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The Role of Curriculum in Students' Identity Formation in Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the role of the Islamic boarding school curriculum in shaping the identity of students (*santri*) based on relevant literature. Specifically, the study examines the relationship between the curriculum and students' identities. The method used is a qualitative approach with the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The literature identification and selection process refers to PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). The search was conducted on Google Scholar using Publish or Perish and Mendeley. Of the 90 studies identified in the 2016–2026 publication period, eight studies were selected for analysis. The results of this research synthesis identified four dimensions of the role of the curriculum: internalization of religious and moral values, formation of social identity, integration of religious and scientific values, and adaptation to social and technological change. These four dimensions are interrelated in the educational experience of students. However, direct evidence regarding the meaning of identity and its sustainability is still limited. The results of this study can be used by Islamic boarding school managers and educators as considerations in designing learning, habituation, role models, social activities, and knowledge integration. Curriculum evaluation also needs to consider the meaning of values by students, not only compliance and behavioral changes. The novelty of this research lies in its synthesis of four dimensions of the curriculum's role within a single framework for discussing the formation of santri identity. This study also distinguishes between curriculum implementation, behavioral change, and the meaning of identity. This distinction clarifies the limits of the available evidence and demonstrates the need for further research on the sustainability of santri identity.

Keywords: Islamic boarding school curriculum; integration of knowledge; internalization of values; Islamic education; social identity; student identity.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are Islamic educational institutions that contribute to the development of religious knowledge, the instilling of moral values, and the shaping of students' social lives. The existence of Islamic boarding schools is not only oriented towards the delivery of Islamic knowledge, but also encompasses character development, spiritual strengthening, and the development of social responsibility in community life. This strategic role is legally based through Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Islamic Boarding Schools, which recognizes Islamic boarding schools as part of the national education system and establishes the functions of education, da'wah, and community empowerment. These three functions demonstrate that Islamic boarding schools have a broad role in developing the quality of individual and social life. In practice, the Islamic boarding school education process unfolds through interconnected learning, habituation, role models, and social interactions. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools are a relevant educational setting for examining the relationship

among curriculum implementation, the internalization of religious values, and the formation of student identity (Indonesia, 2019). In its implementation, Islamic boarding school education takes place not only through classroom learning but also through habituation, social interactions, and daily life. This condition makes the curriculum an important part of the educational process that has the potential to shape the way students understand values, carry out responsibilities, and develop their self-orientation.

The study of the relationship between curriculum and the formation of student identity is increasingly relevant as demands on Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to maintain the tradition of Islamic scholarship while responding to the dynamics of societal change. *Pesantrens* are not only required to maintain the continuity of learning classical texts and Islamic values, but also need to develop an educational system that is appropriate to contemporary needs. These changes include strengthening formal education, integrating religious and general knowledge, and utilizing technology in the learning process. In this situation, the curriculum holds a strategic position because it serves as a framework that connects educational objectives, learning materials, parenting practices, and students' social experiences. Through these various activities, students interact with values, norms, and traditions that have the potential to influence their understanding of themselves and their social environment (Alif et al., 2025). However, the relationship between curriculum and identity cannot be understood as an automatic process.

Students' interpretations of their educational experiences need to be considered to understand how their identities develop in the constantly changing Islamic boarding school environment (Ramadhan et al., 2024). This systematic study of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic boarding schools identified challenges, including adapting learning paradigms, integrating curriculum policies with institutional structures, and limited facilities and access to technology. Meanwhile, (Alid et al., 2022) discussed strategies for modernizing the Salaf Islamic boarding school curriculum through a national qualifications framework. Both studies demonstrate that curriculum reform involves more than just changing material, but also efforts to maintain the relevance of education without losing the character of the Islamic boarding school.

These changing dynamics present educational challenges that extend beyond academic achievement to the sustainability of values and the development of students' identities. Islamic boarding school curricula are required to maintain the internalization of religious and moral values while providing educational experiences that meet the evolving needs of students. In this context, education serves not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a space for developing self-understanding, strengthening social responsibility, and developing a perspective on the environment. Learning experiences, the role models of educators, the practice of worship, and interactions among students are all part of the educational process that can influence individual interpretations of Islamic boarding school values. Furthermore, advances in science and technology require students to be able to adapt without losing the religious orientation that underpins Islamic boarding school education. Therefore, curriculum development needs to maintain a balance between preserving tradition, strengthening morals, expanding scientific horizons, and preparing for social change. This balance is important to study to understand the relationship between the curriculum and the formation of the identity of students (Aryani et al., 2025) discusses the integration of basic values of Islamic boarding schools in curriculum development and student education, while (Purnairawati, 2025) identifies structural and administrative issues in the integration of Islamic boarding schools with formal education.

These various studies demonstrate that the development of Islamic boarding school curricula faces challenges in maintaining the continuity of Islamic values, improving student competencies, and adapting educational governance to current developments. These three aspects are interrelated in determining the direction of Islamic boarding school education. Preserving tradition serves to maintain the scholarly and spiritual characteristics of Islamic boarding schools, while competency development expands students' abilities to understand knowledge and navigate social change. At the same time, adjustments to educational management are necessary to ensure curriculum implementation remains relevant to community needs without neglecting the fundamental principles of Islamic boarding schools (Alid et al., 2022). However, discussions of curriculum change cannot simply focus on institutional aspects and improving learning quality. Attention also needs to be directed to how these educational experiences relate to the process of student identity formation. This is crucial because the curriculum not only regulates learning materials but also provides space for the internalization of values, social interaction, and self-understanding, all of which can influence the development of student identity.

Several previous studies have examined curriculum development and the transformation of Islamic boarding schools from different perspectives. (Sakban et al., 2025) through a systematic review of 21 studies, analyzed the implementation of various Islamic boarding school curriculum models and their relationship to student learning outcomes (Khoirillina et al., 2026) examined the relationship between tradition, curriculum modernization, and the transformation of Islamic boarding school management, while (Harto & Aprison, 2025)

discussed institutional transformation strategies in facing disruption. Furthermore, (Permanasari et al., 2026) examined obstacles to curriculum implementation, digital constraints, and institutional responses. (Sriayu et al., 2025) also examined Islamic boarding school modernization through curriculum integration, learning method updates, and technology utilization. These studies provide a foundation for understanding changes in Islamic boarding school education with diverse focuses.

Based on the mapping of previous research, there is a need to develop a synthesis that specifically links the various dimensions of the Islamic boarding school curriculum to the process of student identity formation. Studies on curriculum modernization, scientific integration, religious value development, and adaptation to technological developments have provided insight into changes in the implementation of Islamic boarding school education. However, the relationship between these dimensions still requires an integrated analysis to understand their relevance to the formation of student identity. This gap is important to note because identity cannot be fully represented through character, behavior, level of obedience, or academic achievement. The behavior observed in Islamic boarding school life does not necessarily reflect how students understand, accept, and interpret educational values as part of their self-concept. Thus, an analysis of the role of the curriculum needs to consider both the educational experience and the process of meaning-making that occurs within the Islamic boarding school environment.

The formation of a student's identity also involves the relationship between religious and moral values, social interactions, academic experiences, and the ability to navigate societal changes. These four aspects do not always operate separately but can be interconnected in shaping the student's educational experience. Therefore, a study that can map the interconnectedness of these various dimensions based on available research evidence is needed. This approach is crucial for identifying trends in findings, explaining emerging patterns of relationships, and assessing the limitations of previous research in explaining the role of the curriculum in the formation of student identity. Through systematic review, the relationship between curriculum implementation, learning experiences, and the meaning of identity can be analyzed more precisely without assuming a causal relationship that is not supported by empirical evidence (Kawakip & Sulanam, 2023). The novelty of this research lies in its effort to integrate various dimensions of the Islamic boarding school curriculum into a single analytical framework for the formation of student identity. This research does not assume that each dimension has never been studied before, but rather emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationships between dimensions that may not be fully depicted when each aspect is examined separately. This integration is expected to provide a more comprehensive perspective on the position of the curriculum in the educational experience and the process of self-meaning of students (Inayatul Mahfudloh et al., 2026).

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to systematically examine the contribution of the pesantren (Islamic boarding school) curriculum to the formation of santri (student) identity, based on a selection of scholarly research that meets established criteria. The study focuses on identifying curricular aspects relevant to the formation of santri identity, reviewing trends in previous research findings, and analyzing the limitations of existing studies. Furthermore, this research seeks to identify opportunities for future studies to broaden the understanding of the curriculum's role within the pesantren educational environment. The findings are expected to contribute to strengthening the conceptual framework regarding the relationship between the pesantren curriculum and santri identity, while also serving as an academic reference for future research aimed at developing pesantren education that is responsive to the needs of the times.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method and descriptive-synthesis analysis techniques. The SLR method was chosen to identify, select, review, and synthesize the results of previous studies relevant to the role of the curriculum in the formation of Islamic boarding school (santri) identity. This approach allows researchers to compare findings from various studies to identify patterns, similarities, differences, and limitations of available evidence. This method was used to provide a comprehensive synthesis so that the results are not biased towards any of the relevant studies (Mursyidi, 2024). The review implementation refers to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines as developed by (Moher et al., 2009). PRISMA is used as a guideline for reporting the process of identifying, screening, assessing eligibility, and determining the studies included in the review.

The data search was conducted by collecting research through electronic databases such as Google Scholar, Publish or Perish, and Mendeley to identify each study to be reviewed. Research selection was carried out through a staged filtering process, considering the suitability of the research content to the research objectives. Inclusion criteria included research published in the period 2016–2026, discussing the curriculum or

practices of Islamic boarding school education, and providing relevant findings to analyze the formation of student identity, either directly or through aspects related to values, social life, scientific orientation, and educational adaptation. Research that was not relevant to the focus of the study or did not provide sufficient information for analysis was excluded from the selection process (Creswell, 2016).

In the initial stage, title screening resulted in 31 studies that met the initial considerations for further review. These studies were then examined based on the suitability of the focus and substance of the discussion. After the review process, eight studies were determined as the main sources for the synthesis. This selection process is reported through a PRISMA diagram, with the sequence of identification of 90 studies, initial screening of 31 studies, and determination of eight final studies. Analysis was conducted on the content of the eight selected studies using descriptive analysis and thematic synthesis techniques. Relevant information was reviewed based on bibliographic identity, research objectives, methods used, educational context, and findings related to the focus of the study. This information was then compared to find patterns and relationships between findings (Sugiyono, 2017). The synthesis not only considers the similarities in research results, but also pays attention to differences in context and limitations of the evidence presented by each study.

The results of the comparison were then grouped into four analytical themes: internalization of religious and moral values, formation of social identity, integration of religious and scientific values, and adaptation of the curriculum to social change and technological developments. Grouping was based on the relevance of the findings to the research focus. Findings related to changes in behavior, character, or curriculum implementation were not directly treated as evidence of identity formation, but were carefully interpreted in accordance with the information available in the research. The validity of the synthesis was maintained through source traceability, consistency of selection criteria, and appropriateness of interpretations to the findings reported in the research. Each conclusion was checked against the substance of the reviewed literature to ensure it did not go beyond the available evidence (Miles & Jazeera, 2017). Because not all studies directly measured student identity, the results were interpreted as a synthesis of the conceptual link between curriculum and identity formation, not as proof of a causal relationship. The limited number of studies and the diversity of research methods reviewed were also taken into account in drawing conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Journals Reviewed

No.	Author and Year	Title	Method	Key Findings
1.	Vivi Handayani and Hawwin Huda Yana (2026).	The Role of Islamic Boarding School Education in the Formation of Self-Identity of Students at the Darul Qur'an Muhammadiyah Aceh Islamic Boarding School.	Descriptive qualitative	Islamic boarding school education supports religious identity, discipline, responsibility, independence, and social aspects through a religious, collective environment, rules, and the exemplary behavior of the ustaz.
2.	Mohammad Zaini (2024).	Implementation of Multicultural-Based Curriculum at Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School, Surabaya.	Qualitative case study	The contribution, additive, and transformation approaches integrate togetherness, tolerance, cooperation, deliberation, justice, and equality while maintaining the spirituality of Islamic boarding schools, justice, democracy, prejudice reduction, and equality.
3.	Agesta Eka Salindry, Afriantoni, Muhammad Win Afgani (2025).	Utilization of Islamic Boarding School Curriculum in Shaping the Character of Students.	Qualitative case study	The Islamic, general, and extracurricular curriculum uses bandongan, sorogan, halaqah, tadris, and projects to support discipline, independence, leadership, honesty, and cooperation.
4.	Muhammad Yasin (2022).	Implementation of Islamic Boarding School Curriculum Management in Forming the Independent Character of Students.	Descriptive qualitative	Planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum supports independence through the habituation of independent activities and agricultural and livestock programs.

5.	Muh. Hanif and Nilma Sifa (2026).	Sociology of Educational Institutions: Construction of Urban Santri Identity in the Tradition of Pesantren Kilat and Non-Formal Learning.	Field qualitative	Some participants demonstrated changes in worship, speech, and religious symbols. The learning utilized Islamic videos, educational games, and motivational seminars.
6.	Mukhlis (2023).	Main Components of the Islamic Education Curriculum in Islamic Boarding School Environments as a Formation of Character and Religiousness of Students.	Literature study	The curriculum includes religious, academic, moral, traditional methods, and evaluation materials to support religious knowledge and character building.
7.	Tsalis Imamuddin (2025).	Transformation of Islamic Boarding School Curriculum: Literature Study on the Development of Islamic Education Based on the Needs of the Times.	Literature study	Modernization, technology, and globalization encourage the integration of religious education, general knowledge, vocational skills, literacy, classical systems, memorization of the Koran, and integrated dormitories.
8.	Sulistia Salsabiilaa, Dhuhaa Isti'anah, Suci Dwi Aprillia, Mohammad Dzaky Zaidan, and Anggi Kurniawan (2025).	Islamic Education Curriculum Management in the Digital Era: A Case Study of Curriculum Management at Imam Asy Syafi'I Islamic Boarding School (PPIA) Banyuwangi.	Qualitative case study	Islamic boarding schools combine traditional Islamic values with technology through participatory management involving leaders, teachers, students, and guardians.

Key Findings on the Role of Curriculum in the Formation of Student Identity

1. Internalization of Religious and Moral Values

Internalization of religious and moral values in Islamic boarding school education is a process of instilling Islamic values that encompasses understanding, appreciation, and application in the students' daily lives. This process is not limited to the delivery of religious material in the classroom, but also occurs through habituation, the example of educators, and the students' involvement in various Islamic boarding school activities. Curriculum implementation plays a role in providing educational experiences that support the introduction and continuous application of these values. Through interactions with educators, fellow students, and the institutional environment, students have the opportunity to understand the meaning of religious and moral values in real life. Thus, internalization of values is an important dimension in examining the relationship between the Islamic boarding school curriculum and the process of student identity formation (Mukhlis, 2023) explaining that religious material, moral education, traditional learning methods, and evaluation are interrelated components of Islamic boarding school education. These components take on practical form through the study of yellow books and religious knowledge within the Islamic boarding school environment (Salindry et al., 2025).

The relationship between learning materials and Islamic boarding school educational practices is reflected in various ongoing activities, such as the habituation of worship, the application of discipline, moral development, and the exemplary behavior of the ustaz. These activities form part of the educational experience that enables students to recognize and understand Islamic values through daily life practices. In its implementation, the curriculum serves not only as a guideline for conveying knowledge but also as a means of connecting the values taught with behavior within the Islamic boarding school environment. Interactions with the ustaz and fellow students also provide space for the process of observation, learning, and interpreting prevailing norms. Thus, these educational practices are relevant to study in understanding how the curriculum experience relates to the development of self-understanding and the formation of student identity (Amalia et al., 2025).

These findings expand on the explanations of (Mukhlis, 2023) and (Salindry et al., 2025) which suggest that learned values acquire meaning through daily educational experiences. Furthermore, (Zaini, 2024) shows that internalization of values also encompasses tolerance, justice, and respect for differences. The Islamic boarding school curriculum plays a crucial role in integrating the mastery of religious knowledge with the

development of morals and the formation of students' social orientation. Through the process of learning, familiarizing, and applying Islamic values in daily life, students gain experiences that can shape their ways of thinking, behaving, and interacting with their social environment. This integration demonstrates that the curriculum functions not only as a tool for delivering religious material but also as a means of instilling values that contribute to the development of students' identity. Internalization of religious and moral values can be understood as one mechanism linking the educational process with character formation and self-identity (Hidayah & Nurdiyansyah, 2025). However, based on the research reviewed, the sustainability of this internalization process and its influence on the development of students' identity in the long term have not been adequately measured.

2. Formation of Social Identity and Independence

Social identity relates to how students view and understand themselves as part of a community with shared values, norms, and responsibilities. Unlike the internalization of religious and moral values, which emphasizes the understanding and application of values in individual life, the social identity dimension highlights the process of developing self-understanding through interactions with the social environment. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, this process is reflected in relationships between students, involvement in collective activities, the application of shared rules, and participation in institutional life. These experiences provide opportunities for students to understand their role and position within the Islamic boarding school community. Furthermore, social interaction can provide a space for learning group norms and developing a sense of belonging to the educational environment (Kawakip & Sulanam, 2023). Therefore, social identity is an important dimension in analyzing the relationship between the Islamic boarding school curriculum and the formation of student identity (Amalia et al., 2025) link collective life and the role model of religious teachers to the formation of student identity (Zaini, 2024) shows how a multicultural curriculum provides space for the development of tolerance, cooperation, deliberation, and respect for differences.

These social experiences also develop through structured activities outside of classroom learning. (Salindry et al., 2025) found that organizational, leadership, and entrepreneurial activities are related to the development of independence, responsibility, and cooperation. Similarly, Yasin (2022) explained that agricultural activities, fish farming, and the habituation of independent activities provide students with practical experience in carrying out responsibilities. However, (Solichin et al., 2026) found that behavioral changes in participants in short-term Islamic boarding schools (pesantren kilat) were not always sustained. This difference suggests that social experiences play a role in supporting the process of student identity formation. However, their success also depends on the continuity of guidance and the educational environment that underpins this process. Consistent social experiences provide students with opportunities to understand, internalize, and apply social values in their daily lives. In this context, the Islamic boarding school curriculum serves as a means to facilitate the formation of shared experiences through learning activities, social interactions, and behavioral habits. This collective experience allows students to practice social values repeatedly, thus potentially strengthening their understanding and awareness of norms and responsibilities within the Islamic boarding school community.

3. Integration of Religious and Scientific Values

The scholarly identity of Islamic boarding school students is formed through a process of understanding knowledge, determining the direction of learning, and recognizing the relationship between religious and general disciplines. This process is not limited to mastering the material taught but also encompasses an understanding of the relevance of knowledge to individual and societal lives. In this context, the Islamic boarding school curriculum serves as an educational tool that integrates Islamic scholarly heritage with modern developments. The interconnected organization of learning provides space for students to broaden their horizons, improve their analytical skills, and recognize the interconnections between various fields of knowledge. Thus, the curriculum serves not only to convey academic information but also to support the formation of students' scholarly orientation, enabling them to understand, develop, and apply knowledge relevantly to address various life challenges (Saputra et al., 2026).

In addition to the curriculum, the interaction between students and religious teachers, the use of various learning resources, and participation in academic activities also play a role in shaping perspectives on knowledge and determining the direction of their learning. These various experiences provide opportunities for students to develop understanding, broaden their horizons, and develop perspectives on the knowledge they learn. Therefore, scientific identity is not solely measured by the breadth of knowledge possessed, but is also reflected

in the students' ability to understand the meaning of knowledge, connect various disciplines of knowledge, and apply it appropriately in their personal and social lives. This dimension is important for examining the relationship between the Islamic boarding school curriculum and the formation of student identity (Salindry et al., 2025) which shows that the diniyah, general, and extracurricular curricula form an educational structure that combines learning of yellow books, general subjects, organizations, and skills.

This structure aligns with the explanation (Mukhlis, 2023) that the Islamic boarding school curriculum can integrate religious material, moral education, general subjects, and practical skills. This integration is part of a broader curriculum change. The development of Islamic boarding school education demonstrates efforts to expand the scope of learning through the integration of science, language proficiency, 21st-century literacy, and vocational skills (Taqiyuddin et al., 2025). This development is a response to the increasingly complex needs of modern society. Islamic boarding schools are not only oriented towards strengthening religious knowledge but also strive to equip students with relevant competencies to face developments in science, technology, and the world of work. In this context, the curriculum serves as a means of connecting Islamic scholarly traditions with contemporary knowledge and skills. The integration of various learning areas can provide students with opportunities to broaden their horizons, enhance critical thinking skills, develop communication skills, and prepare themselves for social change (Husairi, 2025).

Nevertheless, the development of modern competencies must still consider the characteristics and core values of Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, scientific integration is a crucial aspect in examining how the curriculum supports the development of knowledge orientation and the formation of students' scientific identities. (Salindry et al., 2025) describe curriculum components within the context of educational implementation, (Mukhlis, 2023) provides a conceptual basis, while (Imamuddin, 2025) explains the direction of its transformation. These three findings indicate that the Islamic boarding school curriculum strives to maintain the tradition of Islamic scholarship while expanding the scope of students' knowledge. However, material integration does not directly demonstrate the formation of a specific scientific identity because the research reviewed has not consistently explained how students interpret their scientific orientation.

4. Adaptation of Traditional Values and Modernity

Adapting the Islamic boarding school curriculum is an effort to adapt educational elements, such as teaching materials, learning strategies, and educational management systems, to the developments and changing needs of society. This step aims to maintain the relevance of Islamic boarding school education amidst advances in science, technological developments, and the dynamics of student needs. Throughout the process, curriculum reform must still consider the characteristics and fundamental values that underpin the implementation of Islamic boarding school education. This adaptation can be implemented through refinement of learning content, the application of more varied teaching approaches, and the integration of technology into teaching and learning activities. Thus, curriculum adjustments are not only oriented towards modernizing the education system but also aimed at maintaining the Islamic boarding school's identity while preparing students to face challenges and changes in the ever-evolving social environment (Raihan et al., 2025).

However, the adaptation process is not solely oriented towards modernizing the education system, but also needs to maintain the tradition of Islamic scholarship, moral development, and strengthening the spirituality of students. The balance between renewal and preservation of values is an important aspect in determining the direction of Islamic boarding school curriculum development. Through targeted adjustments, Islamic boarding schools are expected to be able to equip students with knowledge and skills that are in line with current developments while maintaining the characteristics of Islamic education as the foundation for the formation of student identity (Imamuddin, 2025) explains adaptation through the integration of general knowledge and contemporary skills, while (Isti'anah et al., 2025) shows the selective use of technology to support the management and learning of Islamic boarding schools. Both studies show that renewal can occur at the level of curriculum structure and educational implementation.

Furthermore, adaptation is also a response to social changes and student characteristics (Zaini, 2024) shows that a multicultural curriculum broadens students' experiences in understanding diversity, while (Solichin et al., 2026) discuss the use of Islamic videos and educational games in non-formal learning. Although learning reforms can encourage changes in student behavior, limitations in maintaining these changes are an important consideration in evaluating the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. This condition indicates that the success of curriculum adaptation cannot be measured solely by updating materials, implementing new methods, or utilizing technology in educational activities. Assessments also need to consider the sustainability of the

application of learned values in students' daily lives. Furthermore, students' understanding and interpretation of educational experiences are important aspects to examine (Manaf et al., 2025). Thus, curriculum adaptation needs to be understood as a process that is oriented not only towards changes in the learning system but also towards the meaningfulness of educational experiences for the formation of students' identities.

The results of the research synthesis show that the formation of student identity through the Islamic boarding school curriculum cannot be reduced to achieving mastery of material or compliance with educational regulations. Identity develops through a process involving the relationship between taught values, social interaction experiences, scientific orientation, and individual interpretations of environmental changes. In this context, the curriculum not only serves as a guideline for implementing learning but also provides space for students to recognize values, build self-understanding, and develop their life orientation. Educational experiences gained through learning, habituation, role models, and involvement in the Islamic boarding school community can be part of this process (Homsiyah et al., 2026).

Meanwhile, social change and technological developments present new contexts that influence the learning experiences of students. Therefore, the function of the curriculum needs to be understood more broadly as part of an educational ecosystem that connects knowledge, values, social interactions, and the formation of students' self-orientation (Ma'arif & Arif, 2026) They identified the relationship between habituation, role models, curriculum integration, and Islamic boarding school culture in character education. However, the results of this research need to be critically examined because the success of character education does not directly prove the formation of a long-term student identity. Behavioral changes that emerge during the educational process do not necessarily reflect a deep and sustainable internalization of values. Identity requires a process of understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of values that develop through individual experience and social interaction. Therefore, the relationship between curriculum implementation and student identity formation needs to be understood proportionally. Distinguishing between the two concepts is important so that the success of an educational program is not automatically taken as evidence that a student identity has been formed in a relatively permanent manner.

The main problem in the internalization of religious and moral values relates to the difference between behavior that arises from habituation and values that have been accepted as part of an individual's identity. In an Islamic boarding school environment, students can demonstrate discipline, devotion to worship, and adherence to rules as a form of adjustment to the prevailing educational system. However, this behavior does not fully reflect how students understand and internalize the underlying values. Internalization of values involves a process of understanding, acceptance, and interpretation that allows individuals to use these values as guidelines in life (Muzaki et al., 2026). Therefore, the success of Islamic boarding school education cannot be solely assessed based on students' behavioral regularity or adherence to institutional regulations. Attention also needs to be directed to how students interpret religious and moral values and apply them in various situations. This distinction is important for a deeper understanding of the relationship between curriculum implementation, educational experiences, and the formation of student identity.

The congruence of views (Mukhlis, 2023), (Salindry et al., 2025), and (Amalia et al., 2025) shows that values education requires a connection between knowledge, practice, and the learning environment. However, the results of research by Solichin et al. (2026) which showed that changes in religious behavior do not always occur sustainably is an important consideration in interpreting the success of value internalization in Islamic boarding schools. These findings show that religious behavior formed through the process of habituation during education cannot necessarily be maintained when students face different social situations. This condition indicates that compliance with Islamic boarding school rules and routines does not automatically reflect a deep acceptance of values (Solichin et al., 2026). Therefore, the success of value internalization needs to be assessed not only based on the conformity of students' behavior with institutional norms, but also through their ability to understand the meaning of values, accept these values as part of personal principles, and apply them consistently in everyday life. This perspective emphasizes the importance of distinguishing behavior that arises due to environmental demands from behavior based on individual awareness and commitment.

The sustainability of one's own identity is also related to social experiences formed through collective life. Consistent findings from (Yasin, 2022) and (Salindry et al., 2025) indicate that involvement in educational practices provides opportunities for students to develop independence and responsibility. However, the meaning of these experiences cannot be limited to mastering skills or engaging in shared activities. Social experiences are relevant to identity formation when students begin to understand their position as community members, accept responsibility, and link actions to believed values. This explanation is supported by research (Suyuthi et al., 2025) which found a positive relationship between support from educators, peers, and institutional culture with students'

religious moderation identity. Although this study used a correlational approach, the results provide empirical support that the social environment is related to identity development.

On the other hand, social identity formed through community engagement needs to be positioned in relation to openness to diversity. Findings (Zaini, 2024) show that multicultural education provides a space for connecting Islamic values with respect for differences. The formation of social identity in Islamic boarding schools does not always lead to the strengthening of an exclusive orientation toward one's own group. Instead, education can provide space for students to develop an understanding of diversity and build open social relationships. However, the value of openness introduced through the curriculum is not necessarily fully reflected in students' attitudes in various social situations. This situation indicates a possible gap between the development of multicultural awareness during the educational process and the consistency of its application in social life. This issue is important to address because students' social identity is formed not only through interaction and engagement with the Islamic boarding school community, but also through experiences dealing with groups with different backgrounds, values, and characteristics (Umar & Nurrohman, 2024). Therefore, studies on social identity need to consider how students understand diversity, position themselves in a pluralistic environment, and apply the values of openness acquired during their Islamic boarding school education.

Another challenge in Islamic boarding school education relates to the formation of students' scientific identities amidst efforts to integrate religious and general knowledge. Several studies have shown that the integration of these two fields reflects a shift in the orientation of Islamic boarding school curricula in response to contemporary educational needs. However, the integration of religious and general material within the curriculum structure does not automatically guarantee the formation of a unified understanding in students. Such integration also requires a learning process that helps students understand the interconnectedness of various disciplines and connects them to Islamic values. Furthermore, the transformation of Islamic boarding school education occurs through the interaction between deeply rooted Islamic educational traditions and modern educational approaches. This development demonstrates that curriculum reform has the potential to broaden the scope of students' knowledge and learning experiences, while maintaining the continuity of Islamic scholarly traditions as the foundation of Islamic boarding school educational identity (Arif et al., 2024; Imamuddin, 2025; Mukhlis, 2023; Salindry et al., 2025).

However, (Rosowulan et al., 2025) identified issues with the institutional scientific identity of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in the development of digital education, including the mismatch between the learning load and core competencies and a weakening orientation toward traditional knowledge. This situation indicates that expanding the scope of learning materials does not automatically strengthen the scientific orientation of students (santri). Curriculum integration requires the formulation of clear links between various scientific fields so that knowledge development proceeds in a directed manner without losing the distinctiveness of the Islamic boarding school's scientific tradition. Without adequate integration, the expansion of material has the potential to make the learning process merely an addition of disciplines, rather than an effort to build interconnected understanding. Therefore, curriculum development needs to consider how religious knowledge and general knowledge are positioned, connected, and interpreted within the overall educational process. This discussion also emphasizes the importance of distinguishing scientific identity at the institutional and individual levels. Institutional identity relates to the character and academic traditions of the Islamic boarding school, while the scientific identity of students refers to the understanding, orientation, and how individuals integrate the knowledge gained during their education.

The relationship between scientific development and curriculum adjustment is increasingly important as technological advances bring changes to the implementation of Islamic boarding school education. The use of technology provides opportunities to expand the reach of learning resources, update teaching strategies, and improve the quality of students' academic experiences. However, the implementation of various innovations must be carried out in a targeted manner to remain aligned with the vision, goals, and characteristics of Islamic boarding school education. Changes in the learning system should not only be oriented towards the use of technology but also consider the continuity of Islamic educational values. Therefore, the combination of religious knowledge, general knowledge, and technology must be designed proportionally to support the comprehensive development of students' insights. This approach is expected to strengthen the relevance of Islamic boarding school education in facing current developments without neglecting the underlying Islamic principles (Novebri et al., 2025).

Within this framework, adjusting the Islamic boarding school curriculum involves more than just updating teaching materials and utilizing digital technology, but also developing learning strategies tailored to the needs of students and the dynamics of society. The adaptation process needs to be designed by considering student characteristics, changes in the social environment, and the demands of scientific development. Furthermore,

Islamic boarding schools need to maintain a balance between implementing educational innovation, preserving Islamic scholarly traditions, and strengthening moral development. These three aspects complement each other in supporting the delivery of relevant education without losing the institution's distinctive characteristics. Thus, the balance between renewal and continuity of tradition serves as an important foundation for analyzing the relationship between curriculum changes and the development of scholarly orientation and the process of student identity formation within the Islamic boarding school environment.

Research (Isti'anah et al., 2025) shows that selective use of technology can be an institutional strategy to maintain a values-based educational orientation. This perspective is supported by (Nugroho & Astutik, 2024) who examined the use of digital technology in Quran memorization education and identified challenges to its implementation. This suitability indicates that successful adaptation lies not in the intensity of technology use, but in its relevance to pedagogical needs and educational character. However, successful adaptation is also influenced by institutional readiness to manage change. The transformation of Islamic boarding school management involves the relationship between digitalization of management, learning renewal, and strengthening of academic culture (Waldan et al., 2025). This finding broadens the interpretation that curriculum change cannot be separated from the capacity of the implementing organization. When technological updates are not accompanied by alignment with educational goals and management, changes can be limited to administrative aspects without making a clear contribution to the students' learning experience.

Based on the synthesis of cross-findings, the conceptual contribution of this research lies in the understanding that the formation of student identity through the Islamic boarding school curriculum is a multidimensional process involving the relationship between internalization of values, social experience, scientific orientation, and adaptation to environmental changes. Internalization of religious and moral values provides a foundation for students to understand and interpret Islamic principles. Meanwhile, social participation provides opportunities for students to recognize their position, carry out responsibilities, and build bonds with the Islamic boarding school community. Scientific experience also broadens students' understanding of knowledge and educational orientation, while curriculum adaptation provides a context for students to respond to societal developments without neglecting the basic values of the Islamic boarding school (Jasminto et al., 2025).

These four dimensions are not understood as stand-alone processes, but rather as interrelated elements in the student's educational experience. Values learned can acquire meaning through social interaction, while social and academic experiences can influence how students understand themselves and position themselves in a constantly changing environment. Within this framework, the curriculum serves not only as a guideline for delivering learning materials but also as part of the educational environment that provides experiences for the development of students' self-understanding (Siregar, 2026). However, the relationships between these dimensions are the result of a conceptual synthesis based on the reviewed literature, not a causal model proven through empirical testin.

Practically, the results of this research synthesis emphasize the need to broaden the scope of curriculum evaluation in the implementation of Islamic boarding school education. Educational success should not only be measured by mastery of learning materials, student discipline, compliance with regulations, or the effectiveness of institutional governance. Evaluation should also be directed at the development of students' identities as individuals who possess an understanding of religious and moral values, an awareness of their membership in the Islamic boarding school community, and a scientific orientation formed through the educational process. Furthermore, students' abilities to navigate social change and technological developments need to be an important consideration. A more comprehensive evaluation approach allows Islamic boarding schools to obtain a more comprehensive picture of educational outcomes, including aspects of identity formation that cannot always be measured through visible academic and behavioral indicators (Asrori et al., 2025).

This approach can help provide a more comprehensive picture of the Islamic boarding school (pesantren) educational experience and its relevance to their identity development. Furthermore, curriculum development needs to consider the balance between preserving Islamic scholarly traditions and strengthening competencies needed in contemporary life. Renewal of materials, learning methods, and the use of technology need to be placed within the broader framework of Islamic boarding school educational goals. Thus, educational innovation should not only be oriented toward changing the learning system but also consider the learning experiences, social interactions, and the interpretation of values by the students. However, these implications should be understood as conceptual recommendations that still require further testing in diverse Islamic boarding school contexts (Sutikno, 2026).

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its results. First, the number of eight studies analyzed, along with the diversity of research designs and institutional contexts, limits the generalizability of the findings. Differences in Islamic boarding school characteristics, learning approaches, and

research focuses can produce a heterogeneous picture. Second, not all of the studies reviewed directly addressed student identity. Consequently, some of the relationships between curriculum and identity formation are derived through interpretation and conceptual synthesis of findings related to values, behavior, social interactions, and scholarly experiences. Third, longitudinal evidence regarding the sustainability of students' values, behavior, and self-orientation after completing Islamic boarding school education is still limited (Najib et al., 2026). Therefore, the interdimensional relationships formulated in this study cannot be treated as causal evidence.

Based on these limitations, further research needs to develop more specific and operational indicators of student identity formation. A longitudinal approach can be used to explore changes in self-understanding over time, while comparative research can help explain the similarities and differences in educational experiences across different types of Islamic boarding schools. Empirical research should also incorporate the perspectives of students, educators, and Islamic boarding school administrators to better understand the relationship between curriculum design, learning implementation, and identity formation (Musthofa & Baqiyatush Sholihah, 2026). With this approach, further research is expected to test the relevance of this conceptual framework and strengthen understanding of the curriculum's role in student identity formation.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the role of the Islamic boarding school curriculum in shaping the identity of students (santri) through a synthesis of eight selected studies. The study identified four main dimensions: internalization of religious and moral values, development of social identity and independence, integration of religious values with academic subjects, and curriculum adaptation to social dynamics and technological advancements. These four dimensions demonstrate that the Islamic boarding school curriculum serves not only as a guideline for learning but also as an educational framework that supports the development of students' understanding of values, social responsibility, academic orientation, and ability to respond to environmental changes. The findings of the synthesis indicate that the formation of students' identity is not solely understood through mastery of material, adherence to rules, or behavioral changes during education. This process is also related to how students interpret the values they learn, internalize them through educational experiences, and apply them consistently in their daily lives. However, the strength of this conclusion is still limited by the characteristics of the sources analyzed. Not all of the studies reviewed directly place students' identity as the focus of their studies, while evidence regarding the sustainability of identity after students complete their Islamic boarding school education is still limited. Thus, the results of this study indicate a conceptual relationship between the Islamic boarding school curriculum and the formation of student identity, but do not provide sufficient basis for establishing a causal relationship. Future research should develop more measurable identity indicators and employ a longitudinal design to explore the formation, development, and sustainability of student identity across various life contexts.

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