

# Balancing Tradition and Modernity: Adaptation Strategies of Islamic Boarding Schools in the Era of Globalization

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## ABSTRACT

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**Introduction:** Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a crucial role in Southeast Asian education by integrating religious knowledge with character development. However, globalization and the demands of modern education pose significant challenges for traditional pesantren, especially in balancing classical Islamic teachings with contemporary academic and vocational competencies. While some pesantren have adapted to these changes, there is a need for more institution-specific studies that explore how individual pesantren navigate this transformation.

**Objectives:** This study aims to analyze the role and adaptation strategies of Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek in addressing contemporary educational challenges. It seeks to understand how the institution sustains its traditional Islamic education while responding to the demands of modern academics and technology. Specifically, the research examines curriculum development, institutional governance, community engagement, and the perceptions of stakeholders including students, parents, and educators.

**Methods:** A qualitative research approach was employed to provide an in-depth understanding of the institution's adaptation strategies. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns and themes, and triangulation techniques were applied to enhance the validity and credibility of the findings.

**Results:** The findings reveal that Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek remains strongly committed to classical Islamic education, emphasizing subjects such as Fiqh, Hadith, Tafsir, and Sufism. One of the institution's distinctive features is its structured mentorship system, in which students take on mentoring roles before receiving formal academic recognition. This approach fosters leadership skills and promotes deeper engagement with religious texts. Despite external pressures to modernize, the pesantren has maintained its traditional approach, bolstered by strong community trust and a firm adherence to core religious values.

**Conclusions:** The study concludes that Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek effectively sustains traditional Islamic education through mentorship and community support, even in the face of modern challenges. However, it also identifies a need to integrate supplementary subjects such as language skills, vocational training, and interdisciplinary Islamic studies to enhance students' future career prospects without compromising religious integrity. This institution-specific case contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic education reform and highlights areas for future research, including comparative studies across different pesantren and the inclusion of quantitative methods to assess educational outcomes and stakeholder perceptions.

**Keywords:** Islamic boarding schools, educational adaptation, religious education, mentorship, curriculum development

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools are a significant cultural heritage that illustrates the identity of a nation through education. One of the most enduring models of Islamic educational institutions in Southeast Asia is the Islamic boarding school, which has existed since the 14th century (Latif & Hafid, 2021). These institutions have historically produced scholars and national leaders who are both devout and highly skilled in their respective fields (Thahir, 2014). The role of religious education, particularly in shaping moral character and religious understanding, is considered crucial for children from an early age (Ulfatin et al., 2020). Islamic boarding schools focus on classical religious texts, equipping students with knowledge of Islamic teachings such as Fiqh, Hadith, Tafsir al-Quran, Tauhid, and Sufism (Jamil et al., 2019). Furthermore, they aim to cultivate students with strong Islamic character (Ma'arif et al., 2023). The leadership of the kyai is central to these institutions, as they maintain, develop, and implement key policies within the schools (Anam et al., 2019). Historically, the spread of Islam in Patani can be traced back to the 12th century, brought by preachers and traders from the Middle East (Aslan, 2019). Other perspectives suggest that Islam was introduced by preachers from West Asia, South Asia, and North Africa (Habibah & Rosdi, 2024). The significant turning point occurred when the King of Patani, Phaya Tu Nakpa, embraced Islam in the 14th century, leading to the widespread adoption of Islam and the establishment of Islamic educational institutions (Sara, 2019). Initially, religious education was conducted in mosques, surau, mushalla, and teachers' homes before the emergence of formal Islamic boarding schools (Aslan et al., 2020). One of the earliest recorded Islamic boarding schools in Patani was the Sena Patani Village Islamic Boarding School, founded by Faqih Wan Musa bin Wan Muhammad Saleh al-Laqihi in the 16th century (Ardae & Wan, 2020). Today, these institutions remain a strong symbol of Patani's Islamic Malay identity (Dorloh & Hashim, 2019).

Islamic boarding schools in Patani have distinct regional characteristics, particularly in provinces such as Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun (Awang, 2016). These institutions are more than just educational centers; they also function as hubs for social, economic, and cultural activities (Horstmann, 2008). However, unlike formalized education systems, the curriculum in Islamic boarding schools is not standardized, and each kyai implements their own teaching methods. The primary subjects taught include the reading and writing of Malay and Arabic, religious sciences such as tawhid, sharia, fiqh, morals, tarikh, nahwu, sharaf, and falak, as well as Quranic memorization (Sarkar, 2014). A significant aspect of the educational approach in Patani boarding schools is the emphasis on the study of classical Islamic texts and the use of the Jawi script, which aligns with the linguistic and cultural identity of the Patani Malay community (Abdullah, 2008). In recent years, however, these institutions have encountered challenges due to social transformations and the rapid development of globalization. Some sectors of society have begun to question the relevance of traditional Islamic boarding schools, advocating for modern educational approaches and curriculum adjustments (Purwanto et al., 2020). Despite these pressures, many parents continue to value Islamic boarding schools for their role in instilling religious knowledge, discipline, and strong moral character in students.

Several studies suggest that Islamic boarding schools must integrate modern educational approaches while maintaining their core religious and cultural identity. Research highlights that adapting curricula to include contemporary subjects such as science, technology, and language skills can help these institutions remain relevant in the modern educational landscape (Purnomo et al., 2023). Additionally, leveraging digital technology in teaching and administration can enhance educational delivery and institutional management without compromising traditional values (Ma'arif et al., 2023).

While previous studies have examined the historical significance and curriculum of Islamic boarding schools (Thahir, 2014; Jamil et al., 2019; Ma'arif et al., 2023), there is limited research on how individual Islamic boarding schools, particularly Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek, navigate these contemporary challenges. Most existing literature focuses on general trends and historical narratives rather than specific case studies that analyze the adaptation of Islamic boarding schools to modern educational demands (Purwanto et al., 2020; Purnomo et al., 2023). This gap in the literature presents an opportunity to explore how Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek continues to maintain its educational mission while responding to the evolving needs of society.

The objective of this study is to examine the role and adaptation strategies of Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek in addressing contemporary educational challenges. The research aims to assess the institution's ability to balance traditional Islamic education with modern academic and technological advancements. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on a single, institution-specific analysis, which is rarely explored in existing research on Islamic boarding

schools. Furthermore, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on educational transformation within religious institutions by offering insights into how Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek sustains its relevance in the modern era. The scope of the study includes an analysis of curriculum development, institutional governance, community engagement, and the perception of stakeholders, including students, parents, and educators.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Islamic Boarding School

Islamic boarding schools are traditional educational institutions that serve as centers for Islamic learning (Jubba et al., 2021). These institutions are typically led by a kyai, who plays a central role in education and decision-making (Ma'arif et al., 2023). The primary purpose of Islamic boarding schools is to disseminate Islamic religious knowledge and instill moral values in students and society (Islamic et al., 2024). These institutions uphold Islamic teachings and emphasize religious morals as the foundation for daily life (Purwanto et al., 2020). Islamic boarding schools are structured around five fundamental elements: the kyai, santri (students), mosque, dormitories, and religious books (Ihsan et al., 2021; Supriyanto et al., 2022; Isbah, 2020). They perform two essential functions: providing structured religious education and acting as institutions that uphold and spread Islamic values within both the boarding school community and the broader society (Irawan, 2022).

The term "pondok" originates from the Arabic word "Funduq," meaning dormitory or lodging (Oktari & Kosasih, 2019). The phrase "Pondok Pesantren" combines "pondok" and "pesantren," both referring to an Islamic educational institution where students receive instruction (Hidayat et al., 2020). Etymologically, "pesantren" derives from "santri" with the prefix "pe-" and suffix "-an," signifying a place for students (Aziz et al., 2022; Fitriyah et al., 2018). The term "santri" itself originates from "sant," meaning good people, and "tra," meaning helpful, thus defining pesantren as an institution that nurtures virtuous individuals (Ali Nasith, 2024). Imron Arifin defines an Islamic boarding school as a dormitory-based traditional educational institution where students live under the guidance of one or more kyai (I. Arifin, 1993). The kyai, assisted by ustaz, oversees students and plays a critical role in their religious and moral education (Asiah et al., 2022). The kyai serves as a mentor, educator, and community leader (Bajari et al., 2021; Maharani et al., 2016). The success of an Islamic boarding school is heavily influenced by its leadership (Permadani et al., 2018; Anam et al., 2019a; I. Arifin et al., 2018). Islamic boarding schools are distinct from other educational institutions due to their flexible educational approach: (1) students are not restricted by age, (2) lifelong learning is encouraged, (3) there are no time constraints on learning activities, (4) students can stay indefinitely as long as they follow regulations, and (5) the pace and depth of learning depend on the individual student's dedication (Solichin & Effendy, 2020). Each Islamic boarding school develops its own unique culture based on the kyai's leadership, social environment, institutional values, and vision (Ihsan et al., 2021). Despite these differences, all Islamic boarding schools emphasize religious discipline, Islamic brotherhood, and mutual cooperation. The schools maintain traditions that reinforce their role as educational, social, and ideological centers for the Islamic community (Kawakip & Sulanam, 2023).

### The Education and Teaching System of Pesantren

Islamic boarding school education consists of both physical and cultural elements. The physical elements include facilities such as dormitories, mosques, and classrooms (Dhofier, 2011). Meanwhile, the cultural elements encompass values such as obedience to the kyai, sincerity, humility, and religious traditions that have been preserved for generations (M. Z. Arifin, 2022). The education system emphasizes spiritual development while maintaining traditional Islamic values (Shiddiq, 2015). Traditional Islamic boarding schools maintain a unique culture that deeply influences students' religious perspectives (Aulia et al., 2018). These institutions focus on preserving Islamic scholarly traditions and uphold the study of classical Islamic texts, commonly known as the "yellow book" (Kawakip & Sulanam, 2023; Nasrun & Hamzah, 2013). Core subjects include Fiqh, Hadith, Tafsir, Tauhid, and Sufism (Jamil et al., 2019). To adapt to societal changes, Islamic boarding schools employ various educational strategies while maintaining their Islamic identity (Machmudi, 2021).

The kyai is the primary educator, but senior students also play a crucial role in assisting with teaching, supervision, and management of the boarding school environment (Masyhura et al., 2015). Although the curriculum evolves based on contemporary educational advancements, the fundamental Islamic teachings remain unchanged. The Islamic boarding school teaching system is not based on standard grade levels. Instead, it consists of three stages: initial, intermediate, and advanced. At the initial level, students learn Arabic writing, Malay Arabic script, Quranic

studies, and basic religious principles. The intermediate level includes in-depth studies of texts such as *Furu' al-Masail*, *Sabil al-Muhtadin*, and *Aqidah al-Najin*. At the advanced level, students study more complex Islamic texts such as *Hasiyah al-Bajuri*, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, and *Tanbih al-Ghafilin* (Masyhurah et al., 2015). The halaqah system, modeled after the Masjidil Haram in Mecca, remains a predominant method of instruction. In this system, students sit cross-legged around the teacher, who reads and explains texts while students take notes (Zarkasyi, 2020). Arabic books are translated into Malay and explained using the sharahan method (Abdullah, 2014; Jamaluddin, 2012).

### **The Role of Islamic Boarding Schools**

Islamic boarding schools play a crucial role in shaping educational outcomes and moral development (Akour & Alenezi, 2022; Cahaya et al., 2022; Niemi, 2021). Historically, these institutions have focused on producing scholars well-versed in Islamic teachings (Linnaja & Imron, 2021). The primary goal of Islamic boarding school education is to ensure students fulfill their religious duties while achieving spiritual enlightenment (Ihsan et al., 2021). Islamic boarding schools also serve as agents of community empowerment by (1) fostering Islamic mental and spiritual growth and (2) providing a foundation for instilling Islamic values in society (Syukri et al., 2020). The quality of education in an Islamic boarding school directly impacts its reputation and the trust it receives from the community (Syafiq Humaisi et al., 2019).

Beyond religious education, Islamic boarding schools contribute to character building through behavioral modeling and discipline (Shiddiq et al., 2022). They provide civic, social, national, skills-based, and arts education to uphold noble values (Abidin, 2020). In Patani, Islamic education plays an essential role in preserving Malay cultural identity and spirituality (Lee, 2015). As key educational institutions, Patani's Islamic boarding schools are central to community development and cultural preservation (Liow & Raya, 2020). The talaqqi system, in which students read and study texts directly with a teacher, remains a fundamental aspect of Islamic boarding schools (Rasid et al., 2019; Wekke et al., 2019). In this system, teachers foster mutual respect, emotional connection, and an environment that nurtures learning. The student-teacher relationship is built on empathy, trust, and mutual understanding, creating a holistic educational experience (Ismail et al., 2024).

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study explores the existence of Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek Yala Islamic Boarding School in developing Islamic Religious Education in the era of globalization. A qualitative research approach is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study. Qualitative research positions the researcher in the natural setting, allowing the world to be observed and interpreted through field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and personal memos (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This study follows an interpretative and naturalistic approach, seeking to understand the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences within their environment.

### **Participants**

This research was conducted at Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek Islamic Boarding School, located in Tasek village, Tasek sub-district, Muang district, Yala province, South Thailand, specifically at No. 57, Tasek sub-district, Muang district, Yala province 95000. Established in 1990 by Tuan Guru Hj Ahmad bin Abdul Rahman, this institution plays a significant role in providing Islamic education in the region. The key participants in this study include the leader and first caregiver of the boarding school, Tuan Guru Hj Ahmad bin Abdul Rahman, as well as the assistant kyai and second caregiver, Abdul Rahim Abdul Latif. Additionally, ten student leaders within the boarding school's institutional structure were involved, namely Irfan Usman, Zulkifli Soleh, Luqman Abdul Ghani, Taufik Ramli, Wi'am Amin, Abdul Salam Lating, Yusri Ngoh, Lukman Mayik, Yusri Useng, and Abdul Raahim Wayiko. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument and must be physically present at the research site to collect primary data, ensuring direct engagement with the participants and the research context (Ulfatin, 2022).

### **Data Collection**

The data collection techniques utilized in this study included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. In qualitative research, data collection involves multiple sources such as direct observation, interviews, document

analysis, artifacts, and the researcher's immersion into the cultural background of the research site (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Observation was conducted by the researcher to examine the daily lives of students, their behaviors, and the characteristics of the research setting at Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek. This included participation in various activities, particularly learning sessions, to gain a deeper understanding of the school's pedagogical approach. In-depth interviews were also carried out using a semi-structured format with the kyai, assistant kyai, and ten student leaders, aiming to explore their experiences, perspectives, and insights regarding the boarding school's role in religious education and its adaptation to contemporary challenges. Additionally, documentation methods involved the analysis of archival materials such as photographs of activities, institutional records, and historical documents detailing the establishment and development of the boarding school. Through this approach, comprehensive data were collected in written, oral, and visual forms, ensuring a thorough exploration of the research subject.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis in this study followed a structured and systematic process, incorporating three main phases: pre-field analysis, field analysis, and post-field analysis. The data were processed concisely while maintaining clarity and depth to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research subject. To enhance data validity, triangulation techniques were employed, including member checking, prolonged engagement, and reference adequacy (Huberman, 2014). The analysis was conducted through four key steps. First, data collection involved gathering raw data from observations, interviews, and documentation. Second, data condensation was carried out by filtering, selecting, and summarizing the most relevant information to focus on key findings. Third, data display involved organizing and presenting the information in a coherent and structured manner, making it easier to interpret. Finally, conclusion drawing was performed by identifying patterns, interpreting findings, and synthesizing insights to develop meaningful conclusions. This analytical approach ensures the reliability and validity of the study while capturing the nuanced realities of Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek Islamic Boarding School and its educational strategies in the modern era.

## **RESULTS**

### **Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek Islamic Boarding School**

Based on interviews and documentation, Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek Islamic Boarding School was founded in 1990 by Mr. Ahmad bin Abdul Rahman, a native of Chemuwe village, Belukar Samak sub-district, Bachok district, Narathiwat province. He received his education at Pondok Sekam Budi Patani under the guidance of Tuan Guru Hj Abdul Qadir bin Wangah, also known as Ayoh Dir Sekam. While studying, he was invited to give religious lectures in various mosques across Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat provinces. One of these locations was the mosque in Tasek village, where he later married the daughter of the local sub-district head. Initially, he conducted religious teachings at his wife's house for three years before establishing a musalla (prayer hall). As student numbers increased, additional huts were built, and on July 25, 1990, the institution was officially recognized and granted government permission.

### **School System**

The education system at Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek follows a traditional model where students wear sarongs, Malay attire, skullcaps, and shirts as official clothing. The institution is managed by a kyai and employs the yellow classical books as the main source of learning. The learning method is divided into two forms: general and halaqah. The general form involves all students attending recitations with Kyai Abdul Rahman Ahmad and his assistant, Kyai Abdul Rahim Abdul Latif, in the mosque. The halaqah form is structured based on student proficiency, ranging from halaqah one to halaqah four, where mentors guide students through traditional learning methods. Mentors are selected based on their expertise and ability to teach the yellow books, making mentorship a prestigious role within the boarding school. Students who fail to fulfill mentoring duties are not regarded as accomplished. The structure of halaqah and the associated learning materials are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Halaqah at Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek Islamic Boarding School

No	Halaqah	Number of Students	Mentor(s)	Book (Kitab)
1	One	40	Yusri Yunus, Lukman Lubuk Luas, Bukhari, Mohd Nasri, Nasri Klongsai, Muhammad Resan, Irfan, Ahmad Kabang, Sobri, Ramli, Alif Jelapang, Abd Salam, Hafiz Telimuh Abd Hakim	Kitab Misbah Al-Munir, Learn to Read Jawi, Learning to Write Jawi, Kitab Pedoman Solat
2	Two	20	Yusri Ngoh	Kitab Ta'lim Al-Aulad, Kitab Pedoman Solat, The Dhabit Way, Fiqh 4 Mazhabs
3	Three	20	Abd Salam Ramli	Kitab Hidayatussibyan, Kitab Matan Jurumiyah, Matan Memorization
4	Four	5	Alif Jelapang	Kitab Asas I'tiqad, Matan Memorization

### Curriculum

Observations, interviews, and documentation indicate that the institution primarily uses yellow classical books, written in both Malay and Arabic. These books are attributed to renowned Patani Malay scholars such as Sheikh Daud Al-Fathani, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fathani, and Sheikh Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad Al-Fathani, all of which employ the Jawi script. The school's graduates often hold prominent religious positions, demonstrating the institution's credibility despite its non-formal status in Thailand's education system. Despite its simplicity, Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek remains a crucial center for Islamic knowledge. Santri (students) spend considerable time memorizing religious texts and studying under the supervision of their kyai. The kyai's weekly teaching schedule is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Teaching Schedule of Kyai Ahmad Abdul Rahman

No	Day	Book (Kitab)	Time
1	Friday	Azkar & Pati Faridhah	06:00-07:30 AM
2	Saturday	Durussami & Sabila Muhtadin	19:00-20:00 PM
3	Sunday	Pati Faridah & Asmawi	06:00-07:00 AM
4	Monday	Hidayatu As-Salikin & Tafsir Nur Ihsan	13:00-14:00 PM
5	Tuesday	Pati Faridah & Asmawi	06:00-07:30 AM
6	Wednesday	Riyadhu As-Salihin & Tafsir Al-Quran	13:00-14:00 PM
7	Thursday	Riyadhu As-Salihin & Tafsir Al-Quran	13:00-14:00 PM

### Extracurricular and Annual Activities

The institution also organizes a range of extracurricular and annual activities to enrich students' religious and social experiences. The weekly extracurricular activities include religious recitations, student preaching training, and motivational gatherings, as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Extracurricular Activities

No	Activities	Day	Time
1	Recitation of Ratib & Yasinan	Friday	After Maghrib
2	Training students to preach	Friday & Wednesday	After Asr & Isha
3	Preaching in mosques	Friday	Zuhr time
4	Visiting the grave (Makam)	Friday	06:00 AM
5	Community recitation	Friday	1:30 PM

Similarly, annual activities include alumni meetings, Maulid celebrations, and Barzanji practices, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Annual Activities

No	Activities	Date/Time
1	Alumni Meeting	Rabi'ul Awal (date varies)
2	Maulidul Rasul	Rabi'ul Awal (date varies)
3	Barzanji Practice	Safar (daily after Asr & Isha)
4	Asyura	Muharam (date varies)
5	Isra' wa Mi'raj	Rajab (date varies)

## Role

Observations and interviews confirm that Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek has been instrumental in producing Islamic scholars and religious leaders for over three decades. Despite minimal infrastructure, it has earned community trust for its ability to impart deep religious knowledge. The boarding school not only serves as an educational institution but also contributes to religious outreach by organizing sermons, teaching in local Malay schools, and conducting Qur'anic recitations at funerals. Kyai and students hold significant social influence, often consulted on religious matters. The community, recognizing the school's value, actively supports it through donations and volunteer work, ensuring its continued role as a respected center of Islamic education in Patani.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study align with previous research on the significance of Islamic boarding schools in Southeast Asia (Latif & Hafid, 2021; Thahir, 2014). Similar to other Islamic boarding schools, Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek follows the traditional pesantren model, where religious education focuses on Fiqh, Hadith, Tafsir, and Sufism (Jamil et al., 2019). This approach is consistent with the practices observed in Patani's traditional Islamic schools (Dorloh & Hashim, 2019). However, the emphasis on mentorship and the requirement for students to serve as mentors before being recognized as successful learners is a unique characteristic of Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek. This differs from other pesantren models, where mentorship is encouraged but not a strict prerequisite for academic success (Ma'arif et al., 2023).

### Traditional and Modern Curricula in Islamic Boarding Schools

Studies have highlighted the dichotomy between traditional and modern approaches in Islamic boarding schools. For instance, research by Azra (2015) underscores that many pesantren have undergone curriculum transformation to incorporate general subjects such as mathematics, sciences, and foreign languages. This adaptation aims to improve graduates' employability and integration into modern society (Hidayat, 2020). However, Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek has remained steadfast in its commitment to an entirely religious curriculum, which contrasts with pesantren that have gradually embraced modernization (Purnomo et al., 2023). In Indonesia, pesantren like Gontor have integrated modern disciplines while maintaining Islamic core values (Mujiburrahman, 2018). This model has proven beneficial for producing graduates with both religious and secular competencies, preparing them for roles in academia, governance, and business (Rahmat, 2019). Conversely, Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek continues to uphold a purely religious educational philosophy, reinforcing the notion that traditional Islamic education remains relevant in contemporary settings where spiritual leadership and religious scholarship are still highly valued (Abdullah, 2021).

One of the primary implications of this study is the affirmation that traditional Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, remain a vital part of Islamic education despite rapid changes in global education systems. Unlike secular institutions that prioritize modern subjects, pesantren like Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek continue to emphasize religious teachings rooted in Fiqh, Hadith, Tafsir, and Sufism. This model reinforces students' understanding of classical Islamic scholarship, ensuring the continuity of religious traditions across generations. Furthermore, the preservation of cultural identity within the pesantren system aligns with the concept of educational resilience (Rahmat & Suryani, 2021). While many educational institutions have adopted contemporary pedagogical strategies to adapt to globalization, Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek demonstrates that traditional methods can remain effective. This resilience suggests that traditional pesantren serve as not only academic institutions but also as cultural and religious hubs that safeguard indigenous Islamic knowledge.

## **Pedagogical Approaches and Student Engagement**

Previous studies indicate that pesantren education emphasizes teacher-centered learning, memorization, and direct instruction (Nasir & Zainuddin, 2020). However, the findings of this study highlight a more dynamic pedagogical approach in Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek, where mentorship plays a significant role. Unlike other pesantren that primarily focus on rote memorization (Ismail, 2022), students at Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek engage in peer-led mentoring, which fosters deeper understanding and community bonding. The mentorship requirement in this pesantren aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development, which emphasizes the role of more capable peers in facilitating learning. This is in contrast to studies that suggest a rigid teacher-student hierarchy in traditional Islamic boarding schools (Syarif, 2017). Moreover, mentorship as a formalized requirement rather than an informal practice suggests an innovative adaptation within the pesantren model, offering insights for other institutions seeking to balance tradition with effective pedagogical strategies (Yusri & Ahmad, 2023).

The structured mentorship model at Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek is one of its distinguishing features. Unlike other pesantren where mentorship is informal or optional, this institution integrates mentorship as a prerequisite for academic recognition. This model fosters personal responsibility, enhances leadership skills, and strengthens peer collaboration among students. Research on mentorship in Islamic education (Sulaiman et al., 2022) suggests that structured peer-led mentoring enhances cognitive development, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy. The findings of this study support these claims, emphasizing that mentorship fosters deeper engagement with religious texts and community responsibilities. In this context, the pesantren system aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development, where learning is most effective when facilitated by a more knowledgeable peer. Beyond academics, mentorship also strengthens the moral and ethical development of students. By requiring older students to mentor younger ones, Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek instills a sense of social responsibility and discipline. This practice is particularly relevant in today's context, where many educational institutions struggle to cultivate ethical leadership among students (Fauzi & Hamzah, 2023).

## **Globalization and the Role of Islamic Boarding Schools**

One of the significant challenges faced by traditional Islamic boarding schools is the impact of globalization. Studies suggest that globalization has prompted many Islamic institutions to integrate modern subjects to ensure their graduates' competitiveness in the job market (Purwanto et al., 2020). Institutions such as Darunnajah in Jakarta and Al-Zaytun have modified their curricula to include entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and scientific studies (Fahmi, 2021). In contrast, Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek has maintained its traditional curriculum, prioritizing classical Islamic studies. Despite this, the institution continues to thrive, largely due to strong community trust and adherence to its foundational values (Ma'arif et al., 2023). This suggests that not all Islamic boarding schools need to modernize their curricula to remain relevant, as there is still a substantial demand for institutions that prioritize traditional religious teachings (Zulkifli, 2020).

## **Community Trust and Institutional Sustainability**

Research by Wahid (2019) emphasizes the importance of community trust in the sustainability of Islamic boarding schools. The ability of pesantren to maintain strong ties with their surrounding communities ensures continued enrollment and financial support. This aligns with the findings of this study, which show that Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek has maintained its reputation despite external pressures to modernize. Unlike some pesantren that struggle to sustain enrollment due to competition with secular institutions (Rahim, 2018), Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek's adherence to traditional educational values has reinforced its standing within the community. This contrasts with findings by Ali (2022), who argues that modernization is necessary for sustainability. Instead, this study suggests that sustainability can also be achieved through strong community trust and a clear institutional identity (Fadhilah, 2021).

## **Gender Roles and Student Development**

Studies on gender dynamics in pesantren education indicate that many traditional institutions uphold gender-segregated learning environments (Hasanah, 2021). Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek follows a similar structure, with distinct educational paths for male and female students. However, unlike some pesantren where female students have limited leadership opportunities (Munir, 2020), this study finds that female students in Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek also engage in mentorship roles, which is relatively progressive compared to other traditional



Islamic boarding schools. This aligns with research by Kurniawati (2022), who found that pesantren that encourage female leadership produce more confident and capable graduates. In contrast, pesantren that strictly limit female participation in leadership roles may inadvertently restrict their graduates' potential in broader society (Yusuf, 2019). Therefore, the model employed by Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek presents a nuanced approach to gender roles within Islamic education, demonstrating that traditional institutions can still foster student empowerment.

### **The Kyai as an Educational and Social Pillar**

This study reaffirms the central role of kyai in Islamic boarding schools. The kyai at Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek serve as both religious scholars and institutional leaders, responsible for governance, policy-making, and student guidance. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Anam et al., 2019), which highlight the kyai's influence in shaping both the educational and social functions of pesantren. The socio-religious role of the kyai extends beyond education. As a figure of authority, the kyai is responsible for maintaining the integrity of religious teachings, ensuring discipline, and fostering community trust. The kyai's ability to maintain strong ties with local communities enhances the boarding school's sustainability by ensuring continuous student enrollment and community support (Hidayat, 2020). Given the kyai's crucial role, there is a need for systematic leadership training programs to enhance their management skills while maintaining their religious authority. This could involve workshops on educational leadership, community engagement, and institutional development (Mujib, 2021), ensuring that pesantren leaders are equipped to address modern educational challenges without compromising religious values.

### **Challenges and Future Directions**

A growing body of literature suggests that integrating modern subjects into pesantren curricula can enhance students' career prospects without diminishing religious values (Zulkifli, 2021). While Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek has successfully maintained its traditional educational approach, its long-term sustainability depends on its ability to adapt to changing educational and economic landscapes. One viable strategy is to incorporate supplementary subjects that complement the core religious curriculum. Enhancing language skills—such as Arabic, English, and local languages—can improve students' access to broader Islamic scholarship and global communication. Additionally, vocational training in fields like entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and agriculture can open alternative career pathways, equipping students with practical skills for economic self-sufficiency. Furthermore, integrating interdisciplinary Islamic studies by linking classical Islamic knowledge with contemporary social, political, and economic issues can help students engage more effectively with the modern world. This approach addresses concerns raised by modern education advocates while ensuring that pesantren graduates remain well-prepared to contribute meaningfully to society (Purnomo et al., 2023).

Another crucial implication of this study is the importance of collaborative networks between Islamic boarding schools and other educational institutions. Establishing partnerships with universities, research centers, and government agencies could provide valuable resources for curriculum enhancement, faculty development, and student exchange programs (Fadhilah, 2021). Several pesantren in Indonesia have successfully partnered with higher education institutions to offer dual-degree programs, allowing students to gain academic qualifications while continuing their religious studies. If Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek explores such initiatives, it could increase graduates' opportunities without compromising the pesantren's religious mission.

The study also highlights the broader social implications of traditional Islamic education. Pesantren like Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek play a crucial role in fostering moral and ethical values within society. By producing graduates who are well-versed in Islamic teachings, these institutions contribute to the development of ethical leaders, religious scholars, and community activists. Moreover, pesantren serve as community centers, offering religious guidance, dispute resolution, and social support. In rural areas where access to formal education and governmental support is limited, pesantren often function as key institutions for literacy, social welfare, and conflict mediation (Hasanah, 2022). Ensuring the sustainability of pesantren education, therefore, has significant implications for social stability and community development.

This study primarily focuses on a single Islamic boarding school, limiting the generalizability of its findings. Future research could compare multiple traditional Islamic boarding schools in Patani and other Southeast Asian regions to identify broader patterns and variations in educational models. Additionally, further research could explore the long-term impact of traditional Islamic education on students' career paths and social integration. Another limitation is

the reliance on qualitative data. While interviews, observations, and documentation provided rich insights, future studies could incorporate quantitative approaches to measure educational outcomes, student satisfaction, and community perceptions of Islamic boarding schools. Such data could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and challenges faced by these institutions.

### CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study was to examine the role and adaptation strategies of Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek in addressing contemporary educational challenges. This research sought to assess how the institution balances its traditional Islamic educational approach with modern academic and technological advancements. The study also aimed to explore the sustainability of its curriculum, governance, and community engagement amidst the increasing demands for educational transformation. By focusing on a single institution, this research contributes to the broader discourse on the relevance and resilience of traditional Islamic boarding schools in the era of globalization.

The findings of this study highlight several key aspects. First, Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek remains deeply rooted in traditional Islamic education, emphasizing religious studies such as Fiqh, Hadith, Tafsir, and Sufism while maintaining the classical kitab kuning curriculum. Second, mentorship plays a central role in its pedagogical model, where students are required to serve as mentors before achieving academic recognition. This structured mentorship fosters leadership skills, peer collaboration, and deeper engagement with religious texts. Third, despite external pressures to modernize, the institution has sustained its educational approach through strong community trust, religious credibility, and adherence to its foundational values. However, the study also revealed challenges, particularly regarding the need to integrate contemporary subjects such as language skills, vocational training, and interdisciplinary Islamic studies to enhance students' career prospects without compromising religious values.

This study makes several contributions to the field of Islamic education. It provides an institution-specific analysis of how Ma'had Al-Islami Darussalam Tasek navigates the complexities of maintaining traditional Islamic education while responding to modern educational expectations. The study underscores the significance of structured mentorship as a unique pedagogical feature that distinguishes this institution from other Islamic boarding schools. Additionally, it highlights the role of community trust in ensuring the sustainability of pesantren, reinforcing the idea that modernization is not the sole path to institutional longevity. The findings suggest that pesantren can maintain their traditional values while selectively integrating modern educational elements to enhance student competencies. Future research could explore comparative analyses of different Islamic boarding schools across Southeast Asia to further examine variations in adaptation strategies.

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