

Reconstructing Santri Learning Orientation in the Transformation of Modern Pesantren Education at Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum Jember

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Abstract:

This study examines the transformation of santri learning orientations within the integration of pesantren, formal schooling, and higher education at Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum Jember. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, focus group discussions, and document analysis involving kyai, administrators, and three santri typologies: *santri kitab*, *santri pelajar*, and *mabasantri*. The findings show that educational integration in the pesantren does not fully produce epistemological coherence. Instead, it creates differentiated learning orientations, uneven intellectual trajectories, and tensions between traditional religious learning and modern academic demands. *Santri kitab* tend to maintain text-centered religious authority, *santri pelajar* experience academic overload within dual educational systems, while *mabasantri* face identity ambivalence between pesantren values and contemporary academic culture. This study introduces the concept of *hybrid-fragmented learning orientation* to explain how integration and fragmentation coexist within modern pesantren education. The study argues that pesantren transformation involves not only institutional modernization but also the negotiation of knowledge, authority, and santri identity. These findings contribute to contemporary Islamic education studies by offering a critical perspective on the complexities of educational integration in modern pesantren.

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Introduction

The pesantren institution has long occupied a central position in the development of Islamic education in Indonesia (Nurtawab, 2025). Beyond functioning as religious institutions, pesantren historically serve as spaces for the transmission of Islamic knowledge, moral formation, and the reproduction of ulama through the study of classical Islamic texts (*turāth*) under the authority of the *kyai* (Gusmian & Abdullah, 2022). Traditional pedagogical practices such as *bandongan*, *sorogan*, and *halaqah* emphasize textual mastery and the continuity of religious scholarship (Isnadia & Safitri, 2026). Within this educational culture, santri learning orientation has generally been directed toward the preservation and transmission of religious knowledge grounded in classical Islamic traditions.

In recent decades, however, pesantren have experienced substantial transformation as they respond to globalization, educational modernization, technological development, and changing social expectations (Hadi, 2022; Bano, 2020). These changes have not only altered institutional structures but also reshaped the epistemological orientation of learning within pesantren. The integration of pesantren education with formal schooling and higher education has gradually produced different categories of santri with distinct intellectual orientations (Rohim et al., 2026). *Santri kitab* remain closely attached to the study of classical texts and traditional religious authority, *santri pelajar* combine pesantren education with formal schooling, while *mabasantri* engage more intensively with academic research, critical inquiry, and contemporary scientific discourse.

Several studies have interpreted this transformation as part of pesantren's adaptive strategy in responding to the demands of twenty-first century education, particularly in developing critical thinking, collaboration, and broader social competencies (Abidin, 2021; Suradji & Faridi, 2025). The integration between religious and formal education is frequently viewed as a productive model capable of balancing spiritual depth with academic competence (Maemunah, 2022; Riwanda et al., 2025). At the same time, digitalization has expanded santri access to knowledge beyond classical Islamic literature toward online resources, academic journals, and digital learning platforms (Hidayati, 2024; Suresman et al., 2025). Consequently, pesantren are increasingly portrayed as hybrid educational institutions where tradition and modernity coexist dynamically (Fathurrohman, 2023). This coexistence often creates hybrid educational arrangements in which religious authority, modern academic expectations, and institutional adaptation continuously interact and negotiate with one another (Tan, 2014).

Despite these developments, existing studies largely tend to describe pesantren transformation as a relatively harmonious and linear process. The dominant discourse frequently emphasizes institutional adaptation, curriculum integration, and modernization while paying less attention to the tensions, contradictions, and fragmentation emerging from such transformation. From the

perspective of Islamic education sociology, institutional change is rarely free from negotiation, conflict, and epistemological contestation (Qorib, 2025; Sahin, 2018). In the context of pesantren, the coexistence of multiple educational systems may generate differentiated learning orientations, unequal intellectual trajectories, and shifting forms of religious authority among santri. Similar patterns have also been identified in contemporary Indonesian Islam, where the diversification of educational institutions contributes to the fragmentation of religious authority and competing forms of intellectual legitimacy (Burhani, 2021; Matin & Millie, 2022).

This issue becomes particularly important when viewed through earlier studies on pesantren transformation. Clifford Geertz (1960) positioned santri as a dynamic social-religious group whose identity continuously evolves within changing social contexts. Meanwhile, Dhofier (1994) emphasized that pesantren are fundamentally rooted in the authority of the *kyai* and the continuity of classical Islamic scholarship. Expanding this perspective, Soebahar (2013) argued that pesantren modernization involves broader changes in leadership patterns, institutional governance, and educational systems that increasingly accommodate contemporary demands. These perspectives indicate that pesantren transformation should not be understood merely as institutional expansion, but also as a process of negotiating authority, knowledge, and identity.

Recent studies further show that educational integration within pesantren does not always produce epistemological coherence. Azra (2022) notes that the reintegration of religious and modern sciences often remains administrative rather than conceptual. As a result, pesantren may operate with parallel educational systems that coexist structurally but remain fragmented epistemologically. This condition frequently places *santri pelajar* within dual academic demands that potentially reduce the depth of both religious and general knowledge acquisition (Fauzi, 2022). In addition, the emergence of *mahasantri* introduces a new form of identity ambivalence shaped by the encounter between pesantren traditions and modern academic rationality (Hashim, 2021). Research on integrated Islamic education in Indonesia similarly shows that students frequently negotiate between religious commitment, modern academic culture, and changing social aspirations (Hasan, 2012).

The transformation of pesantren also raises concerns regarding the continuity of classical Islamic scholarship. Karim (2025) argues that the increasing integration of formal education often reduces the intensity of *kitab kuning* studies because santri must divide their attention across multiple educational responsibilities. At the institutional level, modernization is not always accompanied by adequate human resources or epistemological integration, thereby creating gaps between educational ideals and practical implementation (Masud, 2022). These conditions suggest that pesantren transformation is not simply a successful modernization project, but rather a dialectical

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arena characterized by negotiation, adaptation, and tension between tradition and contemporary educational demands.

Within this context, Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum Mlokorejo Jember provides a significant case for examining the transformation of santri learning orientation. The pesantren integrates salafiyah education, a traditional Islamic educational system centered on classical Islamic texts and religious sciences, formal schooling, and higher education within a single institutional ecosystem, producing three distinct santri typologies simultaneously: *santri kitab*, *santri pelajar*, and *mahasantri*. This institutional configuration makes Bustanul Ulum an important site for analyzing how educational integration shapes learning orientation, epistemological relations, and intellectual identity among santri.

Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize the adaptive and integrative dimensions of pesantren modernization, this study argues that educational integration may also produce fragmentation, epistemic differentiation, and internal tensions among santri groups. Therefore, this study addresses three main questions: (1) how do learning orientations transform among *santri kitab*, *santri pelajar*, and *mahasantri*; (2) how does the interaction between pesantren tradition and formal education generate epistemological fragmentation; and (3) how can the concept of *hybrid-fragmented learning orientation* explain the dynamics of contemporary pesantren education?

Accordingly, this study aims to reconstruct the transformation of santri learning orientations within the dialectical relationship between classical Islamic traditions, formal education, and higher education in modern pesantren. The study introduces the concept of *hybrid-fragmented learning orientation* to explain how integration and fragmentation coexist within pesantren educational transformation. Conceptually, this study contributes to contemporary Islamic education scholarship by offering a more critical perspective on pesantren modernization, particularly regarding the negotiation of knowledge, authority, and santri identity in the context of institutional change.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design to examine the transformation of santri learning orientations within the context of modern pesantren education. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on understanding educational experiences, institutional dynamics, and epistemological changes emerging from the interaction between pesantren traditions, formal schooling, and higher education (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, qualitative inquiry enabled the researcher to explore how different santri typologies construct and negotiate their learning orientations within everyday educational practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum Mlokorejo Puger Jember, East Java, Indonesia. The pesantren was selected purposively because it represents an integrative educational

institution that combines salafiyah education, formal schooling, and higher education within a single institutional system. This configuration provides an important setting for examining the coexistence of *santri kitab*, *santri pelajar*, and *mahasantri* within one educational environment (Yin, 2018). Fieldwork was carried out from January to April 2026 to allow prolonged engagement with participants and a deeper understanding of institutional and social contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The participants consisted of kyai, pesantren administrators, teachers, and santri from different educational backgrounds. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement and experience in the educational processes being studied (Patton, 2015). The santri participants included representatives of *santri kitab*, *santri pelajar*, and *mahasantri* in order to capture variations in learning orientation, educational experience, and intellectual adaptation within the pesantren environment.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with kyai, administrators, teachers, and santri to explore their perspectives on educational transformation, learning orientation, and institutional change (Seidman, 2013). Participant observation focused on daily educational activities, including *kitab kuning* studies, classroom learning, and dormitory interactions. FGDs were carried out particularly with *santri pelajar* and *mahasantri* to identify collective experiences and shared educational challenges (Morgan, 2019). In addition, institutional documents such as curricula, academic regulations, and educational reports were analyzed to support and contextualize the field data.

The data analysis followed a thematic qualitative procedure. Data obtained from interviews, observations, FGDs, and documents were first organized and coded to identify recurring patterns and categories. The coded data were then reduced, displayed, and interpreted to generate broader themes related to the transformation of santri learning orientations (Miles et al., 2014). Through this analytical process, the study identified the emergence of what is conceptualized as a *hybrid-fragmented learning orientation*, referring to the coexistence of educational integration and epistemological fragmentation within pesantren education. The interpretation of findings was guided by a constructivist perspective that understands knowledge as socially shaped through interaction and institutional context (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, this study applied triangulation by comparing data from interviews, observations, FGDs, and documentation. Member checking was conducted by confirming several preliminary interpretations with participants, while peer debriefing was used to reduce interpretive bias and improve analytical consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These procedures were intended to maintain the validity and trustworthiness of the research findings.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process. All participants were informed about the objectives of the study and participated voluntarily. Confidentiality and anonymity were protected by omitting personal identities from the research report. The study also respected the cultural and religious norms of the pesantren environment during the entire process of data collection and interpretation (American Educational Research Association, 2011).

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Results and Discussion

Results

This study was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum Mlokorejo Puger Jember and its affiliated higher education institution, STAI Raden Abdullah Yaqin (STAI RAYA). The pesantren integrates salafiyah education, formal schooling, and higher education within one institutional system. The findings reveal that this integration has significantly transformed santri learning orientations and produced different educational experiences among *santri kitab*, *santri pelajar*, and *mahasantri*. Rather than creating a fully integrated educational culture, the transformation has generated differentiated learning patterns, uneven intellectual trajectories, and tensions between traditional religious learning and modern academic demands.

The Integrative Educational Structure and Epistemological Gaps

Bustanul Ulum has developed a multi-level educational structure consisting of Madrasah Diniyah (*Madin Unggulan*), formal primary and secondary schools, and higher education through STAI RAYA. This institutional model allows santri to continue their educational trajectory within the same pesantren environment, from classical Islamic learning to academic and professional education.

At the diniyah level, learning remains strongly oriented toward memorization, textual understanding, and moral discipline through the study of classical Islamic texts. However, as santri enter formal schooling and higher education, they are introduced to competency-based learning models that emphasize analytical reasoning, academic performance, and critical engagement with broader scientific disciplines.

Although structurally connected, the transition between these educational levels is not always accompanied by a coherent epistemological framework. Several participants described difficulties in adapting from text-centered religious learning to analytical and research-oriented academic culture. In practice, religious and general subjects continue to operate separately with limited interdisciplinary interaction. As a result, educational integration tends to function more administratively than conceptually.

Transformation of Learning Orientation

The findings indicate a gradual shift in santri learning orientation. Traditional learning practices that previously focused on mastery of *kitab kuning* are increasingly combined with contextual and problem-oriented approaches. One teacher explained:

“Previously, santri mainly concentrated on mastering classical Islamic texts in depth, but now they are also actively engaged in general subjects such as mathematics, language, and science. This condition helps them relate religious knowledge to everyday life.” (Interview, March 8, 2026)

Another informant emphasized that pesantren learning has begun to encourage interpretation and critical reflection rather than rote memorization alone:

“We encourage santri not only to memorize texts, but also to analyze, interpret, and connect what they learn with contemporary social realities.” (Interview, March 16, 2026)

These findings show that pesantren education is increasingly oriented toward adaptive and contextual learning. However, this transformation also creates a redistribution of learning focus. Several santri admitted that the increasing number of academic demands reduced the intensity of their engagement with classical

texts. Consequently, educational expansion often occurs simultaneously with a decline in the depth of traditional scholarly mastery.

Differentiation of Santri Typologies

The study also found clear differences in intellectual orientation among *santri kitab*, *santri pelajar*, and *mabasantri*. *Santri kitab* generally demonstrate stronger mastery of classical Islamic scholarship and maintain close attachment to traditional religious authority. However, their exposure to modern scientific discourse and academic methodology remains relatively limited.

In contrast, *santri pelajar* occupy an intermediate position. Their involvement in both pesantren and formal education enables them to navigate religious and general knowledge simultaneously. Nevertheless, they frequently experience academic pressure due to the dense educational schedule required by the dual system.

Meanwhile, *mabasantri* show a stronger orientation toward research, critical inquiry, and academic discussion. A lecturer described this condition as follows:

“Mabasantri are no longer limited to studying religious sciences alone. They are also trained in research, academic writing, and intellectual development, allowing them to combine religious competence with academic skills needed in contemporary society.” (Interview, March 8, 2026)

Despite these advantages, the coexistence of different santri typologies has produced forms of internal differentiation within the pesantren. Certain educational pathways are increasingly perceived as more modern, prestigious, or socially relevant than others. This situation contributes to unequal intellectual positioning among santri groups.

Shifting Authority and Institutional Management

The findings confirm that the *kyai* continues to occupy a central role in shaping moral values, religious orientation, and pesantren identity. Participants repeatedly emphasized that education in the pesantren is not solely directed toward intellectual achievement but also toward ethical formation.

“Our responsibility is not only to teach knowledge, but also to guide santri in morality and daily conduct. Knowledge without adab will lose its blessing.” (Interview, March 16, 2026)

At the same time, educational management within the pesantren has become increasingly institutionalized. Administrators are now more actively involved in curriculum management, technological development, and educational planning. One administrator stated:

“We try to provide modern classrooms, internet access, and digital learning facilities so that santri can adapt to current developments without losing pesantren traditions.” (Interview, March 16, 2026)

This development indicates a gradual shift from purely charismatic authority toward a more managerial educational structure. Although the *kyai* remains symbolically central, institutional decisions increasingly involve administrative and technical considerations.

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Curriculum Integration and Academic Pressure

Another important finding concerns the consequences of curriculum integration. The pesantren attempts to combine religious education with the national curriculum to produce santri who are academically competent while remaining grounded in Islamic values.

“We do not abandon the pesantren curriculum. Instead, we strengthen it with the national curriculum so that santri possess both religious and academic competencies.” (Interview, March 8, 2026)

However, the integration also creates considerable academic pressure, especially for *santri pelajar*. Participants described schedules that were highly demanding, requiring them to divide attention between pesantren activities, formal schooling, and additional assignments. Several santri reported fatigue, reduced study concentration, and limited time for deep engagement with classical texts.

This condition becomes more visible when competency-based learning models require santri not only to understand material but also to present, analyze, and apply knowledge in broader social contexts. Consequently, the educational system expands santri competencies while simultaneously increasing cognitive and institutional burdens.

Digitalization and Unequal Educational Adaptation

Digital technology has also reshaped learning practices within the pesantren. Access to e-books, online journals, and digital learning media has broadened educational resources available to santri.

“Today santri learn not only from classical texts, but also from digital sources such as e-books, journals, and interactive learning media.” (Interview, March 16, 2026)

Although digitalization provides wider access to knowledge, the findings reveal unequal levels of digital literacy among santri. Some adapt quickly to digital learning environments, while others continue to rely primarily on traditional learning methods. In several cases, the growing dependence on digital resources also reduced the intensity of face-to-face textual study traditionally associated with pesantren scholarship.

Hybrid-Fragmented Learning Orientation

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the transformation of pesantren education at Bustanul Ulum does not produce a fully integrated educational system. Instead, the pesantren operates within what this study conceptualizes as a *hybrid-fragmented learning orientation*. This condition refers to an educational situation in which institutional integration coexists with epistemological fragmentation.

Within this framework, santri experience multiple and sometimes competing learning orientations. Educational integration creates broader opportunities for academic mobility and intellectual development, yet it also generates tensions related to identity, authority, learning priorities, and knowledge construction. The findings therefore suggest that contemporary pesantren transformation involves not only institutional modernization, but also the negotiation of intellectual identity and educational meaning among different santri typologies.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the transformation of learning orientation at Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum reflects a broader shift in the structure of knowledge, educational authority, and santri identity within contemporary pesantren education. The integration of salafiyah education, formal schooling, and higher education has expanded educational opportunities for santri, yet it has also generated tensions between traditional religious learning and modern academic expectations. These findings indicate that pesantren transformation should not be viewed merely as institutional modernization, but as an ongoing negotiation between continuity and change.

One important finding concerns the changing orientation of learning among santri. The integration of formal education has encouraged santri to engage not only with classical Islamic texts but also with analytical reasoning, contextual interpretation, and interdisciplinary knowledge. This development supports Azra's (2022) argument regarding the reintegration of religious and modern sciences in Islamic education. In Bustanul Ulum, however, such integration remains uneven. Religious and general sciences coexist institutionally, yet they are not always connected through a coherent epistemological framework. Consequently, santri often move between different systems of knowledge without fully integrating them conceptually. This condition reflects a broader challenge within contemporary Islamic education, where institutional integration is often not accompanied by deeper epistemological integration between religious and modern scientific traditions (Sahin, 2018; Bálint & László, 2026).

This condition becomes visible in the experiences of the three santri typologies identified in this study. *Santri kitab* remain closely attached to classical textual traditions and maintain strong orientation toward religious authority. In contrast, *santri pelajar* are positioned between pesantren obligations and formal educational demands, requiring them to negotiate dual academic expectations simultaneously. Meanwhile, *mahasantri* demonstrate stronger engagement with research culture, critical inquiry, and academic discourse, but they also experience tensions between pesantren values and contemporary academic rationality. These findings suggest that educational integration does not necessarily produce a homogeneous intellectual culture; instead, it generates differentiated learning trajectories among santri.

The emergence of differentiated santri typologies can be understood through Geertz's (1960) perspective that views santri identity as dynamic rather than static. In the contemporary pesantren context, santri identity is increasingly shaped by educational background, institutional exposure, and academic orientation (Kawakip & Sulanam, 2023; Wahono et al., 2023). The findings reveal that the coexistence of *santri kitab*, *santri pelajar*, and *mahasantri* contributes to forms of epistemic stratification within the pesantren environment. Certain educational pathways are perceived as more modern, academically valuable, or socially relevant than others. As a result, educational differentiation gradually influences patterns of intellectual recognition and social positioning among santri themselves.

At the same time, the study confirms that the authority of the *kyai* remains central in preserving the moral and spiritual foundations of pesantren education, consistent with Dhofier's (1994) and Halim & Nubowo (2025), conception of pesantren as a tradition-based institution rooted in charismatic leadership.

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Nevertheless, the findings also indicate a gradual transformation in institutional governance. Educational management, curriculum planning, and technological development increasingly involve administrative structures and managerial considerations. This shift reflects a transition from purely charismatic authority toward a more hybrid governance system that combines traditional leadership with bureaucratic management. Although this transformation improves institutional effectiveness, it may also alter the traditional pattern of knowledge authority within pesantren.

Another important issue emerging from the findings is the persistence of epistemological fragmentation within an institution that appears structurally integrated. Bustanul Ulum has successfully developed an educational system connecting diniyah education, formal schooling, and higher education. However, the absence of deep conceptual synthesis between these domains causes religious and modern sciences to operate in parallel rather than interactively. This finding differs from dominant narratives that often portray pesantren modernization as a harmonious integration process. In practice, the integration observed in this study tends to be administrative and structural rather than epistemological. This condition supports Bano's (2020) argument that modernization in Islamic education frequently produces institutional hybridity accompanied by internal tensions.

The findings also show that educational integration creates significant academic pressure, particularly for *santri pelajar*. The combination of pesantren obligations, formal schooling, and additional extracurricular demands results in a dense educational schedule that affects concentration, study depth, and learning balance. In several cases, santri experienced difficulty maintaining intensive engagement with *kitab kuning* studies while simultaneously meeting formal academic requirements. This condition illustrates that the expansion of educational competencies may also produce cognitive overload and fragmented learning focus.

Digitalization further complicates this transformation process. Access to digital learning resources has expanded santri exposure to broader forms of knowledge, including academic journals, online materials, and interactive media. This finding aligns with Masud's (2022) argument that Islamic educational institutions increasingly operate within the dynamics of the global knowledge economy. Nevertheless, the study also found unequal levels of digital adaptation among santri. Some were able to utilize digital resources critically, while others relied primarily on conventional learning practices. Moreover, the growing dependence on digital learning raised concerns regarding the weakening of intensive textual study traditionally associated with pesantren scholarship. The expansion of digital learning environments also reshapes the transmission of religious knowledge by enabling santri to access broader interpretations and alternative sources of authority beyond conventional pesantren networks (Zaidiyah, 2023; Suresman et al., 2025).

The experience of *mahasantri* illustrates another important dimension of pesantren transformation, namely identity ambivalence. Their involvement in higher education exposes them to academic rationality, critical discourse, and modern intellectual traditions that are not always fully compatible with pesantren culture. This finding supports Hashim's (2021) observation that students in contemporary Islamic education frequently negotiate between religious commitment and modern academic expectations. In Bustanul Ulum,

this dual orientation often produces adaptive intellectual capacities, but it may also generate uncertainty regarding identity, authority, and intellectual belonging.

Taken together, the findings indicate that pesantren transformation is not a linear movement from tradition to modernity. Instead, it represents a dialectical process characterized by negotiation, partial integration, and continuous tension between competing educational orientations. Within this context, the concept of *hybrid-fragmented learning orientation* proposed in this study becomes important for understanding contemporary pesantren education. The concept refers to a condition in which institutional integration coexists with epistemological fragmentation, differentiated intellectual trajectories, and competing educational expectations among santri.

This study contributes theoretically by offering a more critical perspective on pesantren modernization. Previous studies have generally emphasized pesantren adaptability and curriculum integration, whereas this study shows that educational integration may simultaneously produce fragmentation, identity negotiation, and unequal intellectual positioning. In this regard, pesantren modernization should be understood not only as institutional expansion, but also as a transformation affecting the construction of knowledge, authority, and santri identity.

Practically, the findings suggest the need for stronger epistemological integration between religious and formal education within pesantren curricula. Educational integration should move beyond administrative coordination toward the development of conceptual connections between classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary scientific disciplines. The study also highlights the importance of reducing excessive academic burdens on santri through more balanced curriculum arrangements. In addition, pesantren institutions need to strengthen critical digital literacy while preserving intensive textual learning traditions that remain central to pesantren intellectual culture.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the transformation of santri learning orientation at Pondok Pesantren Bustanul Ulum Jember is not merely a process of educational expansion, but also a process of negotiating knowledge, authority, and intellectual identity within contemporary pesantren education. The integration of salafiyah education, formal schooling, and higher education has broadened santri academic exposure and learning opportunities. However, the findings show that this integration does not automatically create epistemological coherence. Instead, it produces differentiated learning orientations, uneven intellectual trajectories, and tensions between traditional religious learning and modern academic demands.

The study identifies that *santri kitab*, *santri pelajar*, and *mahasantri* develop distinct educational orientations shaped by their different institutional experiences. While educational integration encourages broader intellectual engagement, it also creates academic overload, fragmented learning focus, and identity ambivalence, particularly among santri navigating multiple educational systems simultaneously. These findings indicate that pesantren modernization involves a more complex dynamic than commonly portrayed in dominant narratives of harmonious educational integration.

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The main contribution of this study lies in the formulation of the concept of *hybrid-fragmented learning orientation*. This concept explains how institutional integration within pesantren may coexist with epistemological fragmentation and differentiated intellectual positioning among santri. In this regard, the study contributes to contemporary Islamic education scholarship by offering a more critical framework for understanding pesantren transformation beyond structural modernization alone. Therefore, strengthening epistemological dialogue between classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary academic knowledge becomes essential for developing a more integrative and sustainable model of pesantren education.

This study is limited to a single pesantren setting and therefore cannot fully represent the diversity of pesantren transformation in Indonesia. Future studies are needed to conduct broader comparative research across different pesantren models and regions. Further research may also explore strategies for strengthening epistemological integration between classical Islamic scholarship, formal education, and higher education while maintaining the intellectual depth and cultural identity of pesantren traditions. Overall, the findings suggest that the transformation of pesantren education should be understood not only as institutional modernization, but also as an ongoing dialectical process involving negotiation between tradition and modernity, religious authority and academic rationality, as well as continuity and change in santri learning orientation.

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