

STANDARDISED ADAPTABILITY IN MUHAMMADIYAH PESANTREN: GOVERNANCE, HUMAN RESOURCES AND CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

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Abstract

This study examines how a provincial Muhammadiyah development agency coordinates institutional transformation across a network of Islamic boarding schools. Using a theory-informed qualitative multi-case design, the study compared eight Muhammadiyah pesantren in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Data were collected in December 2024 from 42 purposively selected participants comprising two LP2M leaders and, at each pesantren, one institutional leader, three teachers, and one dormitory supervisor. Semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis were examined through within-case and cross-case procedures. The analysis identified three mutually reinforcing mechanisms. Governance standardisation strengthened organisational structures, reporting, accreditation preparation, and data-informed monitoring. Professional development supported pedagogical, linguistic, managerial, and ideological capacities, although its institutional value depended on coaching and follow-up. Curriculum integration combined diniyah studies, the national curriculum, and Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyahan while preserving local specialisations. Across cases, formal systems were most sustainable when reinforced by amanah, discipline, sincerity, and collective responsibility. The study develops standardised adaptability as a framework combining shared institutional expectations with contextual differentiation. The findings do not establish causal effectiveness but show how a civil-society intermediary can coordinate reform without eliminating pesantren autonomy and identity.

Keywords: Muhammadiyah Pesantren; Institutional Governance; Human Resource Development; Curriculum Integration; Standardised Adaptability.



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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji cara lembaga pengembangan Muhammadiyah tingkat wilayah mengoordinasikan transformasi kelembagaan dalam jaringan pesantren. Dengan desain kualitatif multi-kasus berbasis teori, penelitian membandingkan delapan pesantren Muhammadiyah di Sulawesi Selatan. Data dikumpulkan pada Desember 2024 dari 42 partisipan yang dipilih secara purposif, terdiri atas dua pimpinan LP2M serta, pada setiap pesantren, satu pimpinan lembaga, tiga guru, dan satu pembina asrama. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi lapangan, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis melalui prosedur dalam-kasus dan lintas-kasus. Analisis menghasilkan tiga mekanisme yang saling memperkuat. Standardisasi tata kelola memperkuat struktur organisasi, pelaporan, persiapan akreditasi, dan pemantauan berbasis data. Pengembangan profesional mendukung kapasitas pedagogis, kebahasaan, manajerial, dan ideologis, tetapi manfaat kelembagaannya bergantung pada pendampingan dan tindak lanjut. Integrasi kurikulum memadukan kajian diniyah, kurikulum nasional, serta Al-Islam dan Kemuhammadiyahan sambil mempertahankan kekhasan lokal. Pada seluruh kasus, sistem formal lebih berkelanjutan ketika diperkuat oleh amanah, disiplin, keikhlasan, dan tanggung jawab kolektif. Penelitian ini mengembangkan kerangka adaptabilitas terstandar, yaitu perpaduan antara harapan kelembagaan bersama dan diferensiasi kontekstual. Temuan tidak membuktikan efektivitas kausal, tetapi menunjukkan peran organisasi masyarakat sipil dalam mengoordinasikan reformasi tanpa menghilangkan otonomi dan identitas pesantren.

Kata Kunci: *Pesantren Muhammadiyah; Tata Kelola Kelembagaan; Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia; Integrasi Kurikulum; Adaptabilitas Terstandar.*

A. Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play a central role in religious formation, community leadership, and educational access in Indonesia. Their legitimacy rests on religious authority, residential learning, and close relationships between teachers and students. These strengths coexist with growing demands for institutional accountability, teacher professionalism, curriculum coherence, and graduate competitiveness. Pesantren must therefore improve their organisational and educational systems without weakening the religious identity that sustains community trust (Utama & Akbar, 2023; Tanjung et al., 2025).

Research on pesantren modernisation has addressed curriculum reform, leadership, quality management, and organisational adaptation (Kawakip, 2020; Hasyim, 2021; Jalil et al., 2023; Muttaqin, 2025). Much of this scholarship, however, concentrates on individual institutions or state-regulated systems. It provides less explanation of how civil-society intermediary organisations coordinate

improvement across networks of locally autonomous schools. This gap matters because transformation at network level requires mechanisms that establish common expectations while preserving institutional responsiveness and identity.

Lembaga Pengembangan Pesantren Muhammadiyah (LP2M), under the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership of South Sulawesi, occupies this intermediary position. It supports 28 Muhammadiyah pesantren through governance guidance, teacher development, accreditation assistance, curriculum coordination, institutional monitoring, and data consolidation. LP2M does not exercise the coercive authority of a state ministry. Its influence instead depends on shared Muhammadiyah identity, organisational legitimacy, technical assistance, and sustained relationships with local leaders.

This study investigates eight Muhammadiyah pesantren that differ in history, scale, educational orientation, and stage of development. It focuses on three domains that recurred across the cases: institutional governance, human resource development, and curriculum integration. Total Quality Management, human capital theory, organisational development, and Islamic educational values serve as sensitising perspectives rather than predetermined causal explanations. The guiding analytical proposition is that institutional transformation becomes stronger when governance systems, professional capacity, and curriculum design are coordinated and reinforced by Islamic ethical commitments.

The study addresses four questions: (1) How does LP2M support the standardisation of institutional governance across diverse Muhammadiyah pesantren? (2) What forms of human resource development are implemented, and how are they perceived to support institutional improvement? (3) How is curriculum integration enacted while maintaining local specialisation and Islamic identity? and (4) What cross-case framework can be derived from these institutional experiences? By answering these questions, the study develops the concept of standardised adaptability to explain how shared standards can coexist with contextual differentiation. Its scholarly contribution lies in shifting the unit of analysis from isolated pesantren reform to network-level civil-society intermediation and in explaining how governance, professional capacity, curriculum integration, and Islamic moral commitments interact across institutionally diverse cases.

Islamic educational reform takes different institutional forms across Muslim-majority societies. Malaysia has developed state-coordinated religious schooling within the national education system, while comparative accounts of Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia show varying combinations of central authority, curriculum modernisation, and competency-oriented reform (Abdul Hamid, 2017;

Fitriani et al., 2025; Hadi et al., 2025; Suhaili, 2025). These models demonstrate the importance of coordination, but they do not fully explain reform in systems where educational institutions remain locally founded and organisationally autonomous.

The Indonesian pesantren context is distinctive because many institutions are established and managed by communities or Islamic organisations. Improvement therefore depends not only on regulation but also on trust, shared identity, technical support, and negotiated standards. Muhammadiyah offers an important case of networked civil-society governance: pesantren remain locally embedded while participating in a broader organisational system. This arrangement raises a central question for institutional change: how can a network promote accountability and quality without producing uniformity?

Total Quality Management emphasises leadership commitment, process standardisation, stakeholder orientation, continuous improvement, and evidence-based decision-making. These principles are relevant to pesantren because they encourage systematic planning, documentation, evaluation, and accountability (Siti Aimah, 2021; Hasnadi, 2021; Udhma & Minarti, 2025). In this study, TQM is used to examine whether common procedures and monitoring practices become embedded in institutional routines rather than remaining formal requirements.

A direct transfer of secular management models, however, can overlook the moral and spiritual foundations of Islamic education. Organisational behaviour in pesantren is shaped by formal responsibilities and by values such as amanah, ikhlas, discipline, service, and accountability before God. The study therefore treats Islamic values as a behavioural infrastructure. These values do not replace governance systems; they may strengthen those systems when translated into documented duties, professional expectations, and consistent educational practices.

Human capital theory highlights the institutional value of investments in knowledge, skills, and professional capacity. In pesantren, relevant investments include pedagogical training, language development, leadership preparation, managerial competence, and ideological formation. Organisational development theory adds that sustainable change requires planned interventions in structures, processes, and culture rather than isolated training events (Rothwell et al., 2022). Together, these perspectives direct attention to the transfer of individual learning into institutional routines.

The study combines these perspectives in a coordinated analytical framework. Governance provides structures for planning, documentation, and accountability. Human resource development builds the capacity required to operate those structures. Curriculum integration translates institutional identity and quality expectations into educational practice. Islamic values may reinforce all three

domains, while institutional history, leadership, resources, location, and specialisation shape implementation. The framework is used as a sensitising device and is refined through within-case and cross-case analysis.

Table 1. Analytical framework of Muhammadiyah pesantren transformation

Institutional Governance	Human Resource Development	Curriculum Integration
Structures, reporting, accreditation, data systems, accountability	Pedagogical, linguistic, managerial, and ideological development	Diniyah, national curriculum, Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah, contextual specialisation

Source: Authors' analytical synthesis based on the literature and multi-case field data.

B. Research Methods

The study employed a theory-informed qualitative multi-case design to identify recurring and contrasting patterns across pesantren with different institutional characteristics. The design supported analytical generalisation and framework development rather than statistical generalisation or causal testing (Yin, 2018; Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). Three interpretive lenses guided the analysis: phenomenological attention to participants' experiences, a theological-normative reading of Islamic educational values, and a sociological-organisational analysis of structures and institutional change.

Eight Muhammadiyah pesantren in South Sulawesi were selected through maximum-variation purposive sampling (Patton, 2015): Darul Arqam Gombara, Ummul Mukminin, Darul Fallah Unismuh Bissoloro, Ma'had Fathul Mu'in, MBS Palopo, Darul Arqam Cece, Darul Arqam Balassuka, and Darul Arqam Punnia. The cases included established and recently founded institutions, a female-only institution, a university-affiliated agribusiness pesantren, a tahfidz-specialised pesantren, and modern boarding-school models. This variation enabled the analysis to examine whether common mechanisms remained visible across different institutional types.

The final analytic sample comprised 42 purposively selected participants who had direct knowledge of LP2M programmes or their implementation at site level. Two participants were LP2M leaders. Each of the eight pesantren contributed five participants: one institutional leader or director, three teachers, and one dormitory supervisor (musyrif or musyrifah). Thus, the sample included two network-level leaders, eight pesantren leaders, 24 teachers, and eight dormitory supervisors. LP2M participants contributed network-level perspectives, while pesantren personnel provided contextual evidence from individual cases. The complete distribution is reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Study sites and institutional variation

Pesantren	Institutional characteristic	Analytical relevance
Darul Arqam Gombara	Established pilot institution	Mature governance and documentation
Ummul Mukminin	Female-only, large-scale institution	Scalability and gender-responsive governance
Darul Fallah Unismuh Bissoloro	University-affiliated agribusiness pesantren	Contextual curriculum adaptation
Ma'had Fathul Mu'in	Tahfidz-specialised pesantren	Specialisation within common standards
MBS Palopo	Modern boarding-school model	Language development and academic achievement
Darul Arqam Cece	Recently established, rapidly growing institution	Institutional mentoring and HR development
Darul Arqam Balassuka	Developing institution	Variation in implementation capacity
Darul Arqam Punnia	Pesantren with higher-education pathways	Graduate progression and institutional continuity

Table 3. Participant distribution by study site and role

Location	Leader/Director	Teacher	Dormitory supervisor	Administration	Total
LP2M	2	–	–	–	2
Darul Arqam Gombara	1	3	1	–	5
Ummul Mukminin	1	3	1	–	5
Darul Fallah Bissoloro	1	3	1	–	5
Ma'had Fathul Mu'in	1	3	1	–	5
MBS Palopo	1	3	1	–	5
Darul Arqam Cece	1	3	1	–	5
Darul Arqam Balassuka	1	3	1	–	5
Darul Arqam Punnia	1	3	1	–	5
Total	10	24	8	0	42

Data collection was conducted in December 2024 through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The participant roster

comprised 42 interview informants across the network- and site-level roles reported in Table 2; interview encounters lasted approximately 45–90 minutes and examined governance, professional development, curriculum integration, institutional constraints, and perceived outcomes. A common interview guide supported comparison across cases while allowing participants to explain local experiences in depth (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Interview materials were organised into textual records for coding. Because the archived materials available for manuscript preparation did not preserve line-identifiable verbatim excerpts for every theme or a separately auditable audio-recording log, the Results section reports interview evidence as role- and case-attributed thematic paraphrase rather than reconstructing quotations that cannot be verified.

Field observations were conducted across the eight pesantren during the December 2024 fieldwork and covered management meetings, training activities, classroom instruction, and dormitory routines to examine how formal policies were enacted in everyday practice. The archived materials do not preserve a reliable session-by-session observation count; therefore, no unverified numerical total is reported. Document analysis included accreditation records, institutional profiles, curricula, decrees, LP2M programme reports, monitoring documents, and selected PontrenMu database extracts selected for their direct relevance to governance, professional development, curriculum integration, and institutional monitoring. The three evidence streams were compared within each case and then across cases, and observational or documentary claims are reported only where they can be connected to traceable institutional patterns.

Analysis followed the interactive procedures of data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and iterative verification (Miles et al., 2014). The process began with a within-case summary for each pesantren. First-cycle coding used descriptive and in-vivo codes to preserve participants' language, while second-cycle pattern coding grouped related codes into broader categories (Saldaña, 2021). Cross-case matrices then compared recurring mechanisms, institutional differences, enabling conditions, and implementation constraints. The resulting categories were interpreted through the sensitising framework without treating the theories as predetermined explanations.

Trustworthiness was strengthened through member checking with LP2M leaders and selected pesantren directors, an audit trail of analytical decisions, peer debriefing with two colleagues outside the data-collection team, source triangulation, and negative-case analysis. Negative cases were used to refine the emerging framework rather than merely confirm it. Ethical procedures included institutional permission, voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality,

and secure handling of interview and documentary data. Reflexive safeguards were built into the analysis by separating participant claims from documentary or observational corroboration, retaining negative cases, and using peer debriefing to reduce the risk of overly favourable interpretations of LP2M-supported change.

C. Results and Discussion

Results

Institutional Governance: From Personalised Authority to Organised Accountability

Across the eight cases, institutional transformation was associated with a gradual movement from personalised management towards clearer organisational structures and more traceable decision-making. In interviews, LP2M and pesantren leaders consistently described organisational charts, programme planning, reporting, and accreditation preparation as the main instruments through which common expectations were communicated. Field observations of management routines were used to examine whether these formal arrangements were visible in day-to-day coordination, while document review of decrees, reporting formats, accreditation files, institutional profiles, and programme records provided the main traceable evidence for the existence of formal governance structures. Local institutions adapted these instruments rather than applying them uniformly, but the instruments established a shared minimum language of governance across the network.

Darul Arqam Gombara displayed the most developed formal governance arrangements. Its documented structure included a mudir, deputy directors, departmental units, and administrative support, and the documentary record showed clearer assignment of responsibilities than systems that depended primarily on oral coordination. Ummul Mukminin demonstrated the functional importance of governance at scale. Institutional profile and accreditation-related records documented 1,314 female students across four accredited educational units, a scale that required delegation, regular reporting, and accountability to relevant Muhammadiyah and Aisiyah structures. Interview accounts from institutional leaders were consistent with the documentary pattern that larger and more mature institutions required more formalised coordination.

The PontrenMu database was a distinctive governance mechanism. Selected database extracts consolidated information on enrolment, staffing, accreditation, programmes, and institutional development, enabling LP2M to identify support needs and monitor network-level progress. Interview and observational evidence nevertheless indicated variation in administrative capacity and data-entry

discipline across sites. This variation shows that digital infrastructure supports evidence-informed governance only when personnel maintain accurate and timely records; the platform itself does not guarantee consistent use.

Cross-case comparison identified three enabling conditions: leadership commitment, administrative capacity to maintain documentation, and continuous LP2M mentoring. Interview accounts described mentoring as important for translating templates into locally workable routines, while observations and documentary comparisons showed that formal instruments were more consistently embedded where institutional leadership and follow-up were stronger. Where these conditions were weak, templates could exist without becoming stable routines. Governance standardisation therefore operated as a supported organisational practice rather than a one-time transfer of forms.

Human Resource Development: Building Pedagogical, Managerial, and Ideological Capacity

Human resource development formed the second recurring mechanism. Across interviews, participants described teacher training, Arabic and English language development, managerial workshops, Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah formation, and evaluation activities as recurring forms of LP2M support. Observation of training-related activities and institutional routines was used to examine how such programmes were followed by local application, while programme reports and institutional staffing records provided documentary context. The evidence indicates that the programmes addressed both technical competence and organisational identity, reflecting the expectation that personnel should possess professional skills alongside commitment to Muhammadiyah educational values.

At Darul Arqam Cece, participants associated intensive mentoring and staff development with rapid organisational growth. Institutional profile records documented an increase from seven students at establishment in 2018 to 483 students in 2023/2024, supported by 64 teachers and 19 dormitory supervisors. These figures do not demonstrate that LP2M caused the growth. Rather, the cross-source interpretation places LP2M mentoring alongside local leadership, community trust, staffing, and institutional promotion as conditions associated with the observed trajectory.

MBS Palopo illustrated how teacher training and language programmes could be connected with student participation in national academic competitions, while Darul Arqam Punnia showed a longer-term emphasis on graduate progression to higher education and Islamic universities abroad. Interview accounts interpreted

these outcomes as part of broader institutional development, but the documentary evidence does not isolate the effect of training from school history, student selection, leadership, or other local factors. Across cases, professional development had greater institutional value when training was followed by coaching, local application, and management support.

Implementation remained uneven. Newer or geographically distant institutions found it more difficult to release teachers for training, sustain language programmes, and retain qualified staff. The relevant transformation mechanism was therefore not attendance at training itself, but the conversion of individual learning into stable institutional routines.

Table 3. Selected institutional indicators and cautious interpretation

Case	Indicator	Related LP2M support	Interpretive caution
Darul Arqam Cece	7 to 483 students; 64 teachers; 19 supervisors	Institutional mentoring and HR development	Association, not isolated causal effect
Ummul Mukminin	1,314 students; four accredited units	Governance and reporting support	Large scale also reflects institutional history
MBS Palopo	National-level academic participation	Teacher training and language immersion	Achievement depends on multiple school-level factors
Darul Arqam Punnia	Graduate progression to higher education	Sustained academic and institutional support	Longitudinal tracking is still required

Curriculum Integration: Common Standards with Contextual Specialisation

Curriculum integration formed the third mechanism. Interviews with leaders, teachers, and dormitory supervisors consistently described a curriculum structure that combined classical diniyah subjects, the national curriculum, and Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah. Curriculum documents and institutional profiles were reviewed to corroborate these broad components, while classroom and dormitory observations provided contextual evidence of how formal curriculum expectations were connected with everyday educational routines. LP2M supported common competency expectations, learning outcomes, character formation, and assessment guidance while allowing each institution to retain contextual specialisation.

Darul Fallah Unismuh Bissoloro integrated agribusiness, sustainable agriculture, and entrepreneurship within its university-linked environment. Ma'had Fathul Mu'in retained tahfidz as its central identity while implementing broader

quality expectations, and MBS Palopo emphasised language development and academic competition. These differentiations were visible in institutional profiles, curriculum-related documents, and participant explanations of local priorities. The cross-case evidence therefore shows that curriculum integration established shared expectations without requiring curricular uniformity.

Participants identified sincerity, discipline, integrity, independence, brotherhood, simplicity, environmental responsibility, and love of knowledge as core pesantren values. Observations of worship, dormitory supervision, teacher–student interaction, communal duties, and daily routines were used to examine how these values were enacted rather than merely stated. Their institutional importance lay in their practical connection to responsibility and conduct. Documentary statements of values were therefore interpreted cautiously and given greater analytical weight when they were consistent with observed routines and participant accounts.

Network-level graduate expectations included Qur’anic literacy and memorisation, competence in Islamic studies, communicative Arabic and English, academic preparedness, and progression to higher education. Achievement varied across institutions. The analysis therefore distinguishes shared expectations from uniformly realised outcomes.

Cross-Case Synthesis: The LP2M Institutional Transformation Framework

The three mechanisms were mutually reinforcing across the cases. Governance established structures for planning and accountability; human resource development enabled personnel to operate those structures; and curriculum integration translated institutional identity into educational practice. Cross-source comparison showed that weakness in one domain constrained progress in the others: training had limited institutional effect where reporting and follow-up were weak, while curriculum expectations were difficult to implement where staffing and teacher competence were insufficient. This interdependence, rather than isolated programme success, became the primary cross-case finding.

Islamic values formed an enabling layer across the three mechanisms. Amanah supported accountability, ikhlas reinforced service, discipline sustained routines, and ukhuwwah encouraged collective responsibility. These values did not substitute for formal systems. Their contribution became visible when they reinforced documented responsibilities, professional expectations, and educational standards. The cross-case pattern is described here as standardised adaptability: common institutional expectations combined with context-sensitive implementation.

Discussion

Extending Quality Management in Faith-Based Education

The findings confirm the relevance of quality-management principles to pesantren, particularly leadership commitment, standardised procedures, documentation, data use, and continuous improvement. This converges with pesantren-oriented TQM studies that emphasise systematic planning and quality assurance (Siti Aimah, 2021; Hasnadi, 2021) and with work integrating quality management and Islamic values (Udhma & Minarti, 2025). The present study extends those accounts in two ways. First, it shows that quality practices were coordinated across a network rather than implemented only within a single institution. Second, formal systems were more sustainable when moral commitments such as amanah, ikhlas, discipline, and collective responsibility were translated into duties and routines. The findings therefore support TQM's concern with traceability and continuous improvement while challenging any assumption that management techniques can be transferred into faith-based institutions without attention to moral and organisational culture.

This extension is also consistent with research describing transformation of religious learning culture and quality assurance in Islamic education (Halimah et al., 2024; Nurjaman et al., 2022). However, the cross-case evidence adds an important boundary condition: Islamic values should not be romanticised as automatic guarantees of quality. Where responsibilities, documentation, mentoring, and follow-up were weak, normative commitments alone did not produce consistent implementation. Values provided moral motivation, whereas formal systems provided consistency, traceability, and accountability. The contribution is therefore relational: quality emerged from the alignment of formal management mechanisms and lived ethical commitments rather than from either element in isolation.

Civil-Society Intermediation and Networked Governance

LP2M represents an intermediary arrangement between centralised state control and complete school autonomy. This differs from studies that explain pesantren modernisation primarily through kiai leadership or change within individual institutions (Hasyim, 2021; Saihan & El-Rumi, 2021), and it extends multi-case work on the organisation of modern pesantren by shifting attention to a network-level coordinating body (Jalil et al., 2023). LP2M establishes shared expectations without the coercive authority of a ministry and supports local institutions without directly managing them. Compliance is encouraged through shared Muhammadiyah identity, organisational legitimacy, technical assistance, monitoring, mentoring, and network membership. The result therefore identifies

civil-society intermediation as a distinct governance mechanism for educational reform.

This arrangement combines flexibility with vulnerability. The pattern converges with scholarship showing that pesantren adaptation is shaped by leadership, institutional identity, and responses to modern educational demands (Kawakip, 2020; Muttaqin, 2025; Zulmuqim et al., 2020). Yet the present cases show that adaptation is not only an institution-level process: it can be coordinated through an intermediary that differentiates support according to organisational maturity and local specialisation. The model may therefore be scalable within networks that possess comparable sources of legitimacy and trust, but replication outside Muhammadiyah would require adaptation to different governance cultures, funding arrangements, and degrees of school autonomy.

From Training to Institutional Capability

The human-resource findings refine a simple human-capital interpretation in which training is expected to generate institutional improvement through individual skill acquisition. Organisational development theory instead emphasises that learning must be embedded in structures, processes, and culture (Rothwell et al., 2022). The cross-case evidence supports this latter view: training produced greater institutional value when it was followed by coaching, local application, managerial support, and routines that retained the acquired capacity. This finding also explains uneven implementation in newer or geographically distant pesantren, where staff release, retention, and follow-up were more difficult. The novelty lies in treating professional development not as an isolated input but as a transfer process from individual competence to organisational capability.

Curriculum Integration: Standard Core, Local Specialisation

The curriculum findings converge with studies of pesantren curriculum modernisation that describe efforts to combine Islamic studies with national or contemporary educational demands (Tanjung et al., 2025; Wahdi et al., 2024). They also resonate with evidence that pesantren across Indonesian regions preserve distinctive institutional characteristics while adapting to changing educational environments (Ridhwan et al., 2018; Zulmuqim et al., 2020). The current study extends this literature by showing that integration at network level did not require the removal of specialisation. Agribusiness, tahfidz, language development, and higher-education pathways remained locally distinctive while common expectations were maintained for diniyah learning, national curriculum requirements, Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyahan, character formation, and

graduate competence. This empirical pattern provides the curricular dimension of standardised adaptability.

Standardised Adaptability as the Core Transformation Principle

The study's central conceptual contribution is standardised adaptability. The eight cases did not converge on a single institutional model. Instead, they shared minimum expectations for governance, staff development, and curriculum quality while retaining differences in gender orientation, tahfidz, agribusiness, language priorities, and institutional history. Standardised adaptability therefore refers to the coordinated use of common standards that define minimum quality while preserving legitimate contextual differentiation. It is not a midpoint between standardisation and autonomy; it is a network-governance principle that specifies what should be common while allowing the means of implementation to remain context-sensitive.

This concept reframes the familiar tension between tradition and modernity in pesantren studies. Earlier scholarship shows that modernisation can coexist with religious identity and local institutional forms (Kawakip, 2020; Pribadi, 2022; Tanjung et al., 2025). The present study extends that insight by identifying the organisational mechanism through which coexistence can be coordinated across multiple autonomous institutions. The concept also has boundary conditions: adaptability can become inconsistency when minimum standards are unclear, while standardisation can become rigidity when local needs are ignored. Its explanatory value therefore depends on the interaction among clear minimum expectations, differentiated implementation, mentoring, local leadership, and trust.

Implications for Islamic Educational Reform

For Muhammadiyah and other Islamic educational networks, the findings suggest that regional intermediary bodies can coordinate mentoring, data consolidation, professional development, accreditation support, and curriculum quality while differentiating assistance according to institutional maturity, geographic access, staffing, and specialisation. This differs from state-directed reform models in which authority is primarily regulatory and centrally administered (Abdul Hamid, 2017; Fitriani et al., 2025; Hadi et al., 2025). In the Muhammadiyah cases, shared organisational identity and relational legitimacy were central resources. Transfer to other settings should therefore be treated as contextual adaptation rather than direct replication because legitimacy, organisational culture, resources, and autonomy differ across educational systems.

D. Conclusion

This study examined eight Muhammadiyah pesantren in South Sulawesi through the interconnected domains of institutional governance, human resource development, and curriculum integration. Evidence from 42 participants, field observations, and institutional documents showed that governance provided structures for planning and accountability, professional development built the capacities needed to operate those structures, and curriculum integration translated institutional identity into educational practice. The cross-case pattern was strongest where mentoring, local leadership, documentation, and follow-up connected these domains rather than allowing them to operate as separate programmes.

The study develops a context-sensitive framework of standardised adaptability. A civil-society intermediary can establish common expectations without eliminating pesantren autonomy when standardisation is accompanied by mentoring, local adaptation, and organisational trust. Islamic values function as enabling moral infrastructure when they are connected to formal responsibilities and professional standards. Conceptually, the framework explains how standardisation and differentiation can be coordinated rather than treated as opposing choices. The evidence supports an interpretive cross-case framework, not a causal claim of effectiveness or universal validation.

The study is limited by its qualitative multi-case design, concentration within one province and one organisational network, uneven quantitative indicators across sites, and reliance on a role-structured sample of 42 internal organisational actors. These perspectives may produce favourable interpretations of LP2M support, even though triangulation, negative-case analysis, and reflexive safeguards were used to moderate that risk. The archived materials available for manuscript preparation also did not preserve line-identifiable verbatim excerpts for every analytical theme, so reconstructed quotations were deliberately avoided. Future research should include longitudinal graduate tracking, comparative studies across provinces and Islamic organisations, independent stakeholder perspectives, and mixed-method testing of relationships among governance quality, staff development, curriculum implementation, student outcomes, and spiritual-organisational culture.

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