

Institutionalizing Quality Assurance in Traditional Islamic Education: The Strategic Role of Majelis Masyayikh in Indonesian Pesantren

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Abstract

The dualism between traditional pesantren education and national standards often marginalizes santri graduates in terms of vertical mobility access. This research aims to analyze the conceptual framework of quality assurance established by the Majelis Masyayikh (MM), the dynamics of its implementation at the grassroots level, and its implications for public recognition of graduates. Employing a qualitative-descriptive design with a policy analysis approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with MM members, pesantren leaders, and policymakers, as well as an analysis of regulatory documents. The results indicate that the MM framework has successfully integrated salafiyah epistemology into an accommodative-transformative quality assurance system. Despite emerging administrative and ideological challenges, the success of this policy highly depends on a participatory-cultural approach rather than hierarchical bureaucratic instructions. The impact of this research provides an empirical foundation for the government to design inclusive accreditation instruments, ensuring that the institutionalization of pesantren enhances the quality of santri human resources sustainably and fosters global competitiveness in the future without uprooting its authentic spiritual traditions.

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INTRODUCTION

Pesantren education plays a vital role in shaping the moral character and intellectual resilience of Indonesian society amidst the current wave of globalization (Islamic et al., 2024; Jaenullah et al., 2022; Zainuri et al., 2025). The need for educational institutions capable of integrating traditional religious literacy with the demands of modern civilization is increasingly urgent to be addressed in a structured manner. The wider community progressively demands assurance that pesantren graduates not only possess deep religious knowledge (*tafaquh fiddin*) but also comprehensive competencies recognized legally, academically, and professionally in the public sphere (Badrin, 2024). Based on data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, there are more than thirty thousand pesantrens with millions of students (*santri*) serving as the backbone of grassroots education in Indonesia; however, public recognition of their graduates' competency standards is often hindered by disparities in managerial quality between institutions (Fauzi, 2023a). The enactment of Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren became a milestone for the state to recognize this ecosystem (Abdurrahman & Arifin,

2025). Therefore, the institutionalization of quality assurance through the Majelis Masyayikh (Council of Scholars) is not merely a fulfillment of state administrative requirements, but a strategic necessity to ensure that pesantren contributions remain relevant and highly competitive in broader society (Lathifah et al., 2025; Mujahidin et al., 2023).

Despite pesantrens having gained strong legal legitimacy from the state, the public and education stakeholders are still faced with serious issues regarding the absence of standardized and publicly accountable quality standards. The primary problem concerning the public is the uncertainty regarding academic quality and the competence of traditional pesantren graduates, which are not yet fully equivalent to other formal education systems. Many graduates of *salafiyah* (traditional) pesantrens still experience marginalization or difficulties in access when intending to pursue higher education in public universities or when entering the professional job market that requires standardized diplomas (Darwanto et al., 2024). This imbalance gives rise to a stigma that traditional Islamic education is less capable of adapting to modern quality assurance systems. Society often feels hesitant in choosing pesantren institutions due to the lack of evaluation and accreditation instruments that specifically measure pesantren quality without eroding its unique traditions. Consequently, the potential of millions of *santri* as high-quality agents of social change is not optimized, and the gap in human resource quality between graduates of general educational institutions and traditional pesantrens in the wider community continues to widen (H. M. Wibowo, 2025).

Empirical phenomena in the field reveal a highly complex reality when traditional pesantrens are confronted with standardization demands from the government. Most pesantrens, especially those with pure *salafiyah* affiliations, tend to be resistant and fear that the quality assurance system will undermine the autonomy of the *kyai* (religious leader) and eliminate the uniqueness of the *sanad*-based (chain of transmission) knowledge tradition, such as the study of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts) (Fadillah et al., 2026). On the other hand, pesantren institutions that organize Formal Diniyah Education (PDF) and Ma'had Aly (Higher Education Pesantren) are eagerly awaiting a clear quality framework to gain full recognition for their diplomas (Fauzi, 2023b; Umam, 2014). The presence of the Majelis Masyayikh (MM) as an independent quality assurance body mandated by law creates a new dynamic at the grassroots level. On one hand, the Majelis Masyayikh is working hard to formulate quality rubrics and internal accreditation systems (*mu'adalah*) consistent with pesantren epistemology, but on the other hand, implementation in the field remains slow and fraught with a tug-of-war between maintaining local traditional authenticity and complying with state regulations (Buanaputra et al., 2022). Managerial confusion at the pesantren management level has become a daily occurrence that hampers this quality institutionalization process.

Discourses regarding quality assurance and the standardization of pesantren education have actually been extensively reviewed by scholars; however, the majority of these studies remain fixated on legal-formal aspects and general state interventions. Studies conducted by (Kosim et al., 2023; Sabila et al., 2024) focus on historical analysis regarding the dynamics of political relations between pesantrens and the central government in responding to national education policies. Furthermore, research by (Islam et al., 2019; Maulidin et al., 2024) examines

quality assurance in madrasahs and integrated Islamic schools, concluding that the adoption of international quality management systems can enhance institutional competitiveness. Meanwhile, a study by (Tanjung et al., 2025) highlights how modern pesantrens adapt to the national curriculum but ignores the context of *salaf* pesantrens which have specific educational systems. Several other studies, such as those by (Safiudin et al., 2023; A. Wibowo et al., 2023), only evaluate the readiness of pesantren infrastructure following the enactment of the law without touching upon the substance of educational quality itself. Overall, this literature tends to view pesantren as an object of policy rather than an independent entity with its own internal quality-keeping mechanisms through a very distinctive epistemology of knowledge.

Complementing previous studies, research by (Ahmadi, 2024; Syadzily, 2025) has begun to mention the existence of the Majelis Masyayikh, but the analysis is still limited to a normative-descriptive review regarding its organizational structure rather than its strategic operationalization of quality assurance. Based on this literature mapping, a highly conspicuous research gap is evident: there has been no comprehensive study analyzing the strategic role of the Majelis Masyayikh in institutionalizing a quality assurance system that empirically blends modern academic indicators with the authentic traditions of traditional pesantrens. Therefore, this research stands to fill that academic void by positioning the Majelis Masyayikh as the primary agent in the transformation of pesantren quality governance. The contribution of this research is vital and urgent to complete because the results will provide a theoretical and practical framework for Islamic education stakeholders in formulating non-hegemonic quality standards. Failure to bridge this research gap will only perpetuate confusion at the grassroots level and potentially cause the Majelis Masyayikh's policies to become merely dead documents that fail to be implemented by thousands of pesantren institutions scattered across the archipelago (Danaeefard, 2026).

The novelty (state of the art) of this research lies in its conceptual approach that offers a synthesis between modern educational quality management theory and the philosophical values of traditional Islamic education (*turats*) through the Majelis Masyayikh framework. Unlike conventional national accreditation approaches that tend to quantify all aspects of education, this research reveals how a quality standard can be formulated qualitatively based on parameters of *sanad* (knowledge transmission), the tradition of *kitab kuning* study, and the formation of character/ethics (*ta'dib*) which are the core of the pesantren education system. This study is the first to analytically and empirically dissect the cultural negotiation between the authority of the *kyai* and state regulations through the instruments of the Majelis Masyayikh. Completing this research is very important and crucial as pesantrens are currently at a decisive historical crossroads. If this model of quality assurance, which is sensitive to local wisdom, can be institutionalized effectively, Indonesia will have an internationally recognized blueprint for traditional Islamic education without having to sacrifice the cultural identity and institutional independence that has been nurtured for centuries.

Grounded in the aforementioned background, this research specifically formulates three primary focus problems: first, what is the conceptual framework for quality assurance designed by the Majelis Masyayikh for traditional pesantren entities?; second, what are the

dynamics and challenges of implementing this quality assurance system at the grassroots level?; and third, what are the implications of this quality institutionalization for the public recognition of pesantren graduates? As a primary argument, this research hypothesizes that the strategic role of the Majelis Masyayikh will only be effective if its quality standardization framework is developed through a participatory-cultural approach, rather than mere hierarchical bureaucratic instructions. Quality assurance that holistically adopts pesantren epistemology will be able to balance modern accountability demands with the preservation of *salafiyah* traditions. The main contribution of this research's findings is practically expected to produce constructive policy recommendations for the government and pesantren leaders in designing inclusive accreditation instruments. Ultimately, this research seeks to provide a solid empirical academic foundation to ensure that the institutionalization of pesantren can sustainably enhance the quality of *santri* human resources in the future.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive design with a policy analysis approach to explore strategic issues in depth regarding educational quality standard regulations (Enserink et al., 2022; Fischer et al., 2007). This approach was selected as it is highly appropriate for comprehensively dissecting the essence of regulations. The research is focused on Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin Malang, Indonesia, chosen because it represents the actual dynamics of the implementation and socialization of the Majelis Masyayikh (MM) quality system at the grassroots level. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with MM members, *pengasuh/kiai* (pesantren leaders), and policymakers from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Additionally, policy documents such as the Pesantren Law, Ministerial Regulations (PMA), and the MM quality rubrics were utilized as primary data sources.

Data analysis was performed using the interactive model by Miles et al. (2014) which encompasses three stages: data condensation/reduction to select crucial information, data display in a structured manner, and conclusion drawing (data verification) to answer the research questions. Finally, the validity of the data was strictly ensured through source triangulation (comparing accounts across different informants) and technical triangulation (combining interviews with document analysis), ensuring that the research results are valid and reliable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Conceptual Framework of Majelis Masyayikh Quality Assurance

In the context of this study, the conceptual framework for quality assurance designed by the Majelis Masyayikh is operationally defined as an "accommodative-transformative" standardization system. Field findings indicate that this concept is not a mere carbon copy of the general school accreditation system, but rather an instrument that legitimizes the excellence of traditional pesantrens without eroding their *salaf* (traditional) identity. Practically, this quality assurance focuses on formulating pesantren education standards that include

elements of *sanad* (chains of scholarly transmission), *Kitab Kuning*-based curricula, and the authority of the *kyai* as the primary soul of the institution. From the perspective of the Majelis Masyayikh, quality assurance is operationalized as an effort to provide state recognition (*rekognisi*) for the quality of pesantren graduates who have historically been marginalized within the national education system. Thus, this quality assurance serves a dual function: as a fortress for authentic pesantren traditions and as a bridge for *santri* to gain access to vertical mobility equal to graduates of other formal educational institutions at a global level.

Based on an interview with a member of the Majelis Masyayikh (Informant 1), they stated: *"We do not wish to homogenize pesantrens, because their strength lies precisely in their diversity; what we are doing is establishing a 'baseline' or minimum quality standard so that every pesantren, no matter how small, has a clear quality reference that is legally recognized by the law."* The researcher interprets this statement as a form of "Epistemological Justice" in educational policy. The MM seeks to position itself as a protector of pesantren autonomy while simultaneously providing a credible standard. This suggests that the conceptual framework built is not hegemonic or coercive but supportive. The researcher's interpretation leads to the conclusion that the Majelis Masyayikh is deconstructing the concept of quality—which has historically been technocratic-administrative—into a value-based concept rooted in scholarly blessing (*barakah*), yet still possessing indicators that can be objectively measured by external parties through instruments they have developed themselves.

Echoing this sentiment, a Leader of a Traditional Pesantren (Informant 2) provided a practitioner's perspective: *"Initially, we were worried about government intervention, but through the socialization of the Majelis Masyayikh, we understood that this quality assurance actually strengthens our position. Now, our santri's diplomas have the same legal standing as formal diplomas without us having to change our yellow book curriculum in the slightest."* The researcher interprets this data as a form of "Adaptive Response" from the pesantren grassroots to macro policies. This indicates a paradigm shift at the traditional pesantren level, moving from an exclusive stance to one that is more inclusive toward modern quality management systems. This proves that the MM's conceptual framework has successfully bridged the tension between tradition and modernity. This success lies in the MM's ability to communicate policy in a way that touches the emotional and spiritual aspects of the *kyai*, so that quality standards are no longer viewed as an administrative burden, but as a form of institutional dignity (*marwah*) and honor.

Through participant observation in several pesantrens serving as pilot projects for this quality assurance system, the researcher observed an integration between traditional management and formal standards. In pesantren secretariats, quality rubrics formulated by the MM were displayed, yet inside the classrooms, the learning process maintained the heavy use of *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods. The researcher interprets this phenomenon as a healthy "Institutional Symbiosis." On one hand, pesantrens are becoming administratively orderly in documenting their academic processes, while on the other, the essence of transferring spiritual values remains uninterrupted. The researcher's interpretation of this observation reinforces the thesis that the Majelis Masyayikh framework is "Scaffolding"—acting as an external support

that strengthens the old structure without remodeling its main frame. The presence of quality documents and assessment instruments in the field is physical evidence that traditional pesantrens are ready to transform into publicly accountable educational institutions without losing the spirit of devotion and humility toward the *kyai*.

All the aforementioned data confirms that the Majelis Masyayikh's conceptual framework is a model of "Distinctiveness-Based Quality Assurance." The data shows that quality in traditional pesantrens is not defined by the grandeur of physical facilities, but by the depth of knowledge transmission and the moral integrity of its graduates. The Majelis Masyayikh has successfully translated these "heavenly values" into a systematic "earthly language," giving pesantren education a competitive edge on par with international standards. These results show that the institutionalization of quality is both a defensive and offensive strategy for pesantrens amidst the globalization of education. Quality has now become a collective asset of the pesantren, where the state only acts as a facilitator through the MM, while the *kyai* remains the supreme authority. The researcher concludes that this concept is the most effective middle-ground solution to maintain the sustainability of traditional Islamic education in Indonesia, ensuring it remains relevant, high-quality, and universally recognized without losing its original identity.

The pattern emerging from the overall research data is the "Pattern of Guided Formalization of Tradition." This pattern indicates three main trends: first, a pattern of convergence between the aspirations of the *ulama* (scholars) and state regulations; second, a pattern of gradual managerial adaptation at the pesantren level; and third, a pattern of strengthening the legitimacy of pesantren diplomas through independent quality standardization. The data depicts a bottom-up movement pattern where quality standards are born from the womb of pesantren tradition itself and then formalized into national policy by the MM. This pattern debunks the old assumption that traditional pesantrens find it difficult to follow quality assurance standards. Instead, the data pattern shows that pesantrens are highly flexible in adopting modern quality systems as long as their fundamental principles are respected. This pattern serves as an ideal model for other religious education systems facing accountability challenges in the modern era, where quality is measured not by uniformity, but by an institution's consistency in preserving the noble values that have become its hallmark.

Table 1. Ideal Influence in Pesantren Quality Assurance

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Quality Assurance Indicator
Majelis Masyayikh Member	"We establish a quality baseline to ensure state recognition without removing the <i>kyai</i> 's autonomy."	Accommodative Standardization & Legal Recognition
Pesantren Leader (<i>Kyai</i>)	"This quality assurance provides a new dignity because santri diplomas are now recognized as equal to general schools."	Graduate Equality
Council of Scholars Secretary	"The quality rubric helps us map the strengths of the yellow book curriculum so its achievements are more measurable."	Curricular Accountability & Internal Evaluation

The table above reflects a significant ideal influence between policy formulation at the Majelis Masyayikh level and implementation at the pesantren education unit level. The "Accommodative Standardization" indicator shows that MM policy has a strong influence because it can provide a sense of security for pesantrens against the threat of curriculum homogenization. This creates a climate of trust, which is the primary capital for the success of quality assurance. This ideal influence is seen in how the MM positions itself not as a superior, but as a strategic partner. The researcher assesses that this indicator is the primary reason why traditional pesantrens—usually highly protective of their traditions—warmly welcome the conceptual framework offered by the Majelis Masyayikh in maintaining their educational quality.

Furthermore, this ideal influence transforms into indicators of "Graduate Equality" and "Curricular Accountability" in the field. This influence is transformative because it changes the perspective of pesantren managers regarding the importance of documentation and self-evaluation. The table shows that the primary motivation for pesantrens to participate in quality assurance is to elevate the dignity of *santri* in the public sphere. Deeply, this indicates that the MM has successfully united the ideological interests of the pesantren with the practical interests of the *santri* in the future. The curricular accountability indicator proves that old traditions now have "modern attire," making them easier for the outside world to understand without changing their content. Ultimately, this ideal influence creates a resilient educational ecosystem where quality is no longer a burden, but a necessity to achieve sustainable excellence.

Based on the analysis of the table and narrative above, the data pattern formed is the "Pattern of Authoritative-Participatory Synergy." This pattern depicts a harmonious reciprocal relationship where the authority of the Majelis Masyayikh in setting standards is met with active participation from the *kyai* in the pesantrens. This pattern shows that quality assurance in pesantrens does not run linearly from top to bottom, but rather in a circular and mutually reinforcing manner. There is a pattern of collective belief that by following the standards set by the Majelis Masyayikh, pesantrens are not submitting to the state, but are instead fighting for the dignity of Islamic knowledge to remain triumphant on the national and international stages. This pattern ensures the future sustainability of pesantren quality.

Dynamics and Challenges of Quality Assurance Implementation at the Grassroots

The dynamics and challenges of implementing the quality assurance system at the grassroots level are operationally defined as the process of dialectics and technical-cultural barriers that arise when the regulatory standards of the Majelis Masyayikh meet the sociological reality of the pesantren. This sub-finding portrays the extent to which the pesantren managerial infrastructure is able to absorb the established quality parameters without disrupting its traditional ecosystem. In the field, this manifests as a "creative tension" between the need for formal state recognition and the effort to maintain the authenticity of *salafiyah* traditions. These dynamics cover aspects of human resource readiness, the availability of administrative tools, and the cultural resilience of the pesantren organization in

facing standardization. The challenges that arise are not merely bureaucratic issues, but a crucial transition phase where the pesantren is redefining its quality standards to be globally recognized while remaining rooted in the authority of the *kyai* and the *kitab kuning*.

The first informant, a Pesantren Secretary, revealed: *"We strongly support this standardization so that our graduates are not looked down upon, but honestly, filling out such detailed quality instruments overwhelms our staff because they are more accustomed to managing service than data collection."* The researcher interprets this data as a significant administrative gap. The primary challenge at the grassroots is the transformation of work culture from traditional-loyalty-based to professional-accountable. The researcher's interpretation indicates that although there is high motivation to gain legality, the technical capacity of pesantrens to manage quality documents is still very limited. This signifies that the Majelis Masyayikh cannot merely provide instruments but must conduct intensive mentoring to bridge the limited bureaucratic literacy at the lower pesantren management level.

The second informant, a Pesantren Leader (Kyai), stated: *"Quality exists in character (akhlak) and the connected chain of transmission (sanad), not just on accreditation paper; we worry that if we are too rigid with administration, the blessing of knowledge will flee."* The researcher interprets this statement as a form of "ontological anxiety" toward standardization. This shows an ideological challenge where some pesantren leaders worry that quantifying quality through formal indicators will reduce the spiritual meaning of pesantren education. This data reveals that implementing quality assurance at the grassroots requires a "gentle" and value-based approach. The researcher concludes that the greatest challenge is how to translate abstract concepts like "*barakah*" and "*sanad*" into measurable performance indicators without losing the spiritual soul that is the primary foundation of traditional pesantren education.

Documentation of the curriculum and teaching materials shows an effort to synchronize the *kitab kuning* with the competency standards formulated by the Majelis Masyayikh. The researcher found syllabus documents that began to include "Learning Objectives" alongside the chapters of classical books. The researcher's interpretation of this documentation data indicates the occurrence of "Pedagogical Hybridity." Pesantrens are beginning to reorganize teaching materials to be more systematic and easily evaluated objectively. However, the researcher also observed inconsistencies in mapping the study load, where the fluid *wetonan* and *sorogan* systems are difficult to pour rigidly into standard lesson hour formats. This documentation proves that the pesantren is in a process of intellectualizing tradition, where the classical curriculum is being prepared to meet national academic qualifications without changing the substance of the original texts taught.

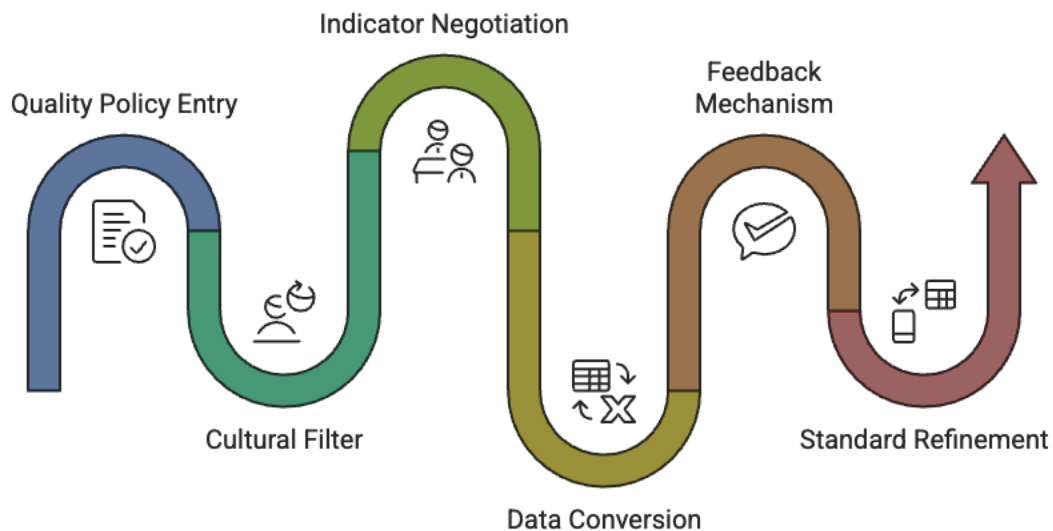


Figure 1. Dynamics of MM Quality Assurance Implementation Flow

The flow above illustrates an implementation process that is circular rather than linear. Quality policies from the Majelis Masyayikh enter the pesantren through a socialization stage, but at the grassroots level, these policies undergo a "cultural filter." Pesantrens negotiate indicators deemed too general to then be adjusted to their respective *salafiyah* profiles. This flow shows that the biggest bottleneck occurs at the "Administrative Transformation" stage, where raw pesantren data must be converted into quality reports. The success of this flow depends heavily on feedback mechanisms from the pesantren to the MM to ensure that the standards set remain inclusive and do not uproot tradition.

Through direct field observation, the researcher found a rather contrasting reality between the spiritual fervor in the mosque and the administrative bustle in the pesantren office. Younger staff were seen struggling with laptops to upload quality documents, while the *kyai* remained focused on teaching books in the veranda. The researcher interprets this phenomenon as "Functional Dualism." There is a new division of labor in the pesantren; the youth serve as the vanguard of standardization, while the elders guard the pillars of tradition. The researcher's interpretation of this observation concludes that implementation challenges trigger internal modernization of the pesantren organization. Pesantrens are starting to adopt more modern management structures to accommodate MM demands. These dynamics show that quality assurance has become a catalyst for changing pesantren governance to be more orderly and systemically transparent.

As a restatement for easier understanding, the results of this study confirm that the implementation of Majelis Masyayikh quality assurance at the grassroots is a process of "Management Acculturation." Data indicates that the main challenge is not a rejection of quality, but the difficulty in aligning two value systems: the traditional system based on charisma and the modern system based on data. The researcher states that pesantrens are striving hard to become publicly accountable institutions without sacrificing the spiritual authority of the *kyai*. To help the reader understand, these findings show that the future success of the Majelis Masyayikh depends heavily on the flexibility of the standards they offer.

If the standards are too rigid, there will be resistance; however, if they are too loose, quality will not be achieved. This dynamic is a journey to find the balance point between noble tradition and standardized modern demands.

The pattern formed from all the above data is the "Pattern of Gradual-Selective Adaptation." Pesantrens do not accept standardization blindly, but rather select which aspects can be formalized (such as curriculum and diplomas) and which must remain sacred (such as teaching methods and the *kyai's* sovereignty). A pattern emerges where technical-administrative hurdles always go hand-in-hand with the spirit to gain state recognition. This pattern confirms that traditional pesantrens have strong resilience in facing policy interventions.

Table 2. Observation Results: Ideal Influence of the Majelis Masyayikh

Observation Aspect	Field Finding	Influence on Ideal Quality
Curriculum Governance	Pesantrens are beginning to document yellow book syllabi in written module formats.	Transformation from personal curriculum to institutionalized standardized curriculum.
Graduate Credibility	Enthusiasm among santri in taking competency exams supervised by MM standards.	Increased santri confidence regarding national diploma recognition.
Institutional Independence	Formation of an internal Council of Scholars to independently control teaching quality.	Strengthening pesantren autonomy in determining its own standards of excellence.

The observation table on ideal influence shows that the presence of the Majelis Masyayikh has begun to trigger positive structural changes despite various challenges. The discovery that pesantrens are starting to compile written syllabi is a major leap from the oral tradition that has dominated until now. This ideal influence shows that MM standardization has forced pesantrens to perform self-reflection and systematize their intellectual property. The researcher interprets this change as a process of "Institutional Maturation," where pesantrens no longer rely solely on collective memory but begin to build accountable knowledge management systems. This indicates that the ideal influence of the MM is capable of pushing pesantrens toward professionalism without having to adopt a general curriculum in a raw form.

Furthermore, the formation of an internal Council of Scholars and the increase in *santri* confidence show that this ideal influence touches upon the aspect of educational sovereignty. Observation proves that when pesantrens are given the authority to determine their own quality standards through the MM framework, a spirit to demonstrate competitive advantage emerges. This ideal influence creates a standard of "Dignified Quality," where diploma recognition is no longer merely a government handout, but the result of measurable quality proof. Deeply, this shows that this quality assurance policy has begun to successfully shift the paradigm from merely "surviving" to "competing with quality." This pattern of ideal influence provides hope that in the future, pesantrens will be independent, system-wise modern educational institutions, yet remain traditional in values.

The pattern formed from the observation data on ideal influence is the "Pattern of Standard-Based Autonomy Strengthening." This pattern shows that Majelis Masyayikh

standardization actually triggers pesantrens to be more independent and systematic in managing their traditions. A pattern emerges where standardization is no longer seen as a threat, but as a tool to strengthen legitimacy and institutional dignity. This pattern indicates the early success of pesantren transformation into universally credible educational institutions through a unique quality assurance path.

Implications of Quality Institutionalization for Graduate Recognition

The emergence of "Recognition Expectations" and the shift in the symbolic capital of *santri* in the public sphere is evident. Although Majelis Masyayikh (MM) certificates and formal diplomas from *salafiyah* pesantrens have not yet been administratively issued, the existence of the MM has created an initial perception regarding quality standardization. In the field, this manifests as increased *santri* confidence and a change in the perspectives of parents and the community regarding the future of non-formal pesantren graduates. This implication is anticipatory, where the public is starting to view *salaf* pesantrens no longer as "second-class" educational institutions, but as entities moving toward legal equality. The researcher captures this phenomenon as a social recognition incubation period, where graduate quality begins to be measured through the promise of standardization being pursued by the state through the authority of the scholars.

Table 3. Interview Results: Implications of Recognition

Interview Excerpt	Indicator	Informant
"Even though the MM diploma isn't here yet, we feel more at ease because the state has started to recognize our system. Children now dare to dream of studying abroad."	Psychological Recognition	Santri Parent
"Our graduates were often seen as lacking legality. The MM gives hope that later they can enter the formal sector without bureaucratic hurdles."	Anticipatory Parity	Pesantren Leader
"We are starting to map alumni. Even before the certificates are out, this quality assurance process has made outside agencies ask about our graduate profiles."	Social Inquiry	Alumni Secretary

Based on the table data above, it is evident that the primary implication currently emerging is the strengthening of psychological aspects and collective hope. The "Psychological Recognition" indicator shows that MM quality institutionalization acts as an "anchor of hope" for *santri* guardians. Even without physical diplomas, the existence of MM regulations and socialization has provided moral legitimacy for *santri* to enter broader public spheres. The researcher interprets this as a form of symbolic capital starting to form before the academic capital (diploma) itself materializes. The courage of *santri* to dream beyond traditional boundaries indicates that quality institutionalization has successfully dismantled the walls of inferiority that have long haunted *salafiyah* pesantren graduates. This is a crucial phase where the "recognized" mentality precedes administrative proof.

Furthermore, indicators of "Anticipatory Parity" and "Social Inquiry" reveal movements at the level of the labor market and further education. The researcher observed that

institutions outside the pesantren are showing openness toward *salaf* graduates alongside massive news coverage regarding the Majelis Masyayikh. The researcher's interpretation suggests that these implications create a "quality promise" in the eyes of the public. However, there is a latent risk; if this institutionalization is stalled for too long at the administrative level without physical proof (diplomas/certificates), social interest could turn into skepticism. Therefore, quality institutionalization in this phase is operating in the arena of public perception. The success of the MM in this transition phase depends heavily on its ability to maintain community trust momentum so that the hope for equality does not fade before diplomas are officially issued.

Field observation results show serious preparation dynamics in *salafiyah* pesantrens; *santri* are beginning to document their memorization portfolios and book mastery more systematically in anticipation of MM standardization. The researcher observed that pesantrens are starting to establish informal communication with universities and local government agencies regarding their legal status. The researcher's interpretation of this observation data concludes that the implications of quality institutionalization have triggered "Graduate Behavior Modernization." *Santri* are no longer just focused on spiritual graduation, but are becoming aware of the importance of measurable academic track records. This observation confirms that even without MM diplomas in hand, the spirit of standardization has changed how *santri* present themselves to the public. There is a conscious effort to show that *salaf* graduates possess competencies equal to those of formal graduates.

This research data emphasizes that the implications of quality institutionalization are currently still at the level of "Perceptual Recognition." Even though formal diplomas have not been issued and MM certificates are in process, the public has begun to grant "trust credit" to pesantren graduates. This quality institutionalization has successfully elevated the social status of *santri* from a marginal position to a position of equal potential national education subjects. Data restatement shows that the promise of equality brought by the MM is more effective in changing the *santri* mentality than other educational policies in the past. Essentially, this quality institutionalization is building a solid foundation of public trust, where graduate quality is recognized through transparent standardization processes, even though administrative graduation documents remain a work in progress.

The emerging data pattern shows a "Pattern of Hope-Based Legitimacy." This pattern illustrates that public recognition is currently driven by optimism toward Majelis Masyayikh policies. A pattern is formed where internal *santri* confidence increases alongside external access to information regarding equalization. This pattern also reveals that graduate recognition is currently "*de facto*" in the eyes of certain communities, preceding the "*de jure*" recognition being sought by the government through quality assurance regulations.

Table 4. Ideal Influence of MM Quality Institutionalization

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Ideal Indicator
Majelis Masyayikh Chairperson	"Ideally, every salaf santri has equal access to any university in the world because their quality has been standardized internationally."	Global Parity
Salaf Pesantren Alumni	"We hope there are no more additional tests doubting our quality when applying for jobs, as the MM certificate is strong proof."	Absolute Quality Standardization
Pesantren Leader	"Ideal recognition is when the community sees the kyai as both a 'mursyid' (guide) and a rector of an institution of indisputable quality."	Integration of Authority & Accountability

The ideal influence table above reflects a very progressive long-term vision regarding Majelis Masyayikh quality institutionalization. The "Global Parity" indicator shows that the ultimate goal of this institutionalization is not just domestic recognition, but international competitiveness. This ideal influence directs pesantrens to no longer be satisfied with local standards, but to begin looking at global pedagogical standards without losing their yellow book roots. The researcher interprets this influence as an effort toward the "Internationalization of Salaf Pesantren," where graduates are expected to become intellectual actors on the world stage. This ideal hope serves as a driving force for pesantrens to continue perfecting their quality assurance systems in line with universally applicable academic criteria.

Furthermore, indicators of "Absolute Quality Standardization" and "Integration of Authority" portray an ideal order where educational dualism truly ends. This ideal influence seeks the removal of discriminatory stigma through physical evidence in the form of MM certificates with high bargaining power. Deeply, this shows a strong desire to unite the spiritual dignity of the *kyai* with modern accountability systems. The researcher interprets that this ideal influence will create a new graduate profile: *santri* who are ritually pious yet professionally competent. This ideal influence is the "guiding star" for MM policy, ensuring that every step of quality institutionalization is always oriented toward the honor and welfare of pesantren graduates in the eyes of the world.

The pattern formed from the ideal influence data is the "Pattern of Identity and Quality Convergence." This pattern shows that the future aspiration of the pesantren is to be an institution with a strong religious identity but with output quality that is highly measurable scientifically. A pattern emerges where standardization is no longer seen as a constraint, but as wings that allow *santri* to fly further into public spheres that were previously closed to them.

DISCUSSION

This research finding indicates that the conceptual framework of the Majelis Masyayikh (MM) has successfully formulated quality standards that are no longer hegemonic but rather accommodative toward pesantren epistemology. This aligns with the argument of (Hidayatullah & Yusuf, 2025) who emphasize that pesantren quality management must be based on the value of *Tafaqquh Fiddin* to avoid losing its core identity. In contrast to the public school accreditation system being overly administrative, the MM model prioritizes aspects of scholarly chains of

transmission (*sanad*) and the authority of the *kyai* as primary indicators. This compatibility is reinforced by studies from (Hadi, 2022; Mujahid, 2021; Pohl, 2006) which state that the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia will succeed if it continues to respect traditional authority structures. The distinction in this study lies in the finding that the MM acts as a "mediator" that legitimizes these traditions into the language of state bureaucracy, a move representing the highest evolution of state recognition toward indigenous institutions.

The dynamics at the grassroots level reveal a "creative tension" caused by administrative literacy barriers; however, this is reduced when a participatory-cultural approach is employed. This finding supports the theories of (Ahsan, 2024; Husna & Arifin, 2025) regarding pesantren resistance to standardization, yet provides novelty in that such resistance thaws when the policymakers are peers (*Masyayikh*) who understand the pesantren culture. Literature from (Isa'di et al., 2025) mentions that pesantren administrative systems often encounter obstacles in data synchronization, which aligns with this study's findings regarding the "administrative gap" in *salaf* pesantrens. Nevertheless, the main argument of this research emphasizes that these challenges can be overcome through non-instructive mentoring. As asserted by (Freitag & Bühlmann, 2009), the success of policy in traditional environments depends heavily on trust between the government and the institution.

Regarding the implications for graduate recognition, this study finds that the institutionalization of MM quality creates a very strong "Perceptual Recognition" within society even before physical administrative proof (diplomas) is issued. This expands upon the findings of (Driessen & Merry, 2006) who previously highlighted the marginalization of traditional pesantren graduates in the labor market. With the existence of MM standards, the public has begun to perceive pesantren graduates as having nationally measurable competencies. Consistent with research by (West & Barham, 2009), public recognition of *salafiyah* pesantren diplomas is key to the vertical mobility of *santri*. The difference here is that this research highlights how such recognition is no longer merely political "mercy" (the provision of equivalence diplomas), but a recognition of academic quality equivalent to formal education, which will fundamentally reshape the competitive map of human resources in Indonesia in the future.

The theoretical implications of this research offer a new model in educational management theory termed "Epistemological Quality Management." This theory contests conventional management views that assume standardization must always be uniform. Theoretically, this research proves that modern accountability can operate alongside the preservation of *salafiyah* traditions if the quality framework is inclusive. These findings enrich the discourse established by (Nurhayati et al., 2024) regarding pesantren adaptation to the national curriculum. Conceptually, this study shifts the paradigm from "accreditation as a burden" to "accreditation as dignity." This is a significant contribution to the development of the sociology of Islamic education, where traditional authority is no longer viewed as an obstacle to progress but as the primary foundation for forming authentic and globally competitive quality standards.

Practically, this study recommends that the government and the Majelis Masyayikh design accreditation instruments that are more flexible and process-oriented rather than merely focused on administrative results. The practical implication is the need to establish "Quality Assurance Clusters" at the regional level to function as cultural mentors for smaller pesantrens. This recommendation supports the views of (Bakar et al., 2024; Davies, 2014) that Islamic education policy must avoid a "one size fits all" approach. Pesantren leaders are also expected to become more open to academic documentation as a form of public accountability without fear of losing autonomy. Ultimately, this research provides an empirical foundation that participatory quality institutionalization will sustainably improve the quality of *santri* human resources, ensuring they are not only superior in religious morality but also competent in facing the challenges of a competitive modern civilization.

CONCLUSION

This research successfully concludes that the key to the success of quality institutionalization within traditional pesantren environments lies in a paradigm shift from rigid bureaucratic instructions to a participatory-cultural approach. The most vital lesson learned is that quality standards do not have to mean uniformity; on the contrary, the quality assurance designed by the Majelis Masyayikh proves that authentic *salafiyah* values—such as *sanad* and the authority of the *kyai*—can be converted into modern accountability indicators without uprooting spiritual foundations. A valuable lesson for policymakers is that pesantrens are not passive objects of regulation, but rather dialogic partners capable of independent transformation if granted a space for fair and inclusive recognition.

Scientifically, the primary contribution of this work is the proposal of the "Epistemological Quality Management" theoretical framework, which breaks the stalemate of conventional educational management theories in viewing faith-based educational institutions. This research has successfully changed the narrative from "accreditation as an administrative burden" to "accreditation as the dignity and honor" of the institution. However, it must be acknowledged that this study has limitations as it was conducted while the institutionalization process was still ongoing; thus, the implications of diplomas for graduate vertical mobility were only captured at the level of public perception. Therefore, future research should be directed toward longitudinal tracer studies after Majelis Masyayikh certificates are officially issued to measure the real impact of this policy on labor market absorption and global educational access for the *santri* community.

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