




**Address :** Tuesday Block No. 76 Rt/Rw  
01/003 Jatitengah Village, Jatitujuh  
District, Majalengka Regency, West Java  
**Email :** arjijournal@gmail.com  
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## Revitalizing Adab Education in Pesantren as a Strategy for Strengthening the Morals of the Younger Generation

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 Firmansyah<sup>1\*</sup>, Gatot Kaca<sup>2</sup>, Miftahul Husni<sup>3</sup>,  
Emma Himayaturrohmah<sup>4</sup>, Mukti Ali<sup>5</sup>

 <sup>1,2,3,5</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang  
<sup>4</sup> Balai Diklat Keagamaan Bandung

 Email Correspondence: [firmansyah\\_uin@radenfatah.ac.id](mailto:firmansyah_uin@radenfatah.ac.id)

**Kata Kunci:**

Pesantren; Pendidikan Adab;  
Penguatan Moral; Generasi  
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**Abstrak:** Pesantren sebagai lembaga pendidikan Islam memiliki peran strategis dalam membentuk karakter dan moral generasi muda. Arus globalisasi, kemajuan teknologi, dan pergeseran nilai sosial menuntut adanya pembaruan sistem pembinaan moral yang relevan dengan konteks kekinian. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis strategi revitalisasi pendidikan adab di pesantren serta mengkaji efektivitasnya dalam memperkuat moral generasi muda. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan studi kasus di 3 (tiga) pesantren yang mewakili model tradisional, modern, dan hybrid. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan kyai, ustaz, dan santri; observasi terhadap aktivitas pembelajaran dan pembinaan adab; serta telaah dokumen kurikulum. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola revitalisasi yang efektif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi revitalisasi pendidikan adab di pesantren mencakup rekonstruksi kurikulum berbasis nilai Qur'ani dan hadis, penguatan keteladanan (*uswah hasanah*) dari para pendidik, dan penggunaan metode pembelajaran adaptif yang memadukan tradisi pesantren dengan teknologi pendidikan modern. Implementasi strategi ini terbukti meningkatkan kesadaran moral, kedisiplinan, sikap sosial, dan ketahanan santri terhadap pengaruh negatif lingkungan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa revitalisasi pendidikan adab merupakan strategi efektif untuk penguatan

moral generasi muda, dan merekomendasikan pengembangan model pendidikan adab yang berkelanjutan serta responsif terhadap tantangan zaman.

**Keywords:**

Pesantren; Manners Education; Moral Strengthening; Young Generation.

**Abstract:** Pesantren as an Islamic educational institution has a strategic role in shaping the character and morals of the younger generation. Globalization, technological advances, and shifting social values demand an updated moral development system that is relevant to the current context. This study aims to describe and analyze the revitalization strategy of adab education in pesantren and examine its effectiveness in strengthening the morals of the younger generation. The research used a descriptive qualitative approach with case studies in 3 (three) pesantren representing traditional, modern, and hybrid models. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with kyai, ustaz, and santri; observation of learning activities and adab coaching; and review of curriculum documents. Data analysis was done thematically to identify effective revitalization patterns. The results showed that the revitalization strategy of adab education in pesantren includes reconstructing the curriculum based on Qur'anic and hadith values, strengthening the exemplary (*uswah hasanah*) of educators, and using adaptive learning methods that combine pesantren traditions with modern educational technology. The implementation of this strategy is proven to increase moral awareness, discipline, social attitudes, and the resilience of santri to negative environmental influences. This study concludes that the revitalization of adab education is an effective strategy for strengthening the morals of the younger generation, and recommends the development of a sustainable adab education model that is responsive to the challenges of the times.

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## INTRODUCTION

Pesantren as an Islamic educational institution has a historical and strategic role in shaping Indonesian civilization, not only as a center for the transmission of Islamic sciences, but also as a stronghold for fostering the manners, morals, and character of the Muslim generation (Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020). Since their early days, pesantren have functioned as socio-religious institutions that combine formal and non-formal education, forming a learning culture based on Islamic values that are rooted in community life (Yusuf et al., 2024a). Pesantren is one of the main pillars that ensures the continuity of the Islamic intellectual tradition in the archipelago, through a knowledge transmission mechanism that not only transfers knowledge, but also bequeaths the tradition of manners sourced from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the legacy of the salaf scholars (Mahmud et al., 2022). In Al-Attas' view, adab is not just an outward behavior, but a noble behavioral system built on metaphysical awareness of human nature, the purpose of life, and the relationship between humans and their God (Muhyiddin et al., 2022a). Adab thus becomes a moral foundation that guides vertical relationships (*habl min Allah*) as well as horizontal relationships (*habl min al-nas*), so that adab education plays a strategic role in shaping a person who is spiritually, intellectually and socially complete (Ulum & Slamet, 2025).

In the framework of pesantren education, adab is not additional material that is simply completed at the end of the lesson, but rather the spirit of the entire educational process (Nur et al., 2023). Santri are not only required to understand religious sciences textually, but also to internalize noble moral values in their daily lives (Alimron et al., 2023). The development of manners in pesantren takes place through various mechanisms, ranging from exemplary kyai and ustaz, strengthening habituation through boarding life, to consistent enforcement of discipline (Eriyanto & Chelong bin Zakariya, 2024). In classical literature, this concept is strongly affirmed. Imam al-Ghazali in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* asserts that knowledge without adab will be a source of moral corruption, while Sheikh Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* places adab as a prerequisite for a knowledge seeker before he is truly worthy of receiving knowledge itself (Yuhanis et al., 2020). The principle of "adab before knowledge" inherited by these scholars characterizes pesantren education that distinguishes it from modern general education institutions (Rozikin & Astutik, 2021).

However, entering the 21st century, pesantren are faced with a rapidly changing social reality, where the challenges faced in fostering adab are increasingly complex and multidimensional (Nur Hayati, 2020). Globalization brings new values that are often not in line with Islamic moral principles, while advances in information technology have changed the patterns of social interaction and behavior of the younger generation (Rohman, 2018). The phenomenon of moral degradation seen in the lives of teenagers, ranging from weakening respect for teachers and parents, increasing intolerant behavior, to weakening work ethic and social responsibility is a serious concern (Shiddiq et al., 2024). The presence of social media accelerates the process of internalizing these new values, often without critical filters, so that the digital public

space becomes an arena for normalizing negative behavior, hate speech, and moral banality (Susilo et al., 2022).

This condition raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of the role of pesantren as a bastion of national morality. If in the past pesantrens were the center of superior character formation and the guardian of the Islamic manners heritage, then today pesantrens are required to reposition their role to remain relevant in the context of a digital society (Azimah, 2018). The changing times force pesantren to not only maintain the old methods, but also revitalize adab education through measurable innovation and adaptation (Sholeh, 2023). Revitalization here does not mean completely replacing proven traditions, but rather strengthening their substance by adjusting them to the current context (Rosyad, 2019). For example, the principle of respect for teachers, which in the pesantren tradition is realized through *tawadhu'* in face-to-face interactions, now needs to be expanded in digital communication ethics, such as maintaining language politeness on social media, not spreading inappropriate content, and using technology for useful purposes (Bahri, 2022).

Digital technology is a double-edged sword for adab education (Yusuf et al., 2024b). On the one hand, it provides opportunities to expand the reach of learning, facilitate access to sources of knowledge, and provide creative media for *da'wah*. However, on the other hand, without adequate control, technology becomes an entry point for misleading information and destructive values (Muhyiddin et al., 2022b). Therefore, the revitalization of adab education in pesantren must include the wise integration of technology, both in the learning process and in the formation of *santri* character (Indah Purnamasari, 2025).

In the context of research, a number of studies have attempted to understand adab education in pesantren, although the majority still focus on traditional implementation. The *uswah hasanah* method remains the most effective approach, while Risman (2022) highlights the urgency of adapting the pesantren curriculum in facing the digital era. However, studies that explore the revitalization of adab education systematically, which includes curriculum reconstruction, strengthening role models, and adapting modern learning methods, are still very limited (Risman, 2022). This gap is an academic gap that needs to be filled to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how pesantren can remain at the forefront of moral development of the younger generation in the midst of dynamic social change.

There are at least three main gaps that underlie the urgency of research and implementation of the revitalization of adab education in pesantren. *First*, the partial approach in research and practice, where adab development is often discussed or implemented only in one aspect, such as curriculum or exemplary, without seeing its integration. *Second*, the lack of systematic integration of technology, even though technology has become an inseparable part of the lives of *santri* and the wider community. *Third*, the lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of the revitalization efforts

carried out, so there is no clear picture of the extent to which the intervention has succeeded in strengthening the morality of santri in a sustainable manner.

The contribution of research and practice of revitalizing adab education in pesantren is dual, namely theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this effort enriches the literature of Islamic education by providing a conceptual framework that integrates the traditional heritage of pesantren with the demands of the digital era. Practically, the revitalization strategy can be a reference for pesantren managers, educators, and educational policy makers in formulating character strengthening programs based on Islamic values but responsive to global challenges. Furthermore, the success of the revitalization of adab education in pesantren has the potential to make a significant contribution to the moral resilience of the nation, because pesantren graduates not only have scientific competence, but also carry noble values that can be an example for the wider community.

## METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategy of revitalizing adab education in pesantren as an effort to strengthen the morals of the younger generation (Kuntowijoyo, 2018). The choice of qualitative approach is based on the research objectives that focus on exploring the meaning, process, and dynamics of adab development that take place contextually in the pesantren environment (M. Djunaidi Ghony dan Fauzan Almansur, 2019). The research location was determined in 3 (three) pesantren in Indonesia that represent traditional, modern, and combination (*hybrid*) models, namely Pesantren Tebuireng Jombang, Pesantren Darunnajah Jakarta, and Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor (Pesantren Gontor), thus enabling comparative analysis of the variations in the strategies applied (Hasan, 2019). The research was conducted over a period of three months, starting from June to September 2025, allowing sufficient time for in-depth observations, interviews, and data triangulation across the three pesantren settings. The main data sources in this study are kyai, ustaz, pesantren administrators, and senior santri who were *purposively* selected by considering their direct involvement in the adab development process (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews to explore informants' views and experiences related to education on manners, participatory observation of learning activities and adab development, and document review such as curriculum, guidebooks, and pesantren rules of conduct (Sugiyono, 2017). All data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, which were carried out iteratively to ensure the depth of the findings. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources, methods, and researchers, as well as member checks with key informants to confirm the interpretation of the results. This methodological approach is expected to produce a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the patterns, strategies, and effectiveness of the revitalization of adab education in (Aqib, 2019).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Strategic Role of Adab Education in Pesantren

Adab education in pesantren holds a very strategic position in shaping the character of santri and society, because adab is not just outward behavior, but reflects moral integrity, spiritual maturity, and depth of religious understanding (Solihat et al., 2022). In the Islamic scientific tradition, adab precedes knowledge, as emphasized by many classical scholars such as Imam Malik and Imam al-Ghazali who underlined that without adab, knowledge will lose its blessed light. Pesantren, as the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, has a specialty that distinguishes it from other educational institutions, namely placing adab as the core of the entire educational process. This tradition was inherited from the network of Nusantara scholars who studied in the Middle East, especially Makkah and Madinah, who viewed that the process of transmitting knowledge must be accompanied by moral development and spiritual discipline.

Pesantren, as the oldest and most indigenous form of Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, embodies this principle by making adab the very core of its pedagogy. Unlike secular institutions that often prioritize cognitive achievement, pesantren integrates adab across all aspects of daily life—from classroom interactions, to communal worship, to dormitory life (Ma'arif, 2018). For instance, the respect shown by santri toward their kyai (teachers) is not merely symbolic but represents an acknowledgment of the sanctity of knowledge transmission and the humility of the learner before divine wisdom. This relational ethic forms the backbone of pesantren culture, shaping santri to view education as a transformative process of self-purification rather than simply an accumulation of facts (Firmansyah, 2024).

The strategic role of adab education becomes even more evident when viewed through the lens of social and cultural continuity. Historically, the pesantren tradition is deeply connected to the intellectual networks of Nusantara scholars who studied in the Middle East, particularly in the haramain (Makkah and Madinah). These scholars brought home not only theological and legal knowledge but also the ethos of adab, which stressed humility, discipline, and sincerity in seeking knowledge (Hak, 2024). This cultural transmission created a distinctive educational identity for pesantren that balanced orthodoxy with locality, making them resilient institutions of moral and social guidance for centuries.

Furthermore, the strategic role of adab in pesantren education extends to its function as a counterbalance against the growing challenges of modernity and globalization. While contemporary educational systems often face difficulties in integrating character education meaningfully, pesantren—with its tradition of adab—already possesses an embedded moral compass that guides the santri (Mustain & Bakar, 2025). This makes pesantren not only a place of religious instruction but also a crucial institution for moral resilience in the face of technological disruption, materialism, and moral relativism. By prioritizing adab, pesantren ensures that graduates are not only

intellectually equipped but also morally grounded, enabling them to serve as agents of ethical transformation within their communities.

In summary, the strategic role of adab education in pesantren lies in its ability to harmonize knowledge, spirituality, and morality into a coherent educational experience. It safeguards the sanctity of learning, sustains cultural heritage, and equips the younger generation with the moral strength needed to navigate an increasingly complex world. Without adab, pesantren would lose its identity and unique contribution to the Indonesian educational landscape, and knowledge itself would risk losing its barakah (blessing).

### Stages of Revitalization and Success Indicators

The revitalization of adab education in pesantren in the modern era becomes increasingly urgent because the swift flow of globalization and modernization brings great challenges to the morality of the younger generation. Advances in information technology, open access to global culture, and the rapid flow of information on social media have presented both opportunities and threats. On the one hand, technology can be used as an effective means of da'wah and learning, but on the other hand, it has the potential to erode noble values if not addressed with wisdom. Santri as part of the young generation of Muslims need to be equipped with not only cognitive skills, but also a strong moral endurance in order to be able to filter out negative influences and utilize the progress of the times for the benefit.

**Table 1. Stages of Revitalization and Their Success Indicators**

Revitalization Stage	Activity Description	Indicators of Success
Vision and Mission Reconstruction	Reconstructing the vision and mission of the pesantren which is oriented towards adab, moral integrity, and value-based leadership.	The new vision-mission document is ratified; all teachers and santri understand and internalize the values of adab as a top priority.
Learning Method Innovation	Integrating kitab kuning learning, value training, critical discussions, and <i>service learning</i> programs.	Increased santri participation in value discussions; integrated adab learning module; character evaluation results show progress.
Strengthening Teacher Exemplification	Continuous training for kyai/ustaz on character building methods and effective communication.	Teachers show consistent behavior according to the value of adab; students positively assess the role of teacher role models; the rate of discipline violations decreases.
Pesantren Culture Development	Strengthening positive pesantren traditions and adapting them to modern media without losing authenticity.	The pesantren traditions are consistent; the use of digital media for adab reinforcement increases; the sense of togetherness and mutual respect increases.
Continuous	Conduct regular monitoring,	Quarterly evaluation reports; there is a

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Evaluation and Revision	and collective improvement of the development strategy.	reflection, and adab	and revision of the coaching policy; the level of satisfaction of santri and santri guardians has increased significantly.
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Revitalizing adab education is not just repeating old methods, but involves reinterpreting and contextualizing moral values in the current reality. For example, the practice of respecting teachers, which used to be done physically through kissing hands or sitting low, now needs to be expanded in the form of digital communication ethics, such as maintaining good manners when interacting through text messages or social media. Similarly, the attitude of *tawadhu'* and humility that was once expressed in face-to-face interactions must now be integrated in the virtual space by not spreading hate speech, hoaxes, or provocative content.

Some modern pesantren have innovated in teaching adab by utilizing digital learning media, while still maintaining the essence of tradition. At Pesantren Tebuireng Jombang, for example, the adab curriculum is integrated with information technology subjects, so that santri learn how to use social media as a means of *da'wah*. Pesantren Darunnajah Jakarta developed the "Digital Ethics of Santri" module which is a mandatory part of adab education. Pesantren Gontor combines classical and non-classical systems, where adab is not only taught in class, but also practiced in daily life through assignments and habituation in the dormitory. This approach is in line with the concept of *tarbiyah Islamiyah* which emphasizes character building through internalization of values in daily activities.

Philosophically, adab education is rooted in the principle of *tawhid* which places Allah as the center of life orientation. Therefore, all aspects of human behavior, including social interactions, must be governed by an awareness of God's existence. Adab education in pesantren combines aspects of *sharia*, Sufism, and *muamalah* harmoniously, thus forming santri who not only obey the rules of Islamic law, but also have gentleness of heart, social sensitivity, and commitment to justice. Revitalizing adab education means strengthening these three dimensions simultaneously, not just focusing on one aspect alone.

Indicators of the success of revitalizing adab education in pesantren can be seen from several dimensions. *First*, the spiritual dimension which is reflected in the increasing quality of santri worship, such as the punctuality of prayer time, solemnity, and consistency in reading the Qur'an. *Second*, the moral dimension that can be seen from daily behavior, including honesty, responsibility, and respect for teachers and others. *Third*, the social dimension which is realized through the active participation of santri in community activities, the ability to work together, and tolerance for differences. *Fourth*, the newly developed digital dimension, namely the ability of santri to maintain communication ethics in cyberspace.

**Table 2. Indicators of the Success of Revitalizing Adab Education in Pesantren**

<b>Dimens ions</b>	<b>Indicators of Success</b>	<b>Form of Evaluation</b>
Spiritua l	Consistency of worship, solemnity, recitation routine	Observation, mentor notes
Morals	Honesty, discipline, respect	Daily assessment of teachers and friends
Social	Caring, tolerance, participation	Involvement in social activities
Digital	Online communication ethics, digital literacy	Monitoring students' social media accounts

### Challenges and Strategic Solutions

The implementation of the revitalization of adab education in pesantren requires synergy between kyai, ustadz, pesantren managers, senior santri, and even alumni. The habituation of manners must be created through a conducive environment, where everyone is a role model. The main challenges faced are the gap in understanding between the older generation and the younger generation in interpreting adab, differences in learning styles, and limited resources in developing technology-based learning media.

To overcome these obstacles, pesantren can adopt an integrative Islamic education management approach, including strategic planning, responsive curriculum development, improving educators' competencies, and continuous evaluation. Pesantren also need to build networks with higher education institutions and community organizations to broaden the horizons of santri and strengthen the values of adab in the broader context of society.

The revitalization of adab education in pesantren has a significant impact on the character building of santri, which in turn contributes to the moral improvement of society. Santris who graduate from pesantren not only bring religious knowledge, but also bring examples of good behavior, so that they are able to become agents of positive change in the community. Thus, this revitalization is not only relevant for the internal interests of pesantren, but also to strengthen the moral resilience of the nation in the midst of complex global dynamics.

### CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the revitalization of adab education in pesantren is an effective strategy in shaping character and strengthening the morals of the younger generation amid the challenges of modernity and globalization of values. The approach used by pesantren does not only focus on cognitive mastery of religious knowledge, but also on the internalization of moral values through exemplary, habituation, personal coaching, and continuous supervision. The revitalization strategies

found include the integration of adab material in the formal and non-formal curriculum, strengthening the pesantren culture as a character-building environment, strengthening the role of kyai and ustaz as moral role models, and adapting learning methods by utilizing media and technology without reducing the substance of the values taught.

This research confirms that the success of adab education in pesantren is largely determined by the consistency of the application of values, the synergy between caregivers and santri, and the sustainability of coaching outside the classroom. In the context of national moral development, pesantren have strategic potential as a center of character education that not only forms a knowledgeable generation, but also civilized, moderate, and able to contribute positively in society. The revitalization of adab education needs to be supported through educational policies that favor strengthening moral values, collaboration between pesantren and stakeholders, and the development of coaching models that are adaptive to the times.

Nevertheless, this research has several limitations. *First*, the scope of the study is limited to selected pesantren, so the findings may not fully represent the diversity of models and practices across different regions of Indonesia. *Second*, the study primarily relies on qualitative observations and document analysis, which, while rich in description, may not capture the quantitative measurement of outcomes such as the long-term moral resilience of santri. *Third*, the research does not yet address in depth the comparative perspective between pesantren and other Islamic or secular educational institutions in responding to globalization and digital challenges. Based on these limitations, further research is recommended. Future studies could expand the scope to include pesantren with different typologies—traditional, modern, and hybrid—to gain a more comprehensive picture of revitalization strategies. Quantitative or mixed-method approaches could also be employed to measure the effectiveness of adab education in terms of behavioral change, moral resilience, and social impact among graduates. Moreover, comparative studies between pesantren and other educational models, both within Indonesia and in other Muslim countries, would provide valuable insights into how adab education can be contextualized and strengthened in diverse socio-cultural settings.

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