INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ISLAMICATE SOCIAL STUDIES

Pesantren in Songkhla Province: Challenges in a Multicultural Society and the Era of Globalization

Aree Laehka
State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel, Indonesia

Email: areelaehka@gmail.com
** *Corresponding Author*

Abstract

This study examines the challenges faced by traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pondok*) in the context of globalization and multiculturalism in Songkhla Province, Southern Thailand. Employing a qualitative approach based on document analysis, the study draws on academic publications, policy documents, and historical records related to Islamic education and social change in the region. The findings indicate that *pondok* institutions continue to play a significant role in preserving Islamic religious values and Malay-Muslim cultural identity while adapting to contemporary societal changes. Such adaptations are evident in curriculum adjustments, institutional management, and engagement with broader community expectations. The multicultural social environment of Songkhla, characterized by religious and ethnic diversity, further positions *pondok* as mediating institutions that contribute to social cohesion and intergroup understanding. However, the study also identifies several key challenges confronting *pondok*, including rapid technological development, shifting social values, and declining public preference for traditional religious education compared to formal and modern schooling systems. The study concludes that *pondok* in Songkhla function not only as centers of Islamic education but also as strategic socio-cultural spaces that sustain religious traditions while negotiating contemporary demands. Their ability to balance continuity and adaptation constitutes a critical foundation for institutional sustainability amid the pressures and opportunities of globalization. These findings contribute to broader discussions on the resilience of traditional religious education within multicultural and globalized societies.

INTRODUCTION

In the southern border region of Thailand, there are currently numerous Islamic educational institutions, both formal and non-formal. One of the oldest and most influential institutions that has remained resilient to the present day is the Islamic boarding school, locally known as *pondok (ponoh)*. Pondok institutions were established based on the ideology, wisdom, and dedication of religious teachers (*tok guru*), who worked collaboratively with local communities that provided both physical and material support to sustain Islamic principles (Rasid et al., 2019; Dorloh & Hashim, 2019). This collaborative foundation reflects a shared mutual need between *tok guru* and the surrounding community. Generally, pondok institutions are established within communities where the majority of the population is Muslim, in alignment with prevailing Islamic beliefs and values.

From a sociological perspective, the pondok is not merely understood as a religious educational institution but also as a social organization that functions as a key mechanism for preserving religious and cultural traditions among Muslim communities in southern Thailand. Pondok institutions play a crucial role in transmitting Islamic values, norms, and traditions from one generation to the next, while simultaneously serving as a center for the formation of the collective identity of the Patani Muslim community (Salaeh, 2023). Based on various Malay historical sources, the tradition of Islamic education in the Patani region has existed for centuries, initially introduced through Middle Eastern–oriented educational approaches brought by Muslim migrants. Over time, this system evolved into a distinctive form of traditional Islamic education known as *ponoh*, which has become a defining characteristic of Islamic education in the region (Rasid et al., 2019).

The early historical development of pondok institutions in southern Thailand is inseparable from the process of the arrival and spread of Islam in Patani. Initially, pondok education emerged from the homes of *tok guru* or mosques that functioned as centers for religious instruction, before gradually developing into more organized educational institutions. However, scholars continue to debate the precise period of the emergence of the first pondok, with some suggesting the 12th century, others the 16th century, and still others the early 18th century.

Benjasamith (2008) explains that the role of *ulama* and *ponoh* became evident from the establishment of the Islamic Malay Sultanate of Patani Darussalam in the early 15th century through to the 20th century. During this period, Patani was widely recognized as a prominent center of Islamic education in Southeast Asia and produced many renowned scholars known by the title *al-Fathani*. Consequently, the region earned the epithet "the Veranda of Mecca."

Beyond serving as a center for religious education, pondok institutions also function as vital instruments for strengthening Islamic religious and cultural identity among Muslim communities. They operate as social spaces that connect local Muslim communities with broader Muslim networks across the Malay world, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia, through scholarly exchanges, networks of *ulama*, and shared traditions of Islamic education. Through this role, pondok institutions not only preserve local Islamic heritage but also serve as essential nodes within the wider network of Islamic education and culture across Southeast Asia (Dorloh & Hashim, 2019; Salaeh, 2023).

As a long-standing traditional educational system, *pondok* Islamic boarding schools within Muslim communities are increasingly facing pressures brought about by societal change, which continue to reshape their roles and functions within contemporary educational contexts. Social transformation and the growing complexity of community needs require *pondok* institutions to reform their curricular structures and pedagogical approaches in order to remain relevant amid the globalization of education (Paramita & Maya Sari, 2023). In Songkhla Province, a region characterized by cultural and religious diversity, *pondok* institutions are expected to preserve their religious identity while simultaneously adapting to the dynamics of a multicultural society (Wekke, Siddin, & Langputeh, 2019).

The era of globalization has introduced significant technological and social transformations that profoundly affect traditional educational institutions such as *pondok*. These changes include expanded access to information technology and increasing parental expectations for students to receive an education that equips them to compete in the modern labor market. Consequently, *pondok* institutions are required to integrate religious education with general education to ensure that their graduates are adequately prepared to confront contemporary challenges (Bahrudin & Sirozi, 2025; Paramita & Maya Sari, 2023).

The sustainability of *pondok* institutions in Songkhla Province is highly dependent on their capacity to adapt across multiple dimensions, including institutional structures, educational management, and engagement with local communities. Such adaptation is essential to ensure that *pondok* continue to function not only as institutions that promote Islamic religious and cultural values but also as contributors to social harmony within multicultural societies (Wekke, Siddin, & Langputeh, 2019; Bahrudin & Sirozi, 2025). Accordingly, this study seeks to explore the challenges faced by *pondok* institutions within multicultural contexts and the era of globalization, while also offering development-oriented recommendations to ensure their ongoing relevance and sustainability.

This article aims to examine the challenges encountered by *pondok* institutions in Songkhla Province within the context of multicultural societies and globalization. Its primary focus is to analyze the relationship between *pondok* institutions and surrounding communities in regions characterized by cultural and religious diversity. The study also addresses factors influencing *pondok* operations, including social change, evolving educational expectations, and adaptation to technological advancements and contemporary societal demands.

Beyond merely understanding the current role of *pondok* institutions, this research provides strategic recommendations for institutional development to enable *pondok* to respond effectively and sustainably to emerging challenges. In doing so, *pondok* institutions can continue to serve as vital actors in promoting religion, education, and social harmony within rapidly evolving multicultural societies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on a document study to analyze the roles and challenges of traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pondok*) in Songkhla Province in responding to globalization and multiculturalism. The document study approach was selected because it enables researchers to understand social and educational phenomena through systematic analysis of relevant written documents, both historical and contemporary in nature (Bowen, 2009).

The data utilized in this study include primary sources, such as reports issued by the Songkhla Islamic Committee, as well as secondary sources, including the book *Multiculturalism and Educational Development in the Three Southern Border Provinces* by Sama-un and colleagues (2006),

the journal article *Islamic Education in the Southern Border Provinces* by Narongraksaket (2006), the thesis *The Improvement and Development of Pondok into Private Islamic Schools* by Prachonpatjanuk (1973), and online sources such as the official website of the Songkhla Islamic Committee.

Data collection was conducted through a comprehensive review of academic literature, previous research reports, and historical records relevant to *pondok* institutions in Songkhla Province. Subsequently, content analysis was applied using a descriptive-analytical approach to interpret the socio-cultural context and to evaluate the adaptive strategies employed by *pondok* institutions in addressing challenges such as technological advancement, social change, and cultural diversity.This study integrates perspectives from multiculturalism theory and Islamic education to generate comprehensive conclusions regarding the strategic role of *pondok* institutions in promoting spiritual values, cultural continuity, and social cohesion in the era of globalization.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Structure and Teaching Models of Pondok Educational in Songkhla Province

The basic structure of traditional *pondok* educational institutions consists of several key elements: the *tok guru* as both the owner and primary instructor of the institution; students known as *tok pagae* as learners; assistants to the *tok guru*; a *balai* or mosque serving as the central space for learning and religious activities; and student dormitories in the form of small *pondok* huts characterized by simplicity and community-based living (Maluleem, 1995; Wekke, Siddin, & Langputeh, 2019). This structure reflects the distinctive characteristics of traditional Islamic educational institutions that emerge from the needs of local Muslim communities and are independently managed by *tok guru* in collaboration with the surrounding community.

Maluleem (1995) explains that the institutional structure of *pondok* education includes small huts used as student residences, constructed on land owned by the *tok guru* or donated by members of the local community. Students are not charged rent to reside in these *pondok*, while the *balai* used for instructional activities is typically located adjacent to the *tok guru*'s residence. The *tok guru* carries out teaching responsibilities without receiving a fixed salary and often engages in additional occupations, such as farming or gardening, to meet daily living

needs. Students enrolled in *pondok* institutions generally range in age from 15 to 25 years, including both unmarried individuals and those who are married.

As the number of students increases, limitations in residential and instructional space present significant challenges for *pondok* institutions. To address these constraints, *tok guru*, parents of students, and local community members collaboratively construct additional *pondok* units within the pesantren environment. These huts are typically arranged in rows, measuring approximately 3 × 3 meters, and are occupied by two to three students per unit. The facilities provided are highly modest and emphasize student self-reliance, including self-cooking practices, shared public bathrooms, and communal wells for daily water needs (Wekke et al., 2019; Dorloh & Hashim, 2019).

Strict segregation between male and female students' residential and learning spaces is implemented as part of the enforcement of moral values and religious norms. Pesantren areas are generally divided into three main zones: male student areas, female student areas, and family areas for married students. Each zone is supervised by a designated area head, typically a senior student entrusted directly by the *tok guru* to assist in maintaining discipline and order within the pesantren community (Dorloh & Hashim, 2019).

Students are generally admitted to *pondok* institutions from a minimum age of 12 years and are required to have completed basic education equivalent to primary or junior secondary schooling. Religious identity is also reflected in students' dress codes, where male students wear white caps (*peci*), long-sleeved shirts, and sarongs or robes (*thob*), while female students wear long hijabs and modest clothing in accordance with Islamic legal requirements. Such patterns of daily life and instruction reinforce the role of *pondok* institutions not only as centers of religious education but also as spaces for character formation, independence, and discipline in students' everyday lives (Wekke et al., 2019).

Teaching System

Rahimmula (2002) describes the teaching system implemented in *pondok* institutions during the eighteenth century as follows. Islamic education conducted by Arab Muslim preachers and local Patani scholars at that time was primarily based on text-centered learning methods, focusing on the recitation of religious texts such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and oral religious instruction delivered by the *tok guru* or ulama. This system emphasized listening rather

than writing as the dominant mode of learning. Among the Patani Malay community, this educational model was commonly referred to as *nadoh*, *tadoh*, or *mena-nadoh*. Literally, the term *nadoh* means "to receive" or "to absorb," but in an academic context, it refers to the practice of listening attentively to lectures or explanations delivered by the teacher (*tok guru* or ulama).

Within this method, students brought their religious texts, listened to the recitation conducted by the *tok guru*, and followed the lesson orally. In the traditional *pondok* system, the use of blackboards was absent, and the learning process relied heavily on memorization. Students were typically instructed to memorize specific texts and later recite them orally before the *tok guru*. This teaching system has remained a defining characteristic of traditional Islamic education in *pondok* institutions in the Patani region up to the present day (Rahimmula, 2002).

Snouck Hurgronje further elaborates on the instructional practices employed in *pondok* education. He notes that students would sit on mats after performing congregational prayers, preparing ink bottles, pens, dip pens, and compiled manuscripts or religious texts to listen to the teacher's instruction. In addition, students prepared paper for note-taking (Rahimmula, 2002). According to Hurgronje, teachers generally employed one of three instructional methods:

1. Text Reading: The teacher reads aloud from a written text or manuscript for students to listen to, including explanations of previously taught material. This method is used to identify issues related to Arabic vowelization and consonant pronunciation, as well as to provide word-by-word explanations to address students' difficulties in understanding the text.

2. Formal Lecture: The teacher explains the content of the text using a structured lecture method. This explanation is adjusted to the technical vocabulary and academic terminology relevant to each subject or scholarly work being studied.

3. Vocabulary Revision and Development: The teacher selects previously introduced vocabulary, explains and restructures it to generate new lexical forms. This newly developed vocabulary is then taught to students as part of the instructional process.

Curriculum and Learning Materials in Pondok Institutions

The curriculum taught in *pondok* institutions primarily consists of Islamic religious sciences and Arabic language studies, including: (1) Qur'anic studies, (2) Hadith, (3) Theology (*tawhid*), (4) Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), (5) Ethics (*akhlaq*), (6) Arabic grammar (*nahwu*), (7) Morphology (*sharaf*), (8) Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), (9) Qur'anic recitation science (*tajwid*), (10) Principles of Qur'anic interpretation (*usul al-tafsir*), (11) Principles of Hadith (*usul al-hadith*), (12) Principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), (13) Islamic inheritance law (*faraidh*), (14) Islamic history (*tarikh*), (15) Rhetoric (*balaghah*), and (16) Logic (*mantiq*).

The curriculum and teaching materials in *pondok* institutions are characterized by a high degree of flexibility and are not formally standardized or officially documented. The selection of learning materials and religious texts depends largely on the discretion of the *tok guru* or on the needs and interests of the students. This flexibility allows each *pondok* institution to tailor its educational practices to its specific social and cultural context.

Among the various subjects taught, particular emphasis is placed on Arabic grammar, Ash'ari theology, and Islamic jurisprudence. Other subjects, such as *tajwid*, tend to receive less attention, except in *pondok* institutions that specialize in these areas. Each *pondok* is generally recognized for its particular strengths in certain disciplines, which are closely linked to the scholarly expertise of the *tok guru*.

In the teaching process, the *tok guru* explains the learning material to the students, while the *santri* take notes on the key points delivered during the lesson, usually recording them in their individual textbooks. Several subjects, such as Arabic grammar, Islamic theology (*aqidah*), and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), are also taught using memorization-based methods.

Assessment is conducted primarily through oral question-and-answer sessions or by asking students to explain specific topics that have been taught. For subjects that require memorization, students are instructed to recite the memorized material orally before the *tok guru* or teaching assistants without referring to written texts. Meanwhile, for subjects that emphasize reading accuracy, such as *tajwid*, students are required to read directly in front of the *tok guru* to demonstrate proper pronunciation and recitation.

At present, several *pondok* institutions in Songkhla Province have adapted their management and instructional systems into two main models. First, traditional instruction conducted in the prayer hall (*balai*) or mosque. This system is implemented under the direct supervision of the *tok guru* as the owner and principal teacher of the *pondok*. In this model, all students study together in a single learning setting without any formal class division based on levels of ability, literacy, or prior educational background. Both novice students and those with varying levels of reading and writing proficiency receive instruction simultaneously.

Second, class-based instructional organization. This system structures learning through graded class levels, supported by designated classrooms, formal evaluation examinations, and a promotion system based on students' academic competence. However, this model remains focused exclusively on religious subjects. Instruction is delivered by individuals who possess advanced expertise in Islamic sciences and who have received explicit authorization from the *tok guru* to teach.

The coexistence of these two instructional systems reflects the flexibility of *pondok* institutions in responding to the educational needs of students and the surrounding community. At the same time, *pondok* institutions continue to preserve their traditional identity and pedagogical ethos.

Nevertheless, some *pondok* institutions continue to maintain a fully traditional instructional model. In this system, all students learn collectively under the guidance of a single *tok guru*, without formal class division, standardized examinations, or a level-based promotion system aligned with students' academic progression.

The Importance and Role of *Pondok* Institutions in a Multicultural Society

Songkhla Province is characterized by significant cultural and religious diversity shaped through a long historical process as an international trading region. Interactions with various nations and ethnic groups have resulted in a complex cultural synthesis that reflects patterns of coexistence among diverse communities, including Muslims, Buddhists, ethnic Malays, Chinese communities, and other groups (McCargo, 2008; Jory, 2013). This diversity has produced a multifaceted social structure in which Islam and Buddhism function as the two principal religious pillars of social life.

Demographically, the majority of Songkhla Province's population adheres to Buddhism (approximately 61.70%), followed by Muslims (35.11%), and adherents of other religions such as Christianity and Hinduism (3.19%). The region is home to 424 Buddhist temples, 108 monk residences, 12 Christian churches, and 407 mosques, indicating the intensity of religious life within shared social spaces (The Islamic Committee of Songkhla; Abuza, 2011). Such conditions necessitate the presence of socio-religious institutions capable of sustaining social harmony and cohesion.

Within this context, *pondok* pesantren institutions, as centers of Islamic education, have long existed and played a strategic role in the lives of Muslim communities in Songkhla. Beyond their function as religious educational institutions, *pondok* pesantren serve as spaces for the formation of values, identity, and social ethics that contribute to the stability of multicultural social life (Wekke & Hamid, 2013; Jory, 2013).

Narongraksaket (2006) explains that *pondok* pesantren play a crucial role in providing Islamic religious education to Muslim communities across various age groups. This education enables learners to understand Islamic legal principles, including obligations and prohibitions, as well as concepts of sin and reward, allowing these values to be practiced in personal, familial, and social contexts. Such functions reinforce the role of pesantren as institutions of sustained moral and spiritual development.

Historically, *pondok* pesantren also functioned as foundational learning centers that produced Islamic scholars (*ulama*), intellectuals, and community leaders. Prior to 1961, the majority of Islamic scholars in southern Thailand were educated in pesantren, many of whom later established new pesantren or served as independent preachers (*dai*) and religious teachers in private Islamic schools (Narongraksaket, 2006; Abuza, 2011). This highlights the role of pesantren as a primary foundation for the transmission of religious knowledge and leadership.

In addition to their educational role, *pondok* pesantren function as social guides for Muslim communities. The *tok guru*, as pesantren leaders, are regarded as religious figures possessing strong moral and social authority. Prajanpajanuk (1973) emphasizes that *tok guru* are highly respected due to their profound religious knowledge and exemplary conduct, rendering their advice and perspectives influential in shaping communal attitudes and behaviors. This

role further strengthens the position of pesantren as institutions that contribute to social cohesion and the resolution of religious and communal issues.

Furthermore, the identity and characteristics of *pondok* pesantren in the southern border regions, including Songkhla, play a significant role in preserving local Islamic traditions and culture. Pesantren function as spaces for the reproduction of Islamic culture rooted in Malay–Muslim traditions, while simultaneously serving as mediators between religious teachings and the realities of a dynamic multicultural society (McCargo, 2008; Wekke & Hamid, 2013). Through this role, *pondok* pesantren not only ensure the continuity of Islamic traditions but also contribute to fostering interreligious harmony in pluralistic regions.

From a cultural perspective, *pondok* pesantren also play an important role in preserving Malay cultural practices, particularly in aspects such as modes of dress and residential architecture. These cultural elements have become integral to the lifestyle of Muslim communities in Thailand's southern border areas. Narongraksaket (2006) explains that the Muslim way of life in this region is closely intertwined with religious teachings, shaping beliefs and cultural practices that differ from those of communities in other parts of Thailand. Moreover, graduates of *pondok* pesantren are widely regarded as guardians of local culture grounded in religious values and frequently assume roles as spiritual leaders and community references in various religious affairs, including marriage ceremonies and other religious activities.

Within the context of Songkhla Province, which is characterized by religious and cultural diversity, *pondok* pesantren play a crucial role in promoting peaceful coexistence. Pesantren emphasize the importance of mutual understanding and respect for differences among ethnic and religious groups. Learning from one another within this environment strengthens social cohesion and helps reduce the potential for conflict within the broader community.

Challenges Faced by Pesantren in a Multicultural Context in Songkhla Province

Songkhla Province, characterized by its religious and cultural diversity, places *pondok* pesantren—as centers of Islamic education and religious transmission—in a position where they face various challenges in fulfilling their roles. Within a multicultural context, pesantren are expected to promote mutual understanding, preserve religious and cultural identities, and

foster harmonious relationships within diverse communities. While this diversity generates social complexity, it also presents opportunities for pesantren to develop flexibility and innovative approaches to sustain their role as key institutions in promoting social balance and long-term community resilience.

Promoting Mutual Understanding and Peaceful Coexistence

Pondok in Songkhla play an important role in strengthening understanding among communities with different religious and cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural learning within a multicultural environment can help reduce potential conflicts and encourage harmonious relationships at the community level. Such interactions form a crucial foundation for peaceful coexistence.

However, this role is not without challenges. Pesantren must contend with issues such as religious prejudice, limited spaces for cross-cultural interaction, and cultural differences that may lead to misunderstanding. Efforts to foster mutual understanding in such contexts require sustained engagement and the adaptation of communication strategies that are responsive to the needs and sensitivities of diverse communities.

Preserving Religious and Cultural Identity

Pondok in Songkhla play a central role in preserving Malay cultural traditions and promoting Islamic religious values, particularly among Muslim communities. Nevertheless, these efforts face challenges arising from social change, including processes of cultural assimilation that may affect the identity of Muslim communities.

At present, pesantren are also confronted with perceptions held by segments of society that view them as potential threats to national security. Such perceptions stem largely from misunderstandings regarding the role of pesantren as educational and religious institutions within Muslim communities. These misconceptions not only affect the public image of pesantren but also create obstacles to their efforts to preserve religious and cultural identity.

As noted by Bandid Sama'un and colleagues (2006) in their study on multiculturalism and educational development in the three southern border provinces, including pesantren, diversity is often perceived by the state as a "threat" to national security. In reality, however, pesantren are institutions that provide education for members of the nation, and their

development represents an investment in valuable human resources that contributes significantly to national progress.

Therefore, rather than perceiving pesantren as a threat and implementing interventions that endanger Muslim identity, the state should seek ways to *develop* and support pesantren in accordance with their actual needs. Through such an approach, the state would not only acknowledge the existence of pesantren without suspicion but also ensure that these institutions continue to function effectively as educational centers for Muslim communities.

To sustain their identity, pesantren must cultivate flexibility and adaptive capacity while maintaining respect for other cultures in the surrounding environment and preserving the core elements of their religious and cultural traditions. This can be achieved, for example, by contextualizing religious activities to make them relevant within a diverse social setting or by providing education about Muslim religious and cultural practices to non-Muslim communities.

Through such approaches, *pondok* pesantren not only maintain their role as centers of education and spirituality for Muslim communities but also serve as bridges that strengthen intergroup relations within Songkhla's multicultural society.

Building Relationships within a Multicultural Society

The religious and cultural diversity of Songkhla presents both challenges and opportunities for *pondok* pesantren. Establishing harmonious relationships among social groups with different beliefs and ways of life is a fundamental necessity. Effective communication and the implementation of community-oriented initiatives—such as cultural exchange programs, interfaith collaboration, and the creation of dialogue spaces to address misunderstandings—represent practical strategies that pesantren may adopt.

Such activities create opportunities for mutual learning and understanding among communities with diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. These efforts not only support the development of social harmony but also strengthen unity at the community level. In this way, pesantren can play a significant role in promoting peaceful coexistence and mutual support within a multicultural society.

Challenges Faced by *Ponoh* in Responding to Social Change in the Era of Globalization

Social change refers to shifts in patterns of life and individual behavior within society, moving from established practices toward new forms that may not yet be fully internalized. Without change, culture cannot develop. Samakkarn (1995) defines social change as transformations that alter social relationships over a specific period, whether on a small or large scale. Such changes are commonly categorized into two types: progressive change and regressive change (Srisantisuk, 1984).

Progressive change refers to transformations that bring advancement to society, such as the transition from rural to urban communities, which influences values, beliefs, and traditions. In contrast, regressive change refers to forms of change that preserve established values and traditions while selectively adopting new elements—for example, embracing aspects of modern culture without abandoning deeply rooted traditions (Srisantisuk, 1984).

Social change is influenced by various factors, including ideology, technological development, social competition, political dynamics, economic conditions, and internal structural pressures within society (Thongsawang, 2004). In the context of globalization, these processes of change occur increasingly rapidly and extend across multiple spheres of life, including the economic, social, cultural, and technological domains. Globalization also has a significant impact on educational systems by promoting the renewal of learning content, teaching methods, and the development of skills relevant to the needs of the 21st century (Iamphaya, 2018; Noimanee, 2019).

As a traditional educational institution for Muslim communities in Thailand, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) continue to play an important role in transmitting Islamic teachings. Although globalization has brought about significant social changes, its impact on the core functions of pesantren remains relatively limited, as religious education continues to be a primary priority for Muslim communities. Nonetheless, modern social change requires pesantren to adapt to the evolving expectations of society.

One of the main challenges lies in integrating formal education with religious education. Many students now simultaneously pursue formal schooling alongside their pesantren education, resulting in reduced time for religious learning and a potential decline in the intensity of religious instruction. Moreover, curriculum adaptation has become an urgent necessity to enable pesantren to respond to the demands of modern society, such as the

addition of vocational subjects, reinforcement of contextualized religious values, and the integration of technology in the learning process (Iamphaya, 2018).

Technological developments also provide new opportunities for pesantren to enhance the effectiveness and reach of learning through online media and digital learning resources. On the other hand, communities expect pesantren not only to function as centers of religious education and traditional cultural preservation but also to equip students with skills relevant to the modern workforce and contemporary life, including digital literacy, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities (Noimanee, 2019).

To address these globalization challenges, pesantren need to implement various adaptive strategies, such as improving teacher quality through training in relevant teaching methods, strengthening collaboration with communities in skill development and community empowerment programs, and preserving religious and traditional cultural values as the pesantren's core identity. Through an adaptive and innovative approach, pesantren can continue to serve as relevant educational institutions while safeguarding the religious and cultural identity of Muslims amidst the rapidly accelerating currents of global social change.

Meeting Community Expectations

Communities expect pesantren not only to serve as institutions for religious instruction and traditional cultural preservation but also to equip students with skills relevant to confronting the challenges of the modern world. These demands include career preparation as well as the development of 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving, which are increasingly essential in social life and the global workforce (Trilling & Fadel, 2009; OECD, 2018).

In response to these globalization challenges, pesantren need to develop adaptive strategies that remain rooted in religious values. One important strategy is the improvement of teacher quality through pedagogical training aligned with the needs of modern learners, including the integration of technology in teaching and the strengthening of contextualized learning approaches (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Moreover, collaboration with the community serves as a key strategy to reinforce the relevance of pesantren. Partnerships with local communities, social institutions, and the workforce can facilitate the development of programs aligned with the needs of the

surrounding environment, such as vocational training, entrepreneurship, and cultural exchange programs. This community-based approach not only enhances the quality of graduates but also strengthens the position of pesantren as social institutions that are responsive to change (Wekke & Hamid, 2013).

On the other hand, adapting to modernity does not imply neglecting traditional values. Pesantren must continue to preserve and transmit Islamic religious values and culture as the foundation for shaping students' character. The integration of traditional values with modern elements constitutes a strength for pesantren in maintaining religious identity while preparing students to navigate the dynamics of global society (Azra, 2015).

With this strategic role, pesantren can function as guardians of Muslim religious and cultural identity amid the rapid social changes driven by globalization. Through appropriate adaptation and innovative approaches, pesantren can continue to contribute as relevant educational centers for Muslim communities in the modern era without losing the traditional identity that characterizes them.

CONCLUSION

The traditional pesantren education system has demonstrated its significant role in preserving religious and cultural identity amid globalization and cultural diversity. The structures and learning methods employed allow pesantren to maintain traditional values while adapting to the needs of modern society. Despite facing various challenges, including technological developments, social change, and economic pressures, pesantren remain capable of providing relevant education, particularly in the areas of religious instruction and character formation.

In Songkhla Province, known for its cultural and ethnic diversity, pesantren not only function as religious educational institutions but also serve as spaces for interaction that reflect multicultural dynamics. The surrounding community, composed of Malay-Muslim, Thai-Buddhist, and other ethnic groups, adds a unique dimension to the social context in which pesantren operate. This creates both challenges and opportunities for pesantren to promote values of tolerance, mutual respect, and social harmony within a plural society. Although the popularity of pesantren may not be as strong as in the past, the community continues to respect and acknowledge the strategic role these institutions play in fostering spiritual, cultural, and social cohesion.

Therefore, pesantren play a strategic role as religion-based educational centers that not only equip young generations with strong religious understanding but also provide them with values relevant for navigating the dynamics of the modern world. In the context of multiculturalism in Songkhla, the presence of pesantren reflects the capacity to preserve tradition, adapt to innovation, and strengthen unity amid diversity. This constitutes a crucial foundation for the sustainability of pesantren in a globalized era full of both challenges and opportunities.

REFERENCES

Abuza, Z. (2011). Political Islam and violence in Indonesia. Routledge.   Akademik.

Azra, A. (2015). Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan modernisasi di tengah tantangan milenium III. Jakarta: Kencana.

Bahrudin, A., & Sirozi, M. (2025). *Tantangan dan sumber daya inovasi pendidikan agama Islam (madrasah dan pondok pesantren)*. Jurnal Ilmiah Global Education, 6(2), 304–312. https://doi.org/10.55681/jige.v6i2.3805 Ejournal Nusantara Global

Benjasmith, I. (2008). *Peran pendidikan dan politik Syekh Wan Ahmad al-Fatani (1856–1908)*. Tesis

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. Qualitative Research Journal, 9(2), 27–40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). Effective teacher professional development. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/effective-teacher-professional-development-report

Dorloh, S., & Hashim, I. (2019). Islamic education with reference to pondok in Patani: Some reflections. *International Research Journal of Shariah, Muamalat and Islam (IRJSMI)*, 1(2), 46–53. https://gaexcellence.com/index.php/irjsmi/article/view/71

Hiranyato, U. (1968). *Muslim di Thailand*. Bangkok: Odeon Store Publishing House.

https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/

Iamphaya, K. (2018). *Globalisasi dan perubahan sistem pendidikan di Thailand*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

Iamphaya, K. (2018). *Pengembangan profesi guru*. Nonthaburi: 21 Century.

Jory, P. (2013). Religion and conflict in southern Thailand. Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 44(2), 236–257. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463413000066

Maluleem, I. (1995). Analisis konflik antara pemerintah Thailand dengan Muslim di Thailand: Studi kasus kelompok Muslim di provinsi perbatasan selatan. Bangkok: Islamic Academy.

McCargo, D. (2008). Tearing apart the land: Islam and legitimacy in southern Thailand. Cornell University Press.

Narongraksaket, I. (2006). Pendidikan Islam di provinsi perbatasan selatan. *Jurnal Kajian Indocina:*

Narongraksaket, I. (2006). Pendidikan Islam di provinsi perbatasan selatan Thailand. Pattani: Pusat Kajian Islam dan Masyarakat.

Noimanee, N. (2019). *Pendidikan dan tantangan keterampilan abad ke-21.* Bangkok: Office of Educational Policy and Strategy.

Noimanee, N. (2019). *Pendidikan Thailand di era globalisasi.* Chachoengsao: Kantor Wilayah Pendidikan Menengah 6.

OECD. (2018). The future of education and skills: Education 2030. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Paramita, T., & Maya Sari, T. (2023). *The impact of globalization on Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools. International Journal of Students Education*, 2(1), 86–89. https://doi.org/10.62966/ijose.v2i1.270 Berpusi Publishing

Prachonpatjanuk, P. (1973). *Peningkatan dan pengembangan pondok menjadi sekolah swasta pengajaran Islam.* Tesis Magister Ilmu Politik, Universitas Chulalongkorn.

Publikasi Akademik, Institut Administrasi Nasional.

Rahimmula, P. (2002). *Peran lembaga ulama dan pendidikan Islam di Pattani pada masa lalu (1785–1945).*

Rasid, R., Munip, A., & Djafar, H. (2019). Transformasi sistem lembaga pendidikan Islam di Patani-Thailand Selatan. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 2(3), 407–420. https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v2i3.1100

Salaeh, F. (2023). Reviving the legacy: The role of Islamic education in Patani, South Thailand. *SYAMIL: Journal of Islamic Education*, 11(1), 39–59. https://doi.org/10.21093/sy.v11i1.5890

Samakkarn, S. (1995). *Sosiologi perubahan sosial.* Bangkok: Thammasat University Press.

Sama-un, B., & Tim. (2006). *Multikulturalisme dan pengembangan pendidikan di tiga provinsi perbatasan*

Sammakan, S. (1995). *Perubahan budaya dan perkembangan sosial.* Bangkok: Proyek Pengembangan selatan: Studi kasus pondok. Bangkok: Pusat Studi Muslim, Institut Asia, Universitas

Srisantisuk, S. (1984). *Perubahan sosial dan pembangunan masyarakat.* Bangkok: Ramkhamhaeng University Press.

The Islamic Committee of Songkhla. "Masjid Thai." *The Islamic Committee of Songkhla.* access 10 Desember 2024, dari https://www.masjidthai.com/ska/masjid/

Thongsawang, T. (2004). *Struktur sosial dan dinamika masyarakat Thailand.* Bangkok: Srinakharinwirot University Press.

Trilling, B., & Fadel, C. (2009). 21st century skills: Learning for life in our times. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Wekke, I. S., & Hamid, S. (2013). Pendidikan Islam dan kearifan lokal dalam konteks multikultural. Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam, 13(2), 299–320.https://doi.org/10.21154/al-tahrir.v13i2.34

Wekke, I. S., Siddin, S., & Langputeh, S. (2019). *Islamic education in Thailand Pattani Muslim minority: What are the institutional continuity and change? Tadris: Jurnal Keguruan dan Ilmu Tarbiyah*, 4(1), 127–134. https://doi.org/10.24042/tadris.v4i1.3753