



Character and Life Skill-Based Management in Pesantren Education: A Comparative Conceptual Analysis

Muhammad Lutfi^{1✉}, Nur Asnawi², Mulyono³, Ilfan Tufail⁴, Irwan Syah Erlangga⁵

¹ Universitas Negeri Jember, Indonesia; muhammadlutfi@unej.ac.id

² Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, Indonesia; nur_asnawi@fe.uin-malang.ac.id

³ Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, Indonesia; mulyonouin@gmail.com

⁴ Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Syari'ah Abu Zairy, Bondowoso, Indonesia; ilfantufail98@gmail.com

⁵ Escuela de Negocios Europea de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain; irwanse1208@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes how pesantren nurture graduate quality through character-based and life skill-oriented management practices. The research addresses a key gap in previous studies, which have examined educational management, character education, and life skills separately, leaving a limited understanding of how these domains interact as an integrated system shaping graduate outcomes. Using a qualitative multisite design, data were collected from two large pesantren through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The data were analyzed using the Miles-Huberman interactive model to identify cross-site patterns. The findings show three major results. First, both pesantrens apply participatory planning that aligns spiritual values, character formation, and vocational learning, although with different managerial styles. Second, implementation integrates formal, nonformal, and informal education with experiential learning, enabling students to develop religious character, independence, and practical competencies. Third, supervision combines structural monitoring and moral guidance, ensuring consistent behavioral development and skill mastery. These findings contribute to an integrated Value Skill Synergy Framework that explains how management processes reinforce character and life skills as mutually supporting components of graduate quality. The study concludes that pesantren graduate excellence emerges from the coherent alignment of values, management functions, and daily educational practices. It recommends strengthening integrative planning, experiential learning, and documented supervision to enhance the sustainability and replicability of pesantren quality management.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana pesantren membangun mutu lulusan melalui praktik manajemen berbasis karakter dan kecakapan hidup. Kajian ini mengisi kesenjangan penelitian sebelumnya yang cenderung memisahkan manajemen pendidikan, pendidikan karakter dan kecakapan hidup, sehingga belum menjelaskan bagaimana ketiga domain tersebut bekerja sebagai satu sistem terpadu dalam membentuk mutu lulusan. Dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif multisitus, data dikumpulkan dari dua pesantren besar melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles Huberman untuk mengidentifikasi pola lintas situs. Temuan menunjukkan tiga hasil utama. Pertama, kedua pesantren menerapkan perencanaan partisipatif yang menyelaraskan nilai spiritual, pembentukan karakter, dan pembelajaran vokasional, meskipun dengan gaya manajerial yang berbeda. Kedua, implementasi pendidikan mengintegrasikan jalur formal, nonformal, dan informal dengan pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman, sehingga santri mengembangkan karakter religius, kemandirian, dan kompetensi praktis.

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Ketiga, supervisi menggabungkan pemantauan struktural dan pembinaan moral untuk memastikan konsistensi perilaku dan penguasaan keterampilan. Temuan ini menghasilkan sebuah Value Skill Synergy Framework yang menjelaskan bagaimana proses manajemen memperkuat karakter dan kecakapan hidup sebagai komponen saling melengkapi dalam mutu lulusan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa keunggulan lulusan pesantren muncul dari keselarasan nilai, fungsi manajemen, dan praktik pendidikan sehari-hari. Studi ini merekomendasikan penguatan perencanaan integratif, pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman, dan supervisi terdokumentasi untuk meningkatkan keberlanjutan dan replikabilitas manajemen mutu pesantren.

Introduction

Historically, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) have played a central role as bastions of religious scholarship (*tafaqquh fi al-din*) and as laboratories for the cultivation of national morality (Huda, 2024; Roqib, 2021). However, along with the acceleration of globalization and the demands of the contemporary labor market, *pesantren* institutions are facing significant transformative challenges (Asrohah, 2011). Societal and governmental expectations of *pesantren* graduates have undergone a paradigmatic shift—from an earlier emphasis on ritual piety and mastery of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), toward the need for human resources who are adaptive, independent, and socially relevant (Sebastian & Alkaff, 2024).

This emerging demand is rooted in a dual crisis currently afflicting Indonesian society. First is the moral crisis (character crisis), marked by the rise of negative phenomena such as violence, promiscuity, substance abuse, and academic dishonesty (Aslamzai et al., 2024; Putra et al., 2025). This condition underscores the urgency of character education—one that integrates the practice of religious teachings with the development of logical, critical, and innovative thinking skills (Rahayu et al., 2025; Tohri et al., 2022). Such an approach must be deeply internalized through both formal and non-formal educational pathways (Caldana et al., 2021; Vaculíková et al., 2024).

In the last decade, *pesantren* have faced challenges in the quality of their graduates amidst the increasing complexity of the digital age. (Nikmatullah et al., 2023). Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (2023) indicates that there are 36,600 Islamic boarding schools with 4.85 million students, but not all of them meet adequate quality management standards (El-Yunusi et al., 2025; Sudir et al., 2025). The BPS report (2024) indicates a competency gap among students in life skills, particularly a 47.2% difference between soft skills and hard skills among graduates of religious education. (Arum et al., 2023; Munandar, 2025). On the other hand, national problems such as the moral degradation of adolescents, the increase in student delinquency, and 6,500 cases of children in conflict with the law (KPAI 2020) reinforce the urgency of a more structured character development model. (Fathoni et al., 2024). This situation places *pesantren* at a crossroads: on the one hand, they are required to maintain the tradition of character development, while on the other hand, they must provide adaptive skills relevant to global needs. The complexity of this phenomenon underscores the need for a *pesantren* management model that can comprehensively address the challenges of graduate quality.

The theoretical framework of this research is based on three main sets of theories. First, the theory of Islamic educational management is based on Islamic Total Quality Management (TQM) and Shura as a governance mechanism, which emphasizes participatory planning, spiritual accountability, and continuous improvement (Efendi, 2022; Mohamed, 2025). Second, character education theory, according to Thomas Lickona (moral knowing–feeling–action), and habituation theory, which places habituation as the foundation for character formation (Dougherty, 2007; Junaidin et al., 2025; Kurniawan & Fitriyani, 2023). Third, the WHO's life skills theory includes personal,

social, cognitive, and emotional skills, as well as the differentiation between soft skills and hard skills as complementary competency structures (Bastian et al., 2005; London, 2011). The integration of these three theoretical frameworks provides a strong conceptual foundation for analyzing *pesantren* management in shaping the holistic quality of graduates, namely spiritual, moral, social, academic, and vocational, emphasizing the interconnectedness between management, character, and life skills.

Previous research on student quality has shown that planning and governance significantly impact the quality of graduates, but most studies only emphasize managerial aspects without systematically integrating character values. Studies on life skills in *pesantren* also confirm the importance of vocational learning, but have not yet integrated life skills with quality management construction. Meanwhile, research on *pesantren* management focuses more on the leadership of the kiai, organizational structure, or curriculum, without considering the synergy between planning, implementation, supervision, and character education and life skills. From these three groups, three main gaps can be concluded: (1) a conceptual gap, due to the absence of an integrative model between management, character and life skills; (2) an empirical gap, due to the limited multisite research testing the best practices of large *pesantren*; and (3) a methodological gap, because most studies use a single descriptive approach without triangulating institutional contexts.

Despite the growing body of research on *pesantren* education, several critical gaps remain. First, existing studies tend to examine educational management, character education, and life skills as separate domains, resulting in the absence of an integrative conceptual framework that explains how these elements interact systematically in shaping *pesantren* graduate quality. Second, empirical evidence is still dominated by single-site or descriptive studies, limiting comparative understanding of how management practices operate across *pesantren* with complex institutional structures. Third, previous research rarely articulates a coherent linkage between managerial processes (planning, implementation, and supervision) and the internalization of character values and life skills. These gaps indicate the need for a multi-site, integrative, and management-oriented conceptual analysis of *pesantren* graduate quality.

In contrast to previous studies that examine *pesantren* management, character education, or life skills as separate analytical domains, this study advances an integrative and systemic perspective. While studies by Zulkarnain and Zubaedi (2021) emphasize community-based management, and Hairo (2025) focuses on kiai leadership, these works do not explain how managerial planning, implementation, and supervision interact with character formation and life skills development as a unified process. Similarly, research on life skills in *pesantren* highlights vocational outcomes but lacks an explicit linkage to graduate quality construction within a management framework. By synthesizing these strands through a multi-site qualitative analysis, the present study extends existing findings by offering a derived conceptual framework that explains the systemic relationship between management practices, character education, and life skills in shaping *pesantren* graduate quality.

The main question of this study is: "How can educational management practices in large *pesantren* with complex institutional structures integrate character building and life skills development to produce graduates of sustainable and contextually relevant quality that are relevant to the demands of the times?" This question stems from the hypothesis that the quality of graduates is not only shaped by normative learning activities but primarily by the integration of effective institutional governance, a structured process of value internalization, and the implementation of contextual and sustainable life skills programs. This research is projected to conclude that *pesantren* implementing integrated management, including planning, implementation, character development, and life skills

reinforcement, will demonstrate a more stable, comprehensive, and replicable pattern of graduate quality across various types of *pesantren*. Additionally, this research is expected to derive a conceptual framework that explains the systemic relationship between educational management, character development, and life skills, as a substantive contribution to the development of the quality of contemporary *pesantren* education. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies not in introducing new themes, but in integrating previously fragmented insights into a coherent conceptual framework that captures the managerial logic underlying character and life skill formation in *pesantren* education.

Methods

This study adopted a qualitative multisite design with two selected *pesantrens* representing complex and mature institutional systems that allow the researcher to compare managerial patterns across different contexts. This design enables analytical generalization rather than statistical inference, which aligns with the study's aim to derive a conceptual explanation of how planning, implementation, and supervision interact with character and life skill development. The selection of Pesantren Nurul Jadid and Pesantren Zainul Hasan was based on three inclusion criteria: large institutional scale, a strong track record of graduate quality, and diverse management practices relevant to building an integrative conceptual framework. *Pesantrens* that did not meet these criteria were excluded to maintain the analytical depth required for multisite comparison.

The research participants consisted of caregivers, managers, and dormitory supervisors, representing actors directly involved in governance and daily educational processes. Additional participants included teachers, students, alumni, and parents, forming a total of 24 informants who met the inclusion criterion of having direct experience with educational management or student development processes within the *pesantren*. Individuals without sustained involvement in managerial or educational activities were excluded to ensure the credibility and relevance of the data. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted until thematic saturation was reached, indicated by recurring patterns, stable categories, and the absence of new codes across both sites.

Data analysis followed the Miles Huberman Saldana interactive model, applied systematically across the two *pesantrens*. The analysis began with data reduction, where interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded to identify initial categories. These categories were then organized into data displays that allowed the researcher to compare managerial structures, character formation mechanisms, and life skill programs across sites. The final stage involved drawing conclusions by synthesizing cross-site similarities and contextual differences to identify stable patterns of *pesantren* management. At the multisite analysis stage, the researcher compared the two cases to trace convergent and divergent mechanisms, ensuring that the resulting conceptual framework reflected both shared principles and contextual variations. This step-by-step analytical process strengthened the validity of the findings and supported the development of an integrated explanation of how *pesantren* construct graduate quality.

Results and Discussion

Results

The findings of this study are derived from observations, interviews, and documentation across the two *pesantrens*, and are synthesized through a cross-site analytical process. The results show that both institutions construct graduate quality

through a holistic orientation that integrates spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, and practical competencies. At Pesantren Nurul Jadid, graduate quality is conceptualized through a balanced framework that emphasizes tawazun across spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, and independence dimensions. Meanwhile, Pesantren Zainul Hasan defines graduate excellence through the pillars of faith, knowledge, and adaptability. Although articulated differently, both *pesantrens* share a commitment to producing graduates who are religiously grounded, ethically responsible, socially engaged, and equipped with life skills. Nurul Jadid highlights balance and systemic integration, whereas Zainul Hasan places stronger emphasis on religious depth and adaptive social competence.

In terms of educational planning, both *pesantrens* employ participatory approaches that involve multiple educational units, although the mechanisms differ. Nurul Jadid institutionalizes participatory planning through structured coordination forums that align spiritual education, formal schooling, and vocational training. Zainul Hasan adopts a collaborative model centered on the kiai, school leaders, and educational boards, focusing on synchronizing religious programs with community-oriented initiatives. Despite these contextual differences, both *pesantren* prioritize the synergy between spiritual formation and vocational readiness as the strategic foundation for shaping graduate quality. This alignment is further reflected in their implementation practices. Nurul Jadid integrates formal, non-formal, and informal education through a unified system supported by exemplary behavior and habituation, while Zainul Hasan combines classical Islamic texts with modern sciences and life skill programs such as entrepreneurship and cooperative training. Both institutions rely on experiential learning through daily routines, production units, and community projects to internalize values and develop practical competencies.

Supervision practices also reveal both convergence and divergence. Nurul Jadid applies a multi-layered structural supervision system that includes daily reporting and performance evaluation, reflecting a bureaucratic and data-oriented approach. In contrast, Zainul Hasan emphasizes hierarchical supervision grounded in the moral authority of the kiai, supported by routine moral evaluation and personal mentoring. Although the supervisory styles differ, both *pesantrens* focus their evaluations on behavioral consistency, moral integrity, academic performance, social participation, and leadership qualities, indicating an orientation that extends beyond cognitive achievement. The integration of character and life skills is evident in both institutions. Nurul Jadid relies on continuous internalization through worship routines, discipline, and the example of the kiai, while Zainul Hasan employs the Satlogi Santri, a six-pillar character framework that includes politeness, steadfastness, sincerity, and other core values. Life skill development is embedded in entrepreneurship programs, vocational units, agricultural activities, and technological enterprises, enabling students to cultivate independence and social responsibility. Across both sites, character formation and life skills are reinforced through modelling, habituation, and community-based learning, resulting in graduates who are self-reliant and socially engaged. Table 2 below summarizes the analysis of these findings.

Table 1. Analysis of Research Findings

Main Variable	Sub-Variable	Research Findings		Cross-Site Analytical Interpretation
		Pesantren Nurul Jadid	Pesantren Zainul Hasan Genggong	
Graduate Quality Concept	Value Orientation	Graduate quality is defined through	Graduate quality emphasizes faith,	Both pesantren develop holistic

		the balance (tawazun) among spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, and independence aspects.	knowledge, and adaptability as the pillars of personal and social excellence.	human beings balancing spirituality, intellect, morality, and social responsibility, but Nurul Jadid stresses balance and integration, while Zainul Hasan highlights religious depth and adaptability.
	Output Profile	Graduates are religiously excellent, intellectually competent, morally noble, independent, and socially devoted.	Graduates are faithful, knowledgeable, ethical, and socially responsible, demonstrating leadership and devotion.	Both pesantren produce multi-competent graduates with strong religious character and life competence.
Educational Planning	Approach and Mechanism	Participatory-integrative planning involving all education units under pesantren coordination; aligned with the vision of 'balanced spiritual and life-skill development.'	Collaborative planning between kiai, school heads, and educational boards focusing on synchronization of religious and vocational programs.	Both adopt participatory planning, but Nurul Jadid institutionalizes it through structured forums, while Zainul Hasan relies on kiai-led coordination, emphasizing traditional leadership.
	Strategic Focus	Prioritizes alignment between spiritual education, formal schooling, and vocational training.	Emphasizes unity of faith-based education and social responsibility through structured community-oriented programs.	Both focus on the synergy of spiritual and vocational education to form holistic graduate quality.
Educational Implementation	Curriculum Integration	Holistic integration among formal (school), non-formal (madrasah diniyah), and informal (asrama) education, supported by	Hybrid learning combining turats (classical Islamic texts) with modern sciences and life-skill programs such as entrepreneurship	Implementation in both pesantren integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, but with different emphases: Nurul

		exemplary habituation systems.	and	and cooperative training.	Jadid on system integration, Zainul Hasan on cultural integration.
	Learning Process	Daily routines based on discipline, worship, moral habituation; combined with life-skill workshops (e.g., agriculture, IT, automotive).	Learning processes combine religious studies with applied social practices; students engage in production units and community projects.		Both emphasize experiential learning (learning by doing) to internalize values and skills.
Educational Supervision	Structure and Procedure	Multi-layered structural supervision (kiai → board → division → teacher) with daily reports and performance evaluation systems.	Hierarchical supervision emphasizing kiai's moral authority and mentoring; routine moral evaluation and personal guidance.	Nurul Jadid applies bureaucratic and data-based supervision, while Zainul Hasan applies charismatic and moral-based supervision.	
	Evaluation Focus	Focus on behavioral consistency, academic performance, and skill mastery.	Focus on moral integrity, social participation, and leadership quality.		Evaluation across sites shows orientation toward moral and life-skill growth beyond cognitive measures.
Integration of Character and Life Skills	Character Formation	Continuous internalization through worship routines, discipline, and kiai's example (uswah hasanah).	Value education through Satlogi Santri (six pillars of character: politeness, steadfastness, sincerity, etc.).	Both utilize modeling, habituation, and community systems as mechanisms of character education.	
	Life Skill Development	Implemented through entrepreneurship programs, vocational units, and talent-based extracurriculars.	Conducted via cooperative, agricultural, and technological enterprises embedded in daily learning.	Both pesantren emphasize productive life education integrated with faith-based values, forming self-reliant and socially engaged graduates.	

To clarify the structure of these findings, the results were organized through an analytical categorization process that distinguishes core findings, supporting findings, and contextual variations. The core findings represent elements consistently present in

both pesantren, including the integrated concept of graduate quality, the alignment of planning, implementation, and supervision as a unified management process, and the internalization of character and life skills through habituation, role modeling, and experiential learning. Supporting findings explain how these core principles are operationalized, such as participatory planning mechanisms, curriculum integration across educational streams, the use of boarding and vocational activities as learning vehicles, and evaluation practices that emphasize discipline and student engagement. Contextual variations highlight differences shaped by leadership style, organizational culture, and institutional structure. These include distinctions between bureaucratic participatory planning and charismatic collegial planning, between structural administrative supervision and moral charismatic supervision, and between system-based and culture-based implementation emphases. These variations demonstrate that while the foundational principles of pesantren management are shared, their practical expressions are adaptive and context dependent.

Discussions

Balancing Between Spirituality, Intellect, and Social Competence

The findings of this study demonstrate that both *pesantrens* construct graduate quality through an integrated orientation that combines spirituality, intellectual development, moral formation, social responsibility, and practical life skills. At Pesantren Nurul Jadid, the paradigm of balance across these domains reflects a holistic educational model consistent with Moslimany et al. (2024), who argue that contemporary *pesantren* increasingly merge character formation with life skill development. This balanced orientation also aligns with Mau (2024), who notes that modern *pesantren* synergize religious and general education to cultivate multidimensional competencies. The integration of formal, non-formal, and informal learning environments further reinforces this holistic approach, supporting Kerr's (2011) argument that communal living and daily routines serve as powerful mechanisms for internalizing values and skills. The present study extends these insights by showing that such integration is not incidental but strategically embedded within *pesantren* management, indicating that graduate quality emerges from a systemic design rather than isolated pedagogical practices.

In contrast, Pesantren Zainul Hasan constructs graduate quality through the philosophy of faith, knowledge, and action, emphasizing the unity between religious understanding and social engagement. This finding supports the findings of Hernandez et al. (2022), who highlight the role of religious institutions in fostering social responsibility, and aligns with Taufikin (2025), who observes that *pesantren* graduates increasingly participate in entrepreneurship and community service as expressions of their religious commitment. The prominence of the Satlogi Santri system illustrates how moral-cultural norms shape character formation, reinforcing Jalilov et al. (2025), who emphasize the importance of value-based frameworks in cultivating ethical behavior. This also resonates with Achadah et al. (2022), who argue that *pesantren* rely on internal norms to transmit religious and social values. The strong influence of kiai leadership observed in this study confirms the findings of Alam (2020) and Iswanto (2020), who identify charismatic leadership as a central determinant of student character development. The present study contributes to this literature by demonstrating how moral-cultural systems and charismatic leadership interact to produce a coherent model of graduate quality.

Synthesizing the two models reveals that both *pesantren* share a common orientation toward producing spiritually grounded and socially functional graduates, yet they operationalize this vision through different managerial modes. Nurul Jadid represents a

systemic and structured model, while Zainul Hasan embodies a traditional and morally intensive model. This duality supports Zahraini (2022), who argues that *pesantren* management is shaped by contextual variables such as leadership style, institutional culture, and organizational structure. The present study extends this perspective by showing that both bureaucratic-modern and traditional-moral models can be equally effective when aligned with institutional values and community expectations. At the same time, the analysis highlights conditions under which bureaucratic management may fail, particularly when formal procedures become detached from value internalization. This interpretation aligns with critiques of proceduralism in educational management, which warn that administrative compliance without moral grounding undermines educational purpose. The findings, therefore, suggest that the success of bureaucratic systems in *pesantren* depends on their integration with spiritual values, exemplary leadership, and daily educational practices.

Overall, the differences between the two *pesantren* underscore the importance of contextualization in *pesantren* management. Local traditions, leadership patterns, human resources, and institutional visions shape the effectiveness of graduate quality development. This supports the broader argument in Islamic education literature that *pesantren* cannot be governed through uniform models due to their cultural and structural diversity. The present study contributes to this understanding by showing that management practices must be internally coherent with *pesantren* values to be effective. Consequently, national policies aimed at improving *pesantren* quality should adopt a flexible framework that respects institutional variation while promoting core principles of integrative character and life skill development.

Integrative Planning for Character and Life Skill Development

Another finding on the planning factor indicates that educational planning at Pesantren Nurul Jadid is characterized by participatory coordination across educational units, guided by *pesantren* leadership. This inclusive mechanism, which involves teachers, administrators, guardians, and students, aligns with Wise et al. (2020), who emphasize that collaborative planning enhances institutional coherence and responsiveness. The approach also supports the argument of Defitrika and Mahmudah (2021) that life skill education as character building requires broad stakeholder involvement in needs assessment and program formulation. In this sense, planning at Nurul Jadid functions not merely as a formal administrative requirement but as a deliberative process that embodies a shared commitment to balancing academic, spiritual, and life skill development. This interpretation is consistent with Mayselless and Kizel (2022), who highlight the importance of dialogic and future-oriented planning in character-based education.

In contrast, planning at Pesantren Zainul Hasan Genggong is shaped by collective coordination under the direct leadership of the kiai and institutional leaders. Although more top-down in structure, this model remains collegial in practice, with the kiai serving as the central moral and strategic authority. This pattern reflects Lipscombe et al. (2021), who argue that charismatic leadership can effectively guide educational planning in traditional institutions due to its moral legitimacy and cultural resonance. The cohesion observed in Zainul Hasan's planning process also aligns with Buanaputra et al. (2021), who note that strong leadership in *pesantren* facilitates consistent value transmission and supports the integration of character development with vocational and social training. These findings suggest that traditional leadership structures can be highly effective when they are embedded within a shared moral framework and supported by community trust.

A comparative interpretation of the two *pesantrens* reveals that both uphold the principle of participation, yet operationalize it through different managerial logics. Nurul Jadid adopts a modern bureaucratic structure that formalizes participation, while Zainul Hasan relies on communal cohesion and the kiai's charisma as the primary coordinating force. This variation supports As'ad and Hakim (2022b), who argue that educational planning in *pesantren* is shaped by contextual factors such as organizational culture, leadership style, and institutional identity. The findings therefore reinforce the view that no single planning model is universally applicable across *pesantren*. Instead, effective planning emerges when managerial structures are aligned with local traditions, institutional values, and leadership visions, as also suggested by Hajar et al. (2025).

From a practical perspective, the participatory-integrative model at Nurul Jadid enhances adaptability and strengthens stakeholder ownership, enabling programs to respond to student needs and environmental changes. Conversely, the kiai-centered model at Zainul Hasan offers advantages in value consistency, rapid decision-making, and the preservation of strong moral traditions. Rather than viewing these models as oppositional, the findings suggest that they are complementary. Integrating modern managerial structures with traditional moral leadership can produce planning processes that are both adaptive and value-driven, thereby supporting sustainable character and life skill development.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that effective educational planning in *pesantren* requires synergy between stakeholder participation, balanced educational priorities, and leadership capable of guiding institutional change. This study enriches the literature on *pesantren* management by showing that the strength of *pesantren* lies in their ability to harmonize tradition with modernity through intentional and context-sensitive planning. The findings support the broader argument that *pesantren* remain resilient and relevant because they adapt their managerial practices while maintaining their core mission of character and life skill formation.

Holistic Implementation of Character and Life Skill Education

The implementation of character and life skill education at Pesantren Nurul Jadid demonstrates a holistic model that integrates formal, non-formal, and informal learning environments. The synergy between school, madrasah diniyah, and asrama creates a unified educational ecosystem in which discipline, worship routines, and productive activities become part of students' daily formation. This finding aligns with Prajapati et al. (2017), who argue that life skills are most effectively internalized when embedded in daily practices rather than taught as isolated modules. It also supports Fatwa (2025) and Gustriani and Kholis (2024), who emphasize that pesantren-based character education becomes transformative when learning spaces and living spaces are integrated. Nurul Jadid's model, therefore, illustrates how pesantren can operationalize total education by ensuring that academic, spiritual, and vocational components reinforce one another within a structured management framework.

In contrast, the implementation model at Pesantren Zainul Hasan Genggong reflects a hybrid approach that combines *Salafi* traditions with modern educational practices. While classical kitab learning remains central, students also engage in vocational and social activities through cooperatives, printing units, agriculture, and community projects. This experiential orientation aligns with Rohmad et al. (2024), who highlight that learning through practice strengthens work ethic, social responsibility, and independence. The findings suggest that Zainul Hasan successfully bridges traditional *pesantren* culture with contemporary socio-economic realities by embedding real-world experiences into daily routines. This supports the argument that *pesantren* can maintain

their cultural identity while adapting to modern demands, provided that experiential learning is integrated into their educational structure.

Cross-site analysis reveals that although both *pesantren* embrace the concept of total education, their implementation orientations differ significantly. Nurul Jadid emphasizes structured integration across educational streams, while Zainul Hasan prioritizes real-world practice and role modeling. This variation supports Falah and Al (2021), who argue that organizational culture, leadership style, and institutional structure shape the implementation of educational programs. It also reinforces Kurnia and Abdulloh (2024), who state that no universal model exists for character and life skill education in *pesantren*; instead, implementation must be adapted to local context and institutional identity. The broader implication is that successful implementation depends on the alignment between educational structures and the daily life mechanisms that shape students' habits and dispositions.

Supervision practices at both *pesantrens* further illuminate how character and life skills are reinforced through institutional mechanisms. At Nurul Jadid, supervision is conducted through a hierarchical and structured system involving the kiai, institutional leaders, bureau heads, and room supervisors. This model combines administrative monitoring with moral-educational guidance, consistent with Soonyeekhun et al. (2024), who describe supervision as both control and personal development. The systematic reporting and observation processes align with Mu'alina (2023), who argues that tiered supervision enhances educator competence and institutional quality. The findings indicate that Nurul Jadid's bureaucratic supervision provides a clear quality assurance framework that supports continuous character and skill development.

Meanwhile, supervision at Zainul Hasan is characterized by intensive moral and spiritual guidance led directly by caregivers and religious leaders. This charismatic model prioritizes example, advice, and spiritual mentoring, aligning with Kotten et al. (2025), who describe charismatic supervision as central to value internalization in *pesantren*. It also supports Putro et al. (2019), who emphasize the importance of direct guidance from morally legitimate figures in character-based supervision. However, the findings also highlight potential risks: charismatic supervision tends to be less documented, more subjective, and highly dependent on the leader's presence, which may reduce accountability and consistency. This nuance contributes to the literature by showing that while charismatic supervision is powerful for value transmission, it requires complementary structures to ensure measurable and sustainable outcomes.

Comparative analysis shows that both *pesantrens* view supervision as a moral development process rather than mere administrative control, yet they operationalize it differently. Nurul Jadid's model is bureaucratic and data-driven, while Zainul Hasan's is personal and spiritually oriented. This difference reflects the influence of institutional context, consistent with Cansoy et al. (2025), who argue that supervision must adapt to organizational culture and leadership patterns. It also aligns with Tsai et al. (2019), who emphasize that effective supervision requires contextual sensitivity and stakeholder engagement. The findings suggest that supervision in *pesantren* comprises two complementary dimensions: formal structure and moral example. When combined, these dimensions can reinforce both accountability and value internalization.

This discussion implies that *pesantren* aiming to strengthen character and life skill development must consider both structural and experiential components. Structured supervision, as seen at Nurul Jadid, enables systematic monitoring and targeted improvement, while charismatic supervision, as practiced at Zainul Hasan, fosters deep moral internalization through personal relationships and daily interactions. The findings argue that these models should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. Instead, integrating structured systems with moral leadership can produce a holistic and contextually

grounded supervision model that aligns with the unique character of *pesantren*. This synthesis offers a strategic pathway for *pesantren* seeking to enhance graduate quality through balanced, adaptive, and culturally rooted educational practices.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the quality of *pesantren* graduates is shaped by the coherent integration of educational management, character formation, and life skill development. The findings demonstrate that two management logics operate effectively within *pesantren*: a bureaucratic logic that emphasizes structured planning, clear procedures, and systematic supervision, and a charismatic logic grounded in moral authority, exemplary leadership, and personal guidance. Graduate quality emerges not from choosing one model over the other, but from the alignment between managerial practices and the cultural values of each *pesantren*. Holistic supervision, whether formal or charismatic, plays a central role in internalizing values and strengthening students' character and life skills.

Several methodological limitations should be acknowledged. This study focuses on only two *pesantren*, which limits the representativeness of the findings across Indonesia's diverse *pesantren* landscape. The results are also shaped by the unique cultural, regional, and leadership characteristics of each institution, reducing generalizability. Although longitudinal elements were included, the data remain descriptive and do not fully capture long-term impacts on graduates after leaving the *pesantren*. Future research should employ stronger longitudinal designs, extended observation periods, and systematic alumni tracking to examine how management models influence graduates' trajectories over time.

Despite these limitations, the study offers important implications for *pesantren* leaders, policymakers, and scholars. Administrators are encouraged to adopt integrative management models that combine the strengths of bureaucratic systems with the moral influence of charismatic leadership. Strengthening documentation, evaluation mechanisms, and institutionalized practices can ensure that character and life skill development does not depend solely on individual leaders. For policymakers, the findings highlight the need for flexible and context-sensitive standards that recognize the diversity of *pesantren* governance models while promoting value-based and skill-oriented graduate competencies.

Overall, this research contributes to the theoretical development of *pesantren* educational management by demonstrating that effective governance is inherently value-driven and context-dependent. It reinforces the importance of integrating institutional systems with spiritual and moral traditions to produce graduates who are adaptive, ethical, and socially responsible. Future studies may explore hybrid management models, comparative analyses across *pesantren* typologies, and policy frameworks that support sustainable character and life skill development in Islamic educational institutions.

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