

## **Modern Pesantren: Shaping Future Leaders Based on Islamic Values**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to analyze the educational strategies implemented at Al-Kautsar Islamic Boarding School in shaping future leaders based on Islamic values. The main focus of this study includes three aspects: strengthening foreign languages, integration of religious and general subjects, and a contextual approach through evaluation and self-development of santri. This research used a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with caregivers, teachers, and santri, as well as observation and documentation. Data analysis techniques used the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of three main steps, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that foreign language strengthening is carried out through language zone programs and international student exchanges. Santri are accustomed to using Arabic and English actively in daily life, which aims to form self-confidence and global da'wah abilities. This strategy creates an immersive environment that encourages natural and contextualized language use. The integration of religious and general studies is implemented by inserting Islamic values in science and technology materials, so that students are able to see science as part of the signs of Allah's greatness. Meanwhile, the contextual approach and evaluation system based on Islamic values are carried out through weekly muhasabah, moral evaluation, and continuous character building. This strategy plays an important role in shaping the personality of students who are disciplined, responsible, and have good character.

**Keywords:** future leaders, Islamic values, modern pesantren

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## A. Introduction

Modern pesantren have become one of the educational institutions that play an important role in shaping the character and leadership of Indonesia's young generation. Amid social change and globalization, society faces various challenges, such as moral crisis, a lack of leaders with integrity, and educational inequality. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the unemployment rate of formal education graduates is still significant (Andrian, 2020), which shows the need to produce a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also spiritually and socially resilient (Paul, 2024). The phenomenon of moral degradation among the younger generation is increasingly becoming a concern (Schneider-Mayerson & Leong, 2020). Adult cases such as corruption, abuse of authority, and social conflicts reflect the weak cultivation of religious and ethical values from an early age. This condition demands the presence of future leaders who are not only competent in facing the challenges of the times but also have a solid foundation of Islamic values.

Modern pesantren, as a combination of classical Islamic education traditions and modern approaches, is a strategic solution in answering these needs. By integrating religious and general education, modern pesantren aim to produce a generation that is not only superior in science but also has leadership character based on Islamic values (Shaturaev, 2021; Somel, 2021). This phenomenon is interesting to study more deeply, especially in the context of its role as an institution that prepares future leaders who can face global challenges without losing their Islamic identity.

Previous research shows that pesantren have long been a pillar of Islamic education in Indonesia. Traditional pesantren focus on the study of the yellow book as the basis of teaching (Hasanah & Kosim, 2021). Modern pesantren try to integrate religious education with general knowledge (Daulay, 2022). However, research that specifically examines how modern pesantren form future leaders based on Islamic values is still very limited. Most studies only highlight academic or spiritual aspects. The academic aspect is often focused on the cognitive achievement of santri and curriculum integration, while the spiritual dimension is mostly studied in terms of worship, morality, and religious character building, without looking at a holistic approach that includes leadership education. Thus, this study is here to fill the gap by highlighting the strategies, methods, and impact of modern pesantren in shaping the character of future leaders.

The modern pesantren curriculum can adapt to global needs, such as mastery of technology and international public relations (Jaenullah et al., 2022). However, several aspects have not been widely researched. First, the effectiveness of leadership programs designed by modern pesantren in forming graduates who are successful at the national and global levels. Second, the limited resources and challenges in implementing an integrated education system that still maintains Islamic values. Third, the real impact of modern pesantren graduates on society, especially in the public leadership sector (Arifin et al., 2024). Although many studies discuss the contribution of modern pesantren, there are still research gaps related to program effectiveness, implementation challenges, and the impact on leadership. More in-depth studies are needed to understand the strategic role of modern pesantren in shaping future leaders.

Al-Kaustar Islamic Boarding School offers a universal approach that is a novelty in producing future leaders based on Islamic values. Not only focusing on mastering religious knowledge, this pesantren integrates Islamic education with the development of modern insights, technology, and leadership skills. Graduates of Al-

Kautsar Islamic Boarding School are individuals who have strong Islamic competence, balanced intellectual skills, and high moral integrity. They are equipped with an integrative mastery of religious and general sciences, communication skills in Arabic and English, and leadership abilities that are responsive to global dynamics. The applied curriculum combines spiritual values with soft skills, such as critical thinking, management, and teamwork, which are rarely raised in depth in pesantren literature (Al Haddar et al., 2023). Al-Kaustar also creates an Islamic leadership-based learning environment by instilling characters such as honesty, trustworthiness, and responsibility in the daily lives of the students. This model is not only oriented to the local context but also produces leaders who can face global challenges while still upholding Islamic values (Achruh & Sukirman, 2024). As a case study, Al-Kaustar is a relevant educational model to inspire other institutions in shaping a superior generation in the modern era.

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of modern pesantren in educating future leaders based on Islamic values. First is the strategy and education system used in modern pesantren instill Islamic values, which involves the introduction of Islamic values that have been applied in the daily life of santri through formal learning and informal activities. Second is the integrated curriculum that combines Islamic religious education with general knowledge, such as science, technology, and foreign languages collected including curriculum structure analysis. Third is learning approaches such as active learning methods, intensive mentoring (tarbiya), and leadership training, such as best practices implemented in pesantren. This research is to understand the effectiveness of the education system, curriculum, and learning approaches of modern pesantren in preparing future leaders who are competent, have integrity, and are based on Islamic values.

The implications of modern pesantren have a strategic role in shaping future leaders based on Islamic values through a combination of an integrated curriculum and a comprehensive educational approach. Modern pesantren form leaders through the internalization of Islamic values such as honesty, trustworthiness, and responsibility (Haryanto, 2022). This is achieved through intensive care and practice-based leadership training. The modern pesantren curriculum integrates Islamic religious education with general science, which prepares students to face global challenges without losing their Islamic identity (Ihsan et al., 2021). This curriculum is designed to equip students with strong Islamic religious insights as well as modern competencies (Pahrudin et al., 2023). The approach involves active learning methods, character building through daily activities, and Islamic value-based leadership training.

## **B. Literature Review**

Modern pesantren have undergone a significant transformation in their education system to produce future leaders based on Islamic values. Modern pesantren combine Islamic religious education with general knowledge to create graduates who are intellectually and spiritually competent (Rochmat et al., 2022). Islamic value-based education in modern pesantren includes various strategies, such as curriculum integration, active learning methods, and strengthening the character of students through leadership activities. In Islam, leadership is not only seen as a position but also a mandate that demands moral and spiritual responsibility. According to Al-Mawardi (in Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah), the ideal leader is fair, knowledgeable, and able to serve the people (Bhatti et al., 2021).

The integration of religious and general curriculum is a strategic step in building Islamic education that is not only relevant to the times but also remains firmly rooted in spiritual values (Ebaid, 2022). The modern pesantren curriculum is designed to integrate religious education and general science to balance the spiritual and intellectual aspects of santri (Mansilla & Jackson, 2022). Some studies show that this integration can increase the competitiveness of santri in facing global challenges (Hosaini et al., 2024). Curriculum integration allows santri to have a strong understanding of religion while mastering the fields of science, technology, and foreign languages.

In the era of globalization, mastering foreign languages, especially Arabic and English, is an important aspect of modern pesantren education. Strengthening foreign languages in modern pesantren aims to expand the reach of Islamic preaching to the international level (Azka et al., 2024). The communicative approach in foreign language learning is applied to improve speaking skills and multicultural interaction. The strengthening of language competence is directed not only at linguistic aspects (speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills) but also at developing leadership character based on Islamic values (Pratiwi & Rohmadi, 2021). Mastery of foreign languages, especially English as an international language, opens up space for intercultural dialog and becomes a strategic medium for conveying universal Islamic messages (Hua, 2018). Language zone is one of the popular approaches used by many modern pesantren to form foreign language habits (Zhong et al., 2022). The language zone can create an immersive learning environment and encourage students to get used to thinking and communicating in a foreign language naturally.

Educational evaluation in modern pesantren does not only focus on academic aspects, but also assesses the development of santri character through an Islamic value-based approach (Wilder, 2023). Periodic evaluations are applied to measure the discipline, spirituality, and morals of santri (Fawait et al., 2024). The muhasabah or self-introspection method is a reflective tool for santri in improving their quality. A 360-degree assessment system, in which teachers, caregivers, and peers also assess the development of santri character, is also used to get a more holistic picture of santri growth (Zahraini, 2022).

### **C. Method**

The research design includes a qualitative descriptive approach that aims to provide a detailed description of the phenomenon of education in Modern Islamic Boarding Schools through observation, interviews, and document analysis (Turale, 2020). The subjects in this study were the caretaker of the boarding school, teachers, and students. Data collection techniques in this research were interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Al-Kaustar Pesantren Srono was chosen as the object of research because this institution is known as one of the modern pesantren that successfully integrates Islamic religious education with general science, and women have a very important role in the development of generations and the spread of Islamic values, especially through education in the family and society. Female santri as future educators, mothers, and community leaders need to be equipped with foreign language competencies and strong Islamic leadership values to contribute to global da'wah actively and meaningfully.

The source of informants in this study was chosen purposively, namely individuals who have knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in educational activities and leadership formation at the Modern Islamic Boarding School (Solarino

& Aguinis, 2021). The pesantren caretakers have strategic insights into the vision, mission, and educational goals of the pesantren, including the Islamic value-based leadership character-building policy. Furthermore, teachers are responsible for curriculum implementation, teaching Islamic values, and developing leadership skills in teaching and learning activities. Then, santri are ones involved in leadership activities in the pesantren environment, so that they can provide perspectives on leadership formation experiences. Through interviews and observations of informant sources, it is hoped that this research can provide comprehensive and in-depth data.

**Table 1. Source of Informants**

No	Category of informants	Number of informants	Name	Reason
1	Pesantren caretakers	1	NVS	Understand the purpose and implementation of the Islamic value-based leadership development program thoroughly.
2	Teachers	2	VI IEH	Knowing directly the implementation of learning and the approach used to shape the character of students
3	Santri	3	NM NN AK	Provides a first-hand perspective as a doer and receiver of the leadership formation process

In this study, the data analysis technique used the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of three main steps, namely, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Solarino & Aguinis, 2021). Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Presentation of data that had been reduced was then presented in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, or diagrams to facilitate understanding. In conclusion drawing, temporary conclusions were made based on patterns or themes that emerge from the data presentation. The Miles and Huberman model was used interactively and iteratively, where each step was interrelated. This process took place throughout the research, from data collection to reporting the results of the research. This technique ensures that data analysis is carried out systematically and in depth. The research is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive picture of the role of the Al-Kaustar Putri Islamic Boarding School in shaping future leaders based on Islamic values.

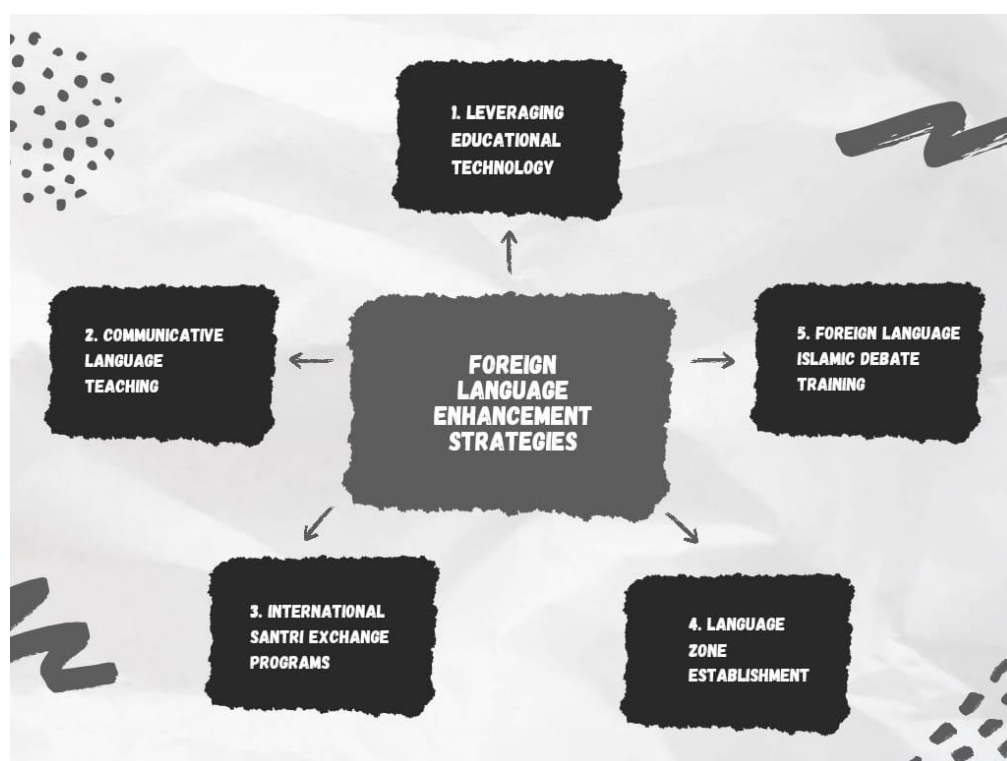
## **D. Findings**

### **1. Strengthening Foreign Languages for Global Da'wah**

Strengthening foreign languages is one of the important strategies in modern pesantren to form future leaders based on Islamic values. Pesantren is also an effective institution in producing spiritually and communicatively ready da'wah cadres. As expressed by the caregiver of Al-Kautsar Islamic Boarding School, as follows:

*“Alhamdulillah, we at Pondok Pesantren Al-Kautsar have seen a lot of progress. Our students are now more confident speaking in Arabic and English. Some of them have even joined student exchange programs abroad and successfully expressed Islamic views in international forums. We believe, with consistency and innovation, our santri will become leaders capable of bringing Islamic values to the global level. This program allowed me to not only learn Arabic and English directly in the countries where they are spoken, but also to introduce Indonesian Islamic values to the local community. And our boarding school also implements a strategy of improving foreign languages and language zones, which can train santri's language habits, which we have scheduled.”*

The interview above shows that the strengthening of foreign languages has had a relevant impact on santri's confidence in communication. The student exchange program abroad allows them to learn directly from native speakers while introducing Indonesian Islamic values in international forums. In addition, the implementation of foreign language strengthening strategies and language zones implemented in the pesantren environment is an effective strategy in forming the habit of santri to use foreign languages in daily life. Overall, this strategy reflects the pesantren's commitment to producing students who are ready to become global leaders based on Islamic values. The results of the interview are reinforced by the results of observations and documentation that researchers have conducted. The boarding school applies a foreign language strengthening strategy, and a language zone where there are English day and Arabic day programs. This program has been scheduled for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday using English, for Thursday, Friday, Saturday using Arabic, and for Sunday, it rotates the first week of English and the second week of Arabic. Foreign language exchange activities are carried out annually.



**Figure 1. Foreign Language Enhancement Strategies**

Based on the picture above, the foreign language strengthening strategy implemented by Al-Kautsar Islamic Boarding School has 5 points. Among them: Leveraging education technology, Communicative language teaching, International santri exchange program, Language zone establishment, and Foreign language Islamic debate training. Evidence of the strengthening of foreign languages is the student exchange program abroad. The documentary evidence is as follows:



**Figure 2. Student Exchange**

The picture above is the Al-Kautsar Islamic boarding school program, namely the international student exchange, which is also a leading innovation. This program provides opportunities for students to practice Arabic and English with native speakers, while introducing Islamic culture rooted in pesantren to the outside world.

## **2. Integration of Religious and General Subjects**

Modern pesantren present innovations in Islamic value-based education by integrating religious and general subjects. As interviews with caregivers and santri are as follows:

*"Al-Kautsar Islamic boarding school not only teaches theory, but also instills in the students that every science they learn is a means to understand the greatness of Allah. For example, in Physics lessons, we relate the law of gravity to the concept of Allah's power in maintaining the balance of nature. The lessons taught at the pesantren made me realize that science is not something separate from religion. When I learned Biology about the wonders of the human body, I saw it as clear evidence of the greatness of Allah."*

Based on these interviews, it can be concluded that the integration of science and religious values in modern pesantren provides an understanding to santri that science is not something separate from Islam, but rather part of the signs of God's greatness. This approach helps santri to see scientific phenomena, such as the law of gravity and the miracle of the human body, as clear evidence of the power and balance of His creation. The results of the interview were strengthened through observations

and interviews at the pesantren. Researchers saw that in teaching, teachers inserted religious verses or reflections when explaining the lesson. The following is the concept of integration applied in the modern boarding school:

**Table 2. Integration**

Aspects	Description	Application Example	Results Achieved
Integration Concept	Combining religious studies (Fiqh, Aqidah, Tafsir) with general sciences (Math, Physics, Biology, etc.) to create harmony between spirituality and intellect.	Discussing relevant Qur'anic verses in science lessons.	Santri understand that religion and science support each other.
Destination	To produce students who are spiritually and intellectually intelligent, able to face global challenges without abandoning Islamic values.	Harmonizing religious values with modern scientific concepts.	Students can explain scientific phenomena with an Islamic approach.
Learning Approach	Islamic context-based learning.	When learning about the law of gravity, teachers connect it to the concept of God's greatness that maintains the balance of the universe.	Santri understand that natural phenomena are part of sunnatullah (God's rules) that must be studied to increase faith and mastery of science.
	Case studies that connect scientific theories with religious values.	The water cycle describes the processes of evaporation, condensation, precipitation, and infiltration.	Santri understand the importance of water for life as part of sunnatullah.

The table above explains the integration of general and religious studies applied at Al-Kautsar Islamic boarding school, including the concept of integration, learning objectives, and approaches.

### **3. Contextual Approach, Evaluation, and Islamic Value-Based Self-Development**

Modern pesantren have adopted a contextual approach in instilling Islamic values through an evaluation system and **self**-development. As stated by the caregivers and teachers:

*"Al-kautsar boarding school not only teaches religious knowledge theoretically, but also tries to connect it with real life. Therefore, we apply a contextual approach, where students are invited to understand knowledge in a more applicable way. Al-Kautsar boarding school believes that moral values are*



*the main foundation for the formation of leaders. Our evaluation system not only aims to determine the academic achievements of students, but also how they practice Islamic values in their daily lives, for example, whether they are honest, caring, and consistent in worship. With this approach, we hope that each student can improve themselves continuously. With the evaluation in this pesantren, it is very helpful for students to continue to improve themselves. Every week, we teach them to do muhasabah, looking back at what we have done and what needs to be improved from there. Students learn to be more disciplined, more caring for others, and more consistent in worship."*

Based on the interview above, it can be concluded that Al-Kautsar Islamic Boarding School not only focuses on teaching religious knowledge theoretically, but also tries to connect it with real life through a contextual approach. This is done so that students can understand and practice knowledge in their daily lives, besides that, placing moral values as the main foundation in the formation of leaders. The results of our observations and documentation show that there are weekly routine activities in the form of joint muhasabah, where students are asked to reflect on their attitudes and worship during the past week. This activity is guided by the dormitory supervisor and closed with advice on moral improvement. In addition, researchers observed a daily behavior point system displayed on the dormitory evaluation board. The following is the evaluation table.

behavior evaluation board				
Name	honesty	discipline	caring	notes
naila	✓	✓	✓	Very good
nurul	✗	✓	✓	Need guidance regarding honesty
khumaira	✓	✗	✗	Often late
✓ take part in activities		✗ not participating in activities		

**Figure 3. Evaluation Table**

## **E. Discussion**

### **1. Strengthening Foreign Languages for Global Da'wah**

In the context of globalization, strengthening these foreign languages for the ability of santri to communicate, especially Arabic and English, is needed so that santri can convey Islamic values to the international community (Siregar, 2022). Foreign language acquisition through exchange is the process of improving language skills

through hands-on learning experiences in the native cultural environment of the language (Onishchuk et al., 2020). In this program, learners are placed in a country where the target language is the main language, so they can practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills intensively in the context of everyday life. This method is effective because Language Immersion is global (Unwin, 2020). Thus, santri are accustomed to using foreign languages in real situations, such as in the classroom, residence, and social environment. Furthermore, Multicultural Interaction (Huda et al., 2021). In this case, students interact with native speakers, which helps them understand the natural use of language, including the culture of communication. Then the increase in self-confidence. This is to communicating with local people helps students be more confident using a foreign language in various contexts. Next is Contextual Learning. In this case, students can understand the meaning of language in the context of local culture, traditions, and customs, which enriches their communication skills.

In addition to improving language ability, the student exchange method also helps students develop soft skills (soft skills), such as adaptability, critical thinking, and appreciation of cultural diversity. Therefore, this program is one of the effective ways to improve foreign language competence. (Nazarov, 2022). With consistency and innovation in the implementation of educational strategies, modern pesantren can produce future leaders who are not only intellectually competent, but also have a vision of global da'wah based on Islamic values.

The foreign language zone is one of the habituation strategies implemented in various modern pesantren to improve the language skills of santri, especially in Arabic and English (Schmidt & Strasser, 2022). This system determines certain times and areas where all student communication activities must be carried out using a specified foreign language (Schmidt & Strasser, 2022). This strategy aims to build an immersion environment that actively involves students in direct and continuous foreign language practice.

Through the implementation of language zones, students not only learn theory in class but also internalize the language through real practice in everyday life (Kotciuba et al., 2021). More than just a means of communication, mastery of foreign languages, especially Arabic and English, is considered an important means of expanding the role of students in global preaching. Students who are accustomed to using foreign languages have great potential to become preachers who can convey Islamic values at the international level, as well as build a wider international communication network.

## **2. Integration of Religious and General Subjects**

The strategy of integrating general and religious studies aims to form santri who not only understand religious teachings deeply but are also competent in general knowledge and ready to face global challenges (Mansilla & Jackson, 2022). Subjects such as Fiqh, Aqidah, and Tafsir are collaborated with Mathematics, Physics, Biology, and Information Technology, creating a harmony between spirituality and science (Khairi et al., 2024). This integrative approach was born from the need to prepare young people who can answer the challenges of the modern era without abandoning Islamic values (Mujahid, 2021).

It is also an answer to the stigma that religious education tends to be exclusive and irrelevant to the development of science (McGrath, 2020). Modern pesantren want to show that Islam is not only a ritual religion, but also provides a strong philosophical foundation for science and technology. Thus, modern pesantren

succeed in instilling spiritual values in the science learning process, making science a means to increase faith while producing a generation that understands the close relationship between science and religion.

### **3. Contextual Approach, Evaluation, and Islamic Value-Based Self-Development**

Modern pesantren today not only act as a center for religious education, but also as an institution that shapes students to be ready to face the challenges of the world while adhering to Islamic values. One of the main factors that supports the success of education in modern pesantren is the application of a contextual approach, an Islamic-based evaluation system, and self-development programs (Anggadwita et al., 2021). These three elements are key in shaping graduates who not only excel in academics but also have strong Islamic character and leadership skills (Solarino & Aguinis, 2021). With this approach, they not only understand the theory but also experience firsthand how to apply Islamic laws in the study of social fiqh. Students are invited to analyze community problems and find solutions based on Islamic teachings.

Modern pesantren have adopted a contextual approach in instilling Islamic values through evaluation and self-development systems. Evaluation and self-development are designed not only to assess the academic achievement of santri but also to measure their moral development, spirituality, and responsibility as individuals (Wilder, 2023). The main goal of this system is to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has a strong Islamic character. One of the main methods applied is periodic evaluation based on Islamic values (Fawait et al., 2024). In every evaluation, aspects such as discipline, morals, and the ability of students to practice daily Islamic values are the main focus (Fatoni & Subando, 2024). In addition, the pesantren also integrates a personalization approach, where caregivers and teachers provide personal guidance to each santri. This step is taken to help students identify their weaknesses while providing direction to optimize their potential. With this method, the pesantren produces individuals who continue to develop spiritually and morally, ready to become leaders based on Islamic values.

As part of the evaluation system, the pesantren also applies the muhasabah or self-introspection method. Every week, santri are invited to reflect on their worship journey and activities. This helps them realize the mistakes that need to be corrected and encourages them to continuously improve themselves. In addition, the pesantren adopts a 360-degree assessment system, where assessment is not only done by teachers, but also by peers and caregivers (Zahraini, 2022). In this way, the pesantren gets a more comprehensive picture of the character development of the santri.

## **F. Conclusion**

Modern pesantren play an important role in shaping future leaders based on Islamic values by implementing various innovative strategies in learning through strengthening foreign languages, especially Arabic and English, to equip students with international communication skills. In addition, pesantren adopt the integration of religious and general sciences, combining Islamic studies with science and technology. Contextual approaches, Islamic-based evaluation, and self-development are applied to ensure that santri develop academically, spiritually, and socially. Learning strategies based on integration, contextualization, and strengthening of foreign languages are very relevant to be applied in a modern pesantren environment. This educational model can be replicated or further developed to strengthen the competitiveness of pesantren graduates at the national and international levels.

Continuous training is needed for teachers in delivering materials integratively and guiding santri in language zones and contextualized learning. Teachers are also required to be role models of the Islamic values taught. Santri need to take advantage of the various educational programs available to develop cross-cultural communication skills and critical thinking without giving up their Islamic identity. Pesantren should not only be closed educational institutions, but also community empowerment centers. Collaboration with local and global communities will strengthen the position of pesantren in forming a generation of contributive and competitive leaders. This research provides positive implications for stakeholders: For pesantren as educational institutions, these results show the importance of curriculum innovation based on integration and globalization; for teachers, the importance of developing contextual learning methods; and for santri, this strategy provides leadership and da'wah in the global era. However, this study has limitations because it was only conducted in one pesantren and used a qualitative approach. For future research, it is recommended to conduct a comparative study between modern pesantren as well as a quantitative or longitudinal analysis of the impact of this strategy, including involving alumni as an indicator of long-term success.

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