

## Cultivating Santri's Academic Writing Skills in a Formal Pesantren Setting: Implementation of Paper Program for Final-Year Students

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### ABSTRACT

Academic writing is essential for developing students' scientific literacy, critical reasoning, and intellectual maturity. However, in pesantren contexts, the transition from oral-textual religious learning to formal academic writing remains underexplored. This study examines the implementation of the Santri Paper Program at Muadalah Mualimin Pesantren Darussalam Garut as an institutional effort to cultivate final-year santri's academic writing skills. This study employed a qualitative case study design with a naturalistic inquiry approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, student testimonies, and document analysis involving pesantren leaders, program committee members, mentors, and final-year santri. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that the program was implemented through five stages: strategic planning, academic writing workshops, mentor briefing, daily mentoring and writing practice, and final assessment. The success of the program was supported by a "Triple-Helix Synergy" consisting of institutionalized Arabic-English linguistic culture, academic collectivism among santri, and religious altruism-based mentorship. These elements enabled 341 santri, guided by 81 mentors, to complete academic papers in Arabic and English. Nevertheless, the program still faced challenges related to digital literacy, limited mentor research profiles, and the lack of external publication mechanisms. The Santri Paper Program offers a contextual model for institutionalizing academic writing in pesantren education. Its sustainability depends on strengthening digital literacy, mentor capacity, and dissemination systems.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Academic writing proficiency is a global benchmark for educational quality (Drennan, 2022) and essential for developing communication skills as well as reasoning to address complex problems and justifications for arguments and analyses (Wahyuningsih, 2021; Wale & Bogale, 2021). In Indonesia, despite many literacy advancement programs by the government, many students still struggle with writing high-quality academic papers, and this is largely due to numerous linguistic and structural challenges (Nugraeni & Akhiriyah, 2025; Wahyuningsih, 2021). This challenge is prevalent in bilingual contexts, where students struggle with foreign language proficiency and academic writing (Naufina & Putro, 2025). This highlights the need for student-centered instructional initiatives (Ladera & Barcelona, 2025; Polonia et al., 2022).

In the unique ecosystem of the *Pesantren* (Indonesia's Islamic boarding schools), this academic writings challenge takes on a dual dimension. While it is undisputable that pesantrens dwell deeply into fundamental religious texts and classical literature (Alfathon & Alberto, 2022; Saharudin, 2025), but rapidly incorporating elements of contemporary rational inquiry into the *Muadalah* (formal education equivalence) beyond religious doctrine (Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022) has shown to be a complex pedagogical undertaking. Globally, this mirrors the challenges of most of the religiously motivated educational institutions in the world working towards addressing the juxtaposition of the traditional education system with that of modern educational requirements, hence the pesantren phenomenon provides a fertile ground for the study of the management of international religious education.

The sharp research gap lies in the lack of an integrated framework that explains how traditional communal values and formal academic mentorship can be synthesized into a sustainable literacy program. Leaving a critical void in how these institutions systemically manage and institutionalize mandatory writing programs. Many of the studies available have predominantly focused on the common writing barriers such as language and digital literacy, including creative writing, blogging, journalism, preaching, and writing short stories (Sya'roni & Nisa, 2023; Syakur et al., 2021) without the more technical advanced creation of scientific knowledge through focused academic writing, which has been of profound importance.

This research addresses this gap by investigating the implementation of the Santri Paper Program at Pesantren Darussalam Garut during its recent implementation cycle from August until November 2025. As a pesantren with a structured mentoring system and over 2000 students, this pesantren provides an excellent opportunity for exploring how to enhance scientific literacy in a formal religious culture (Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022; Ismail, 2021; Muslihati et al., 2023). To provide a comprehensive understanding, this research tackling multiple questions: How is the Santri Paper Program systemically implemented within the *Muadalah* curriculum? What institutional synergies do students draw upon to cope with academic writing? How do the internal potentials of the pesantren ecosystem influence sustainability of this program?

## 2. METHODS

This research employs a case study methodology and a naturalistic inquiry approach (Alfathon & Alberto, 2022; Haki et al., 2024) to examine the academic writing skills within a specific pesantren setting. Thus, the researchers were studying the academic writing program in a 'hands-off' manner in the pesantren. The site of research is the Pesantren Darussalam Garut, an Islamic boarding school in West Java, Indonesia, which is officially a member of the *Muadalah Mualimin* integrated religious formal education system (Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022). This research focused on Santri Paper Program, which is an obligatory component of the final academic writing course to be completed by graduating santri (Ismail, 2021; Muslihati et al., 2023). This program also incorporated multiple seminars and academic activities spanning 3 months, from August to November 2025 (Muslihati et al., 2023).

Primarily, the data were from the interviews, while the secondary data were from the archives of the institution, which included research papers written in Arabic and English, in accordance with the

educational research guidelines of using documents as evidence (Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022; Haki et al., 2024). Purposive sampling was used to select the informants for this study so that the information provided about the writing program's management was as detailed and rich as possible. They included the Kyai (the visionary leader), 4 members of the *lajnah*/program committee (for operational perspectives), and 12 senior mentors (for their pedagogical perspectives). The selection criteria emphasized participation in the 2025 Paper Program cycle and a minimum of five years of residence in the pesantren for mentors. In addition, 20 santri from the final year were identified to give semi-structured interviews and testimonials to obtain the learner's experience. Collected after the program ended were written testimonials from authors, used to back up the primary data and see how engaged they were and what benefits they thought they got (Luu et al., 2025; Na'imah et al., 2025).

Data analysis was conducted by the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2020), which comprises: data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. The data condensation phase: (1) Open coding which categorised the data from the Kyai and mentors into initial labels such as 'bilingual writing barriers' and 'mentorship intensity'; (2) Axial coding, to identify functional relationships between the Muadalah curriculum and the five-stage cycle of the program; and (3) Selective coding which culminated in the development of the 'triple-helix synergy' framework. Following this, the data were organized in a data display format to visualize the interplay of pesantren factors. Analytical framework ensured that every thematic pattern—concerning the unique intellectual transition of santri from traditional scripture literacy to the formal academic writings—emerged directly from the naturalistic and culturally distinct field of the environment (Haki et al., 2024).

Triangulation of sources was employed to determine the credibility of the data in the closed and unique context of the pesantren (Haki et al., 2024; Sya'roni & Nisa, 2023), cross-referencing the oral accounts from the Kyai and the mentors with the actual 2025 paper program and the latest internal guidelines. For dependability, the research timeline was maintained with a detailed audit trail during the crucial one month supervision stage. Confirmability to mitigate researcher bias and ensure the analytical interpretation remained objective was ensured through peer debriefing with academic experts from two campuses with pesantren backgrounds, namely Islamic Education program and the Islamic Education Management program at the Al-Masthuriyah Institute in Sukabumi and Nahdlatul Ulama University in Cirebon.

Regarding ethical procedures, formal permission was secured from the Pesantren leadership, and informed consent was obtained from santri participants. Anonymity of mentors and students was preserved so that their professional and personal standing in the community would not be affected. Thus, their original testimonials were made available without hesitation. In addition, the study was designed to explicitly study the 'negative' elements and paradoxes in the final year santri academic writing program. Such contradictions were examined to enhance theoretical parsing and to reduce confirmatory bias in order to promote a balanced critical analysis of the program's institutional impact (Sya'roni & Nisa, 2023).

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Institutional Vision, Objectives, and the Foundation of the Program

The implementation of the Santri Paper Program at Pesantren Darussalam Garut is the structural embodiment of its vision to produce "cadres of community leaders" who are proficient in classical Islamic sciences (*turats*), Arabic, and modern general sciences. The Santri Paper Program aims to empower santri to not only receive knowledge but also actively engage in scientific inquiry. This kind of "goal-directed scaffolding" is the alignment of pesantren vision with explicit learning objectives. It is said that providing students a clear set of roadmaps and expectations reduces the cognitive and the writing anxiety that students face (Mehdi et al., 2025; Naufina & Putro, 2025).

The program strives to accomplish four goals: (1) enhance the students' language proficiency through scientific writing; (2) develop students' religious and educational comprehension through the reading of ancient and modern texts; (3) enhance students' critical thinking and reasoning; and (4)

transform students' analytical skills from the reading of texts into structured scholarly writings. The goals show that pesantren wants to meet current educational standards by helping students improve their academic writing skills and moving them from being able to read religious texts to being able to understand structured scientific knowledge (Muslihati et al., 2023; Saharudin, 2025).

### 3.1.1 The Role of Institutional Climate and Alumni-Driven Human Resources

There are three types of teacher roles in the Santri Paper: (1) the organizing committee, referred to as the *Lajnah Imtihan Akhir Sanah* or final year exam committee; (2) experts and resource persons; and (3) Musyrif Paper, who are the teachers accompanying the santri in writing their papers (Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022). Each role is filled by many teachers and has its own responsibilities, which are detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Three types of teacher roles

Terms	Qualifications	Role	Total
1. <i>Lajnah Imtihan Akhir Sanah</i>	Teachers considered competent in organization and events;	Program Implementation Committee;	8
2. <i>Narasumber</i>	Qualified Kyais and teachers with master's and doctoral degrees;	Resource Person and Guideline Compiler;	8
3. <i>Musyrif paper</i>	Senior teachers	Paper-writing advisor	81

Learning in this pesantren occur through social participation and shared history. The research identifies that almost all of the academic mentors are alumni of the same institution who previously underwent the same writing tradition. This situation establishes what has been termed a "continuity of academic culture" in which the mentors' very high levels of pedagogical empathy are complemented by a common sociolinguistic identity with their students (Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022). This environment functions as a "Community of Practice" (Drennan, 2022), where pesantren's longstanding and rigid tradition of *Khidmah* (inservicing) only from its alumni is a strong guarantee that the "master-apprentice" bond is deep and transcends the technical level. The tradition of Pesantren's recruitment policy, which only employs human resources from its own alumni, such a school climate is particularly effective for academic programs that utilize collective efficacy from within to offset the shortage of resources (Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022; Na'imah et al., 2025).

### 3.1.2 The Mandatory Nature and Legal Standing of the Program

Every final year santri must complete the Santri Paper Program in order to graduate. With absolute adherence to this policy at the pesantren, each student in the graduating class must execute the entire cycle of a research project, regardless of their skills in academic composition. The "mandatory participation" was said in committee interviews, this is to provide academic discipline and to ensure that all graduates meet the national standards of scientific literacy (Ismail, 2021; Muslihati et al., 2023).

The Santri Writing Program operates successfully due to the governance model, which is managed by the core committee (Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022; Muslihati et al., 2023), they managed 81 teachers as mentors, and 341 students as authors. This mandatory character demonstrates a "high-challenge, high-support" framework. As the program becomes a requirement for graduation, the pesantren establishes an "extrinsic motivator" that, through the completion of the student's tasks, will internalize an "intrinsic academic confidence." This is in stark contrast to many institutions where students have the possibility of disengaging from optional and incidental writing activities when projects are viewed as non-essential or when the structure is weak (Bal, 2021). This type of institutional rule is a response to the Muadalah system stipulations, which dictate that pesantren graduates must hold an aptitude that is at par with the national formal education, coupled with traditional religious (Ismail, 2021).

### 3.2 Program Governance and the Five-Stage Implementation

The core instructional process consisted of two integrated phases: intensive expert-led workshops held over three days, where the Santri receive material from expert teams on academic writing, and daily coaching by mentors for one month. This combination of short-term intensive training followed by sustained guidance was in line with previous research that reported best instructional practices that involved writing competencies designed through a gradual scaffolding approach, and a recursive process fostered through feedback and mentoring, as opposed to stand-alone workshops (Drennan, 2022; Gatz et al., 2025; Muslihati et al., 2023).

The core of this governance is a cycle designed to transition students from conceptual understanding to a finalized scientific work (Muslihati et al., 2023; Wale & Bogale, 2021), which deploys a systematic five-stage implementation whose calendar is summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Stages and duration of Santri Paper Program

Activity Focus	Date/Duration	Institutional Objectives
1. Strategic Planning and System Development	August 18th–September 15 <sup>th</sup> /1 Month	Aligning the program with Pesantren standards
2. Scientific Seminar and Workshop	September 16 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> , 2025 /3 Days	Building foundational academic literacy and technical skills
3. Working Meeting and Mentor Briefing	September 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2025 /1 Days	Establishing the pedagogical bridge and "Triple-Helix" synergy
4. Daily Mentoring and Writing Practice	September 24 <sup>th</sup> -October 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2025 /1 Month	Fostering academic discipline and linguistic application
5. Assessment and Program Reporting	October 27 <sup>th</sup> -November 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2025 / 1 Month	Ensuring quality control and institutional accountability

#### 3.2.1 Stage 1: Strategic Planning and System Development

Program implementation crucially relied on strong administrative governance through a dedicated committee for a series of activities to prepare graduates of pesantren, the Lajnah Imtihan Akhir Sanah (Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022). They are eight selected teachers as the top committee supported by internal senior scholars (master's and doctoral degrees), including the Head Kyai and the pesantren administrative units to develop the foundation of the program. They focused on building the program timeline, assigning expert trainers, recruiting paper supervisors, grouping students, managing fund proposals, and taking responsibility/accountability. Unlike most institutions that depend on external consultants, this phase solely utilizes the pesantren's intellectual capital to construct and maintain program value and operational closeness. This structured oversight is critical, as successful academic interventions depend on institutional coordination (Haki et al., 2024; Kanyiri, 2025; Pasandalan & Cerado, 2025).

#### 3.2.2 Stage 2: Intensive Three-Day Scientific Seminar and Workshop

Students undergo an intensive three-day seminar held in September 16-18, 2025. All speakers were internal pesantren scholars holding postgraduate degrees, selected from the pesantren's own pool of Kyais and *Ustadz* (pesantren teachers) who truly understand the daily lives of the santri. Utilizing pesantren's in-house scholars means writing training can be contextualized and framed to pesantren's values and santris' unique religious environment (Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022).

This sort of rigorous exposure establishes the foundational literacy required for extensive writing initiatives rooted in community (Drennan, 2022; Wale & Bogale, 2021). Evidence suggests the degree of autonomy attained by students, in contrast to the more traditional methodologies, is significantly greater in inquiry writing pedagogy and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) (Suteja & Setiawan, 2022; Wale & Bogale, 2021). Table 3 outlines the timeline, the main competencies addressed in each session, and the participating internal scholars who served as speakers.

**Table 3.** Santri Paper-Writing Training: Schedule, Focus, and Speakers

Day, date	Focus of training	Speaker
Tuesday, September 16, 2025	a. Recognizing Tafsir Scholars and Their Books	KH. Asep Deni F., M.Phil.
	b. Recognizing Hadith Books and Hadith Science	KH. M. Yasyfi A, M.Pd.
Wednesday, September 17, 2025	a. Materials, Appearance, and Techniques for Writing Academic Papers.	Dr. KH. Devi M., Lc, M.Ud.
	b. Building Students' Creativity in Writing	Uus H., S.Pd.I, M.Pd.
	c. Understanding Academic Papers and Types of Academic Papers	Dr. M. Dzaki, M.M.Pd
	d. Paper-Writing Methodology	Indra Ari, S.Th.I., M.Ag.
Thursday, September 18, 2025	a. Writing Techniques, Citation, Footnote Writing, and Bibliography	Dr. Ahmad Hilal, M.Pd.
	b. Topic Selection and Paper Outline Creation	Nenden G., S.H., M.H.

The training introduced students to academic literacy, paper structure, citation techniques, and topic development. This initial seminar is vital and necessary to build high school students' initial awareness and perceptions regarding the formal rules, definitions, and systematic procedures of scientific writing, which serves as a critical catalyst for stimulating creative and innovative ideas derived from real-world phenomena (Polonia et al., 2022; Sitorus & Zasari, 2023), thus allowing santri to accurately determine their research topics, variables, and objectives before transitioning into the formal writing and data analysis stages. Figure 1 shows the great attention that students devote to these intensive sessions.

**Figure 1.** Photos of the academic writing seminar for final-grade santri

### 3.2.3 Stage 3: Mandatory Working Meeting and Mentor Briefing

Stage three is a pivotal "sacred" event; mentors receive formal assignment letters on this occasion and are concurrently inaugurated as mentors by the Kyai. In this phase, mentors undergo coaching from the eight-member core committee and internal senior scholars to socialize the program's guidelines and assessment standards. This phase serves as "Professional Development Scaffolding." The Pesantren strengthens collective teacher efficacy by having the leadership present. The transition of Pesantren teachers into academic guides is a vital social event within the "Community of Practice" (Drennan, 2022; Dzakiyuddin et al., 2022).

### 3.2.4 Stage 4: Intensive Daily Mentoring and Writing Practice

One month of daily one-on-one interactions with students is the most significant portion of the program. The committee assigned 81 mentors to provide guidance and feedback on the writing in the targeted foreign language, Arabic or English. Excellent mentorship is a powerful driver in lowering the task aversion novice writers experience with the 'blank page' phenomenon (Gatz et al., 2025; Nurkamto et al., 2024), so the mentors and students are assigned in the ratios of 1:3 to 1:5. This is aimed at

providing separate individualized feedback to the santri without overly disrupting mentors’s daily responsibilities, and mirroring the “master-apprentice” paradigm, in which the “apprentice” (students) receives oversight from the “master” (mentor) in order to develop their academic discourse (Drennan, 2022; Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022). In contrast to standard weekly mentoring meetings, the daily interactions enable santri to remain focused on their writing milestones until completion. Organized mentorship and concise feedback have proven to be the most effective elements of stimulating the removal of anxiety associated with writing and the enhancement of writing productivity (Bassal et al., 2025; Bauer & El-Sayed, 2025). Figure 2 shows photos of guidance activities and the daily writing process.



Figure 2. Photos of guidance activities and the writing process.

### 3.2.5 Stage 5: Final Assessment and Program Reporting

The final stage concludes the formal grading and evaluation of the 341 papers submitted to the committee and the mentors. Combined with a complete evaluation of the program's implementation, this stage represents the formal conclusion of the writing continuous cycle. As Dzakiyyuddin et al. (2022) state, consolidation of feedback is important for the ongoing maintenance of academic customary practices in Muadalah Muallimin pesantren. The feedback loop, combined with the integration of the administrative and academic timelines, reflects the program's structural essence (Wale & Bogale, 2021). Depicted in Figure 3, this framework illustrates how each stage contributes to the systematic development of students' academic literacy.

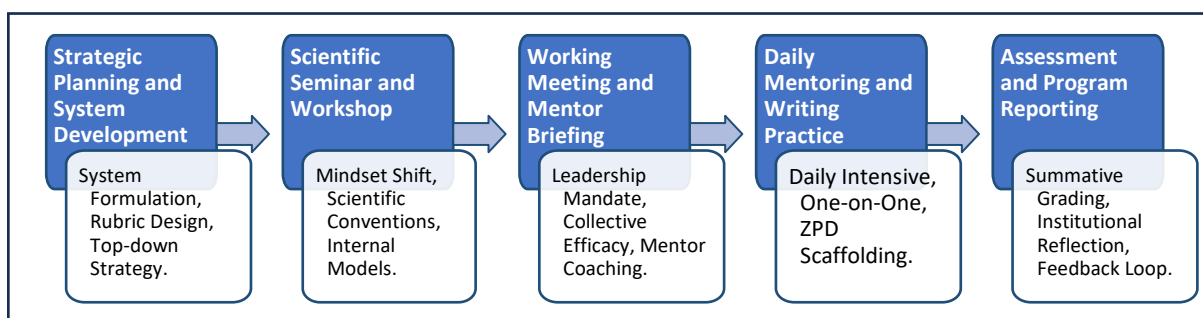


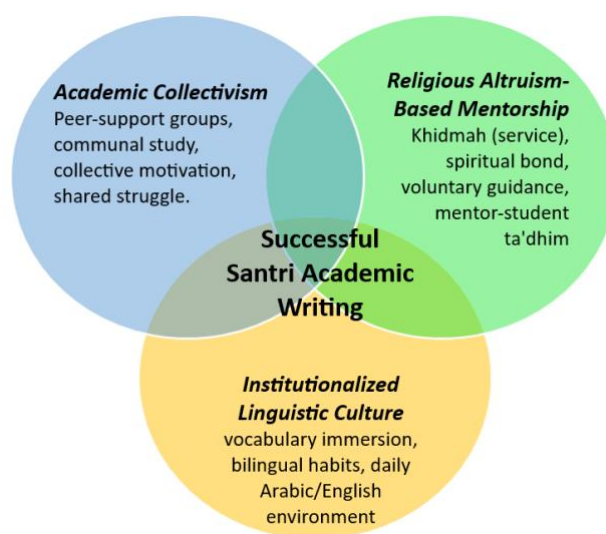
Figure 3. Synthesized Structural Framework of the Five-Stage Santri Paper Program

### 3.3 Institutional Strengths: The Triad of Program Success

The deadline for submitting bound academic papers for the 2025 Paper Program was met by all participants. Research identifies that the the resilience of the program is sustained by the Triple-Helix Synergy which goes beyond individual efforts and becomes a structured institutional force. This triad

comprises linguistic culture, academic collectivism, and religious altruism. They do not act independently but rather as an interlocking mechanism. The pesantren's linguistic culture provides the required 'vocabulary pool,' the academic collectivism ensures 'emotional and intellectual support' among authors, and religious altruism provides the 'moral impetus' for mentors to provide intensive guidance despite their administrative pesantren workloads.

Depicted in Figure 4, this framework illustrates how this dynamic interplay creates a self-sustaining ecosystem that supports santri in overcoming the inherent challenges of academic writing within a traditional setting, and solves what Drennan (2022) and Dzakiyyuddin et al., (2022) implied about significant deficiency in comprehending how an institutionalized, compulsory writing program—bolstered by a strong "master-apprentice" mentorship—can be methodically executed to generate research papers within a pesantren context.



**Figure 4.** The Triple-Helix Synergy Model: The Interplay of Linguistic, Social, and Spiritual Capital in Santri Academic Writing

### 3.3.1 Institutionalized Linguistic Culture: Linguistic Culture as Cognitive Scaffolding

The long-term exposure to Arabic and English reduced santri's typical barriers in foreign-language academic writing. Unlike the students in conventional institutions who tend to have a high level of "language anxiety" when they start to write a paper in a foreign language (Fajrina et al., 2022; Naufina & Putro, 2025), the santri at Darussalam were linguistically prepared for this task, as their daily environment in the pesantren was an immersion in Arabic and English. This aligns with the systemic functional linguistics (SFL), that language is not a structure that can be described in a set of rules, rather, language is a resource to construct meaning and achieve a particular purpose within a given socio-cultural context (Ladera & Barcelona, 2025). The students' focus in constructing complex, argued frameworks should be transcend the boundaries of grammatical correctness and it aligns with the predominant views in research that advocate for the importance of meaning as a fundamental element of academic writing competence (Kayaalp et al., 2022; Luu et al., 2025).

### 3.3.2 Academic Collectivism: The Spirit of "Berjamaah"

The second helix is the culture of Berjamaah (Academic Collectivism), the writing process is viewed not as an individual burden, but rather as an expression of a social intellectual movement. Final-year students were dispersed daily across all communal areas within the pesantren throughout the month-long writing period. In the mosque terrace, within the library, and even in the yards of the

mentors' residences, they work in pairs or small groups and collaborate to solve problems (Haki et al., 2024).

Encouraging small peer group discussions and sharing of resources mirrored the communal lifestyle of the pesantren. As one student (S21) put it, "At first, it was scary to write in English, but since we all struggled together in the dorm (collectivism) and our *ustadz* (mentors) treated our drafts like their own children's work (altruism), the burden was lighter." This phenomenon is a manifestation of 'Collective Efficacy'. The individual persistence of santri increases by their confidence in their group's ability to achieve success (Na'imah et al., 2025). The incorporation of academic collectivism in conjunction with writing-to-learn has been demonstrated to foster evaluative judgment and self-regulation (Kayaalp et al., 2022; Nugraeni & Akhiriyah, 2025). This spirit of academic collectivism, where students engage in peer discussion and mutual support within small groups, is clearly evidenced in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** Students' collaborative engagement and collective learning during the paper-writing sessions.

Collaborative practice is vital and has been proven to save time engage students when they practice scientific writing. It corresponds to other research (Luu et al., 2025) stating that peer interaction acts as a social catalyst for developing critical thinking and evaluative judgment. This social consciousness in pesantren reflects Wenger's (1998) concept of Communities of Practice, where learning is inherently social (Rahmah & Hadi, 2025). However, the pesantren context adds an important spiritual dimension, religious altruism, that is often absent in secular Western models of mentorship.

### 3.3.3 Religious Altruism-Based Mentorship: Dedication and Altruistic Professionalism

The third and most unique helix is the profound dedication of the 81 mentors. Mentors can be found outside their usual classroom setting at mosque porches and even in the offices or at their private residences. They provide guidance that extends beyond the call of duty and beyond formal hours, even guiding students before sunrise after *Subuh* (morning prayers) or after *Isya* (evening prayers), which is natural. Mentors in pesantren offer what can be seen as a more social form than in other educational systems, as in Dzakiyyuddin et al. (2022) and Hastasari et al. (2022) references, it is common for students in pesantren culture to go to their teachers' homes for studying at dawn or in the evening. This flexibility of time and places allows mentors to be more accessible and improve students' writing success rate (Gatz et al., 2025; Mehdi et al., 2025).

As emphasized by a senior mentors during the interview: "We take on this responsibility not just as an administrative duty, but as a form of *khidmah* (service) to the Kyai and the science. A student's success in writing is a perpetual charity for us." Therefore, such level of devotion is uncommon in secular academic institutions, a strong sense of continuity and shared identity between mentor and santri distinguishes the spiritual-based mentoring from conventional academic supervision models. The philosophy of total devotion inherent in the educator identity of the pesantren is a model of

“Altruistic Professionalism” which is founded on intrinsic religious motivation (Hastasari et al., 2022; Ismail, 2021). This deep-rooted commitment is a vital form of Social Capital that maintains program sustainability, as another study points out that the success and sustainability of the Muadalah Pesantren programs are closely related to the strong commitment of the pesantren to its traditions and philosophy (Dzakiyyuddin et al., 2022).

### 3.4 Identified Challenges and Strategic Needs

While the strong social and cultural capital is valued, several institutional paradoxes remain as the program is rolled out. Firstly, the Triple-Helix Synergy provides immense social and spiritual support but the ‘digital literacy gap’ still exists. Most santri demonstrated high competence in traditional referencing but struggled with online resources and automated citation tools. Secondly, the ‘mentor profile paradox’ was observed, in which many mentors had high Religious Altruism but no formal research profiles (e.g. Sinta or Scopus IDs). These paradoxes need to be resolved before the program can be transformed from a local success into a globally recognised academic model. This gap indicates the program is successful internally, but the external recognition and the global circulation of santri works are still limited. The matrix of Figure 6 synthesises the interplay between these unique institutional strengths and internal challenges identified.

Domain	Strength / Success Factor	Challenge / Structural Barrier	Analytical Tension (Emergent Contrast)
<b>SANTRI (Students)</b>	<b>Academic Collectivism (Berjamaah):</b> A deep-rooted habit of mutual support and collaborative peer-learning embedded in all activities.	<b>Digital Literacy Barrier:</b> Limited proficiency in utilizing modern research tools, digital reference managers, and international databases.	Strong communal learning culture contrasts with limited individual capacity to engage with global digital research infrastructures.
<b>MENTORS (Faculty)</b>	<b>Extraordinary Totality (Altruism):</b> Sacred dedication to continuous guidance beyond formal obligations, motivated by moral rather than monetary imperatives.	<b>Academic Writing Inactivity:</b> Mentors function primarily as educators and religious authorities rather than active contributors to scientific journals.	High moral and pedagogical dedication is not institutionally translated into sustained scholarly publication practices.
<b>TRADITION (Pesantren)</b>	<b>Linguistic Social Capital:</b> A long-standing culture of Arabic and English immersion integrated into everyday communication and writing.	<b>The “Archival Trap”:</b> Valuable scholarly outputs remain confined within internal library collections instead of being disseminated globally.	Rich linguistic capital coexists with structurally limited mechanisms for external knowledge circulation and global visibility.

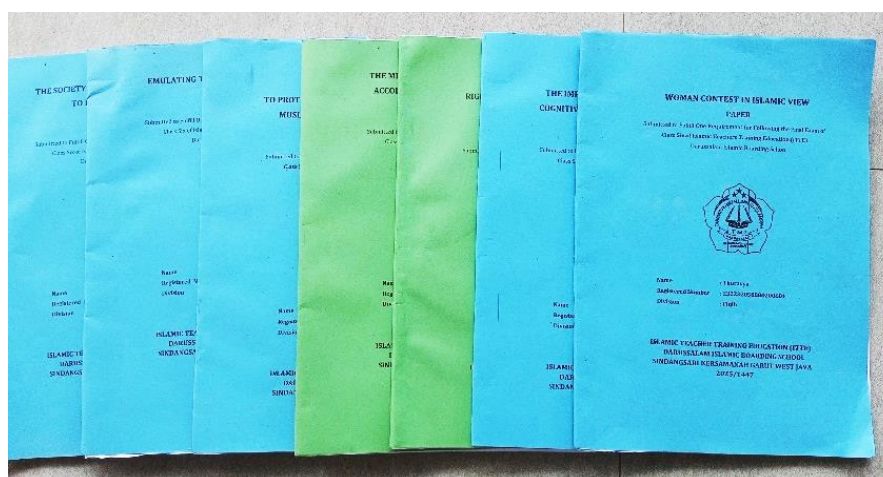
**Figure 6.** Synthesis Matrix of Internal Strengths and Challenges in the Santri Paper Program. This matrix functions as the analytical core of the discussion on the sociological and pedagogical landscape that the Santri Paper Program navigates within the Muadalah system by illustrating the inherent duality within the Pesantren Darussalam.

The first paradox relates to the professional profile of 81 academic mentors. They are very committed, with deep theological-linguistic expertise, but most of them are not engaged in contemporary scientific writing or publishing research. In addition to the above, one of the mandatory attributes of effective academic supervisors is to be active members of the scholarly community (Dhillon, 2022; Drennan, 2022). The lack of active research profiles of mentors often leads to a lack of depth in modern research methodologies and international citation standards, especially for foreign language learners (Ladera & Barcelona, 2025; Wahyuningsih, 2021), and this situation occurs quite often in classical institutions that are starting to achieve the results of academic formalization (Saharudin, 2025; Sya’roni & Nisa, 2023). It emphasizes the need for institutionalized professional development for academic writing among mentors to maintain students’ writing development (Gatz et al., 2025; Muslihati et al., 2023).

The second paradox is the inequality of the santri’s digital literacy. The daily pesantren ecosystem imposes structured restrictions of non-author students to access modern internet infrastructure. The

aim of such policies is to create a protective zone for religious education, thus causing a tension between the values that are held within the pesantren systems and the values needed in current educational research (Ismail, 2021; Sya'roni & Nisa, 2023). Despite the freedom to access and use the internet for paper writing, many santri are accustomed to relying on printed resources from the library, books, and parent references. Without a digital infrastructure, the research needed to overcome the insularity of a physical library's limited resources is unlikely to be conducted by students (Ismail, 2021; Syakur et al., 2021). Strengthening digital literacy is essential to ensure that pesantren graduates can compete in the modern intellectual arena (Nazariah et al., 2023; Rasimin et al., 2024).

The third paradox would be the absence of external publication and dissemination. Each year, the program produces over 300 papers authored by final-year santri, but these are largely internal graduation requirements that find a home only in the pesantren's physical archives. Currently, there is no sustained and systematic system of external publication to wider scientific community or digital archival management of these valuable indigenous knowledge. In contrast, other educational institutions, including some pesantren, have shown that with curation and the appropriate editing, even the writing products of secondary school students, such as journalism and blogs, short stories, and preaching, can be disseminated via collective publishing, institutional repositories, and thematic bibliographies (Nazariah et al., 2023; Saharudin, 2025; Sya'roni & Nisa, 2023). Figure 7 shows photo of samples of completed papers.



**Figure 7.** Samples of archived completed papers.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Santri Paper Program at Pesantren Darussalam Garut effectively institutionalizes academic literacy through a structured curriculum supported by a Triple-Helix Synergy of linguistic culture, academic collectivism, and altruistic mentorship. The use of Arabic and English strengthens students' communicative capital for academic writing, while the culture of berjamaah fosters peer-supported learning and collective academic responsibility. At the same time, teachers' religiously grounded dedication positions mentorship as both a professional and moral commitment. Together, these elements bridge the Muadalah curriculum and traditional pesantren pedagogy, transforming santri from passive recipients of knowledge into novice academic writers capable of participating in knowledge construction.

Theoretically, this study contributes to pesantren literacy studies by showing how faith-based educational cultures can support formal academic writing development. Practically, the findings offer a scalable model for pesantrens and other religious schools seeking to develop academic literacy through language policy, communal learning, and value-based mentorship, even with limited resources. However, the program faces limitations, including mentors' limited visibility in global

research networks, students' digital literacy gaps, and the restricted circulation of santri-authored papers within institutional archives. Future research should compare this model with other pesantrens or secular schools, examine its scalability, and explore how digital literacy training and publication pathways can be integrated into communal mentorship so that santri's academic work can reach wider scholarly audiences.

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