



## **Reconfigurative pesantren: Strategic management of value-preserving institutional change in islamic education**

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### **Article Info**

#### **Article history:**

Received: Dec 12, 2025

Revised: Jan 23, 2026

Accepted: Feb 02, 2026

#### **Keywords:**

Charismatic Leadership;  
Institutional Reconfiguration;  
Islamic Education; Open  
Systems; Reconfigurative  
Pesantren.

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### **Abstract**

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia are increasingly confronted with simultaneous pressures arising from regulatory expansion, socio-cultural expectations, and digital transformation. While existing studies have largely focused on curriculum modernization and organizational hybridity, limited attention has been given to how value-based pesantren sustain institutional identity while adapting to change. This study aims to examine how Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Anwar Pacitan reconfigures its institutional structure through the interaction of norms, systems, and leadership agency, and to propose the concept of a "reconfigurative pesantren" as a novel analytical framework. This research employs a qualitative approach using a single instrumental case study design, with data collected through in-depth interviews involving the kiai, director, teachers, students, and guardians, complemented by participatory and non-participatory observations as well as institutional document analysis. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Miles et al. (2014) and Braun and Clarke (2006), supported by source, method, and time triangulation. The findings reveal a value-preserving institutional reconfiguration occurring through three interconnected dimensions: normative reconfiguration, where core values are institutionalized into vision, routines, and strategic programs; systemic reconfiguration, reflected in organizational restructuring and selective openness to external pressures; and agency reconfiguration, characterized by delegative-charismatic leadership that distributes authority while maintaining the moral legitimacy of the kiai. The interaction of these dimensions produces a reconfigurative pesantren model. The study concludes that pesantren function as selective and adaptive open systems that strategically transform institutional structures while preserving value continuity, offering a mechanistic explanation of sustainable transformation in value-based educational institutions.

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**To cite this article:** Hadi, L., & Latif, M. A. (2025). Reconfigurative pesantren: Strategic management of value-preserving institutional change in Islamic education. *Al Qodiri: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Keagamaan*, 24(1), 99-111.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The 21st century places Islamic educational institutions, particularly pesantren, at a complex intersection between the preservation of religious traditions and the demands of modernization. As institutions rooted in classical Islamic scholarship, pesantren have historically functioned not only as centers of learning but also as moral communities that sustain religious values, social cohesion, and cultural continuity (Dhofier, 2011; Bruinessen, 2015). However, contemporary developments have intensified external pressures on these institutions. State regulations increasingly position pesantren within formal education systems, requiring compliance with national standards and accreditation frameworks (Isbah & Sakhiyya, 2023; Kosim et al., 2023), while societal expectations demand graduates who possess both deep religious understanding and adaptive competencies relevant to modern socio-economic contexts (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022). These dual pressures have transformed pesantren into hybrid educational spaces that must continuously negotiate between maintaining identity and responding to change.

Scholarly understanding of pesantren has evolved significantly over time. Early studies tended to portray pesantren as relatively static and conservative institutions, emphasizing their role in preserving kitab kuning traditions, kiai authority, and communal religious life (Dhofier, 2011).

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However, this perspective has been challenged by subsequent research demonstrating that pesantren are capable of dynamic and selective adaptation (Lukens-Bull, 2001, 2005; Asrohah, 2011). Empirical studies reveal that pesantren transformation is often gradual, negotiated, and rooted in internal value systems rather than imposed external changes (Isbah, 2012, 2020; Murdianto & Iskandar, 2022). These findings suggest that pesantren possess an inherent capacity to respond to modernity without losing their core identity, although the mechanisms underlying this process remain insufficiently explored.

Recent studies have expanded the analysis of pesantren transformation by focusing on strategic management, leadership, and institutional restructuring. Effective management strategies have been identified as key factors in enhancing the competitiveness and attractiveness of pesantren in the contemporary educational landscape (Munifah et al., 2019). Leadership studies further emphasize the importance of balancing charismatic authority with functional delegation, particularly in sustaining organizational continuity in the face of modernization (Mardiyah, 2012; Subandi et al., 2021). More recent contributions highlight the role of adaptive and distributed leadership in responding to regulatory pressures and organizational complexity (Malisi et al., 2024; Rofiqi et al., 2026; Romlah et al., 2025). In addition, emerging research indicates a shift from purely charismatic leadership toward more rational and professional forms of governance, although such transitions may pose risks to traditional legitimacy (Masuwd et al., 2026; Maarif et al., 2025).

At the same time, pesantren transformation cannot be separated from broader educational, social, and technological dynamics. In the educational domain, pesantren increasingly integrate formal and non-formal curricula, combining religious learning with general education and skill development (Wasehudin et al., 2023; Maarif et al., 2023; Amalia et al., 2025). From a social perspective, pesantren continue to function as community-based institutions that foster social cohesion, moral development, and collective identity (Pohl, 2006; Hepni et al., 2025; Ansori et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the rapid expansion of digital technology introduces new challenges related to governance, learning processes, and institutional sustainability, requiring pesantren to adopt selective strategies in managing digital exposure (Hanafi et al., 2021; Bustomi et al., 2025; Rosowulan et al., 2025). These multidimensional developments reinforce the view that pesantren are not merely educational institutions, but integrated systems operating at the intersection of education, society, and religion.

Despite the richness of existing literature, significant gaps remain. First, most studies analyze pesantren transformation in a fragmented manner, focusing separately on curriculum innovation (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022), leadership transformation (Mardiyah, 2012; Maarif et al., 2025), or institutional reform (Malisi et al., 2024), without integrating these dimensions into a comprehensive analytical framework. As a result, the interconnected nature of educational processes, organizational systems, and leadership practices in pesantren transformation is often overlooked. Second, while previous research has documented various forms of change, it has largely emphasized descriptive accounts of “what changes” and “what is maintained,” with limited attention to the underlying mechanisms that produce and sustain these changes within value-based institutions.

More importantly, recent studies indicate that pesantren are increasingly facing complex and simultaneous pressures arising from regulatory expansion, socio-cultural expectations, and digital transformation (Bustomi et al., 2025; Misdah et al., 2025; Rofiqi et al., 2026; Rosowulan et al., 2025; Wasehudin et al., 2023). However, existing conceptual frameworks—such as modernization, hybridity, and adaptation—remain largely descriptive and insufficient to explain how pesantren actively manage these pressures while maintaining institutional identity. There is still a lack of a mechanistic and integrative model that explains how internal elements—namely values (norms), organizational arrangements (systems), and leadership (agency)—interact dynamically to enable sustainable transformation. This gap is particularly critical given the unique nature of pesantren as value-based institutions, where change processes are deeply embedded in religious, cultural, and social contexts.

To address this gap, this study aims to examine how a value-based pesantren reconfigures its institutional structure through the interaction of norms, systems, and leadership agency, using a qualitative case study at Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Anwar Pacitan. Specifically, this study seeks to answer three research questions: (1) how heritage values are institutionalized into new strategic structures and practices; (2) how pesantren respond selectively to external pressures without

experiencing identity dislocation; and (3) how the interaction between norms, systems, and agents produces a reconfigured institutional model.

This study contributes to the literature in three important ways. First, it proposes the concept of *reconfigurative pesantren* as a novel analytical framework that explains institutional transformation as a dynamic, value-preserving, and internally driven process. Second, it integrates educational, social, and religious perspectives into a unified analytical model, thereby reflecting the multidimensional nature of pesantren as institutions that simultaneously function as centers of learning, community development, and moral formation. Third, it provides a mechanistic explanation of how norms, systems, and leadership interact to sustain institutional identity while enabling adaptive change, extending the application of Open Systems Theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978), Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2013), and Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Bass, 1985) into the context of Islamic education.

This research is a focused reanalysis of previous research (Latif, 2025), utilizing the same empirical dataset but employing a distinct analytical lens. While prior work examined structural capacity constraints in dual curriculum implementation, this study shifts the focus toward the internal mechanisms of institutional reconfiguration. By doing so, it offers complementary insights rather than overlapping findings, contributing to a deeper and more integrative understanding of pesantren transformation in contemporary contexts.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a single instrumental case study design (Merriam, 2010; Yin, 2018) to explore the process of institutional reconfiguration within a value-based Islamic educational setting. This design was selected because it enables an in-depth and context-sensitive examination of pesantren as a complex social, educational, and religious institution, where transformation cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures. As emphasized in the introduction, this article represents a focused reanalysis of an existing dataset, with a distinct analytical orientation toward understanding the interaction between norms, systems, and agency in shaping a reconfigurative pesantren model. All empirical findings are derived from and remain consistent with the original thesis data, ensuring analytical continuity while offering a new conceptual interpretation.

The study was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Anwar Pacitan, located in East Java, Indonesia. This site was purposively selected due to its unique trajectory of institutional development, characterized by a strong salafiyah foundation established in the early 1980s and a gradual transformation toward a modern educational model following a leadership transition. The pesantren has undergone five distinct developmental phases, ranging from traditional consolidation to institutional independence, providing a rich context for examining reconfiguration processes. Furthermore, the socio-geographical setting of Pacitan—marked by limited digital infrastructure yet dynamic community engagement—presents a relevant case for analyzing how pesantren respond selectively to external pressures while maintaining their core identity.

Participants in this study were selected through purposive sampling to capture diverse perspectives across institutional levels. Informants included the kiai (pesantren leader), director of Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI), deputy directors, heads of formal and diniyah education units, members of the *asatidz* (teaching staff), senior students, and student guardians. This diversity ensured a comprehensive understanding of institutional dynamics from leadership, managerial, pedagogical, and community viewpoints. In qualitative research, instruments are inherently embedded within the data collection process; therefore, this study utilized semi-structured interview guides, observation protocols, and document analysis frameworks as primary instruments. These instruments were designed to explore themes related to institutional values, leadership practices, organizational systems, and educational processes.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. Interviews were carried out flexibly to allow participants to articulate their experiences and interpretations regarding institutional change. Observations were conducted both participatively and non-participatively, covering learning activities, leadership coordination, dormitory life, and social interactions within the pesantren

environment. Documentation analysis included institutional records such as vision and mission statements, organizational structures, curriculum documents, accreditation reports (BAN-SM 2023), meeting minutes, activity schedules, and digital media content. These multiple data sources enabled triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the findings.

Data analysis followed a qualitative thematic approach integrating the frameworks of Miles et al. (2014) and Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis process involved systematic stages, including data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, definition and refinement of themes, and narrative construction. In this focused reanalysis, coding and thematic development were directed specifically toward identifying patterns of interaction between norms, systems, and agency. This approach allowed the study to generate new interpretive insights from the same dataset, emphasizing the mechanisms underlying institutional reconfiguration rather than merely describing observable changes.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information across different categories of informants, while methodological triangulation involved cross-verification of interview, observation, and document data. Time triangulation was also applied by collecting data across different periods and institutional settings to capture consistency and variation in responses. Member checking was conducted with key informants to validate interpretations and ensure alignment with participants' perspectives. In addition, dependability was maintained through audit trails documenting the research process, and confirmability was ensured through systematic data storage and transparent coding procedures.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This section presents the empirical findings of the study, focusing on the process of institutional reconfiguration at PPM Al-Anwar Pacitan. The findings are organized into four main dimensions: norm reconfiguration, system reconfiguration, agent reconfiguration, and the synthesis toward a reconfigurative pesantren model. Table 1 provides a concise overview of the reconfiguration matrix as a preliminary mapping of findings before detailed explanation.

**Table 1.** Reconfiguration Matrix of Norms, Systems, and Agency at PPM Al-Anwar Pacitan

Dimension	Empirical Indicators	Strategic Function	Theoretical Interpretation
<b>Norms</b>	Vision: Qur'anic generation, independent, excellent Core values: spirituality, discipline, independence, social solidarity Formalized in institutional documents Transmitted through daily routines: <i>wirid</i> , <i>tahlilan</i> , <i>mukhadharah</i> , <i>khidmah</i>	Preserves institutional identity and internal legitimacy amid external pressure	Normative pillar (Scott, 2013): values formalized into institutional symbols without losing cultural authenticity
<b>Systems</b>	Org. restructuring: yayasan > director > vice directors > heads of madrasah > class supervisors New units: <i>Tahfidz</i> , BLK, language programs Dual curriculum: formal (MTs-A, MA-B) + <i>diniyah</i> Selective digital openness (BLK for ICT; no student devices) Accreditation: MTs = A, MA = B (BAN-SM, 2023)	Enables adaptation to regulatory and social demands without dismantling core identity	Adaptive differentiation (Scott, 2013) + input-throughput-output cycle (Katz & Kahn, 1978): selective absorption of external pressures
<b>Agency/Leadership</b>	Kiai as normative anchor & symbolic authority Director: daily academic management Two vice directors: curriculum & student affairs Heads of madrasah: formal units Class supervisors: discipline & guardian communication	Distributes institutional authority while maintaining kiai's symbolic-moral legitimacy chain	Delegative-charismatic leadership: combines idealized (Bass & Bass, 1985) with structural empowerment; prevents leader dependency while preserving value continuity

## **Reconfiguring the Norm: Institutionalizing Heritage Values into a New Framework**

### ***Core Values as Institutional Foundations***

PPM Al-Anwar is built upon a value system that has remained relatively stable since its establishment. Six core values were identified: Qur'anic spirituality, discipline and responsibility, independence, global orientation rooted in tradition, social solidarity, and balance between worship and intellectual development. These values are not merely formal principles but function as deeply embedded assumptions that shape daily practices, institutional behavior, and collective identity.

The strength of this value system lies in its internalization across the pesantren community. It forms a cultural foundation that enables the institution to remain resilient in the face of external pressures. Unlike formal policies that can be easily modified, these values operate at a deeper level, influencing how individuals perceive, act, and interact within the institutional environment. This explains why institutional identity remains stable despite ongoing transformation.

Another important element reinforcing this value system is the symbolic legitimacy of the kiai. Authority is not only derived from formal roles but also from collective belief in the kiai as a guardian of values. This legitimacy strengthens institutional cohesion and creates a form of value resilience that is difficult to disrupt, even under significant external pressure.

### ***Formalization of Values into Strategic Documents***

Norm reconfiguration is further reflected in the formalization of values into institutional documents, particularly the vision and mission. The vision of PPM Al-Anwar emphasizes the development of Qur'anic, independent, high-achieving, and morally grounded individuals. This formulation represents a strategic reinterpretation of traditional values into a language that aligns with contemporary educational demands.

Although the formulation process was largely internal, it marks an important step toward institutional consolidation. The vision has begun to function as a symbolic reference within the organization, being disseminated in meetings, displayed in institutional spaces, and used as a basis for program planning. This indicates a transition from implicit values to formally articulated institutional directions.

This process shows that institutional change does not necessarily originate from external intervention but can emerge from internal reinterpretation. Values that were previously embedded informally are gradually translated into formal structures, providing a clearer foundation for organizational development.

### ***Internalization of Values through Daily Practice***

Beyond formal documents, values are continuously transmitted through daily practices. Activities such as tahlilan, wirid, mukhadharah, and communal work function not only as religious rituals but also as mechanisms for strengthening collective identity and social cohesion. These practices ensure that values are lived experiences rather than abstract concepts.

At the same time, traditional values such as khidmah are being reinterpreted within a more structured organizational system. The introduction of job descriptions, reporting systems, and evaluation mechanisms reflects an effort to integrate traditional dedication with modern accountability. This transformation illustrates a process of value translation, where inherited values are adapted into operational practices without losing their substance.

These findings indicate that tradition and modernization are not in opposition but are continuously negotiated within everyday institutional life. Values serve as a foundation, while organizational practices provide the means for their implementation.

## **System Reconfiguration: Restructuring and Selective Openness**

### ***Organizational Restructuring***

Institutional restructuring at PPM Al-Anwar represents a significant shift from an informal, centralized structure toward a more formal and functional system. The organizational hierarchy now includes the foundation, pesantren leader, director, deputy directors, heads of educational units, and class supervisors. Each level is assigned specific roles and responsibilities, supported by clearer reporting mechanisms.

This restructuring enhances coordination and decision-making efficiency. Previously, institutional management relied heavily on a single authority figure. In the current system,

responsibilities are distributed across multiple functional units, allowing for more responsive and structured management processes.

Importantly, this structural transformation does not eliminate the symbolic role of the kiai. Instead, it allows the kiai to focus on value orientation while operational responsibilities are handled by the management team. This creates a balance between tradition and organizational efficiency.

### ***Institutional Unit Diversification***

System reconfiguration is also reflected in the diversification of institutional units. In addition to the formal (MTs and MA) and diniyah pathways, new programs have been developed, including Tahfidz, foreign language training, and vocational programs through the Job Training Center (BLK). These units respond to emerging societal demands such as Qur'anic memorization, language proficiency, and practical skills.

The introduction of these units does not replace the traditional system but complements it. This indicates an expansion of institutional capacity while maintaining core identity. The pesantren adapts to external demands by adding new components rather than altering its foundational structure.

This diversification demonstrates a strategic approach to institutional development, where innovation is carried out within the boundaries of established values. As a result, the pesantren is able to remain relevant without losing its distinctive characteristics.

### ***Selective Openness to Digitalization***

A distinctive feature of system reconfiguration is the pesantren's approach to digitalization. The findings reveal a selective openness strategy. On the one hand, digital tools are introduced through ICT training, social media management, and online systems. On the other hand, restrictions are maintained on student access to personal digital devices and classroom digitalization.

This approach reflects a filtering mechanism in responding to technological change. Rather than adopting digitalization fully, the pesantren selectively integrates technology in areas that support institutional goals while avoiding potential negative impacts on learning focus and character formation.

This selective openness allows the pesantren to adapt to technological developments without compromising its educational philosophy. Technology is treated as a tool, not as a dominant driver of institutional change.

### ***Evaluation and Feedback System***

System reconfiguration also includes the development of evaluation mechanisms. Evaluation at PPM Al-Anwar combines formal and informal approaches, including annual work meetings, daily monitoring, periodic reporting, and feedback from student guardians. These mechanisms provide a platform for reflection, coordination, and continuous improvement.

Although the evaluation system is not yet fully standardized with measurable indicators, it functions effectively as an organizational learning process. External inputs, such as accreditation results and community expectations, are used as references for internal improvements. This demonstrates the presence of a feedback loop that supports gradual and adaptive institutional development.

### ***Reconfiguration: Delegative-Charismatic Leadership***

#### ***Kiai as a Normative Anchor and Moral Symbol***

The kiai remains a central figure in maintaining institutional values and providing strategic direction. However, operational responsibilities are increasingly delegated to the management team. This shift allows the kiai to function primarily as a moral and symbolic leader, while day-to-day management is handled by designated actors.

This leadership pattern strengthens institutional stability. The symbolic authority of the kiai ensures value continuity, while delegated structures enable operational flexibility. As a result, leadership becomes more focused and effective.

**Role Distribution and Institutionalization of Authority**

The formation of a structured management team represents a key aspect of agent reconfiguration. The director, deputy directors, heads of units, and class supervisors each have clearly defined responsibilities. This distribution of roles enhances organizational responsiveness and reduces dependence on a single leader.

At the same time, authority remains aligned with institutional values. Technical autonomy is granted within clearly defined boundaries, ensuring that decision-making processes remain consistent with the pesantren’s identity. This creates a balance between decentralization and value control.

**Reformulation of Social Relations**

Changes are also evident in the pattern of social relations within the pesantren. The traditional hierarchical model has evolved into a more communicative and participatory system. Interactions between management, students, and guardians are now more structured, particularly in areas such as discipline and student development.

This transformation reflects an adaptation to broader societal expectations. Institutional practices are becoming more transparent and responsive, while still maintaining the core values of the pesantren.

**Human Resource Capacity as a Critical Variable**

Human resource capacity plays a crucial role in the reconfiguration process. The coexistence of formally trained teachers and traditional educators creates both strengths and challenges. While formal educators support professionalization, traditional educators ensure the continuity of classical knowledge.

To address this, the pesantren has begun to develop a regeneration strategy by involving young alumni who are familiar with institutional values and open to innovation. This approach supports gradual capacity development while maintaining value continuity.

**Toward a Reconfigurative Pesantren Model**

**Synthesis of Norms–Systems–Agents**

The findings show that institutional reconfiguration occurs through the interaction of norms, systems, and agents. These three dimensions operate simultaneously and are mutually reinforcing. Norms provide direction, systems offer structural mechanisms, and agents drive implementation and adaptation.

External pressures are not directly adopted but filtered through internal values. This results in a balanced transformation process where institutional identity is preserved while new structures and practices are introduced.

**Table 2.** Internal and External Drivers of Institutional Reconfiguration at PPM Al-Anwar Pacitan

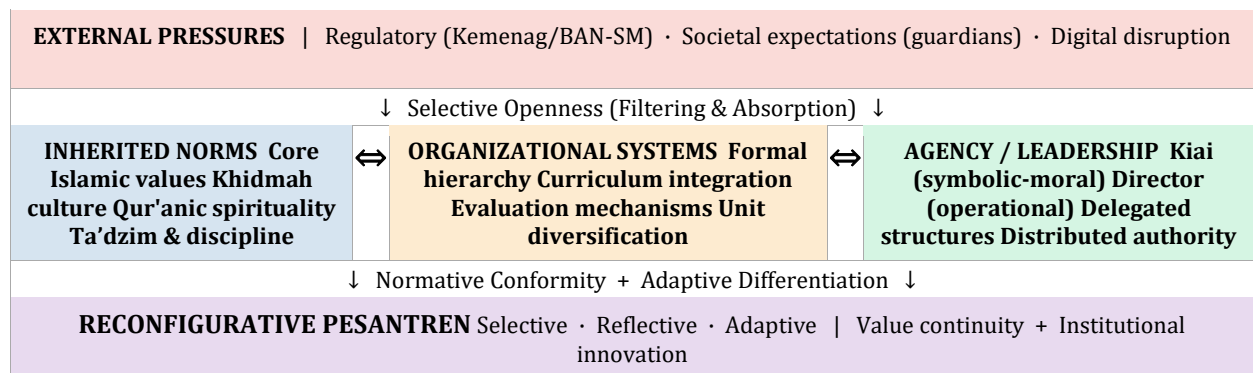
Driver	Type	Manifestation in PPM Al-Anwar	Implication for Reconfiguration
Delegative-charismatic kiai leadership	Internal/Agency	Kiai retains symbolic and moral authority; technical management delegated to director and vice directors	Enables structural flexibility while maintaining value continuity
Khidmah culture	Internal/Normative	Culture of dedication, ta’dzim, and loyalty embedded in daily routines and educational practices	Forms the moral-social glue that sustains reconfiguration without cultural rupture
Post-leadership transition reform	Internal/Systemic	Structural formalization: creation of director, vice director positions, operational SOPs, and specialized units	Shifts from personal-based to structurally-based management; enables institutional scaling
Human resource capacity	Internal / Systemic	Majority S1 formal teachers; diniyah teachers = pesantren	Determines pace of reconfiguration; currently in

Kemenag regulations & BAN-SM accreditation	External / Regulatory	alumni; limited ongoing professional development Compliance with national curriculum standards, administration, and accreditation requirements (MTs = A, MA = B)	professional reconstruction phase Drives normative conformity; catalyzes administrative formalization and systemic documentation
Student guardians' expectations	External / Socio-normative	Demands for language proficiency, transparent discipline, life skills, and academic quality	Drives communicative openness, humanistic development, and program diversification
Limited digital infrastructure in Pacitan	External / Technological	No permanent LCD projectors; no LMS; students prohibited from devices; BLK as complementary unit	Creates selective openness: technology adopted in controlled environments while core learning remains classical

**Reconfigurative Pesantren Model: Characteristics and Mechanisms**

Based on the findings, the reconfigurative pesantren model is characterized by four main features: value-based selectivity, negotiated authority, gradual institutionalization, and bounded openness. These characteristics describe how the pesantren adapts to change while maintaining its core identity.

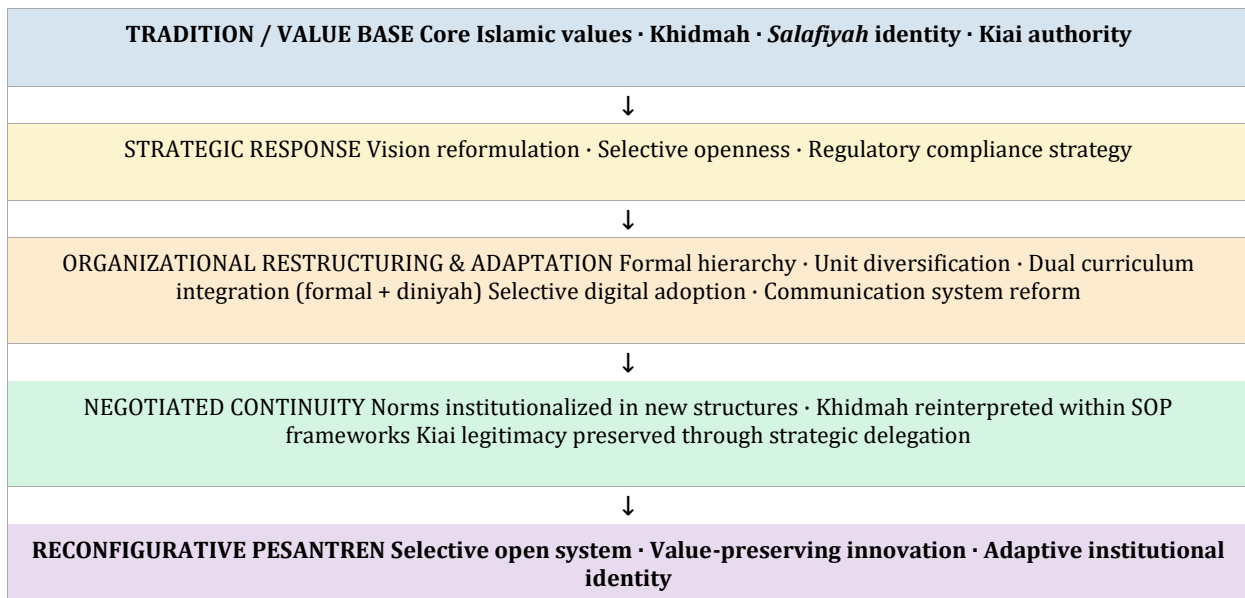
The relationships among these components are illustrated in Figure 1, which shows the interaction between external pressures and internal institutional elements.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Model of the Reconfigurative Pesantren

Figure 1 indicates that institutional transformation occurs through a dynamic process involving filtering, adaptation, and internal alignment. Norms, systems, and leadership interact continuously, producing a stable yet adaptive institutional form. The transformation process is further illustrated in Figure 2, which outlines the stages from traditional foundations to a reconfigured institutional model.

Figure 2 shows that transformation occurs through sequential stages, including value foundation, strategic response, structural adaptation, negotiated continuity, and final reconfiguration. This process highlights that institutional change is gradual and integrative rather than disruptive.



**Figure 2.** Analytical Flow of Institutional Reconfiguration at PPM Al-Anwar Pacitan

**Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that institutional transformation in pesantren cannot be understood as a linear or sectoral process. Instead, the case of PPM Al-Anwar Pacitan reveals a dynamic interaction between norms, systems, and agency that enables institutional adaptation while preserving identity. This finding reinforces contemporary perspectives that pesantren are adaptive institutions capable of negotiating change within their own value frameworks (Isbah, 2020; Isbah & Sakhiyya, 2023; Asrohah, 2011). However, this study extends previous work by emphasizing that sustainability of transformation depends not merely on adaptation itself, but on the internal mechanisms that integrate values, organizational structures, and leadership practices.

From the normative dimension, the persistence of core values confirms that pesantren transformation is anchored in deeply internalized belief systems. These values function as cognitive structures that shape behavior and institutional identity, allowing pesantren to remain stable despite external pressures (Scott, 2013). The findings support recent studies showing that transformation in Islamic educational institutions often occurs through reinterpretation rather than replacement of tradition (Amalia et al., 2025). In this context, the formalization of values into vision and mission documents represents an important stage in institutional consolidation, where implicit cultural norms are translated into explicit organizational frameworks without disrupting their essence.

In the systemic dimension, the restructuring of organizational hierarchy and diversification of institutional units reflect a strategic response to regulatory and societal demands. This aligns with recent research indicating that pesantren adaptation involves selective differentiation rather than total transformation (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022; Kosim et al., 2023). The integration of formal and diniyah education, along with the development of new programs, illustrates how institutions expand capacity while maintaining continuity. Such transformation supports the argument that institutional reform in pesantren is most effective when it balances external compliance with internal legitimacy (Malisi et al., 2024).

A particularly important aspect of system reconfiguration is the pesantren’s approach to digitalization. The findings reveal a pattern of selective openness, where technology is adopted in controlled contexts while restrictions are maintained in core educational activities. This supports recent studies highlighting that managed openness is a key factor in sustaining pesantren in the digital era (Bustomi et al., 2025; Rosowulan et al., 2025). Rather than fully embracing or rejecting digitalization, pesantren demonstrate the ability to filter technological influences based on institutional priorities. This finding extends earlier observations on the impact of technological change on Islamic education by showing that adaptation can be strategic and value-driven rather than reactive (Hanafi et al., 2021).

From the perspective of agency, the transformation of leadership patterns reflects a shift toward delegative-charismatic leadership. The kiai maintains symbolic and moral authority, while operational responsibilities are distributed across formal structures. This finding is consistent with recent studies on leadership transformation in pesantren, which emphasize the importance of balancing traditional authority with professional management (Maarif et al., 2025; Rofiqi et al., 2026). In addition, visionary leadership approaches grounded in religious values have been shown to strengthen institutional coherence and strategic direction in Islamic boarding schools (Hamdanah & Rusydi, 2025). Furthermore, the redistribution of authority supports organizational flexibility without undermining institutional legitimacy. The emergence of structured leadership roles indicates that pesantren are moving toward more sustainable governance models while retaining their value-based foundations.

The reformulation of social relations further illustrates how pesantren respond to changing societal expectations. The shift toward more communicative and participatory interactions reflects broader demands for transparency and accountability in educational institutions (Zuhri & Sibaweh, 2023). This transformation is not merely structural but also cultural, as it involves redefining relationships between leaders, students, and the wider community. Such adaptation aligns with findings that emphasize the role of adaptive leadership in ensuring institutional sustainability in changing social contexts (Ansori et al., 2025).

Human resource capacity emerges as a critical factor influencing the pace of reconfiguration. The coexistence of formally trained educators and traditional religious teachers reflects the dual nature of pesantren. This finding is consistent with research highlighting the importance of integrating professional competence with institutional values in educational transformation (Maarif et al., 2023; Gunawan et al., 2021). However, this study adds that capacity development in pesantren must be value-driven, as institutional sustainability depends not only on technical skills but also on the continuity of cultural and religious identity.

The synthesis of these findings leads to the formulation of the reconfigurative pesantren model as a conceptual contribution. This model explains how institutional transformation occurs through the interaction of norms, systems, and agency, rather than through isolated changes. It extends institutional theory by demonstrating how normative conformity and adaptive differentiation operate simultaneously within value-based institutions (Scott, 2013). Moreover, it provides a mechanistic explanation that complements recent studies on pesantren transformation, which have largely focused on descriptive accounts of change (Misdah et al., 2025; Romlah, 2025). This is also in line with earlier findings that highlight the role of transformational leadership in pesantren as a driving force for institutional change while maintaining religious and cultural values (Supendi et al., 2018).

This study also contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic education by proposing a new understanding of pesantren as selective open systems. Rather than viewing pesantren as resistant or fully adaptive institutions, this research shows that they operate through continuous negotiation between internal values and external pressures. This perspective aligns with recent studies emphasizing the evolving role of pesantren in contemporary society (Isbah & Sakhiyya, 2023; Ratnasari et al., 2026), while offering a more integrative explanation of how transformation is sustained.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that institutional transformation in pesantren requires alignment between values, systems, and leadership. Reforms that focus solely on structural change without considering cultural and normative dimensions risk creating inconsistencies between formal policies and actual practices. This supports recent arguments that policy frameworks for pesantren should emphasize flexibility and contextual adaptation rather than uniform standardization (Malisi et al., 2024). Strengthening human resource capacity, improving evaluation systems, and maintaining value coherence are essential for ensuring sustainable institutional development.

Finally, while this study provides important insights, it is limited to a single case context. Therefore, the proposed model should be understood as an analytical framework rather than a universally generalizable theory. Future research is needed to examine the applicability of this model across different pesantren contexts, particularly in relation to varying levels of modernization, digital integration, and institutional scale (Misdah et al., 2025; Ratnasari et al., 2026; Romlah et al., 2025).

Comparative and longitudinal approaches would be valuable in further refining the concept of reconfigurative pesantren.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the transformation of PPM Al-Anwar Pacitan does not represent a conventional modernization process, but rather a value-based institutional reconfiguration in which identity continuity is preserved through the dynamic interaction of norms, systems, and agency. Normative reconfiguration is reflected in the formalization and operationalization of heritage values within strategic documents and daily practices; systemic reconfiguration appears through organizational restructuring, institutional diversification, and selective openness toward external pressures; while agent reconfiguration is realized through a delegative-charismatic leadership model that maintains the moral authority of the kiai while distributing technical responsibilities. These three dimensions operate synergistically, producing a reconfigurative pesantren that is adaptive, selective, and reflective without losing its foundational values. Theoretically, this study contributes a mechanistic model of reconfigurative pesantren that integrates norm–system–agent interactions, addressing the lack of an integrative framework in existing literature on Islamic boarding school transformation. Practically, the findings suggest that pesantren transformation should be guided by value-based selectivity, structured authority distribution, gradual institutionalization, and controlled openness to external influences. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools with similar characteristics can adopt this framework to manage institutional change more strategically while maintaining identity coherence. However, further research is recommended through multi-case and longitudinal studies to test the applicability, scalability, and long-term stability of this model across different pesantren contexts, particularly in relation to varying institutional capacities, socio-cultural environments, and levels of technological integration.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

LH contributed to conceptualization, fieldwork and data collection, formal analysis, and original draft writing. MAL contributed to theoretical framework development, focused reanalysis design, literature review, critical manuscript revision, and finalization. Both authors approved the final manuscript.

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