

## QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PESANTREN: MODERNIZATION, ADAPTABILITY, AND INTEGRATION INTO INDONESIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

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### ABSTRACT

This research highlights the critical role of quality assurance in Islamic boarding schools, which are integral to the development of Islamic Education in Indonesia. The primary objective of this study is to employ bibliometric analysis to assess the research achievements, identify national and international networks, and map emerging trends in quality assurance for Islamic boarding schools using Google Scholar data from 2017 to 2021. The study utilized bibliometric methods, including publication, authorship, and citation analysis, and employed VOSviewer software to map the bibliometric data. The analysis revealed 996 scientific publications related to quality assurance and Islamic Education, yielding 6,139 citations and 125 interconnection thresholds. Key terms with strong interconnections include “school,” “private school,” “education,” “Indonesia,” and “student.” Notably, no prior studies have applied bibliometric mapping to explore quality assurance in Islamic boarding schools, highlighting this study’s novel contribution. The findings emphasize the importance of pesantren institutions in preserving local wisdom and their role in nation-building. This research has significant implications for Islamic Education, particularly in urging policymakers to strengthen government policies that enhance the quality and relevance of Education in Islamic boarding schools, ensuring their continued contribution to national development.

**Keywords:** Bibliometric Analysis, Islamic Boarding Schools, Quality Assurance, Research Trends

### INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools, known as *pesantren*, play a pivotal role in Indonesia’s educational landscape, blending religious education with the development of moral and intellectual character. These institutions have long been the foundation for Islamic learning, preserving local wisdom and contributing significantly to nation-building. Despite their importance, there is limited scholarly attention on the implementation of Quality Assurance (QA) mechanisms within pesantren, which are critical for ensuring the continued relevance and effectiveness of their educational practices. The need for quality assurance is particularly pressing as pesantren navigate the challenges of modernizing their educational models while maintaining their unique religious and cultural identity.

In Indonesia, recent efforts to establish quality assurance systems in Islamic boarding schools have been initiated by organizations such as the Majelis Masyayikh, which aims to standardize educational practices and ensure the continued growth of pesantren (Usman & Widyanto, 2021). However, the systematic implementation of QA frameworks remains a

significant challenge, with many pesantren facing difficulties balancing traditional pedagogical methods with modern educational demands (Shiddiq et al., 2021). Additionally, the integration of QA systems that align with both national standards and Islamic values has proven complex, as educational reforms must respect the religious and cultural uniqueness of these institutions.

Furthermore, research into quality assurance in pesantren has been limited, with existing studies primarily focusing on the general educational system in Indonesia. While some studies have attempted to examine aspects of QA in Islamic Education (Ijah et al., 2021), little attention has been given to the specific challenges and opportunities for QA within pesantren. The introduction of models like the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) has shown that many pesantren have not fully implemented QA practices in a way that would lead to consistent improvements (Lathifah et al., 2022). As a result, focusing on the development of QA models tailored to the unique context of pesantren is crucial for enhancing the quality and sustainability of Islamic Education.

This study addresses the gap in the literature by conducting a bibliometric analysis of research on quality assurance in pesantren. By analyzing publication trends, citation metrics, and the thematic connections between key research areas, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of QA in Islamic boarding schools. The bibliometric data collected from Google Scholar, combined with VOSviewer software for visual mapping, will allow for an in-depth exploration of the emerging trends and gaps in the research related to QA in pesantren.

The novelty of this research lies in its application of bibliometric methods to explore quality assurance practices specifically within pesantren, a topic that has not been adequately addressed in previous studies. By visualizing the relationships between key research themes and identifying the most influential publications, this study offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers seeking to improve the quality of education in pesantren. Additionally, this research provides a foundation for further studies in the field, contributing to the development of context-specific QA models that can support the long-term sustainability of pesantren in Indonesia.

## METHOD

Bibliometric analysis, a powerful tool in scientific research, allows for the identification of research trends, assessment of author or journal impact, and exploration of collaboration patterns through bibliographic data (Donthu et al., 2021; Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). This approach not only maps the intellectual landscape of a field but also supports informed decision-making in research management. In this study, bibliometric analysis is employed using VOSviewer to examine trends, collaborations, and citation patterns in quality assurance research within Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) from 2017 to 2021. Data were extracted from Google Scholar using Publish or Perish, and VOSviewer was utilized to generate graphical representations of bibliometric networks through its innovative VOS mapping technique (van Eck & Waltman, 2007; Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020; van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

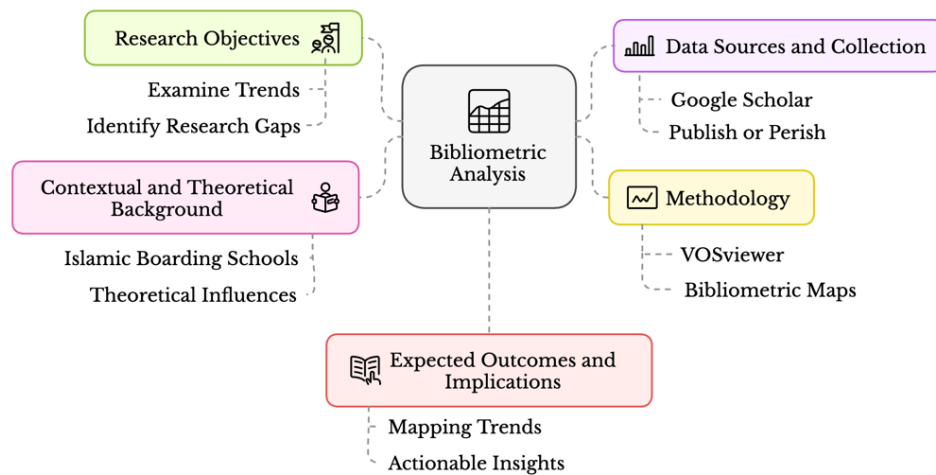


Figure 1. Bibliometric Analysis Framework

Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, deeply rooted in tradition yet influenced by modern education, offer a rich context for exploring the integration of religious values with contemporary pedagogical practices. This blend of tradition and modernity has not only shaped national educational policies but also contributed to the character development of students, reflecting a synthesis of cultural heritage and modern educational principles (Harits et al., 2016; Kurniawan, 2018; Anam et al., 2019; Latif & Hafid, 2021; Huda, 2023). Pedagogical innovations, such as the Sorogan and Halaqoh learning models, foster close student-instructor relationships and promote democratic education, while organizational studies highlight the role of Islamic organizational culture, leadership, and spiritual intelligence in enhancing teacher commitment (Ritonga, 2019; Rokib, 2012; Purnomo, 2022). These practices demonstrate how traditional methods can be effectively integrated with modern strategies to improve learning outcomes.

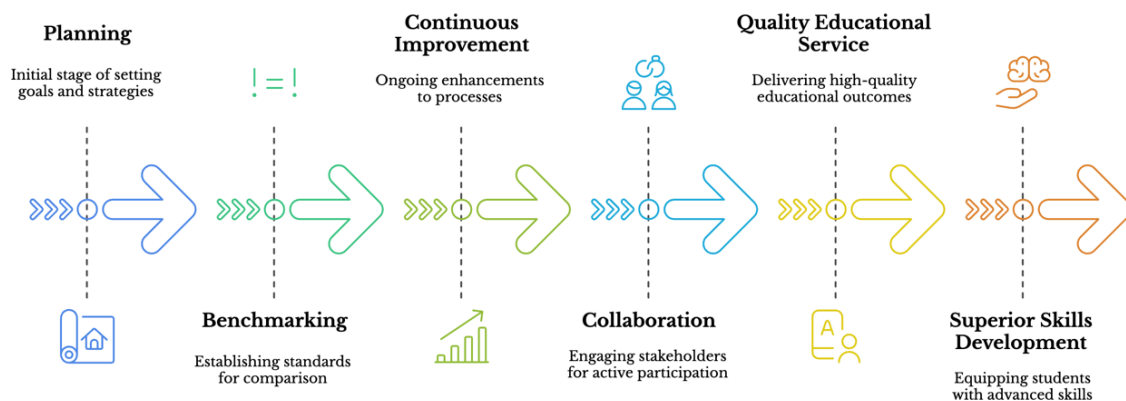


Figure 2. Quality Assurance Framework Process Rooted from Transformational Leadership and Stakeholder Collaboration

This research is grounded in a quality assurance framework, illustrated in Figure 2, which is based on theories of transformational leadership and stakeholder collaboration (Almuhaideb & Saeed, 2020; Subandi et al., 2021). The framework highlights the importance of meticulous planning, benchmarking, and continuous improvement to maintain high standards of educational service quality. Data was carefully collected using Google Scholar and Publish or Perish, with the results then visualized through VOSviewer. This process underscores the

pivotal role of institutional leaders in balancing traditional values with the evolving demands of modern Education (Al Husaeni & Nandiyanto, 2021; Nandiyanto et al., 2022; Nandiyanto et al., 2021; Yusuf & Taufiq, 2020).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Trends in Pesantren Quality Assurance Research

The growth trajectory of quality assurance research in Indonesian pesantren from 2017 to 2021 reveals significant fluctuations, with a total of 996 publications and 6,139 citations, as shown in Figure 1. The number of publications peaked in 2017 at 291 but experienced a steady decline in subsequent years, dropping to 79 in 2021. This decrease is understandable, particularly in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted many educational activities and research efforts, as Casado-Aranda et al. (2021) noted. Despite the drop in research publications, the overall trend highlights the growing academic interest in quality assurance within Islamic boarding schools, which has garnered more attention in recent years.

The adaptability of pesantren to the modern schooling system has been a key factor in their sustained growth throughout Indonesian history. By incorporating non-religious subjects into their curricula and aligning with national educational policies, pesantren have managed to integrate traditional Islamic Education with modern academic frameworks (Falikul Isbah, 2020). This integration has been further strengthened by the establishment of programs like the Islamic Boarding School-Based Junior High School Program, which addresses various issues such as curriculum development, governance policies, human resources, and infrastructure (Zainal et al., 2022). Kosim et al. (2023) also note that the shift in Islamic Education in Indonesia from a domestication approach to an accommodation approach since 1945 has contributed significantly to the evolving role of pesantren, helping them align more closely with national educational standards.

Efforts to modernize pesantren have been championed by figures like Imam Zarkasyi, who revolutionized the curriculum at Gontor Islamic Boarding School by integrating formal, non-formal, and informal education systems (Zarkasyi, 2020). The formal recognition of pesantren within Indonesia's national education system, marked by the passing of the pesantren bill in 2019, further solidified their status as key players in the educational landscape (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022). This recognition has paved the way for the graduates of pesantren to receive equal rights to pursue further education or enter the workforce, a development that aims to bridge the gap between traditional Islamic Education and the broader national education framework (Nurtawab, 2019). These changes reflect a broader societal acknowledgement of the importance of pesantren in shaping Indonesia's future.

Incorporating quality assurance into pesantren is integral to maintaining and enhancing their educational standards. The development of an internal Quality Assurance System (QAS) has been identified as a critical tool in improving the educational outputs of pesantren, focusing on input standards, knowledge assessment, and achievement evaluations (Wulandari et al., 2022). This system not only ensures the continuity of high-quality education but also fosters a quality culture within the institutions. Research on internal quality assurance systems in other educational contexts, such as in Vietnam, has shown that autonomy in managing educational institutions is directly linked to the success of QA implementations (Do et al., 2020). Similarly, in the digital era, modernizing administrative structures through technology and implementing robust quality assurance frameworks are essential for ensuring Islamic Education's relevance and effectiveness in pesantren (Budiharso & Suharto, 2022).

### Bibliometric Analysis of Quality Assurance in Islamic Boarding Schools

A mapping analysis was performed to illustrate the relationships between primary terms related to quality assurance and secondary terms related to Islamic boarding schools. The connections are represented in the network visualization shown in Figure 3. A minimum threshold of 12 occurrences per term was applied to filter the terms within the scope of assurance. As a result, out of the 435 terms identified, only 38 were selected for visualization. The resulting grid visualization highlights the relationships between these key terms based on their frequency and relevance in the publication data.

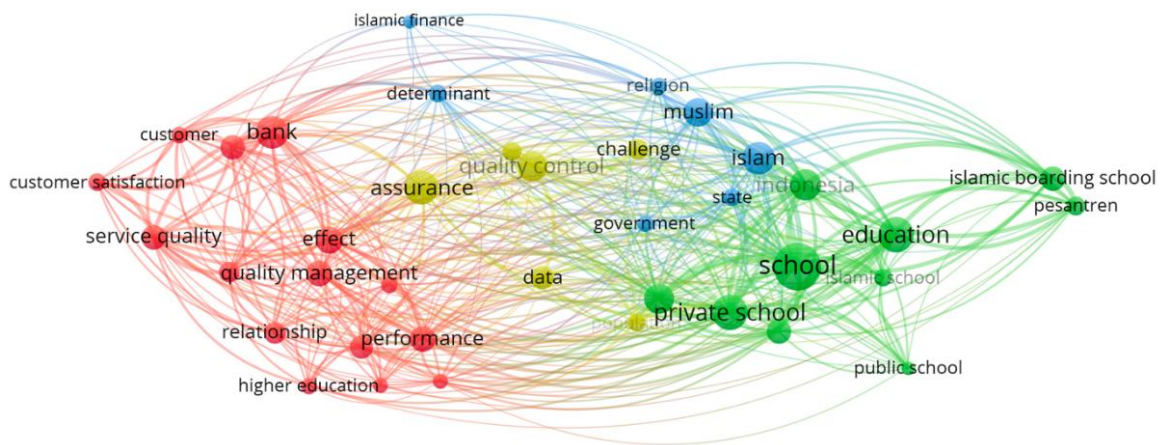


Figure 3. Visualization Network for Quality Assurance Research Development

The network visualization of this study is divided into several distinct clusters, as illustrated in Figure 3. Cluster 1 includes terms such as Bank, College, Customer, Customer Satisfaction, Higher Education, Islamic University, Job Satisfaction, Performance, Quality Management, Relationship, Satisfaction, Services, Service Quality, and University. These terms collectively point to the broader landscape of higher education, customer satisfaction, and quality management within educational institutions. Cluster 2, which focuses on education-related terms, encompasses Education, Indonesia, Islamic Boarding Schools, Islamic Schools, Private Schools, Public Schools, Schools, Students, and Teachers. This cluster highlights the strong connection between quality assurance and educational institutions in Indonesia, particularly those with an Islamic focus. Cluster 3 is centered around terms such as Determinant, Government, Islam, Islamic Finance, Muslim, Religion, and State, reflecting a focus on the intersection of religion, governance, and Islamic finance. Lastly, Cluster 4 includes terms related to assessment, assurance, challenge, data, population, and quality control, which align with key concepts in evaluating and maintaining educational standards.

What stands out in Cluster 2 is the emphasis on the relationship between quality assurance and the education system, specifically within the context of Islamic institutions in Indonesia. The inclusion of the term 'Education' provides a broad scope for understanding the policies, systems, and practices shaping Indonesian Education. The term "Indonesia" indicates a geographical focus, tailoring the research to address educational issues unique to this country. Terms such as "Islamic Boarding School" and "Islamic School" signify the study's interest in institutions that integrate Islamic values into their educational frameworks. At the same time, the distinction between "Private Schools" and "Public Schools" suggests an exploration of the differences in quality, access, and outcomes between these types of schools in Indonesia. The term 'School' serves as a general category, encompassing all levels of education, from primary to potentially tertiary institutions, thus broadening the scope of the study.



The terms “Student” and “teacher” highlight the human aspect of education, indicating a focus on the experiences and challenges faced by students, as well as the role of educators in shaping the educational experience. The data shows a strong relationship between quality assurance and educational terms, particularly with the term “School”, which shows 30 relationships with a total strength of 223. However, the term ‘Islamic Boarding School’ has fewer connections, with only two relationships and a total strength of 15. This relationship is visually represented in Figure 4, providing a clearer understanding of the connections within the educational landscape, particularly with respect to quality assurance in Islamic boarding schools.

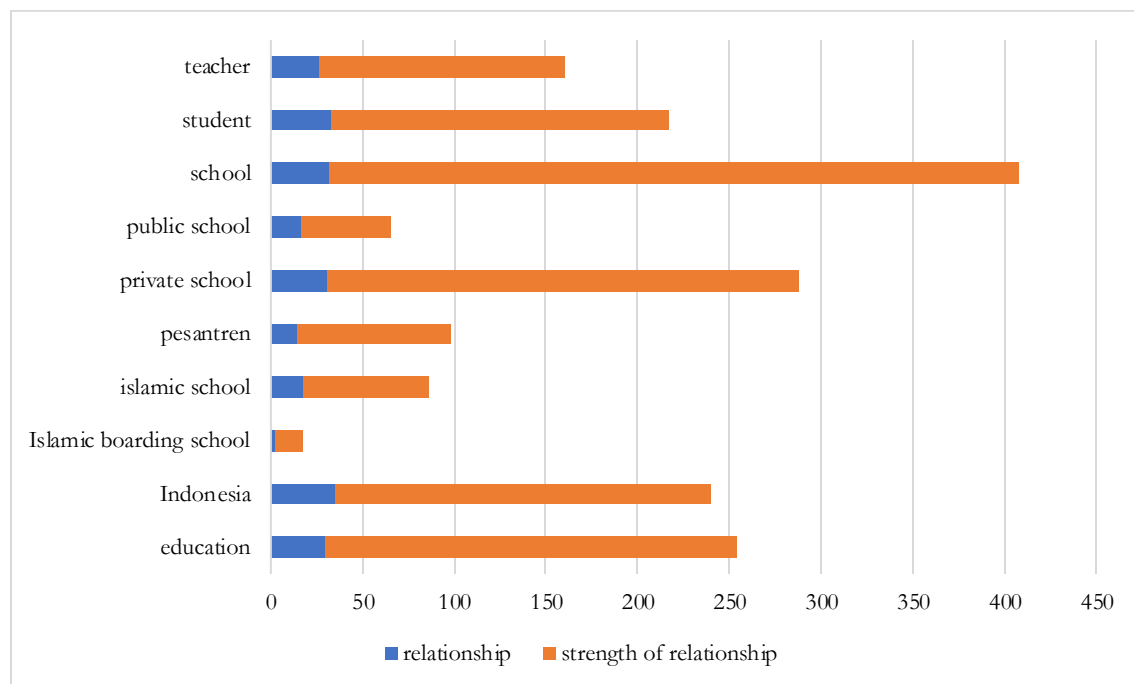


Figure 4. Diagram of the Relationship between Quality Assurance Research and Education Terms

Data presented in Figure 4 highlights the most cited publications related to quality assurance and Islamic boarding schools, based on Google Scholar research. Ten key terms exhibit significant relationships with quality assurance, with the following total relationship strengths: *School* has 32 links and a total strength of 276, *Private School* has 31 links with a total strength of 257, and *education* has 30 links with a total strength of 224. *Indonesia* shows 35 links with a total strength of 205, while *the Student* has 33 links and 184. *Islam* is represented by 27 links and a relationship strength of 143, followed by *Tacher*, which has 26 links and a total strength of 134. Other notable terms include *Bank* with 25 links and a strength of 133, *Muslim* with 32 links and a strength of 129, and *Service Quality* with 23 links and a total strength of 128. These findings illustrate the key areas of focus within quality assurance research related to Islamic boarding schools.

The interrelationships between key concepts in quality assurance research are visually represented in Figure 1. The network visualization shows these relationships as interconnected networks or lines linking various terms. This graphical representation illustrates how different concepts are related and how they interact within the broader context of quality assurance. Additionally, the term clusters within the assurance publications are highlighted in Figure 5. These clusters group terms based on their frequency and relevance, revealing how specific concepts are connected to one another and contributing to the overall research landscape. The

clusters provide a deeper understanding of the key themes and trends in the literature, offering valuable insights into the structure of the field.

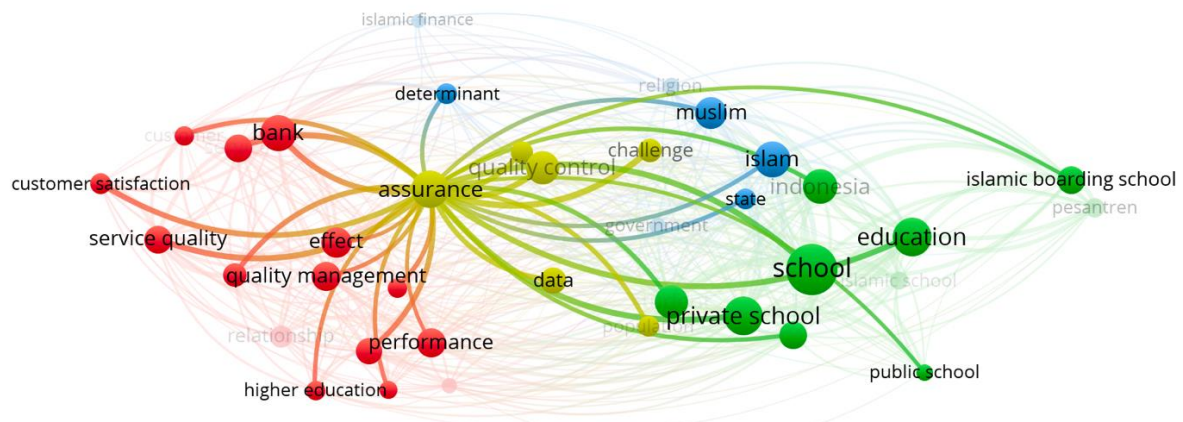


Figure 5. Publication Visualization Network with the term “Assurance.”

The term “Assurance,” as depicted in Figure 5, is connected to various other terms, represented through four color-coded models that indicate the strength and frequency of relationships over time. These related terms include *customer satisfaction*, *customer*, *bank*, *service quality*, *effort*, *management*, *performance*, *higher education*, *determinant*, *quality control*, *data*, *Muslim*, *Islam*, *Indonesia*, *challenge*, *school*, *private school*, *public school*, *education*, and *Islamic Boarding School*. Each color model visually illustrates how these terms are interrelated, providing insight into the dynamics and trends within the field of quality assurance.

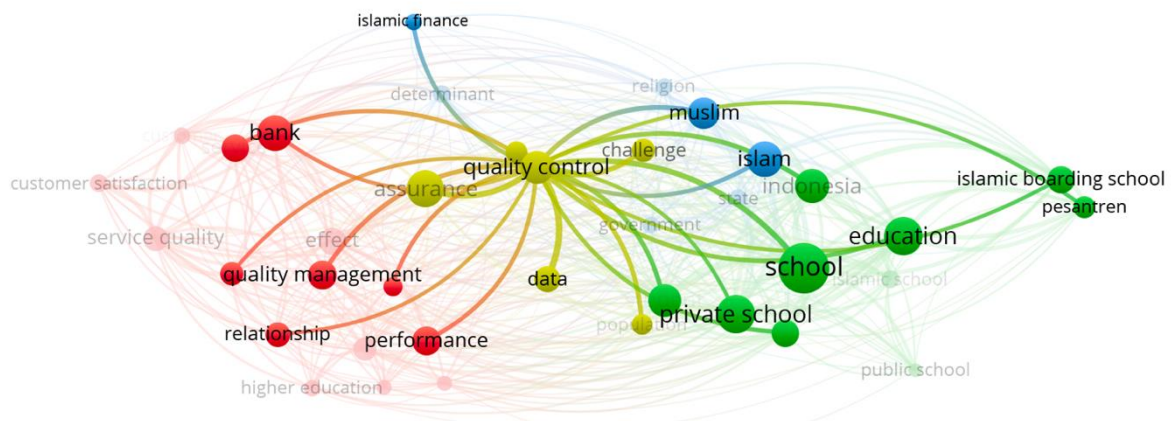


Figure 6. Publication Visualization Network with the Term Quality Control

From the network data visualization of publications, it is evident that *Quality Control*, as shown in Figure 6, is the term most closely related to *Assurance*, with a relationship strength of 72. In addition, several terms are closely associated with *Quality Control*, including *Bank*, *Islamic Finance*, *Quality*, *Management*, *Relationship*, *Performance*, *Assurance*, *Data*, *Muslim*, *Challenge*, *Indonesia*, *School*, *Population*, *Private School*, *Education*, and *Islamic Boarding School*. These terms collectively reflect the key components of quality control within the broader context of quality assurance in Islamic Education, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of the research.

The research on Pesantren's quality assurance from 2017 to 2021 provides critical insights into its growth trajectory and thematic focus. Over this period, a total of 996 publications were produced, accumulating 6,139 citations. However, the number of publications steadily declined, dropping from 291 in 2017 to 79 in 2021, with the most significant decrease occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted global academic activities. This decline underscores the need for renewed efforts to sustain and enhance research in this important area. Bibliometric analysis, as visualized in the study, categorizes the research into several thematic clusters. Cluster 1 focuses on quality management, service quality, and higher education, highlighting the importance of quality assurance in institutional performance and stakeholders satisfaction. Cluster 2 centers on Education within Islamic institutions in Indonesia, examining the integration of pesantren with the broader educational system. Cluster 3 emphasizes the role of government, Islamic finance, and the state-religion relationship, while Cluster 4 addresses challenges, assessments, and quality control in assurance practices. Cluster 2, particularly, warrants attention due to its focus on pesantren and Islamic schools, with an overarching theme of education covering policies, practices, and systems in the Indonesian context. This cluster's distinction between public and private schools points to comparative studies on accessibility, quality, and outcomes. Furthermore, terms like *student* and *teacher* highlight the human aspect of education, exploring their roles and challenges within Islamic educational institutions, which aligns with findings by Sahin (2018).

### The Evolution of Quality Assurance in Islamic Boarding Schools

The adaptability of pesantren has facilitated their growth throughout different historical periods. Their integration with modern educational practices, such as the inclusion of non-religious subjects and formal recognition within Indonesia's national education system, underscores their evolving role in the broader educational landscape (Nurwanto & Cusack, 2017). The establishment of programs like the Islamic Boarding School-Based Junior High School Program further exemplifies this adaptability (Zainal et al., 2022). Despite these advancements, ongoing challenges related to curriculum development, governance, and infrastructure remain central concerns for improving the educational outcomes of pesantren.



Figure 7. Evolution of Pesantren Development

The historical evolution of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) has been shaped by significant shifts in Indonesia's educational policies, as shown in Figure 7. Since 1945, there has been a transition from a domestication approach to an accommodation approach, aligning Islamic ideologies with state policies (Machmudi, 2020). This shift allowed Islamic ideas to thrive and facilitated the intellectual transformation of Muslim thinkers and political activists,



contributing to the broader development of the educational landscape (Maksum et al., 2022). These policy changes underscore the importance of continued support in strengthening pesantren's role in the national education system, helping them adapt and grow within the changing educational environment.

In recent years, significant reforms have been introduced to modernize pesantren, including the integration of formal, informal, and non-formal education systems, as exemplified by the Gontor Islamic Boarding School (Alamin et al., 2022). The passage of the Pesantren bill in 2019 further solidified their status within the national education framework, ensuring that Pesantren graduates have equal opportunities for higher education and employment (Kurniawan, 2019). This formal recognition reflects the Ministry of Religion's ongoing efforts to modernize and standardize traditional learning environments (Saihu, 2020). Alongside these reforms, the development of Internal Quality Assurance Systems (QAS) has been critical in fostering a culture of quality within pesantren, focusing on inputs, standards, achievements, and assessments tailored to their unique contexts (Asnawi & Setyaningsih, 2020; Al Faruq et al., 2023). This system plays a pivotal role in maintaining the quality of education while preserving the distinct identity of pesantren in a rapidly modernizing world. Furthermore, the modernization of administrative practices, the adoption of digital tools, and the incorporation of quality assurance frameworks are crucial for bridging traditional Islamic Education with global educational standards (Darwanto et al., 2022; Suyatno et al., 2022), ensuring that pesantren remain relevant in the 21st century. Efforts to align religious education with national standards through policymaking, human resource development, and monitoring mechanisms further enhance the role of madrasahs in strengthening Indonesia's educational system (Sukasni & Efendy, 2017; Raihani, 2018).

Comparative insights from countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina (Smajić, 2018) and Malaysia (Anis et al., 2018) highlight the importance of establishing robust internal quality assurance systems. In these contexts, the autonomy granted to private higher education institutions often leads to higher levels of quality assurance implementation, demonstrating a clear correlation between institutional autonomy and the effectiveness of QA practices (Seyfried & Pohlenz, 2020). These international examples offer valuable lessons for enhancing quality assurance in Indonesian pesantren, underscoring the need for tailored approaches that address the unique characteristics of Islamic boarding schools.

Research data further reveals recurring themes and key terms central to the quality assurance discourse, such as "School," "Education," "Indonesia," "Islam," and "Student." The inclusion of terms like "Private School" and "Public School" suggests a comparative focus, while terms like "Teacher" emphasize the human aspect of educational quality. As pesantren are integrated into Indonesia's national education framework, continuous support is necessary to address challenges related to infrastructure, governance, and resource allocation. Strengthening teacher training and student development will enhance their contribution to national educational goals. The dynamic evolution of pesantren, aligned with quality assurance practices, reaffirms their vital role in Indonesia's education system (Darwanto et al., 2022). By adopting modern management practices and integrating digital innovations, pesantren can ensure sustainable growth and relevance, securing their long-term impact on national education and societal transformation. This research underscores the importance of collaboration among educators, policymakers, and researchers to ensure the ongoing success and progress of pesantren.

## Redefining Islamic Boarding Schools Through Synergistic Evolution

At the nexus of tradition and innovation, this research explores the interplay between cultural heritage and modern educational paradigms. By interrogating pedagogical transformations, organizational excellence, and outcome-driven frameworks, it illuminates pathways for continuous improvement through stakeholder synergy, redefining education's role in a dynamic global landscape.

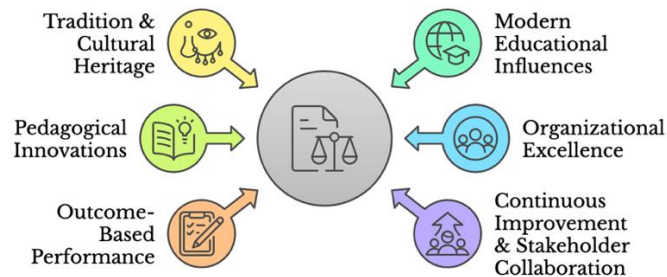


Figure 8. Quality Assurance for Islamic Boarding School

Figure 8 illustrates the dynamic interplay between *Tradition and Cultural Heritage* and *Modern Educational Influences*, which represents a delicate balance at the core of contemporary pedagogical research. While cultural heritage provides educational systems with a strong foundation rooted in identity and historical continuity, modern influences—such as digital literacy, globalization, and interdisciplinary approaches—challenge institutions to evolve while preserving these foundational values. This tension offers rich opportunities for research into how adaptive resilience can be cultivated within educational systems. It allows educators to integrate timeless ethical frameworks with emerging technologies, ensuring that education remains relevant to both contemporary needs and is grounded in cultural heritage. This balance is critical for preserving socio-cultural relevance and equipping learners with the skills needed to navigate an increasingly complex world, positioning education as a guardian of the past while preparing students for the future (Idris et al., 2022).

At the organizational level, *Pedagogical Innovations* and *Organizational Excellence* converge to reshape institutional effectiveness. Innovations such as flipped classrooms, AI-driven personalized learning, and competency-based curricula require strong structural frameworks to scale successfully (Rosowulan et al., 2025). Research in this area focuses on how agile leadership, data-driven decision-making, and resource optimization can transform innovative pedagogical models into established practices. Concurrently, *Outcome-Based Performance* metrics shift the focus from traditional input-based education to measurable outcomes like critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving, aligning institutional objectives with global educational standards. This triad of innovation, excellence, and accountability forms a comprehensive framework for evaluating educational impact, moving beyond traditional academic metrics (Djalilah et al., 2024). The final pillar, *Continuous Improvement, and Stakeholder Collaboration*, highlights the iterative nature of modern education systems. In this collaborative model, stakeholders—including governments, industries, communities, and learners—actively contribute to curricular design and policy development (Sulaiman et al., 2023). Research into this approach investigates how feedback loops, participatory governance, and cross-sector partnerships can drive incremental improvements. This strategy not only democratizes education but also ensures its sustainability, with stakeholder collaboration serving as the foundation of transformative educational ecosystems. Together, these elements define a new research trajectory that reimagines education as a synergistic integration of tradition, innovation, and collective agency.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the crucial role of quality assurance in strengthening pesantren's position within Indonesia's education system, emphasizing the themes of modernization, adaptability, and integration into national frameworks. Despite the decline in publication trends, pesantren have demonstrated resilience by evolving their curricula, embracing technology, and implementing quality assurance practices. To ensure continued progress, it is essential for stakeholders to prioritize policy support, infrastructure development, teacher training, and governance reforms. Collaborative efforts among educators, policymakers, and researchers are vital to enhancing pesantren's contribution to both national education and broader societal development.

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