



Islamic Education Transformation at Nurul Jadid University: The Controversy of Pesantren Values and Global Academia

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ABSTRACT

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This study focuses on the integration of pesantren values into the academic system of Nurul Jadid University as a model of Islamic higher education in addressing the challenges of globalization. The research aims to explore how the identity of pesantren can be preserved without neglecting modern academic demands, while at the same time discovering a balanced model between tradition and modernity in higher education management. The study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation at Nurul Jadid University, KH. Zaini Mun'im Street, Karanganyar, Paiton, Probolinggo in August 2025. Data analysis was conducted through thematic reduction, presentation, and verification. The findings reveal that integrating pesantren values into the academic system presents challenges, such as the potential dichotomy between tradition and modernity, but also opens opportunities through the strengthening of contextual curriculum, institutional culture, and adaptive use of digital technology. The implications of this study highlight that Islamic higher education based on pesantren can create a balanced integration model, thus maintaining the spiritual essence of Islam while simultaneously enhancing global competitiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia is currently undergoing a highly dynamic transformation, particularly within Islamic universities that are rooted in pesantren traditions (Mustopa et al., 2021). On the one hand, Islamic education is deeply anchored in religious values that emphasize morality, spirituality, and the local wisdom of pesantren. On the other hand, Islamic higher education institutions are simultaneously required to adhere to global academic standards that emphasize research productivity, digital competence, and international

competitiveness (Harifah & Sofa, 2025). Nurul Jadid University, as one of the pesantren-based universities, faces a significant challenge in maintaining balance between these two poles. This phenomenon is increasingly relevant to examine, as it not only concerns the direction of Islamic education transformation in the future but also touches upon the issues of identity and the very existence of pesantren universities amid the rapid flow of globalization.

The controversy emerging in this context lies in the epistemological tension between pesantren values—which stress modesty, obedience, and spiritual depth—and global academic values that are oriented toward international standards. Many academics and students perceive traditional pesantren values as less compatible with global academic demands, such as the obligation to publish in reputable journals, the adoption of digital learning technologies, and participation in international research collaborations. Conversely, if pesantren values are undermined, the distinctive identity of Islamic education that differentiates pesantren-based universities from other institutions will be diminished (Saputro & Nas'udin, 2025). This situation raises a crucial question: how can Islamic education at Nurul Jadid University transform by integrating pesantren values with global academic demands without producing harmful dichotomies or contradictions?

Several previous studies may serve as important references for understanding this phenomenon. Abdullah (2020) in the *Journal of Islamic Education Studies* highlighted how Islamic universities in Southeast Asia have responded to globalization through curriculum digitalization. His study revealed that digitalization efforts often create tensions between strengthening religiosity and meeting technological competencies (Izzah et al., 2025). Hidayat and Mukhlis (2021) in the *International Journal of Islamic Thought* emphasized that the transformation of Islamic education in modern pesantren requires a balance between spiritual traditions and research-oriented academic approaches to avoid losing its essential Islamic identity (Komala et al., 2025). Meanwhile, Rahman (2022) in *Higher Education Research & Development* examined the internationalization of Islamic higher education in Indonesia, concluding that accreditation and international collaboration efforts must always be accompanied by strategies to preserve the Islamic identity of universities (Rumra et al., 2025).

Although these studies provide valuable insights, there remains a gap in the literature. Most previous research has focused on curriculum innovation, digitalization, or internationalization of Islamic higher education in general, yet few have specifically examined the unique context of pesantren-based universities such as Nurul Jadid University. In fact, Nurul Jadid University stands out due to its unique character: it was established from a pesantren

culture rich in religious tradition, while at the same time promoting a vision of academic internationalization that requires adaptation to global standards (Putri, 2023). This research seeks to fill that gap by analyzing how the transformation of Islamic education takes place at Nurul Jadid University through the dialectics of pesantren values and global academic demands.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus, which does not merely address curriculum innovation or higher education internationalization in general, but rather provides an analysis of the controversies as well as the strategies of harmonization between these two value systems in the specific context of a pesantren university. This research adopts the perspective of *Cultural Hybridization* (Pieterse, 2009), which emphasizes that globalization does not necessarily eliminate local traditions but can generate new hybrid forms resulting from negotiation between the local and the global (Basri et al., 2025). Thus, this study aims to construct a model of Islamic education transformation that remains faithful to pesantren identity while simultaneously aligning with global academic standards.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to critically examine the process of Islamic education transformation at Nurul Jadid University by highlighting the controversies surrounding the integration of pesantren values and global academic standards. The study seeks to identify the forms of controversy that emerge, analyze the strategies employed by the university to address such tensions, and map the patterns of transformation currently underway. By focusing on one crucial issue how pesantren values can be effectively integrated into a global academic system, this research is expected to contribute theoretically to the discourse on Islamic education transformation and practically to the development of academic policies at Nurul Jadid University and other pesantren-based higher education institutions in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative research design with a case study approach to explore in depth the process of Islamic education transformation at Nurul Jadid University (Mannan et al., 2025). A qualitative approach is chosen because this study focuses on meanings, interpretations, and the social dynamics occurring within the context of pesantren-based education. The research site is Nurul Jadid University, located at KH. Zaini Mun'im Street, Karanganyar, Paiton, Probolinggo, East Java, with the fieldwork conducted in August 2025. The study focuses on how the integration of pesantren values with global academic demands is implemented in the curriculum, academic activities, and institutional culture.

Data collection techniques consist of several methods, namely in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Zahroh et al., 2025). In-depth interviews are conducted with key informants such as university leaders, lecturers, students, and academic unit administrators directly involved in the process of educational transformation. Participant observation is employed to understand the dynamics of academic interaction in classrooms, pesantren activities, and other academic forums. Meanwhile, document analysis is carried out by examining official university documents such as vision and mission statements, curricula, accreditation reports, scientific publications, and policies related to academic development and pesantren values.

The research subjects are determined using purposive sampling, namely the selection of informants based on their involvement, experience, and knowledge regarding the issue of Islamic education transformation at Nurul Jadid University (Badrul & Yaturrochmah, 2024). Informants include university leaders (rectorate and deanship), lecturers engaged in curriculum development, students as direct recipients of the impact, and pesantren administrators who play a role in the integration of Islamic values. The collected data are then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques following the steps of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Hikmah et al., 2022). Data validity is reinforced through source and method triangulation, ensuring that the research findings are scientifically reliable (Rusli et al., 2025). With this approach, the study is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the dialectic between pesantren values and global academic demands at Nurul Jadid University.

Table 1. Research Procedure

| Research Stage | Activities | Objectives |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Pre-Field | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducting literature review on Islamic education transformation, pesantren values, and global academia. 2. Preparing the research proposal. 3. Applying for research permission at Nurul Jadid University. | Establishing theoretical foundation and research legality. |
| Data Collection (August 2025) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In-depth interviews with university leaders, lecturers, students, and pesantren administrators. 2. Participant observation in classrooms, pesantren activities, and academic forums. 3. Document analysis (curriculum, vision-mission, accreditation reports, university publications). | Collecting primary and secondary data related to the transformation of Islamic education. |

| Research Stage | Activities | Objectives |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Data Analysis | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data reduction (sorting relevant data from interviews, observations, and documents). 2. Data presentation in narrative, tables, and thematic forms. 3. Drawing conclusions based on emerging patterns and main themes. | Producing in-depth understanding of the controversy between pesantren values and global academia. |
| Data Validation | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Source triangulation (leaders, lecturers, students, pesantren administrators). 2. Method triangulation (interviews, observations, documentation). | Ensuring data validity so that the research results are academically accountable. |
| Report Writing | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Writing research findings in scientific narrative form. 2. Discussing findings with relevant theories. 3. Preparing conclusions and recommendations. | Documenting research results in an academic form. |

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Integration of Pesantren Values into the University Academic System

The findings indicate that the efforts of Nurul Jadid University to integrate pesantren values into its academic system face complex dynamics. On one hand, the university holds strong pesantren traditions as its institutional identity, while on the other hand, there are global academic demands requiring modernization of curriculum, teaching methods, and quality standards (Fathiyyah & Khusna, 2024).

A lecturer stated: *"We are trying to maintain the spirit of pesantren within the university. However, when national and international accreditation standards demand competency-based curricula, we have no choice but to adapt, even though it sometimes feels contradictory."* (Interview, August 2025). This indicates a tension between preserving pesantren traditions and meeting academic globalization requirements.

Similarly, a student noted: *"Studying here is different. We don't just study theories, but we are also required to pray in congregation, recite the Qur'an, and participate in pesantren activities. The challenge is that class schedules often overlap with pesantren obligations."* (Interview, August 2025). This illustrates that integrating religious values into the academic system creates a dual burden for students, although it strengthens their Islamic identity (Wahyuningsih et al., 2025).

These findings highlight a dialectical process where pesantren values integration is not only a matter of policy but also affects the daily lives of

students and lecturers. Theoretically, this aligns with Tilaar (2004), who emphasized that modern Islamic education must balance tradition and global demands (Khomsinnudin et al., 2024).

Controversy between Pesantren Tradition and Global Academic Standards

The study further reveals controversies regarding the implementation of global academic standards at Nurul Jadid University. The adoption of outcome-based education (OBE) and international publication requirements are often perceived as “foreign” within pesantren culture.

A university leader stated: *“We cannot reject global standards since international accreditation requires them. Yet, we also do not want to lose the pesantren roots that define our identity.”* (Interview, August 2025). This reflects an institutional dilemma between maintaining traditional identity and achieving global recognition.

A pesantren administrator added: *“This pesantren was founded on values of simplicity, but modern academia requires international publications, modern laboratories, and even a different lifestyle. There is a concern that modernization may erode pesantren simplicity.”* (Interview, August 2025). This shows cultural resistance to globalization, which is seen as potentially undermining pesantren’s distinct character (Asiska et al., 2024).

Thus, the controversy is not merely administrative but deeply ideological, tied to institutional identity. Nurul Jadid University is therefore challenged to bridge two different worlds: local tradition and global academic expectations.

Paradigm Shift in Learning

The research also discovered a significant paradigm shift in teaching and learning. The university has adopted technology-based learning, research orientation, and international collaborations. However, these changes pose adaptation challenges for students accustomed to traditional pesantren learning models.

A student shared: *“Now, many courses use digital technology, and lecturers even ask us to present in English. At first, it was difficult for us who are used to studying classical Islamic texts, but gradually, we are adapting.”* (Interview, August 2025). This demonstrates a cognitive and cultural transition among students adapting to new learning models.

Meanwhile, a lecturer stated: *“The global curriculum requires students to be active learners, not just passive receivers of knowledge. We try to instill intellectual independence while maintaining pesantren values of character and ethics.”* (Interview,

August 2025). This suggests that the university is attempting a synthesis between modern pedagogy and pesantren traditions.

This paradigm shift reflects Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning, which emphasizes shifts in thinking and learning as essential for education to adapt to changing times (Oktafia et al., 2025).

Emergency Conditions in Adapting to Globalization

The study also found that adaptation to globalization is experienced as an emergency condition by both lecturers and students. Major obstacles include limited internet access, lack of international academic resources, and language barriers among students.

A student explained: *"We are required to read international journals, but access to paid journals is limited. Besides, our English proficiency is still weak."* (Interview, August 2025). This highlights technical and cognitive barriers in academic transformation.

A lecturer emphasized: *"There is pressure for lecturers to publish in international journals, but not all of us are accustomed to writing in English. This is a heavy burden for many of us."* (Interview, August 2025). This indicates that globalization pressures affect both students and lecturers, creating institutional stress (Amalia et al., 2024).

Such emergency conditions demand systematic solutions to ensure that educational transformation is not only formal but practically implementable.

Solutions and Strategies for Strengthening Identity

Despite facing controversies, paradigm shifts, and emergency challenges, the study found that Nurul Jadid University has developed strategies to cope with these issues.

A university leader explained: *"We are trying to design a flexible curriculum. On one hand, we maintain pesantren values through religious activities, but on the other hand, we also adopt global standards by initiating student and faculty exchange programs."* (Interview, August 2025). This reflects an adaptive strategy that merges tradition with modernity.

A student also shared: *"We feel supported by the English and digital technology training provided by the university. It helps us face academic challenges while preserving our identity as santri."* (Interview, August 2025). This demonstrates that the university's initiatives yield practical benefits for students navigating global challenges (Marlin et al., 2023).

Such identity-strengthening strategies can be understood as a form of *glocalization*, in which global values are accommodated without abandoning local roots (Hanapi & Amaluddin, 2025).

Table 2. Dialectics of Pesantren Values and Global Academic Standards

| Aspect | Pesantren Values | Global Academic Demands | Dialectical Form |
|---------------------|---|---|--|
| Curriculum | Classical Islamic texts, moral education | Outcome-based education, internationalized curriculum | Integration of religious and modern sciences |
| Learning Methods | <i>Sorogan, bandongan</i> , role modeling | Student-centered learning, digital learning | Hybrid of traditional and modern methods |
| Student Identity | Pious santri, religious commitment | Globally competitive students | Cosmopolitan intellectual santri |
| Lecturer Competence | Kyai and pesantren teachers | International publications, collaborative research | Scholar-researcher with spiritual guidance |
| Facilities | Mosque, pesantren dormitories | Modern laboratories, international journal access | Hybrid infrastructure |

Discussion

The first part compares the findings regarding the integration of pesantren values into the academic system with previous studies. This research found a real tension between preserving pesantren identity and meeting global academic demands. This is consistent with the analysis of Sibawaihi et al. (2023), who emphasized that Islamic higher education in Indonesia must enhance global competitiveness while maintaining local identity—by strengthening institutional autonomy, international accreditation, and global academic quality (Jaudi, 2024). Just as Nurul Jadid University seeks to “preserve the spirit of pesantren” while adjusting to global accreditation standards, other Islamic universities face similar pressures. However, unlike some models that emphasize modernization without reinforcing identity, these findings suggest that integration can be carried out in a balanced way through curriculum and institutional culture—an alternative perspective that enriches the existing literature.

The second part examines the interpretation of digitalization and learning paradigms at Nurul Jadid against the broader experience of pesantren in the modern era. Supriyono (2022) argued that the COVID-19 pandemic forced pesantren to adopt digital adaptation, which was initially perceived as contradictory to traditional values but later proved to be a foundation for institutional survival in the 21st century (Saharani, 2022). The findings at Nurul Jadid reveal a similar pattern—although challenges were evident at the beginning, students gradually became accustomed to digital presentations and the use of technology, while lecturers sought to synthesize modern methods with the spiritual values of pesantren. This indicates that modern pesantren education is capable of adopting a “compromise-progression” approach, embracing modernization without losing its roots, thereby reinforcing the

argument that digitalization does not necessarily erode pesantren values but can become an ethical and effective adaptive pathway.

The third part addresses the emergency conditions in adapting to globalization, particularly regarding limited facilities and English proficiency. Ismail & Marwiji (2023) highlighted that Islamic education curricula are often not adaptive to global demands, resulting in lagging behind in digital technology utilization and institutional capacity building (Masruri et al., 2025). Observations at Nurul Jadid clarify that transformation is not only ideological but also operational, as students struggle to access paid journals and lecturers feel pressured by international publication requirements in English. These findings validate the claim that structural challenges such as infrastructure, training, and policy support are real barriers to the globalization of Islamic education (Azizah et al., 2025). However, the solutions offered—such as language training and technological upskilling—suggest a new direction in which these challenges can be addressed through institutional capacity-building strategies rather than resistance to globalization.

Overall, this discussion emphasizes that although the challenges of globalization in Islamic education are real and multidimensional, a combination of glocalization approaches and internal policies that remain sensitive to the local context can strengthen the position of pesantren-based universities such as Nurul Jadid University in the global educational arena.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the integration of pesantren values into the academic system of Nurul Jadid University presents both challenges and opportunities. The key insight derived from this research is that preserving pesantren identity does not necessarily conflict with the demands of academic globalization. Instead, both can coexist through the design of contextual curricula, the strengthening of institutional culture, and the adaptive use of digital technology. The findings demonstrate that Islamic education within a modern pesantren setting is capable of balancing tradition and modernity, thereby maintaining its spiritual essence while also enhancing global competitiveness. Thus, the scholarly contribution of this study lies in offering a renewed perspective on Islamic higher education based on the pesantren model, which moves beyond the dichotomy of tradition versus modernity and instead proposes a more balanced and productive integration.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations in terms of its scope, being restricted to the case of Nurul Jadid University, with limited location, respondent variation, and the exclusive use of qualitative methods. This opens space for further research that is more comprehensive, such as employing large-

scale survey methods involving a wider range of pesantren-based universities across different regions. Such an approach would provide a broader understanding of strategies for integrating Islamic education in the face of globalization challenges. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies combine qualitative and quantitative approaches so that the results can serve as a stronger foundation for policy-making in the development of pesantren-based Islamic higher education.

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