



PESANTREN AS COUNTER HEGEMONIC INSTITUTIONS CHALLENGING SDGs TOWARD INDONESIA EMAS 2045

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the repositioning of pesantren in supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly quality education as a strategic pathway toward Indonesia Emas 2045. As value-based Islamic educational institutions, pesantren have strong potential in character building, competency development, and community empowerment. However, their role in sustainable development remains insufficiently integrated into policy and educational practice. This research employs a qualitative conceptual approach based on library research. Data were collected from academic literature, international reports, and national policy documents, and analyzed using thematic and integrative methods. The findings reveal that the repositioning of pesantren can be achieved through the integration of value-based education, 21st-century competencies, and community empowerment. This integration results in the Pesantren-Based Sustainable Education Model, positioning pesantren as strategic actors in education and sustainable development. This study contributes both theoretically and practically to optimizing the role of pesantren toward Indonesia Emas 2045, while also providing insights for policymakers and educators.

Keywords: Pesantren; SDGs; Quality Education; Indonesia Emas 2045

INTRODUCTION

As the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) have played a significant historical role in shaping the character, morality, and intellectual capacity of the community. Since their inception, *pesantren* have served not only as centers for the transmission of Islamic knowledge but also as agents of social transformation deeply rooted in religious values and local wisdom (Abidin, 2020). In practice, *pesantren* have demonstrated adaptive capabilities in responding to social change, both in the context of colonialism, modernization, and globalization (Sabiq, 2022). However, in the contemporary era marked by the acceleration of digital transformation and the complexity of global challenges, *pesantren* are required to strategically reposition their roles to remain relevant and contribute to national and global development.

In a global context, *the Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) launched by the United Nations serve as the primary framework for sustainable development. This agenda encompasses 17 integrated goals, with quality education as one of the main pillars in creating inclusive and sustainable human development (Ji et al., 2024). Education from an SDG perspective focuses not only on access but also on quality, relevance, and the ability to empower individuals to contribute productively to society. Therefore, education systems in various countries, including Indonesia, are required to integrate sustainable development principles into their curricula, learning methods, and educational policies.

In line with this, the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045 places human resource development as the primary foundation for achieving national progress. Within this framework, quality education is a strategic instrument for producing a superior, adaptive, and globally competitive generation (Sudarma, 2022). This concept aligns with Human Capital Theory, which emphasizes that investment in education is a key factor in increasing a country's productivity and economic growth (Becker & Nihaves, 2007). However, human resource development requires not only cognitive competence but also strong character, ethics, and social awareness.

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), in this regard, hold a unique and strategic position. As community-based educational institutions, they function not only as learning institutions but also as centers for the formation of values, culture, and social practices (Achmadin et al., 2024). The *pesantren* educational model, which emphasizes discipline, independence, and intensive social interaction between students and their surroundings, aligns with the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach, which emphasizes the integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects in the learning process (Achmad et al., 2024).

Furthermore, pesantren also have significant potential in supporting community empowerment through various community-based social and economic programs.

However, in practice, the role of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in the discourse of sustainable development has not received adequate attention. Most studies on the SDGs tend to focus on formal education and modern institutions, while the contribution of Islamic boarding schools as traditional educational institutions is often overlooked. This indicates a gap between the strategic potential of Islamic boarding schools and their recognition in development policies. Furthermore, some Islamic boarding schools still face challenges in terms of curriculum strengthening, technology integration, and human resource capacity development, which can limit their optimal role in the global context (Bratton, 2018; Emon et al., 2016).

Furthermore, changes in the educational landscape in the digital era demand a transformation in the pedagogical approach and management of Islamic boarding school education (Al Ayyubi, Noerzanah, et al., 2025; Al Ayyubi, Prayetno, et al., 2025; Prayetno et al., 2024). Islamic boarding schools can no longer simply maintain traditional learning models; they need to develop more innovative, adaptive, and contextual approaches. In this regard, the concept of transformative learning is relevant, as it emphasizes a learning process that can change individuals' ways of thinking, attitudes, and behavior through critical reflection and meaningful learning experiences (Albani, 2021). Integrating this approach into the Islamic boarding school education system can strengthen its role in shaping a generation that is not only knowledgeable but also possesses critical awareness and social responsibility.

Furthermore, the repositioning of Islamic boarding schools within the SDGs framework should be understood as a strategic effort to integrate local values with the global agenda. Islamic boarding schools have the advantage of being close to the community and building strong social relationships, enabling them to serve as a bridge between development policies and community needs. The community based education approach characteristic of Islamic boarding schools can serve as an alternative model for developing sustainable and inclusive education, particularly in areas not optimally reached by the formal education system. (Mukromin, 2024).

However, studies specifically examining the repositioning of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) within the context of the SDGs, particularly in relation to quality education and the Golden Indonesia 2045 vision, are still relatively limited. Most research remains descriptive in nature and fails to offer a comprehensive conceptual framework for integrating Islamic boarding schools into the sustainable development agenda. Therefore, research is needed that can fill this gap with a more systematic and integrative approach.

Based on the above description, this study aims to examine the repositioning of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals through quality education as a strategic path towards Golden Indonesia 2045. This study will analyze the potential, challenges, and opportunities of Islamic boarding schools in supporting the achievement of SDGs, and formulate a conceptual framework that can integrate Islamic boarding school education with the principles of sustainable development (Nurhikmah, 2024). Thus, this study is expected to provide theoretical contributions in the development of Islamic education and sustainable development studies, as well as practical implications for Islamic boarding school managers and policy makers in optimizing the role of Islamic boarding schools as strategic actors in Indonesia's future development.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a conceptual, library-based approach. This approach was chosen because it focused on developing a conceptual framework for repositioning Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through quality education, rather than on quantitatively measuring variables (Sari et al., 2025). Qualitative research allows researchers to explore meaning, understand phenomena in depth, and interpret various concepts developed in the literature comprehensively (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Methodologically, this research integrates philosophical, pedagogical, and policy approaches. The philosophical approach is used to understand the nature of Islamic boarding school education as a values-based education system oriented toward character building and social transformation. The pedagogical approach is used to analyze contemporary educational theories, particularly those related to quality education, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and transformative learning. Meanwhile, the policy approach is used to examine official documents related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the direction of national education development towards Indonesia Emas 2045 (Lewis et al., 2021). The integration of these three approaches aims to produce a comprehensive and contextual analysis.

The data sources in this study are secondary data obtained from various literature relevant to the research topic. These sources include academic books, reputable national and international journal articles, reports from international institutions such as UNESCO, and national policy documents related to education and sustainable development. Furthermore, literature on Islamic boarding schools from historical, sociological, and educational perspectives was used to enrich the

analysis. Sources were selected selectively, considering their credibility, relevance, and contribution to the research focus (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018; Fiantika et al., 2022; Pahleviannur et al., 2022; Rukin, 2019).

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation studies, namely by identifying, classifying, and organizing various relevant literature sources. This process began with a search for keywords such as "pesantren," "Sustainable Development Goals," "quality education," and "sustainable development" through various scientific databases, such as Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, and academic repositories. The obtained literature was then selected based on its suitability to the research topic and then categorized into specific themes to facilitate the analysis process (Rashid, 2024).

The data analysis in this study employed thematic and integrative analysis techniques. Thematic analysis was conducted by identifying key patterns, concepts, and issues emerging in the literature, particularly those related to the role of Islamic boarding schools, the concept of quality education, and the implementation of the SDGs. This technique enabled researchers to identify key themes that served as the basis for constructing research arguments (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Next, an integrative analysis was conducted by synthesizing the various findings into a coherent conceptual framework. This process involved comparing the perspective of Islamic boarding school education with modern educational theory and sustainable development policies, resulting in a comprehensive analytical model relevant to the research context.

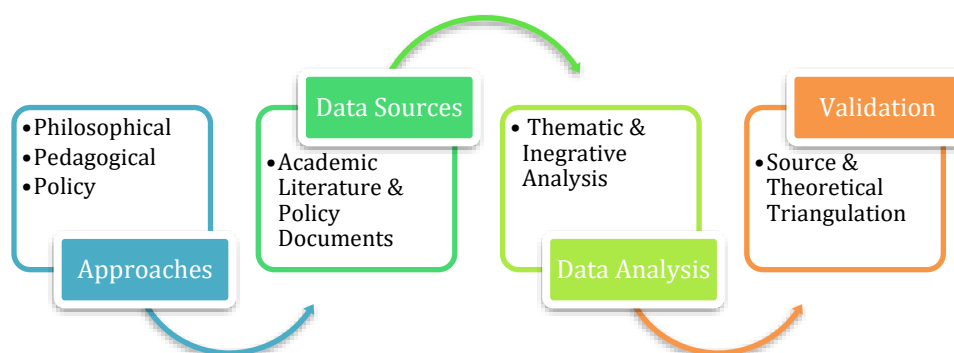


Figure 1. Research Methods Framework

To maintain the validity and legitimacy of the data, this study employed source triangulation and theoretical triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing various literature from different sources, both classical and contemporary, to ensure the consistency and reliability of the information (Huberman, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Meanwhile, theoretical

triangulation was conducted using various scientific perspectives, such as educational theory, sustainable development, and Islamic boarding school studies, thus producing a more comprehensive understanding. In addition, the researcher also conducted a critical interpretation of each source to avoid bias and ensure that the resulting analysis is reflective and argumentative.

However, this study has limitations due to the lack of empirical data from the field. The conceptual approach employed places greater emphasis on developing a theoretical framework than on empirical testing. Therefore, further research is recommended to conduct field studies, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, to test and further develop the model generated in this study. Thus, the research results can provide a more applicable contribution to the development of Islamic boarding school education based on sustainable development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural Marginalization of Islamic Boarding Schools in the Architecture of Sustainable Development Goals

The findings of this study indicate that although Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) have a strong historical and sociological position in the Indonesian education ecosystem, their existence remains marginalized within the global development architecture, as represented by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Ulfah, 2022). This marginalization is not solely due to the internal limitations of Islamic boarding schools, but rather a consequence of the dominant development paradigm oriented toward modern formal educational institutions as the primary actors in human capital production.

Within the SDGs framework, particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education), education is positioned as a strategic instrument for enhancing individual capacity and driving sustainable economic growth (Lewis et al., 2021). However, this approach tends to prioritize quantitative indicators such as access, participation, and academic achievement, neglecting the qualitative dimensions that are key strengths of Islamic boarding schools, such as character formation, value internalization, and life-based learning. This creates a structural bias that indirectly excludes the contributions of Islamic boarding schools from the global development narrative (Bahri et al., 2024).

Furthermore, from the perspective of educational development theory, this condition reflects the dominance of the instrumental rationality paradigm, where education is viewed solely as a tool to achieve economic goals, rather than as a process of developing a holistic human being (Hutagalung et al., 2024). In this context, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) that emphasize the formation of

ethics, spirituality, and social responsibility are often not considered major contributors to development, because their outputs are not always quantitatively measurable. In fact, these dimensions are crucial foundations for sustainable development oriented toward social and moral sustainability.

In addition to structural factors, the marginalization of Islamic boarding schools is also reinforced by the lack of conceptual articulation linking them to the SDGs framework. Most studies on Islamic boarding schools still focus on historical, cultural, or religious aspects, without explicitly linking them to the global development agenda (Asdlori, 2023). Conversely, literature on the SDGs tends to be universalistic and insensitive to local contexts, thus failing to capture the contributions of community-based educational institutions like Islamic boarding schools (Bratton, 2018; Emon et al., 2016). This epistemic gap places Islamic boarding schools in the position of "invisible actors" in the discourse of sustainable development.

On the other hand, the internal challenges facing Islamic boarding schools cannot be ignored. Global transformation marked by digitalization, technological disruption, and changing job market needs demand adaptation within the Islamic boarding school education system (Syafrizal et al., 2024). However, not all Islamic boarding schools have the capacity to respond quickly and effectively to these changes. Limitations in integrative curriculum development, utilization of learning technology, and strengthening human resource competencies are obstacles to increasing the competitiveness of Islamic boarding school graduates (Anarki et al., 2025).

This situation indicates that the challenges faced by Islamic boarding schools are both external and internal. Externally, Islamic boarding schools have not been optimally integrated into SDG-based development policies (Abuzar & Khondoker, 2024). Internally, Islamic boarding schools still require capacity building to adapt to global dynamics. Therefore, an approach that is not only adaptive but also transformational is needed, namely by reconstructing the position of Islamic boarding schools as strategic actors in sustainable development.

Thus, the marginalization of Islamic boarding schools in the SDGs discourse is not a reflection of their irrelevance, but rather a result of the mismatch between the global development paradigm and the values-based education characteristics promoted by Islamic boarding schools. This opens up space for a repositioning effort that positions Islamic boarding schools not merely as complementary institutions but as key actors in building sustainable and meaningful education.

Repositioning Islamic Boarding Schools as Centers for Value- and Community-Based Continuing Education

In response to this marginalization, this study offers a conceptual framework for repositioning Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) as strategic actors in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals through quality education. This repositioning is not merely adaptive to global demands but also transformational, making Islamic boarding schools centers for integrating values-based education, competency development, and community empowerment (Amri et al., 2017; Sabiq, 2022).

This repositioning rests on three main pillars. First, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) serve as centers of value-based education. In the context of sustainable development, the value dimension is a crucial element determining the direction and quality of development (Ali & Halim, 2023). Islamic boarding schools have a comparative advantage in shaping the character, ethics, and social awareness of students through an educational process that takes place not only in the classroom but also in everyday life. An educational model based on role models (*uswah*), habituation, and internalization of values makes Islamic boarding schools holistic and contextual learning spaces (Tamphu et al., 2024). This aligns with the notion that quality education is measured not only by academic achievement but also by the ability to shape socially responsible individuals.

Second, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) as centers for developing 21st-century competencies. To contribute to the SDGs framework, Islamic boarding schools need to integrate traditional values with modern competencies, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy. This integration does not mean eliminating the *pesantren*'s identity, but rather expanding the scope of learning to make it more relevant to the needs of the times. (Adawiyah et al., 2024). In this case, the transformative learning approach is important, because it allows students to not only receive knowledge, but also reflect on and transform their way of thinking in facing social reality (Purnomo et al., 2022).

Third, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) serve as centers for community empowerment. One of the main advantages of Islamic boarding schools is their close relationship with the community. They function not only as educational institutions but also as centers of social, economic, and cultural activities (Budiharso et al., 2023). Within the SDGs framework, this role is highly relevant, particularly in supporting goals related to poverty alleviation, improving welfare, and sustainable community development. Through empowerment programs, such as entrepreneurship training, local economic development, and community education, Islamic boarding schools can become agents of change that have a direct impact on

community life (Ahmad, 1998). Based on these three pillars, this study proposes a conceptual model called the "Pesantren-Based Sustainable Education Model." This model positions Islamic boarding schools as strategic hubs connecting values, education, and sustainable development. In this model, education serves not only to enhance individual capacity but also to build collective awareness and social responsibility in facing global challenges.

Implementationally, this model requires inclusive and collaborative policy support. The government needs to recognize and integrate Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) as a crucial part of the strategy to achieve the SDGs, particularly in the education sector (Lickona, 2013). Furthermore, Islamic boarding schools need to innovate in educational management, strengthen the curriculum, and increase human resource capacity. Collaboration between Islamic boarding schools, the government, and the private sector is also crucial for creating a sustainable education ecosystem. (Listiana et al., 2025). Thus, repositioning Islamic boarding schools is not merely about adapting to global demands, but about transforming their role into strategic actors in sustainable development. Through the integration of values, competencies, and community empowerment, Islamic boarding schools have significant potential to become key pillars in realizing quality education and achieving the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) possess significant strategic potential in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the area of quality education as a foundation for realizing Golden Indonesia 2045. However, this potential has not been fully optimized due to structural marginalization within the global development framework, the dominance of modern formal education paradigms, and internal limitations in adapting to contemporary educational dynamics. This situation reflects a gap between the normative role of pesantren as value based educational institutions and their recognition in sustainable development policies.

In response, this study proposes a repositioning approach through the integration of three key dimensions: values-based education, strengthening 21st-century competencies, and community-based empowerment. This integration results in a conceptual framework called the *Pesantren* Based Sustainable Education Model, which positions pesantren as centers of educational transformation focused not only on individual capacity building but also on fostering collective awareness and social responsibility. Theoretically, this research contributes to expanding the discourse on Islamic education and sustainable development by linking local

pesantren values with the global SDGs agenda, while emphasizing the importance of values, ethics, and community in achieving quality education.

Practically, the findings offer important implications for various stakeholders. The government is encouraged to develop more inclusive policies, pesantren managers are urged to innovate in curriculum and teaching methods, and communities along with the private sector are encouraged to strengthen collaboration. Nonetheless, this study is limited by its conceptual nature and lack of empirical testing, indicating the need for further field-based research to evaluate the model's effectiveness. Therefore, repositioning pesantren within the SDGs framework is both a strategic and historical necessity, as they have the potential to become transformative agents in advancing quality education and guiding Indonesia toward Golden Indonesia 2045.

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