

Pesantren Education and Its Contribution to Developing Religious Values in Kudus Community

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the Islamic boarding school education model around Kudus. This study is based on knowledge of experience and community perceptions of life in the environment around the Islamic boarding school. It explores the contribution of Islamic boarding schools in shaping the character of the Kudus community. This type of research is field research, which is included in qualitative research. Namely, researchers go into the field to obtain data. Data collection techniques include observation, interview, and documentation. The subjects of this study were the caretakers and managers of Islamic boarding schools, as well as several student and community leaders in Islamic boarding schools around Kudus. Data analysis techniques include data collection, reduction, presentation, conclusion, and verification. The study results indicate that the Islamic boarding school education model around Kudus consists of three educational models, namely the Salafiyah Islamic boarding school model, the Khalafiyah Islamic boarding school model and the comprehensive Islamic boarding school model. The perception of the Kudus community on Islamic boarding schools consists of two perceptions: positive and negative. Moreover, Islamic boarding schools contribute to shaping the religious character of the people around Kudus. The findings are expected to contribute to academic knowledge for the community and provide references for other Islamic boarding schools to continue to strive to provide broad benefits to the community.

Keywords: *Pesantren*, Education Model, Community Perception, Islamic Boarding Schools Contribute

Article History:

Received: August 2023; Revised: September 2023; Accepted: December 2023

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/edsojou.v1i1.405>

How to Cite:

Utama, I. H., & Akbar, R. F. (2023). Pesantren Education and Its Contribution to Developing Religious Values in Kudus Community. *Education and Sociedad Journal*, 1(1), 13–23.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are one of the institutions that play an active role in building the nation's civilization. Islamic boarding schools are centres of religious, moral and even general education (Aziz et al., 2021; Efendy et al., 2023; Ramdani & Ihsan, 2021). Islamic boarding schools have been established long before Indonesia's independence (Musaddad, 2023; Isbah, 2020; Faiz et al., 2023). The scholars' persistence at that time gave rise to the idea of establishing Islamic boarding schools as one of the strategies to expand the spread of Islam and fight for the sovereignty of the State (Ahmad, 2023; Jaenullah et al., 2022; Taufiq, 2021). Islamic boarding schools play a significant role in knowledge, courage and wisdom. A student is taught various religious, general and social sciences (Ihsan et al., 2021; Maulidia, 2023; Mujahid, 2021). Islamic boarding school education emphasizes the aspect of morality or good character in carrying out all things taught by teachers or kiai, with various values ranging from simplicity, independence, work ethic, solidarity and sincerity, which are applied to students so that they have good, strong and responsible character, to religion, to themselves, family, society and the State.

Let us talk briefly about Islamic boarding schools in Kudus; around 100 have been registered or not licensed. Moreover, Islamic boarding schools spread across each region represent almost every sub-district. Until this condition is supported, the Kudus community's morality and religiosity are getting better. The condition of the Islamic boarding school in Kudus is also excellent, as seen from the adequate facilities and infrastructure, even though there are a few shortcomings of the new Islamic boarding school. The *asid* or the *kiai* also fulfil the competence of all fields related to the Islamic boarding school. What should be emphasized here is that more students and Islamic boarding schools in the Kudus area, in particular, will be better.

Regarding human resources, Islamic boarding schools in Kudus have many students from outside the region, but Kudus dominates in Java and Indonesia. Students in Kudus have unique personality characteristics; with the existence of Islamic boarding schools in the Kota District area, for example, the Kudus community upholds the values of politeness and friendliness and also says good things so that the community around the boarding school has almost a perfect character and nature. Although some things are minimal in some students, that is only a tiny part. Implementing Islamic boarding schools in Kudus is also almost optimal, as it provides education about religion and everything that correlates with a good mental character attitude.

Various previous researchers have conducted research on the role of Islamic boarding schools in shaping the religious character of society. Mujahid (2021) emphasized that Islamic boarding schools play a significant role in shaping noble morals and creating a generation based on Islamic values. Islamic boarding schools are not only centres of religious education but also social spaces that instil the values of simplicity, independence, and solidarity (Rohaeni et al., 2021; Mukti et al., 2022; Zaini, 2023). Jubba et al. (2022) examined the contribution of Islamic boarding schools in building national morality, especially in developing character based on Islamic values. Students educated in Islamic boarding schools have a mindset and behaviour that are more responsive to social challenges because their education focuses on spiritual and social aspects (Roqib, 2021; Solihin et al., 2020; Purwanto & Wafa, 2023). Dewi & Zaenurrosyid (2023) stated that Islamic boarding schools in rural areas play a role in strengthening the religiosity of local communities through a *da'wah* approach and informal education. The role of the *kiai* as a central figure is vital in shaping the character of students, with an emphasis on the examples given in everyday life (Ramdani & Ihsan, 2021; Ridlo & Yanti, 2023). Rohman et al. (2023) identified that modern Islamic boarding schools can integrate religious and general education, thus producing graduates who are both religious and academically competent. These studies strengthen the idea that Islamic boarding schools are institutions that have a strategic role in building the religious character of society, including in Kudus.

Although many studies have examined the role of Islamic boarding schools in shaping religious character, most of these studies focus on internal aspects of Islamic boarding schools, such as the religious education curriculum and *Kiai's* approach to students. However, there is still a gap in research on how Islamic boarding schools directly contribute to forming religious character in the community around the Islamic boarding school, especially in areas with strong religious traditions such as Kudus. Therefore, this study offers novelty by exploring the specific contribution of Islamic boarding schools in Kudus, both long-established and newly developed, in shaping the religious character of the community, taking into account the unique local context and social diversity of the Kudus community.

This journal aims to explore in depth how Islamic boarding school education in Kudus contributes to shaping the religious character of the local community. This study also seeks to identify elements of Islamic boarding school education, such as simplicity, independence, solidarity, and sincerity, which are applied to students and their impact on the community's behaviour around

the Islamic boarding school. The results of this study are expected to provide new insights into the importance of effective management of Islamic boarding schools as centres of religious education and character building in the modern era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a type of field research that uses a qualitative approach (Nassaji, 2020). This research was conducted in Kudus Regency with a focus on five Islamic boarding schools, namely Raudhatul Tholibin Islamic Boarding School, Al Isyqi Islamic Boarding School, Yasin 2 Islamic Boarding School, Darul Falah Islamic Boarding School, and one other Islamic boarding school that is relevant to the study. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to explore an in-depth understanding of the contribution of Islamic boarding schools in shaping the religious character of the community in Kudus. These locations were chosen because of the uniqueness of each Islamic boarding school in organizing religious education and its interaction with the surrounding community. These Islamic boarding schools have an important role in building moral and spiritual values in students' internal environment and the surrounding community. This research does not only focus on Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions but also on their influence in a broader social context.

The data in this study were obtained through three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted directly in the Islamic boarding school environment and the surrounding community to understand the interaction dynamics and the implementation of religious values. Interviews were conducted with participants of Islamic boarding school caretakers, administrators, students, and community leaders around the Islamic boarding school. These interviews were designed in a semi-structured manner to dig up in-depth information about the contribution of Islamic boarding schools in shaping the religious character of the community. In addition, documentation was used to complete the data by utilizing Islamic boarding school archives, activity records, and other relevant official documents. Combining these three techniques aims to obtain rich and comprehensive data to support in-depth analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model from Miles and Huberman, which involves three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification (Busetto et al., 2020). In the data reduction stage, information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation is selected, simplified, and categorized based on the main themes of the study, such as religious values, Islamic boarding school education methods, and their impact on society. The data presentation stage is completed by compiling the reduced data into narrative or table form to facilitate understanding of the relationships between themes. Finally, conclusions are drawn by looking for meaningful patterns and relationships from the data presented and conducting verification to ensure consistency and validity of the findings. This model allows for systematic and in-depth analysis to answer research questions related to the contribution of Islamic boarding schools in Kudus.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Education Model in *Pesantren*

The *pesantren* education model in Kudus consists of three educational models, namely the *Salafiyah pesantren* model, the *Khalafiyah pesantren* model and the comprehensive *pesantren* model. *Pesantren* with a *salafiyah* education model uses the old model of teaching and does not teach much general knowledge. Emphasizing on the learning of the yellow book, including the book of Fiqh, *tafsir*, *nahwu Shorof* and *Tasawwuf* and the promotion exam which was carried out also read the yellow book. Islamic boarding schools with the *Khalafiyah* education model have begun to

fully integrate the classical system and schools into Islamic boarding schools. The *Khalafiyah* Islamic Boarding School strives to present Islam in accordance with the times and social context as well as the needs of modern society. The comprehensive *pesantren* model is a combination of *salafiyah* and modern *pesantren*, the application of general education and also books, teaching methods with *sorogan*, *bandongan*, and *wetonan*, teaching patterns following the Ministry of Religion, and the general religious curriculum is interconnected. The educational model of Islamic boarding schools in the Kudus area is described including *salafiyah* Islamic boarding schools, *khalafiyah* Islamic boarding schools, and comprehensive Islamic boarding schools as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Model of Islamic Boarding School Education in Kudus

Types of <i>Pesantren</i>	Characteristic	Information
<i>Salafiyah</i> Islamic Boarding School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yellow Book 2. Traditional Educational Values 3. Simple student life 4. Teaching Pattern with the <i>Halaqoh</i> System 5. Pure curriculum from kyai 6. Mukim and kalong students 	Raudhatul Thalibin Piji Lau Dawe Islamic Boarding School Darul Falah Islamic Boarding School
<i>Khalafiyah</i> Islamic Boarding School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scripture studies are no longer prominent. 2. The yellow book turned into a school subject. 3. Starting to include general knowledge related to religion. 4. The teaching pattern follows the rules of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. 5. The curriculum is integrated with the public. 6. <i>Santri</i> Mukim 	Pesantren Al Isyqi Singocandi Bae
Comprehensive Islamic Boarding School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Merger between <i>salafiyah</i> and modern Islamic boarding schools 2. In the application of general education and also books 3. Teaching methods with <i>sorogan</i>, <i>bandongan</i>, and <i>wetonanan</i> 4. The teaching pattern follows the Ministry of Religion 5. The general religion curriculum is interconnected 6. <i>Santri</i> Mukim 	Yasin II Bae Kudus Islamic Boarding School

Pesantren with a *salafiyah* education model uses the old model of teaching and does not teach much general knowledge. Emphasizing on the learning of the yellow book, including the book of Fiqh, *tafsir*, *nahwu Shorof* and Tasawwuf and the promotion exam which was carried out also read the yellow book. In *Salafiyah* Islamic boarding schools, Islamic learning is based on the Quran, Hadith, and the understanding of *Salafusshalih* scholars. Students are encouraged to understand Islam textually and follow a rigorous approach to Islamic teachings without much traditional interpretation or addition. The understanding of Islamic teachings in *Salafiyah* Islamic boarding schools tends to be conservative and emphasizes compliance with sharia laws.

Islamic boarding schools with the *Khalafiyah* education model have begun to fully integrate the classical system and schools into Islamic boarding schools. The *Khalafiyah* Islamic Boarding School strives to present Islam in accordance with the times and social context as well as the needs of modern society. Modern Islamic boarding schools or *khalafiyah* are Islamic boarding schools that have begun to fully integrate the classical system and schools into Islamic boarding schools, as for the yellow book only as a support, which is different between traditional Islamic boarding schools.

The comprehensive *pesantren* model is a combination of *salafiyah* and modern *pesantren*, the application of general education and also books, teaching methods with *sorogan*, *bandongan*, and *wetonan*, teaching patterns following the Ministry of Religion, and the general religious curriculum is interconnected. Comprehensive Islamic boarding schools as part of the Islamic boarding school model can be said to be an improved version. Islamic boarding schools that combine the traditional and modern education and teaching systems.

Public Perception of *Pesantren*

The perception of the Kudus community in *pesantren* consists of two perceptions: positive and negative. The positive perception of the community in Islamic boarding schools in the Kudus district is that Islamic boarding schools are considered educational institutions that uphold religious and moral values. The community appreciates Islamic boarding schools' contribution to shaping the younger generation's religious and moral character through the education provided. Islamic boarding schools are often the centre of religious and social activities in the local community. The negative perception is that there is a concern that education in Islamic boarding schools tends to focus too much on religious aspects and pay less attention to general education. The public's negative perception of violence in the Islamic boarding school environment can arise due to cases of violence reported by the media, stories circulating orally, or personal experience or direct observation.

Islamic boarding schools have a positive perception in Indonesian society for various reasons that make them a respected and valued institution. First, Islamic boarding schools are considered educational institutions that uphold religious and moral values. The community appreciates Islamic boarding schools' contribution to shaping the younger generation's religious and moral character through the education they provide.

Islamic boarding schools are often the centre of religious and social activities in the local community. The community feels involved and connected to Islamic boarding schools through various activities such as recitations, Friday sermons, social services, and religious training. This creates a sense of solidarity and togetherness between the Islamic boarding school and the surrounding community.

Islamic boarding schools are also considered institutions that can solve various social and moral societal problems. The *kiai* and *ustadz* in Islamic boarding schools often become consultants or advisors in religious, moral, and social matters for the surrounding community. Islamic boarding schools provide added value to improve the social and moral conditions of the community.

The negative perception is that there is a concern that education in Islamic boarding schools tends to focus too much on religious aspects and pay less attention to general education. The public's negative perception of violence in the Islamic boarding school environment can arise due to cases of violence reported by the media, stories circulating orally, or personal experience or direct observation.

There are concerns that education in Islamic boarding schools tends to focus too much on religious aspects and pay less attention to general education. Some people believe that education in Islamic boarding schools may not be adequate to prepare the younger generation to face the demands and competition in an increasingly complex modern society.

Negative perceptions of violence and bullying in Islamic boarding schools are an issue that arises in discussions about education and parenting in these institutions. Some people believe that physical, verbal, or psychological violence that occurs in Islamic boarding schools can be a serious problem that affects the psychological and emotional well-being of students. They are worried that such treatment can damage social relationships, reduce learning motivation, and even cause trauma to students.

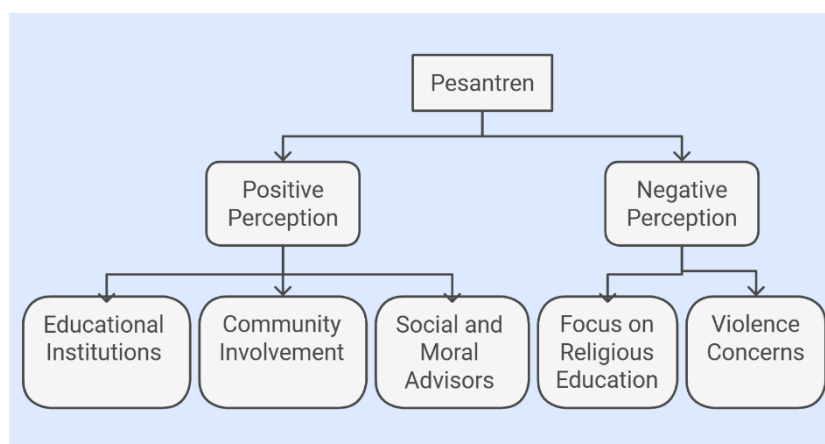


Figure 1. Public Perception of Pesantren

Figure 1, the perception of the Kudus community towards Islamic boarding schools is divided into two categories, namely positive perception and negative perception. Based on the observations in the environment around the Islamic boarding school, the positive perception of the community towards Islamic boarding schools in Kudus Regency shows that Islamic boarding schools are considered educational institutions that uphold religious and moral values. The community highly appreciates Islamic boarding schools' contribution to shaping the younger generation's religious character through the education provided. In addition, Islamic boarding schools are also centres of religious and social activities in the local community. This can be seen from the community's participation in various religious events, such as religious studies, Friday sermons, religious training, and other social activities, which create a sense of solidarity and togetherness between the Islamic boarding school and the community. Local community leaders also often refer to Islamic boarding schools as places that provide solutions to various social and moral problems, such as family guidance, religious consultation, and conflict mediation in the surrounding environment.

However, the interview results showed a negative perception in a small part of the community. This concern is related to the assumption that education in Islamic boarding schools focuses too much on religious aspects and pays less attention to general education. Several informants expressed that Islamic boarding school graduates are sometimes considered less prepared to face the demands of the world of work in the modern era. In addition, the issue of violence in Islamic boarding schools has also become a public concern, mainly because of cases of violence reported by the media or oral stories circulating. In direct observation, although there are Islamic boarding schools that have implemented compassion-based parenting, some students admitted to having heard or witnessed disciplinary actions that were considered excessive. Although not always reflective of the actual conditions, this perception remains a challenge that Islamic boarding schools need to overcome to maintain their reputation as dignified and inclusive educational institutions.

The Contribution of Islamic Boarding Schools in Shaping the Religious Character of the Community

The contribution of *pesantren* in shaping the religious character of the Kudus community includes *pesantren* becoming an Islamic educational institution that provides a supportive environment for the development of spirituality and religious character. Islamic boarding schools are the centre of Islamic learning and teaching at the local level. Islamic boarding schools also play a role in shaping religious leadership in the community. Islamic boarding schools also contribute to developing a moral and responsible society. Through the education provided, Islamic boarding

schools teach values such as simplicity, hard work, and help.

Islamic boarding schools become Islamic educational institutions that provide a supportive environment for developing spirituality and religious character. The students at the Islamic boarding school learn about Islamic teachings theoretically and live in an environment that constantly invites them to practice religious values in their daily lives. This helps to form a strong and consistent religious character in the students.

Islamic boarding schools also play a role in shaping religious leadership in the community. The *kiai* and *ustadz* in the Islamic boarding school are not only teachers for the students but also role models and spiritual leaders for the surrounding community. They provide direction and guidance in religious, moral, and social matters to the community, thus helping to strengthen religious character at the local level.

Islamic boarding schools also contribute to developing a moral and responsible society. Through the education provided, Islamic boarding schools teach values such as simplicity, hard work, help, and respect for fellow humans. This helps to form a religious character oriented not only to a vertical relationship with God but also to a horizontal relationship with fellow human beings and the environment.

Islamic boarding schools in Kudus Regency play a significant role in shaping the religious character of the community. The disciplined and Islamic-themed environment of the Islamic boarding school is a conducive place for the development of the spirituality of students and the surrounding community. For example, in several Islamic boarding schools, such as the Raudhatul Tholibin Islamic Boarding School and the Darul Falah Islamic Boarding School, the daily activities of the students include religious studies, memorizing the Qur'an, and socio-religious activities involving the surrounding community. The *kiai* and *ustadz* at these Islamic boarding schools are also often asked to speak at religious events or consultants on social issues, showing the high public trust in Islamic boarding schools. In addition, Islamic boarding schools also hold programs such as Islamic-based skills training, which not only strengthen students' character but also empower the community.

Islamic boarding schools are religious education centres and drive social and moral transformation in the Kudus community. Islamic boarding schools contribute to forming a generation that is religious and has high social responsibility. The values of simplicity, hard work, and solidarity taught in Islamic boarding schools reflect the effective integration of religion-based character education. In addition, the role of Islamic boarding schools in producing spiritual leaders at the local level strengthens the capacity of communities to face moral and social challenges. However, there are challenges in ensuring that the contribution of Islamic boarding schools remains relevant to the times, especially in integrating religious values with the skills needed in modern society. This shows the need for a holistic education strategy in Islamic boarding schools to continue strengthening their role in shaping the religious character of society.

Discussion

The educational model of *pesantren* in Kudus, encompassing *Salafiyah*, *Khalafiyah*, and comprehensive approaches, reflects the diversity and adaptability of Islamic boarding schools in addressing the evolving needs of society. The persistence of the *Salafiyah* model underscores the importance of preserving traditional Islamic teachings as a cornerstone of religious education. It emphasizes the role of *pesantren* in maintaining the authenticity of Islamic heritage. Conversely, the *Khalafiyah* model represents a strategic shift towards modernity by integrating general education into religious frameworks. This trend resonates with the works of Prasetyo (2022), who highlighted how *pesantren* adapt to societal changes without compromising their core values. The

comprehensive model further exemplifies this adaptability by bridging traditional and modern pedagogies, providing a holistic approach to Islamic education. This diversification indicates that *pesantren* in Kudus do not merely serve as religious institutions but also play a transformative role in preparing students for contemporary challenges while maintaining their spiritual foundations.

Given these findings, it becomes imperative to analyze how these models address the broader question of educational relevance in a globalized world. Mujahid (2021) emphasized that *pesantren* must balance safeguarding traditional values and meeting modern societal demands. The comprehensive model, in particular, is an ideal framework for other *pesantren*, as it integrates textual understanding with contextual applicability. However, it is crucial to enhance the pedagogical methodologies within this model to ensure they align with international educational standards (Rohman, 2022; Budiharso et al., 2023). This includes adopting student-centred learning approaches and integrating technology into traditional systems. Ultimately, *pesantren* should preserve Islamic teachings and serve as incubators for future leaders capable of navigating both religious and worldly domains (Rohaeni et al., 2021; Mukti et al., 2022). By doing so, *pesantren* can reinforce their position as dynamic institutions capable of shaping individuals who are spiritually grounded and socially competent.

The public perception of *pesantren* in Kudus reveals a dichotomy between admiration for their role in shaping religious and moral character and concerns regarding their limitations in general education and allegations of violence. This duality aligns with the findings of Mohadi & Tarshany (2023) who noted that *pesantren* are often revered as moral anchors within their communities but face criticism for their traditional focus and occasional adverse incidents. The positive perceptions highlight *pesantren* as community hubs for religious and social activities, strengthening social cohesion and moral guidance. On the other hand, the negative perceptions emphasize structural issues, including the adequacy of preparing students for modern challenges and addressing disciplinary practices. These perceptions underscore the complex role of *pesantren* in balancing religious authority with societal expectations for modernization and inclusivity.

Pesantren must adopt strategic reforms to address these challenges while preserving its core values. Integrating a balanced curriculum that emphasizes religious and general education, as suggested by studies like Aribah & Pradita (2022), could help bridge the gap between traditional and modern expectations. Moreover, establishing transparent mechanisms for addressing concerns about discipline and violence would bolster public trust. A proactive approach, such as compassion-based parenting models, should be standardized and monitored to prevent potential abuse and ensure a safe learning environment (Ramdani & Ihsan, 2021; Jaenullah et al., 2022; Taufiq, 2021). By aligning their educational framework with societal demands while maintaining their spiritual essence, *pesantren* can solidify their position as inclusive institutions capable of producing morally and academically exceptional individuals.

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*)' contribution to shaping the Kudus community's religious character illustrates their critical role as spiritual and moral development centres. This finding aligns with Manshur (2020) assertion that *pesantren* serve as educational institutions and agents of community transformation by embedding religious values in daily life. Through disciplined environments and religious teachings, *pesantren* cultivate the students' spirituality and strengthen social cohesion and leadership within the surrounding community. Their role in producing religious leaders, such as *Kiai* and *ustadz*, further amplifies their impact by ensuring that moral and ethical guidance permeates local society (Roqib, 2021; Solihin et al., 2020). Moreover, the *pesantren's* integration of character-building activities with social empowerment reflects their commitment to fostering individual piety and collective responsibility.

To maintain and enhance their contributions, *pesantren* must adopt a holistic approach that bridges traditional religious education with modern societal needs. Flensner (2020) emphasized integrating religious education with practical skills to prepare students for contemporary challenges. The findings of this study further reinforce the need for a well-rounded curriculum that not only instills religious values but also equips students with competencies relevant to modern society. This research underscores the critical contribution of *pesantren* as transformative institutions, suggesting that their continued relevance requires strategic development that harmonizes spiritual and practical dimensions.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed three main findings: first, the educational model in Islamic boarding schools emphasizes the integration of religious values with the formation of students' moral character; second, the public perception of Islamic boarding schools in Kudus is divided into positive, namely Islamic boarding schools as centres for the formation of religious and moral values, and antagonistic related to concerns about the lack of attention to general education and issues of violence; third, the contribution of Islamic boarding schools in forming the religious character of the community through the role of *kiai* and *ustadz* as spiritual leaders and social empowerment programs based on Islamic values. However, this study has limitations in the scope of the location, which only focuses on Kudus and does not deeply explore the variation of Islamic boarding school education models in other regions. For further research, it is recommended to expand the research object to Islamic boarding schools in various regions with a comparative approach and further examine the efforts of Islamic boarding schools in integrating religious education with modern skills to increase graduates' relevance and competitiveness in contemporary society.

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