



# Integration of Pesantren Curriculum and Higher Education

Adib Rofiuddin Basori<sup>1</sup>, Mulyawan Safwandy Nugraha<sup>1</sup>, Sopidi<sup>2</sup>, Syibromilisi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon, Indonesia

✉ [adibrofuddin.basori266@gmail.com](mailto:adibrofuddin.basori266@gmail.com)\*

## Abstract

This study analyzes the amalgamation of the pesantren curriculum and secondary education at STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon, focusing on Islamic tenets and academic criteria within the framework of modern education. This study aims to elucidate the implementation of the integration of the pesantren and higher curriculum at STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon, as well as to identify the elements that facilitate and impede its achievement. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, data are collected via participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis from the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Head of Study Program, and students. This study explains that the integration process centers on three fundamental pillars: faith, knowledge, and charity, with a strong emphasis on moderation (*wasatbiyah*) in the curriculum. Although integration has been successful, the problem lies in the use of pesantren values as indicators in academic evaluation, and character development in the classroom takes time. This study emphasizes the importance of optimizing the implementation of an integrative curriculum, contributing to the literature by demonstrating the application of Islamic principles in the context of practical and academic education.

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## INTRODUCTION

The integration of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) with higher education in Indonesia is receiving heightened attention, especially in addressing the challenges posed by globalization, which necessitate a balance of academic and religious competencies (Suprpto & Sumarni, 2022; Nur et al., 2023; Arroisi et al., 2024). As per information from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, by 2023, there existed about 27,000 Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) throughout Indonesia, imparting diverse religious and ethical ideals (Ritonga & Dede Rosyada, 2024; Sakdiah, 2024).

Nonetheless, several Islamic boarding schools have failed to completely align their curricula with the requirements of higher education, which is progressively founded on science and technology. STIT Buntet Pesantren in Cirebon is an Islamic boarding school dedicated to tackling this challenge, functioning as a pesantren-based higher education institution with the objective of integrating religious teaching and

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science within its curriculum. The primary challenge in integrating the curricula of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) with higher education is the misalignment between the traditional values of these institutions and the requirements of a science- and technology-oriented academic environment (Ridwan & Oswald Timothy Edward, 2024; Darmawati et al., 2024).

Current curriculum frequently inadequately address the requirements of students aspiring to higher education, hindering their adaptation to the established formal education system. Moreover, the absence of coordination between Islamic boarding schools and universities impedes this integration process (Suryanto, 2024; Machado & Szerman, 2021). Consequently, it is essential to analyze the efficacy and sustainability of the integration process at STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon.

An examination of prior research indicates multiple efforts to align the curricula of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) with higher education. Sholehah (2025), elucidates in her research the integration of the Islamic education curriculum with a science and technology approach in higher education. This study underscores the significance of interdisciplinary collaboration among educators to build a curriculum that aligns with contemporary advancements.

A research by Ashari et al., (2022), identified issues in student management inside Islamic boarding schools that require resolution through more cohesive instructional practices. This study establishes a crucial basis for comprehending the management of curricular integration in Islamic boarding schools. This article's originality stems from its concentrated examination of STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon as a case study, a topic that has not been extensively addressed in prior studies.

This study aims to elucidate the integration of the Islamic boarding school curriculum with higher education at STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon and to determine the elements that facilitate or impede its achievement. This research is essential for advancing an educational approach that integrates religious and academic elements, thereby yielding proficient graduates equipped to confront global concerns. The primary assertion of the study is that effective integration of the Islamic boarding school curriculum with higher education necessitates robust collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and universities, alongside regulations that facilitate curriculum creation tailored to contemporary student requirements.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing a case study framework to examine the merger of Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) and higher education curricula at STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon. This methodology was used as it enables researchers to attain a comprehensive grasp of the curriculum integration process and to investigate the elements that facilitate and obstruct its efficacy at the institution (Poltak & Widjaja, 2024; Engkizar 2023; 2024; Putri et al., 2025; Aryasutha et al., 2025). This research emphasizes on data gathering and the analysis of phenomena occurring in the field. Through a case study, researchers can meticulously uncover the diverse factors influencing curriculum implementation.

Researchers actively participated in the data gathering process, utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and recording (Ardiansyah et al., 2023; Engkizar et al., 2022; 2023; Hamdi & Desvia, 2025; Kaema & Ulwi, 2025). Interviews were conducted with diverse informants engaged in the curriculum integration process, including the leadership of STIT Buntet Pesantren, lecturers, curriculum managers, as well as several students and alumni of the Islamic boarding school affiliated with the higher education system at STIT Buntet. Informants were chosen through a purposive sample method, targeting persons possessing pertinent

knowledge or experience linked to the research subject. Comprehensive interviews were performed to examine their viewpoints on the curriculum integration process at STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon and to ascertain the obstacles and solutions encountered during implementation.

Participatory observation was performed at STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon to get an immediate comprehension of the implementation of the integrated curriculum in daily instruction and learning. Researchers documented interactions among students, lecturers, and curriculum administrators to gain deeper insights into the dynamics within and beyond the classroom. Additionally, an analysis of documents, including curriculum archives, academic regulations, and activity reports, was conducted to provide a more thorough understanding of the structure and substance of the applied curriculum.

This study was carried out at STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon, situated in Cirebon, West Java. The investigation spanned two months, from October to November 2025. Throughout this period, researchers performed a series of interviews, observations, and document collecting to get thorough and representative data on the research subject. This study utilized data triangulation techniques to assure the authenticity of the gathered data, integrating information from several sources and data gathering methods (Susanto et al., 2023).

This triangulation seeks to enhance the validity of the research findings by juxtaposing data acquired via interviews, observations, and documents. Moreover, the researchers verified the findings through talks with informants to confirm the precision of the data interpretation. This technique enabled the researchers to confirm that the findings accurately represented the actual situation and could be relied upon for subsequent investigation.

This study employs a dependable method, since the qualitative approach enables researchers to investigate the phenomena comprehensively and attain a more nuanced understanding of the integration of the Islamic boarding school curriculum with higher education. The success of this research is contingent upon direct engagement with the individuals and the precision of data processing and analysis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Integration of the Islamic Boarding School Curriculum with Academic Studies

The initial finding reveals that STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon emphasizes the reinforcement of three principal pillars in curriculum integration: faith, knowledge, and virtuous actions. This integration is distinctly evident in the institution's goal and objective, which seeks to cultivate graduates proficient in synthesizing science, technology, and religion from the Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja) perspective. This signifies an endeavor to establish a comprehensive education, emphasizing both the acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of character in alignment with moderate Islamic principles. The Head of STIT Buntet Pesantren articulated, "This integration is understood as the amalgamation of higher education's academic accomplishments with the identity and values of the Islamic boarding school, ensuring that the curriculum is directed not solely towards professional competence but also towards the character development of students" (interview with the Head of STIT Buntet, 2025).

At the operational level, curricular integration is manifested in the several courses offered, which amalgamate components of the Islamic boarding school with formal education. The Head of the Islamic Education and Guidance (MPI) Study Program stated, "We are developing courses focused on Islamic boarding school management and guidance and counseling, with Islamic boarding school values thoroughly integrated into each learning module" (interview with the Head of MPI

Study Program, 2025).

The academic programs at STIT Buntet Pesantren, including Islamic Education Management (MPI) and Islamic Education Guidance and Counseling (BKPI), embody this initiative by incorporating courses on Islamic boarding school administration, Islamic guidance and counseling management, alongside general courses aligned with Islamic boarding school principles. This establishes a robust basis for pupils to cultivate academic skills and strong character.

Nonetheless, a significant obstacle in executing this curriculum integration is the capacity of lecturers to incorporate Islamic boarding school ideals into quantifiable and usable academic learning methodologies. The Head of the BKPI Study Program remarked, "While the majority of lecturers are graduates of Islamic boarding schools, the challenge lies in converting their comprehension of Islamic boarding school values into quantifiable academic learning methodologies applicable in course evaluations" (Interview with the Head of the BKPI Study Program, 2023). This suggests that while Islamic boarding school ideals are incorporated into the curriculum, its execution in the classroom necessitates continuous training and modifications for instructors to enhance their application.

This discovery corresponds with other research that underscores the necessity of amalgamating religious education with science to establish a more inclusive and pertinent educational framework (Al Jaber et al., 2025). The focus on integration is evident in the course structure, which merges Islamic boarding school management with guidance and counseling, emphasizing both theoretical frameworks and the application of Islamic boarding school values within an academic setting (Interview with the Head of the MPI Study Program, 2025).

### **Collaboration Mechanisms for Curriculum Development in Campus-Islamic Boarding Schools**

Concerning the curriculum formulation process, data reveal a strong partnership between campuses and Islamic boarding schools, resulting in a curriculum that amalgamates academic and Islamic boarding school principles. This procedure is conducted via a collaborative forum, the Management Review Meeting (RTM), which includes administrators from the campus, foundation, and Islamic boarding school. This establishes a governance framework predicated on "dual legitimacy," wherein campuses possess administrative jurisdiction over the curriculum, while Islamic boarding schools retain significant veto authority to guarantee that the curriculum aligns with Islamic boarding school principles.

The incorporation of Islamic boarding school values into the curriculum is manifested through the development of courses that encompass not only general knowledge but also the principles imparted in Islamic boarding schools, including independence, discipline, and the harmonious application of religious teachings. This collaboration between campuses and Islamic boarding schools fosters the development of student character that corresponds with the values imparted in Islamic boarding schools, encompassing both academic proficiency and the ethics and conduct that signify a student's character.

The Head of the STIT Buntet Islamic Boarding School stated, "Pesantren serve as custodians of authentic values, possessing significant veto power in assessing whether the developed curriculum embodies the principles of tafaquh fiddin and wasathiyah" (Interview with the Head of STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon, 2025). This collaborative procedure parallels the research conducted by Ni'am & Arafah (2024), which asserts that curriculum administration in Islamic boarding school-based educational institutions necessitates a strategy that harmonizes religious traditions with the requirements of formal education.

### **Integration of Implementation in Curriculum Framework, Educational Activities, and Extracurricular Programs**

Research on the execution of curriculum integration at STIT Buntet Pesantren reveals that integration occurs across three primary dimensions: curriculum framework, pedagogy, and co-curricular activities. The enhancement of Islamic boarding school content at the study program level is evident in courses like Islamic Boarding School Management and Islamic Boarding School Guidance and Counseling, which incorporate both scientific theories and Islamic boarding school values (Interview with the Head of the MPI Study Program, 2025). This establishes a robust platform for pupils to cultivate academic competencies grounded in moderate Islamic boarding school ideals (Hilmin, 2024).

At the program level, curricular integration is achieved by courses that possess unique characteristics of Islamic boarding schools and the enhancement of Islamic boarding school content within general courses. The Head of the MPI Study Program articulated that various courses openly demonstrate this connection, including Islamic Boarding School Management and Islamic Boarding School Guidance and Counseling. "We created a course dedicated to Islamic boarding school management and guidance and counseling, acting as a conduit between academia and Islamic boarding schools" (Interview with the Head of the MPI Study Program, 2025). This course imparts general theories in the subject while incorporating the ideals and practices cultivated in Islamic boarding schools, enabling students to attain a more holistic understanding of education management based on Islamic boarding schools (Anugrah et al., 2024).

Curriculum integration is systematically executed at the learning level through the preparation detailed in the Semester Learning Plan (RPS) and subsequently implemented in the classroom. A professor from the BKPI Study Program indicated that the RPS incorporates Islamic boarding school ideals, including independence, simplicity, and respect, as integral components of specific Course Learning Outcomes (CPMK). "This integration is conducted methodically from planning to execution, wherein Islamic boarding school values are incorporated into each course" (Interview with a BKPI Study Program Lecturer, 2025). These findings correspond with the research conducted by Yusuf & Abbas (2025), which highlighted the significance of amalgamating religious beliefs with academic competencies to produce well-rounded graduates.

Additionally, students encounter curriculum integration via co-curricular programs beyond formal lectures. Students observed that initiatives like the Hadith Interpretation Study Forum, the Religious Moderation Technical Implementation Unit (UPT), and the Quranic Memorization Program offer avenues for enhancing their religious knowledge while amalgamating intellectual and spiritual qualities. One student remarked, "Extracurricular programs such as the Hadith Interpretation Study Forum and Quranic memorization significantly enhance our comprehension of religion while simultaneously equipping us for scientific discourse through a more scholarly lens" (Interview with Student, 2025).

Post-class procedures also illustrate enhanced integration, as students convene in small groups to examine (*muhafadzah*) and deliberate on newly acquired content. These groups operate akin to *halaqah* sessions in Islamic boarding schools, although adopt a campus-oriented scientific methodology. One student articulated, "We not only review the lesson orally but also engage with the material through scientific methodologies, including journal analysis and data synthesis." This integrates the pesantren tradition of *tafaqquh fiddin* (religious reflection) with the scientific method employed in academic settings" (Student Interview, 2025). This illustrates that, despite the divergent methodologies of the pesantren tradition and formal education, both can synergistically enhance the development of intellectuals who are not only

academically proficient but also embody a robust religious character.

The integration of curriculum via co-curricular programs and extracurricular activities is significantly pertinent to the notions of the Hidden Curriculum and Dual Curriculum Integration (Maulana & Fuad, 2024). Curriculum integration highlights that character and value development are frequently more effectively cultivated through non-formal activities and supportive learning environments (the Hidden Curriculum), exemplified by the Hadith Interpretation Study Forum and post-class muhafadzah groups. These exercises provide a foundation for imparting the principles of discipline, tafaqquh fiddin, and moderation that are inadequately addressed in formal lectures.

The collaboration between the Islamic boarding school halaqah tradition, emphasizing repetition and etiquette, and the campus scientific method, which prioritizes critical analysis and data synthesis, exemplifies the efficacy of the vertical and horizontal integration model. This synergy between the scientific and values curricula of the Islamic boarding school fosters the development of graduates with comprehensive competencies (Hakim Lukman Et Al, 2020). This underscores that character education cannot be limited to designated courses but must be integrated across the student's academic and social environment.

### **Integrative Quality Assurance System and Its Effects on Graduates**

The quality assurance system at STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon emphasizes the incorporation of moderate values into the curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. The Student Leadership Council (LPM) utilizes the PPEPP cycle (Determination, Implementation, Evaluation, Control, and Improvement) to oversee and enhance the level of curriculum integration (Interview with the Head of LPM, 2025). The efficacy of curriculum integration is assessed comprehensively, incorporating technical skills, interpersonal skills, and external evaluations via tracer studies, to guarantee that graduates exhibit robust academic proficiency alongside commendable character and the capacity to implement moderate values in professional settings (Interview with the Vice Head of Academic Affairs, 2025).

The Vice Head of Academic Affairs at STIT Buntet Pesantren stated that the effectiveness of curriculum integration is assessed comprehensively. This assessment includes three primary components: i) hard skills, evaluated via Grade Point Average (GPA), study efficiency, and research/publication achievements; ii) soft skills or character attributes, such as tafaqquh fiddin values, tolerance/wasathiyah, discipline, and communication etiquette, assessed through observation, peer evaluations, and student conduct reports; and iii) external feedback obtained through tracer studies or graduate user surveys. "We assess success comprehensively, considering not only academic performance but also students' character and their capacity to implement moderate values in the workplace" (Interview with the Vice Chair of Academic Affairs, 2025).

Alumni and stakeholders affirmed the beneficial effects of curriculum integration on graduates. They asserted that STIT Buntet Pesantren graduates exhibit a robust amalgamation of student character attributes, including discipline, accountability, ta'dzim (reverence), and integrity, alongside academic professionalism that renders them suitable for the workforce. An graduate remarked, "Upon graduation, I possess robust academic competencies; however, the most significant aspect is the character I cultivated at the Islamic boarding school." The character attributes of discipline and honesty have significantly benefited my work and professional interactions" (Interview with Alumni, 2025).

Alumni and stakeholders affirmed the beneficial effects of this integration, as numerous graduates exhibited a blend of robust student character and academic professionalism in their professional environments. This corroborates the findings of Imaduddin (2024), who highlighted that the integration of Islamic boarding school

ideals with academic education can yield graduates who are both intellectually exceptional and demonstrate significant integrity in their jobs.

### **Obstacles to Implementation: Faculty Human Resources, RPS Operationalization, and Temporal Limitations**

This study's findings indicate that while the integration of the Islamic boarding school curriculum at STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon has been effectively executed, notable challenges persist concerning the quality of the lecturers' human resources and time limitations in the educational process. The Head of the MPI Study Program articulated that the primary problem resides in the lecturers' capacity to convert pesantren virtues, such as *ta'dzim* (respect) and modesty, into quantifiable indicators for learning and evaluation (Interview with the Head of MPI Study Program, 2025). This underscores the significance of continuous training for educators to effectively incorporate pesantren ideals into systematic and quantifiable academic learning methodologies.

This is also evident in prior research by (Yusuf & Abbas (2025), which underscored the necessity of character-based education within the framework of integrated Islamic education. This study illustrates that, despite most lecturers originating from pesantren backgrounds, there exists a necessity to enhance their comprehension of teaching and evaluating character in accordance with Islamic norms. This study also revealed issues associated with the implementation of Semester Learning Plans (RPS). While the RPS includes integrative values, the emphasis on cognitive outputs frequently overshadows instruction, restricting the time devoted to cultivating character values.

This corresponds with the findings of Sakdiah (2024), who indicated that values-based education in Islamic boarding schools is frequently obstructed by the pressure to achieve predetermined academic objectives. This pressure creates a conflict between achieving quantifiable academic results and fostering a profound development of students' character. This study highlights the necessity for a more equitable pedagogical approach, dedicating adequate time to the incorporation of character values, as advocated by Yusuf & Abbas (2025), who stressed the significance of blending hard and soft skills within the Islamic boarding school education framework.

The implications of these findings strengthen the current theoretical discourse regarding the difficulties of curriculum integration in Islamic boarding schools. Al Jaber et al., (2025), asserted that effective integration of religious and academic education necessitates a system that fosters a balance between intellectual development and moral character formation. This indicates that despite the well-structured integrated curriculum, issues in implementation persist regarding the optimization of character education, necessitating modifications in instructor training and improved management of instructional time.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that STIT Buntet Pesantren Cirebon has effectively amalgamated the pesantren curriculum with higher education by employing a strategy that harmonizes science, technology, and religion. This integration emphasizes three principal pillars: faith, knowledge, and charity, embodying the values of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja) in all facets of education. Nonetheless, considerable obstacles persist, especially regarding the caliber of instructors and restricted instructional time, which may impede the successful execution of this integrative curriculum. These findings corroborate prior studies suggesting that the amalgamation of religious and scientific education necessitates a methodical and enduring strategy in both instruction and assessment. A natural implication of these findings is the necessity for continuous training for instructors to enhance their capacity to integrate

pesantren values into quantifiable academic learning methodologies. Moreover, modifications in the management of learning time are essential to guarantee the effective instillation of pesantren character values in the educational process. Enhancing an integrative and collaborative curriculum between the university and the pesantren is essential for elevating the quality of education that harmonizes intellectual and character development.

This study significantly contributes to educational literature, especially on the integration of Islamic boarding school (pesantren) and higher education curricula in Indonesia. These findings enhance Islamic educational theory, which integrates science with religious principles, and offer practical guidance for Islamic boarding schools in developing curricula that address contemporary concerns. Future research opportunities may concentrate on creating more successful curriculum implementation models and examining the potential for collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and higher education institutions to cultivate proficient and ethical graduates.

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