

## KITAB KUNING LEARNING AS SOCIAL CAPITAL: The Role of Pesantren Mambaus Sholihin Gresik Alumni in Preserving Islamic Heritage in Madura

<sup>1</sup>Mohammad Makinuddin, <sup>2</sup>M. Muizzuddin

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Kiai Abdullah Faqih Gresik, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>[kinudd@gmail.com](mailto:kinudd@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[muhammadmuizzuddin84@gmail.com](mailto:muhammadmuizzuddin84@gmail.com)

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis mekanisme pembelajaran kitab kuning oleh alumni Pondok Pesantren Mambaus Sholihin Gresik sebagai bentuk modal sosial dalam pelestarian khazanah keislaman di Madura, dengan tiga fokus utama: mekanisme pembelajaran, bentuk pelestarian-pendiseminasian ilmu, dan tantangan adaptasi era modern. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi lapangan, data primer diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan alumni, pengelola pesantren, dan tokoh masyarakat, dilengkapi observasi partisipatif terhadap proses sorogan-bandongan serta kegiatan dakwah, dan analisis dokumentasi arsip serta rekaman pengajian. Analisis deskriptif interpretatif dengan triangulasi sumber memastikan validitas temuan. Hasil menunjukkan metode sorogan membangun kepercayaan interpersonal yang menginternalisasi nilai keikhlasan-gotong royong, sementara bandongan memperkuat solidaritas melalui kelompok pengajian bulanan yang menghasilkan jaringan dakwah lintas wilayah Gresik-Madura. Alumni aktif melestarikan tradisi Aswaja melalui pengajian masjid desa, dakwah kontekstual, literasi pemuda, dan pemberdayaan ekonomi. Tantangan utama berupa persaingan media sosial dan migrasi urban menyebabkan penurunan peserta pengajian, namun diatasi melalui adaptasi e-learning, video pengajian, dan metode interaktif kontekstual yang menjaga kedalaman spiritual. Kesimpulan menegaskan pesantren sebagai institusi dinamis yang mensinergikan tradisi klasik dengan inovasi digital, membentuk komunitas kohesif berbasis modal sosial untuk pembangunan sosial-keagamaan berkelanjutan di Madura.

**Kata Kunci:** Modal Sosial, Pembelajaran Kitab Kuning, Pesantren.

### Abstract

This study analyzes the learning mechanisms of *kitab kuning* (Islamic classical books) by pesantren alumni of Mambaus Sholihin Gresik as a form of social capital in preserving Islamic intellectual heritage in Madura, with three main focuses: the learning mechanisms, the forms of preservation and dissemination of knowledge, and the challenges of adaptation in the modern era. Using a qualitative field study approach, primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with alumni, pesantren administrators, and community figures, complemented by participatory observation of the *sorogan-bandongan* learning processes as well as da'wah activities, and analysis of archival documentation and religious lecture recordings. Interpretive descriptive analysis with source triangulation ensured the validity of the findings. The results indicate that the *sorogan* method builds interpersonal trust that internalizes the values of sincerity and mutual cooperation, while *bandongan* strengthens solidarity through monthly study groups that produce cross-regional da'wah networks spanning Gresik and Madura. Alumni actively preserve the Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah tradition through village mosque lectures, contextual da'wah, youth literacy, and economic empowerment. The main challenges, in the form of social media competition and urban migration, lead to a decline in lecture participation; however, these are overcome through adaptation via e-learning, lecture videos, and contextual interactive methods that maintain spiritual depth. The conclusion affirms the pesantren as a dynamic institution that synergizes classical tradition with digital innovation, forming a cohesive community based on social capital for sustainable socio-religious development in Madura.

**Keywords:** Social Capital, Kitab Kuning Learning, Pesantren

## Introduction

Pesantren have become very important educational institutions in the development of Islamic life in Indonesia, especially in Madura, which is known for its strong pesantren tradition. One of the distinctive features of pesantren education is the teaching of the kitab kuning, the classical Islamic texts that serve as primary sources of religious knowledge. The study of the kitab kuning not only transmits religious knowledge but also forms social capital through the internalization of religious and sociocultural values that are passed down from generation to generation (MZ et al., 2025).

Pesantren Alumni play a strategic role as agents of the preservation and dissemination of Islamic treasures contained in kitab kuning (Jannah, 2019). Mambaus Sholihin Alumni in Madura specifically showed a real work in maintaining religious traditions through various social and religious activities in the community, which at the same time strengthened the social capital network in the region. Social capital as a network of relationships and trust values is an important foundation in building dynamic religious community solidarity.

*Kitab kuning* Learning in pesantren is not only a process of knowledge transfer, but also the formation of character and understanding of the socio-religious context that makes alumni able to make a real contribution to the life of the community (Agung Yuwono Putro & Suryono, 2019). The cultivation of the values studied in *kitab kuning* creates social capital that strengthens social cohesion and Islamic identity in the midst of modernization and globalization. Therefore, the alumni of the pesantren are not only the successors of religious traditions but also as the driving force in the preservation of Islamic treasures in Madura.

The role of Mambaus Sholihin Gresik alumni reflects how social capital derived from learning *kitab kuning* can be used to build an effective and sustainable religious communication network. They connect the heritage values of pesantren with the needs of contemporary society, in terms of social, cultural, and even economic (Mangkachi, 2021). Thus, the work of pesantren alumni is a form of actualization of pesantren functions outside the formal realm of education.

This study aims to reveal the mechanism of *kitab kuning* learning by alumni of the Mambaus Sholihin Gresik Pesantren as a social capital that plays a role in the preservation of Islamic treasures in Madura. In addition, this research focuses on identifying forms of preservation and dissemination of Islamic knowledge and values carried out by alumni. The study also analyzes the various challenges faced in maintaining the relevance and adaptation of *kitab kuning* in the midst of the dynamics of the development of the modern era. This research is expected to enrich the literature on the contribution of Pesantrens to socio-religious development.

This research also reviews the work of Mambaus Sholihin Gresik as an institution that specifically develops the tradition of *kitab kuning* learning with a relevant approach to the condition of the Madurese people who are thick with local culture and traditional Islamic values. This is in line with the findings that pesantren in Madura have distinctive characteristics that involve strong social interaction between alumni, students, and the surrounding community (Kutsiyah et al., 2020).

The preservation of Islamic traditions through *kitab kuning* in Madura also cannot be separated from the role of the alumni community who take part in various socio-religious activities, such as recitation, da'wah, and community empowerment. The social capital formed from this alumni network is a significant source of trust and moral strength. This condition strengthens the position of pesantren as the main pillar of Islam in Madura. This study also reviews the challenges faced by pesantren alumni in implementing the *kitab kuning* learning in the modern era, where the influence of technology and social change is increasingly rapid. How they adapt and maintain the relevance of these religious traditions is an important part of this research (Kutsiyah et al., 2020). These findings can be a reference in the development of adaptive and effective religious learning strategies.

This study is expected to open a space for constructive dialogue regarding the work of pesantren and alumni in the development of social capital which is not only religious, but also socio-cultural and economic. Therefore, it is important to understand *kitab kuning* as a source of knowledge and social capital that has great potential in the development of Madura society.

### Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a field research method which aims to obtain an in-depth picture of the mechanism of *kitab kuning* learning by alumni of pesantren Mambaus Sholihin Gresik and the role of social capital in the preservation of Islamic treasures in the Madura community. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is relevant to explore socio-cultural aspects, Islamic values, and adaptation challenges that are not easily measured quantitatively. The main data was obtained through in-depth interviews with several key speakers, namely Pesantren alumni, cottage managers, and community leaders who are active in religious activities. In addition, participatory observation was carried out to see firsthand the learning process of turast and socio-religious activities that took place in the pesantren environment and the surrounding community. To complete the data, documentation in the form of notes, pesantren archives, and recordings of alumni religious activities was also used. Data analysis is carried out in an interpretive descriptive manner by interpreting qualitative data to understand social and religious meanings, as well as their relationship with social capital that is formed and takes part in the preservation of Islamic traditions.

The validity of data and research findings is maintained through the triangulation technique of sources and methods, so that the results of this research are expected to provide a valid and comprehensive picture according to the context of pesantren and the Madura community.

## Research Findings and Discussion

### The Mechanism of *Kitab Kuning* Learning as Social Capital

Based on in-depth interviews with 8 alumni of Mambaus Sholihin Gresik, the mechanism of learning *kitab kuning* takes place through the *sorogan* (individual learning with kiai) and *bandongan* (group public lectures) methods, which not only transfer fiqh and Sufism knowledge, but also build a network of trust between alumni. A senior alumnus stated, "*Kitab kuning* taught us patience and bonds of friendship which is now the capital to hold regular recitations in Madura villages." Participatory observation for two weeks showed that this interaction created social solidarity, where alumni supported each other in da'wah activities, in line with the tradition of Madura pesantren that emphasizes kiai-santri communication for the preservation of classical knowledge.

The documentation of pesantren archives reveals that alumni form recitation groups that meet monthly, strengthening social capital through the values of sincerity and mutual cooperation internalized from *kitab kuning*. Additional interviews with pesantren managers confirmed that this mechanism resulted in a network that connects Mambaus Sholihin alumni community in Madura, supporting the sustainable preservation of Islamic treasures.

### Forms of Preservation and Dissemination of Islamic Knowledge

Identification from observations and documentation shows that alumni preserve treasures through the recitation of *kitab kuning* in mosques, da'wah (contextual lectures), and economic empowerment. One alumnus said, "We disseminate Islamic values from *kitab kuning* to the people of Madura through recitation, maintaining the *Aswaja* (Traditionalist Sunni Islam) tradition." The observation data of recitation activities indicated community participation in recitation activities. Interviews with community leaders corroborate that this dissemination expands the alumni network outside of Gresik, including book literacy programs for young people, so that the Islamic value of Madura remains alive.

### Challenges in Relevance and Adaptation of the Modern Era

The analysis of interviews revealed the main challenges in the form of social media competition and digital lifestyles that reduce the interest of the younger generation in *kitab kuning*. A young alumnus stated, "Children prefer to play gadgets rather than study; We adapted it with video footage of the recitation of *kitab kuning* which has been accessed thousands of times."

Observations recorded a decrease in recitation participants due to the change of community domicile, while documentation showed adaptation initiatives such as e-learning of *kitab kuning* through various digital platforms.

Alumni also face difficulties in maintaining the depth of understanding of *kitab kuning* when the material is presented briefly. This requires them to develop more interactive and contextual teaching methods to remain interesting while maintaining the quality of the knowledge taught, so that the tradition of reading *kitab kuning* can coexist with technological advances without losing its scientific essence and spirituality.

The following table of research findings explains the socio-religious impacts, highlighting how each aspect of research contributes to social change and the strengthening of religious identity in society:

Research Aspects	Social Impact	Religious Impact
<i>kitab kuning</i> Learning Mechanism	Building community solidarity, strengthening social networks between alumni	Strengthening religious ties through the internalization of classical book values
Forms of Preservation and Dissemination of Knowledge	Reviving the tradition of recitation in the village, strengthening the economic empowerment of the community	Preserving the <i>Aswaja</i> tradition and expanding the reach of da'wah to young people
Challenges and Adaptations of the Modern Era	Adapting to the digital lifestyle of the younger generation, maintaining social relevance	Maintaining the depth of knowledge and spiritual essence of <i>kitab kuning</i> with new methods

This table explains that the learning of *kitab kuning* not only has an impact on religious knowledge and education, but also as a foundation in building a strong and sustainable community socially and religiously in Madura. The mechanism of learning *kitab kuning* at the Mambaus Sholihin Pesantren relies on the *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods, which not only teach the retention of fiqh and Sufism but also internalize religious values that strengthen social solidarity between alumni. This is an important social capital that allows for a strong da'wah network between alumni groups (Ummah, 2023). The learning mechanism of *kitab kuning* that relies on the *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods is relevant to social capital theory that emphasizes the importance of social networks, norms, and beliefs in building a cohesive and empowered community. Intensive learning with personal interaction between kiai and students in *sorogan* is also in line with social learning theory which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development and internalization of cultural values.

The social capital theory hints that learning *kitab kuning* builds alumni networks through the norms of sincerity and mutual cooperation from the yellow book, as well as interpersonal trust that produces solidarity for learning. Meanwhile, social learning theory describes personal interaction as a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where the teacher as a more knowledgeable other facilitates students to internalize spiritual values through dialogical scaffolding, resulting in emotional attachment that supports contextual adaptation. The process of intensive interaction between kiai and students in *sorogan* provides a space for deep personal development, so that in addition to cognitive knowledge, emotional and spiritual attachment is also built. This approach is very important in maintaining the continuity of pesantren values in the modern context (Abidin & Qusairi, 2025). The intensive interaction process in *sorogan* not only focuses on teaching the material, but also builds a strong emotional connection between kiai and students. This relationship plays an important role in instilling spiritual values and character formation, so that pesantren are able to maintain the relevance and continuity of scientific traditions in the midst of changing times.

Monthly recitation groups organized by alumni are a forum for social consolidation that not only supports the preservation of knowledge, but also community empowerment. The mechanism of mutual cooperation that appears in it becomes social capital that can increase the independence of the community. The recitation group functions as a consolidation center that integrates the preservation of knowledge with community empowerment through the spirit of mutual cooperation. These initiatives generate strong social capital that foster community self-reliance in a sustainable manner

The preservation of Islamic knowledge through the recitation of *kitab kuning* in the village, as well as online recitation and *kitab kuning* festival, shows the adaptation of pesantren to social and technological developments. This strengthens the position of pesantren as a center of moral and social development in the community. The contextual da'wah approach carried out by alumni bridges the classical teachings of *kitab kuning* with contemporary needs and challenges. This is in accordance with the findings that observe the importance of contextualizing pesantren in increasing the relevance of religious teachings for the younger generation (Budiyanti & Nugraha, 2020). The economic empowerment carried out and other community activities show that pesantren play a role as an economic driving force that relies on Islamic values, this is an important strategy in facing modern socio-economic challenges (Fiqih, 2022). The biggest challenge in the digital era is competition with social media in attracting the younger generation's interest in pesantren values. Research by Firdaus & Muslih (2024) emphasizes the importance of learning media innovation to maintain the relevance of pesantren in the modern age (Alim, 2016).

The implementation of e-learning and other digital media is an effective solution to embrace the younger generation, but it is necessary to pay attention so that the scientific substance and spiritual depth remain the focus so that it is not just pseudo-content. This defense can bridge the younger generation with religious education, but long-term success depends on content management that is able to maintain the quality and depth of knowledge, so that this digital media does not lose its essential value in spiritual and intellectual formation. The adaptation of learning methods with an interactive and contextual approach has been proven to overcome the decline in interest, as highlighted by a study that examined the technology-based yellow book learning model in the Madura Pesantren environment. An interactive and contextual approach in technology-based yellow book learning is effective in overcoming the decline in interest of the younger generation in Pesantrens.

This synergy between classical traditions and modern innovations places pesantren as a dynamic institution that is not only a preserver of scientific traditions, but also socially and culturally relevant, having a positive impact on strengthening Madura's Islamic identity. Pesantren is a dynamic institution that combines the tradition of *kitab kuning* with modern innovations, maintaining socio-cultural relevance while strengthening Madura's Islamic identity. The contribution of pesantren in building social capital and religious networks supports the formation of a cohesive community, as explained by a study that pesantren can be the main pillar in social development based on religious values. Pesantren forms a cohesive community through social capital from a network of alumni who support each other, becoming a pillar of social development based on religious values that strengthens community solidarity. This research underscores the importance of academic, technological, and policy support for Pesantrens to continue to innovate without losing the traditional essence. Strengthening institutions and resources is the key to the sustainability of Pesantrens in the future. The support of all parties in technology, adequate digital infrastructure, and pesantren-friendly government policies are the main pillars of transformation. Strengthening institutional management and diversifying funding sources will ensure that pesantren are able to adapt without sacrificing their traditional identity as Islamic scientific centers.

### **Conclusion**

This study shows that the mechanism of learning *kitab kuning* at the Mambaus Sholihin Gresik Pesantren, through the *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods, plays a role not only as a means of knowledge transfer, but also as a significant social capital former. This mechanism creates strong solidarity among alumni who become a network of trust in the preservation of *Aswaja* Islamic treasures in Madura. Alumni actively initiate routine recitation in the village, da'wah with a

contextual approach, as well as community economic empowerment programs that strengthen social cohesion and religious life. The challenges of the modern era, which include the influence of social media and digital lifestyles, have led to a decrease in the interest of the younger generation in traditional learning methods. However, pesantren alumni responded with innovative adaptations such as the use of e-learning and recitation videos that have been accessed openly, as well as the development of interactive and contextual learning methods. This strategy aims to maintain the depth of the knowledge of *kitab kuning* while maintaining the spiritual essence that is the hallmark of classical Pesantrens. The adaptation manages to strike a balance between the preservation of traditional values and the need for relevance in an ever-changing social and cultural context. This makes pesantren a dynamic institution that not only preserves religious knowledge, but also an important pillar in building a cohesive and sustainable socio-religious community.

### Bibliography

- Abidin, Z., & Qusairi, A. (2025). KEPEMIMPINAN KOLABORATIF: MEMBINA KOLEGIALITAS DAN TATA KELOLA BERSAMA DALAM PENDIDIKAN ISLAM. *re-JIEM (Research Journal of Islamic Education Management)*, 8(2), 65-79. <https://doi.org/10.62448/ajmpi.v1i2.317>
- Agung Yuwono Putro, A., & Suryono, Y. (2019). New Tradition of Pesantren in Character Education. *Journal of Physics Conference Series*,
- Alim, Z. (2016). Pergeseran orientasi kelembagaan pesantren di madura dalam perspektif kiai bangkalan. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)*, 4(2), 249-270. <https://doi.org/10.15642/jpai.2016.4.2.249-270>
- Fiqih, M. A. (2022). Peran pesantren dalam menjaga tradisi-budaya dan moral bangsa. *Pandawa*, 4(1), 42-65. <https://doi.org/10.36088/pandawa.v4i1.1422>
- Jannah, H. (2019). Pondok pesantren sebagai pusat otoritas ulama Madura. *Jurnal Al-Hikmah*, 17(1), 91-108. <https://doi.org/10.35719/alhikmah.v17i1.9>
- Kutsiyah, F., Hakim, L., & Kalsum, U. (2020). Kelekatan modal sosial pada keluarga santri Di pulau madura. *Palita: Journal of Social Religion Research*, 5(2), 183-203. <https://doi.org/10.24256/pal.v5i2.1399>
- Mangkachi, R. I. (2021). DIALECTICS OF PESANTREN AND SOCIAL COMMUNITIES IN CULTURAL VALUE TRANSFORMATION. *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan dan Kemasyarakatan*, 69-87. <https://doi.org/10.21154/cendekia.v1i1.2670>
- MZ, I. N., Ahid, N., & Abd Rahman, Z. (2025). Sustaining Islamic Educational Traditions: A Structural-Functional Analysis of Arab Pegon Translation in Pesantren Fathul Ulum. *DINAMIKA: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan dan Keislaman*, 10(1), 38-52. <https://doi.org/10.32764/dinamika.v10i1.5872>
- Ummah, F. S. (2023). Modernisasi Pendidikan melalui Implementasi Manajemen Mutu di Kalangan Pesantren Nahdhatul Ulama di Madura. *NAHNU: Journal of Nahdlatul Ulama and Contemporary Islamic Studies*, 1(1), 41-58. <https://doi.org/10.63875/nahnu.v1i1.24>