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**Local Wisdom-Based Islamic Religious Education Model:
Studies at Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School**

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) often faces challenges regarding relevance when Islamic values are taught purely textually, without connection to the local cultural context. This study aims to describe the model for integrating local wisdom into PAI instruction at Pesantren Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyah, identify the forms of local wisdom internalized, and analyze their impact on the students' character and religiosity. The study employs a qualitative approach with an ethnographic case study design. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with the pesantren leader (pengasuh), religious teachers (ustaz), and students, as well as document analysis; the data were then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The results indicate that the pesantren integrates traditions such as customary deliberation (musyawarah adat), local hadrah arts, communal cooperation (gotong-royong), and the local language into the PAI curriculum. This is achieved through strategies involving the contextualization of classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), the habitual practice of culturally infused Islamic rituals, and the role-modeling of the kiai as a cultural figure. A unique finding of this study is the emergence of a "custom-based hidden curriculum" model, one that is not formally written down yet consistently shapes the students' religious moderation. The study recommends formalizing the documentation of this local wisdom-based curriculum to ensure its sustainability beyond reliance on the kiai alone, as well as developing similar models in other pesantren with different sociocultural characteristics.

Keywords: Hidden Curriculum, Islamic Boarding School, Islamic Religious Education, Local Wisdom, Religious Moderation.

PRELIMINARY

Ideally, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) should not merely transfer normative knowledge regarding creed, worship, and ethics, but also cultivate a form of piety that is grounded and contextual to the students' lives (Hadisi et al., 2024). Within this ideal framework, PAI ought to bridge religious texts with the sociocultural realities in which students live, ensuring that Islamic values are not perceived as alien or detached from their cultural identities (Zaid et al., 2026). Ideally, such an educational process fosters a generation that is both religious and appreciative of their ancestral culture and traditions, viewing them as part of a peaceful and moderate expression of Islam.

Local wisdom, representing a crystallization of values, norms, and practices passed down through generations within a community, holds great potential to reinforce the process of internalizing Islamic values. Ideally, Islamic educational institutions such as *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) should utilize local wisdom not merely as a ceremonial add-on, but as a learning resource and pedagogical strategy integrated into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. In this way, universal Islamic values, such as *musyawarah* (deliberation/consultation), *gotong-royong* (mutual cooperation), and respect for others, can be taught through cultural idioms that are already familiar to the students' daily lives.

In reality, the practice of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in many educational institutions, including some *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), tends to remain textual and dichotomous, separating

religious teachings from the local cultural contexts in which they are imparted. This phenomenon risks creating a gap between classroom teachings and the students' socio-cultural realities; consequently, the resulting religious understanding tends to be normative and textual rather than contextual, leaving students prone to adopting exclusive or rigid attitudes toward cultural differences.

Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyah Islamic Boarding School, an Islamic educational institution situated within a community that retains strong cultural traditions, faces similar dynamics. Preliminary observations indicate that the school incorporates various local cultural practices, ranging from customary deliberation traditions and locally-flavored *badrah* arts to the spirit of communal cooperation (*gotong-royong*), alongside the formal Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum; however, there has been little systematic study regarding how these elements integrate within the learning process and the shaping of the students' character.

Several previous studies have confirmed the importance of integrating local wisdom into Islamic education. Mansir, Purnomo, and Tumin (2020) found that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) instruction based on local cultural knowledge in schools and madrasas enhances students' contextual understanding of Islamic teachings. Similarly, Mazid, Prasetyo, and Farikah (2020) emphasize the significant role of local wisdom values in shaping community character, while Syarif and Hannan (2020) demonstrate that the local wisdom of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in Madura serves as an ideal foundation for fostering Islamic moderation within the local community.

Other research strengthens these findings from the perspective of curriculum and Islamic boarding school management. Sodik (2021) revealed the dialectic of religion and local culture in the Majan Tulungagung Land as a model of Islamic education based on local wisdom, while Sutarno (2021) found that the development of the PAI curriculum at the Islamic boarding school at Diniyah Takmiliah which accommodated local wisdom actually strengthened, not replaced, the students' Islamic identity. Kholifah (2022) added that Islamic boarding school education strategies that are adaptive to social-digital challenges still require local wisdom roots as a basis for character, and Riza (2022) emphasized the urgency of developing PAI teaching materials that explicitly contain local wisdom content.

Research specifically focused on the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) context has also expanded rapidly in recent years. Aziz and Najmudin (2024) examined the construction of local wisdom-based character education in *pesantren* in Banten, finding that the *nyantri* tradition itself constitutes a form of local wisdom that shapes the spiritual intelligence of *santri* (students). Kurniadi (2023), Muis et al. (2023), and Rostiana (2023) each confirmed that developing teaching materials and Islamic Religious Education instruction based on local wisdom or multicultural principles enhances relevance and student acceptance. Meanwhile, Haidir et al. (2023), Husni (2024), Khatimah (2024), and Saputri, Sarpendi, and Rahmawati (2025) consistently demonstrated that strengthening local wisdom-based Islamic character education contributes positively to the religiosity and competence of *santri* across *pesantren* with diverse sociocultural characteristics.

Although the existing literature is extensive, a notable gap remains. First, the majority of prior research has focused on formal schools, *madrasas*, or *pesantren* in regions with well-studied cultural traditions (such as Java, Madura, Bugis, and Sunda), whereas *pesantren* situated in specific sociocultural contexts, like Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyah, have yet to be the subject of in-depth academic study. Second, most research emphasizes final outcomes (such as curriculum products or teaching materials) without ethnographically unpacking the process of internalizing local wisdom values that occurs through daily interactions among *kyai* (religious leaders), *ustadz* (teachers), and *santri* (students). Third, the concept of a "hidden curriculum" rooted in local wisdom, referring to the learning of values that, while not formally codified, exert a powerful influence, has rarely been explicitly addressed in studies of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on local wisdom.

Addressing this gap, this study offers a novel contribution in the form of an in-depth ethnographic description of the mechanisms for internalizing local wisdom within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Pesantren Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyah. It places special emphasis on revealing a "custom-based hidden curriculum" pattern as a non-formal pathway for shaping the character and religious moderation of *santri* (students), an aspect relatively unexplored in previous studies, which have tended to focus primarily on formal curricula or written teaching materials.

The significance of this research lies in three aspects. First, from an academic standpoint, it enriches the body of literature on Islamic Religious Education (PAI) grounded in local wisdom by employing an ethnographic perspective, an approach rarely utilized in the context of specific *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). Second, from a practical perspective, the research findings can serve as a reference for *pesantren* leaders and Islamic education policymakers in designing models for integrating local wisdom that are better documented and sustainable. Third, from a social perspective, the study contributes to strengthening religious moderation through the preservation of local wisdom, thereby aligning with the national agenda of fostering religious moderation and cultural preservation amidst the accelerating currents of globalization.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with an ethnographic case study design, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of how local wisdom is internalized into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at the Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyyah *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) from the perspectives of those directly involved. This approach was selected because the phenomenon of integrating local wisdom into PAI is contextual, dynamic, and rich in symbolic meaning, aspects that can only be fully comprehended through the researcher's immersion in the daily life of the *pesantren* community.

The research subjects consisted of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) leaders, instructors teaching Islamic Religious Education (PAI), administrators, and students (*santri*), selected via purposive sampling based on their intensive involvement in learning practices grounded in local wisdom. Data were collected using three primary techniques: participant observation of formal learning sessions and non-formal cultural activities within the *pesantren* environment; semi-structured, in-depth interviews to explore the informants' meanings and experiences; and a documentary study of the curriculum, syllabi, and records of *pesantren* activities. Triangulation of sources and techniques was employed to ensure data credibility.

The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which encompasses the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, carried out iteratively throughout the fieldwork. Data validity was verified through source triangulation (comparing information from caregivers, religious teachers, and students), technique triangulation (comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation), and member checking to confirm the researcher's interpretations with key informants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Observations and interviews indicate that Pesantren Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyyah integrates local wisdom into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through four primary channels: (1) contextualizing classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) using local cultural idioms and examples; (2) fostering the habit of practicing Islamic-infused cultural rituals; (3) the *kiai* serving as a role model who embodies both cultural and religious authority; and (4) reinforcing the use of the local language as a medium for communicating Islamic values in daily life.

Regarding the contextualization of *kitab kuning* (traditional Islamic texts), the *ustaz* consistently links concepts of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *akhlak* (ethics) with local socio-cultural practices, for instance, connecting the texts' chapters on *muamalah* (social and economic transactions) to the traditions of *gotong-royong* (mutual cooperation) and the systems of mutual assistance long practiced by the community surrounding the *pesantren*. This strategy enables *santri* (students) to more easily grasp the relevance of *fiqh* teachings to their real lives, rather than viewing them merely as normative theories detached from their daily experiences.

The most prominent cultural ritual with an Islamic character is the tradition of customary deliberation (*musyawarah*) held prior to making important decisions within the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), a practice integrated with the Islamic principle of *syura* (consultation). Students (*santri*) are actively involved in deliberation forums at both the dormitory and student organization levels; consequently, the value of *syura* is not merely taught cognitively in the classroom but is also directly practiced in the management of dormitory life.

Local *hadrah* art, modified to incorporate Islamic verses, serves as another important medium for instilling a love for tradition alongside the values of *tawhid* (monotheism) and moral character. *Hadrah* practice is conducted regularly as an extracurricular activity integrated with the Islamic arts and culture curriculum, allowing *santri* (Islamic boarding school students) to experience firsthand the blend of local cultural expression and the propagation of Islamic teachings.

The *kiai* figure at Pesantren Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyah serves as a point of integration between religious and cultural authority. The *kiai* does not merely teach formal Islamic religious education material but also actively leads and imbues with Islamic meaning various local traditions preserved by the *pesantren*, such as *selamatan* rituals prior to exams, *haul* commemorations, and traditional ceremonies of the surrounding community attended by students as part of contextual learning outside the classroom.

Regional languages are actively used by *kiai* and senior *ustaz* in conveying religious advice (*mau'idzab hasanah*), especially in non-formal forums such as recitations after congregational prayers. The use of regional languages makes religious messages feel closer emotionally and culturally to students who come from the environment around the Islamic boarding school, compared to delivery that uses formal language or Arabic alone.

A unique finding of this study is the identification of a pattern termed by the researchers as a "custom-based hidden curriculum", a series of value-based learning experiences that occur outside the formal Islamic Religious Education curriculum structure yet consistently and repeatedly shape the religious worldview of the *santri* (students). This hidden curriculum is identified through the *pesantren's* daily routines, ranging from seating arrangements during deliberations and local etiquette regarding receiving guests to the assignment of chores based on the spirit of *gotong-royong* (communal cooperation), all of which are imbued with Islamic values despite never being explicitly documented in the syllabus.

The impact of internalizing this local wisdom is evident in the religious attitudes of the *santri* (Islamic boarding school students), which tend to be moderate and inclusive. Senior students who have long been part of the *pesantren* environment demonstrate a superior ability to bridge religious differences through a consultative approach, compared to new students who have not yet been fully exposed to that "hidden curriculum" tradition.

Nevertheless, this study also identifies a challenge regarding the model's sustainability: a heavy reliance on the *kiai* as the primary driver of integrating local wisdom. Young *ustadz* acknowledge the lack of adequate written guidelines for replicating the strategy of contextualizing local wisdom without direct guidance from the *kiai*, creating a risk that the continuity of this good practice could be disrupted in the event of a leadership transition.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the integration of local wisdom into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Pesantren Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyah occurs organically and is seamlessly woven into the daily life of the *pesantren*; a custom-based "hidden curriculum" emerges as a key finding that distinguishes this institution from the more structured and formal models of local wisdom integration reported in previous studies.

Discussion

The finding that Pesantren Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyah contextualizes *kitab kuning* (traditional Islamic texts) using local cultural idioms aligns with the findings of Mansir, Purnomo, and Tumin (2020), who assert that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) instruction grounded in local cultural knowledge enhances students' contextual understanding. However, this study extends those findings by demonstrating that contextualization occurs not only at the level of instructional materials but also within the social relationships characterizing the students' daily *muamalah* (social-transactional) practices, thereby making the study of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) more dynamic and relevant to their concrete experiences.

The practice of traditional deliberation (*musyawarah adat*) combined with the principle of *syura* reinforces the view held by Syarif and Hannan (2020) that the local wisdom of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) can serve as an ideal foundation for Islamic moderation. Relating these findings to theories of religious moderation reveals that the deliberative process within *musyawarah* is not merely a decision-making mechanism but also a pedagogical space that trains *santri* (students) to think tolerantly and respect diverse viewpoints, a core competency of *wasathiyah* (the middle path) in Islam.

The role of local *hadrah* art as a medium for instilling the values of *tawhid* (monotheism) and *akhlak* (moral character) reinforces the findings of Rostiana (2023) and Riza (2022) regarding the importance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching materials that are grounded in local wisdom, contextual, and engaging for students. However, this study demonstrates that the art form functions not merely as supplementary teaching material but is structurally integrated into mandatory extracurricular activities, thereby broadening and ensuring the consistency of its impact on the students' Islamic affective development.

The centrality of the *kiai* figure as a nexus integrating religious and cultural authority aligns with the findings of Aziz and Najmudin (2024) regarding the role of the *nyantri* tradition and *kiai* leadership in shaping character education based on local wisdom within *pesantren* in Banten. Within the framework of Islamic educational leadership theory, the *kiai* at Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyyah can be understood as a "cultural broker" who bridges religious texts with the local context, a role that transcends the mere function of a formal educator.

The use of regional languages in conveying religious counsel reinforces Sutarno's (2021) argument that developing an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that accommodates local wisdom, including regional languages, actually strengthens, rather than weakens, students' internalization of Islamic values. From a linguistico-pedagogical perspective, the use of the mother tongue in religious messages reduces the psychological distance between the message and the recipient, thereby facilitating the internalization of values on an emotional level, rather than merely a cognitive one.

The most substantive finding of this study, the existence of a "custom-based hidden curriculum", expands the conceptual framework of the hidden curriculum, which has predominantly been discussed within the context of general schooling. Unlike the studies by Husni (2024) and Khatimah (2024), which focused on the formal and written development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curricula based on local wisdom, this study reveals that the internalization of local wisdom values at Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyyah largely occurs through informal, undocumented channels; nevertheless, its influence on shaping the students' character is no less potent than that of the formal curriculum.

The more moderate religious attitudes observed among senior students compared to new students reinforce the findings of Haidir et al. (2023) regarding the relevance of local wisdom-based Islamic character education in fostering moderate attitudes among learners. Relating these findings to socialization theory suggests that the duration of exposure to a custom-based "hidden curriculum" correlates with the level of internalization of moderation values; this aligns with the premise that character formation requires a continuous process of habituation rather than the one-way delivery of material over a short period.

The challenge posed by the reliance on the *kiai* figure for the sustainability of this local wisdom integration model echoes concerns raised in Kholifah's (2022) research regarding the need for adaptive *pesantren* strategies, ones that do not rest solely on individual figures amidst ever-changing social and digital landscapes. These findings underscore the importance of transforming local wisdom from a form of tacit knowledge embodied in the *kiai* into explicit knowledge that can be documented and replicated by the next generation of *ustadz*.

When compared to the findings of Saputri, Sarpendi, and Rahmawati (2025), which demonstrated that developing instruction based on *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) local wisdom enhanced the competence of female students in Lampung, this study reveals a similar pattern but with a different emphasis: while the research by Saputri et al. highlighted measurable gains in competence, this study focuses more on the underlying processes and mechanisms of character formation, thereby making the two studies complementary in understanding the phenomenon of integrating local wisdom from the perspectives of both process and outcome.

Overall, the dialogue between these research findings and the theories of the hidden curriculum and religious moderation, as well as the concept of the "cultural broker", demonstrates that the integration of local wisdom into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) within *pesantren* cannot be adequately understood solely through an analysis of the formal curriculum; rather, it requires a comprehensive analysis of the *pesantren*'s socio-cultural ecology, including power relations, cultural leadership, and the daily routines that implicitly shape the students' Islamic consciousness.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Pesantren Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyah integrates local wisdom into Islamic religious education through the contextualization of *kitab kuning* (traditional Islamic texts), Islamic-infused cultural rituals, local *badrah* arts, the cultural role-modeling of the *kiai* (religious leader), and the use of the local language. A unique finding of this research is the identification of a "custom-based hidden curriculum" that operates outside the formal curriculum structure yet consistently fosters moderate and inclusive religious attitudes among the *santri* (students), particularly those who have long resided within the *pesantren* environment.

The implication of these findings is that *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) must not rely solely on the *kiai*'s cultural leadership to drive the integration of local wisdom; instead, they should formally document these best practices to ensure their continuity across successive leadership generations. This study recommends that Pesantren Darul Hijrah Al-Aziziyah, and other *pesantren* operating in similar contexts, develop written guidelines on strategies for contextualizing local wisdom within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and conduct training for young *ustadz* (instructors) to enable them to consciously and purposefully replicate this custom-based hidden curriculum. Future researchers are advised to conduct comparative studies across *pesantren* with diverse sociocultural backgrounds to test the transferability of the custom-based hidden curriculum model identified in this study.

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