

Educational Strategies of Islamic Boarding Schools in Internalizing Islamic Values within Multicultural Societies

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) internalize Islamic values within a multicultural social environment in Bali, Indonesia, where Muslims constitute a minority group. The research addresses the limited empirical understanding of *pesantren*-based value education in minority-Muslim contexts characterized by strong cultural and religious diversity. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with *pesantren* leaders, teachers, and students, as well as document analysis of curricula and institutional educational policies. The findings indicate that Islamic values are primarily internalized through daily educational practices, habituation, and educators' role modeling rather than through formal instruction alone. *Pesantren* employ adaptive educational strategies that emphasize universal ethical values such as tolerance, respect, and peaceful coexistence, enabling students to engage constructively within Bali's multicultural society. These strategies contribute to observable changes in students' social attitudes and behaviors, reflecting the development of inclusive and context-sensitive religious understanding. Although this study is limited by its focus on a specific sociocultural setting, the findings provide important insights into the role of *pesantren* as agents of character formation and religious moderation in plural societies.

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Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) constitute one of the most enduring and socially embedded institutions of Islamic education in Indonesia. Historically and sociologically, *pesantren* have played a significant role not only in transmitting Islamic knowledge but also in shaping religious values, moral character, and social identity among students (*santri*). As community-based educational institutions, *pesantren* function as living spaces where religious teachings are internalized through daily practices, discipline, and social interaction. In contemporary contexts, however, *pesantren* increasingly operate within complex and diverse social environments characterized by religious, cultural, and ethnic plurality. This condition requires *pesantren* to maintain Islamic values not merely in a normative sense, but to reinterpret and contextualize them so that they remain relevant and constructive within multicultural societies (Adolph, 2016; Ma'arif, 2018).

Multicultural societies present distinct challenges for Islamic educational institutions, particularly *pesantren*, as diversity can potentially lead to social tension if not managed through appropriate educational approaches. In this context, *pesantren* education is expected to develop strategies for internalizing Islamic values that emphasize tolerance, social harmony, justice, and equality as integral principles of Islamic teachings. Previous studies have demonstrated that *pesantren* possess substantial potential to function as agents of multicultural education due to their strong emphasis on moral formation, discipline, and close social relations between students and the surrounding community (Halim, 2021; Sulistyaningsih, 2024). Nevertheless, such potential does not automatically translate into effective educational outcomes without deliberate, systematic, and reflective educational strategies.

A growing body of research has examined multicultural education within *pesantren* from various perspectives, including value transmission, the role of religious leaders (*kiai*), and curriculum management. Ramdhan et al. (2021), for instance, highlight the central role of *kiai* in cultivating multicultural values through exemplary leadership and institutional policies. Similarly, Imami (2020) and Az Zafi et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of integrating multicultural Islamic values into *pesantren* learning systems. Despite these contributions, much of the existing literature remains largely descriptive and tends to focus on identifying values and practices rather than critically examining how educational strategies function as sustained processes of Islamic value internalization within multicultural contexts. Consequently, the strategic dimension and mechanisms through which values are internalized remain underexplored.

Moreover, studies on *pesantren* in multicultural settings often frame multicultural education as a normative goal without sufficiently linking it to the reinforcement of Islamic identity among students. In plural societies, however, the development of an inclusive yet

firmly rooted Islamic identity is crucial to enable students to engage harmoniously with diversity while maintaining their religious commitments. Junaedi et al. (2023) and Yasin and Rahmadian (2024) argue that the internalization of Islamic values grounded in religious moderation serves as a vital bridge between strong faith commitment and social openness. Therefore, there is a clear need for research that explicitly examines pesantren educational strategies as instruments for internalizing Islamic values that are not only doctrinal but also adaptive to multicultural social realities.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze in depth the educational strategies employed by pesantren in internalizing Islamic values within multicultural societies. This research seeks to address a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the strategic dimension of pesantren education in fostering inclusive and context-sensitive Islamic values. Theoretically, the study is expected to contribute to the broader discourse on Islamic education by offering insights into models of value internalization in multicultural settings. Practically, the findings are anticipated to provide guidance for pesantren administrators and policymakers in Islamic education to design educational strategies that cultivate students who are religiously grounded, morally upright, and capable of living harmoniously within diverse social environments (Hanan et al., 2022; Hayat et al., 2024).

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine in depth the educational strategies of Islamic boarding schools in internalizing Islamic values within the multicultural context of Bali. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because this study seeks to understand meanings, processes, and educational practices as they naturally occur within a specific social setting, rather than to test variables quantitatively (J. W. , & P. C. N. Creswell, 2018; J. W. Creswell, 2014; Lexy J. Moleong, 2017). The case study design enables a holistic and contextual exploration of pesantren education, particularly within Bali's socio-cultural environment characterized by religious plurality and strong local traditions (J. W. , & P. C. N. Creswell, 2018).

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement and relevance to the educational processes of the pesantren (Sugiyono, 2019, 2023). The informants included pesantren leaders, teachers (ustadz/ustadzah), and active students engaged in religious instruction and character development programs. Data collection was conducted through participant observation of daily educational activities, in-depth interviews to capture participants' experiences and perspectives on the internalization of Islamic values in Bali's multicultural society, and document analysis of institutional materials such as curricula, activity schedules, and educational policies. The use of multiple data collection techniques was intended to generate rich, comprehensive, and complementary data (Sugiyono, 2023).

Data analysis was carried out iteratively following an interactive analytical framework involving data reduction, data display, and reflective conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). The analytical process began with open coding to identify recurring patterns and strategic themes related to pesantren education and value internalization, followed by thematic categorization reflecting adaptive Islamic values within a multicultural context. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, source and method triangulation were applied by cross-validating data obtained from observations, interviews, and documents. This rigorous procedure was intended to ensure the credibility and academic reliability of the research findings (Lexy J. Moleong, 2017; Sugiyono, 2019).

Result

This section presents the main empirical findings of the study concerning the educational strategies employed by Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in internalizing Islamic values within the multicultural context of Bali. The findings are presented systematically and objectively, based on data obtained through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The presentation of results follows the sequence of the research objectives and focuses solely on describing the findings, without engaging in theoretical interpretation, which is reserved for the discussion section.

1. Integration of Islamic Values into Daily Educational Practices

The findings indicate that the internalization of Islamic values within the pesantren is not confined to formal classroom instruction, but is embedded comprehensively in the daily lives of the students. Values such as tolerance, discipline, simplicity, and respect for diversity are cultivated through routine activities, including collective worship, religious learning sessions, and everyday interactions between students and educators. Observational data reveal that the reinforcement of Islamic values is often conveyed in a contextual manner, carefully adjusted to the multicultural social environment of Bali, without promoting exclusivist attitudes toward other religious or cultural groups.

Interviews with pesantren leaders further reveal that the process of value internalization is carried out gradually and persuasively. Students are encouraged to understand Islamic teachings as universal moral principles that emphasize mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and social harmony. This approach is reflected in the delivery of religious instruction, which prioritizes ethical conduct and social responsibility over confrontational or doctrinal rigidity.

2. Adaptive Strategies in Responding to Bali's Multicultural Environment

The study finds that the pesantren adopts adaptive strategies in organizing Islamic education within Bali's diverse social setting. The pesantren consciously adjusts its modes of communication, language use, and social activities to align with local cultural norms. Observational findings show that certain religious symbols are used selectively in public

spaces surrounding the pesantren as a form of respect toward the predominantly non-Muslim community.

Interviews with teachers (ustadz/ustadzah) indicate that students are guided to perceive diversity as an inherent aspect of social reality. They are encouraged to interact respectfully and appropriately with the surrounding community, including through participation in social and communal activities. These findings demonstrate that the pesantren does not position itself as an isolated institution, but rather as an integral part of the broader multicultural society in Bali.

3. The Role of Educators in the Internalization Process

Another significant finding of this study is the central role of educators in facilitating the internalization of Islamic values. Educators are not merely transmitters of religious knowledge, but also serve as role models whose attitudes and behaviors are closely observed and emulated by students. Field observations reveal that students tend to adopt the communication styles, interpersonal conduct, and social attitudes demonstrated by pesantren leaders and teachers, particularly in their responses to cultural and religious differences. Interviews with students indicate that the exemplary conduct of educators plays a crucial role in shaping their understanding of Islam as a moderate and inclusive religious tradition. Students emphasize that the openness and tolerance displayed by their teachers provide practical guidance on how Islamic values can be applied contextually, without generating social tension within Bali's multicultural environment.

4. Students' Responses and Interpretations of Value-Based Education

The findings also show that students interpret value-based Islamic education as a formative process that shapes their character and social attitudes. Students report that pesantren education extends beyond ritualistic religious instruction and equips them with practical guidance for engaging constructively with social diversity. Several students express that their experiences in the pesantren have enhanced their openness and adaptability in interacting with people from different religious and cultural backgrounds.

Observational data further indicate noticeable changes in students' social behavior, including increased attentiveness in social interactions, more respectful language use, and a heightened awareness of the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships with the surrounding community. These findings suggest that the internalization of Islamic values within the pesantren is not limited to cognitive understanding, but is manifested in students' everyday social practices.

Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate that the internalization of Islamic values within pesantren education unfolds as a lived and experiential process that is deeply embedded in students' everyday routines. Rather than being conveyed as abstract moral prescriptions, Islamic values are continuously practiced through habitual activities, interpersonal interactions, and shared communal experiences. This pattern reflects a long-standing tradition in Islamic education that prioritizes the cultivation of moral character (akhlak) through sustained practice and ethical conduct. In this context, the pesantren functions not merely as an instructional space, but as a moral environment where values are gradually absorbed and embodied by students through daily engagement (Al-Attas, 2023).

The manner in which Islamic teachings are contextualized within Bali's multicultural environment further underscores the pesantren's inclusive pedagogical orientation. The study shows that religious instruction is framed in ways that emphasize universal ethical meanings, such as mutual respect, social harmony, and peaceful coexistence, rather than rigid doctrinal boundaries. This approach enables students to perceive Islam as a moral framework that is compatible with cultural diversity and plural social realities. Such findings resonate with broader perspectives on multicultural education, which argue that value education becomes more effective when it is aligned with learners' sociocultural contexts and lived experiences (Banks, 2016). In a minority-Muslim setting like Bali, this contextual orientation appears particularly significant in fostering interreligious sensitivity and social awareness.

The adaptive strategies adopted by the pesantren also reveal its dynamic engagement with the surrounding community. By adjusting patterns of communication, symbolic expressions, and modes of social interaction, the pesantren demonstrates an awareness of its position within a pluralistic society. These adaptive practices suggest that the pesantren actively negotiates its religious identity in ways that maintain social harmony without compromising core Islamic values. This finding supports earlier scholarship that views pesantren as socially embedded institutions capable of responding flexibly to cultural and societal changes (Bruinessen, 2013). Such adaptability enhances the pesantren's legitimacy and reinforces its role as a constructive actor within diverse social environments.

Another salient aspect emerging from the findings is the central role of educators in shaping the process of value internalization. Educators are not only responsible for delivering religious knowledge but also serve as visible moral references for students. Their everyday behaviors, modes of interaction, and responses to difference become implicit lessons that significantly influence students' attitudes and conduct. Through consistent role modeling, educators translate abstract values into observable practices, allowing students to learn through example. This dynamic aligns with established understandings of value transmission, which emphasize the importance of credible role

models in shaping moral development (Bandura, 1999). In the pesantren context, educators' conduct effectively becomes a living curriculum that reinforces inclusive and socially responsive interpretations of Islamic values.

Finally, the manifestation of internalized values in students' social behavior highlights the broader educational impact of pesantren-based value education. Students' increased attentiveness to social norms, respectful communication, and adaptive engagement with diverse communities indicate that the learning process extends beyond cognitive understanding to influence affective and behavioral dimensions. These outcomes reflect the broader objectives of Islamic education, which seek to produce individuals who are not only religiously knowledgeable but also ethically grounded and socially responsible (Al-Attas, 2023). Consistent with previous studies, the findings suggest that pesantren education holds significant potential as a model for nurturing religious moderation and social cohesion, particularly within multicultural and minority-Muslim contexts such as Bali (Haddade et al., 2023; Hefner, 2018).

Conclusion

This study concludes that pesantren in Bali play a strategic role in internalizing Islamic values through contextual, adaptive, and practice-oriented educational approaches. The process of value internalization is not limited to formal instruction, but is realized through habituation, educators' role modeling, and everyday social interactions that are attuned to the realities of a multicultural society. The findings demonstrate that pesantren are capable of negotiating Islamic identity in an inclusive manner while maintaining core religious principles, thereby contributing to social harmony within plural environments. Accordingly, pesantren function not only as religious educational institutions, but also as important agents of character formation and religious moderation in multicultural contexts.

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