

## TRANSFORMATION OF PESANTREN CULTURE IN INTERNALIZING MULTICULTURALISM VALUES IN THE DIGITAL DISRUPTION ERA

**Qoidul Khoir<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Syariah Nurul Qarnain, Indonesia

Email : qoidul.khoir@stisnq.ac.id<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract :

*This research examines the cultural transformation of pesantren in internalizing multiculturalism values in the digital disruption era. The research focus is directed toward changes in cultural, pedagogical patterns, and the role of pesantren leadership in responding to the dynamics of diversity and digital technological developments. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method thru in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The research findings indicate that pesantren are undergoing a cultural shift from a hierarchical traditional pattern toward a more dialogical, inclusive, and adaptive culture thru the integration of moderate Islamic values, the utilization of digital media, and the strengthening of digital literacy and ethics. This transformation strengthens the role of pesantren as agents of religious moderation, but still faces obstacles such as the digital competency gap and limited contextual learning modules. The research conclusion confirms that the success of internalizing multiculturalism values in pesantren is highly determined by the visionary leadership of the kiai, the readiness of human resources, and institutional policy support. Therefore, this research recommends strengthening digital literacy, developing a multiculturalism-based pesantren curriculum, and implementing sustainable cultural transformation strategies to ensure that pesantren remain relevant and contribute to building an inclusive society in the digital age.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Transformation, Multicultural Value Integration, Disruption Era

### Abstrak :

Penelitian ini mengkaji transformasi budaya pesantren dalam menginternalisasi nilai-nilai multikulturalisme pada era disrupsi digital. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada perubahan pola budaya, pedagogik, dan peran kepemimpinan pesantren dalam merespons dinamika keberagaman dan perkembangan teknologi digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pesantren mengalami pergeseran budaya dari pola tradisional yang hierarkis menuju budaya yang lebih dialogis, inklusif, dan adaptif melalui integrasi nilai Islam moderat, pemanfaatan media digital, serta penguatan literasi dan etika digital. Transformasi tersebut memperkuat peran pesantren sebagai agen moderasi beragama, namun masih menghadapi kendala berupa kesenjangan kompetensi digital dan keterbatasan modul pembelajaran kontekstual. Kesimpulan penelitian menegaskan bahwa keberhasilan internalisasi nilai multikulturalisme di pesantren sangat ditentukan oleh kepemimpinan kiai yang visioner, kesiapan sumber daya manusia, dan dukungan kebijakan kelembagaan. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini merekomendasikan penguatan literasi digital, pengembangan kurikulum pesantren berbasis multikulturalisme, serta strategi transformasi budaya yang berkelanjutan agar pesantren tetap relevan dan berkontribusi dalam membangun masyarakat yang inklusif di era digital.

Kata Kunci : Transformasi Budaya, Integrasi Nilai Multikultural, Era Disrupsi



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The transformation of pesantren culture has become a strategic issue in Islamic education during the digital disruption era. Rapid technological changes are influencing the value systems, interaction patterns, and religious practices of santri (Rohani, 2024). Schein and Kotter's theory of cultural transformation asserts that environmental changes will force changes in the core values of institutions, while social facts demonstrate the widespread penetration of digital media into pesantren life. This condition reveals a gap between the theory of cultural change, which demands systemic adaptation, and the reality of pesantren, which still retains its traditional character.

The value gap between the ideal of multiculturalism and the social reality of pesantren is becoming increasingly apparent. Pesantren are expected to instill values of tolerance and diversity, but the phenomenon of digital polarization and intolerant content often influences the perspectives of students (Muhtarom et al., 2020). Exposure to digital media increases the tendency toward religious exclusivism among pesantren students. This gap indicates the need for a more structured cultural transformation so that multicultural values are not just normative discourse.

The digital disruption era is changing the learning systems and social practices of pesantren. Technology is shifting scientific authority from religious leaders to digital information that is often unvalidated. Rahmah stated that digitalization is changing epistemic authority in traditional educational institutions, and this phenomenon is emerging in many Islamic boarding schools that are now interacting with social media (Rahmah et al., 2025). Pesantren need to undergo a cultural transformation to maintain their moral authority while more adaptively internalizing the values of multiculturalism.

Previous research has discussed religious moderation and multiculturalism in pesantren, but has not holistically examined the aspects of cultural transformation. Most research focuses on curriculum, teaching materials, or moderation programs without considering changes in the values and social structures of pesantren. Research by Marzuki et al. (2020), Haris (2023), and Cahyono (2017) confirms that pesantren are spaces for the reproduction of tolerance values, but the studies still focus on pedagogical practices rather than institutional culture. The position of this research is to fill that gap by examining cultural transformation as the internal basis for multicultural values.

Studies linking pesantren culture and digital technology are also still limited. Many studies only discuss the use of digital media in learning, not its impact on the organizational culture of Islamic boarding schools. Research by Setyadinawan & Faridi (2024) and Bahrudin et al. (2024) shows the use of technology in Islamic boarding schools but neglects cultural implications such as social hierarchy, religious authority, and the relationship between students and religious leaders. These limitations underscore the need for new research examining how digitalization either promotes or hinders the internalization of multicultural values within pesantren culture.

There is an urgent need to identify the forms of cultural transformation occurring in pesantren during the digital era. Without clear mapping, pesantren risk experiencing value conflicts between tradition and modernity. The phenomenon of changes in santri lifestyle, digital device-based learning, and shifts in pesantren communication patterns indicates cultural dynamics that have not been systematically documented. This research is important for capturing this process of change as a basis for strengthening multicultural Islamic education.

This research focuses on the internalization of multiculturalism values in the process of pesantren cultural transformation. Multicultural values are an important foundation for maintaining harmony amidst the nation's diversity. (Hidayat, 2022) emphasizes that multicultural education is successful if the value of tolerance is embedded in the structure and culture of the institution, not just in the formal curriculum. Therefore, this research aims to investigate how pesantren adapt to multiculturalism values in cultural changes due to digital disruption.

The main objective of this research is to analyze the forms of cultural transformation in pesantren and strategies for internalizing multiculturalism values in the digital era. Comprehensive research is needed to develop a model for strengthening multicultural values for Islamic educational institutions. This need aligns with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy direction to strengthen religious moderation, which emphasizes digital literacy and tolerance as key competencies for the santri generation. Thus, this research is expected to generate new insights into the cultural shifts within pesantren and offer a conceptual framework for strengthening multicultural Islamic education in the digital disruption era.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative approach with an interpretative-critical paradigm, as the study's focus is directed toward understanding the meaning, dynamics, and processes of pesantren cultural transformation in response to digital disruption and the internalization of multiculturalism values (Hasan et al., 2025). This approach allows researchers to deeply understand the social reality of pesantren, including value relationships, cultural practices, and changes in interaction patterns that cannot be measured quantitatively.

The method used is a case study. The case study method was chosen because the research aims to comprehensively examine the phenomenon of pesantren cultural transformation in a real, specific, and contextual setting. A case study allows for an in-depth analysis of cultural changes at the level of artifacts, values, and basic assumptions of pesantren in facing digital challenges and social diversity.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data (Haifa et al., 2025). Primary data were obtained from key informants, including kiai or pesantren administrators, pesantren managers, ustaz/ustazah, santri, and pesantren digital media managers. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained

from pesantren institutional documents such as pesantren regulations, diniyah curriculum, santri activity guidelines, pesantren digital archives, official pesantren social media content, and government policy documents relevant to religious moderation and pesantren education.

Data collection techniques were carried out thru in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Achjar et al., 2023). In-depth interviews were used to explore the perspectives, experiences, and strategies of pesantren actors in responding to digital disruption and internalizing multiculturalism values. Participant observation was conducted to observe pesantren cultural practices, social interaction patterns among students, religious activities, and the use of digital media in daily pesantren life. Document analysis was used to examine the representation of multiculturalism values in pesantren regulations, curriculum, traditions, and digital content produced and disseminated by pesantren.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes the simultaneous and continuous processes of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Fajri, 2023). The data obtained were reduced and categorized based on key themes such as the forms of pesantren cultural transformation, strategies for internalizing multiculturalism values, the role of digitalization, and supporting and inhibiting factors. Next, the data is presented in the form of matrices, thematic tables, and analytical narratives to facilitate the extraction of meaning. The research findings were verified thru source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking to ensure the validity and credibility of the results.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The research findings indicate that pesantren are undergoing significant cultural transformation in response to digital disruption and the increasing complexity of social diversity. This transformation is evident not only in the use of digital technology in teaching and preaching activities, but also in changes in value orientation, interaction patterns, and mechanisms for internalizing multicultural values. Pesantren, initially known for their traditional and hierarchical culture, are beginning to develop a more dialogical, inclusive, and adaptive culture that embraces the diverse social, cultural, and religious backgrounds of their students.

Field findings show that the internalization of multiculturalism values in pesantren occurs thru the integration of Islamic values of moderation into religious curriculum and non-formal activities. The values of tolerance (tasamuh), justice ('adl), human brotherhood (ukhuwah insaniyyah), and respect for differences are practiced thru contextual classical book learning, cross-view discussions, and the habituation of mutual respect in the daily lives of students. This process confirms that pesantren are not abandoning their scholarly traditions, but rather reinterpreting values to make them relevant to contemporary multicultural realities.

Digital disruption serves as a major catalyst for cultural change in pesantren. The utilization of social media, digital learning platforms, and online religious content fosters a wider space for interaction between pesantren and global society (Juhri, 2025). The research results show that digitalization accelerates the process of exchanging ideas, broadens students' horizons regarding diversity, and strengthens the narrative of moderate Islam. However, digital openness also presents serious challenges in the form of the influx of intolerant discourse, digital radicalism, and ideological bias, which could potentially influence the thinking patterns of santri (Islamic students).

In this context, the role of kiai and ustadz has transformed from an authoritative figure to a cultural agent and mediator of values. They not only serve as a source of religious knowledge but also as critical interpreters of circulating digital information (Zuhri, 2021). The research findings indicate that the kiai actively guide the santri to develop digital literacy, critical thinking skills, and media ethics as an integral part of internalizing multiculturalism values. This strengthens the position of pesantren as educational institutions that not only preserve tradition but also lead social change.

The research findings also revealed variations in the success rates of cultural transformation among pesantren. Pesantren with a clear institutional vision, digital infrastructure support, and an organizational culture open to innovation tend to be more successful in internalizing the values of multiculturalism. Conversely, pesantren that still view digitalization as a threat to traditional authority exhibit cultural resistance, which impacts the slow transformation process. This finding indicates that the cultural transformation of pesantren is contextual and heavily influenced by internal leadership and policies.

The discussion of the research findings supports the view of organizational culture transformation theory, which states that changes in values and practices require adaptation at the structural, actor, and cultural symbol levels (Sutanto, 2025). In the context of pesantren, cultural transformation does not mean secularization or the elimination of Islamic identity, but rather a process of creative negotiation between pesantren traditions and global demands. This finding aligns with multicultural education theory, which emphasizes the importance of contextual learning, inter-identity dialog, and recognizing plurality as the foundation for inclusive character development.

Overall, the findings of this research and discussion confirm that pesantren possess strong cultural and theological capacity to internalize the values of multiculturalism in the digital disruption era. The transformation of pesantren culture is taking place thru the strengthening of moderate Islamic values, digital pedagogical adaptation, and the visionary leadership of the kiai. However, the sustainability of this transformation requires a systematic strategy in strengthening digital literacy, developing contextual curricula, and managing pesantren culture that is responsive to the dynamics of global diversity.

The main findings of this study confirm that the cultural transformation of pesantren in the digital disruption era is an adaptive process that is cultural,

pedagogical, and ideological in nature. Pesantren are not merely adopting digital technology as a learning tool, but are reinterpreting Islamic values to respond to the increasingly complex multicultural reality. This finding aligns with Edgar H. Schein's theory of organizational culture transformation, which states that sustainable organizational change must touch upon the levels of artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions (Lase et al., 2025). In the context of pesantren, digitalization functions as a new artifact, while the value of multiculturalism is internalized as updated cultural norms and assumptions.

The internalization of multiculturalism values in pesantren takes place thru the integration of moderate Islamic values such as tolerance, justice, and human brotherhood into the curriculum and daily practices of the students. This finding supports the theory of multicultural education developed by James A. Banks, which emphasizes that multicultural education should be integrated into the curriculum structure, learning processes, and institutional culture, rather than being merely supplementary material (Budiono, 2024). In this study, pesantren demonstrate contextual and religiously-based multicultural educational practices, enabling the development of inclusive attitudes without losing Islamic identity.

Digital disruption expands the interaction space of pesantren with global reality, while also introducing the risk of intolerant and radical narratives entering. This strengthens Manuel Castells' argument about network society, where educational institutions are no longer in a closed space but are part of a global information network (Nugroho et al., 2020). In this context, pesantren serve as a cultural filter that selects, interprets, and directs the flow of digital information to align with the values of moderation and multiculturalism.

The change in the roles of kiai and ustaz from authoritative figures to value mediators and digital literacy facilitators is an important finding in this research. These findings align with Paulo Freire's views on dialogical education, which emphasize the importance of horizontal relationships between educators and learners in building critical consciousness (Rizal, 2025). In pesantren practice, context-based religious dialog in the digital realm becomes an effective means of instilling critical, tolerant, and reflective attitudes toward differences.

The success of pesantren cultural transformation is highly influenced by the visionary leadership of the kiai, who are open to change. These findings support transformational leadership theory (Bass & Avolio), which emphasizes the role of leaders in building vision, inspiring value change, and creating an adaptive organizational culture. In the context of pesantren, the Kiai functions as a cultural agent of change, bridging the traditions of pesantren with the demands of the digital and multicultural era.

Overall, the findings of this research indicate that pesantren possess strong theological, cultural, and pedagogical capital to internalize multiculturalism values in the digital disruption era. This finding confirms the experts' view that value-based education, when combined with digital literacy and adaptive leadership, can be a strategic instrument in building a tolerant and inclusive society. Thus, this research not only strengthens existing theory but also

expands its context of application in pesantren-based Islamic education in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the cultural transformation of pesantren in internalizing multiculturalism values in the digital disruption era is an adaptive process that touches upon the dimensions of values, pedagogy, and leadership. Pesantren have proven capable of maintaining their Islamic identity while responding to global challenges thru the integration of moderate Islamic values, the use of digital technology, and the strengthening of a dialogical and inclusive culture. This transformation not only alters learning patterns and the relationship between kiai and santri, but also expands the role of Islamic boarding schools as agents of religious moderation in the digital space. However, the success of this transformation remains dependent on the readiness of human resources, digital infrastructure, and consistent institutional policies in managing cultural change.

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