

Pesantren Kampus and the Preservation of Islamic Intellectual Traditions: Innovation in Indonesian Islamic Higher Education

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Pesantren Kampus within Islamic Higher Education Institution (IHEI) and its innovative strategies for sustaining Islamic knowledge amid modern academic challenges. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, this study conducted field research at six IHEIs in Jakarta, Purwokerto, Wonosobo, Semarang, Yogyakarta, and Malang. Four main strategies are revealed: first, institutional integration between IHEI and pesantren connecting traditional Islamic studies and formal education; second, expanding technology-based programs reflects innovative teaching supported by a monitoring and evaluation application system; third, integration of turâth curriculum with modern research methodologies to strengthen the relevance of Islamic studies; and fourth, development of a community-based spiritual mentoring model to promote character development and academic ethics. These findings demonstrate that Pesantren Kampus functions not only as religious support institutions but also as spaces for the dissemination, transformation, and revitalization of Islamic knowledge within a modern higher education environment. Moreover, it highlights the impact of the four strategies on student formation, producing academically competent, religiously grounded, technologically literate, and socially engaged graduates. This study contributes to the discourse on IHEI by offering a conceptual framework of

institutional, pedagogical, technological, and spiritual innovation for Pesantren Kampus. It also provides strategic roadmap for Pesantren Kampus to move beyond supportive roles and become active institutional participants in transforming Islamic knowledge paradigm within IHEI.

Keywords: *educational innovation; Islamic intellectual tradition; Islamic higher education; pesantren; kampus*

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Introduction

The term *Pesantren Kampus* is relatively new. It refers to an institution that integrate Islamic boarding school traditions with the modern higher education system. The term is introduced as some Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEI) in Indonesia adopted this system to their formal education units. Their presence is crucial to preserve the treasury of Islamic knowledge and be a driving force for IHEI (Abubakar 2018, 1). Through *Pesantren Kampus*, students can pursue religious knowledge as in traditional Islamic boarding schools concurrently with their university studies, proving the integration of science and religion. Graduates of this education system are expected to possess adequate religious competencies and be prepared to face contemporary academic dynamics (Zakaria et al. 2025, 92).

Amidst globalization, *Pesantren Kampus* is challenged to maintain the relevance of Islamic education without abandoning the Islamic values passed down through generations (Ahmadiono et al 2025, 3). Educational modernization, technological developments, and the rapid flow of information demand institutional adaptation. Without innovation, *Pesantren Kampus* risks being eroded by secularist that often marginalize religious values, which can decline students' interest and weaken the community's cultural identity (Ismail 2022, 324). Despite facing various challenges, *Pesantren Kampus* is potential to leverage digital technology and scientific developments to strengthen Islamic education (Abubakar 2018, 2). The use of technology and modern learning methods allows for a more interactive, flexible, and inclusive education system for students from diverse backgrounds (Arif et al. 2024, 170). Therefore, *Pesantren Kampus* needs to implement innovative strategies that maintain the integrity of

Islamic scholarship while improving educational quality through optimal use of technology (Zarkasyi 2015, 229).

Studies on Islamic higher education reveal that the connection between university-based academic learning and residential religious formation has not been thoroughly integrated. International Islamic University Malaysia and similar institutions stress the integration of knowledge in philosophy, curriculum, and institutional vision through the concept of *tawhid*. However, they do not regard residential systems as a primary pedagogical tool for enhancing *tafaqquh fi al-din* (Hanafi 2021). At the same time, Al-Azhar University is an example with a lot of academic authority and a focus on specific fields of study, but it does not have a dormitory-based learning system. On the other hand, *madrasa* institutions in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh), as widely discussed by UNESCO, demonstrate strong residential religious formation. However, they tend to operate as a parallel educational track that is not systematically connected to modern higher education systems (Salma & Raashid 2024, 2). In Indonesia, existing literature generally identify two types of institutions. The first one is academically focused with well-integrated curricula but weak emphasis on residential life. The second is religious residential institutions fostering strong spiritual development yet having limited ties to modern academics (Hussin et al. 2025, 561).

In Indonesia, several State Islamic Higher Education implement *Pesantren Kampus* model to bridge Islamic scholarly traditions and modern higher education (Junaedi & Wijaya 2021; Ahmadiono et al. 2025; Huda et al. 2025). One prominent example is UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, positioning *Ma'had Al-Jami'ah* as an integral part of the education system, not merely a student residence. It integrates the *pesantren* tradition and the methodological demands of contemporary higher education. This model allows for the incorporation of academic education, character development, and the strengthening of Islamic knowledge within a structured and synergistic framework (Abubakar 2018; Ali 2020; Rahman 2023, 140). However, there remains a research gap regarding the institutional mechanisms of this integration, its contribution to the development of Islamic studies, and its policy implications. Therefore, this study is crucial in positioning *Pesantren Kampus* not only as an innovative model, but also as a potential framework for the development of more integrative and sustainable Islamic higher education.

Various innovative strategies implemented by *Pesantren Kampus* in responding to the challenges of contemporary higher education are discussed here. This study then classifies *Pesantren Kampus* into two types. First, those institutionally integrated with universities and managed directly as official higher education units, such as Ma'had al-Jamiah at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, UIN Walisongo Semarang, and UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Second, *pesantren* owned by community leaders that formally partner with universities, such as those associated with UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, UNSIQ Wonosobo, and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The primary focus of this study is to examine the integration of Islamic sciences with modern disciplines in the curriculum of *Pesantren Kampus*. The approach maintains the continuity of Islamic scholarly traditions while increasing their relevance amidst the globalization of higher education. Thus, this study examines how *Pesantren Kampus* maintains their Islamic identity while encouraging innovation and institutional development.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a multi-site case study design to analyze innovative strategies of *Pesantren Kampus* in preserving and developing Islamic scholarship within Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs). This approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth study of the same phenomenon across various institutional contexts while also facilitating comparisons between cases (Hall & Liebenberg 2024, 3). The study objects are six *Pesantren Kampus*: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, UIN Walisongo Semarang, UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, and UNSIQ Wonosobo. They were purposively selected due to their affiliation with IHEIs, integration of the *pesantren* tradition and the university system, and active involvement in academic and religious activities.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and document analysis as a form of methodological triangulation to increase credibility of the data. 18 interviewees were selected through purposive sampling, three from each institution, comprising administrators, lecturers, and students (Günther et al. 2024). Interviews were conducted both offline and online, lasting 45-90 minutes, recorded with the participants' consent, and then transcribed verbatim. The interviews

focused on four main aspects: institutional integration, curriculum design, the use of technology in learning, and forms of spiritual mentoring. Document analysis included curricula, syllabi, teaching materials, and internal policy documents to strengthen interview findings (Chand 2025).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, encompassing multiple readings, initial coding, category grouping, theme development, and cross-participant and cross-site review (Schlunegger et al 2024; Wilson 2025). The final stage involved interpreting key themes in line with the research objectives to explain how *pesantrens* develop, maintain, and adapt innovative strategies amidst globalization and educational modernization. Data validity was maintained through credibility, dependability, and confirmability, using source triangulation, systematic documentation of the research process, and ethical research standards (Johnson et al. 2020).

Results and Discussion

Innovative Strategies Implemented by the Pesantren Kampus

This study identifies four key innovative strategies implemented by *Pesantren Kampus* to maintain and develop Islamic scholarship within Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEI). They reflect innovations in the structural, pedagogical, epistemological, and socio-spiritual dimensions (Lahmar 2024, 16). First, the integration between IHEI and *pesantren* demonstrates a new model that bridges traditional Islamic studies with formal education. This integration is realized through curriculum synchronization, student development, and collaboration between lecturers and *pesantren* administrators (Embong et al. 2015). This model encourages the continuous transmission of Islamic knowledge while enriching students' academic and spiritual experiences. Second, the diversification of technology-based programs reflects pedagogical innovation in response to the digital transformation of education. The findings indicate that *Pesantren Kampus* utilize digital platforms for classical text learning, e-learning systems, and skills development programs that align with contemporary socio-economic needs. This strategy expands the reach of Islamic scientific traditions into a more adaptive and inclusive digital learning environment (Achmadin et al. 2024).

The third strategy is integrating *turâth* (classical intellectual tradition) with contemporary research methodologies for scientific development (Muqowim & Lessy 2019). Students are encouraged to study *turâth* through textual analysis, along with critical, contextual, and

interdisciplinary approaches. It allows students to learn the classic books, containing religious perspective, while adopting scientific research methodologies aligned with contemporary academic developments (Zakaria et al. 2024, 123). Thus, classical literature is positioned not merely as a legacy, but also as a source of knowledge relevant to current academic discourse.

Fourth, community-based learning model is an innovative approach to refine students' adaptability in university culture (Purbasari et al. 2025, 8). Programs such as *halaqah* (Islamic study groups), targeted guidance/mentoring, and joint religious activities help internalize Islamic values in daily life. In other words, the programs are designed to maintain a balance between academic achievement and student spiritual development. Moreover, they enhance students' resilience, empathy, and social skills. Overall, these findings indicate that *Pesantren Kampus* is an educational innovation that encourages institutional, pedagogical, epistemological, and spiritual transformation. Hence, it potentially becomes an adaptive framework for the future of Islamic higher education.

Institutional integration allows universities and *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) to constructively reconcile their respective scientific traditions, while program diversification provides room for innovation to bridge the gap. UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang is an example of institutional integration. It was marked by the establishment of Ma'had Sunan Ampel al-Aly (MSAA) in 1999 during the STAIN era and has remained in existence up to the current UIN era (Ali 2020). This model allows for the foundation of regulations, organizational structures, and programs supported by a planned monitoring and evaluation system (Diana 2021). Universities focus on academic development and research, while *pesantren* emphasize ethical conduct, *tafaqquh fi al-dîn* (religious teachings), and moral-spiritual development. The experience of UIN Malang later became a reference for UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Walisongo Semarang in developing *Ma'had al-Jâmi'ah*, or *Pesantren Kampus*.

Furthermore, institutional integration encourages collaboration between universities and *pesantren* to develop students' excellence in academic and character (Sofi et al. 2025). Meanwhile, program diversification is a second innovation strategy that adapts *pesantren*-based education to evolving academic standards, technology, and institutional

needs (Waziroh et al. 2026, 99). The form and effectiveness of this diversification depend on the characteristics of each *Pesantren Kampus*, as seen in the practices at UIN Jakarta and UIN Walisongo Semarang (Khoir et al. 2025).

Pesantren Kampus contributes decisively to student development by providing a conducive living environment, organizational support, and access to learning resources. This environment fosters collaboration among students from diverse backgrounds, thus strengthening the overall educational ecosystem. However, the organizational structure and governance at UIN Walisongo Semarang do not yet fully facilitate the formation of an integrated residential community. In this context, program diversification is a more adaptive and compensatory strategy, ensuring that the values of *pesantren* are maintained through flexible and contextual arrangements. This comparison demonstrates that diversification is not aimed at standardizing the institution. Rather, it increases the effectiveness, legitimacy, and relevance of *Pesantren Kampus* model across various institutional contexts (Huda et al. 2025).

Despite limited facilities and resources, *Pesantren Kampus* at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Walisongo Semarang have gradually adopted digital applications to support the monitoring and evaluation of learning and *pesantren* activities. Furthermore, each IHEI managing *Pesantren Kampus* has demonstrated a strong commitment to utilizing the study of *turâth* as a means of strengthening Islamic scholarship and internalizing Islamic values within the campus environment. For example, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang developed a diversified program into two main tracks, namely *Tahfîz al-Qur'ân* through *Hai'ah Tahfîz al-Qur'ân* (HTQ) and the study of Islamic classic books, which include *tafsîr*, *fiqh*, *'aqîdah*, and *taşawwuf* (Izzuddin 2025; Chamidah 2025). This program is implemented consistently through the guidance of senior mentors and supported by a digital monitoring-evaluation system. Overall, institutional integration and technology-based program diversification complement each other, as seen in the practices at UIN Malang, UIN Jakarta, and UIN Semarang (Sofi 2025; Nailil 2025).

Pesantren Kampus integrates the study of *turâth* with modern academic approaches in the learning process (Muthohirin 2025). This integration combines classical Islamic intellectual traditions with contemporary scientific methods. In practice, *turâth* is not only studied as a scholarly heritage but also analyzed critically, contextually, and adapted

to current developments (Elston 2022). This practice is evident at LSQH, UNSIQ Wonosobo, and *pesantrens* partnering with UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, where classical *tafsir* studies are combined with modern analytical approaches. That way, students are able to comprehend religious texts in a dynamic social context (Rochmanto et al. 2024, 29; Machsun et al. 2025; Kholil 2025). A similar pattern was found at *pesantrens* in partnership with UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto where *fiqh* and hadith learning is conducted through an academic approach. It aims to encourage critical reading and links to social and scientific developments (Nasrudin 2025; Zuhdi 2025). Students of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta also engage in focus group discussions on contemporary issues and scholarly publications such as the journal *Tadabbur* (Nailil 2025). Collectively, this study found that *Pesantren Kampus* demonstrate the integration of classical Islamic studies and contemporary academic approaches in various learning practices.

Exploring Community-Based Mentoring Model in Pesantren Kampus

One of the main strategies to maintain the balance of students' academic development and spiritual formation is the community-based mentoring model in *Pesantren Kampus*. In UIN Walisongo Semarang, *Pesantren Kampus* is not only oriented to academic achievement but also to character formation and the cultivation of students' spiritual resilience. A comparable approach is implemented in UIN Malang, where religious events such as *istighâthah*, *shalawât* gatherings, and commemorative *khawf* rituals are routinely conducted to honor the institution's founders and significant contributors to the university. These practices bolster spiritual continuity and serve as a moral compass within the academic milieu (Diana 2021). In both institutions, spiritual mentoring is not simply an additional religious practice. It is an institutional mechanism to develop students' ethical disposition, foster communal attachment, and equip them to face the challenges of modern higher education while firmly grounding themselves in Islamic values (Qingyan 2025).

This similar approach is not visible in all *Pesantren Kampus* that served as the subjects of this study. Spiritual formation remains an integral part of student life at *Ma'had al-Jâmi'ah* UIN Jakarta and other *pesantrens* partnering with UIN Purwokerto, UNSIQ Wonosobo and UIN Yogyakarta. It is seldom articulated through a formal community-based mentoring framework. Rather, it is more often embedded in the overall

ecology of daily *pesantren* practices, such as worship, religious learning session, moral discipline, close interaction with *kiai* and senior mentors, and fostering an Islamic scholarly atmosphere (Dhofier 2019). In other words, the commitment to foster students' spirituality is clearly present. However, it does not necessarily appear as a distinct or explicitly institutionalized innovation strategy. This contrasts with the approach adopted at UIN Walisongo and UIN Malang.

This variation is intriguing as it suggests that the integration of *pesantren* and higher education does not yield a singular, uniform model of innovation. Each institution develops its own strategy for integrating academic discipline and spiritual formation, shaped by its own history, culture, leadership, and social and institutional context. Therefore, the lack of a formally acknowledged community-based spiritual mentoring model in certain *Pesantren Kampus* should not be construed as an indifference to students' spiritual development. Spiritual formation can be achieved through more subtle, ingrained, and culturally assimilated practices instead of a distinctly outlined mentoring structure. Such practices include community rituals, peer support systems, and integration of spiritual values into daily academic activities (Waziroh et al. 2026).

This finding highlights the overarching thesis of the study that innovation within *Pesantren Kampus* is not exclusively manifested through standardized institutional frameworks. It may arise from context-specific modifications that maintain the fundamental objectives of Islamic higher education while addressing local needs and capabilities (Hasan 2025). Religious activities such as classical text study sessions, congregational *dhikr*, and community service constitute an integral part of campus life. They help students remain consistently connected to religious values across various aspects of daily experiences. This form of spiritual mentoring cultivates students who are not only intellectually competent in academic matters but also grounded in strong moral integrity and spiritual resilience (Arifin 2025; Hakim 2025).

With faith-based community support, students of *Pesantren Kampus* are encouraged to develop themselves holistically, encompassing both intellectual growth and spiritual life (Wargadinata 2025). This support system enhances a sense of unity and solidarity among students, cultivating deeper interpersonal connections as they confront the challenges of university life. Community-based spiritual mentoring boosts students' academic performance while fostering character development

and profound religious awareness. Accordingly, it nurtures individuals who are more integrated and resilient in addressing the challenges of the contemporary world.

Preserving Islamic Science through Pesantren Kampus Innovation

Pesantren in Indonesia employ varied methods to preserve and advance Islamic scholarship, despite facing numerous challenges (Nurtawab 2025, 243). The first key strategy is institutional integration, which facilitates a meaningful and productive convergence of the scholarly traditions of universities and *pesantren* (Hasan 2025). This integration fosters a dialogue between the epistemic depth, moral discipline, and religious authority traditionally associated with *pesantren*, and the academic rigor, organizational structure, and scientific orientation of higher education institutions. Consequently, instead of serving merely as residence for Muslim students, *Pesantren Kampus* has evolved into dynamic sites of knowledge production. It is the place where Islamic studies are sustained, reformulated, and made responsive to contemporary intellectual and social demands (Pohl 2006).

This institutional integration is visible in many *Pesantren Kampus* in Indonesia. UIN Walisongo Semarang incorporated *Pesantren Kampus* to the university system, creating a close link between the academic curriculum and students' spiritual and communal lives. A similar approach is applied in *Ma'had al-Jâmi'ah*, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. It has a significant institutional role in improving academic excellence and religious development through a well-structured residential system. This integration can also be seen in the partnerships with *pesantrens* undertaken by UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and UIN Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto. So, students study both through university academic and *pesantren* learning activities. UNSIQ Wonosobo established specialized unit, *Lingkar Studi Qur'an dan Hadith* (LSQH) connecting classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary academic research, further strengthening the institutional integration. These examples show that although the form of integration varies, the purpose remains the same, namely to create a cohesive educational ecosystem. In other words, Islamic intellectual heritage and modern higher education are expected to reinforce one another (Setiawan 2005).

This institutional integration is important and provides the structural basis for future innovations. The integration of pedagogical

principles of the *pesantren* with the administrative and academic structures of universities improves the educational offerings of *Pesantren Kampus*. It also strengthens students' spiritual development and builds more contextual Islamic scholarly models (Machsun 2025). This strategy reflects the combination between the *pesantren* tradition and the university system. It creates an educational environment rooted in the intellectual heritage of Islam and simultaneously responsive to the contemporary needs of academic life (Rahman 1982). In this context, institutional integration is the main framework that makes other innovative strategies in *Pesantren Kampus* viable and sustainable.

Through this integration, university leadership gains the authority to develop policies which are then implemented as programs to achieve *Pesantren Kampus*' vision and mission. Accordingly, the *Pesantren Kampus* is entirely administered by the university, enabling its programs and activities to be aligned and synergized with campus' broader academic culture (Zakaria et al. 2025). Conversely, when *pesantren* is distinct from higher education institutions, it becomes significantly more challenging to forge a coherent and enduring link between the two academic traditions.

Pesantren emphasizes personal character development in accordance with Islamic values. It attempts to improve students' moral behaviour (*akhlâq*), build up a strong personal identity and teach religious education (Sofi 2025). *Pesantren* usually has a clear set of norms, values and codes of conduct that are adhered into daily life under the guidance of *Kiai* and teachers. These normative frameworks serve as a vital pedagogical tool that constantly nurtures morality and spiritual growth (Supriani et al. 2023).

The *Pesantren Kampus* in UIN Malang, owing to its extensive institutional history and profound expertise in governance, organizational development, and iterative processes of institutional integration, has generated academic outcomes exemplifying a model for other institutions. The acknowledgement of UIN Malang's *Pesantren Kampus* is substantiated not only by internal assertions but also by numerous benchmarking visits from IHEIs across the nation. Ma'had Sunan Ampel Al-Aly as a "Ma'had Percontohan" (Exemplary *Pesantren*) becomes the official and institutional research destination that clearly positions the *Ulul Albab* system as a foundation for the standardization of *Pesantren Kampus* within IHEI (Ali 2020). At UIN Malang, all freshmen must engage in *Pesantren Kampus* program. Those with particular aptitudes such as Quran memorizer (*hafiz al-Qur'an*) and interpreter of classical Islamic literature (*Kitab Kuning*), are

systematically developed. Within the internal framework of *Pesantren Kampus*, *taḥfiẓ al-Qur'ān* serves as a specialized track (*takhaṣṣuṣ*), while advanced *kitab kuning* studies are facilitated through collaborative agreements with *Ma'had 'Āli* institutions in Malang. A significant number of UIN Malang graduates have memorized all 30 sections (*juz'*) of the Quran (Chamidah 2025).

Similarly, the program in *Kitab Kuning* studies has produced substantial outputs, including comprehensive commentaries (*sharḥ*) on *Fatḥ al-Qarīb*, completed with authoritative references. They were composed by students and released in three volumes during 2022-2024: *'Ubūdiyyah* and *Ṭahârah*, *Munâkaḥah*, and *Mu 'âmalah*. The head of *Ma'had al-Jâmi'ah* of UIN Malang stated that the *takhaṣṣuṣ* program in *Kitab Kuning* studies has been running since the period of two past rectors (Professor Haris and Professor Zainuddin), and is being sustained by the current rector (Professor Ilfi). The three leaders ensure that UIN Malang students develop competitive advantages in Islamic scholarship. The completion of three volumes of *sharḥ* marks the beginning of a broader scholarly works. It is a proof that UIN Malang, through its *Pesantren Kampus*, contributes to the advancement of Islamic knowledge in contemporary context (Izzuddin 2025).

Another innovative strategy of *Pesantren Kampus* is program diversification supported by technological tools, which were implemented by UIN Malang and UIN Jakarta. Programs are designed in various formats corresponding to the learning needs and characteristics of Gen-Z students. Digital applications are also employed to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of programs and related activities. UIN Malang, in particular, consistently implements *pesantren*-based programs in a focused and well-structured manner. The instructional texts used in learning activities within the *Pesantren Kampus* are: a) *al-Tahdhīb*, discussing Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*); b) *Qâmi 'al-Ṭughyân*, focusing on Islamic creed (*'aqīdah*) and ethics (*akhlâq*); and c) *Tuḥfat al-Ṭullâb*, used for the study of *tajwīd* and Quranic sciences. In addition, *Ma'had al-Jâmi'ah* of UIN Malang also implements a range of non-academic programs. They are congregational prayers, the Quran recitation (*tadarus*), dorm-based mentoring, and student monitoring conducted by *musyrif/musyrifah* (senior mentors) (Diana 2025).

Pesantren Kampus of UIN Jakarta and UIN Walisongo Semarang have similar activities. The difference between both institutions and UIN

Malang is the regulation. In UIN Malang, *Pesantren Kampus* is a one-year mandatory program for all freshmen. This policy is effective in cultivating *pesantren*-based culture in the campus due to the adequate institutional capacity and supporting infrastructure. Conversely, the limited *pesantren* participation at UIN Jakarta and UIN Semarang hindered a comparable *pesantren* culture from being fully institutionalized in their campuses. UIN Jakarta does not require students to live in the university-owned *pesantren* due to limited capacity. Meanwhile, UIN Semarang started requiring this policy in 2023.

The third innovation is the integration of *turâth*-based curriculum and contemporary research methodologies (Zakaria et al. 2024). This method enables students to learn *Kitab Kuning*, one of the important elements of *pesantren* tradition, and gain scientific research skills in line with the current academic standards. Nevertheless, its implementation face challenges, especially in moving beyond theoretical discussion and adopting more rigorous analytical methods. One of issues is on the accessibility of sufficient facilities for rigorous and methodologically robust research on classical texts. *Ma'had al-Jâmi'ah* of UIN Jakarta found academic and technical limitations. It includes difficulties in the instruction and comprehension of *Kitab Kuning*. Moreover, the institution still has infrastructural shortcomings that hinder the establishment of the *Pesantren Kampus* as a mandatory program for freshmen (Nailil 2025).

An illustrative example of this innovative strategy can be found in *pesantrens* affiliated with UIN Yogyakarta. They offer Quranic exegesis (*tafsîr*) studies combined with classical commentaries while relating them to contemporary issues. In IAT (*Ilmu Al-Quran dan Tafsir*-Quranic and Tafsir Studies) Major, Faculty of *Ushuluddin*, one of the courses offered is *The Quran and Contemporary Issues*. Although the course has limited instructional time, it addresses a wide range of emerging contemporary concerns. To complete the formal learning in campus, students discuss *tafsîr* in *pesantrens*, providing deeper comprehension on the Quran.

Pesantren Mahasiswa Lingkar Studi al-Quran (LSQ) is one of partners that accommodates many students from IAT Major of UIN Yogyakarta. Prof. Abdul Mustakim, the Head of LSQ, stated that the learning materials in the *pesantren* are for deepening students' understanding on what they learned in campus, particularly regarding contemporary issues on the Quran interpretation. Learning *tafsîr* is

believed to give positive impacts on comprehension of religion (Kamal 2024, 183).

They are also introduced to current research trends in Quranic studies. It includes the theme of living Quran in Indonesia, emphasizing on the methods and analytical frameworks (Mustakim 2025).

Meanwhile, Pesantren Darussalam and Pesantren Fath al-Mu'in, affiliated with UIN Purwokerto, focus on learning *Kitab Kuning*. They study various branches of Islamic knowledge, including *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, *tafsīr*, and *ḥadīth*. While both places employ standard texts commonly used in *salaf pesantren* traditions, their instructional approach adopts a thematic learning model and are aligned with current issues. This model has two main purposes: first, to deepen students' understanding of subject that has been studied in their respective majors; second, to address Islamic topics that are not sufficiently covered in formal campus curriculum. The former functions as curricular enrichment, while the latter introduces emerging or less-explored areas of Islamic studies. This model illustrates a pedagogical framework employed in the academic environment at UIN Purwokerto.

In Pesantren Darussalam, particularly, the *Kitab Kuning* learned is available in digital format, such as *al-Mawsū'ah* and *al-Shâmilah*. Other related software applications are also utilized. This trend highlights the growing importance of employing digital sources to enhance learning and facilitate students' access to classical Islamic texts within contemporary educational settings (Halimi et al. 2022). Moreover, in teaching students about *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, Pesantren Darussalam tried to connect it to modern scientific methodologies. Continuing the legacy from previous leader, Kiai Hariri Sofa, the *pesantren* offers instruction in *fiqh* classic book i.e. *Fath al-Qarīb* as primary reference, supported by *ḥadīth* studies. To enrich the *fiqh* discussion, theories of religious and social research are also introduced. This approach broadens students' intellectual horizons, that *fiqh* does not arise in a vacuum, but is intrinsically connected to ongoing social dynamics (Yusuf 2025).

Accordingly, partner *pesantrens* of UIN Purwokerto and UIN Yogyakarta do not implement conventional model of teaching *Kitab Kuning*. Instead, they pick and choose certain parts of the authoritative texts and link them to contemporary issues, supported with some relevant research. This way, university students are trained to develop critical thinking skills by studying religious texts. The Quran *tafsir* program in

LSQ Yogyakarta enhances students' reasoning in Quranic studies. Simultaneously, *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* studies in Pesantren Darussalam, Purwokerto cultivate students to engage profoundly with the critical reasoning traditions of Muslim scholars. The rich tradition of Islamic scholarship leads students into the realm of open and reflective thinking.

The fourth innovative strategy is community-based spiritual mentoring. It is a vital part of the *Pesantren Kampus* model successfully combining students' intellectual development and spiritual growth (Machsun et al. 2025). In many *Pesantren Kampus*, there are religious activities such as classical text study and congregational *dhikr*, but they are often poorly coordinated among students of different faculties. Consequently, there is a gap between religious and academic activities (Arifin 2025).

This mentoring, actually, promotes a sense of community among students. However, religion-based mentoring initiatives may attract more religiously oriented students, while academically inclined ones risk feeling marginalized in spiritually focused programs (Abidin & Sirojuddin 2024). Thus, *pesantrens* affiliated with universities should develop inclusive religious activities that involve all students, ensuring that no one feels marginalized and that everyone benefits from the activities (Sholikah et al. 2025).

Regarding the interconnection of knowledge, although religious sciences have been linked to social sciences and humanities, the integration between religious and natural sciences is relatively weak. At UIN Malang and UIN Jakarta's *Pesantren Kampus*, for instance, interdisciplinary approaches within social sciences and humanities have been introduced, however, meaningful interconnection with the natural sciences is still highly limited. One challenge in this context is the inherent difficulty in merging two fundamentally different disciplinary fields. This is evident in *pesantren* education which has traditionally focused on religious learning.

At UIN Malang, initiatives to create interconnection between Islamic and non-Islamic domains of knowledge have commenced. Nevertheless, these initiatives are still in their nascent phase. They have predominantly manifested as the organization of *ḥalaqah* sessions with eminent scholars in their fields. The sessions promote the composition of scholarly treatises connecting one's disciplinary expertise to Islamic viewpoints, along with analogous initiatives (Izzuddin 2025). This

situation illustrates the intrinsic challenge of merging these fields of knowledge, as a standardized model delineating the relationship between the two traditions has yet to be established. However, if these efforts are consistently undertaken, the results of integrating these two academic traditions are expected to yield a substantial contribution in the future.

However, this does not imply that such integration is unachievable. Rather, it requires more rigorous and sustained efforts from the administrators of *Pesantren Kampus* to develop new and more systematic methods for connecting religious with natural sciences. Universities cannot serve as the exclusive entities in formulating models of knowledge integration and interconnection. They need the ongoing engagement of *pesantren* as a crucial institutional mechanism for actualizing this enduring ideal (Surajudeen & Mat 2013).

From the interviews, this study concludes that *Pesantren Kampus* has shown significant success, but its implementation needs to be more systematic and consistent. The monitoring and evaluation of current programs in both academic and religious sectors require significant enhancement. Although the university leadership has provided supportive policies for the evaluation of academic and religious programs in university-affiliated *pesantrens*, it is still poorly structured. This condition restricts institutions' ability to systematically identify existing issues or deficiencies within these programs. As a result, it may potentially obstruct continuous improvement and the enhancement of educational quality (Jamil et al. 2025).

The functions of *pesantren* leaders (called as *Pengasuh*) and senior teachers (*Ustaz-Ustazah*) within *Pesantren Kampus* are equally vital. They are usually referred to as *Dewan Masyâyikh* (Council of Senior Ulama), who significantly contribute to the preservation of instructional quality and the perpetuation of *pesantren* traditions (Chamidah 2025). However, despite their strong competence in religious knowledge, many *Pengasuh* have not yet developed a sufficiently deep understanding of academic education in higher education level. Those involved in academic teaching occasionally encounter difficulties in adapting to more systematic instructional approaches aligning with higher education standards. This condition suggests that while the *Dewan Masyâyikh* plays significant influence in preserving Islamic scholarly traditions, its members would benefit from further professional development in higher education governance and contemporary pedagogical methodologies.

The integration of religious knowledge and modern scientific disciplines indeed constitutes a major challenge within the *Pesantren Kampus*. However, this does not indicate that such integration is unattainable (Achmadin et al. 2024, 216). Initiatives undertaken in several *Pesantren Kampus* show that initial steps toward integration have already been made, even though the outcomes have not yet been fully realized. In some universities, the teaching of religious studies through social science and humanities approaches has been carried out effectively. However, meaningful engagement with the natural sciences still requires longer-term efforts and more comprehensive research. At UIN Walisongo, for instance, although certain integrative initiatives have been introduced, intensive inter-faculty collaboration remains necessary to develop a more systematic and sustainable interconnection between two domains of knowledge.

Overall, while the *Pesantren Kampus* have successfully introduced a range of significant innovations in Islamic education, several challenges remain to be addressed. One of them is the limited realization of interconnection and integration between Islamic sciences and the natural sciences. In contrast, models of knowledge interconnection and integration within the social sciences and humanities have been gradually implemented. Nevertheless, substantial challenges related to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation persist and require greater institutional attention. This is to ensure that university-owned *pesantrens* can achieve their educational objectives more effectively (Jamil et al. 2025, 127).

The *Pesantren Kampus* possess considerable potential to serve as an advanced and contextually relevant model of Islamic education in response to contemporary challenges. However, only through sustained efforts and continuous innovation can it cultivate a generation that is not only academically accomplished but also grounded in strong moral and spiritual foundations. To this end, the *Pesantren Kampus* must remain adaptive and engage in regular evaluation to ensure that every policy and program implemented yields optimal outcomes in both academic and religious contexts.

Conclusion

This study concludes that *Pesantren Kampus* has developed four major innovative strategies to preserve and advance Islamic scholarship

within Islamic Higher Education Institutions: a) institutional integration between university and *pesantren*; b) program diversification supported by technological tools; c) the integration of *turâth*-based learning with modern research methodologies; and c) community-based spiritual mentoring. Collectively, these strategies demonstrate that *Pesantren Kampus* is not merely complementary religious institution within the university environment. It also functions as dynamic epistemic space in which Islamic scholarly traditions are preserved, reformulated, and made relevant to contemporary academic life. These approaches bring *tafaqquh fî al-dîn* to the academic formation of students. It provides a chance for a dialogue between classical Islamic learning and current methodological, technological and institutional developments in higher education. The impact of these strategies is not only felt at the institutional level. It impacts students as *santri* who are advanced to be academically competent, religiously grounded, technologically adept, and socially active individuals.

This study identifies a significant challenge in the integration and interconnection of Islamic scholarship with the natural sciences, despite advancements in connecting Islam with social sciences and humanities. It needs more rigorous, systematic, and experimental initiatives, such as interdisciplinary research projects and collaborative programs. This is a particularly important unresolved issue considering the epistemological goals that accompanied the transformation of IHEI from IAIN to UIN, aiming for a more holistic science integration. Therefore, it is essential to have a more advanced framework of integration and interconnection supported by pragmatic collaboration between *Pesantren Kampus* and the broader UIN community. Such framework is crucial for *Pesantren Kampus* to transcend their function as supportive religious environments and become active institutional participants in transforming Islamic knowledge paradigms.

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