

Toward Excellent Islamic Boarding Schools: Reconstructing Educational Governance Based on Pesantren Values

Abdul Halim¹, Kojin², Ahmad Tanzeh³, Wardani⁴, Rohiqi Mahtum⁵

¹⁵ Universitas Bondowoso, Indonesia

²³ Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, Indonesia

⁴ Universitas Ibrahimy Situbondo, Indonesia

Received: 15/04/2026	Revised: 12/05/2026	Accepted: 30/06/2026
Abstract	Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are increasingly required to improve their educational quality and global competitiveness while preserving their distinctive Islamic identity and traditional values. This study addresses the need to reconstruct educational governance based on pesantren values as a sustainable strategy for institutional excellence. The purpose of this study is to develop a value-based educational governance model that integrates indigenous pesantren philosophy with contemporary governance principles. A qualitative multi-case study design was employed involving three Indonesian Islamic boarding schools. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and field notes, and analyzed using the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing with cross-case synthesis. The findings reveal that effective educational governance is built upon the integration of core pesantren values—ikhlas, amanah, syura, ukhuwah, ta'awun, tawassuth, and istiqamah—with transformational leadership, integrated quality assurance, digital governance, collaborative partnerships, and international engagement. Based on these findings, the study proposes the Excellent Islamic Boarding School Governance Model (EIBSGM) as a comprehensive framework for strengthening institutional quality while maintaining religious authenticity. The study concludes that governance reconstruction should prioritize the transformation of pesantren values into strategic governance principles rather than replacing traditional governance systems, thereby enabling Islamic boarding schools to achieve sustainable excellence and global competitiveness.	
Keywords	Islamic boarding schools; educational governance; pesantren values; transformational leadership; global competitiveness.	
Corresponding Author Abdul Halim Universitas Bondowoso, Indonesia; hosainimpd@gmail.com		

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) have long been recognized as one of the oldest and most influential indigenous Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Historically, pesantren have played a strategic role not only in transmitting Islamic knowledge but also in shaping moral character, preserving local wisdom, strengthening social cohesion, and producing religious scholars who contribute to national development. In recent decades, however, globalization, digital transformation, international educational standards, and increasing public expectations for educational quality have



fundamentally altered the landscape in which pesantren operate. These changes require pesantren to strengthen their institutional governance while maintaining their distinctive religious identity and traditional values. Consequently, reconstructing educational governance based on pesantren values has become an urgent academic and practical concern to ensure the sustainability and global competitiveness of Islamic boarding schools (Taqiyuddin & Aspandi, 2021).

Educational governance refers to the structures, processes, policies, leadership, accountability mechanisms, and stakeholder participation that determine how educational institutions are managed to achieve their objectives (UNESCO, 2017). Within the pesantren context, governance extends beyond administrative management because it is deeply embedded in religious authority, ethical leadership, communal participation, and the philosophical values inherited from generations of Islamic scholars. Fundamental pesantren values including *ikhlas* (sincerity), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *tawassuth* (moderation), *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation), and *al-muhafazhah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah* (preserving beneficial traditions while adopting better innovations) constitute the ethical foundation of institutional governance (Aspandi et al., 2021). These values distinguish pesantren governance from conventional educational management models by integrating spiritual, social, and organizational dimensions into decision-making processes (Madjid, 2002; Hidayat & Khalika, 2019).

Despite their historical resilience, many pesantren continue to encounter governance-related challenges. Previous studies have reported limitations in strategic planning, quality assurance systems, institutional accountability, leadership succession, financial transparency, digital governance, and international collaboration (Nizar & Churrahman, 2022). While government policies have encouraged educational modernization, debates persist regarding the appropriate balance between preserving traditional pesantren identity and adopting contemporary governance practices. Some scholars argue that modernization inevitably risks weakening the authenticity of pesantren culture, whereas others maintain that governance reform can strengthen institutional capacity without compromising religious values when innovation is rooted in pesantren philosophy (Azra, 2012; Tan, 2014). This divergence illustrates that governance transformation should not merely imitate modern management systems but should reconstruct governance through the internal values that have historically sustained pesantren institutions.

Recent research has increasingly examined Islamic educational leadership, institutional quality assurance, organizational culture, and educational innovation within pesantren (Sandra et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the existing literature largely discusses these dimensions separately, resulting in limited theoretical integration between governance principles and indigenous pesantren values. Few studies have proposed a comprehensive governance framework capable of integrating strategic leadership,

organizational culture, quality management, stakeholder engagement, digital transformation, and global competitiveness into a unified model grounded in pesantren philosophy. This theoretical gap limits the ability of Islamic educational institutions to formulate governance strategies that are simultaneously adaptive to global educational developments and faithful to their religious and cultural foundations.

This study addresses this gap by reconstructing educational governance based on pesantren values to formulate a governance model that supports institutional excellence and international competitiveness. The reconstruction proposed in this research views governance not merely as administrative effectiveness but as an integrated system combining visionary leadership, ethical decision-making, participatory management, quality assurance, digital innovation, and sustainable institutional development rooted in Islamic values. The study therefore aims to develop a conceptual framework for Excellent Islamic Boarding Schools that aligns governance reform with the philosophical foundations of pesantren. The findings demonstrate that educational excellence and global competitiveness can be achieved not by replacing traditional pesantren values with external governance models but by transforming those values into strategic governance principles that strengthen institutional quality, organizational resilience, and international engagement while preserving the authentic identity of pesantren.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative multi-case study design to reconstruct an educational governance model grounded in pesantren values for developing excellent and globally competitive Islamic boarding schools. A qualitative approach was selected because the research sought to understand governance practices, leadership patterns, institutional culture, and value systems embedded within pesantren rather than to measure predetermined variables statistically. The multi-case study enabled analytical comparison across different pesantren contexts, allowing the identification of shared governance principles while recognizing each institution's unique characteristics. The study adopted a constructivist paradigm, assuming that educational governance is socially constructed through interactions among religious leaders, teachers, students, administrators, alumni, and surrounding communities.

The research was conducted at three prominent Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia selected through purposive sampling because they have demonstrated continuous institutional development while maintaining strong pesantren traditions. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and field notes. Key informants included *kyai* (Islamic boarding school leaders), vice directors, principals, teachers, administrators, senior students, alumni,

and representatives from educational foundations. Institutional documents including strategic plans, quality assurance manuals, curriculum documents, organizational structures, accreditation reports, and digital governance policies—were also examined to strengthen data triangulation.

Table 1. Research Design

Research Component	Description
Research approach	Qualitative
Research design	Multi-case study
Research sites	Three Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia
Sampling technique	Purposive sampling
Participants	Kyai, principals, vice principals, teachers, administrators, students, alumni, foundation representatives
Data collection	Semi-structured interviews, participant observation, document analysis, field notes
Data analysis	Interactive model: data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing and verification
Trustworthiness	Triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, audit trail
Research outcome	Educational governance model based on pesantren values

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of three interconnected stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing with continuous verification. Interview transcripts, observation records, and institutional documents were coded using thematic analysis. Initial open coding identified governance-related concepts, followed by axial coding to establish relationships among leadership, organizational culture, governance mechanisms, institutional values, and educational quality. Selective coding was subsequently employed to integrate these categories into a coherent educational governance framework based on pesantren values.

To ensure research trustworthiness, four criteria of qualitative rigor were applied. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement, source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking with key informants. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of institutional contexts and governance practices. Dependability was maintained through a systematic audit trail documenting research procedures, coding decisions, and analytical processes. Confirmability was achieved through researcher reflexivity, peer debriefing, and cross-validation between interview findings, observational evidence, and institutional documents.

The final stage involved cross-case synthesis to identify recurring governance principles shared among the participating pesantren. Similarities and contextual differences were compared to formulate an integrative governance model that combines indigenous pesantren values with contemporary educational governance principles. This reconstruction provides a theoretical framework for

strengthening institutional excellence while preserving the philosophical identity of Islamic boarding schools and enhancing their capacity to respond to global educational challenges.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Reconstructing Educational Governance Based on Pesantren Values

The findings indicate that the governance of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) is fundamentally distinguished from conventional educational governance by its integration of spiritual values, religious authority, communal participation, and institutional accountability. Data collected through interviews, participant observation, and document analysis across the three research sites demonstrate that governance is not merely an administrative mechanism for managing educational resources but represents a value-based system that guides leadership, decision-making, curriculum development, financial management, quality assurance, and institutional sustainability. Rather than adopting modern governance principles without adaptation, the participating *pesantren* reconstructed governance by embedding indigenous *pesantren* values into every managerial process (Irwandi et al., 2023). This reconstruction reflects the philosophical principle of *al-muhafazhah 'ala al-qadim al-shalih wa al-akhdu bi al-jadid al-ashlah*, namely preserving beneficial traditions while embracing innovations that contribute to institutional excellence.

Interviews with *kyai*, school principals, and foundation administrators consistently revealed that governance decisions are rooted in Islamic ethical principles before managerial considerations. Institutional policies are generally formulated through *musyawarah* (collective deliberation), emphasizing consensus, transparency, and collective responsibility. Financial decisions involve multiple institutional stakeholders, while strategic planning incorporates both educational objectives and religious missions. These governance practices demonstrate that accountability within *pesantren* extends beyond legal compliance toward moral accountability before God, institutional responsibility toward society, and professional responsibility toward educational stakeholders. To synthesize the empirical findings, the principal governance values identified across the three *pesantren* are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Core Pesantren Values and Their Governance Functions

Pesantren Value	Governance Function	Institutional Contribution
<i>Ikhlas</i> (Sincerity)	Ethical leadership	Organizational commitment and service orientation
<i>Amanah</i> (Trustworthiness)	Accountability and transparency	Public trust and financial integrity
<i>Syura</i> (Consultation)	Participatory decision-making	Collective responsibility and institutional legitimacy

<i>Ukhuwah</i> (Brotherhood)	Organizational collaboration	Strengthened teamwork and social cohesion
<i>Ta'awun</i> (Mutual assistance)	Stakeholder participation	Community engagement and sustainable partnerships
<i>Tawassuth</i> (Moderation)	Adaptive governance	Balance between tradition and innovation
<i>Istiqamah</i> (Consistency)	Quality assurance	Continuous institutional improvement

As shown in **Table 2**, each pesantren value functions not only as a moral principle but also as an operational governance mechanism. The empirical evidence suggests that institutional effectiveness emerges from the interaction between ethical values and managerial practices. For example, *amanah* strengthens financial accountability through transparent budgeting systems, while *syura* encourages participatory leadership by involving teachers, administrators, alumni, and community representatives in strategic decision-making. Likewise, *istiqamah* promotes continuous quality improvement through regular evaluations, curriculum reviews, and institutional performance monitoring.

Observational data further revealed that governance reconstruction has transformed leadership practices within pesantren. Traditionally, leadership authority centered almost exclusively on the *kyai* as the primary religious and institutional leader (Mardia, 2022). Although the charismatic authority of the *kyai* remains highly respected, governance has gradually evolved toward a more collaborative structure characterized by delegated responsibilities, professional management, and distributed leadership. Educational directors, quality assurance units, financial administrators, curriculum development teams, and digital transformation committees increasingly contribute to institutional governance while maintaining respect for the spiritual authority of the *kyai*. This balance between charismatic leadership and organizational professionalism represents one of the most significant governance transformations observed during the study.

The reconstruction also extends to institutional quality assurance. Rather than relying solely on government accreditation standards, the participating pesantren integrate internal religious values into their quality assurance systems. Educational quality is assessed not only through students' academic achievements but also through indicators such as character formation, spiritual discipline, community service, leadership development, and religious commitment. Consequently, institutional success is evaluated through both measurable educational outcomes and moral-spiritual development (Muis et al., 2022).

These findings directly address the first objective of this study, namely reconstructing educational governance based on pesantren values. The empirical evidence demonstrates that governance reconstruction is not achieved through replacing traditional governance structures with modern administrative models. Instead, governance develops through institutional reinterpretation of traditional values to meet contemporary educational demands (Dacholfany et al., 2023b). Digital

administration, strategic planning, performance evaluation, and stakeholder engagement are adopted as managerial innovations while remaining consistent with pesantren philosophical foundations.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce the principles of value-based governance, which argue that organizational effectiveness depends upon alignment between institutional values and governance mechanisms (Hanum et al., 2023). Unlike conventional governance frameworks emphasizing efficiency, accountability, and managerial control, pesantren governance incorporates spiritual accountability as an equally important governance dimension. Decisions are evaluated not only according to organizational performance but also according to ethical and religious considerations. This distinctive governance characteristic differentiates Islamic boarding schools from secular educational organizations.

The findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the central role of organizational culture in determining institutional effectiveness. Earlier research has shown that pesantren sustainability is largely supported by strong religious traditions, visionary leadership, and communal participation. However, many previous investigations discussed these elements independently without integrating them into a comprehensive governance framework (Alawiyah et al., 2023). The present findings extend previous scholarship by demonstrating that pesantren values function as interconnected governance principles shaping leadership, organizational culture, accountability, institutional resilience, and quality assurance simultaneously.

Nevertheless, several differences from earlier studies also emerged. Previous governance research frequently conceptualized modernization as the adoption of external management standards. In contrast, the present study found that modernization becomes more sustainable when innovations are translated into the language of pesantren values. Digital information systems, strategic planning, internal audits, and quality management are more readily accepted by institutional members when interpreted as practical expressions of *amanah*, *ikhlas*, *syura*, and *istiqamah* rather than as externally imposed administrative requirements (Mardia, 2024). This finding suggests that governance reform is culturally embedded and cannot be successfully implemented without considering institutional identity.

Another significant finding concerns stakeholder participation. The study observed increasing collaboration among pesantren, alumni, higher education institutions, government agencies, private industries, and local communities (Solehudin et al., 2025). Such partnerships contribute to curriculum enrichment, entrepreneurial education, digital literacy, scholarship programs, and international cooperation. These collaborative governance practices strengthen institutional adaptability while preserving pesantren autonomy. Rather than diminishing the authority of the *kyai*, stakeholder participation expands institutional capacity to respond to increasingly complex educational challenges.

Overall, the first set of findings confirms that educational governance reconstruction based on pesantren values provides a sustainable pathway toward institutional excellence. Governance rooted in *ikhlas, amanah, syura, ukhuwah, ta'awun, tawassuth, and istiqamah* enables Islamic boarding schools to integrate spiritual identity with professional educational management. This reconstruction not only enhances organizational effectiveness but also strengthens institutional legitimacy, public trust, educational quality, and long-term sustainability. These findings establish the foundation for the subsequent discussion concerning the integration of traditional pesantren values with contemporary educational governance practices presented in the next section.

2. Integrating Traditional Pesantren Values with Contemporary Educational Governance

The second major finding demonstrates that educational excellence in Islamic boarding schools is achieved not by replacing traditional pesantren values with modern management practices, but by integrating both into a coherent governance framework. Evidence gathered from interviews, observations, and institutional documents indicates that the three pesantren have successfully combined religious traditions with contemporary educational governance, thereby creating adaptive institutions capable of responding to national educational reforms and global challenges. This integration reflects the dynamic nature of pesantren as institutions that preserve Islamic identity while continuously adapting to social, technological, and educational change.

The integration process is particularly evident in leadership practices. Historically, pesantren governance has been characterized by the central authority of the *kyai*, whose legitimacy derives from religious knowledge, moral integrity, and social trust. While this charismatic leadership remains an indispensable feature of pesantren, the findings reveal a gradual shift toward collaborative and distributed leadership (Bush, 2021). Administrative responsibilities are increasingly delegated to professional management teams, including directors of education, quality assurance units, financial managers, curriculum coordinators, and information technology divisions. This organizational transformation does not diminish the authority of the *kyai*; instead, it enables religious leadership to function strategically while operational management is carried out professionally.

The participants consistently emphasized that leadership effectiveness depends upon the integration of spiritual values with managerial competence. According to several *kyai* and school principals, educational leaders must simultaneously possess religious integrity (*akhlaq*), strategic vision, managerial capability, communication skills, and technological literacy. Consequently, leadership is no longer perceived merely as institutional authority but as a process of facilitating organizational learning, innovation, collaboration, and sustainable development (Ikhwan, 2021).

Another important finding concerns the integration of organizational culture with quality assurance. The participating pesantren have established internal quality assurance systems that

incorporate both national educational standards and institutional religious values (Leithwood et al., 2021). Academic evaluation is complemented by assessments of students' character, discipline, worship practices, leadership capacity, social responsibility, and community engagement. Consequently, educational quality is interpreted holistically rather than solely through academic achievement or accreditation scores. The governance reconstruction identified in this study is summarized in Figure 1.

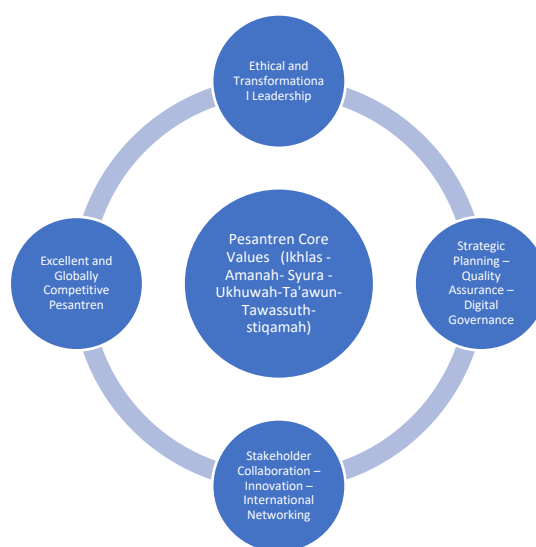


Figure 1. Integrated Educational Governance Framework Based on Pesantren Values

As illustrated in **Figure 1**, pesantren values function as the foundational layer of governance. Ethical leadership translates these values into institutional strategies, which are subsequently operationalized through strategic planning, quality assurance mechanisms, digital transformation, and stakeholder collaboration. These governance processes ultimately contribute to institutional excellence and global competitiveness.

The findings also indicate that digital transformation has become one of the most significant aspects of governance reconstruction. All participating pesantren have adopted digital technologies to improve educational administration, academic services, communication, and institutional management (Hasan, 2021). Digital attendance systems, academic information systems, online learning platforms, electronic financial reporting, digital libraries, and institutional websites have become integral components of governance.

Interestingly, digitalization is not viewed merely as technological modernization. Rather, participants consistently described digital innovation as an instrument for implementing the Islamic value of *amanah* (O.E.C.D., 2024). Digital information systems increase transparency, improve accountability, reduce administrative errors, and facilitate evidence-based decision-making. Likewise,

online communication platforms strengthen collaboration among teachers, students, parents, alumni, and institutional partners.

These findings challenge earlier assumptions suggesting that modernization inevitably weakens pesantren traditions. Instead, the present study demonstrates that technological innovation can reinforce traditional values when implemented within an ethical governance framework. Digital governance becomes an extension of pesantren philosophy rather than a replacement for it.

Institutional collaboration emerged as another essential component of governance integration. Unlike traditional governance models that primarily focused on internal institutional management, contemporary pesantren actively establish partnerships with universities, government agencies, industries, international organizations, alumni associations, and local communities (Hallinger, 2021). Such collaboration supports curriculum development, teacher professional development, entrepreneurship education, student exchange programs, research collaboration, and community empowerment initiatives.

The empirical evidence further reveals that collaborative governance strengthens institutional resilience (Fullan, 2023). During interviews, administrators emphasized that external partnerships provide additional financial resources, technological expertise, professional networks, and international exposure while maintaining institutional autonomy. Governance therefore becomes increasingly participatory without compromising the pesantren's religious identity.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings strongly support Transformational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes the role of visionary leaders in inspiring organizational change while maintaining shared values and collective commitment (Harris, 2022). The findings also reinforce Institutional Theory, suggesting that organizational sustainability depends upon balancing institutional legitimacy with environmental adaptation. Pesantren maintain legitimacy by preserving religious traditions while simultaneously responding to external educational demands through governance innovation.

The findings additionally extend the literature on Good Educational Governance. Conventional governance frameworks typically emphasize transparency, accountability, participation, efficiency, responsiveness, and effectiveness. While these principles are also evident within the participating pesantren, this study identifies an additional governance dimension **spiritual accountability** (Tan, 2022). Educational decisions are evaluated according to ethical, religious, and social consequences in addition to organizational performance indicators. This multidimensional accountability represents an important theoretical contribution because it integrates managerial governance with Islamic ethical philosophy.

Comparison with previous studies further strengthens these conclusions. Earlier investigations generally reported that pesantren modernization involved curriculum reform, educational management improvement, and infrastructure development. However, relatively few studies have explained how indigenous values function as governance mechanisms that facilitate institutional transformation (Dhofier, 2022). The present findings therefore contribute a more comprehensive explanation by demonstrating that values such as *ikhlas*, *amanah*, *syura*, and *ukhuwah* operate simultaneously as ethical principles, organizational norms, leadership standards, and strategic governance instruments.

Another noteworthy contribution concerns organizational culture. Previous scholars often treated culture as a supporting factor for educational management. In contrast, this study demonstrates that organizational culture constitutes the central driver of governance reconstruction. Shared values shape institutional identity, influence decision-making processes, encourage stakeholder commitment, and strengthen organizational adaptability during periods of change (Azra, 2023).

The integration of traditional values with contemporary governance practices ultimately enables pesantren to respond effectively to globalization without experiencing an identity crisis. Rather than perceiving globalization as a threat, the participating institutions reinterpret global educational standards through Islamic ethical values. International collaboration, digital learning, research development, entrepreneurship education, and institutional accreditation are accepted because they are understood as practical manifestations of *maslahah* (public benefit) and institutional responsibility.

Overall, these findings answer the second research objective by demonstrating that governance reconstruction depends upon the successful integration of pesantren traditions with contemporary educational governance. This integration produces adaptive institutions capable of maintaining religious authenticity while continuously improving educational quality, organizational effectiveness, stakeholder participation, and global engagement. The subsequent section synthesizes these findings into a comprehensive governance model for developing excellent and globally competitive Islamic boarding schools.

3. Toward Excellent Islamic Boarding Schools: A Governance Model for Global Competitiveness

The final stage of this study synthesizes the empirical findings into an integrated governance model designed to support the development of Excellent Islamic Boarding Schools. The cross-case analysis demonstrates that institutional excellence is not determined solely by educational facilities, financial capacity, or academic achievement. Instead, sustainable excellence emerges from the interaction between pesantren values, ethical leadership, professional governance, continuous quality improvement, digital transformation, stakeholder collaboration, and international engagement. These

dimensions collectively constitute a governance ecosystem that enables Islamic boarding schools to remain faithful to their religious identity while responding effectively to global educational developments.

The comparative analysis across the three research sites revealed a consistent governance pattern despite differences in institutional history, organizational structure, and educational programs (Hidayat & Khalika, 2022). All participating pesantren placed Islamic values at the center of organizational decision-making, while simultaneously adopting contemporary governance mechanisms to improve institutional effectiveness. This finding indicates that governance reconstruction is not merely an administrative reform but a philosophical transformation in which traditional religious values become strategic organizational resources for institutional innovation.

Based on these findings, this study proposes the Excellent Islamic Boarding School Governance Model (EIBSGM) as a conceptual framework for reconstructing educational governance (Sutopo, 2023). Unlike conventional governance models that primarily emphasize efficiency, accountability, and managerial effectiveness, the EIBSGM integrates spiritual values with organizational professionalism. The model consists of six interrelated governance dimensions.

Table 3. Excellent Islamic Boarding School Governance Model (EIBSGM)

Governance Dimension	Main Components	Expected Outcomes
Value-Based Governance	<i>Ikhlās, Amanah, Syura, Ukhuwah, Tawassuth, Ta'awun</i>	Strong institutional identity and ethical culture
Transformational Leadership	Visionary <i>kyai</i> , distributed leadership, strategic management	Organizational innovation and sustainable development
Integrated Quality Assurance	Academic quality, character education, spiritual development, continuous evaluation	Holistic educational excellence
Digital Governance	Academic information systems, digital learning, financial transparency, data management	Efficient, transparent, and responsive management
Collaborative Governance	Government, universities, industries, alumni, communities, international partners	Institutional resilience and global networking
Global Competitiveness	International curriculum, foreign partnerships, research productivity, entrepreneurship, graduate competitiveness	Excellent and globally recognized pesantren

As presented in Table 3, governance reconstruction is multidimensional. The first dimension, Value-Based Governance, functions as the philosophical foundation of institutional management. Rather than serving merely as ethical guidelines, pesantren values become operational governance principles that shape organizational culture, leadership behavior, policy formulation, and institutional accountability. This confirms that governance effectiveness depends upon the alignment between organizational values and managerial practices.

The second dimension, Transformational Leadership, emerged consistently across all research sites (Fillah et al., 2023). The findings indicate that the role of the *kyai* has evolved from being solely a charismatic religious authority into becoming a strategic institutional leader who facilitates innovation while preserving pesantren traditions. Leadership is increasingly characterized by delegation, teamwork, organizational learning, and evidence-based decision-making. This evolution reflects the transition from individual-centered leadership toward institutional leadership without diminishing the spiritual legitimacy of the *kyai*.

The third dimension concerns Integrated Quality Assurance. Unlike conventional educational institutions that primarily evaluate academic outcomes, pesantren assess institutional quality through a balanced integration of cognitive achievement, spiritual maturity, moral character, leadership competence, entrepreneurial capacity, and social responsibility (Khorri et al., 2024). This holistic quality framework strengthens graduate competitiveness because students develop intellectual competence alongside ethical and spiritual resilience.

The fourth dimension, Digital Governance, represents one of the most significant governance innovations identified in this research. Digital transformation has enhanced administrative efficiency, institutional transparency, communication effectiveness, and educational service quality (Abidin et al., 2024). More importantly, digital technology is interpreted as an instrument for implementing Islamic ethical principles rather than merely improving operational efficiency. Financial transparency, online reporting systems, digital archives, and academic information systems are viewed as practical manifestations of *amanah* and institutional accountability.

Another important finding concerns Collaborative Governance. The empirical evidence demonstrates that sustainable institutional development requires active collaboration among pesantren and external stakeholders. Partnerships with higher education institutions, government agencies, industries, alumni, international organizations, and local communities have significantly strengthened curriculum development, teacher capacity building, student mobility, entrepreneurship education, research collaboration, and community empowerment programs. These collaborative networks increase institutional adaptability while maintaining the autonomy and identity of pesantren (O.E.C.D., 2025).

Finally, Global Competitiveness represents the ultimate outcome of governance reconstruction (Madjid, 2020). The participating pesantren no longer define excellence solely in terms of national accreditation or student enrollment. Instead, institutional success increasingly includes international recognition, research productivity, digital readiness, graduate employability, entrepreneurial competence, foreign language proficiency, and participation in global educational networks. These findings indicate that globally competitive pesantren can preserve their Islamic identity while actively contributing to international educational discourse.

From the perspective of the research objectives presented in the Introduction, these findings provide a comprehensive answer to the central research question: How can educational governance based on pesantren values contribute to the development of excellent Islamic boarding schools? The findings demonstrate that institutional excellence is achieved through governance reconstruction rather than governance replacement. Modern management systems become effective only when interpreted through indigenous pesantren values. Consequently, governance innovation strengthens, rather than weakens, institutional authenticity.

Scientifically, this finding extends existing theories of educational governance in several important ways. First, it broadens the concept of Good Educational Governance by introducing spiritual accountability as an essential governance dimension. While conventional governance emphasizes transparency, participation, efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability, this study argues that governance in Islamic educational institutions must also incorporate accountability before God (*hablum minallah*) alongside accountability to society (*hablum minannas*). This dual accountability creates a more comprehensive governance paradigm that integrates managerial performance with ethical responsibility.

Second, the study enriches Institutional Theory by demonstrating that organizational legitimacy is sustained not only through compliance with external regulations but also through the preservation of institutional values (U.N.E.S.C.O., 2024). The participating pesantren successfully adapted to globalization without experiencing organizational identity loss because innovation was continuously interpreted through pesantren philosophy. This finding suggests that cultural identity should be regarded as a strategic organizational asset rather than an obstacle to modernization.

Third, the proposed governance model contributes to the growing literature on Islamic Educational Leadership by emphasizing that leadership effectiveness emerges from the integration of spirituality, professionalism, collaboration, innovation, and strategic governance. Leadership is therefore understood not simply as authority but as the capacity to transform institutional values into sustainable organizational practices.

The findings also have important practical implications. For policymakers, the proposed governance model offers a framework for developing national policies that recognize the unique characteristics of pesantren while encouraging institutional modernization. For pesantren leaders, the model provides practical guidance for strengthening strategic planning, quality assurance, digital transformation, and stakeholder engagement without compromising Islamic values (Bank, 2022). For higher education institutions and teacher education programs, the model offers theoretical foundations for preparing future educational leaders capable of managing faith-based educational institutions in increasingly complex global environments.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. The research focused on three Indonesian pesantren with relatively established governance systems; therefore, the findings may not fully represent smaller or newly established Islamic boarding schools. Future studies may employ mixed-methods approaches involving larger samples to examine the relationship between value-based governance, organizational performance, educational quality, and graduate outcomes. Comparative studies involving Islamic educational institutions in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, or Africa would also strengthen the international applicability of the proposed governance model.

Overall, the synthesis of the findings confirms that the Excellent Islamic Boarding School Governance Model (EIBSGM) provides a comprehensive framework for reconstructing educational governance based on pesantren values. The model demonstrates that institutional excellence and global competitiveness are not achieved by abandoning traditional Islamic values but by transforming those values into strategic governance principles that promote ethical leadership, professional management, organizational resilience, digital innovation, collaborative partnerships, and sustainable educational quality. Accordingly, this study contributes both theoretically and practically to the advancement of Islamic educational governance and offers a new direction for the future development of globally competitive Islamic boarding schools.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that reconstructing educational governance based on pesantren values provides a sustainable framework for developing excellent and globally competitive Islamic boarding schools. The findings reveal that institutional excellence is achieved not by replacing traditional governance systems with modern management approaches, but by integrating indigenous pesantren values with contemporary educational governance. Values such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *syura* (consultative decision-making), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation), *tawassuth* (moderation), and *istiqamah* (consistency) function as strategic governance principles that shape leadership, organizational culture, quality assurance, digital transformation, stakeholder collaboration, and institutional accountability. Based on the cross-case analysis, this study proposes the Excellent Islamic Boarding School Governance Model (EIBSGM), consisting of six interconnected dimensions: value-based governance, transformational leadership, integrated quality assurance, digital governance, collaborative governance, and global competitiveness. Collectively, these dimensions provide an integrated governance ecosystem capable of strengthening institutional

resilience while preserving the philosophical identity of pesantren in the face of rapidly changing educational environments.

The study contributes theoretically by extending the discourse on Islamic educational governance through the integration of spiritual accountability with the principles of good educational governance, thereby offering a governance paradigm that balances ethical values, professional management, and organizational innovation. Practically, the proposed model provides strategic guidance for policymakers, pesantren leaders, and educational practitioners seeking to enhance institutional quality without compromising Islamic traditions and cultural identity. Nevertheless, this research is limited to three Indonesian pesantren employing a qualitative multi-case study design; therefore, its findings should be interpreted within similar institutional contexts. Future research is encouraged to validate the proposed model using quantitative or mixed-method approaches across broader educational settings and comparative international contexts. Such studies would strengthen the generalizability of the Excellent Islamic Boarding School Governance Model (EIBSGM) and further enrich the development of value-based educational governance for Islamic boarding schools in the era of globalization.

REFERENCES

- Abidin, Z., Dasuki, M., Karim, A., Umam, K., & Amrozi, S. R. (2024). Exploring Leadership Models in Islamic Education: A Comparative Study of Mono and Dual Leadership Structures in East Java Pesantren. *QALAMUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, Dan Agama*, 17(2), 15. <https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v17i2.7833>
- Alawiyah, T., Gaffar, A., & Rosa, A. T. R. (2023). Transformational Leadership in Islamic Boarding Schools: Strategies for Improving Student Quality. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 12(4), 17. <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v12i04.8143>.
- Aspandi, A., Sukron, A., K., A., Budiman, A. M., & Sopandi. (2021). Islamic Boarding School Governance and Islamic Boarding School Education from the Perspective of Qur'anic Ethics with a Case Study of Al-Khoziny. 2025. *Journal of Mathematics Instruction, Social Research and Opinion*, 5(3), 12. <https://doi.org/10.58421/misro.v5i3.1444>.
- Azra, A. (2023). *Islamic Education in Indonesia: Tradition and Modernization toward the Twenty-First Century* (Revised). Kencana Prenada Media.
- Bank, W. (2022). *Realizing the Future of Learning: From Learning Poverty to Learning for Everyone, Everywhere*. World Bank Publications.
- Bush, T. (2021). School Leadership and Educational Management: Theory, Policy, and Practice. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 48(4), 54.
- Dacholfany, M. I., Ikhwan, A., Budiman, A., & Hutabarat, Z. S. (2023a). Model of Educational Leadership Management in Boarding Schools. 2023. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, 8(1), 14. <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i1.339>.
- Dacholfany, M. I., Ikhwan, A., Budiman, A., & Hutabarat, Z. S. (2023b). Model of Educational Leadership Management in Boarding Schools. 2024. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, 8(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v8i1.339>.
- Dhofier, Z. (2022). *The Tradition of Pesantren: The Role of the Kyai in the Maintenance of Traditional Islam in Indonesia* (Revised, p. 3).
- Fillah, Z. L., Shasmeen, A., & Rokimin. (2023). Integrating Total Quality Management (TQM) and Islamic Educational Governance: A Framework for Enhancing Educational Quality in Pondok Pesantren. *Proceeding of International Conference on Islamic Boarding School (ICOP)*, 3(1), 32. <https://doi.org/10.61159/icop.v3i1.888>
- Fullan, M. (2023). *Leading in a Culture of Change*. Jossey-Bass Education Series. Wiley.
- Hallinger, P. (2021). Leadership for Learning: What We Have Learned from 30 Years of Empirical Research. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 48(1), 12.
- Hanum, A., Arsyad, J., Syafi'i, I., & Zarkasyi, K. H. A. S. (2023). Educational Leadership in Islamic

- Boarding Schools in the Perspective of. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 12(2), 16. <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v12i02.3939>.
- Harris, A. (2022). Distributed Leadership and School Improvement. 2021. *School Leadership & Management*, 41(2), 21.
- Hasan, N. M. (2021). Islam, and the Transformation of Pesantren in Indonesia. 2018. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 22(1), 21.
- Hidayat, K., & Khalika, N. (2022). *Pesantren dan Transformasi Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia*. Mizan Publishing.
- Ikhwan, A. (2021). Leadership in Islamic Educational Institutions: A Conceptual Framework. 2019. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education. Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo*, 7(2), 22.
- Irwandi, I., Fatwanti, D., Syarifudin, E., Muslihah, E., & Patimah, S. (2023). Implementation of Islamic Educational Management through Boarding-Based Student Development to Realize an Effective Madrasah. *International Journal of Educational Research. EDUJAVARE Publisher*, 18(3), 21. <https://doi.org/10.70610/edujavare.1504>.
- Khori, A., Faizal, J., A., & Lugowi, R. A. (2024). Managing Democratic Education within Pesantren Traditions: A Multi-Case Study of Islamic Boarding Schools in Cianjur, Indonesia. *Tarbawi: Jurnal Keilmuan Manajemen Pendidikan*, 12(1), 44. <https://doi.org/10.32678/tarbawi.v12i01.12252>
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2021). Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership Revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 12.
- Madjid, N. (2020). *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren: Sebuah Potret Perjalanan*. Paramadina.
- Mardia. (2022). Islamic Boarding School Education Governance in Building the Character of Students in the Era of Disruption. *UIN Alauddin Makassar*, 3(2), 16. <https://doi.org/10.24252/edu.v3i2.45271>.
- Mardia. (2024). Islamic Boarding School Education Governance in Building the Character of Students in the Era of Disruption. *UIN Alauddin Makassar*, 3(2), 17. <https://doi.org/10.24252/edu.v3i2.45271>.
- Muis, R. R., Indriyani, L., Arifudin, I., Gloria, R. Y., & Wiradinata, D. (2022). The Transformation of Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia: A Shift in Organizational Management and Leadership Patterns. *Jurnal Pendidikan Untuk Semua*, 9(1), 14. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jpus.v9n1.p67-74>.
- Nizar, A., & Churrahman, T. (2022). Implementation of Islamic Education Management at Islamic Boarding School. 2022. *Academia Open*, 6(7), 21. <https://doi.org/10.21070/acopen.6.2022.2259>.
- O.E.C.D. (2024). *School Leadership for Learning: Insights from TALIS*. OECD Publishing.
- O.E.C.D. (2025). *Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing.
- Sandra, I., Kurniawan, R. A., & Alfian, M. (2020). Governing Islamic Education in a Decentralized System: A Comparative Study of Public Schools, Islamic Boarding Schools, and Pesantren in West Sumatra. 2025. *STKIP Subang*, 12(2), 13. <https://doi.org/10.36989/didaktik.v12i02.12928>.
- Solehudin, S., Hirawati, S., A., & Iskandar, T. (2025). Peran Kepala Sekolah dalam Penguatan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam di Sekolah Berbasis Pesantren Indonesia. 2025. *Dirosat: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 11(1), 12. <https://doi.org/10.28944/dirosat.v11i1.2603>.
- Sutopo, L. (2023). Digital Good Governance in Pesantren-Based Madrasahs: A Conceptual Model. *Mudir: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 8(2), 12. <https://doi.org/10.55352/mudir.v8i2.2848>
- Tan, C. (2022). *Islamic Education and Indoctrination: The Case in Indonesia*. Routledge.
- Taqiyuddin, I., & Aspandi, A. (2021). The Transformation of Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools into Integrated Pesantren: Curriculum, Governance, and Technological Adaptation. *Jurnal Pendidikan*, 12(1), 12. <https://doi.org/10.33650/pjp.v12i1.10408>.
- U.N.E.S.C.O. (2024). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO Publishing.