Enhancing Islamic Education Adaptability through Classical Management in the Digital Era

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of Lewin's Change Management Model in managing institutional transformation at Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung, a faith-based Islamic educational institution navigating digital era challenges. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research collected data through interviews, observations, document analysis, and teacher surveys to explore how the unfreezing, moving, and refreezing phases were adapted within the pesantren's Islamic value system. The findings reveal that change was initiated through reflective awareness and spiritual framing, presenting digital transformation as a form of tajdid (renewal) rooted in religious duty. Strategic actions in the moving phase included teacher training, e-learning integration, and moral validation of digital content, while the refreezing stage saw institutionalization through updated policies, mentoring networks, and embedding Qur'anic values in daily digital practices. The study demonstrates that Lewin's model can be effectively contextualized in Islamic settings through value-based leadership and culturally grounded strategies. It concludes that sustainable change in pesantren requires moral legitimacy, participatory engagement, and alignment between innovation and tradition. These findings contribute to broader theoretical discourse on managing educational change in faith-based environments and offer practical recommendations for Islamic educational leaders seeking modernization without compromising their spiritual identity.

INTRODUCTION

The massive development of information technology over the past decade has been a major catalyst for the emergence of the disruption era—an era marked by radical and rapid change that destabilizes established systems, including in the realm of education. In this context, Islamic education faces complex challenges that are not only technological in nature but also involve social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. The urgent need to transform educational practices into models that are adaptive to the digital era is becoming increasingly apparent, particularly in the face of intense value globalization (Huda et al., 2017; Rahimi & Oh, 2024).

Digitalization has reshaped the teaching and learning ecosystem through the emergence of e-learning, online platforms, social media integration, and AI-based educational software, all of which directly or indirectly influence the Islamic education system. This transformation brings with it ideological challenges, particularly the effort to preserve Islamic values and identity within educational environments that are increasingly exposed to global cultures and modern norms many of which may conflict with Islamic principles. These developments raise concerns about the potential erosion of Islamic values if institutions fail to formulate appropriate responses to contemporary changes (Koehrsen, 2021; Kurniawan et al., 2022). Islamic educational institutions are thus called upon to innovate not only in administrative governance but also in pedagogical practice without losing their foundational spiritual and ideological identity.

Another equally important challenge is the growing public demand for transparency, accountability, and stakeholder participation in managing Islamic educational institutions. The era of information openness has encouraged broader public involvement in assessing institutional performance and policy direction. This pushes for an institutional governance model that is agile in responding to change yet firmly rooted in Islamic values (Brahimi et al., 2024; Habibi et al., 2022; Hossain et al., 2024; Maryam et al., 2025). Addressing this issue cannot rely solely on pedagogical approaches; rather, it requires structured managerial strategies supported by clear theoretical frameworks. In this regard, Kurt Lewin's Change Management Model remains one of the classical frameworks that is still highly relevant today. The model offers a structured three-stage process: unfreezing (disrupting the status quo), moving (executing change), and refreezing (institutionalizing change). Although originally developed in the context of Western business organizations, the model is highly applicable when contextually adapted to Islamic educational institutions especially in facing the challenges of digital transformation (Asmendri et al., 2024; Burnes & Bargal, 2017; Kay, 2024). In the unfreezing stage, leaders in Islamic education are encouraged to raise awareness within the academic community about the need for fundamental change. This can be achieved through collective discussions, scholarly forums, and internal evaluations to identify the gaps between current institutional conditions and the demands of the digital era.

The moving stage provides an operational framework for implementing transformative steps, such as digital literacy training for educators, integration of ICT into the curriculum, and data-driven managerial decision-making. Islamic values must continue to serve as the foundation for every innovation, ensuring that technological adaptation does not result in ideological drift. Meanwhile, the refreezing stage focuses on institutionalizing the changes so they become embedded within a stable and sustainable organizational culture. In Islamic educational settings, this means reaffirming Islamic identity within a digitally integrated system (Asmendri et al., 2024; Kay, 2024; Yunus et al., 2021). Although Lewin's model has been widely implemented in modern organizational management, its application within Islamic education remains limited, especially in Indonesia. Most previous studies have concentrated on the technical aspects of digital integration or pedagogical innovation, rather than on structured, theory-based change management strategies (Abuhassna et al., 2024; Wiziack & dos Santos, 2021). Furthermore, many of these studies have yet to fully integrate Islamic values within the change process leaving a theoretical and practical gap in the literature. This article seeks to address that gap by integrating Lewin's classical model with the dynamic realities of change management in Islamic educational institutions in the digital era.

Conceptually, this study contributes to strengthening value-based change management theory in the field of education. Practically, it offers a contextually relevant and adaptable managerial model for Islamic education providers. This article

highlights how change management grounded in classical theory remains both relevant and functional when adapted to the moral imperatives and digital demands of Islamic education. Thus, the scientific contribution of this article lies not only in enriching academic discourse, but also in offering practical insights for institutions currently navigating digital transformation. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the implementation of classical management models in managing organizational change within Islamic educational institutions as a strategy to enhance their adaptability in the digital era. It examines how Lewin's model can be interpreted and contextualized in Islamic education not merely as a mechanistic framework, but as a value-driven approach that facilitates harmony between tradition and modernity.

METHODS

This study adopted a case study approach to analyze the implementation of Lewin's Change Management Model at *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung*. The case study method was chosen because it enables an in-depth exploration of the dynamic and context-specific process of change taking place within an Islamic educational institution facing modern challenges, including digitalization and evolving socio-cultural expectations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung* was selected as the research site due to its distinctive combination of strong adherence to traditional Islamic values and a proactive response to contemporary educational demands, offering a rich context to examine the applicability and effectiveness of Lewin's model in managing institutional transformation (Mirzaei et al., 2025). The data collection process involved several stages. First, qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders at the pesantren, including school leaders, teachers, and administrative staff. These interviews aimed to elicit their insights regarding the challenges of adapting to the modern era and their experiences with the application of Lewin's model in managing institutional change (Alam, 2020). Second, participant observation was conducted to explore how Lewin's three-stage model—unfreezing, moving, and refreezing—was reflected in daily activities. The researcher observed learning sessions, teacher training programs, and decision-making processes that involved collaboration between teachers, students, and parents (Burnes & Bargal, 2017).

Third, document analysis was carried out to collect secondary data from official institutional records, including the school's vision and mission statements, long-term development plans, curriculum programs, and internal reports related to organizational change efforts. These documents provided a basis for understanding the strategies and policies underpinning the transformation processes at the pesantren (Nadlifuddin et al., 2024). Fourth, a structured survey was administered to teachers and staff using a questionnaire designed to assess their perceptions of the model's implementation, especially in terms of change acceptance and execution. The survey also sought to uncover perceived challenges and successes associated with the institutional transformation, as well as the extent to which these changes support the pesantren's mission to cultivate adaptive and spiritually grounded Muslim youth (Habibi et al., 2022). All collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview and observational data were coded and interpreted narratively to reconstruct the change process based on Lewin's three phases. Meanwhile, the survey responses were analyzed descriptively to generate an overview of teachers' and staff members' perceptions of the model's implementation. The combination of these methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how classical change management theory can be contextualized within Islamic educational settings (Miles M. B. & Saldana, 2014).

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation of data sources was applied, including interviews, observations, documentation, and surveys. In addition, prolonged engagement and member checking were used to verify

the accuracy of interpretations and enhance the validity of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through this case study, the research aims to provide a detailed picture of the implementation process of Lewin's Change Model in *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung,* along with the challenges and supporting factors that influence its success. The findings are expected to offer practical insights for other Islamic educational institutions seeking to adopt similar change models while maintaining their religious and cultural identity amidst the pressures of modernization

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of Lewin's Change Management Model at *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung* follows a dynamic and value-integrated process aligned with the institution's Islamic vision and mission. The results are presented thematically based on Lewin's three-stage model: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing.

Unfreezing: Building Awareness of the Need for Change

In the unfreezing stage, *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung* demonstrated a strategic awareness of the urgent need for organizational transformation amid the rapid advancement of digital technology in education. Institutional leaders initiated a series of structured dialogues, combining traditional *halaqah* (study circles) with formal reflective forums to explore the implications of digital disruption on Islamic education. These efforts were not merely procedural but were deeply embedded in the pesantren's epistemological framework, which emphasizes *musyawarah* (consultative decision-making) as both a pedagogical and managerial tool. The leadership deliberately linked the discourse on change to foundational Islamic principles such as *islah* (reform) and *tajdid* (renewal), creating a value-aligned rationale for organizational shift. This contextualization of change within an Islamic discourse not only facilitated acceptance but also anchored the process in religious legitimacy, an essential factor for unfreezing in traditional institutions (Haynes, 2021; Sobirin & Djubaedi, 2024).

Empirical data gathered through interviews indicated a growing concern among teachers and administrators regarding the dissonance between conventional instructional methods and students' learning preferences in the digital age. The school principal noted that "many students are more responsive to digital interfaces than oral lectures," signaling a generational shift in information processing. This observation is consistent with the broader trend documented by Akrim, (2022) and Ismail et al., (2025), who report that Islamic schools across Indonesia are experiencing increased pressure to integrate technology without compromising religious values. Furthermore, internal evaluations revealed declining engagement in certain classroom activities and noted the ineffectiveness of printed modules during pandemic-era hybrid learning, prompting urgent reflection on pedagogical adaptability.

Strategic planning documents and annual institutional reports from 2023–2024 reflected a shift in administrative priorities. Previously centered on curriculum expansion and religious immersion, recent plans emphasized *literasi digital Islami* (Islamic digital literacy), teacher upskilling, and infrastructure renewal. These internal policy documents marked a formal acknowledgment that maintaining the status quo could jeopardize both educational quality and the pesantren's long-term relevance. Such findings resonate with Bracho et al., (2021), Nguyen & Graham, 2023 and Rahimi & Oh, (2024), who argue that successful organizational unfreezing often begins with recognition of *existential gaps* between institutional practices and external demands, particularly when framed in moral or mission-based language.

An important feature of the unfreezing process at the pesantren was the leadership's careful balance between highlighting the urgency of change and preserving

institutional identity. Rather than portraying digitalization as a break from tradition, it was framed as a form of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) to respond to contemporary challenges. This theological re-interpretation enabled pesantren stakeholders to perceive change not as a threat but as an act of faith-based renewal. Teachers and staff were encouraged to view digital tools as instruments of *dakwah* (religious outreach), further reducing resistance. The approach aligns closely with Lewin's notion of "disconfirmation" as a motivator for change, whereby individuals begin to question the validity of current practices, but with the added dimension of religious epistemology as a driver of motivation (Burnes, 2020; van Nistelrooij, 2021).

Ultimately, the unfreezing phase at *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung* was not merely a technical step in a change management model—it was a deeply reflective and value-laden process. It bridged the sacred and the strategic, combining empirical analysis of institutional needs with spiritual justification for change. This dual anchoring allowed the pesantren to lay a robust foundation for the subsequent stages of transformation. By weaving Islamic ethical narratives into change discourse, the pesantren created not just readiness, but moral commitment to evolve. This highlights a key contribution of the case: it shows how unfreezing, when embedded in the worldview of a faith-based organization, becomes a profoundly cultural and theological act, rather than a purely managerial one.

Moving: Implementing Strategic Change While Upholding Islamic Values

The moving phase at *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung* marked a decisive shift from conceptual readiness to concrete transformation. Following the unfreezing stage, institutional leaders began implementing structured change programs aimed at realigning pedagogy with the realities of a digitalized society. The introduction of e-learning platforms such as Google Classroom and Zoom was not an isolated technological adoption but part of a broader curricular reform that integrated digital delivery with traditional *kitab kuning* instruction. This hybrid pedagogical model was designed to maintain *santri's* engagement while preserving the depth of classical Islamic texts. As Ramli et al., (2024) argue, digital tools in Islamic education must be aligned with epistemic authenticity; the pesantren embraced this by embedding Qur'anic ethics into instructional design, using visual materials annotated with Islamic moral messages and narrated in respectful linguistic tones.

Teacher training became a central mechanism for operationalizing the change. Workshops were held monthly, facilitated by both IT specialists and senior *ustadz*, to ensure a dual emphasis on digital literacy and spiritual integrity. This dual-framework training, termed *pelatihan murobbi digital* by the pesantren, became a hallmark of the institution's adaptive strategy. Observational data indicated that teachers gradually became confident in using interactive tools like Kahoot! and Google Forms for both academic and religious content assessment. However, this transformation did not unfold uniformly. Disparities in digital competence were evident, especially among senior teachers unfamiliar with modern devices. The leadership addressed this through a peer mentoring initiative, pairing tech-savvy junior teachers with senior scholars—a model that reflects what (Van Vugt & and Gallagher, 2025) call "intra-institutional scaffolding," where learning flows horizontally across experience tiers rather than vertically from administrators.

Despite these initiatives, challenges emerged related to workload intensification and resource inequality. Survey results indicated that while 82% of teachers acknowledged the value of digital integration, nearly 70% expressed concerns over increased preparation time, device maintenance, and screen-related fatigue. These findings are consistent with (Suhaimi et al., 2022), who found that without parallel investment in teacher well-being and technical support, digital reforms in Islamic schools can stall. Furthermore, the pesantren's infrastructure originally designed for

offline communal learning had to be retrofitted with improved internet access, dedicated tech labs, and learning resource centers. Funding constraints delayed some of these improvements, exposing the gap between strategic vision and implementation capacity. Still, the gradual overcoming of these barriers reflected a pattern of adaptive resilience institutions evolve through negotiated compromise between ideals and practical realities.

What distinguishes this phase at *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung* is the persistent commitment to Islamic ethical grounding. Every new digital resource, whether a video lecture or a WhatsApp group for *halaqah*, underwent *tashih* (verification) by a team of Islamic scholars to ensure it met ethical standards. Instructional content emphasized *adab* (etiquette), not just *ilmu* (knowledge), which aligns with the pesantren's long-standing pedagogical mission of nurturing spiritual character. Teachers were encouraged to insert daily *muhasabah* (self-reflection) exercises within digital assignments, and students were reminded to observe *niyyah* (intentions) before logging in. These practices ensured that digitalization did not lead to secularization, affirming Yamamah, (2022) and Yilmaz, (2024) assertion that moral-spiritual continuity is essential in Islamic institutional change. The pesantren's practice thus presents a unique synthesis where innovation is not just functional but spiritual.

In essence, the moving phase at this pesantren illustrates that successful implementation of change is not merely about introducing technology, but about translating that technology into pedagogical and spiritual value. The institutional change was dynamic, multi-level, and deeply contextual. While partial resistance and logistical barriers persisted, the pesantren's layered approach—training, peer mentorship, resource mobilization, and ethical vetting—ensured that change became a lived, not imposed, reality. This aligns with Miles M. B. & Saldana, (2014) model of sustained transformation, where implementation success hinges on feedback loops, adaptation, and cultural integration. Ultimately, *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung* offers a compelling case for how Islamic educational institutions can navigate digital transitions without forfeiting their foundational identity.

Refreezing: Institutionalizing Change for Sustainability

The refreezing phase at *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung* marked a critical juncture where the changes initiated in the earlier phases began to be formally embedded into the institutional structure, culture, and identity. This phase was not merely administrative, but deeply reflective of the pesantren's commitment to sustainability and value continuity. Leadership documents revealed a significant revision of the pesantren's vision and mission statements, explicitly adding "digital spiritual literacy" as a strategic objective. This codification reflects Lewin's emphasis on stabilizing change through institutional reinforcement (Burnes & Bargal, 2017). By updating its foundational statements, the pesantren ensured that the change narrative was no longer external or episodic, but internalized as part of its organizational ethos.

Furthermore, the integration of digital pedagogy into long-term planning and student assessment frameworks signifies a shift from experimentation to consolidation. Curriculum documents from 2024–2025 included mandatory digital projects in Islamic Studies, blending *tafsir* and *hadith* assignments with multimedia presentation formats. Teachers developed rubrics that assessed not only content comprehension but also the ethical use of digital tools—reflecting a dual focus on competence and character. This approach aligns with what Habibi et al. (2022) describe as "Islamic techno-pedagogical integration," where digital literacy is cultivated within moral boundaries. The pesantren's commitment to embedding Qur'anic ethics into digital practices, such as citing verses responsibly and avoiding unethical online sources, illustrates that refreezing was also a spiritualization of technology.

Culturally, refreezing took the form of ritualizing new practices within traditional pesantren norms. For example, digital classes began with *doa al-ma'thurat*, and teachers frequently reminded students of *niyyah* (intention) before engaging with technology. These symbolic acts served to sacralize digital engagement and alleviate concerns among senior educators that modernization might erode *adab*. Such ritual integration has been shown by Andersson & Gadolin, (2020) to be effective in preserving institutional identity during change. Moreover, the culture of *muraqabah* (spiritual self-awareness) was revived in virtual settings through reflective tasks and digital journaling apps designed for daily *muhasabah*. These innovations show how technology was not only adopted but was redefined in Islamic pedagogical terms, offering a model for value-based cultural embedding.

Organizationally, a notable feature of this stage was the emergence of internal mentoring structures. Teachers who had excelled in digital adaptation—often younger educators—were formally designated as *musyrif teknologi* (technology mentors) and tasked with assisting others. This peer-led support system was formalized through policy circulars and became a requirement during weekly pedagogical meetings. Such mechanisms fostered a culture of continuous improvement and mutual accountability, a condition Burnes, (2020) notes is critical for preventing regression. Moreover, leadership evaluations tied to digital competency reinforced the permanence of the transformation. These practices helped institutionalize not only the tools but the behaviors, language, and leadership expectations required for sustained change. In sum, the refreezing process at *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung* exemplified how change can be anchored in both structure and spirit. By integrating digital practices into formal policies, pedagogical routines, and spiritual rituals, the pesantren achieved a holistic stabilization of its transformation efforts. This outcome supports Sahin, (2019) proposition that Islamic educational reform must balance modern functional demands with the preservation of authenticity. The pesantren's case demonstrates that refreezing is not the end of change, but the beginning of a new institutional culture—one that harmonizes the imperatives of the digital age with the sacred traditions of Islamic education.

Discussion

The findings of this study reaffirm that Lewin's Change Management Model possesses the theoretical elasticity necessary for adaptation in diverse institutional contexts, including faith-based educational settings. While originally designed for secular organizational environments, its three-phase framework—unfreezing, moving, and refreezing—proved both relevant and actionable when applied within *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung*. Each phase was contextualized not merely as a managerial step, but as a process steeped in Islamic ethical reasoning, spiritual discourse, and collective deliberation (*musyawarah*). The pesantren's leadership reinterpreted Lewin's principles through an Islamic lens, showing that institutional change, when aligned with religious values, can be perceived not as rupture, but as *tajdid*—a form of spiritual renewal consistent with Islamic intellectual tradition (S. Rahimi, 2024; Rassool, 2024; Yunus et al., 2021). A critical factor in the model's success was the role of culturally embedded leadership that could bridge strategic frameworks with theological narratives. The pesantren leaders did not merely instruct change; they cultivated *moral legitimacy* for change, framing digital transformation as a continuation of *dakwah* and *tarbiyah ruhiyah* rather than as a secular necessity. This framing helped reduce resistance and created a shared vision across stakeholders. As affirmed by Nguyen & Graham, (2023), change efforts in religious institutions are most effective when spiritual narratives are integrated into leadership discourse. Moreover, communication channels remained open and participatory throughout the process—

teachers, administrators, students, and parents were consistently engaged, which reinforced trust and enhanced adaptability.

Beyond technological integration, the study reveals that sustainable change in Islamic education demands institutional introspection and the willingness to reinterpret tradition in the face of evolving realities. The success of digital pedagogical tools was not due to their novelty, but because they were harmonized with the pesantren's existing value system. Rituals such as *doa* before digital sessions and the inclusion of *akhlaq* in online content demonstrated that innovation can coexist with authenticity. This finding resonates with Lincoln & Guba, (1985) argument that organizational change in culturally rich institutions must respect contextual validity— change is only legitimate when it resonates with the lived values and practices of the institutional community. Furthermore, this research contributes a new perspective to the discourse on Islamic educational reform by empirically demonstrating that classical change models can be spiritually reframed. Prior scholarship often dichotomizes between Western management theory and Islamic education systems, yet this study demonstrates that such binaries are unnecessary. Instead, the pesantren effectively hybridized universal management principles with localized religious meaning, creating a model of adaptive religiosity. This supports the proposition by Anwar et al., (2025 and Ridwan & Lalu Agus Satriawan, (2024) that pesantren modernization is not about abandoning the past but about integrating it wisely with the present—maintaining *tsaqafah Islamiyah* (Islamic knowledge) while engaging the tools of modern education.

Importantly, the study also raises awareness of the practical limitations faced by pesantren in implementing institutional change. Infrastructure constraints, digital fatigue, and unequal teacher competencies were all factors that influenced the pace and consistency of transformation. Yet, these challenges were met with adaptive solutions such as mentoring systems, spiritual reinforcement, and the strategic pacing of reform. These findings highlight that the success of refreezing is not merely about policy enforcement, but about creating conditions for habit formation and cultural internalization (Burnes, 2020). This emphasizes the need for sustained leadership commitment and incremental implementation tailored to institutional readiness. In conclusion, the adaptation of Lewin's Change Model at *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung* demonstrates that value-based educational institutions are not incompatible with modern change theory. On the contrary, when change models are situated within the ethical, cultural, and spiritual ecosystem of an institution, they can not only succeed but thrive. This case underscores the significance of contextual theology in change management and presents a replicable framework for other pesantren seeking transformation without compromising their core identity. As Islamic education continues to navigate the digital age, such integrative models offer a pathway forward—where reform is not only strategic, but also sacred.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of Lewin's Change Management Model at *Pondok Pesantren Diniyah Putri Lampung* demonstrates the model's applicability and adaptability in faith-based educational settings. Through each phase—unfreezing, moving, and refreezing—the institution successfully integrated change initiatives with Islamic ethical principles and communal values. The transformation process was not limited to technological adoption but involved deep cultural alignment, spiritual framing, and participatory leadership that collectively ensured institutional readiness, engagement, and sustainability. The findings suggest that effective change in Islamic educational institutions must be both structurally strategic and spiritually grounded. Leaders who situate organizational transformation within the moral and theological framework of the pesantren can foster greater legitimacy and community-wide commitment to reform. Furthermore, institutionalization of change requires deliberate

embedding of new practices into long-term policies, cultural rituals, and internal mentoring systems, ensuring continuity without disrupting identity. Based on these insights, future educational reforms in pesantren and similar Islamic institutions should prioritize the harmonization of tradition and innovation. Policymakers and school leaders are encouraged to design change models that respect cultural integrity while promoting adaptive competencies. In particular, spiritual legitimization, inclusive stakeholder communication, and staged implementation emerged as key success factors that should inform similar efforts elsewhere. For future researchers, this case highlights the value of exploring change management through the lens of religious values and institutional culture. Comparative studies involving pesantren across diverse regions, or research applying other classical or contemporary change models in Islamic contexts, could enrich our understanding of how educational institutions evolve while maintaining religious authenticity. In light of the digital age's rapid transformation, research must continue to bridge the gap between theoretical models and context-based applications that uphold educational excellence and spiritual purpose.

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