

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE ABU ZAIRI SALAFIYAH ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL AS AN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

Muhammad Imron Rosidi ¹ 

Affiliation: Attaqwa Islamic Institute Bondowoso

Email: kangimron857@gmail.com

Received: 2025-10-15; Accepted: 2025-11-11; Published: 2025-11-20

ABSTRACT

Pesantren are Islamic educational institutions that play a vital role in preserving Islamic values amidst the current of globalization. However, to remain relevant and sustainable, Islamic boarding schools must adapt to the changing times without losing their identity. This study aims to analyze the challenges and opportunities faced by Islamic boarding schools in the era of globalization, using a case study at Pondok Islamic boarding school Salafiyah Abu Zairi Tlogosari Bondowoso. The research employs a qualitative approach with field research methods, where data is collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that Pondok Islamic boarding school Salafiyah Abu Zairi successfully upholds salaf values such as sincerity, simplicity, and independence, while integrating modern elements into its education system, particularly in strengthening Arabic and English language programs. This becomes a strategic opportunity to enhance students' competitiveness in a global context. The main challenges, on the other hand, include limited facilities and human resources. However, with adaptive leadership and community support, the Islamic boarding school is able to respond to these challenges in a contextual manner.

Keywords: Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah; Globalization; Challenges and Opportunities; Islamic Educational Institution; Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has deep historical roots, one of which is through the institution of *pondok pesantren*. The pesantren has been an integral part of Islamic civilization in the archipelago, even before the formal education system was introduced by the colonial government. The institutional adaptation theory in Islamic education explains that educational institutions such as pesantren are required to continue innovating to avoid falling behind in the face of time's development (Zuhdi, 2020).

In the modern context, pesantren faces new realities brought about by globalization, which brings both challenges and opportunities. Globalization is characterized by advances in information technology, the exchange of cultures, and changes in lifestyle. Here, pesantren plays a strategic role in preserving Islamic values and local wisdom while still adapting to the dynamics of the times. As explained by Ma'arif and Arifin (2022), with the development and advancement of technology in this era of globalization, pesantren is required to adjust and keep up with these developments. Despite the distinctiveness of pesantren, there are sometimes internal problems that need to be solved so that they do not become obstacles in keeping up with the times. Among the issues many pesantren face today is managerial problems.

Pesantren not only functions as an institution for transferring religious knowledge but also as a character-building institution that upholds diversity and moderate values. However, globalization presents a complex challenge to the existence of pesantren. These challenges include increased competition among educational institutions, technological disruption, demands for quality management, and the penetration of foreign cultures that often do not align with Islamic values (Aliyah & Fauzi, 2021). On the other hand, globalization also opens space for pesantren transformation into adaptive and innovative institutions. This opportunity can be realized by utilizing digital media for da'wah, improving students' foreign language skills (especially Arabic and English), and integrating entrepreneurship programs into the pesantren curriculum (Mubarak & Hidayat, 2023).

Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi, located in Tlogosari, Bondowoso Regency, East Java, is one of the pesantren that stands out for studying the challenges and opportunities of Islamic education in the globalization era. Amid the rapid modernization and globalization, this pesantren has remained consistent in playing a role as an institution for foreign language development, particularly Arabic, which is the gateway to understanding authoritative Islamic sources. Despite its simple facilities and location far from the city center, Salafiyah Abu Zairi has been able to establish its existence through its flagship Arabic and English language development programs. In an era of globalization that demands efficiency, speed, and competence, such a learning model represents a significant opportunity for pesantren to emerge as an alternative educational institution capable of meeting the community's need for fast and practical mastery of Arabic and English.

However, globalization also brings serious challenges to pesantren like Salafiyah Abu Zairi. One of these challenges is the limitations in institutional management, professional human resources, and the optimal use of information technology. While modern educational institutions compete to integrate technology into the learning process and promotion, pesantren, which still rely on traditional systems, risk being left behind if they fail to adapt. Additionally, competition among educational institutions, as well as the influence of foreign cultures that can affect local values and the spirituality of students, also presents challenges.

In this context, the growing awareness of Muslims to understand religion more deeply presents a significant opportunity for Salafiyah Abu Zairi. Arabic, as the language of the Qur'an and Hadith, is an essential need in the process of understanding Islam comprehensively. Therefore, this pesantren has great potential to become a leading center for Islamic-based foreign language development in the future, provided that it continues to improve governance, enhance the quality of teaching, and strengthen collaboration with the community and external institutions.

Overall, Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi exemplifies how pesantren can face the globalization era by leveraging opportunities such as the growing demand for Islamic education while addressing internal challenges related to management, facilities, and institutional competitiveness. With this background, this research is essential to deeply examine how Salafiyah Abu Zairi addresses the challenges and opportunities in the globalization era, both in terms of its institution, curriculum, and adaptive strategies in responding to the changing times.

Opportunities and Challenges

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, opportunity is defined as a space or chance, both concrete and abstract, that provides a possibility for an activity to take advantage of in achieving its goal. Meanwhile, challenge is defined as something or an object that encourages determination to improve one's ability in overcoming problems. In the context of pesantren, opportunities and challenges are two sides of the same coin that cannot be separated in the process of developing Islamic educational institutions.

Pesantren has significant opportunities in developing education based on character, spirituality, and independence. Pesantren is also beginning to receive attention from various parties, both from the government and the private sector, in efforts to improve the quality of education and economic empowerment of the community. The era of digitalization provides an opportunity for pesantren to utilize information technology in the learning process, marketing the students' entrepreneurial products, and managing administration more professionally. Moreover, pesantren's autonomy in managing a distinctive and adaptive curriculum is also a strength that should be maintained and developed (Zainuddin et al., 2024). However, pesantren also faces substantial challenges.

Some pesantren still encounter obstacles related to infrastructure, institutional management, and human resource competencies. Globalization brings cultural influences that can erode local and religious values if not addressed wisely (Hasan, R., & Nurhalimah, S., 2023). Additionally, the demand for pesantren graduates who not only understand religious knowledge but able to compete in the modern job market presents its own burden. Therefore, innovation and synergy between pesantren, the government, and society are required to make pesantren an adaptive center of education and empowerment in line with the changes of the times (Dacholfany, M. I. et al., 2024).

Pondok Pesantren

The term *pondok pesantren*, according to Syamsul Ma'arif (2015) in his book *Pesantren Inklusif Berbasis Kearifan Lokal*, explains, citing several experts, that there are various terms used to refer to this Islamic educational system. In Java and Sunda, it is commonly called pesantren or pondok. In Aceh, it is known as dayah, rangkang, or meunasah, while in Minangkabau, it is called surau. Zamakhsari Dhofier explains that pesantren comes from the word *pesantrian*, which means 'a place for santri' (*students*). The commonly used term pesantren, or pondok, comes from the root word *santri*. According to Professor Johns, the word originates from Tamil, meaning *religious teacher*, while C.C. Berg argues that *santri* comes

from the Indian term *shastri*, meaning someone who knows religious scriptures, particularly Hindu texts (Ma'arif, 2025).

Islamic Educational Institutions

Etymologically, an institution is the origin or reference of something, the basis for something else, or an organization formed to conduct scientific research or perform an activity. From this definition, it can be understood that an institution has two meanings: 1) physical, material, and concrete meaning, and 2) non-physical, non-material, and abstract meaning. In English, an institution refers to an *institution* (physical meaning), which is a facility or organization for achieving specific objectives, and in a non-physical or abstract sense, an *institution* refers to a system of norms that fulfill needs. An institution in the physical sense is also called a *building*, while in the non-physical sense, it is referred to as *pranata* (Ramayulis, 2021).

Islamic educational institutions, in terminological terms, can be understood as a space or place where the process of Islamic education takes place. From the above definition, it can be concluded that educational institutions contain both concrete aspects, such as facilities and infrastructure, and abstract aspects, including norms and regulations, as well as the responsible parties for the education process itself (Ramayulis, 2021).

Globalization

Globalization is an intensive and comprehensive process, encompassing global integration of economics, technology, culture, and information, so that what happens in one place can directly impact other places (Giddens, 2020). In Islamic education, especially in pesantren, globalization brings significant challenges and opportunities. It highlights the need for pesantren to integrate traditional values with modern technological and managerial capabilities. It emphasizes the importance of curriculum innovation and teacher training to ensure that pesantren remains relevant without losing its Islamic identity. In facing globalization, pesantren have started adopting a multicultural approach. They integrate content from diverse cultures and promote tolerance through interfaith activities and student exchange programs. However, this process is still faced with internal resistance and limited resources (Gozali, 2024).

METHOD

The type of research employed in this study is field research using qualitative methods. According to Bogdan and Taylor, qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and their observed behavior. The data source for this research is the Head of Salafiyah Abu Zairi Islamic Boarding School, who is also the founder and initiator, as well as the teachers responsible for implementing Arabic and English language teaching methods. Additionally, several students involved in the development of foreign institutions, namely LPBA Abu Zairi, are also included as data sources.

Supporting data sources in this study come from library materials, such as literature, articles, journals, books, and theses relevant to the research topic. The data collection techniques used include interviews, observations, and documentation. Two data validation techniques were employed: technical triangulation and source triangulation. The data analysis technique used is the interactive data analysis model by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Purposive sampling was used to determine the research informants. Purposive sampling is a commonly used technique where the researcher selects samples based on specific criteria. The selection criteria are divided into inclusion and exclusion. In this study, the researcher gathered information from a number of research informants as listed in the table below:

Table 1.1: Informant Data Study

No	Name	Position	Status
1	M. Syafruddin Syarif, SH	The foundation's president	Informant Study
2	Bahdatul Nur Liali M.Pd.I	Deputy Caregiver	Informant Study
3	Achmad Taufik S, Pd.	Head of Section, Islamic Boarding School	Informant Study
4	Zainul Arifin M.Pd	Head of Education	Informant Study
5	Inqi Nagh Firda Erfiana S.Pd	LPBA Teacher	Informant Study
6	Rasya Putra Huzair	Chairman, LPBA Men's Coordinator	Informant Study
7	Nadia Putri Fizahara	Chairman, LPBA Women's Coordinator	Informant Study
8	Riska Maulidia Putri	Active Student, LPBA	Informant Study

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi in the Perspective of Challenges and Opportunities in the Era of Globalization

Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi, located in the Tlogosari area, Bondowoso Regency, is known for its cool natural environment, which supports a conducive learning atmosphere. This pesantren stands out as an interesting subject to study in the context of challenges and opportunities in the era of globalization, especially because of its innovative approach in the field of language development, specifically in teaching Arabic and English.

Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi in Tlogosari, Bondowoso, is an example of a pesantren that responds to these challenges by developing programs for mastering Arabic and English. Through an intensive two-month learning system, this pesantren has successfully graduated dozens of batches of students who are proficient in speaking Arabic and English. This innovation demonstrates that pesantren can play a significant role as an effective and relevant institution for foreign language development in the era of globalization.

Until now, pesantren, with all its unique characteristics, remains a central institution for Islamic education development. The existence of pesantren continues to receive positive responses from society because pesantren is able to provide added value to the community. This is evident from the fact that pesantren has produced individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and capable of changing their behavior and mindset. The growing awareness among Muslims to understand religion more deeply presents a great opportunity for this pesantren to grow and strengthen its existence. However, challenges such as the developing management systems and the limited infrastructure remain issues that must be addressed. Therefore, Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi is a relevant subject to examine in the context of pesantren management and the development of students' entrepreneurial spirit, especially in utilizing the growing need for mastering Arabic as a key to understanding Islam.

Challenges of Pondok Pesantren Education in the Era of Globalization

Since the establishment of pesantren during the same period Islam was introduced until today, pesantren has been interacting with the broader society. Pesantren has gained experience with various social groups over time and has grown alongside them with their support. As is widely known, globalization inevitably leads to changes in all aspects of life, including changes in orientation, perceptions, and the level of selectivity among Indonesian society toward education. Therefore, pesantren is expected to adapt to global competition. Holding on to the basic principles that will strengthen the movement of pesantren to remain on the right Islamic path is a must. However, pesantren must also follow the developments of the times to maintain its role as an educational, da'wah, and community development institution.

المحافظة على القديم الصالح والأخذ بالجديد الأصلح *Al-Muhafadlatu 'ala al-qadim al-sholeh wl al-ahdu bi al-jadid al-aslah*. This famous adage among scholars, students, and the pesantren world means preserving the good old values while innovating with better new ones. The traditional values of pesantren include sincerity, simplicity, independence, togetherness, positive freedom, and consistency. These values shape the character of students who are sincere, independent, simple, cooperative, free from bad desires, and consistent in speech, actions, and behavior according to Islamic teachings and noble culture.

Opportunities for Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi in Foreign Language Development

One of the flagship programs consistently developed by this pesantren is the Arabic and English Language Development Institute, known as LPBA. This program is regularly held and has graduated several batches of participants from various age groups and educational backgrounds. The uniqueness of this program lies in its practical and applicable approach, allowing participants to speak Arabic and English fluently within a relatively short time.

The program originated from the initiative of Ustadz Dr. Zainul Arifin, M.Pd.I, who initially taught English to several students at another pesantren where he taught. Within three months, his students were able to actively speak English, a remarkable achievement that was appreciated by the pesantren leadership. Even though the pesantren was not English-based, the students were awarded certificates as a form of recognition. This success quickly spread and attracted many people who wished to learn directly from him, although they did not follow the main pesantren program, which focused on Al-Qur'an memorization and classical Islamic texts.

This situation encouraged Ustadz Zainul Arifin M.Pd.I to establish a new institution under the pesantren's auspices to accommodate this demand. This location later became the foundation of Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi, which is now a center for intensive Arabic and English language development.

Although still in a simple condition, both in terms of management, facilities, and institutional systems, Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi continues to show progress. This is largely due to the enthusiasm of young caregivers who are adaptive to the changes of the times, including utilizing social media for promotion and da'wah. This proves that pesantren, despite its limitations, still has great potential to grow and thrive amid globalization challenges. In this context, Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi represents how a traditional pesantren can respond to the challenges of the times with a creative approach while seizing the opportunity created by the growing public awareness of the importance of learning Arabic as a key to understanding Islam comprehensively.

The story began when Ustadz Dr. Zainul Arifin M.Pd.I was teaching at a pesantren near Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi. He applied Arabic language learning to several students under his guidance. Within a short time, specifically two months, these students became proficient in speaking Arabic. This success was later recognized by the pesantren leadership,

and the students were awarded certificates, even though the pesantren was not Arabic-based. The news of this achievement spread, attracting more people who were eager to learn from him.

Ustadz Zainul Arifin stated that the establishment of the Arabic and English Language Development Institute under Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi is part of the pesantren's vision to produce a generation of Muslims who are not only religious but also globally competent. The Arabic language program has a duration of three months. During this time, participants are expected to complete their memorization and become fluent in speaking Arabic.

Ustadzah Firda Erfiana explained that the institution has two main tracks: Arabic and English language development. The primary focus remains on active communication skills, not just theory. For Arabic, a hands-on approach is used, while for English, students are introduced to basic conversation, everyday vocabulary, and light reading practice. Riska, one of the active students in the English program, shared that she found the method very helpful. She admitted to not having a background in English, but within a short time, she was already able to have light conversations and understand simple texts in English.

Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi continues to develop itself despite its limitations, whether in terms of management, education, or infrastructure. Although it is still in a stage of development, the pesantren is gaining recognition from the public. From both a physical and managerial standpoint, Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi is still in the process of development. Efforts to acquire land, build facilities, and improve the institutional system are ongoing step by step.

Table 1.2: Educational Program Development

Program Name	Arabic and English Language Development Institute (Learn Arabic and English in Three Months)
Duration	3 Months
Teaching Method	80% Practical, 20% Classroom Material
Start Date	Every Month, 10th Date
Program Fee	Dormitory: Rp200,000
	Program: Rp300,000
	T-Shirt, Sticker, Certificate: Rp100,000
Total Fee	Rp500,000
Meal Fee	Self-funded (Canteen available, prices start from Rp5,000/portion)
Registration Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Copy of ID/Family Card- Passport Photo 3x4- Fluent in reading Al-Qur'an- Strong intention and commitment- Willingness to follow pesantren rules- Willing to complete the program- Settle administrative fees

Program Advantages	Participants with no prior knowledge can speak Arabic or English fluently in just 3 months
--------------------	--

CONCLUSION

Pesantren is the “backbone” of Islamic education in Indonesia. It continues to be a reference for the Islamic education of future generations. Specifically, in Indonesia, pesantren is inseparable from the face of Islamic education in the archipelago, as well as the general existence of Islam in the country. Pesantren has advantages that other educational institutions may not possess. One of the most important aspects is that pesantren not only teaches knowledge but also imparts life lessons.

The existence of Salafi pesantren must be preserved and maintained. Despite its strengths and unique qualities, pesantren, like any other institution, is not perfect. There are fundamental areas that need continuous improvement and refinement. Some pesantren excel in certain aspects, but other aspects still require development. The guiding principle is *al-muhafadhotu 'al al-qodimis sholih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah* “Preserving the good old ways and adopting the better new ones.”

Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Abu Zairi, with its uniqueness and strengths, particularly in the teaching of Arabic and English and its daily lifestyle, must continue to improve, especially in terms of management and facilities. Although relatively new, it has already gained recognition and become a reference for learning Arabic, especially, and is expected to seize opportunities and face challenges to continually improve in the era of globalization.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Al Asyari. (2022). Tantangan sistem pendidikan pesantren di era modern. *Risalatuna: Journal of Pesantren Studies*, 2(1), 127–143.

Aliyah, S., & Fauzi, M. (2021). Transformasi pesantren di era globalisasi: Peluang dan tantangan. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Indonesia*, 6(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.31000/jpii.v6i1.4234>

Dacholfany, M. I., Ritonga, M., Hiljati, H., Judijanto, L., & Syamsuri, S. (2024). Navigating educational management in the era of digital transformation. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 16(2). <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v16i2.4769>

Gozali, A., & Rahmawati, N. (2024). Strategi pesantren dalam menjawab tantangan globalisasi: Pendekatan multikultural dalam kurikulum. *Jurnal Sains Sosial dan Pendidikan*, 8(1), 55–66. <https://ssed.or.id/contents/article/view/923>

Hasan, R., & Nurhalimah, S. (2023). Strategi pengembangan pesantren dalam meningkatkan kemandirian ekonomi santri. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 5(3), 210–225. <https://ejournal.uin.edu/jmpi/article/view/2023-05-03>

Khalifah, A. (2022). Strategi pendidikan pesantren menjawab tantangan sosial di era digital. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 6(3), 4967–4978.

Ma'arif, S., & Arifin, Z. (2022). Pendidikan pesantren dan tantangan globalisasi: Membangun moderasi beragama di era digital. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Nusantara*, 4(2), 112–127. <https://doi.org/10.25077/jpin.v4i2.2022.112-12>

Mubarak, A., & Hidayat, R. (2023). Peran pesantren dalam pengembangan keterampilan bahasa Arab dan wirausaha santri. *Jurnal Transformasi Pendidikan Islam*, 5(1), 77–92. <https://doi.org/10.32502/jtpi.v5i1.2023>

Ramayulis. (2021). *Ilmu pendidikan Islam* (9th ed.). Kalam Mulia.

Ma'arif, S. (2015). *Pesantren Inklusif Berbasis Kearifan Lokal*. Kaukaba Dipantar.

Samsudin. (2020). Tantangan lembaga pendidikan pesantren di era disrupsi. *Conference on Islamic Studies FAI*, 221–230.

Zainuddin, M., Ahmad, D., & Rahmawati, A. (2024). Transformasi pendidikan pesantren dalam menghadapi era digital. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Nusantara*, 6(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.25077/jpin.v6i1.2024.45-58>

Zuhdi, M. (2020). Adaptive Islamic education: The role of pesantren in facing modern challenges. *International Journal of Islamic Educational Research*, 2(2), 145–158. <https://doi.org/10.52436/ijier.v2i2.145>