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## STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN PESANTREN: INNOVATIONS FOR ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the strategic management practices at Pesantren KHAS Kempek to enhance the quality of education and maintain organizational sustainability. The qualitative method was used to obtain data through semi-structured interviews, and the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) was also used to encourage input from important stakeholders such as Pesantren leaders and educational managers. Qualitative coding and thematic categorization were conducted using NVivo 12 software for data analysis. Using Total Quality Management (TQM) and Transformational Leadership theory as a framework, the research explores the strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation process. Specifically, three major dimensions emerged: (1) Strategic Formulation, which emphasizes a collaborative planning process aimed at enhancing traditional Islamic curricula (kitab kuning) while broadening educational offerings in response to societal demands; (2) Implementation, which highlights the importance of capacity-building among educators, technology integration, and strategic partnerships; and (3) Evaluation, which refers to the systematic process of assessing the alignment of program effectiveness with institutional objectives through regular evaluative reviews. The result is extremely employable graduates, heightened public trust, and financial sustainability. Despite these challenges, like limited infrastructure or the need for curriculum adaptation, the Pesantren directly engages with these by investing in infrastructure expansion and developing new pedagogical approaches. It presents a model for Islamic education institutions that seeks to integrate traditional Pesantren values with the demands of modern education. Notably, it finds that when such integration is done holistically and is context-sensitive, it is a successful process.

**Keywords:** Strategic management, pesantren, educational innovation, organizational sustainability.



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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*Pesantren*) are important in Indonesia's educational and social landscape. It is the home to some of the country's most influential religious thinkers and centers of progressive social change. It is challenging in the era of globalization and digitalization for *Pesantren* to adapt and compete by adopting new management strategies to improve the quality of education and organizational sustainability (Suteja et al., 2022). *Pesantren*'s adaptability is even more important in making organizational sustainability strategies. It must be pursued by adhering to the plan and be ongoing, avoiding failure to achieve optimal results (Kolik, 2022). Therefore, it is urgent to research the strategic management of *Pesantren* to improve quality human resource education and the sustainability of organizational management.

According to previous studies, Islamic educational strategic management requires careful planning, systematic implementation, and ongoing monitoring to achieve educational goals (Rochbani, 2024). Additionally, past research reveals that *kyai*-based strategic management in *Pesantren* supports the development of flagship programs, such as *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts) and *Tahfidzul Qur'an* (Quran Memorization) (Suprihno & Rohmawati, 2024). However, implementing these strategies are often halted by limited human resources and infrastructure, as noted by Atabik et al. (2024). Thus, further research is needed to understand how *Pesantren* can overcome these challenges.

Digitizing educational administration significantly increases existing Islamic educational institutions' efficiency and learning quality (Susanto et al., 2022). Technologies like the Learning Management Systems, WhatsApp, and Google Forms are crucial in the learning, monitoring, and evaluation process (Muafiah et al., 2022). The study also found that Indonesian state and private Islamic universities face difficulties in digitization due to human resources and infrastructure. The significance of further research surrounding the strategic administration of digitization in a *Pesantren* setting lies in its continuation and application. This is because technology allows continual feedback on student development and more sophisticated coordination between personnel (Abidin, 2021). Based on the reviewed literature, the digital age emergence could provide potential opportunities to redefine the management practice in Islamic academia whilst recognizing the need to overcome certain limitations in successful modernization.

The principles of Islamic values-based management provide a perspective on eroding practices of strategic management in *Pesantren*. A research identifies values like *istiqamah* (steadfastness) and *mashlahah* (public benefit) provide frameworks for strategic planning in *Pesantren*-based universities (Purnomo et al., 2024). They hope that these foundations will help communities for years to come. But, values application in modern *Pesantren* is complicated and needs a variation. Just as the *qalb* guides individuals to maintain *istiqamah* concerning their needs, so it does for the *mashlahah*, but ultimately, both rely on the choices at hand and can differ depending on each context. It requires understanding the unique context of each *Pesantren* so that contextualized and sustainable solutions can be created (Luthfiah et al., 2024). While difficulties will undoubtedly arise, as long as people approach every challenge with commitment and consideration for everyone involved, every *Pesantren* can achieve its vision in a way that respects history and community.

Additionally, the literature increasingly highlights entrepreneurial leadership's critical role in promoting innovation within *Pesantren* (Afriyanto et al., 2021). *Pesantren*, previously focused on religious educational backgrounds, are now required to develop students' entrepreneurial abilities. One crucial aspect is how Muslim leaders, or *kyai*, establish *Pesantren* to make sustainable Islamic educational institutions accommodate religious and worldly needs. These visionaries encourage creativity and guide with strategies conscious of local communities and global mechanics. In addition, successful coverage of technological innovations like up digital learning platforms enhances the educational quality and institutional capabilities (Muafiah et al., 2022). However, integrating technology into all *Pesantren* remains challenging, particularly in rural areas with limited internet access. Isolated villages struggle most



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to obtain the devices and connections needed to participate in the education-transforming digital revolution.

A few studies emphasize gaps, in theory, in building Islamic strategic management theories that include broader scopes of management, including but not limited to recent developments in Islamic organizational innovation strategies and leadership. For example, research shows that the dominant research interest is strategic management processes, while the effects of other factors, and in particular, entrepreneurial leadership, are underexplored (Asaadi et al., 2024). It also highlights the importance of a deeper study of more integrated strategic management practices in Pesantren to develop organizational sustainability (Cai et al., 2024).

This study aims to analyze strategic management practices at Pesantren Kiyai Haji Aqiel Siroj (KHAS) Kempek, Cirebon, one of the leading Pesantren focused on traditional teaching and educational innovation. The research is expected to contribute significantly to the literature on Islamic strategic management and offer practical solutions for Pesantren to address operational and strategic challenges. By exploring innovation- and Islamic values-based strategy implementation, this study also contributes to developing strategic management models relevant to the Pesantren context in Indonesia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Strategic Management*

Strategic management, as defined by David and David (2015), is the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives. The primary goal of strategic management is to discover and create new and distinct opportunities for the future, contrasting with long-range planning, which optimizes future trends based on current patterns (David & David, 2015).

The strategic management process is based on the belief that organizations should continuously monitor internal and external events, enabling timely adjustments when necessary. The scale and intensity of changes affecting organizations have dramatically increased, requiring all organizations to identify and adapt to these changes. The strategic management process aims to enable organizations to adapt effectively to changes (Davis, 1989). Strategic management is a goal-oriented, logical, and systematic approach to organizational decision-making. It organizes quantitative and qualitative information to facilitate effective decision-making, even in uncertain conditions (Pearce & Robinson, 2013).

In education, strategic management involves a continuous process encompassing environmental analysis, strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation to adapt to organizational changes. For example, Luthfiah et al. (2024) show that robust environmental analysis contributes to improving educational quality. Meanwhile, strategy formulation and implementation aligned with Islamic values, such as *istiqamah* and *mashlahah*, strengthen strategic planning in Pesantren-based universities (Purnomo et al., 2024).

Technology is crucial in supporting strategic management, particularly in education. However, challenges remain in accessing technology in rural areas, where internet connectivity can be limited, hindering the full adoption of these tools in all educational environments. Muafiah et al. (2022) find that using technologies like Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Google Forms enhances learning and evaluation efficiency in Islamic universities. Digitalization of educational quality management, as implemented at UIN Saifuddin Zuhri and Universitas NU Al Ghazali (Atabik et al., 2024), has successfully improved operational efficiency despite human resource and infrastructure challenges. Additionally, technology-based approaches drive innovation, such as using podcasts to enhance students' language skills (Manshur & Makiyah, 2024).

Organizational sustainability in education is also supported by well-planned and collaborative strategic management practices. Research notes that commitment, funding, and organizational performance significantly impact Pesantren's sustainability (Zien et al., 2024). Another adds that strategic planning and organizational learning



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are vital in enhancing sustainability, mediated by sustainable practices (Sultana et al., 2024). Moreover, collaboration between teachers and parents has proven effective in supporting inclusive learning (Kolik, 2022).

However, gaps and challenges remain. Research highlights the lack of exploration into specific aspects of Islamic strategic management (Asaadi et al., 2024), while Saputra and Fauzan (2024) point out the suboptimal implementation of strategic management in some institutions due to the absence of dedicated evaluation teams. To address these challenges, the role of strong leadership and entrepreneurial kyai leadership is emphasized as a critical factor in driving transformation in Pesantren, especially in the digital era (Arifyanto et al., 2021). Thus, comprehensive, adaptive strategic management supported by technology and strong leadership can enhance organizational quality and educational sustainability.

### ***Educational Quality***

Educational quality refers to an institution's ability to provide learners with relevant skills and knowledge for success, supported by inclusive learning environments and appropriate content (Maghfiroh, 2018). High-quality education is critical in sustainable development by enabling learners to be economically productive, contribute to democratic societies, and improve overall well-being (Tanujaya et al., 2022). Key factors contributing to educational quality include reducing barriers such as poverty and gender discrimination, increasing access to education for marginalized groups, and enhancing the capacity of teachers and other stakeholders (Smith & Berge, 2009).

Innovations such as integrating pedagogy with social marketing (Sudarno et al., 2024) and using art-based podcasts (Manshur & Makiyah, 2024) have proven effective in fostering creative and relevant learning experiences. Per quality management, the importance of applying an Islamic Quality Management System to align educational quality with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is emphasized (Zien et al., 2024).

Collaboration between teachers and parents is also considered effective in supporting inclusive education (Kolik, 2022). Sulfiani et al. (2023) highlight the importance of aligning vision, mission, flagship programs, and adequate facilities to ensure quality education with measurable outcomes. However, challenges such as gaps in graduate competencies (Abidin, 2021) and insufficient resources for evaluation (Muhammad et al., 2022) remain significant hurdles. Despite these challenges, local values such as *mashlahah* and *istiqamah* (Purnomo et al., 2024) offer strategic approaches to strengthen the implementation of quality education and address future challenges.

### ***Organizational Sustainability***

Organizational sustainability is defined as strategies and management implementation considering three aspects: economic, environmental, and social factors (Adewale et al., 2018). These strategies include strategic planning, consistent implementation, and continuous evaluation. For instance, madrasas have improved educational quality through strategic formulation, implementation, and evaluation, which impacted economic, environmental and social conditions (Luthfiah et al., 2024; Rochbani, 2024). This objective needs responsible leadership skills. Such leadership is crucial, particularly through entrepreneurial approaches that modernize Pesantren and quantum leadership that fosters innovation via organizational intelligence and knowledge sharing (Arif et al., 2024; Cai et al., 2024).

Supporting factors such as commitment, funding, and organizational performance (Anggadwita et al., 2021), alongside sustainable human resource practices, create a 'green support' system that bolsters social and environmental sustainability (Mehak & Batcha, 2024). However, Pesantren face challenges such as limited human resources, inadequate infrastructure (Atabik et al., 2024), and short-term perspectives in implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) (Zahroh & Maunah, 2015). To overcome these obstacles, innovations like digitalizing quality management have proven effective in enhancing educational administrative efficiency (Syaharudin et al., 2022). Additionally, teacher-parent collaboration in developing inclusive curricula positively impacts learning tailored to student needs (Kolik, 2022).



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Overall, sustaining Pesantren organizations requires a holistic approach encompassing strategic formulation, monitoring, and human resource capacity building. Integrating Islamic values in strategic management is vital to addressing global challenges while strengthening collaboration among Pesantren, communities, and governments to create economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable organizations (Purnomo et al., 2024).

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design*

This study uses a qualitative method to learn in-depth about strategic management practices at KHAS Kempek Pesantren. This allows for a deep understanding of the innovations put in place to improve the educational quality and sustainability of the organization. The qualitative approach is through semi-structured interviews with a purposive sampling method, ensuring participants being interviewed had relevant experience in strategic decision-making in the Pesantren (Rai & Thapa, 2015). Participants include Pesantren leaders and education managers with over five years of experience actively involved in designing or implementing educational strategies.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews focusing on three main areas: strategic management formulation, educational system innovations, and organizational sustainability measures. The interview protocol was developed based on previous studies and adapted to the specific context of Pesantren KHAS Kempek. Interview questions were designed to explore the participants' experiences, strategies, challenges, and perceptions regarding the quality and sustainability of education at Pesantren KHAS Kempek. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian, recorded with participant consent, and transcribed for analysis. Selected excerpts were translated into English for reporting purposes.

Data analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 software and involved multiple stages: (1) Initial reading to understand participant backgrounds and research context; (2) Initial coding to identify patterns, concepts, and relevant themes; (3) Grouping preliminary themes into broader categories; and (4) Refining categories through iterative discussions among researchers to produce main themes. Memo functions in NVivo were used to record reflections during analysis, and query tools were employed to explore specific patterns or themes within the data.

### *Validity and Reliability*

Validity and reliability were ensured through (1) data triangulation involving participants in various strategic roles within the Pesantren, (2) independent analysis by two researchers to compare and refine findings, and (3) conducting interviews in the participant's native language to maintain data authenticity. Researcher discussions minimized bias and ensured consistency in findings.

### *Ethics in Research*

This study adheres to ethical standards by maintaining the confidentiality of Pesantren and participant identities. Participation was voluntary, with identities anonymized and the right to withdraw from the study granted at any time. These measures ensured research integrity and respected participant rights.

## FINDINGS

### *Strategic Management at Pesantren KHAS Kempek Cirebon, Indonesia in Enhancing Educational Quality and Organizational Sustainability*

This study examines the strategic management practices at Pesantren KHAS Kempek to improve students' educational quality through three primary phases: formulation, implementation, and evaluation of strategies. The findings are based on semi-structured interviews with 18 key informants, field observations, and internal document reviews. The results are summarized as follows:



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**Strategic Formulation/Planning.** Pesantren KHAS Kempek employs a collaborative approach in formulating its educational strategies, involving Pesantren leaders, teaching councils, and formal education heads. Key focuses include (a) strengthening the traditional Islamic curriculum in non-formal education through intensive studies of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts), emphasizing *nahwu* (grammar), *shorof* (morphology), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *ushul fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), *aqidah* (Islamic creed), *balaghoh* (rhetoric), *mantiq* (logic), and *tasawuf* (Sufism) to preserve Salafi traditions, (b) diversifying formal education levels by establishing institutions such as SMP KHAS Kempek (Junior High School), MTs KHAS Kempek (Islamic Junior High School), MA KHAS Kempek (Islamic Senior High School), SMK KHAS Kempek (Vocational High School), and two higher education institutions (STIKES KHAS Kempek - Health Sciences College, and STIES KHAS Al Jaelani - Islamic Economics and Business School), (c) integrating religious values with modern skills through additional programs in formal education, including entrepreneurial skills in vocational schools and academic research in higher education, and (d) focusing on organizational sustainability, optimizing Pesantren resources through external collaborations.

**Strategy Implementation.** Implementation strategies at Pesantren KHAS Kempek involve various approaches to enhance students' educational quality and organizational sustainability. Key practices include:

**Integrated Curriculum Implementation.** In non-formal education, *kitab kuning* studies are structured progressively: (1) *ibtida'* (basic level), focus on foundational *nahwu* and *shorof*, (2) *wushto* (intermediate level), advanced studies in *fiqh*, *ushul fiqh*, and *aqidah* with practical case analysis, and (3) *ulya* (advanced level), emphasis on *balaghoh*, *mantiq*, and *tasawuf* to develop critical thinking and spiritual character. In formal education, a national curriculum is combined with Pesantren-based local content, including mandatory *kitab kuning* studies, language programs in Arabic and English, and vocational skills training, such as entrepreneurship.

**Teacher Capacity Development.** Developing the professionalism of teaching staff is a priority in implementing the strategy, with the following main activities, (1) training in yellow book learning methods, where teachers receive intensive training related to innovative teaching techniques to increase students' interest in understanding yellow books, (2) strengthening modern pedagogy, where teachers at the formal level are given training on project-based learning approaches and educational technology to create a dynamic learning environment, and (3) mentoring system, where senior teachers accompany junior teachers in applying effective teaching methods, especially at the non-formal education level.

**Collaboration with External Institutions.** Pesantren KHAS Kempek actively establishes strategic partnerships with various institutions to support educational development, including (1) universities, namely, universities under the auspices of the Pesantren, such as STIKES KHAS Kempek and STIES KHAS Al-Jaelani, collaborate with other universities in the fields of research, seminars, and student exchanges, (2) health institutions, e.g., STIKES KHAS Kempek partners with local hospitals to support the development of nursing and public health practices, and (3) local government and the private sector, where this collaboration includes internship programs for vocational school students, entrepreneurship training, and development of Pesantren infrastructure.

**Facilitating Technological Innovation.** The use of technology is an innovative step in supporting learning and management of Islamic boarding schools, such as (1) online learning, where formal education has begun to implement online learning platforms to support the teaching and learning process, especially in emergencies such as a pandemic, (2) digitalization of administration, where a technology-based academic information system is implemented to facilitate the management of student data, schedules, and grades, and (3) technology training for students, where Islamic boarding schools provide technology skills training, such as basic software management and graphic design, to increase the competitiveness of students in the world of work.

This implementation strategy has resulted in several achievements, including (1) competitive graduate quality, that is, students demonstrate high competence in religious knowledge and practical skills, as evidenced by the large





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number of alumni who are accepted at prestigious universities or are successful in the professional world, (2) increased satisfaction of students and parents, in which an integrated curriculum and professional teachers increase public trust in Islamic boarding schools, and (3) financial sustainability, where diversification of educational programs and external cooperation help Islamic boarding schools maintain the organization's economic stability.

However, this implementation also faces challenges, such as limited technological infrastructure and adjusting the yellow book curriculum to the needs of the digital era. The Islamic boarding school is committed to increasing infrastructure investment and further developing teacher capacity to overcome this. This systematic implementation reflects the dedication of the KHAS Kempek Islamic Boarding School to maintaining the tradition of Islamic boarding school knowledge while integrating innovation to meet the challenges of modern education.

**Strategic Evaluation.** Strategic evaluation at the KHAS Kempek Islamic Boarding School is carried out periodically through annual meetings involving the boarding school caretakers, teachers, heads of formal institutions, management staff, and representatives of senior students. The evaluation process is carried out to ensure that the strategies implemented are per the boarding school's vision and mission and possess a significant impact on educational quality and organizational stability. The following are the results of a comprehensive evaluation based on research findings:

**Improving the Quality of Students.** One of the main achievements of the strategy implementation is improving the boarding school graduates' quality. Where the KHAS Kempek boarding school considers the aspect of balancing religious and general competencies. Graduates of the boarding school demonstrate a deep mastery of the yellow book, including the fields of *nahwu*, *shorof*, *fiqh*, *aqidah*, and *tasawuf*, which are supported by a tiered learning approach (*ibtida'*, *wushto*, *ulya*). On the other hand, students at the formal education level acquire academic and professional skills, such as entrepreneurship in vocational schools and academic research in universities. Readiness to face the modern era is also a crucial aspect in improving the quality of education for students. Students involved in formal and non-formal education programs demonstrate good adaptability in facing the challenges of the modern era, such as competition in the job market and critical thinking skills.

**External Recognition.** The success of education at the KHAS Kempek Islamic Boarding School can be seen from the achievements of alumni, namely (1) several alumni were accepted at national and international universities with good reputations, especially in the fields of religion, education, and health, and (2) several alumni were also recognized for their contributions in the professional sector, including as lecturers, entrepreneurs, health workers, and religious scholars at the national and international levels.

**Organizational Sustainability.** The Islamic boarding school has succeeded in developing a financial sustainability model through diversification of income sources, namely (1) the Islamic boarding school has established business units related to educational institutions, such as the management of canteens, bookstores, and student dormitories, which directly support educational operations, (2) the Islamic boarding school has established partnerships with various industries and institutions to support academic and operational needs, such as student scholarships, teacher training, and facility assistance.

**Challenges.** Although significant achievements have been achieved, several challenges are still faced. The challenges are as follows, (1) Islamic boarding schools face limitations in terms of physical facilities, such as classrooms, laboratories, and internet access, especially to support formal education and the use of technology in learning, and (2) the yellow book curriculum which is the foundation of non-formal education is sometimes not optimally integrated with the needs of students in the modern era, for example, technological skills or understanding of the global socio-economic context.

However, based on the evaluation results, several improvements have been made with the following results, that is (1) renovating and building adequate educational facilities, including laboratories, multimedia rooms, and



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internet access, (2) developing the yellow book curriculum with a more contextual approach, connecting religious values with modern skills, (3) expanding the network of cooperation with national and international institutions to support the development of the capacity of students and educators, and (4) adopting a data-based evaluation system using educational management software to monitor progress and the impact of strategies in a more measurable manner.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the strategic evaluation conducted by Pesantren KHAS Kempek has succeeded in implementing various innovative strategies that have an impact on improving the quality of education for students and the sustainability of the organization. However, to face the challenges of the modern era, it is necessary to strengthen infrastructure, innovate the curriculum, and develop broader strategic cooperation. This periodic evaluation is an important instrument in ensuring that the grand vision of the Pesantren remains relevant and adaptive to the dynamics of the times.

## DISCUSSION

The findings align with Total Quality Management (TQM) principles, emphasizing continuous improvement, stakeholder involvement, and performance measurement as integral parts of educational quality strategies. The implementation of data-driven evaluation, collaborative involvement in strategy formulation, and focus on student satisfaction reflect the core principles of TQM. Additionally, the managerial strategies employed by the leadership of Pesantren KHAS Kempek also exhibit characteristics of Transformational Leadership, where the kyai (Islamic leader) plays a central role in inspiring the vision for change, motivating educators to adopt technology, and establishing strategic external partnerships. This approach not only drives educational innovation but also creates an organizational climate that supports the growth and sustainability of the Pesantren in the face of global dynamics.

Based on the expert ranking process and Content Validity Index (CVI) analysis, the strategic priority for Pesantren KHAS Kempek can be identified. Such means were instrumental in targeting the most important activities to develop a strategic planning process. Applying NGT for the expert ranking process ensured various perspectives were represented in the decision-making process, echoing the strategic planning literature advocating for stakeholder participation and prioritization (Bryson, 2018). This study used NGT to ensure that strategic priorities were informed and reflected the consensus of the stakeholder groups.

Given that alignment is essential for the successful development and implementation of strategy, as discussed in strategic thought, the CVI analysis, which provided indicative data of how relevant and valid to the task the strategies, aggregating around the surfacing positionalities, are. The strategic innovation and organizational sustainability-related segments of the CVI score highly, reflecting the crucial relevance of strategies of such nature and type, as well as their feasibility within the long-term organizational goal context in a future orientation (Hax & Majluf, 1996). The correlation between this expert feedback model and strategic planning frameworks reinforces the significance of using a structured approach that derives from evidence in decision-making in educational organizations.

This study explored the strategic management practices at Pesantren KHAS Kempek in improving the quality of education and organizational sustainability. The research identifies formulation, implementation, and evaluation as the main interconnected stages grounded in strategic management theory. A collaborative approach in strategic planning, innovation in technology-based and modern skills implementation, and data-driven evaluation emphasize the relevance of this model in addressing the challenges of modern education. Islamic strategic management, such as *istiqamah* and *mashlahah*, provides a distinctive philosophical foundation for the Pesantren context. This research complements previous studies on the transformation of Islamic education through locally grounded strategic approaches.





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The findings reveal that Pesantren KHAS Kempek has successfully combined traditional *salaf* education with modern innovations, producing spiritually and professionally competent graduates. Diversifying formal education by establishing new institutions expands access and meets the community's demand for values-based Islamic education. Implementing an integrated curriculum, educator capacity building, and external collaboration significantly contribute to improving educational quality. This initiative aligns with the TQM theory that collaboration between teachers and parents is also considered effective in supporting inclusive education (Kolik, 2022). However, the Pesantren still faces challenges in the infrastructure and technological integration of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts) learning. The data-driven evaluation strategies represent a progressive effort to ensure the effectiveness of educational programs and organizational sustainability.

These findings align with Susanto et al. (2022), who demonstrated that technology can enhance the quality of learning and evaluation in Islamic educational institutions. Nevertheless, the infrastructure constraints faced by Pesantren KHAS Kempek are reminiscent of similar challenges encountered by UIN Saifuddin Zuhri and Universitas NU Al Ghazali, as discussed by Atabik et al. (2024). The collaborative formulation strategies also support Rochbani's (2024) assertion that well-planned, value-based approaches are key to the success of Islamic education. Conversely, these results enrich the findings of Suprihno and Rohmawati (2024) by adding dimensions of organizational sustainability through diversification and external collaboration.

Successful strategic implementation at Pesantren KHAS Kempek can be attributed to the management's commitment to addressing the needs of students and the community. A tiered approach to *kitab kuning* learning ensures a deep mastery of religious knowledge while integrating modern skills to prepare students to face global challenges. This model illustrates that Pesantren's education not only focuses on preserving tradition but also on innovating for relevance in the modern era. However, this success heavily depends on human resource capacity, which remains a developmental focus within these strategies.

Periodic evaluations are essential for identifying strengths and weaknesses in strategy implementation. Data-driven evaluation models clarify the program's impact on students and the organization. Evaluation results demonstrate significant improvements in graduate quality, external recognition, and financial sustainability. These findings support Kaplan and Norton's (1996) Balanced Scorecard framework, highlighting long-term impact measurement's importance in strategic management. However, challenges such as limited facilities and integrating the *kitab kuning* curriculum with the digital era need further attention.

Significantly, this study reveals broad implications for the management of Pesantren in Indonesia. The strategic approach of Pesantren KHAS Kempek can serve as a model for other Islamic educational institutions aiming to enhance educational quality and organizational sustainability. Integrating technology, external collaboration, and strengthening local traditions offer a new direction for Pesantren's development. Additionally, data-driven evaluations can be adopted to optimize educational program management. Future research could explore the implementation of similar strategies in other Pesantren contexts to broaden the generalization of these findings.

## CONCLUSION

The strategic planning process is essential in affecting education quality and organizational sustainability. The findings indicate that Pesantren embraces a strategic approach comprising formulation, implementation, and evaluation, which prioritizes, among others, strengthening *kitab kuning* curricula, diversifying education, syncing religious values with modern competencies, and promoting external partnerships. These changes have increased its graduates' quality, visibility, and economic viability. In its findings, though making a significant contribution to understanding religious radicalism and counter-terrorism efforts, the study is limited by its focus on one Pesantren. More studies should examine the possibility of implementing similar strategies in different Pesantren, especially those with different social and economic backgrounds.



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Furthermore, this sustainable education needs to address *kitab kuning* with the nature of educational needs in the modernization, with access to much higher technology. This framework model can be modified for religious denominations or private school frameworks. At its foundation, strategic innovation, organizational sustainability, and stakeholder engagement are adaptable concerning institutional values, goals, and resource availability. Both religious institutions (such as Pesantren) and private institutions should combine traditional and modern curricula, concentrating on educator capacity-building, collaboration with outside parties, and an emphasis on data-driven evaluations. A flexible framework can help to improve strategic planning across different levels of education to find equilibrium between traditional and innovative approaches.

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