

Boarding School Education in Indonesia: A Conceptual Analysis of the Differences between Boarding Schools and Islamic Boarding Schools in the Perspective of Contemporary Islamic Education

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Abstract

This study investigates the conceptual distinctions between boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) within the framework of contemporary Islamic Religious Education (IRE). The research aims to understand how both systems integrate religious values, academic achievement, and character formation in a residential educational environment. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study analyzes philosophical foundations, curriculum orientation, and the roles of educators in shaping students' moral and intellectual growth. The findings reveal that boarding schools emphasize structured management and curriculum integration between general and Islamic education, whereas pesantren focus on the transmission of classical Islamic sciences and character development through traditional mentorship and communal life. Both models share the same mission of producing spiritually grounded, disciplined, and socially responsible individuals. The study concludes that an integrative approach combining the strengths of both systems is essential for developing holistic Islamic education that remains relevant amid globalization, technological change, and social diversity.

Keywords: Islamic Education; Boarding School; Pesantren; Contemporary Islamic Education.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji perbedaan konseptual antara sekolah berasrama dan pesantren dalam kerangka Pendidikan Agama

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Islam (PAI) kontemporer. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah memahami bagaimana kedua sistem tersebut mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai keagamaan, prestasi akademik, dan pembentukan karakter dalam lingkungan pendidikan berasrama. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis landasan filosofis, orientasi kurikulum, serta peran pendidik dalam membentuk perkembangan moral dan intelektual peserta didik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sekolah berasrama menekankan manajemen yang terstruktur dan integrasi kurikulum umum dengan pendidikan Islam, sedangkan pesantren berfokus pada transmisi ilmu-ilmu Islam klasik serta pembentukan karakter melalui bimbingan tradisional dan kehidupan komunal. Keduanya memiliki tujuan yang sama, yaitu mencetak individu yang religius, disiplin, dan bertanggung jawab secara sosial. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendekatan integratif yang memadukan keunggulan kedua sistem sangat penting untuk mengembangkan pendidikan Islam yang holistik dan relevan terhadap globalisasi, perkembangan teknologi, dan keragaman sosial.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Islam; Sekolah Berasrama; Pesantren; Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer.

A. Introduction

The phenomenon of the increase in boarding schools in Indonesia can be observed from the high level of interest and demand from the community, especially from parents, for educational institutions that are not only oriented towards academic achievement, but also towards character building and strengthening the religiousness of students. In this context, boarding schools are often positioned as an ideal educational model that is considered capable of integrating religious values with modern educational principles,

thereby responding to the need for a holistic and balanced education system that encompasses intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects. On the other hand, Islamic boarding schools as a model of traditional Islamic education continue to undergo a process of renewal and modernization in order to respond to the challenges of the times and the tide of globalization. These efforts reflect the adaptation of Islamic boarding schools in maintaining their relevance as educational, da'wah, and character-building institutions in line with the needs of contemporary society without

abandoning their traditional roots of scholarship.

Boarding school education is one model of education that is gaining attention in the context of education in Indonesia, as it is considered to have great potential in shaping the character of students, strengthening the internalization of religious values, and creating an intensive and focused learning environment. In the realm of contemporary Islamic Religious Education, there are two main forms of boarding school systems that are often compared, namely pesantren as traditional religious institutions rooted in classical book teaching systems and direct guidance from kyai, and modern boarding schools that integrate the national curriculum with boarding school systems and religious habituation programs. The historical, structural, curricular, and parenting pattern differences make a comparative study of these two models relevant and significant for examining their respective contributions to achieving the goals of Islamic religious education in the modern era (Manaf, 2022; Syafe'i, 2017).

Conceptually, Islamic boarding schools are viewed as residential educational institutions that place kyai or ustadz and the tradition of studying classical texts at the center of the learning process. This model is oriented toward the transmission of classical religious knowledge, the habit of worship, and the character building of students through intensive interaction in daily life in the boarding school environment. In contrast, boarding schools, especially those labeled as Islamic boarding schools, seek to integrate the national curriculum with religious activities, intra- and extracurricular learning, and systematic boarding school management in order to adapt to modern educational standards. The integration of traditional values and the formal education system has given rise to new dynamics in Islamic education practices, including the adaptation of teaching methods, the design of an integrative Islamic Education curriculum, and the challenge of maintaining a balance between the pesantren tradition and the demands of educational modernization (As-Tsauri & Erihadiana, 2022; Syafe'i, 2017).

Based on various empirical studies, a number of studies show that the boarding school model has significant potential in strengthening the understanding of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and shaping the character of students through the implementation of a curriculum that integrates academic dimensions with boarding-based care. However, a number of weaknesses remain a concern, including high academic pressure, limited facilities and infrastructure, and problems in boarding house management. On the other hand, Islamic boarding schools continue to undergo a conceptual reconstruction process towards a form of institution that is able to accommodate the values of religious moderation and curriculum transformation, without abandoning their traditional identity as centers of classical Islamic education. Based on this context, this study proposes a conceptual analysis that positions boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools on a spectrum of boarding school education models, focusing on the similarities and differences in curriculum structure, the role of the boarding school environment

in character building, and the implications of both for the practice of contemporary Islamic Religious Education (As-Tsauri & Erihadiana, 2022; Syafe'i, 2017).

The main issues in boarding school education in Indonesia include differences in systems, value orientations, and challenges in implementing Islamic education between Islamic boarding schools and boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools emphasize classical Islamic scholarship, religious practices, and the relationship between teachers and students, while boarding schools combine formal curricula with boarding school care. Pesantren value orientation focuses on spiritual and religious character building, while boarding schools emphasize the integration of Islamic values with global and academic competencies. The challenges faced include developing a relevant PAI curriculum, effective boarding school management, balancing religious and general education, and optimizing the function of boarding schools as environments for value building, not merely as places to live.

B. Method

This study aims to conceptually analyze the boarding school and Islamic boarding school models within the framework of contemporary Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The focus of the study is on how these two institutions integrate Islamic values, character building, and academic competence in response to the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative descriptive design with conceptual analysis, as this approach is considered most appropriate for examining the philosophical foundations, curriculum orientation, and educational strategies without involving direct empirical data collection.

The theoretical basis of this study is rooted in the integrative Islamic education paradigm, which emphasizes the unity of spiritual, moral, and intellectual dimensions in shaping the holistic development of students. This paradigm serves as the analytical framework for examining how boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools operationalize the integration of religious and general knowledge, as well as how the boarding school environment

plays a role in shaping the character and discipline of students.

Based on this theoretical framework, the analysis process was carried out in three main stages, namely: (1) conceptual mapping to identify the main characteristics of each educational model, (2) comparative analysis to examine differences in curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and institutional management systems, and (3) synthesis to formulate an integrative education model that combines traditional Islamic values with modern educational practices. This methodological framework serves to bridge theory and practice, while providing a basis for further empirical research on Islamic boarding school education in Indonesia

C. Result and Discussion

1. Boarding School Education

Boarding school education can be understood as an educational system that combines "learning" and "living/boarding" in one institution. In Indonesia, this means that students not only follow the academic curriculum, but also live in a boarding school environment that supports the formation

of character, values, and daily habits (Badri, Hasanah, Erihadiana, Suhartini, & Nurfaui, 2025). Boarding school education has the primary goal of developing students holistically, spiritually, intellectually, socially, and character-wise. This system emphasizes comprehensive character building through life in the dormitory, which becomes an environment for learning and developing discipline and independence (Fitriana & Sumardiyani, 2024; Khoiruzzadi & Hakim, 2020; Perdana, Suwandi, Zamjani, Hendrik, & Biantoro, 2017; Setiawan, 2021).

The boarding school curriculum is designed to harmoniously integrate general knowledge and religion, thereby supporting the holistic development of students in intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social aspects. This approach emphasizes not only academic achievement but also the formation of strong character and moral values. In the learning process, the methods used are dominated by modern approaches such as student-centered learning and project-based learning, which place students as active subjects in learning activities. Through these methods, students are

encouraged to think critically, collaborate, and develop creativity and problem-solving skills independently (Fitriana & Sumardiyani, 2024).

The role of teachers and dormitory supervisors in this system is very strategic, not limited to teaching in the classroom, but also includes character building, behavior supervision, and management of social life in the dormitory environment. They act as educators, mentors, and role models who support the growth of a conducive and supportive learning environment. Dormitory life itself provides ample space for students to interact, learn to live together, and hone social skills such as tolerance, empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility. Thus, dormitory education serves as a vehicle for holistic personal development, producing a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also morally upright and ready to face the challenges of global life (Fitriana & Sumardiyani, 2024; Perdana et al., 2017).

Boarding schools have a number of distinctive characteristics that set them apart from non-boarding education systems. One of the main elements is

communal living in a boarding environment, which serves as a place for instilling values, habits, and structured daily rituals. This collective lifestyle encourages intensive social interaction among students, creating an atmosphere of mutual learning and helping one another, as well as strengthening solidarity and social empathy. In this context, the boarding school environment functions not only as a place to live, but also as a space for character education that takes place naturally and continuously.

Another prominent characteristic is the combination of a general curriculum with religious or character values, which are designed in an integrative manner to shape individuals who are balanced in terms of intellectual and moral intelligence. This curriculum emphasizes not only cognitive aspects, but also affective and psychomotor aspects, thereby developing students' potential in a comprehensive manner. In addition, internal dormitory management, which includes the role of caregivers, the implementation of rules, scheduling, and extracurricular activities, serves as a vehicle for character building

and self-discipline. This management structure ensures the creation of an orderly, focused environment that supports the internalization of positive values in students' daily lives.

Research at MAN 1 Pekalongan published by UIR Press Journal shows that the boarding school system has a significant influence on the development of students' independence, both emotionally, socially, and economically. Boarding school students are accustomed to managing their time, fulfilling their personal needs, and adapting to various social situations, which ultimately strengthens their sense of responsibility and self-confidence. Furthermore, a study entitled "Transformation of Boarding School Management Models in Enhancing Student Accessibility and Educational Quality" emphasizes that boarding school models need to transform in line with the socio-cultural context and technological developments, without neglecting the core values that are the spirit of boarding school education, such as togetherness, independence, and character building. Thus, modern boarding schools are required to be able

to balance tradition and innovation in order to remain relevant in improving accessibility and educational quality in the global era (Darwanto, Prahmana, Susanti, & Khalil, 2024).

2. Pesantren Education

Pesantren are Islamic educational institutions that focus on the in-depth spiritual and intellectual development of students through a distinctive learning system steeped in traditional values. The main characteristics of pesantren lie in their teaching methods, such as halaqah, sorogan, and bandongan, each of which emphasizes direct interaction between teachers (kyai or ustaz) and students (santri). The halaqah method prioritizes learning in the form of assemblies or study circles, where the kyai delivers religious material directly and in depth to the santri, accompanied by discussions and explanations of interpretations of classical texts (kitab kuning). Sorogan emphasizes an individual approach, where students read and study books in front of the kyai to receive personal correction and guidance, allowing for a more intensive process of internalizing knowledge and manners. Meanwhile, bandongan is a

collective method where the kyai reads and explains books in front of a number of students, who take notes and listen carefully to the explanations (Ali & Kawakip, 2025; Permadi, Sya'ban, & Hilalludin, 2025). These three methods are not only oriented towards the mastery of religious knowledge in a textual sense, but also towards the formation of character, discipline, and spiritual closeness between teachers and students. The strong personal relationship between the two forms the foundation for the transmission of Islamic knowledge and values (Ali & Kawakip, 2025; Permadi et al., 2025).

Pesantren are traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia that have existed and developed for centuries, playing an important role in shaping the Islamic identity and culture of the nation. As explained by Hasanah (2020) in her work "Sejarah Pendidikan Pesantren" (History of Pesantren Education) published by Pondok Jurnal, pesantren function as institutions that shape Islamic traditions in Indonesia as well as cultural mediators that bridge Islamic values with the dynamics of modernity. With its distinctive character,

pesantren are able to adapt to social changes without losing their traditional roots, making these institutions remain relevant amid the currents of globalization and modernization in education (Hasanah, 2022).

Furthermore, the results of a study entitled “Resilience Model of the Traditional Islamic Boarding School Education System in Shaping the Morals of Students in the Midst of Modernizing Education” published by E-Journal Undikma confirms that the traditional (salaf) pesantren education system has high resilience in maintaining moral values amid the modernization of education. Salaf boarding schools are not only centers for the transmission of classical Islamic knowledge, but also serve as strong institutions for moral guidance. The community still regards boarding schools as the main reference in moral and spiritual education because of their system that emphasizes a balance between mastery of knowledge, spiritual depth, and character building (Jaenullah, Utama, & Setiawan, 2022).

The traditional pesantren curriculum basically emphasizes intensive Islamic education with a focus

on mastering classical Islamic sciences, such as tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and tasawuf. However, with the passage of time and the demands of social relevance, modern Islamic boarding schools have begun to adopt the national curriculum and utilize learning technologies in an effort to integrate tradition and modernity. The learning process, which was previously dominated by traditional methods such as sorogan and bandongan, is now complemented by more interactive modern approaches, including group discussions, the use of digital media, and the application of a more structured evaluation system. In this context, the role of teachers or ustadz is not only limited to imparting knowledge, but also as respected spiritual and intellectual guides, as well as moral role models for the santri. In addition, dormitory supervisors are responsible for shaping the religious character and discipline of the santri through supervision of daily activities and internalization of Islamic values (Ali & Kawakip, 2025; Permadi et al., 2025). Life in the boarding school environment also takes place in a strong and relatively exclusive religious atmosphere, creating a space conducive

to the formation of character, spirituality, and integrity of the students in accordance with Islamic values (Ali & Kawakip, 2025; Saini, 2024).

3. Comparison between Boarding Schools and Islamic Boarding Schools

Boarding education in Indonesia presents two models that are often compared, namely boarding-based institutions that combine formal general education, often referred to as boarding schools, and the traditional religious system of Islamic boarding schools. In academic studies, the Islamic boarding school model is discussed as an Islamic educational institution with strong historical roots in Indonesian society, focusing on the teaching of classical Islamic texts, communal life in boarding schools, and spiritual guidance by religious teachers. Case studies cite how pesantren play a strategic role in fostering a spirit of independence and empowerment among santri after graduation (Musaddad, 2023; Purwoko, 2022; Syah & Iswantir, 2023). Meanwhile, modern boarding schools combine the national curriculum and structured boarding school guidance

with the aim of developing not only academic aspects but also character and morals. For example, research on boarding school-based learning systems confirms that these institutions are designed so that students acquire a balanced education in general and religious knowledge through scheduled boarding and supervision by mentors (Putri, Maidarfrida, & Trimansyah, 2024; Tang, Aji, & Bachtiar, 2024).

Furthermore, in the context of religious education transformation, the study "A Systematic Literature Review of Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren) Education in Indonesia (2014-2024)" shows that the pesantren model in Indonesia is developing and can be classified into three types: salaf/traditional, modern, and integrated (Ari, Dorloh, & Abdullah, 2024). Salaf/traditional boarding schools place more emphasis on non-formal education based on classical Islamic texts; modern boarding schools integrate formal education in accordance with government regulations; while integrated boarding schools combine the two by harmonizing religious and general curricula. This transformation shows that

Islamic boarding schools are no longer exclusive to the religious sphere, but also respond to the demands of globalization and nationalization of education (Musaddad, 2023). In terms of curriculum and learning practices, the comparison between boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools can be summarized as follows: boarding schools usually adopt a boarding system with scheduled character building, active supervision, and the integration of general and religious knowledge in an effort to respond to national educational needs and moral challenges (Putri et al., 2024; Tang et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Islamic boarding schools, especially traditional ones, emphasize intensive religious education, the community life of students living in the boarding school, the teaching of classical Islamic texts, and the unique relationship between teachers and students—although many boarding schools are now adapting to the formal curriculum in order to be relevant to the national education system (Astuti, 2017; Purwoko, 2022).

In terms of excellence, boarding schools have advantages in structured management, the integration of academic

and character aspects, and dormitory facilities that enable 24/7 guidance. A study says that the boarding school system enables the formation of excellent character through positive habits, the integral instilling of values, monitoring of student activities, and the development of talents and interests (Tang et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Islamic boarding schools excel in strengthening religious identity, Islamic scholarly traditions, deep boarding school communities, and strong alumni networks, all of which contribute to the formation of students as religious and social agents (Ari et al., 2024; Syah & Iswanti, 2023; Zuhdiana & Mawartningsih, 2017).

However, both models also face quite complex challenges. Boarding schools must maintain a balance between academic demands and authentic religious guidance so that they do not become mere "ordinary boarding schools" with additional sleeping quarters. In addition, accessibility and cost are important issues, especially for low-income families. Meanwhile, Islamic boarding schools face challenges in packaging the general curriculum,

improving the quality of formal teaching, and providing adequate infrastructure so that graduates are competitive in modern education and the world of work (Amrizal, 2011; Astuti, 2017; Musaddad, 2023).

In terms of educational policy implications, the material shows that Indonesia needs to develop an integrative model that takes advantage of the strengths of both types of institutions: Islamic boarding schools, which are strong in religious and character education, and boarding schools, which excel in structural systems and general curriculum integration. Such a model would provide an alternative educational institution capable of producing graduates with religious, academic, and social competence. The research highlights that pesantren/hybrid educational institutions can become mainstream in the national education system, with structured management that still maintains local wisdom and religious authenticity (Amrizal, 2011; Ari et al., 2024).

4. Contemporary Perspectives on Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

a. The basic concept of PAI in the context of boarding schools

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the context of boarding school education is a systemic effort to develop religious competencies that include aspects of faith, worship, and morals, while deepening understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith, and fostering social skills and independence in students through an intensive and integrated living environment. In this model, religious learning is not limited to formal class hours, but is integrated into daily activities such as spiritual guidance, regular recitation, congregational worship, character building in the boarding school, and continuous interaction between students. Thus, PAI serves as character education that internalizes religious values in all aspects of boarding school life, rather than merely as a stand-alone subject (Muazza, Mukminin, Habibi, Hidayat, & Abidin, 2018; Wardi, Ismail, Supandi, & Hodairiyah, 2025).

The main principles in the implementation of boarding school-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) include: the application of an integrative

curriculum that combines religious and general subjects; habituation of religious values through routine activities and boarding school discipline; contextual learning that utilizes the boarding school environment as a space for internalizing religious values and practices; and the central role of kyai, teachers, and boarding school guardians as mentors in the daily lives of students, both in spiritual, academic, and social aspects (Noor, 2024; Wardi et al., 2025).

b. Contemporary challenges (globalization, technology, pluralism)

In the context of boarding school education, both in the form of boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools, current social dynamics and global developments pose various new challenges that require adjustments to the educational paradigm. These challenges arise as a consequence of rapid changes, especially in the social, cultural, technological, and global values spheres, all of which influence the way young people think, behave, and interact.

First, the tide of globalization has a significant impact on the identity of students. The flow of unlimited

information, global popular culture, and individualistic and materialistic values often conflict with the religious and moral values taught in boarding schools. In this situation, Islamic educational institutions need to equip students with critical thinking skills, cultural literacy, and value flexibility so that they can interact openly without losing their Islamic identity. Strengthening character and internalizing religious values are key to preventing identity alienation and preventing the emergence of extreme or radical attitudes due to the clash of global values (Achruh & Sukirman, 2024; Tolchah & Mu'ammam, 2019).

Second, the development of digital technology presents both opportunities and threats to boarding school education. Digitalization allows access to a wide range of learning resources, online learning, and efficient cross-regional communication. However, on the other hand, the phenomena of misinformation, disinformation, and distraction due to excessive use of gadgets can hinder the learning process and spiritual deepening of students. Therefore, the integration of technology in boarding school education needs to be done selectively and

purposefully, based on Islamic values and humanistic pedagogical principles. Technology should serve as a tool to enrich the learning experience, not replace the role of teachers or mentors as central figures in character education (Muaddyl Akhyar, Nurfarida Deliani, & Khadijah Khadijah, 2025; Sari & Amini, 2025).

Third, pluralism and social diversity are becoming increasingly apparent challenges in the context of national life. Santri and boarding school students live in a society that is diverse in terms of religion, ethnicity, and culture. Therefore, Islamic education in boarding schools needs to foster awareness of tolerance, the ability to engage in interfaith dialogue, and social skills for peaceful coexistence amid differences. An inclusive approach to religious learning, as emphasized by the multicultural education paradigm, is important for building civic values and national spirit without sacrificing religious beliefs (Mukhsin, Muslihudin, Mutaqin, & Nasir, 2024).

Fourth, curriculum harmonization is also a major challenge. Traditional Islamic boarding schools often face a

dilemma between preserving classical scholarly heritage and the need to adapt to the national curriculum, which emphasizes science and 21st-century competencies. Conversely, modern boarding schools face the risk of a decline in the depth of religious education when the focus is directed towards achieving national or international academic standards. Therefore, a harmonious curriculum integration model is needed, in which religious, intellectual, and life skills aspects can be balanced within the framework of character education (Hanif, Mukhroji, Suwito, Mubaroq, & Dharin, 2024; Noor, 2024).

Thus, boarding school education in the contemporary era is required to continue innovating without abandoning its scientific roots. Curriculum flexibility, ethical digital literacy, and the strengthening of spiritual and social values are the main foundations for boarding schools to remain relevant and competitive in shaping a generation that is faithful, knowledgeable, and has integrity amid complex global challenges.

c. Integration of Islamic Education in boarding schools vs Islamic boarding schools

The integration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in boarding school environments shows different characteristics and orientations between boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools. These differences can be seen in terms of objectives, curriculum, learning methods, the role of caregivers, and responses to contemporary challenges. Although both place religious values at the core of education, the approaches and implementations develop in accordance with the institutional vision and social context of each.

In terms of objectives and orientation, boarding schools generally emphasize a balance between achieving national and international academic standards and character education based on religious values. These institutions strive to produce students who excel intellectually while also possessing moral and spiritual integrity. In contrast, Islamic boarding schools have a stronger orientation towards the deepening of classical Islamic sciences such as mastery of classical Islamic texts, tafsir,

and fiqh as well as the formation of morals and religious life within the boarding school community. Thus, while boarding schools focus on global adaptation and academic competence, Islamic boarding schools place greater emphasis on the internalization of spiritual values and moral guidance based on Islamic traditions (Muazza et al., 2018; Noor, 2024).

In terms of curriculum and learning methods, modern boarding schools implement an integrated curriculum between general subjects and Islamic Religious Education (PAI), with a systematic and competency-based structure. The learning process is supported by modern methods such as project-based learning, the use of information and communication technology (ICT), and an objective and measurable evaluation system. In contrast, Islamic boarding schools are still rooted in a traditional curriculum system, such as halaqah-style recitation of religious texts and the sorogan method, which emphasizes a close relationship between teachers (ustadz/kyai) and students. Learning is experiential and takes place in the daily

lives of students through religious practices, religious habits, and community activities that are rich in spiritual values (Noor, 2024; Wardi et al., 2025).

Significant differences can also be seen in the roles of caregivers and teachers. In modern boarding schools, the role of teachers tends to be professional and structured, encompassing the roles of instructor, academic advisor, and counselor who guides students' personal development. Meanwhile, in Islamic boarding schools, kyai and ustadz are central figures who have moral, spiritual, and social authority. The relationship between santri and kyai is charismatic and paternalistic, where the personal example of the kyai is the main source of character building and internalization of religious values (Barica & Chellam, 2025; Muazza et al., 2018).

In response to contemporary challenges, modern boarding schools are relatively more adaptive in adopting technological innovations, new learning models, and multicultural programs. These institutions tend to be open to global changes and are ready to adjust

their curricula to the demands of the 21st century. In contrast, Islamic boarding schools show a more gradual dynamic of adaptation. Some Islamic boarding schools have successfully modernized by adding general education and information technology training without abandoning their religious traditions, while others still show resistance to the national curriculum. The best integration pattern is generally a hybrid system, which is a combination of a modern curriculum and traditional Islamic boarding school values that are kept authentic (Hanif et al., 2024; Yumni Febriani Tanjung, Yusnaili Budianti, & Junaidi Arsyad, 2025).

Conceptually, both boarding school models have great potential to strengthen the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education if they are able to balance spiritual depth and social relevance. Islamic Religious Education in boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools needs to be directed not only to strengthen faith and morality, but also to develop digital literacy, life skills, and an open attitude towards the plurality of modern society. In this context, practical recommendations that can be proposed

include training Islamic Religious Education teachers in digital literacy and pluralism education, collaborative programs between Islamic boarding schools and modern schools through the exchange of pedagogical practices, and the design of a flexible curriculum that maintains religious depth while accommodating 21st-century competencies. With these strategies, the integration of PAI in boarding schools can serve as a bridge between traditional Islamic values and the demands of a dynamic global life (Muaddyl Akhyar et al., 2025).

5. The Role of Government and Regulation in the Management of Boarding Schools in Indonesia

The Indonesian government plays a strategic role in regulating and developing boarding school systems, both in the form of boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools, as an integral part of the national education system. Through Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools, the government formally recognizes Islamic boarding schools as educational institutions equivalent to other formal education institutions. This law not only

affirms the legitimacy of Islamic boarding schools, but also regulates institutional management, curriculum, and quality assurance systems that provide a strong legal basis for the existence of Islamic boarding schools within the framework of national education policy. Furthermore, Minister of Religious Affairs Regulations (PMA) Number 30 and 31 of 2020 clarify the provisions regarding the establishment, operation, and characteristics of Islamic boarding schools as Islamic-based educational institutions with boarding facilities, so that Islamic boarding schools can maintain the uniqueness of Islamic values and scientific traditions that have been rooted in the history of education in Indonesia (Najah, 2022).

In its implementation, the government not only acts as a regulator, but also as a facilitator and mentor in the development of boarding school education quality. These efforts are realized through the provision of technical assistance, quality management guidance, and supervision of educational institutions to ensure they meet National Education Standards (SNP). This approach emphasizes the importance of

holistic education that integrates the development of religious, academic, life skills (soft skills), and national insight aspects. Government support is also reflected in the provision of adequate educational facilities and infrastructure, especially in areas with limited access to education, as well as the implementation of inclusive policies for students from various socio-economic backgrounds (Najah, 2022; Perdana, 2019).

Although boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools both implement a boarding school education system, the government provides more specific regulations for Islamic boarding schools as Islamic religious educational institutions. Islamic boarding schools have unique characteristics in their curriculum based on classical Islamic texts, traditional learning methods (*bandongan* and *sorogan*), and a student care system that emphasizes the formation of character and spiritual discipline. In contrast, modern boarding schools mostly adopt the national curriculum with additional religious and character content relevant to global needs. Government policy in this context is accommodative, providing space for

adaptation and integration between general education and religious education so that both can contribute synergistically to shaping students who are religious, intelligent, and competitive in the modern era (Manaf, 2022).

However, the government also recognizes the various challenges faced by boarding schools, such as gaps in curriculum quality, limited teaching resources, and funding sustainability. To address these issues, various strategic efforts have been made, such as reconstructing the curriculum based on the integration of religious values and modern science, improving the competence of teachers and boarding school supervisors, and optimizing institutional management to be more efficient and adaptive to the needs of the times. Thus, the government's policy in the field of boarding school education not only aims to strengthen the foundation of Islamic education but also to produce superior human resources with noble character and global competitiveness in line with the paradigm of contemporary Islamic Education (Manaf, 2022; Najah, 2022).

D. Conclusion

Boarding schools and Islamic boarding schools play an important role in strengthening Islamic values and character education in the context of contemporary Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Although they have different orientations and structures, both have the same vision, which is to shape students who are knowledgeable, have noble character, and are grounded in strong spirituality. Boarding schools tend to integrate the national curriculum with Islamic values through structured management and modern pedagogical approaches, while Islamic boarding schools maintain the transmission of classical Islamic knowledge and moral guidance through spiritual guidance and communal life.

Conceptual analysis shows that the integration of these two educational models offers a strategic direction for the development of holistic Islamic education in Indonesia, namely education that is able to harmonize tradition with modernity and religious values with academic excellence. Further research is recommended to

empirically examine the application of this integrative model, particularly in assessing its effectiveness in shaping spirituality, social responsibility, and students' ability to adapt to the challenges of technology and globalization.

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