR- Bibliometrik	Scopus
2	Kosim et al. (2023)	The Dynamics of Islamic Education Policies in Indonesia	Kualitatif	Scopus
3	Darwanto et al. (2024)	Transformation of Boarding School Management Models in Enhancing Student Accessibility and Educational Quality	Kualitatif	Scopus
4	Arif et al. (2024)	A Systematic Literature Review of Islamic Boarding School (<i>Pesantren</i>) Education in Indonesia (2014–2024)	SLR	Scopus
5	Rohman & Muhtamiroh (2023)	Integrating Traditional-Modern Education in Madrasa to Promote Competitive Graduates	Kualitatif	Scopus
6	Sofi et al. (2025)	<i>Pesantren</i> in Dynamic Transformation: Harmonizing Classical Roots and Modern Practices	Kajian literatur	Scopus
7	Nurkhin et al. (2024)	Accountability of <i>Pondok Pesantren</i> : A Systematic Literature Review	SLR	Scopus
8	Saini (2024)	<i>Pesantren</i> dalam Era Digital: Antara Tradisi dan Transformasi	Kajian literatur	Google Scholar

9	Shofwani, W., et.al., (2025)	Transforming educational management in Islamic boarding schools: A historical and digital perspective	Kualitatif	Google Scholar
10	Imamuddin (2025)	Transformasi Kurikulum Pesantren: Studi Literatur tentang Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam	Studi literatur	Google Scholar
11	Mustofa et al. (2023)	Hybrid <i>Pesantren</i> in Indonesia: Analyzing the Transformation of Islamic Religious Education	Kualitatif	Google Scholar
12	Sholeh (2023)	Transformation of Islamic Education: A Study of Changes in The Transformation of The Education Curriculum	Kualitatif	Google Scholar
13	Harmathilda et al. (2024)	Transformasi Pendidikan Pesantren di Era Modern: Antara Tradisi dan Inovasi	Kualitatif + lapangan	Google Scholar
14	Jalil et al. (2023)	The Process of Organizing and Developing <i>Pesantren</i> into Modern Institutions: A Multi-Cases Study	Multi-kasus	Google Scholar
15	Ansori et al. (2023)	Transformation of Islamic Boarding School Education: Dormitory Mapping Innovation	Deskriptif	Google Scholar
16	Zaini et al. (2022)	Islamic Boarding School's Curriculum Management Modernization	Kualitatif	Google Scholar
17	Ahsan (2024)	Kontroversi Kurikulum Pesantren dan Tantangan Membangun Standar Mutu Pendidikan	Kajian kritis	Google Scholar
18	Hidayati, H., & Muradi, A. (2025).	Curriculum Integration in Semi-Modern Pesantren: A Holistic Approach in Arabic Language Education	Kualitatif	Google Scholar
19	Budiharso, T., Bakri, S., & Sujito, S. (2023).	Transformation of Education System of the Pesantren in Indonesia from the Dutch Colony to Democratic Era	Kajian kebijakan	Google Scholar
20	Mas'udi (2024)	The Evolution of <i>Pesantren</i> Education: Continuity and Change in Curriculum and Management	Historis-kualitatif	Google Scholar
21	Yugo, T. (2025)	Improving the Quality of Islamic Education through <i>Pesantren</i> -Based Management in Indonesia	Kajian literatur	Google Scholar

22	Chudzaifah et al. (2022)	Quality Management of Students in Islamic Boarding Schools	Kualitatif	Google Scholar
23	Zulmuqim et al. (2022)	Analisis Filosofis Manajemen Mutu dalam Pendidikan Islam dan Implementasinya pada Pesantren	Analisis filosofis	Google Scholar
24	Ridani & Sudadi (2025)	<i>Transformasi Manajemen Mutu Pendidikan di Era Digital: Tinjauan Sistematis</i>	Tinjauan sistematis	Google Scholar
25	Rofiq & Sonia (2026)	<i>Implementasi Manajemen Transformatif dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan Pondok Pesantren</i>	Kualitatif	Google Scholar
26	Zahrah & Sukirno (2022)	Psychological Well-Being <i>pada Mahasiswa Santri Ditinjau dari Dukungan Sosial dan Stres Akademik</i>	Kuantitatif	Google Scholar
27	Farhan & Shobahiya (2024)	The Dynamics of Student Mental Health in Perspective Psychology of Islamic Education	Analisis faktor	Google Scholar

Islamic Educational Transformation (Learning Models and Curriculum)

Eight of the included studies focused on the transformation of learning models and curricula in *pesantren* as part of the broader modernization process. Through a systematic literature network analysis of studies published between 2007 and 2025, Suresman et al., identified a progressive shift from traditional instructional methods, such as sorogan and bandongan, toward hybrid and digitally supported learning models emphasizing inclusivity, character education, and digital literacy, while preserving the religious and cultural identity of *pesantren* (Suresman et al., 2025). This typological transformation was further supported by Arif et al., whose systematic review of *pesantren* education (2014–2024) identified three institutional models along the tradition–modernity continuum: salaf (traditional) *pesantren*, which rely exclusively on non-formal instruction based on classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*); modern *pesantren*, which integrate formal schooling with *pesantren* education; and integrated *pesantren*, which collaboratively implement both educational systems (Arif et al., 2024).

A similar transformation has also been observed in the madrasah sector. Rohman et al., reported that graduates' competitiveness improved when madrasah successfully integrated traditional Islamic values with modern educational approaches through an integrated madrasah–*pesantren* curriculum supported by discovery learning strategies (Rohman et al., 2023). These findings are consistent with those of Mustofa et al., who documented the emergence of hybrid *pesantren* and digitally supported learning systems as adaptive responses to advances in information technology while maintaining the distinctive characteristics of Islamic education (Islam et al., 2023). Curriculum reform was also highlighted by Zaini et al., and Prima et al., who emphasized the importance of

integrating religious and general subjects through curriculum management that is more responsive to the demands of contemporary education (Zaini et al., 2022) (Prima et al., 2025).

Consistent with these findings, Qolbi et al. demonstrated that the integration of artificial intelligence literacy into Islamic Religious Education has fostered the development of more ethical, inclusive, and technologically responsive learning models, thereby reinforcing the view that the digital transformation of Islamic education can proceed without compromising the religious values that underpin *pesantren* education (Satria Kharimul et al., 2026). Meanwhile, Saini (2024) interpreted this transformation as a continuous negotiation between preserving the traditions of *pesantren* and responding to the demands of modernization, suggesting that educational change is fundamentally adaptive rather than a replacement of the institution's core identity (Saini, 2024b). Overall, these eight studies demonstrate that curriculum and pedagogical transformation represent the most extensively examined dimension of *pesantren* modernization, characterized by a consistent shift from orally transmitted, teacher-centered instructional methods toward integrated, technology-enhanced, and competency-based learning models.

Institutional Transformation of *Pesantren*

Six studies examined changes in governance, leadership, accountability, and educational policies accompanying the modernization of *pesantren*. At the macro level, Kosim et al., traced the historical evolution of state policies on Islamic education from a policy of "domestication" toward one of "accommodation," culminating in stronger legal recognition of *pesantren* and madrasah within Indonesia's national education system (Kosim et al., 2023). At the institutional level, Darwanto et al. (2024) found that the transformation of boarding school management models enhanced student accessibility and educational quality through strengthened character development, tolerance, and technological competence, although high costs, geographical constraints, and stringent admission requirements continued to limit equitable access (Darwanto et al., 2024). Nurkhin et al., further expanded this discussion by systematically examining the development of governance and accountability mechanisms, particularly institutional reporting practices within *pesantren* (Nurkhin et al., 2024).

Similarly, Jalil et al. (2023), through a multiple-case study of *pesantren* restructuring, reported that the organizational transformation of *pesantren* into modern educational institutions was frequently constrained by resistance to change rooted in the perspectives of some kiai, highlighting leadership disposition as a critical factor influencing institutional transformation (Jalil et al., 2023). Abdul Wahid and Chair (2024), together with Mas'udi (2024), further enriched this discussion by documenting how policy transformation and the historical evolution of *pesantren* management and curriculum have shaped both the pace and direction of institutional change (Hasyim & Chair, 2024) (Mas'udi, 2024). Overall, these six studies demonstrate that institutional transformation within *pesantren* extends beyond administrative reform. Instead, it is closely associated with leadership culture, government policy recognition, governance mechanisms, and institutional accountability, all of which

collectively support the modernization and long-term sustainability of *pesantren* education.

Modernization of *Pesantren*

Six studies examined how *pesantren* have negotiated the process of modernization while preserving their religious identity. Sofi et al. found that contemporary *pesantren* have evolved into complex educational institutions integrating religious instruction, vocational education, character development, and socio-economic empowerment through a selective rather than comprehensive engagement with modernity, particularly in response to the characteristics of the digitally literate millennial generation of *santri* (Sofi et al., 2025). Similarly, Imamuddin, described a curriculum transformation from a traditional model centered on *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts) toward the integration of general education and vocational competencies, guided by the classical principle of *al-muhafazhah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah* ("preserving beneficial traditions while adopting better innovations") (Imamuddin, 2025).

In a relevant single-case study, Harmathilda et al., found that the transformation of MA Sa'id Yusuf Depok required a careful balance between maintaining *kitab kuning* as the primary normative reference and selectively adopting modern technologies, with the leadership of the *kiai* serving as the determining factor in maintaining this balance (Harmathilda, Yuli, et al., 2024). Likewise, Sholeh et al., reported that the modernization of Islamic education was implemented through curriculum transformation designed to accommodate the needs of contemporary society while preserving the fundamental values of Islamic education (Sholeh et al., 2023). Ansori et al., documented comparable reform efforts through innovative restructuring of the *pesantren* dormitory system as part of broader educational modernization initiatives (Ansori et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Ahsan, critically examined the curriculum controversies that emerged as *pesantren* sought to establish standardized educational quality benchmarks, highlighting that modernization efforts are inevitably accompanied by internal debates and institutional contestation (Ahsan, 2024). Overall, these six studies suggest that the modernization of *pesantren* is best understood as a process of selective adaptation rather than a linear replacement of long-established traditions. The reviewed evidence consistently indicates that *pesantren* strive to maintain their religious and cultural identity while incorporating educational innovations that enhance their relevance in contemporary society.

Educational Quality in *Pesantren*

Five studies specifically examined quality management frameworks in *pesantren* and *madrasah*. Yugo, emphasized that the *kiai* remains both the structural and spiritual center of quality governance in *pesantren*, with leadership authority derived primarily from personal religious exemplarity rather than administrative power alone (Yugo, 2025). At the operational level, Chudzaifah et al., found that quality management is implemented through structured *santri* character development programs encompassing religious values, honesty, discipline, independence, responsibility, life skills, and leadership development (Chudzaifah et al., 2022). Zulmuqim et al., provided a philosophical foundation for these practices by demonstrating how quality management principles can be meaningfully

implemented in the development of madrasah and pesantren without reducing educational quality to merely administrative indicators (Zulmuqmin et al., 2022).

Within the context of digital transformation, Ridani and Sudadi, through a systematic review of 30 studies, reported that digital tools such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), quality information systems, and digital dashboards have strengthened the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in education. However, their adoption remains constrained by limited digital literacy among educators, the absence of standardized digital quality indicators, and unequal technological infrastructure, particularly in Indonesia's disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost (3T) regions (Ridani & Sudadi, 2025). Likewise, Abidin and Qusairi, reported that the implementation of transformative management practices contributes to improving educational quality in pesantren (Abidin & Qusairi, 2025). Collectively, these five studies indicate that improving educational quality in pesantren depends on the interaction between the spiritual authority of the *kiai*, structured character development programs, and the adoption of digital quality assurance systems that remain unevenly implemented across institutions.

Student Well-Being in *Pesantren*

Two studies explicitly examined santri well-being, both focusing primarily on psychological well-being. Zahrah and Sukirno, in a quantitative study involving 200 university students living in *pesantren* in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, identified significant relationships among social support, academic stress, and psychological well-being. Their findings indicated that santri pursuing higher education while simultaneously residing in *pesantren* are particularly vulnerable to academic stress due to the dual demands of academic and religious responsibilities, whereas adequate social support serves as an important protective factor that mitigates such stress (Zahrah & Sukirno, 2022).

Complementing these quantitative findings, Farhan and Shobahiya (2024) through a phenomenological qualitative study conducted at Pondok Pesantren Modern Islam Assalaam, found that *santri* commonly experience high levels of academic pressure, identity conflicts arising from the interaction between traditional pesantren values and the demands of modernity, as well as complex socio-spiritual challenges. The study recommended integrated psychological and spiritual mentoring strategies to promote santri mental well-being (Farhan & Shobahiya, 2024). Although this theme was represented by the fewest studies among the five thematic categories, both studies consistently demonstrated that balancing religious and academic responsibilities constitutes a major source of psychological pressure for santri, while structured social and spiritual support systems serve as essential protective factors for promoting student well-being.

Discussion

Transformation of Islamic Education as the Foundation of *Pesantren* Modernization

The findings presented in the Results section reveal that eight of the 27 articles examined focus on changes in learning models and curriculum, making this the most

dominant theme among the five identified. This dominance indicates that the success of pesantren transformation is more substantially determined by the institution's capacity to reform its educational system than by physical or administrative changes alone. Education thus serves as the primary instrument driving change across institutional, governance, and organizational culture dimensions of *pesantren*.

The shift from classical methods such as *sorogan* and *bandongan* toward hybrid and digital-based models, as identified by Suresman et al. and corroborated by Arif et al., demonstrates that pesantren have not abandoned the traditional educational system that constitutes their identity. Rather, various innovations have been developed through the integration of classical learning methods with approaches that are more adaptive to technological advancement and societal needs. This condition suggests that modernization proceeds as a process of educational refinement rather than a replacement of the foundational values of pesantren. The scholarly tradition is preserved as the educational foundation, while innovation is directed toward enhancing learning effectiveness and the relevance of graduate competencies.

The consistency of findings across these eight articles further indicates a shift in the educational orientation of pesantren. Whereas educational success was previously measured primarily by mastery of Islamic sciences, the orientation has now expanded toward producing graduates who demonstrate a balance between academic competence, religious character, professional skills, and adaptability to contemporary developments. This reorientation suggests that pesantren are not merely striving to sustain their existence, but are actively strengthening their contribution as educational institutions capable of addressing the needs of contemporary society.

Institutional Change as a Structural Prerequisite for *Pesantren* Transformation

The six articles in this theme consistently demonstrate that educational transformation cannot be sustained without corresponding changes at the institutional level. Reforms in curriculum, pedagogy, and technology utilization as documented in the preceding theme are difficult to implement effectively when organizational governance remains anchored in patterns that lack adaptability. Institutional change therefore constitutes an essential prerequisite that enables pesantren to manage educational innovations in a more systematic, purposeful, and sustainable manner.

The findings of Kosim et al. regarding the policy shift from state "domestication" toward "accommodation" of Islamic education, alongside the findings of Darwanto et al. and Nurkhin et al. concerning the strengthening of governance and accountability mechanisms, reveal that pesantren are no longer positioned as institutions dependent solely on the individual authority of a single *kiai*. Instead, they are progressively developing into educational organizations that adopt principles of modern management without abandoning the values of religious leadership. The authority of the *kiai* remains central to decision-making; however, its exercise is increasingly supported by administrative systems, functional differentiation, and more professionalized governance mechanisms.

On the other hand, the findings of Jalil et al. regarding resistance to change rooted in the mindset of some *kiai* affirm that institutional transformation does not proceed without challenges. The success of transformation depends not only on the availability of regulatory frameworks or resources, but also on the capacity to build shared understanding between traditional values and the imperatives of change. Institutional transformation thus serves as the bridge connecting pesantren's traditional values with the demands of professionalism in modern educational management, and represents one of the principal determinants of the overall success of *pesantren* transformation.

Modernization of Islamic Boarding Schools as a Process of Selective Negotiation

The six articles comprising this theme consistently demonstrate that *pesantren* modernization is not a linear process of abandoning tradition, but rather a process of selective negotiation. The findings of Sofi et al. regarding contemporary pesantren that integrate religious learning, vocational education, and socio-economic empowerment, alongside the principle of *al-muhafazhah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah* articulated by Imamuddin, illustrate that pesantren consciously select which aspects of modernity to adopt without sacrificing their religious identity.

This consistency is reinforced by the findings of [Harmathilda et al.](#), who position *kiai* leadership as the determining factor in maintaining the balance between preserving *kitab kuning* as a normative reference and adopting technology selectively. This finding underscores the interconnection between this theme and the preceding institutional change theme: the leadership capacity and governance structures that have been developed constitute a prerequisite for the success of this selective negotiation. Meanwhile, the critical findings of Ahsan regarding curriculum controversies that emerge when *pesantren* attempt to establish standardized quality benchmarks indicate that modernization is not free from internal contestation, resulting in outcomes that are far from uniform across institutions.

Taken together, the findings within this theme suggest that the modernization of Islamic religious schools is best understood as a process of gradual adaptation contingent upon institutional capacity and leadership quality, rather than a uniform and linear transformation applicable across all *pesantren*.

Educational Quality as an Indicator of Transformation Success

The five articles in this theme demonstrate that educational quality in pesantren has evolved from a concept previously oriented toward mastery of Islamic sciences toward a more comprehensive construct. The finding of Jalil et al. that the *kiai* remains the structural and spiritual center of quality governance, reinforced by the finding of [Chudzaifah et al.](#) that quality management is operationalized through structured character development programs, reveals that educational quality is no longer measured solely by academic achievement or comprehension of classical texts. It now encompasses the formation of character, leadership, independence, critical thinking, digital literacy, and readiness to navigate social change.

The findings of Ridani and Sudadi regarding the limited digital literacy of educators and infrastructural disparities in the implementation of digital quality assurance tools indicate that the enhancement of educational quality remains contingent upon the interaction among *kiai*-centered spiritual authority, structured character development programs, and the still-uneven adoption of educational technology a pattern consistent with the selective negotiation dynamic identified in the preceding modernization theme. Educational quality can therefore be understood as an indicator that reflects the effectiveness of the entire process of educational transformation, institutional change, and modernization discussed in the preceding themes, while simultaneously preserving Islamic values as the fundamental basis of educational practice.

Student Welfare as an Underexplored Dimension of *Pesantren* Transformation

Although this theme is supported by only two articles the fewest among the five themes the findings of Zahrah and Sukirno and of Farhan and Shobahiya consistently demonstrate that the dual demands of religious life and academic obligation constitute the primary source of psychological stress among santri. The limited number of studies within this theme is itself a significant finding: it indicates that the welfare dimension of santri remains comparatively underaddressed relative to the four transformation themes, despite the fact that all four curriculum, institutional change, modernization, and quality ultimately converge upon the lived learning experience of santri.

The finding that adequate social support effectively mitigates academic stress arising from dual role demands demonstrates that the success of educational transformation cannot be separated from the welfare conditions of *santri*. A psychologically healthy educational environment is an essential prerequisite for effective learning processes; therefore, student welfare can no longer be regarded as a supplementary concern, but rather as an integral component of the success of pesantren education. This gap in the research literature simultaneously constitutes a research lacuna that warrants attention in future studies, particularly larger-scale empirical investigations into the psychological well-being of santri in the context of institutional modernization.

Conceptual Contribution and Implications for *Pesantren* Transformation

The five themes discussed above collectively demonstrate that the transformation of Islamic boarding schools constitutes a gradual and mutually integrated process: originating in the reform of educational systems, followed by institutional strengthening, proceeding through selective negotiation in modernization, advancing toward educational quality enhancement as a measurable indicator of success, and ultimately converging upon student welfare. Although scholarship on pesantren transformation continues to grow, the majority of prior studies have examined each dimension in isolation curriculum studies focusing on pedagogical innovation, institutional research emphasizing organizational governance, and welfare studies remaining confined to psychological dimensions and limited in scope, as evidenced by the findings of Theme 5.

The primary contribution of this study lies in the construction of a conceptual synthesis that connects these five themes as a mutually reinforcing process rather than as

independent dimensions. This perspective reveals that the success of *pesantren* transformation is not determined by change within any single dimension, but by the integration of all components in building an adaptive educational system that preserves the Islamic identity of *pesantren*. The implications of this research affirm that *pesantren* development must be pursued through a holistic approach that simultaneously strengthens pedagogical innovation, institutional governance, selective modernization negotiation, quality assurance systems, and student welfare support services. This framework is intended to serve as a reference for *pesantren* administrators, policymakers, and future researchers in designing more sustainable and responsive models of *pesantren* transformation in response to the evolving landscape of education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the transformation of traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) into modern educational institutions is a gradual and integrated process encompassing five major dimensions: Islamic educational transformation, institutional transformation, the modernization of *pesantren*, educational quality, and student well-being. The findings indicate that the modernization of *pesantren* does not diminish their Islamic identity; rather, it integrates traditional values with educational innovation, strengthened institutional governance, and improved educational quality. The primary contribution of this study lies in the development of a conceptual synthesis that demonstrates the interrelationships among these five dimensions as an integrated transformation process supporting the successful modernization of *pesantren*. Nevertheless, this study is subject to several limitations, as it included only studies retrieved from the Scopus and Google Scholar databases published between 2022 and 2026, while research specifically addressing student well-being remains relatively limited. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to expand the range of databases and publication periods, as well as incorporate empirical approaches to validate and refine the conceptual model of *pesantren* transformation proposed in this review.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contribution

Saefullah, M: contributed to the conceptualization of the study, literature collection, data analysis, and preparation of the original manuscript draft. **Raharjo:** contributed to the research methodology, concept validation, and manuscript review. **Fihris:** contributed to formal analysis, data interpretation, and substantive revision of the manuscript. **Mulsyah, M.S:** contributed to reference collection, data verification, and manuscript editing. **Qolbi, S.K:** contributed to research supervision, writing coordination, final manuscript review, and correspondence management. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Funding Statement

This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of AI Use

ChatGPT was used to assist with language editing, academic writing improvement, and manuscript organization under the authors' supervision. All outputs were carefully reviewed, verified, and approved by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

Additional Information

This study employed a library research approach and did not involve human or animal participants; therefore, ethical approval was not required. All data were obtained from published sources and are available in the references section.

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