

Islamic Education Based on Sufi-Transformative Learning: A Philosophical Framework for Pedagogical Change in Pesantren

Taufikin^{1*} , Fajar Syarif², Mowafg Abraham Masuwd³ 

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kudus, Indonesia

Jl. Conge Ngembalrejo, Ngembal Rejo, Ngembalrejo, Kec. Bae, Kab. Kudus, Jawa Tengah 59322, Indonesia.

² Institut Ilmu Al-Qur'an (IIQ) Jakarta, Indonesia

Jl. Ir H. Juanda No.70, Pisangan, Kec. Ciputat Tim., Kota Tangerang Selatan, Banten 15419, Indonesia

³ University of Zawia, Libya

Approximately 6 km South of Zawiya City Center, Az-Zāwiyah, Libya

Article History:

Received: April 13, 2025; Revised: May 10, 2025; Accepted: May 28, 2025; Published: June 24, 2025

Abstract: Islamic Education Based on Sufi-Transformative Learning: A Philosophical Framework for Pedagogical Change in Pesantren (Islamic Boarding Schools)

Objective: This study proposes an integrative framework for Sufi-transformative learning in Islamic pesantren, combining transformative learning theory with the philosophy of neo-Sufi education to bridge the conceptual gap. **Method:** This study uses a qualitative multi-case study design, the research was conducted in two Islamic boarding schools in Central Java, recognized for their strong Sufi traditions. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation and document analysis. **Results:** The findings reveal significant transformations in pedagogical practices, including the use of digital tools to support moral learning, increased emphasis on spiritual reflection, and the repositioning of teachers as moral exemplars. **Conclusion:** Transformative Islamic education in pesantren emphasizes metaphysical awareness and ethical formation, and holds the potential to become an innovative model for holistic Islamic education that bridges tradition and modernity. **Contribution:** This study offers a new philosophical lens and opens avenues for curriculum development, teacher training, and future research in values-based Islamic pedagogy.

Keyword: Islamic education; Sufistic-transformative learning, Philosophical, Pedagogy, Pesantren

Abstrak: Pendidikan Islam berbasis Pembelajaran Sufistik-Transformatif: Kerangka Kerja Filosofis untuk Perubahan Pedagogis di Pesantren

Tujuan: Syudi ini mengusulkan kerangka kerja integratif untuk pembelajaran transformatif Sufi di pesantren Islam, dengan menggabungkan teori pembelajaran transformatif dengan filsafat pendidikan neo-Sufi untuk menjembatani kesenjangan konseptual. **Metode:** Desain penelitian menggunakan studi multi-kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini dilakukan di dua pesantren di Jawa Tengah, yang terkenal dengan tradisi sufistiknya yang kuat. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipan, dan analisis dokumen. **Hasil:** Temuan menunjukkan adanya transformasi signifikan dalam praktik pedagogis, yang meliputi penggunaan alat digital untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran moral, penekanan yang semakin kuat pada refleksi spiritual, dan reposisi guru sebagai teladan moral. **Kesimpulan:** Pendidikan Islam transformatif di pesantren menekankan kesadaran metafisik dan pembentukan etika, dan memiliki potensi untuk menjadi model inovatif dalam pendidikan Islam holistik yang menjembatani tradisi dan modernitas. **Kontribusi:** Studi ini memberikan kontribusi lensa filosofis baru dan membuka jalur baru untuk pengembangan kurikulum, pelatihan guru, dan penelitian di masa depan dalam pedagogi Islam berbasis nilai.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Islam; Pembelajaran Sufistik-Transformatif: Filosofis; Pedagogis; Pesantren.

* Corresponding Author: Taufikin,  taufikin@iainkudus.ac.id

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kudus, Indonesia

Address: Jl. Conge Ngembalrejo, Ngembal Rejo, Ngembalrejo, Kec. Bae, Kab. Kudus, Jawa Tengah 59322, Indonesia

To cite this article:

Taufikin, T., Syarif, F., & Masuwd, M. A. (2025). Islamic Education Based on Sufi-Transformative Learning: A Philosophical Framework for Pedagogical Change in Pesantren. *At-Ta'lim: Media Informasi Pendidikan Islam*, 24(1), 22-33. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29300/attalim.v24i1.8427>

A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has deep roots and has played a significant historical role in shaping the character of Muslims, especially through pesantren (Islamic Boarding Schools) (Jubba et al., 2021; Taufikin, 2021; Taufikin, 2022). Pesantren is not just an institution for teaching religious knowledge, but also a space for moral, spiritual, and social development that has been sustained across generations. In Indonesia education's system, pesantren play an important role in developing national character by fostering *adab* (ethical values), sincerity, and strong spiritual awareness.

However, in the last two decades, global changes triggered by digitalization, greater social mobility, and the loss of meaning in modern education, have challenged pesantren's ability to adapt in terms of knowledge and teaching methods. Therefore, both theoretical and practical efforts are needed to understand and reformulate the framework of pesantren education so that it remains relevant to today's needs while preserving its identity (Athoillah et al., 2024; Iqbal & Akram, 2020; Sauri et al., 2018).

Several contemporary studies show that pesantren have begun to undergo significant transformations in curriculum design, teaching approaches, and the use of technology. Research by Zarkasyi (2020) and Yusuf et al. (2024) shows that many pesantren have started integrating modern science and digital technology into their learning systems. This transformation is both technical and epistemological, as it encourages changes in how santri (students of pesantren) understand the relationship between religious knowledge, secular knowledge, and their spiritual existence. In general, the responses of pesantren to the contemporary challenges vary. Some pesantren respond by modernizing their curriculum and teaching methods, while others choose a more conservative approach by maintaining their traditional knowledge systems. However, the main problem is the absence of a philosophical framework that can epistemologically bridge these two poles. In many cases, educational transformation tends to be instrumental and pragmatic, lacking a strong foundation in core values. Therefore, a conceptual approach is needed to align cognitive transformation with spiritual development and to integrate critical thinking with metaphysical awareness in pesantren learning practices pesantren (Apdoludin & Martinisyamin, 2022; London, 2023; Mutammam et al., 2024; Thoha & Hannan, 2022).

This study offers a synthesis between Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow) and Neo-Sufistic Educational Philosophy (Al-Attas) to address this challenge. Transformative Learning, as developed by Mezirow (1991, 1996), emphasizes the importance of critical reflection in transforming one's perspective through disorienting dilemma experiences. While Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas' concept of *ta'dīb* offers an educational approach that integrates the intellect (*'aql*), the soul (*ruh*), and *adab* into a unified process of forming the complete human being (Daiber, 2020; Syed, 1980). The combination of these two perspectives creates a new paradigm in understanding learning in pesantren where transformation includes intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects.

The number of literature reviewing these two approaches separately has grown quite extensive. Transformative Learning has been applied in various contexts, including adult education, critical pedagogy, and intercultural studies (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2025; Altinyelken, 2021; Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2025; Lahmar, 2020). On the other hand, Al-Attas' thinking has become an important foundation for the Islamization of science and the development of value-based Islamic education (Wan, et al., 2022). However, only a few studies have attempted to integrate these perspectives within traditional educational settings such as pesantren. Research conducted by Abubakari & Kalinaki (2024) and Syihabuddin et al. (2024) has only begun to explore the relationship between spirituality and critical reflection in education. This condition indicates a significant theoretical gap in the development of a learning model that holistically combine cognitive and Sufistic transformation.

This study seeks to address the existing gap by presenting a new conceptual model: Sufistic-Transformative Learning. This model bridges two major theoretical frameworks from different epistemological backgrounds and offers an analytical lens to understand the dynamics of pedagogical change within pesantren. Using a qualitative case study approach in several pesantren in Java, this article explores how Sufistic values such as *adab*, divine consciousness, and the moral exemplarity of *kiai* interact with the practice of critical reflection, the use of digital technology, and the integration of general sciences.

Accordingly, this study addresses three main research questions: (1) What forms of pedagogical transformation are currently occurring in pesantren? (2) How are the principles of Sufistic education and transformative learning internalized in the learning process? and (3) What are the implications of this philosophical synthesis for the future of Islamic education? The novelty of this study lies in its theoretical effort to reconcile two approaches that have been considered separate, as well as to make a practical contribution in designing value-based education that is contextual, spiritual, and transformative in the Indonesian pesantren context. Through this framework, pesantren are positioned not only as tradition preservers but also as laboratories of future-oriented education grounded in the integration of intellect, ethics, and transcendence.

B. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, which is considered the most suitable method for exploring the phenomenon of pedagogical transformation within pesantren context in a deep and contextualized manner. This approach allows researchers to understand the dynamics of education in pesantren through philosophical and practical lenses and to reconstruct educational realities from the perspectives of those directly involved in the learning process (Creswell, 2014; Khan, 2022; Tisdell, 2023).

This research was conducted in two Islamic boarding schools located in Central Java, namely Pondok Pesantren Anak Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Raudhatul Falah (PPATQ RF) in Pati, and Pondok Pesantren Al Islah in Demak. These locations were selected purposively, considering their strong Sufism nuances embedded in educational practices, as well as their openness to curriculum and technological innovations that align with Islamic spiritual values.

The research involved 23 participants selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The details are as follows: three *kiai* who serve as leaders of the pesantren and guardians of spiritual values, ten *ustadz* who act as curriculum implementers and learning facilitators, five parents as external stakeholders, and five students aged 15-21 years as a representation of primary educational beneficiaries. This composition aims to provide a triangulated perspective on the phenomenon under study.

Data were collected using three main techniques: (1) semi-structured interviews, (2) participatory observation, and (3) documentation study. In-depth interviews were conducted with all informants to explore their narratives related to pedagogical transformation, the role of technology, spiritual practices, and perspectives on value-based education. The interview process was recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using qualitative data processing software (Galily, 2024; Nightingale, 2019).

During the fieldwork, observations were focused on interactions among *kiai*, *ustadz*, and *santri*, the use of learning media, and spiritual rituals, which are integral to daily life in the pesantren. Documentation studies were conducted on the written curriculum, the institution's vision and mission statements, and recordings of recitations or other non-formal educational activities.

Data were analyzed using a thematic approach, combining deductive and inductive techniques. Deductive codes were developed based on the theoretical frameworks of Mezirow (transformative learning concepts such as disorienting dilemmas, critical reflection, and perspective transformation) and Al-Attas (including concepts of *ta'dīb*, *adab*, and metaphysical

awareness). Inductive codes on the other hand are derived from a close reading of the field data, allowing for the identification of new and unanticipated findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Thompson, 2022).

The coded data were then organized into major themes, and cross-case analysis was conducted to identify relevant patterns, differences, and theoretical implications. This approach allowed the integration of empirical findings with the philosophical dimensions of the Sufistic-Transformative Learning model.

Data validity was ensured through methodological triangulation, source triangulation, and member checking with several key informants. Detailed contextual descriptions were provided to support transferability, while the use of an audit trail and systematic documentation strengthened dependability. The researcher also engaged in periodic self-reflection to maintain objectivity and minimize interpretive bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Quintão et al., 2020).

This study obtained ethical clearance from the relevant institutions, and all participants gave informed consent after being informed of the study's purpose, benefits, and their rights as participants. The identities of all participants were pseudonymized to maintain the confidentiality and the integrity of their narratives. Through this methodology, this study aims to provide an in-depth and authentic understanding of how the transformation of Sufistic value-based learning and critical reflection takes place within the context of contemporary pesantren education.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This chapter presents the findings from fieldwork conducted through in-depth interviews with 16 informants from two pesantren: Pondok Pesantren Anak Tahfidz Al-Qur'an Raudhatul Falah (PPATQ RF) in Pati and Pondok Pesantren Al Islah in Demak. The findings are organized based on the study's three main research questions: (1) The forms of pedagogical transformation that occur in pesantren, (2) The internalization of the principles of Sufistic education and transformative learning in the learning process, and (3) The implications of philosophical synthesis for the future of Islamic education. All data were analyzed thematically to reveal the deeper meanings behind the participants' experiences.

1. Forms of Pedagogical Transformation in Pesantren

Various curricular and methodological innovations reflect the ongoing pedagogical transformation in the two studied pesantren. Table 1 below summarizes the main themes identified from the interviews.

Table 1. Themes of Pedagogical Transformation from the Interviews

Main Theme	Interview Excerpt	Frequency	Interpretation
Digital Technology Integration	"We use YouTube and Zoom to teach tafsir and Arabic." - Ustadz 3	9	<i>Pesantren</i> utilizes digital platforms to expand access to learning while preserving spiritual values.
Contextualized Learning	"We relate <i>fiqh</i> lessons to social issues such as corruption or the environment." - Ustadz 7	7	Lessons are linked to real-life issues to foster social awareness and ethical responsibility.
The Changing Role of Teachers	"Teachers are no longer the only source of knowledge, we also learn from videos, discussions and practices." - Student 2	8	There is a paradigm shift from teacher-centered instruction to participatory and collaborative learning models.

Main Theme	Interview Excerpt	Frequency	Interpretation
Holistic and Reflective Approach	"We are often asked to write reflective journals about our spiritual lessons and experiences." - Student 5	6	Learning integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions through reflective practice.

This transformation shows a creative adaptation to the global challenges while remaining rooted in pesantren identity. These findings are consistent with the findings of Yusuf et al. (2024) and Zafi et al. (2021), who noted an increase in technology integration and interdisciplinary learning in pesantren.

2. Internalization of Sufistic Education Principles and Transformative Learning

The principles of Sufistic education and transformative learning do not operate independently but are interwoven in a mutually reinforcing process. This integration is evident in teacher-student relationships, daily spiritual practices, and reflective approaches to learning.

Table 2. Themes of Internalization of Sufistic Education and Transformative Learning

Main Theme	Interview Excerpt	Frequency	Interpretation
Moral Role Model of the Teacher (<i>Kiai</i>)	"Our <i>Kiai</i> is a living example; from him we learn manners, not just knowledge." - <i>Santri</i> 4	10	<i>Kiai</i> is positioned as <i>murabbi</i> , teacher, and moral-spiritual guide for the students.
Daily Spiritual Practice	"Every morning before studying we do <i>dhikr</i> and recite <i>hizib</i> , this strengthens our hearts." - <i>Santri</i> 1	8	Spiritual routines become the foundation of character-development and strengthen students' learning motivation.
Critical Reflection as a Habit	" <i>Kiai</i> often asked us, 'Why do you believe this?', which made us rethink." - <i>Santri</i> 3	7	Dialogical approach and existential questions shapes reflective thinking skills and deeper understanding.
<i>Adab</i> as the Ultimate Goal	"We were taught that being a knowledgeable person must be polite, not arrogant, and humble." - <i>Ustadz</i> 4	6	Education is focused on achieving <i>adab</i> as the highest aim of the learning process.

This result confirms Al-Attas' theory of ta'dib, which views *adab* as the foundation of true education. In addition, key elements of transformative learning as proposed by Mezirow, such as critical reflection and disorienting dilemmas, are evident in the dialogical interactions and question-and-answer practices between teachers and students.

3. Philosophical Implications for the Future of Islamic Education

Based on the synthesis of empirical findings and the conceptual framework of Sufistic-Transformative Learning, there are several important implications for the future direction of Islamic education.

a. Expanding the Role of Pesantren as a Center for Moral Transformation

Pesantren should not be viewed merely as institutions for memorizing texts or studying Islamic law. Rather, they serve as transformative spaces where knowledge, manners, and spirituality are integrated in the educational process. As *Kiai* 2 stated, "We want to produce human beings, not just scholars." This perspective aligns with Al-Attas's vision of Islamic education, which aims to produce *insan kamil*, a complete human being Who embodies intellectual, ethical, and spiritual excellence.

b. Strengthening the Role of Teachers as Transformational Figures

The role of the teacher in Sufistic education differs significantly from that of the instructor in modern secular education. The teacher functions not only as a transmitter of knowledge

but also as a moral and spiritual exemplar who guides through personal conduct. Therefore, any reform in Islamic education must prioritize teacher development.

c. The Need for a Reflective-Transcendental Curriculum Framework

The future curriculum of pesantren should not be organized solely around academic content, but also be guided by reflective and transcendental values. The curriculum should integrate the study of classical Islamic texts with engagement in contemporary issues, and balances rational reflection with the intuition of the heart. Such a framework lays the foundation for a liberating and enlightening learning experience that fosters holistic human development.

d. Technology as a Means, Not an End

Pesantren has successfully demonstrated that technology does not conflict with spirituality, rather it can serve as a valuable tool to support meaningful learning. As Ustadz 6 emphasized, "Technology is like a knife; it can be useful if directed by values."

These implications confirm that the transformation of Islamic education requires an innovative approach grounded in strong spiritual and moral foundations. The Sufistic-Transformative Learning model developed in this study offers a theoretical and practical alternative for designing relevant and meaningful Islamic education in the digital era.

With these results, the research not only presents an empirical picture of changes in pesantren but also outlines a philosophical-pedagogical framework that can serve as a foundation for developing Islamic education based on values, reflection, and spiritual awareness.

Discussion

This chapter presents an in-depth discussion of the research findings by referring to the theoretical framework of Sufistic-Transformative Learning and contemporary scholarly literature on Islamic education, transformative learning, and Sufistic pedagogy. The discussion focuses on three main aspects: (1) forms of pedagogical transformation, (2) internalization of Sufistic values and critical reflection, and (3) philosophical implications for the future of Islamic education. The discussion is organized systematically and elaboratively, highlighting the compatibility, differences, and novelty of the research findings in relation to existing studies.

1. Pedagogical Transformation in the Pesantren Context

The research findings show that pesantren is undergoing a significant pedagogical transformation, particularly in the integration of digital technology, the application of contextual learning methods, and the evolving changes in teacher-student relationships. These findings are in line with the studies of [Taufikin \(2021\)](#), [Zafi et al. \(2021\)](#), and [Zarkasyi \(2020\)](#), who noted that some pesantren have begun to embrace learning innovations while maintaining spiritual values.

This transformation can be explained using transformative learning framework proposed by [Jones \(2020\)](#), [Mezirow \(1991, 1996\)](#), which emphasizes the disorienting dilemma as the starting point of a change in learning perspective. In the pesantren context, the emergence of digital technology and global challenges has triggered critical reflection for both teachers and santri. However, unlike in the Western context, which emphasizes individual rationality and autonomous decision-making, transformation within the pesantren (Islamic boarding school) system occurs through a deeply rooted collective framework. In Western educational and philosophical traditions, personal growth is often framed as an individual pursuit, driven by self-reflection, personal agency, and rational deliberation. In contrast, the pesantren fosters transformation as a shared, durational process that is embedded in communal life. It is deeply rooted in the spiritual bond between teachers and students, as described by [Seyyed \(2002\)](#), [Felsenthal & Agbaria \(2025\)](#), and [Ramadan \(2011\)](#). A comparison between the findings of this study and previous studies is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of Pedagogical Transformation Findings

Learning Aspect	This Study	Previous Studies	Similarity	Distinction and Novelty
The Role of Technology	Used as a tool for manners and knowledge	Used for efficiency and affordability (Hidayat et al., 2022)	Technology integration in the classroom	Emphasis on technology as a spiritual vehicle
Reflective Method	Journal and discussion-based learning	Individual reflection in a secular context (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2025 ; Altinyelken, 2021 ; Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2025 ; Lahmar, 2020)	The importance of reflection in transformation	Spiritual reflection as a primary method
Teacher-Student Relationship	<i>Kiai</i> as a moral and spiritual guide	Teacher as discussion facilitator (Taylor, 2019)	Both emphasize transformation	The teacher's role is more spiritual than just a facilitator

2. Sufistic Value Internalization and Critical Reflection

The internalization of Sufistic values in the learning process in pesantren is carried out through exemplary conduct, daily spiritual practices and reflective habituation. This finding is consistent with the concept of ta'dib from Al-Attas ([Harvey, 2023](#); [al-Attas, 1980](#)), which positions adab as the primary goal of Islamic education. In this context, pesantren serves as both an epistemic and transformative space, where learning is not merely the transmission of information but also a process of moral and spiritual self-transformation.

Critical reflection in transformative learning, as described by Mezirow, becomes more effective when embedded within a spiritual framework. In this regard, this study enriches the previous research by showing that the reflection process in pesantren involves not only cognitive but also metaphysical dimensions. This interpretation is supported by theories from [Ahmed & Chowdhury \(2025\)](#), [Altinyelken \(2021\)](#), [Felsenthal & Agbaria \(2025\)](#), [Lahmar \(2020\)](#), and [Palmer \(2002\)](#), who link educational reflection to the wholeness of human spirituality.

Furthermore, this study shows how spiritual practices such as dhikr, hizib, and munajat indirectly strengthen the santri's capacity in dealing with disorienting dilemmas. In other words, spirituality does not hinder critical reflection but rather facilitates cognitive and emotional transformation.

D. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Research Implications

One key implication of these findings is the need for curriculum development that integrates transformative learning with Sufistic education. In this case, a holistic approach based on Sufistic-Transformative Learning has the potential to address criticism of epistemological fragmentation in Islamic education ([Wan et al., 2022](#)).

This study also prominently depicts the teacher as a transformational figure, in contrast to modern educational approaches that separate personal identity from professional function. In the pesantren context, the *kiai* is not merely a teacher but also a spiritual exemplar ([Eriksson et al., 2019](#)). This depiction contributes to the ongoing discussions on Islamic education reform, which have tended to focus more on curriculum and methodology while overlooking the personal transformation of educators.

In addition, technology, which in many literatures often regarded as neutral or even profane ([Forsman, 2024](#); [Hobbs, 2021](#)), is found to have an ethical and spiritual significance. This discovery provides an important contribution to the discourse on the Islamization of tech-

nology, as initiated by Al-Attas (1980), Asran et al. (2015), and Harvey (2023), which rejected the dichotomy between technological advancement and spiritual values.

2. Research Contribution

One key implication of these findings is the need for curriculum development that integrates transformative learning with Sufistic education. In this case, a holistic approach based on Sufistic-Transformative Learning has the potential to address criticism of epistemological fragmentation in Islamic education (Wan et al., 2022).

This study also prominently depicts the teacher as a transformational figure, in contrast to modern educational approaches that separate personal identity from professional function. In the *pesantren* context, the *kiai* is not merely a teacher but also a spiritual exemplar (Eriksson et al., 2019). This depiction contributes to the ongoing discussions on Islamic education reform, which have tended to focus more on curriculum and methodology while overlooking the personal transformation of educators.

In addition, technology, which in many literatures often regarded as neutral or even profane (Forsman, 2024; Hobbs, 2021), is found to have an ethical and spiritual significance. This discovery provides an important contribution to the discourse on the Islamization of technology, as initiated by Al-Attas (1980), Asran et al. (2015), and Harvey (2023), which rejected the dichotomy between technological advancement and spiritual values.

Table 4. Dimensions of Research Novelty

Dimensions	Novelty Offered	Academic Contribution
Theory	Synthesis of Mezirow and Al-Attas in <i>pesantren</i> education	A new model of transformative-spiritual Islamic learning
Reflection Practice	Spirituality-based reflection (<i>dhikr</i> , journaling, Sufistic dialog)	Expanding the concept of reflection in transformative learning
Technology and Morality	Technology is directed by the value of <i>adab</i>	Expansion of technology discourse based on Islamic ethics

E. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

By offering a Sufistic-Transformative Learning model, this study enriches the discourse of Islamic education, which has so far lacked systematic exploration of its reflective and spiritual dimension. In the global context, this approach can bridge traditional Islamic education and future educational demands that requires the integration of critical thinking, spiritual, and moral competencies (Abdullah et al., 2019; Achmad & Fitria, 2024; Fauzi et al., 2019).

This approach also supports the argument that the renewal of Islamic education does not have to abandon the tradition, but rather through revitalizing Sufistic values as the foundation of critical and contextual learning. Therefore, this study recommends the development of an Islamic education curriculum based on *adab* and transformative principles, as well as teacher training programs aimed at forming educators who are both spiritually grounded and pedagogically transformative. Thus, this discussion emphasizes that the future of Islamic education does not lie in mere technology integration or curriculum reform. However, the reconstruction of educational epistemology can answer the times' challenges through a reflective, valuable, and spiritual approach.

F. CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that pedagogical transformation in *pesantren* includes methodological and technological aspects and touches on deep spiritual and ethical dimensions. The integration of technology, reflective learning, and contextual teaching approaches indicates how *pesantren* are adapting to contemporary challenges. However, what stands out most is the systemic internalization of Sufistic values such as *adab*, *ta'dīb*, and the moral example of *kiai* into the teaching and learning process. This finding shows that transformative learning

does not need to be positioned in opposition to traditional Islamic education but can be synthesized through a Sufistic-Transformative Learning approach that integrates cognitive, moral, and spiritual transformation.

The main findings confirm that spirituality and critical reflection can work together as the foundation of meaningful learning transformation. The involvement of teachers as transformational figures, the utilization of technology with *adab* value, and a reflective and transcendental curriculum approach are key implications for Islamic education reform. By designing education that pursues knowledge acquisition, character development, and metaphysical awareness, *pesantren* can serve as the prototype for a more integrative model of future education. Ultimately, this research also realizes that Islamic education reform must go beyond structural or content-based changes and must address the epistemological foundations and spiritual dimensions of educational practice.

As a contribution to scholarship, this study offers a conceptual model that combines transformative learning and Sufistic education philosophy, which until now have rarely been explored integratively. This opens up new space for further research, particularly in developing a permanent curriculum grounded in transcendental reflection and teacher training programs with a transformative and Sufistic orientation. However, the limitations of this study lie in the limited scope of two *pesantren* and the relatively small number of participants, so generalization of the results needs to be done carefully. Nevertheless, this study provides a significant first step toward formulating a more holistic, contextual, and ethically valuable approach to Islamic education in responding to 21st-century challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges the support provided by Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sunan Kudus and the authorities at the research site, whose cooperation was invaluable throughout the course of this study. Special thanks are also extended to FS and MAM for its contribution to this research collaboration.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript. TF: Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft, and Writing - Original Draft. FS: Writing - Review & Editing. MAM: Conceptualization.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest financial, professional, or personal that could have influenced the results or interpretation of this research. And the co-author (MAM) is an Editorial Advisory Board Members for this journal and was not involved in the editorial review or the decision to publish this article.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, I., Hidayana, B., Setiadi, Kutaneegara, P. M., & Indiyanto, A. (2019). Beyond School Reach: Character Education in Three Schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 9(3), 145–159. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jesr-2019-0032>
- Abubakari, M. S., & Kalinaki, K. (2024). Digital competence in islamic education for lifelong learning: Preliminary analysis using DigComp 2.1 framework. In *Embracing Technological Advancements for Lifelong Learning* (pp. 1–31). <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-1410-4.ch001>
- Achmad, A., & Fitria, L. (2024). The Philosophical Trilogy for The Development of Islamic Educational Management. *TATHO: International Journal of Islamic Thought and Sciences*, 227–237. <https://doi.org/10.70512/tatho.v1i4.49>

- Ahmed, F., & Chowdhury, S. (2025). Rethinking contemporary schooling in Muslim contexts: An Islamic conceptual framework for reconstructing K-12 education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 57(2), 152–165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2024.2411325>
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1980). *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education*. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization.
- Altinyelken, H. K. (2021). Critical thinking and non-formal Islamic education: Perspectives from young Muslims in the Netherlands. *Contemporary Islam*, 15(3), 267–285. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-021-00470-6>
- Apduludin & Martinisyamin. (2022). Modeling Analysis, Findings, Development, Organizing The Material And Learning For Students In Islamic Boarding Schools. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8(1), 25–36. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i1.15277>
- Asran, M. A. B., Wan Zakaria, W. F. A. B., & Mohd Nizah, M. A. (2015). The integration of education in Al-Hadi and Al-Faruqi. *Social Sciences (Pakistan)*, 10(1), 20–23. <https://doi.org/10.3923/sscience.2015.20.23>
- Athoillah, M., Rahman, A. S., Firdaus, A. S., & Septiadi, M. A. (2024). Policies And Practices Religious Moderation In Pesantren. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 10(2), 387–396. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v10i2.27543>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Daiber, H. (2020). The Malaysian Scholar Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (b. 1931) on Islamic Education: An Evaluation in View of Classical Islamic Sources. In *Knowledge and Education in Classical Islam: Religious Learning between Continuity and Change* (2 vols) (pp. 1001–1013). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004413214_043
- Eriksson, M., van Riper, C. J., Leitschuh, B., Bentley Brymer, A., Rawluk, A., Raymond, C. M., & Kenter, J. O. (2019). Social learning as a link between the individual and the collective: Evaluating deliberation on social values. *Sustainability Science*, 14(5), 1323–1332. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00725-5>
- Fauzi, Supa'at, & Novikasari, I. (2019). Holistic-integrative education system in an islamic kindergarten. *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 7(2), 399–414. <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v7i2.6449>
- Felsenthal, I., & Agbaria, A. (2025). 'Justice before god': Critical Islamic education based on the work of Tariq Ramadan. *British Journal of Religious Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2025.2480655>
- Forsman, M. (2024). Neil Postman (1985) Amusing Ourselves to Death. In *Classics in Media Theory* (pp. 322–333). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003432272-24>
- Galily, Y. (2024). Interviewing. In *Encyclopedia of Sport Management, Second Edition* (pp. 519–520). <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035317189.ch303>
- Harvey, R. (2023). Islamic Theology and the Crisis of Contemporary Science: Naquib al-Attas' "Metaphysical Critique" and a Husserlian Alternative. *Theology and Science*, 21(3), 404–420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2023.2230429>
- Hidayat, M., Rozak, R. W. A., Hakam, K. A., Kembara, M. D., & Parhan, M. (2022). Character education in Indonesia: How is it internalized and implemented in virtual learning? *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 41(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v41i1.45920>
- Hobbs, R. (2021). "A most mischievous word": Neil Postman's approach to propaganda education. *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-65>
- Iqbal, M. Z., & Akram, H. (2020). Role of sekola Islam and pesantrens in nation building of indonesia: An analysis of the perceptions of alumni. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(4), 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.51709/fw12728>

- Jones, P. (2020). *Critical transformative learning and social work education: Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory*. The Routledge Handbook of Critical Pedagogies for Social Work (pp. 489–500). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351002042-40>
- Jubba, H., Pabbajah, M., Abdullah, I., & Juhansar. (2021). Reorienting Moral Education for Millennial Muslims: The Changing Role of Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia. *Islamic Quarterly*, 65(3), 423–441.
- Khan, N. I. (2022). Case Study as a Method of Qualitative Research. In *Research Anthology on Innovative Research Methodologies and Utilization Across Multiple Disciplines* (pp. 452–472). <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-3881-7.ch023>
- Lahmar, F. (2020). Islamic Education: An Islamic “Wisdom-Based Cultural Environment” in a Western Context. *Religions*, 11(8), Article 8. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11080409>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (with Internet Archive). (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, Calif. : Sage Publications. <http://archive.org/details/naturalisticinqu00linc>
- London, R. (2023). The mystery of spirit: Implications for integrating a spiritual perspective in secular education. In *Supporting Children and Youth Through Spiritual Education* (pp. 62–80). <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-6371-0.ch004>
- Mezirow, J. (1996). Contemporary paradigms of learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 46(3), 158–173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369604600303>
- Mezirow, J. (with Internet Archive). (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass. <http://archive.org/details/transformative0000mezi>
- Mutammam, Anggraeni, D., Afroni, A., Sutrisno, Zubaidah, A., & Irfanullah, G. (2024). Adaptation and Transformation of Pesantren Education in Facing The Era of Muslim Society 5.0. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(3), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i3.114>
- Nightingale, A. J. (2019). Triangulation. *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography, Second Edition* (pp. 477–480). <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102295-5.10437-8>
- Palmer, J. (2002). *Environmental Education in the 21st Century: Theory, Practice, Progress and Promise*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203012659>
- Quintão, C., Andrade, P., & Almeida, F. (2020). How to Improve the Validity and Reliability of a Case Study Approach. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education*, 9(2), 264–275. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jise.v9i2.2026>
- Ramadan, T. (2011). Western Muslims and the Future of Islam (p. 284). <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195183566.001.0001>
- Sauri, S., Nursyamsiah, N., & Nurbayan, Y. (2018). A critique of local wisdom values in Indonesia's pesantren. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 26(T), 37–50..
- Seyyed, H. N. (2002). *Islam And The Plight Of Modern Man*. Islamic Texts Society. <http://archive.org/details/NasrSeyyedHosseinIslamAndThePlightOfModernMan2nd2001>
- Syed, M. Attas. (1980). *The Concept Of Education In Islam*. International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization. <http://archive.org/details/the-concept-of-education-in-islam>
- Syihabuddin, M., Manggala, K., Ansharah, I. I., & Nurkholisoh, S. (2024). The Scientific Integration of Sociology in Islamic Studies: A Theoretical And Applicative Analysis. *Al-Masail: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2(1),. <https://doi.org/10.61677/al-masail.v2i1.202>
- Taufikin, T. (2021). Pesantren as the Three Centers of Education Perspective of Ki Hadjar Dewantara. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 21(1), 101–119. <https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v21i1.3149>
- Taufikin, T. (2022). Pesantren: Pendidikan Khas Indonesia, Tangguh di Masa Pandemi Covid-19. *Tarbawiyah : Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.32332/tarbawiyah.v5i2.4285>
- Taylor, C. (2019). What is religion? The polysemy of a contested concept. *Annali Di Studi Religiosi*, 20, 9–22. https://doi.org/10.14598/Annali_studi_relig_20201902

- Thoha, M., & Hannan, A. (2022). Modernization of Education Governance Based on Accelerative Paradigm among Pesantren Communities in Madura, Indonesia. *Ulumuna*, 26(2), 417–446. <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v26i2.515>
- Thompson, J. (2022). A Guide to Abductive Thematic Analysis. *Qualitative Report*, 27(5), 1410–1421. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5340>
- Tisdell, E. J. (2023). The braid of transformative learning, spirituality, and creativity: The impetus to create as well as critique. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2023(177), 37–50. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.20477>
- Wan Yusoff, W. M., Juperi, J. A., & Preece, A. S. (2022). Philosophical Inquiry as a Method for Teaching Islamic Education. In *Supporting Modern Teaching in Islamic Schools: Pedagogical Best Practice for Teachers* (pp. 68–80). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003193432-7>
- Yusuf, M. I., Maimun, A., Basri, & As'ad, M. (2024). Transformational Leadership of KH. Yusuf Hasyim in Preserving Traditional Islamic Education at Pesantren Tebuireng. *Munaddhomah*, 5(4), 383–394.. <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i4.1430>
- Zafi, A. A., Jamaluddin, D., Partono, Fuadi, S. I., & Chamadi, M. R. (2021). The Existence of Pesantren Based Technology: Digitalization of Learning in Pondok Pesantren Darul Ulum Kudus. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 18(2), 493–510. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2021.182-15>
- Zarkasyi, H. F. (2020). Imam Zarkasyi's modernization of pesantren in Indonesia: (A case study of darussalam gontor). *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 8(1), 161–200. <https://doi.org/10.21043/QIJIS.V8I1.5760>

Copyright holder:

© Taufikin, T., Syarif, F., & Masuwd, M. A. (2025)

First Publication Right:

At-Ta'lim: Media Informasi Pendidikan Islam

This Article is licensed under:CC-BY-NC-SA ([Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/))