

Innovative Approaches and Traditional Methods: Constructing *Qiroatul Kutub* Learning in South Sumatran Islamic Boarding Schools

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ABSTRACT

Qiroatul kutub is a critical language skill in pesantren education. Despite its importance, preliminary research indicates that only 30% of students in South Sumatra's pesantren can proficiently read classical Arabic texts, known as the yellow book. This gap highlights the need to examine how various pesantren implement *qiroatul kutub* learning. This qualitative study employed a phenomenological design to explore learning constructions in traditional, semi-modern, and modern pesantren. Data were collected through structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Findings reveal commonalities in the use of classical texts, focus on Arabic grammar (*Nahwu* and *Shorf*), Arabic proficiency development, and the overarching goal of producing Islamic scholars. Differences emerged in teaching methods, curricula, subject focus, and linguistic approaches. Traditional pesantren retain classical techniques such as *sorogan*, *bandongan*, *muhafazhoh*, *tarjamah*, and *bahtsul masail*. In contrast, semi-modern and modern pesantren integrate these with contemporary educational methods. The study concludes that each pesantren type adapts its *qiroatul kutub* system in line with its institutional identity and vision. Understanding these variations can inform strategies to enhance classical text literacy among pesantren students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The research on *qiroatul kutub* attracted the attention of previous researchers from various research focuses, especially its object in Islamic boarding schools in East Java. This is because Islamic boarding schools in this province are considered to be a reference by other Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia with various indicators such as aspects of the history of the establishment, traditions, curriculum used, and learning methods. Islamic boarding schools are one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. There are several main functions of Islamic boarding schools, in the Department of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (2004), in the first part, namely mastering religious knowledge,

through the recitation of books organized by Islamic boarding schools is the main or main component of the activities of Islamic boarding schools.

The establishment and implementation of Islamic boarding schools are carried out in several types as follows: *first*, Islamic boarding schools provide education in the form of the study of the yellow book. *Second*, pesantren organizes education in the form of *Islamic dirasah with a muallimin* education pattern. *Third*, pesantren provides education in other forms that are integrated with general education (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 18 of 2019). Islamic boarding schools have various typologies as their characteristics that distinguish them from each other: *first*, traditional or *salafiah* Islamic boarding schools that apply education guided by classical books commonly known as yellow books. *Second*, modern Islamic boarding schools or *kholafiah* follow the government curriculum more. *Third*, semi-modern or the convergence of *salafiah* and *kholafiah* tries to adapt *pesantren* to the development of the times (Nihwan M. & Paisun, 2019).

Based on these types of boarding, it is interesting to analyze how the construction of *qiroatul kutub* learning is carried out by each type of Islamic boarding school in South Sumatra in an effort to provide students with an understanding of how to be able to *qiroatul kutub* well. Then, to analyze the unique challenges and opportunities in *qiroatul kutub* learning in each Islamic boarding school. According to Madjid (1997), *qiroatul kutub* learning is included in the curriculum in Islamic boarding schools, especially *salafiah* Islamic boarding schools, which include materials (fields of study), books studied, learning methods, and evaluation systems. Fields of study studied at Islamic boarding schools: *Nahwu, Shorf, Fiqh, Tauhid, Sufism, Tafsir, and Hadith*.

Arabic is very important in its role in various aspects, both as a language of revelation, a language of worship, and a language of international communication (Arsyad, 2003). Based on this argument, it can be understood that it is very urgent to study Islamic references, the majority of which use Arabic. *Qiroatul kutub* can contribute to the aspect of reading Arabic-language Islamic science references that are interesting and important to research.

This is in line with the researcher's observation (Tuesday, 5/9/2023) that in the Islamic boarding school that is the object of this research, there are subjects about Islam, and the literature uses Arabic books. Therefore, being able to *qiroatul kutub* is a necessity that must be possessed by each student, especially in relation to succeeding or passing in the subject, and more importantly, to equip students to be able to understand other books besides the books in the classroom subjects. Based on the author's initial observations and interviews in September 2023, learning *qiroatul kutub* (text reading) at Islamic boarding schools in South Sumatra has not fully used active learning strategies, where the practice is still more with the classical method or *Wetonan* from the supervisors, who are the teachers, so that students lack the practice of *qiroatul kutub*.

It is different when compared to the active learning strategy, which accommodates students for more practice rather than passively just listening to explanations from the teacher. Students should be given more opportunities to practice *qiroatul kutub* and be listened to (received) and then corrected by their *ustadz* rather than learning by classical methods or lectures. So it is hoped that the learning achievement will be maximized in the sense that the students can practice *qiroatul kutub* properly and correctly. The Government's mandate in the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, as outlined in Chapter V, Article 12, concerning students, is that students receive educational services tailored to their talents, interests, and abilities. According to the Government of the Republic of Indonesia (2009), among the educational goals is to increase the potential, intelligence, and interest of students.

As a large province in Indonesia, South Sumatra, which consists of 17 regencies or cities, has many Islamic boarding schools as Islamic educational institutions. Based on data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of South Sumatra Province, as of April 30, 2024, there are 633 Islamic boarding schools in this province (Ministry of Religion, 2024). The Islamic boarding schools mentioned above have diverse typologies such as *salafiah, kholafiah, semi-kholafiah, and tahfizh*, which have their uniqueness as Islamic educational institutions. This research was conducted in 3 (three) large Islamic boarding schools in the South Sumatra Province region, namely: Sabilul Hasanah Banyuasin Regency as a traditional

Islamic boarding school, Raudhatul Ulum Ogan Ilir Regency as a modern Islamic boarding school, and Muqimus Sunnah Palembang City as a combination of traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools.

Based on the researcher's initial observations, each of the three Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) under study demonstrates unique characteristics and instructional methods in teaching *qiroatul kutub*. These distinct approaches highlight significant pedagogical diversity, making them a compelling subject of research. The author's academic concern stems from the varied effectiveness of *qiroatul kutub* instruction, which plays a crucial role in enabling *pesantren* students to comprehend classical Islamic references accurately.

Several previous studies have examined this theme from different perspectives. Hanani (2015) explored Arabic language learning models and their influence on students' ability to read Arabic texts. Jabbar et al. (2017) analyzed the efforts of *kiai* (Islamic scholars) in enhancing students' skills in reading *kitab kuning*. Amal and Isnaini (2023) focused on developing *qiroatul kutub* competencies in *pesantren*, while Zakaria (2019) examined instructional methods at Pondok Pesantren Karangasem, Lamongan. However, there remains a gap in studies specifically investigating the pedagogical strategies of *qiroatul kutub* learning in South Sumatran *pesantren*.

This research seeks to address that gap by answering the following question: What are the similarities and differences in constructing *qiroatul kutub* learning using traditional methods and innovative approaches in South Sumatran *pesantren*? The objective is to explore these comparative strategies to better understand how each model contributes to the effectiveness of *qiroatul kutub* education within the regional context.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative data can be in the form of words, sentences, or narratives, either obtained from in-depth interviews or observations. This type of qualitative research is Phenomenology. Researchers, from a phenomenological point of view, try to understand the meaning of events and their relationships with people in certain situations. Among the implementations of the phenomenological approach are comparative and systematic approaches. In order to systematically compare various forms of life experience and instructional practices in the *pesantren* studied. The subject of the study is the researcher as a key instrument for data collection and data analysis. The informants of this research are the leaders of Islamic boarding schools (*mudir*), the Head of Madrasah Aliyah, the Deputy Head of Madrasah Aliyah, the *qiroatul kutub* teacher, the administrator of the Intra-School Student Organization in the language section, the field of *qiroatul kutub* coaching, and the madrasah aliyah students who participated in *qiroatul kutub* learning.

The implementation of the research procedure related to primary data was obtained from the results of interviews and observations of field participation in research informants from three Islamic boarding schools in South Sumatra Province: Muqimus Sunnah, Palembang City, Sabilul Hasanah, Banyuasin Regency, and Raudhatul Ulum Ogan Ilir Regency. The selection of these three *pesantren* is based on the typology of the boarding. The Sabilul Hasanah is a representation of the traditional Islamic boarding school, the Raudhatul Ulum is a representation of the modern Islamic boarding school, and the Muqimus Sunnah is a representation of the semi-modern Islamic boarding school. Also, the selection of *pesantren* as the object of this research is based on geographical representation.

This research has research ethics considerations in the form of research permits for several *pesantren* that are the object of research. Also, the researcher guarantees the confidentiality of the collected research data. The data is used only for research and development. Meanwhile, secondary data are obtained from references related to this research theme, specifically the learning of *qiroatul kutub*, which is accessed from various books and scientific journals as a result of the research. The materials and instruments in this study utilize the research interview guidelines as a guide for

structured interviews based on the research objectives, and also employ the Moleong format for participation observation guidelines.

The data collection technique of this research is carried out by triangulation, which includes the following techniques: first, interviews: is the process of obtaining information for research purposes by asking and answering questions face-to-face between the interviewer and the informant or the interviewee. The second observation of participation: saw and observed directly the atmosphere of people and places at the time of the study. The focus of observation is on the similarities and differences in learning *qiroatul kutub* of Islamic boarding schools as the object of this research. Third, documentation: is data in the form of photos, journals, and other documents related to research. This data analysis technique goes through 4 (four) stages of analysis: data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions or verification. Miles & Huberman called this analysis pattern the Interactive Model Analysis. Data analysis began from the time of data collection. Triangulation was carried out to strengthen the validity of the data, namely, structured interviews, participatory observations, and complementary documentation between one data collection technique and another.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Learning Equations

The learning of *qiroatul kutub* in Islamic boarding schools in South Sumatra has similarities and differences in the process and characteristics. The similarity of learning *qiroatul kutub* is found in the material used, focusing on the classical book, the use of the science of tools *Nahwu* (Syntax) and *Shorf* (Morphology), the use of Arabic components such as *Imla'*, *Insya'*, and *Balaghoh*, as well as the learning objectives, namely understanding Islamic references well, winning the *Musabaqoh Qiroatul Kutub*, being able to continue their studies in the Middle East, and becoming scholars.

Table 1. Equation of *Qiroatul Kutub* Learning in Traditional and Modern Islamic Boarding Schools

Number	Aspects of Equations	Example	Information
1.	Focus on the classic books	<i>Matn Abi Syuja'</i> , <i>Safinah al-Najah</i> , <i>Fath al-Qorib</i> and <i>Fath al-Mu'in</i>	In the field of Fiqh
2.	Use of tool science	<i>Nahwu</i> (Syntax) and <i>Shorf</i> (Morphology) Sciences	Language grammar
3.	Use of Arabic components	<i>Imla'</i> , <i>Insya'</i> , <i>Balaghoh</i>	Supports the <i>Qiroatul Kutub</i> skill
4.	Learning objectives	Able to read and understand Arabic Islamic references, excel in <i>Musabaqoh Qiroatul Kutub</i> , continue their studies in the Middle East, and become a scholar	General purpose

Based on the table, there are four key similarities in *qiroatul kutub* learning across Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in South Sumatra. These similarities include the following: First, both traditional and modern *pesantren* study classical texts, or *kitab kuning*, which represent essential literature in the Islamic intellectual tradition (*turath*). These texts encompass a range of disciplines, including *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), *hadith* (Prophetic traditions), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *ushul fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), and *tasawuf* (Sufism).

Among these fields, *fiqh* is emphasized more heavily in *qiroatul kutub* due to its practical relevance in daily religious life. Both traditional and modern *pesantren* consistently refer to classical sources, recognizing the enduring value of these works in shaping Islamic scholarship. As educational

institutions rooted in Islamic teachings, *pesantren* devote considerable attention to these foundational texts.

According to MSM, a *qiroatul kutub* teacher at a modern *pesantren* (Tuesday, May 14, 2024), "Classical books remain essential as learning materials." Similarly, UL, the head of a traditional *pesantren* (Sunday, March 3, 2024), stated, "Islamic classical texts contain a wealth of scientific knowledge that remains vital in traditional *pesantren* education."

Second, the use of tool science. In the learning of *qiroatul kutub*, the sciences of *Nahwu* and *Shorf* are the two main sciences that allow a person to understand Arabic texts correctly. The science of *Nahwu* provides a clear grammatical structure, while the science of *Shorf* delves deeper into the meaning of the change in the form of words. These two sciences are needed so that readers can correctly grasp the message contained in the text, avoid misunderstandings, and delve into the science contained in it. Instrumental science (*Nahwu* and *Shorf*) is used by traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools to understand the rules of the Arabic language. These two sciences are very important in *qiroatul kutub* as a basis for understanding Arabic, especially related to the formulas in *qiroatul kutub*. These two sciences are considered tools in understanding the *qiroatul kutub* well, which was historically compiled in an effort to provide formulas in reading Arabic texts.

The science of *Nahwu* (Syntax) studies the rules that govern the order of sentences in Arabic, including the relationship between words in sentences. In *qiroatul kutub*, this knowledge is useful for structuring sentences correctly, whether they include news sentences, questions, or commands, as well as how each word in the sentence functions. Then, it can determine *fi'il* (verb), *fa'il* (subject), and *maf'ul* (object), and it can help understand *harakat* (punctuation). Because Arabic is very dependent on *harakat*, understanding the science of *Nahwu* can help in placing *harakat* correctly in words, which affects meaning. *Shorf* (Morphology) studies change in word forms, namely changes in verbs, nouns, and adjectives. And the patterns that exist in Arabic. This science is useful for understanding the root of words and derivative forms and understanding the changes in word forms that occur, such as the difference between the past, present, or passive forms. Then, understanding the broader meaning of a word, such as a word from the *fi'il* (verb) form, can be an *ism* (noun) or a property (adjective), and the change gives a certain nuance to the meaning. It is also important to recognize various word patterns because the form of words often changes depending on the context; for example, verbs can change into nouns or properties with the help of certain patterns in *Shorf*.

Third, the use of Arabic components. The learning of *qiroatul kutub* is carried out in Arabic, and students are expected to be able to understand and master Arabic language knowledge, such as giving vocabulary (*Mufrodat*), composing (*Insya'*), writing (*Imla'*), and language arts (*Balaghah*). In traditional Islamic boarding schools, mastery of Arabic is very important to understand classical books. Likewise, in modern Islamic boarding schools, although the curriculum is more varied, mastery of the Arabic language is still the main focus to ensure that students can understand Islamic texts directly.

Fourth, learning objectives. The purpose of this learning is to provide knowledge to students to understand *qiroatul kutub* learning properly and correctly, which can lead the alumni boarding school to master this field. According to MSG teacher *qiroatul kutub* (Wednesday, 29/5/2024), "It is intended to make it easier for students to understand the yellow books." Based on this explanation, it can be understood that these various Islamic boarding schools play an important role in preserving the Islamic scientific tradition. However, there are different educational priorities between traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools. Traditional *pesantren* maintains the classical tradition of Islamic education, while modern *pesantren* combines it with modernity.

3.2 Learning Differences

The difference between *qiroatul kutub* learning in traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools in South Sumatra is found in the learning method, the curriculum used, the use of tools, science *Nahwu* and *Shorf*, and the approach to science.

Table 2. Differences in *Qiroatul Kutub* Learning in Traditional and Modern Islamic Boarding Schools

Number.	Aspects of Difference	Example	Information
1.	Learning methods	<i>Sorogan, Bandongan, Muhafazhoh, Bahts al-Masail, and Tarjamah Methods</i>	Traditional Islamic boarding schools are more dominant in using the <i>Sorogan, Bandongan, Muhafazhoh, and Bahts al-Masail methods</i> . The modern pesantren is more dominant using the <i>Tarjamah and Bandongan methods</i>
2.	Referenced curriculum	The book used, the terms, evaluations, and patterns used.	Traditional pesantren refers to the curriculum of traditional pesantren in East Java: Tebuireng Jombang, Tambakberas Jombang, and Lirboyo Kediri. The modern pesantren refers to the curriculum of the modern pesantren Darussalam Gontor, the Islamic University of Medina, and Al Azhar University, Cairo Egypt
3.	Use of tool science	<i>Nahwu and Shorf</i>	Traditional Islamic boarding schools learn more deeply the knowledge of tools in the books of <i>Nahwu</i> and <i>Shorf</i> . Traditional Islamic boarding schools are superior in grammar. Meanwhile, modern pesantren are superior in terms of interpreting and focusing on components in Arabic language science, namely: <i>Imla', Insya', and Balaghah</i> .
4.	Approach to science	Discussion material	Traditional Islamic boarding schools focus more on the field of fiqh in the madhhab of Imam Shafi'i. As for modern Islamic boarding schools, in addition to studying the works in the Imam Shafi'i madhhab, they are also studied in other madhhabs such as the Hanafi, Maliki, and Hambali madhhabs.

Based on this table, it can be understood that there are four differences in *qiroatul kutub* learning in Islamic boarding schools in South Sumatra. The difference lies in the following aspects: *First*, is the learning method. Traditional Islamic boarding schools are more dominant in using the *Sorogan*, *Bandongan*, *Muhafazhoh*, and *Bahtsul Masail* methods in their learning. The modern *pesantren* is more dominant in using the *Tarjamah* and *Bandongan* methods.

The *Sorogan* method (individual services) is that the teacher only faces one student who is still at the elementary level. Technically, the student presents a book in front of the teacher or *kiyai* then the teacher reads several parts of the book, and then the student repeats the reading until the student reads well (Abdurrahmansyah, 2020). The *Bandongan* method, according to Zuhri (2002), is a learning that prioritizes collective service (collective approach) in studying classic books. This method is classical. That is, students participate in lesson activities by sitting around the teacher who explains the book. The *Muhafazhoh* method, according to Nata (2001), involves students memorizing certain texts or sentences from the book they are studying. Typically, this method of memorization is taught in the form of verses or nazams in the book itself. The *Bahtsul Masail* method is a forum for the study and determination of the Islamic law characteristics of Nahdlatul Ulama' and Islamic boarding schools. This method means the discussion of various issues that serve as an official forum to discuss religious issues (*al-Masail al-Diniyyah*), especially related to fiqh issues (*al-Masail al-Fiqhiyyah*) (Chaq, 2021). The *Tarjamah* method is a method of translating from one language to another. This method is usually used by students who have a large vocabulary. When teachers translate Arabic texts, students do not have difficulties (Asy'ari, 2007).

This difference in methods occurs because traditional Islamic boarding schools preserve existing methods such as the *Sorogan* method and also *Bahtsul Masail* to focus on studying fiqh. As for modern Islamic boarding schools, they strive to strengthen the Arabic language which begins with enriching vocabulary so that they are able to use the translation method well. According to MAY, the leader of traditional Islamic boarding schools (Saturday, 18/5/2024), "*The learning method at this type of pesantren is to preserve the good methods that have existed so far.*" As for modern Islamic boarding schools, the methods used are an effort to keep the original Arabic language good, (TWA, leader of modern Islamic boarding schools, Wednesday, March 27, 2024).

Second, the curriculum that is referenced. Traditional Islamic boarding schools refer to the curriculum of *salafiyah* Islamic boarding schools that have been established in learning *qiroatul kutub*. The modern *pesantren* includes material from the general education system. In addition to focusing on classical books, modern Islamic boarding schools also integrate modern learning methods and general curriculum content into their educational system. Based on IW teachers at traditional Islamic boarding schools, (Sunday, 25/2/2024) it is "*Historically referring to the curriculum of traditional Islamic boarding schools in East Java.*" in modern Islamic boarding schools, according to ID, the vice principal (Wednesday, 29/5/2024) is "Because historically the leadership and the teacher council are alumni of the referred modern Islamic boarding schools and 80% of the teachers are alumni of the university. The difference in the curriculum referred to is inseparable from the leaders of the *pesantren* and teachers who are alumni of the institution. So that the books, methods, and evaluations carried out refer to the educational institution.

Third, the use of tool science. Traditional Islamic boarding schools learn more deeply the knowledge of tools in the books of *Nahwu* and *Shorf*. Traditional Islamic boarding schools are superior in grammar. Meanwhile, modern Islamic boarding schools are superior in terms of interpreting and focusing on components in the Arabic language. According to MSG, the traditional Islamic boarding school *Nahwu* science teacher (Saturday, 9/3/2024) "*It is very important to study the science of Nahwu and Shorf various books with a very focused focus so that students can master the qiroatul kutub well.*"

Because traditional Islamic boarding schools consider it important to master these two sciences more deeply. Modern Islamic boarding schools have the principle of acceleration in learning these two sciences, and there is no repetition in the learning material.

Fourth, approach to knowledge. Traditional Islamic boarding schools focus more on the field of jurisprudence in the madhhab of Imam Shafi'i. As for modern Islamic boarding schools, in addition to studying the works in the madhhab of Imam Shafi'i, they are also studied in others madhhab. According to TH, the trustee of *qiroatul kutub* traditional Islamic boarding school (Saturday, May 18, 2024), "Traditional Islamic boarding schools do focus on the field of Islamic science, especially in the Imam Shafi'i madhhab." According to ZF head of *qiroatul kutub* modern Islamic Boarding School (Saturday, May 18, 2024), "Modern *pesantren* do not focus too much on the material of one of the madhhabs in the Islamic tradition." Based on history, modern Islamic boarding schools tend to be more accommodating of the fiqh school than the Imam Shafi'i school.

Discussion

Learning Equations

First, focus on the classics. Traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools study various classic books in Islamic intellectual treasures such as in the field of jurisprudence. The following is the same book of fiqh studied by these two types of Islamic boarding schools:

Table 3. The Same Yellow Book Studied by Traditional and Modern Islamic Boarding Schools

No.	Book	Author	Information
1	<i>Safinah al-Najah</i>	Salim bin Sumair al-Hadhrami	Studied in traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools
2.	<i>Matn al-Ghayah wa al-Taqrif</i>	Abi Syuja'	Studied in traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools
3.	<i>Fath al-Qorib al-Mujib</i>	Muhammad bin Qasim al-Ghazi	Studied in traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools
4	<i>Fath al-Mu'in Bisyarhi Qurrah al-'Ain</i>	Zainuddin bin Abdul Aziz Almalibari	Only studied in traditional and semi-modern Islamic boarding schools

This book is a book of fiqh, especially in the madhhab of Imam Shafi'i. It is studied with a focus by traditional *pesantren* as knowledge of both theory and practice in the school. And in modern Islamic boarding schools, it is also studied, especially in its extracurricular activities. *Second*, the use of tool science. The use of tool science, namely *Nahwu* (Syntax), and *Shorf* (Morphology) to understand the rules in Arabic grammar. In this lesson, it is very important as a basic capital for students in the ability to *qiroatul kutub*. This result is consistent with the conclusion of the research by Jabbar, et.al. (2017) which states that nahwu science is very important as an effort to improve the ability to read the yellow book. The use of Syntax and Morphology in the discipline of Linguistics is in line with the view of Saussure, a famous Swiss linguist who stated that language consists of two aspects: *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* refers to the language system itself, while *parole* refers to the use of language in a particular context. Syntax (*Nahwu*) and Morphology (*Shorf*) in this context as a language system or *langue*, while its use in the context of learning *qiroatul kutub* can be understood as *parole* as the use of language in a certain context.

Third, the integration of Arabic language components. A key similarity in *qiroatul kutub* learning across both traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) is the use of Arabic language elements, including *mufrodah* (vocabulary), *imla'* (dictation), *insya'* (composition), and *balaghah* (rhetoric and literary style). Both types of *pesantren* recognize the significance of these components as foundational tools for understanding and applying classical Islamic texts effectively.

Fourth, the learning objectives. Traditional and modern pesantren share the goal of fostering a comprehensive understanding of core Islamic sciences—particularly *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *tafsir* (Qur’anic exegesis), hadith (Prophetic traditions), and *aqidah* (creed). These institutions are committed not only to the intellectual development of students but also to building their moral character. The ultimate aim is to produce graduates who are capable of reading and interpreting Islamic references, possess strong moral values, excel in competitions such as *Musabaqah Qira’atil Kutub* (MQK), pursue further education in the Middle East, and serve as knowledgeable scholars who contribute positively to society based on Islamic principles.

Learning Differences

This study reveals various patterns in *qiroatul kutub* learning across traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in South Sumatra. One prominent difference lies in the teaching methods employed. Traditional pesantren predominantly use the Sorogan method, in which students read directly in front of the teacher and receive immediate supervision. They also employ the Bandongan method, where teachers read and explain classical texts to groups of students. Other commonly applied approaches include Muhafazhoh (memorization), especially for grammatical rules in Nahwu and Shorf, and Bahtsul Masail, a deliberative practice involving group discussion and debate to derive Islamic legal rulings. These findings align with Hanani (2015), who identified similar methods in Salafiyah pesantren in Kediri. However, this study highlights differences in practice due to the typological variations among pesantren—ranging from traditional to semi-modern and modern models. As stated by MAY (18 May 2024), the process of interpreting classical texts in traditional pesantren involves dissecting words (*mufrad*), analyzing sentence structure (*jumlah*), and grasping the intended meaning (*murad*).

Modern pesantren, in contrast, emphasize Tarjamah (translation) and Bandongan, with a strong orientation towards practical language skills (*al-Kalam*). As noted by TWA (27 March 2024), modern institutions favor Tarjamah as the dominant strategy for *qiroatul kutub*, supported by instruction in vocabulary (*mufrodat*), writing (*imla’*), composition (*insya’*), and literary rhetoric (*balaghah*). MAY (18 May 2024) also noted that modern pesantren utilize a Muthola’ah system, in which teachers read and explain texts grammatically, followed by discussions on linguistic tools such as Nahwu and Shorf. Unlike traditional settings, modern pesantren promote learner-centered education, encouraging student independence, critical engagement with texts, and the application of knowledge in real-life contexts.

While both traditional and modern pesantren employ diverse methods, their emphasis differs. Traditional institutions prioritize Sorogan, Bandongan, Muhafazhoh, and Bahtsul Masail, reflecting a teacher-centered approach deeply rooted in classical scholarship. Modern pesantren lean toward Tarjamah and Bandongan, incorporating more contemporary pedagogical techniques. This methodological diversity enriches the intellectual heritage of *qiroatul kutub* learning. However, to improve pedagogical effectiveness, there is a need for ongoing teacher training to enhance human resource capacity and develop more innovative teaching methods beyond the traditional frameworks.

In terms of curriculum, traditional pesantren predominantly follow established models from influential Javanese institutions such as Darul Ulum Jombang, Bahrul Ulum Tambakberas, Lirboyo Kediri, and Asyafi’iyah Jakarta. These schools rely heavily on the yellow book tradition, focusing on a curriculum shaped by generations of classical Islamic scholarship. On the other hand, modern pesantren tend to adopt curricular models from Darussalam Gontor, Al-Azhar Cairo, and the Islamic University of Medina. Their curriculum incorporates more structured evaluation systems and integrates both religious and general sciences. The curricular diversity across pesantren types reflects a broader need for curriculum reform that is responsive to contemporary human development needs and aligned with 21st-century competencies.

The study also uncovers differences in the application of *‘ilm al-alah* (instrumental sciences), particularly Nahwu and Shorf. While modern pesantren tend to cover these subjects through

foundational texts like *al-Nahw al-Wadhih* and *al-Amtsilah al-Tashrifiiyyah*, traditional pesantren explore these sciences in greater depth. Traditional institutions not only teach the rules but also emphasize full memorization of texts such as *Alfiyyah Ibn Malik*, which contains 1002 poetic verses. This memorization is typically performed communally in song-like recitation (*lalaran*), embedding grammatical principles through oral tradition. SA (9 March 2024), a Nahwu teacher at a modern pesantren, explained that although *al-Nahw al-Wadhih* provides sufficient foundational knowledge, he occasionally refers to *Alfiyyah* as a supplementary tool to keep lessons engaging. While modern pesantren focus more on functional Arabic skills, traditional ones maintain a heavier emphasis on theoretical grammar, thereby offering a more rigorous but often more teacher-centered approach.

Nevertheless, both models exhibit limitations. Traditional pesantren may struggle with overly textual interpretations and limited student autonomy, whereas modern pesantren may offer less depth in grammar. Generally, traditional institutions excel in grammatical structure (*al-tarakib*), while modern institutions place greater emphasis on interpretation, conversational Arabic (*al-muhadatsah*), and broader linguistic competencies. As NC (10 August 2024) pointed out, these trends highlight the differing pedagogical priorities between the two educational models.

The research also highlights contrasting epistemological orientations. Traditional pesantren tend to focus on *fiqh*, *akhlaq* (ethics), and *aqidah* (creed), emphasizing inherited scholarly traditions rooted in the Shafi'i school of thought. Their aim is to internalize and practice established Islamic teachings. In contrast, modern pesantren pursue a more integrative and balanced approach, combining religious sciences with modern knowledge and emphasizing adaptability to contemporary contexts. Although they uphold Islamic teachings, their curricula often engage multiple schools of jurisprudence and reflect a broader worldview that incorporates science and technology.

The study's findings suggest that while pesantren in South Sumatra often take inspiration from established institutions in Java, they also innovate according to local customs and educational needs. Despite similarities in learning objectives—particularly in fostering a deep understanding of classical Islamic texts and developing future scholars—the materials and methods employed reflect different pedagogical philosophies. Traditional pesantren maintain strong ties to inherited Islamic scholarly traditions, while modern pesantren are more experimental and flexible in their methods and content delivery.

These observations underscore the relevance of contrastive analysis in examining language instruction systems. As defined by Tarigan (1992), contrastive analysis involves comparing linguistic systems across phonology and grammar to identify similarities and differences. Al-Basyir (1988) reinforces this definition, emphasizing its value in language teaching, translation, and cross-cultural communication. In the context of *qiroatul kutub*, contrastive analysis helps illuminate the distinct pedagogical strategies adopted by traditional and modern pesantren, as well as their implications for student outcomes.

Finally, the study identifies sociocultural differences that also shape educational practices. In South Sumatra, teacher-student relationships tend to be more relaxed and less hierarchical compared to pesantren in Java. Local Malay Islamic traditions—such as *dhikr* and *tariqat*—influence spiritual practices, whereas in Java, *wiridan* and *tahlilan* are more common. Additionally, the language of instruction differs: Malay and Indonesian dominate in South Sumatra, while Pegon script and Javanese are often used in Javanese pesantren.

This study is limited in scope, focusing on only three pesantren in South Sumatra. The regional nature of the sample may introduce interpretive bias, and broader comparative studies are needed to generalize the findings. Nonetheless, the study provides a meaningful contribution to understanding the dynamic landscape of *qiroatul kutub* learning in Indonesia, highlighting both continuity and innovation in Islamic education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that *qiroatul kutub* learning in both traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in South Sumatra shares four core similarities: the use of classical texts such as *Fath al-Qarib*, *Tafsir Jalalain*, and *Sahih Bukhari* and *Muslim*; the application of foundational linguistic tools such as *Nahwu* (syntax) and *Shorf* (morphology); the incorporation of Arabic language components including *Imla'*, *Insya'*, and *Balaghah*; and shared learning objectives, such as enabling students to understand Islamic texts in Arabic, compete in *Musabaqah Qira'atil Kutub* (MQK), pursue higher education in the Middle East, and become scholars. However, significant differences exist in learning methods, curriculum references, depth of grammar instruction, and approaches to knowledge. Traditional *pesantren* rely more heavily on *Sorogan*, *Bandongan*, *Muhafazhoh*, and *Bahtsul Masail*, and adopt curricula from prominent East Javanese institutions, while modern *pesantren* favor *Tarjamah* and emphasize simplified instructional texts aligned with institutions like Gontor, Al-Azhar, and the Islamic University of Medina. Traditional institutions also engage more deeply with advanced grammar texts such as *Alfiyyah Ibn Malik*, while modern *pesantren* use more basic grammatical references. In terms of knowledge orientation, traditional *pesantren* focus predominantly on *fiqh*, whereas modern *pesantren* aim for a balanced approach across various Islamic disciplines. While this study contributes to the broader discourse in Islamic pedagogy, especially concerning the construction of *qiroatul kutub* instruction, its findings are limited by the regional scope and sample size, which includes only three *pesantren*. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore the long-term impact of different *qiroatul kutub* learning methods on alumni outcomes, and to support the development of hybrid curricula, teacher training programs, and pedagogical innovations that align Islamic education with 21st-century needs.

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