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Religious Commodification and Digital Culture in Pesantren: A Value-Based Islamic Educational Management Framework

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ABSTRACT

Religious commodification and digital transformation present growing challenges to the institutional identity, religious authority, and educational management of pesantren. This study examines forms of religious commodification, institutional responses to digital culture, and the role of Islamic educational management in preserving religious values. Employing a qualitative literature review, the study synthesizes selected scholarly publications through content and thematic analysis. The findings reveal that commodification occurs through religious branding, digital preaching, educational marketing, and changes in organizational practices, while digitalization creates opportunities for institutional development alongside challenges to traditional authority. Social capital, moral leadership, and selective technological adoption emerge as important institutional resources. The study proposes a value-based Islamic educational management framework integrating participatory planning, ethical organizing, responsible digital implementation, and value-oriented evaluation. This framework contributes to understanding how pesantren may balance modernization, institutional sustainability, and religious authenticity, although its practical effectiveness requires further empirical investigation across diverse institutional contexts.

ABSTRAK

Komodifikasi agama dan transformasi digital menghadirkan tantangan bagi identitas kelembagaan, otoritas keagamaan, dan pengelolaan pendidikan pesantren. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji bentuk komodifikasi agama, respons pesantren terhadap budaya digital, serta peran manajemen pendidikan Islam dalam menjaga nilai-nilai keagamaan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui studi pustaka dengan analisis isi dan tematik terhadap literatur ilmiah terpilih. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa komodifikasi muncul melalui penggunaan simbol keagamaan, dakwah digital, pemasaran pendidikan, dan perubahan praktik organisasi. Sementara itu, digitalisasi membuka peluang pengembangan kelembagaan sekaligus menghadirkan tantangan terhadap otoritas tradisional. Modal sosial, kepemimpinan moral kiai, dan adopsi teknologi secara selektif menjadi sumber daya penting dalam menghadapi perubahan tersebut. Penelitian ini menghasilkan kerangka manajemen pendidikan Islam berbasis nilai yang mengintegrasikan perencanaan partisipatif, pengorganisasian berlandaskan etika, pelaksanaan digital yang bertanggung jawab, serta evaluasi berorientasi nilai. Kerangka ini menawarkan landasan konseptual bagi pesantren untuk menyeimbangkan modernisasi, keberlanjutan kelembagaan, dan autentisitas keagamaan, tetapi efektivitasnya masih memerlukan pengujian empiris.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed how information is accessed, produced, distributed, and consumed, including within educational institutions. For Islamic education, digital transformation presents opportunities to improve learning accessibility, institutional management, and religious communication while simultaneously raising concerns about the preservation of Islamic values and educational identity. Az-zuhri et al. (2025) emphasize that digitalization in Islamic education extends beyond the adoption of technological instruments, as it requires institutions to reconsider their educational strategies, organizational practices, and responses to changing social expectations. Although digital platforms facilitate

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interactive learning and expand the reach of religious communication, their implementation also introduces challenges related to digital literacy disparities, the erosion of religious values, and the commercialization of educational services (Az-zuhri et al., 2025; Wardhani et al., 2024). These developments create a fundamental challenge for Islamic educational institutions: how to benefit from technological advancement while maintaining the religious principles that underpin their educational mission.

Alongside digital transformation, religious practices and symbols have increasingly become embedded in market-oriented activities. Religious messages are packaged, promoted, and consumed through various communication platforms, creating new relationships between spiritual authority, economic interests, and public recognition. Maulana et al. (2026) demonstrate that religious sermons and preaching activities may function as arenas of symbolic exchange between religious figures and Muslim audiences, particularly within the expanding religious consumption practices of the Muslim middle class. Hasan & Hilalludin (2025) describe this phenomenon as religious consumerism, in which spiritual values risk being reduced to commercially attractive symbols and representations. Such developments are particularly relevant to Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which increasingly operate within competitive educational environments. Beyond their traditional responsibilities for religious instruction and character formation, pesantren have expanded their institutional activities through entrepreneurship, sharia-oriented business initiatives, digital communication, and educational branding (As Salimi & Aimmah, 2026). Consequently, the growing interaction between religious identity and market mechanisms raises important questions about the extent to which institutional modernization influences the preservation of pesantren values.

The commodification of religion has also become an important issue in contemporary Islamic education. Nurohmat et al. (2023) explain that the commodification of Islamic education occurs when educational values and institutional characteristics are increasingly translated into exchange values, particularly through the promotion of superior programs, modern facilities, and graduate competencies as competitive advantages. Although these practices may support institutional development and financial sustainability, they may also encourage educational institutions to prioritize market attractiveness over their fundamental religious and educational responsibilities. Similar concerns emerge in digital religious communication. Hakim & Dahri (2025) identify the monetization of religious content, the emergence of celebrity preachers, and the commercial use of Islamic symbols as manifestations of religious commodification in digital environments. Yasin (2025) further discusses the McDonaldization of religion, referring to the tendency to simplify and standardize religious teachings into easily accessible and rapidly consumed digital content. These developments suggest that digitalization may influence how religious knowledge is communicated, how spiritual authority is recognized, and how Islamic institutions construct their public identities.

The institutional implications of these transformations are particularly important for pesantren, which must respond to changing educational demands while maintaining their distinctive religious traditions. Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026), referring to data from Statistics Indonesia in Central Java (2025), report that the number of students enrolled in pesantren in Magelang Regency declined from 49,307 in 2022 to 21,118 in 2023. Although this regional evidence cannot independently establish a nationwide decline or identify its underlying causes, it illustrates the importance of examining institutional attractiveness, community engagement, and educational sustainability. Increasing competition may encourage pesantren to strengthen promotional activities, modernize administrative systems, and adopt more formal management practices. However, institutional modernization may also generate organizational tensions when managerial efficiency becomes disconnected from established religious values. As Salimi & Aimmah (2026) identify potential shifts in the authority of the kiai from spiritual leadership toward administrative structures, alongside changes in the meaning of khidmah, traditionally understood as service and devotion within pesantren culture. These findings indicate that the challenges of modernization extend beyond technological adaptation and involve the preservation of institutional identity, moral authority, and organizational values.

Existing scholarship has provided valuable insights into digital transformation, religious commodification, and Islamic educational management. Nevertheless, these research streams have generally developed through relatively separate analytical perspectives. Studies examining digital transformation in Islamic education have primarily emphasized technological integration, learning innovation, and digital literacy, while providing more limited explanations of its ideological and institutional governance implications (Az-zuhri et al., 2025; Wardhani et al., 2024). Research on religious commodification has explored the commercialization of Islamic symbols in advertising (Mahardika, 2024), the interaction between religious identity

and consumer culture within hijrah communities (Salehudin et al., 2021), and the symbolic exchange associated with religious preaching (Maulana et al., 2026). Meanwhile, studies of pesantren management have predominantly investigated curriculum development, educational leadership, and institutional adaptation (Najib & Yenuri, 2026; Salsabiilaa et al., 2025). Although these contributions provide important conceptual and empirical foundations, the relationships among religious commodification, digital culture, and institutional management remain insufficiently integrated within a common analytical framework.

More recent studies on digital religious communication further reveal the complexity of these relationships. Nawaf (2025), Yasin (2025), and Zaman (2024) examine changing patterns of religious authority in social media environments, particularly the growing influence of audience engagement, digital visibility, and platform-based popularity. Other studies investigate the commercialization of spiritual practices and the transformation of religious preaching into entertainment-oriented content (Fuadi & Ramadhanita, 2025; Rusli & Takbir, 2025). These findings suggest that religious authority increasingly operates within environments where traditional scholarly legitimacy interacts with algorithmic visibility and public recognition. However, the implications of these developments for the internal governance of Islamic educational institutions remain less clearly articulated. Nasir et al. (2026) provide relevant insights by demonstrating how digital management systems in pesantren can function as instruments of student discipline and character development, while Salsabil et al. (2026) describe the transformation of traditional scholarly networks into hybrid structures connecting pesantren-based religious authority with digital platforms. Despite these contributions, further conceptual integration is needed to explain how Islamic educational management can address the tensions between technological modernization, market-oriented pressures, and the preservation of religious values.

This study addresses this gap by positioning Islamic educational management as a central analytical perspective for understanding the interaction between religious commodification and digital culture in pesantren. Rather than treating digitalization exclusively as technological innovation or commodification solely as an economic phenomenon, the study examines both processes as interconnected challenges involving institutional governance, religious legitimacy, organizational identity, and educational values. Its principal conceptual contribution lies in developing a value-based Islamic educational management framework that integrates participatory planning, organizational arrangements grounded in moral leadership, ethically oriented digital implementation, and evaluation mechanisms that consider both institutional performance and religious values. This framework is intended to explain how pesantren may negotiate the demands of modernization without automatically equating economic activities or digital engagement with the erosion of religious authenticity.

Accordingly, this study aims to (1) identify and synthesize the forms of religious commodification associated with pesantren, (2) examine the reciprocal relationship between digital culture and pesantren institutional practices, and (3) formulate the role of Islamic educational management in addressing the opportunities and challenges arising from these transformations. Employing a qualitative literature review, the study integrates findings from previous research to develop a conceptual understanding of value-based institutional governance. The expected contribution is twofold. Theoretically, it extends discussions of Islamic educational management by incorporating religious commodification and digital culture into the analysis of pesantren governance. Practically, it offers a conceptual reference for pesantren administrators seeking to balance technological adaptation, institutional sustainability, and the preservation of Islamic educational values.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Religious Commodification and Islamic Education

Religious commodification refers to the process through which religious values, symbols, practices, and identities are transformed into products or services that can be promoted, exchanged, and consumed within market-oriented environments. This process involves the increasing interaction between religious meanings and economic interests, particularly when spiritual symbols become instruments of commercial differentiation, social recognition, and institutional competitiveness (Maulana et al., 2026). From the perspective of Bourdieu's theory of capital, as applied by Maulana et al. (2026) and Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026), religious legitimacy and spiritual reputation may function as symbolic and social capital that can subsequently be converted into economic resources. However, such conversion does not necessarily indicate the erosion of religious authenticity. Its implications depend on how economic activities are organized, how religious symbols

are represented, and whether institutional practices remain consistent with their underlying ethical commitments.

The relationship between religious commodification and Islamic values has generated different interpretations in previous studies. Hakim (2024), examining the provision of Hajj and Umrah services, emphasizes the ethical risks associated with treating religious activities primarily as commercial opportunities. The study highlights honesty, humility, accountability, and the fulfillment of commitments as essential principles for preventing the exploitation of religious practices. Similarly, Hasan & Hilalludin (2025) distinguish between the symbolic use of sharia terminology and the substantive integration of Islamic principles into economic and organizational systems. Their argument suggests that the legitimacy of religiously oriented economic activities should be evaluated through the consistency between institutional claims and actual practices rather than through religious branding alone. These perspectives demonstrate that commodification cannot be adequately understood solely through the presence of financial transactions, as its ethical consequences are closely associated with institutional intentions, governance arrangements, and accountability.

Within Islamic education, commodification becomes particularly significant when educational programs, facilities, institutional reputation, and graduate characteristics are increasingly presented as competitive products. Nurohmat et al. (2023) conceptualize this development as a shift from educational use value toward exchange value, whereby institutional characteristics acquire commercial significance in educational markets. Such transformations may encourage improvements in infrastructure, service quality, and organizational sustainability. Nevertheless, excessive dependence on market-oriented considerations may also create tensions between institutional competitiveness and the religious objectives of education. In the pesantren context, these tensions are especially relevant because educational activities are traditionally associated with religious devotion, moral formation, scholarly transmission, and community service. Consequently, the expansion of commercial practices requires careful consideration of whether institutional development reinforces or weakens these educational responsibilities.

Studies examining religious consumption provide further insights into the broader social mechanisms of commodification. Mahardika (2024) demonstrates how religious symbols and representations of masculinity are incorporated into commercial advertising to influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. Salehudin et al. (2021) identify interactions between religious identity, lifestyle transformation, and capitalist consumption within hijrah communities, illustrating how religious expressions may become intertwined with contemporary consumer culture. Meanwhile, Fuadi & Ramadhanita (2025) examine the commercialization, standardization, and personalization of spiritual practices in digital environments. Although these studies investigate contexts beyond pesantren, they reveal how religious meanings can be reconstructed through market mechanisms and communication practices. Their relevance to Islamic educational institutions lies in the possibility that similar mechanisms may influence institutional branding, educational promotion, and the public representation of religious identity.

Taken together, the literature suggests that religious commodification should be understood as a multidimensional process rather than an inherently uniform or exclusively negative phenomenon. Economic activities may contribute to institutional sustainability when they support educational objectives and operate within accountable ethical frameworks. Conversely, commodification becomes problematic when religious values are reduced to promotional instruments, spiritual authority is exploited for commercial advantage, or institutional success is evaluated predominantly through financial performance and market visibility. This distinction is particularly important for pesantren, where religious legitimacy constitutes a fundamental institutional resource. Accordingly, the present study conceptualizes religious commodification as a continuum of practices whose ethical implications depend on the alignment between religious claims, organizational decisions, and actual institutional conduct.

2.2. Digital Culture, Religious Authority, and Institutional Identity

Digital culture has transformed the production, circulation, and interpretation of religious knowledge by introducing communication environments characterized by rapid information exchange, algorithmic visibility, and interactive audience participation. Within these environments, religious authority is increasingly negotiated through digital platforms rather than being communicated exclusively through established educational institutions and traditional scholarly networks. Arbiah et al. (2025) identify the decentralization of religious authority and the emergence of new forms of legitimacy associated with online popularity and algorithmic optimization. This development creates opportunities for broader religious participation while

raising concerns about the credibility, depth, and authenticity of religious knowledge circulated through digital media.

The transformation of religious authority is particularly relevant to pesantren because their educational traditions emphasize scholarly transmission, moral credibility, and the continuity of religious knowledge through sanad. Yasin (2025) distinguishes between epistemic authority grounded in established scholarly traditions and performative authority associated with the visibility and popularity of religious figures in digital environments. Similarly, Zaman (2024) associates changing patterns of religious information consumption among Generation Z with the increasing preference for accessible, visual, and rapidly distributed digital content. Nawaf (2025) further demonstrates that the legitimacy of digital preachers is negotiated through audience interactions, indicating that religious credibility is increasingly influenced by participatory communication processes. These findings suggest that digital platforms introduce additional mechanisms through which religious authority is recognized, evaluated, and contested.

The growing influence of digital visibility also creates conditions in which religious communication may become closely associated with commercial interests. Hakim & Dahri (2025) identify the monetization of religious content and the increasing significance of engagement indicators, including followers, likes, and content sharing, in shaping public perceptions of religious credibility. Rusli & Takbir (2025) examine dakwahtainment, highlighting how entertainment-oriented religious communication may privilege emotional appeal and symbolic representation over reflective engagement with religious teachings. Alqohar & Maharani (2026) similarly identify the commodification of religious values as a challenge in digital content production, alongside concerns about misinformation and algorithm-driven consumption. These studies indicate that digitalization can influence the criteria through which religious messages gain visibility and legitimacy, potentially creating tensions between communicative effectiveness and the substantive quality of religious knowledge.

Nevertheless, digital transformation does not necessarily replace traditional religious authority. Instead, emerging evidence suggests the development of hybrid arrangements in which established scholarly traditions interact with contemporary communication technologies. Salsabil et al. (2026) describe the transformation of religious scholarly networks into hybrid structures that connect pesantren-based sanad traditions with digital platforms. This development indicates that digital technologies may extend the reach of traditional religious networks while simultaneously exposing them to new forms of public scrutiny and competition. Nasir et al. (2026) further identify the emergence of hybrid santri identities and the use of digital management systems as instruments of institutional discipline and character development. These findings demonstrate that digitalization affects both the external communication of pesantren and the internal organization of educational practices.

The relationship between digital representation and institutional identity can also be interpreted through Goffman's dramaturgical perspective, as employed by Fathoni et al. (2026). From this perspective, digital platforms function as a new front stage through which teachers, students, and educational institutions construct and communicate their public identities. The distinction between publicly displayed religious values and everyday institutional practices becomes particularly important when digital communication is used for institutional promotion. An institution may successfully communicate an image of religious authenticity while facing difficulties in maintaining consistency between its public representation and internal organizational conduct. This possibility does not imply that digital branding is inherently deceptive; rather, it highlights the importance of transparency, ethical communication, and institutional accountability.

Hasan & Hilalludin (2025) further emphasize that technological adoption is shaped by the social, cultural, and religious contexts in which technologies are implemented. Accordingly, digital transformation should not be treated as a neutral or purely technical process. Its consequences depend on institutional priorities, leadership decisions, organizational capabilities, and the values guiding technological implementation. For pesantren, this means that digital platforms may strengthen religious education, community engagement, and institutional sustainability when their use remains consistent with educational objectives. Conversely, poorly governed digital practices may intensify pressures toward superficial religious representation, excessive dependence on popularity indicators, and the commercialization of institutional identity.

The literature therefore points to a central theoretical tension between traditional religious legitimacy and emerging forms of platform-based recognition. Rather than assuming that digital popularity inevitably replaces scholarly authority, this study interprets digital culture as a process through which established and emerging sources of legitimacy interact, compete, and potentially complement one another. The implications

of this interaction for pesantren depend substantially on the institutional capacity to govern digital communication, preserve scholarly credibility, and maintain consistency between religious identity and organizational practices.

2.3. Islamic Educational Management as a Value-Based Governance Mechanism

Islamic educational management provides an institutional perspective for understanding how pesantren respond to the simultaneous pressures of digital transformation and religious commodification. In this context, management encompasses the processes through which educational objectives are established, organizational responsibilities are distributed, institutional activities are implemented, and performance is evaluated. However, the distinctive character of pesantren requires these managerial functions to be interpreted in relation to Islamic values, religious leadership, community relationships, and the moral objectives of education. Consequently, managerial effectiveness cannot be assessed exclusively through administrative efficiency, financial sustainability, or institutional competitiveness.

Previous research identifies different patterns of managerial adaptation among Islamic educational institutions. One pattern emphasizes selective modernization, whereby contemporary management practices and digital technologies are incorporated without abandoning established religious traditions. Salsabiilaa et al. (2025), examining curriculum management at Pondok Pesantren Imam Asy Syafi'i in Banyuwangi, demonstrate how participatory educational planning and selective technological implementation can support institutional adaptation while preserving traditional educational orientations. Similarly, Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026) highlight the role of culturally grounded public relations and social capital in maintaining institutional relationships and community trust. Their findings suggest that the sustainability of pesantren may depend partly on the ability to mobilize established social networks and religious credibility rather than relying exclusively on conventional promotional strategies.

Leadership and digital literacy also emerge as important elements of institutional adaptation. Najib & Yenuri (2026) emphasize the role of kiai leadership and digital literacy in supporting religious moderation within pesantren. Wardhani et al. (2024) recommend periodic evaluation and dedicated institutional mechanisms for supervising technological implementation in Islamic education. Meanwhile, Magfiroh et al. (2026) identify visionary leadership and alumni networks as relevant strategies for strengthening Islamic educational institutions. Az-zuhri et al. (2025) further argue that the challenges of digital transformation extend beyond technological infrastructure and involve broader managerial concerns, including institutional readiness, educational priorities, and the preservation of Islamic values. Collectively, these studies indicate that successful adaptation requires organizational coordination and leadership capable of connecting technological initiatives with educational and religious objectives.

A contrasting pattern emerges from research examining the organizational consequences of modern management practices. Drawing on Weber's theory of authority, As Salimi & Aimmah (2026) identify tensions associated with the increasing formalization of pesantren management. Their study describes how administrative structures, organizational procedures, and performance-oriented systems may alter the position of the kiai, shifting certain decision-making responsibilities from traditional spiritual leadership toward formal organizational arrangements. The study also identifies the commodification of khidmah, whereby practices traditionally understood as religious service and devotion become increasingly interpreted through contractual obligations and measurable organizational performance. These developments raise questions about how managerial modernization may influence the moral relationships and organizational culture historically associated with pesantren.

However, the introduction of formal management structures should not automatically be interpreted as a threat to religious authenticity. Administrative procedures, accountability mechanisms, and organizational specialization may improve institutional coordination and transparency. The central issue concerns whether these mechanisms are developed in ways that recognize and preserve the religious and educational foundations of pesantren. As Salimi & Aimmah (2026) suggest, organizational tensions arise particularly when managerial modernization is implemented without sufficient integration of Islamic values. This interpretation shifts the analytical focus from a simple opposition between traditional and modern management toward the institutional conditions under which both approaches can be meaningfully integrated.

The role of social and cultural capital provides an additional perspective on this relationship. Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026) demonstrate how community trust, alumni relationships, and the moral reputation of religious leaders can support institutional sustainability. Salsabiilaa et al. (2025) similarly illustrate the

importance of maintaining religious educational traditions while introducing selected managerial and technological innovations. From the perspective of Bourdieu's theory of capital, these findings suggest that the cultural and symbolic resources of pesantren may contribute to institutional development and economic sustainability. Nevertheless, the available evidence is context-dependent, and findings derived from individual institutional cases cannot establish that such strategies will produce equivalent outcomes across different types of pesantren.

Based on this synthesis, Islamic educational management can be conceptualized as a value-based governance mechanism through which pesantren evaluate and regulate the implications of religious commodification and digital transformation. The proposed mechanism is grounded in three interrelated principles: amanah (trustworthiness and responsibility), khidmah (service and devotion), and maqāṣid (the higher objectives of Islamic principles). These values provide a normative foundation for evaluating whether managerial decisions contribute to educational quality, institutional accountability, moral development, and community welfare.

Within this framework, planning should involve participatory decision-making and the alignment of institutional strategies with religious objectives. Organizing should establish clear administrative responsibilities while preserving the meaningful involvement of religious leadership in strategic and ethical decisions. Implementation should emphasize responsible digital communication, religious literacy, transparency, and the integrity of educational and economic activities. Finally, monitoring and evaluation should integrate conventional institutional performance indicators with assessments of educational quality, ethical conduct, and consistency with Islamic values. Such an approach enables pesantren to evaluate modernization according to both its organizational benefits and its implications for institutional identity.

The conceptual significance of this perspective lies in positioning management as an active mechanism through which institutional values influence responses to external pressures. Religious commodification and digital culture are therefore not treated as independent developments operating outside organizational control. Instead, their consequences are understood as partly dependent on managerial decisions, leadership arrangements, and institutional accountability. This interpretation extends the discussion of Islamic educational management beyond administrative adaptation by emphasizing its potential role in maintaining the relationship between organizational sustainability and religious authenticity.

2.4. Conceptual Synthesis and Research Propositions

The preceding literature reveals three interconnected dimensions of contemporary pesantren transformation. First, religious commodification introduces market-oriented mechanisms through which religious symbols, educational services, and institutional identities acquire economic significance. Second, digital culture reshapes the communication of religious knowledge, the recognition of religious authority, and the public representation of educational institutions. Third, Islamic educational management influences how these developments are interpreted, adopted, and regulated within pesantren organizations.

Although previous studies provide evidence concerning each dimension, their combined implications for institutional governance remain insufficiently integrated. The present study therefore proposes that the relationship between commodification and digitalization should be examined through the managerial processes that connect institutional strategies with religious values. In this interpretation, the central concern is not whether pesantren participate in economic activities or adopt digital technologies, but how institutional governance shapes the purposes, implementation, and ethical consequences of these practices.

Drawing on the reviewed literature, four conceptual propositions are formulated:

- Proposition 1 (P1): Religious commodification in pesantren operates through multiple institutional and communicative practices, with its ethical implications depending on the alignment between religious claims, organizational objectives, and actual practices.
- Proposition 2 (P2): Digital culture creates opportunities for expanding religious communication and institutional engagement while introducing tensions between traditional scholarly authority, platform-based visibility, and the representation of religious identity.
- Proposition 3 (P3): Social capital, the moral credibility of kiai leadership, and the continuity of pesantren educational traditions may support institutional adaptation to market and digital pressures, although their effectiveness depends on organizational context.
- Proposition 4 (P4): Value-based Islamic educational management may provide a governance mechanism for addressing religious commodification and digital transformation through

participatory planning, ethically grounded organizing, responsible implementation, and integrated performance evaluation.

These propositions are developed as interpretive statements derived from the synthesis of previous studies rather than as statistically testable hypotheses within the present research design. Their purpose is to guide the subsequent thematic analysis and support the development of a conceptual framework for understanding how pesantren negotiate the relationship between modernization, institutional sustainability, and Islamic educational values. The proposed relationships therefore require further examination through empirical research involving pesantren with different organizational characteristics, leadership structures, and levels of digital adoption.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a literature-based research design to examine the relationships among religious commodification, digital culture, and Islamic educational management in pesantren. The approach was selected because the primary objective was to interpret, compare, and synthesize existing scholarly findings rather than to measure relationships between variables or test causal hypotheses through primary empirical data. Previous studies by Az-zuhri et al. (2025) and Najib & Yenuri (2026) provided relevant conceptual foundations for examining digital transformation and institutional management in Islamic education. By integrating findings across these interconnected areas, the present study sought to develop a conceptual understanding of how pesantren management may respond to market-oriented pressures and technological transformation while preserving institutional religious values.

The research adopted a purposive literature review strategy supported by qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. This design enabled the examination of theoretical arguments, empirical findings, and institutional practices reported across studies with different methodological approaches and research contexts. Unlike a systematic literature review, the present study did not employ an exhaustive database search or a standardized systematic review protocol. Accordingly, its findings are intended to provide an interpretive synthesis of the selected literature rather than a comprehensive representation of all available research.

The research process consisted of five interconnected stages. First, three research questions were formulated concerning religious commodification, digital culture, and Islamic educational management in pesantren. Second, relevant scholarly documents were identified and selected according to predetermined eligibility criteria. Third, the selected documents were examined and their relevant information recorded in a structured extraction matrix. Fourth, the extracted information was coded, categorized, and compared to identify recurring themes, conceptual relationships, and differences across studies. Finally, the synthesized findings were used to develop a value-based Islamic educational management framework and critically examine the four conceptual propositions (P1–P4) formulated in the preceding theoretical discussion.

3.2. Literature Selection and Research Corpus

The study analyzed a corpus of 25 scholarly documents selected purposively from the literature available to the researchers. The selection focused on publications addressing at least one of three interconnected research areas: religious commodification and Islamic education; digital culture, religious communication, and religious authority; and Islamic educational management, particularly within pesantren institutions. Four inclusion criteria guided document selection. First, the publication had to address at least one of the three principal research themes. Second, the document had to fall within the designated publication period of 2019–2026, with an undated source retained in the corpus subject to bibliographic verification. Third, eligible documents included journal articles, research reports, and undergraduate theses containing relevant conceptual discussions or empirical findings. Fourth, the document's text had to be accessible to the researchers for examination and interpretation.

Duplicate records were counted only once. Documents containing substantially overlapping content were also excluded from repeated consideration to reduce the risk of treating the same evidence as independent findings. Following this selection approach, the research corpus comprised 24 journal articles, one research report (Salehudin et al., 2021), and one undergraduate thesis (Mahardika, 2024). For analytical purposes, the 25 documents were organized into three primary thematic categories based on their principal research focus.

The first category, religious commodification and Islamic education, comprised eight documents: Baharun & Niswa (2019), Fuadi & Ramadhanita (2025), Hakim (2024), Hakim & Dahri (2025), Mahardika (2024), Maulana et al. (2026), Nurohmat et al. (2023), and Salehudin et al. (2021). These publications provided conceptual and empirical perspectives on the commercialization of religious symbols, religious consumption, market-oriented educational practices, and the ethical implications of religious commodification. The second category, digital culture, religious preaching, and religious authority, comprised seven documents: Alqohar & Maharani (2026), Arbiah et al. (2025), Hasan & Hilalludin (2025), Nawaf (2025), Rusli & Takbir (2025), Yasin (2025), and Zaman (2024). These studies addressed changes in religious communication, the emergence of platform-based authority, digital religious identities, and the relationship between religious values and digital media environments. The third category, Islamic educational management, santri identity, and pesantren in digital environments, comprised eleven documents: As Salimi & Aimmah (2026), Az-zuhri et al. (2025), Rahman & Santoso (2025), Fathoni et al. (2026), Magfiroh et al. (2026), Najib & Yenuri (2026), Nasir et al. (2026), Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026), Salsabil et al. (2026), Salsabiilaa et al. (2025), and Wardhani et al. (2024). These publications examined institutional adaptation, leadership, curriculum management, social capital, digital governance, and the preservation of religious identity within Islamic educational institutions.

The thematic classification was used to organize the corpus rather than to establish mutually exclusive conceptual boundaries. Several documents addressed more than one research theme and were therefore considered across thematic categories during the analytical process. Furthermore, studies conducted outside pesantren settings were used to provide comparative and conceptual insights, rather than being treated as direct empirical evidence of pesantren institutional practices.

3.3. Data Collection and Extraction

Data were collected through documentary analysis of the selected scholarly publications. Each document was examined to identify relevant concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical observations, and institutional implications associated with religious commodification, digital culture, and Islamic educational management. A structured data extraction matrix was used to organize information from the selected literature. The matrix contained seven principal components: (1) publication identity, including authorship and publication year; (2) research type and methodological approach; (3) institutional or social context, distinguishing pesantren-based studies from research conducted in other settings; (4) forms of religious commodification or dimensions of digital culture examined; (5) reported institutional responses or managerial functions; (6) principal findings and theoretical contributions; and (7) methodological or contextual limitations.

This extraction structure enabled the researchers to distinguish findings derived directly from pesantren settings from broader observations concerning religious commodification and digital communication. Such differentiation was necessary because evidence from consumer markets, social media communities, and religious service industries cannot automatically be generalized to Islamic boarding schools. The extracted information also provided a basis for comparing how different studies interpreted similar phenomena. Particular attention was given to the relationships between religious legitimacy and economic activities, the transformation of religious authority in digital environments, and the organizational mechanisms through which pesantren seek to preserve their educational and religious identities.

3.4. Data Analysis and Conceptual Synthesis

The collected data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis was employed to identify recurring concepts, arguments, and reported findings within the selected documents, while thematic analysis was used to organize these findings into broader interpretive categories. The analytical process consisted of four stages. The first stage involved initial coding of the extracted information. Relevant statements and findings were identified according to their relationships with religious commodification, digital culture, institutional identity, religious authority, and educational management. The second stage involved grouping related codes into three overarching analytical themes: forms and mechanisms of religious commodification, pesantren responses to digital culture, and managerial functions associated with institutional adaptation and value preservation.

The third stage involved cross-study comparison to identify similarities, differences, and conceptual tensions among the selected publications. Particular attention was given to contrasting interpretations of commodification, the relationship between traditional and digital religious authority, and the organizational

consequences of adopting modern management practices. Findings from pesantren-based research were distinguished from those derived from broader religious and digital contexts to avoid overstating their institutional applicability. The fourth stage involved integrating the identified themes into a conceptual framework of value-based Islamic educational management. The managerial dimensions were organized according to four interconnected functions: planning, organizing, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. This classification drew on the managerial processes discussed by Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026) and was complemented by the planning, implementation, and evaluation perspectives presented by Salsabiilaa et al. (2025).

The conceptual synthesis examined how these managerial functions could be interpreted through Islamic values, particularly amanah, khidmah, and maqāṣid. These principles were employed as normative analytical categories for considering institutional responsibility, service-oriented organizational practices, and the broader ethical objectives of Islamic education. The four conceptual propositions developed in Section 2.4 were subsequently examined through argumentative comparison with the synthesized literature. Each proposition was assessed by considering whether the selected studies provided supporting evidence, introduced qualifications, or revealed competing interpretations. This procedure was intended to evaluate the conceptual coherence and explanatory relevance of the propositions rather than establish their statistical significance or empirical causality.

3.5. Trustworthiness and Methodological Limitations

The trustworthiness of the analysis was addressed through source traceability, cross-study comparison, and explicit differentiation between reported findings and the researchers' interpretations. Principal analytical claims were linked to the publications from which they were derived, allowing readers to identify the evidentiary basis of the synthesis. Comparisons were conducted across studies with different research contexts and publication types, including journal articles, a research report, and an undergraduate thesis. The analysis also distinguished between direct evidence concerning pesantren and contextual evidence derived from studies of religious communication, consumer culture, and digital platforms. This distinction was important for maintaining interpretive accuracy and preventing conclusions drawn from broader religious phenomena from being presented as established institutional conditions within pesantren.

Several methodological limitations should be acknowledged. First, the literature was selected purposively from available documents rather than identified through an exhaustive search of academic databases. Consequently, the corpus may not represent the full range of relevant scholarship. Second, several included publications relied on individual case studies, limiting the transferability of their findings across pesantren with different institutional characteristics. Third, some studies examined religious commodification and digital authority outside Islamic educational settings, meaning that their relevance to pesantren remains primarily comparative or conceptual. Finally, the synthesis was interpretive and did not involve primary fieldwork or empirical testing of the proposed management framework. These limitations indicate that the findings should be understood as a theoretically informed synthesis of the selected literature. The resulting framework provides a conceptual basis for subsequent research, particularly empirical investigations examining how different pesantren integrate digital technologies, respond to market-oriented pressures, and maintain consistency between managerial practices and Islamic educational values.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings derived from the qualitative synthesis of the selected literature. The analysis is organized into six interconnected themes: the spectrum of religious commodification associated with pesantren (Section 4.1), institutional responses to digital culture (Section 4.2), internal commodification and organizational tensions (Section 4.3), the protective role of social capital and local wisdom (Section 4.4), the development of a value-based Islamic educational management framework (Section 4.5), and the critical examination of the four conceptual propositions (Section 4.6). Tables 1 and 2 summarize the thematic interpretation of the reviewed publications rather than presenting primary empirical observations. The discussion distinguishes findings reported in previous studies from the conceptual interpretations developed through the present synthesis.

4.1. The Spectrum of Religious Commodification and Its Relevance to Pesantren

The literature synthesis indicates that religious commodification takes multiple forms and operates across different institutional and social environments. Rather than representing a single process, commodification

involves various mechanisms through which religious symbols, practices, identities, and institutional resources acquire market-oriented significance. Ten interconnected arenas were identified from the reviewed literature, as summarized in Table 1. These categories represent an analytical classification developed through the synthesis and should not be interpreted as ten independently verified forms of commodification occurring within pesantren.

Table 1. Forms of Religious Commodification Identified in the Reviewed Literature

Arena	Manifestation of commodification	Supporting literature
Product marketing	Use of halal symbols, religious values, and masculine identity in commercial advertising	Mahardika (2024)
Religious lifestyle and identity	Interaction between hijrah identity, consumer culture, and market-oriented religious expression	Salehudin et al. (2021)
Religious sermons and preaching	Symbolic exchange between religious speakers and audiences, including the growing significance of visibility and sponsorship	Maulana et al. (2026)
Religious services	Commercial use of religious symbols and expectations in Hajj and Umrah services	Hakim (2024)
Islamic educational institutions	Promotion of educational programs, facilities, and graduate characteristics as competitive market attributes	Nurohmat et al. (2023)
Pesantren organizational practices	Transformation of *khidmah* and institutional branding through formalized managerial and market-oriented arrangements	As Salimi & Aimmah (2026)
Digital religious content	Monetization of religious communication and commercial use of Islamic symbols	Hakim & Dahri (2025)
Religious personal branding	Construction of preacher visibility, reputation, and audience engagement through digital platforms	Nawaf (2025)
Religious entertainment	*Dakwahtainment* emphasizing symbolic and emotional appeal over reflective religious engagement	Rusli & Takbir (2025)
Digital spiritual practices	Commercialization, standardization, and personalization of spiritual services, including online *khodam* checking	Fuadi & Ramadhanita (2025)

The first group of findings concerns the commercialization of religious identity through consumer products and lifestyle practices. Mahardika (2024), employing Barthes' semiotic approach, identifies the incorporation of Islamic symbols and masculine representations into advertising for Kahf products. Religious values are associated with attributes such as courage, moral commitment, and personal integrity, creating symbolic associations intended to influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions. Similarly, Salehudin et al. (2021) examine the interaction between hijrah communities and capitalist consumption, demonstrating how religious identity may become intertwined with lifestyle choices and economic activities. Their findings also indicate that outward religious expressions do not necessarily correspond to equivalent changes in personal attitudes or behavior. These studies illustrate a broader concern relevant to pesantren: the possibility that religious identity may become increasingly evaluated through visible representations rather than substantive ethical practices.

The second group concerns religious preaching and services. Maulana et al. (2026) demonstrate how religious sermons can operate as arenas of symbolic exchange, where religious credibility and audience recognition interact with contemporary forms of visibility and sponsorship. In digital environments, indicators such as follower numbers, audience engagement, and commercial support may become increasingly relevant to perceptions of preaching success. However, these indicators do not necessarily reflect the theological depth or educational value of religious messages. In the context of Hajj and Umrah services, Hakim (2024) emphasizes the importance of honesty, humility, responsibility, and the fulfillment of commitments in preventing the exploitation of religious expectations for commercial purposes. These findings suggest that the ethical implications of commodification depend substantially on how religious legitimacy is used and whether commercial activities remain consistent with the values they claim to represent.

A third group of findings highlights the commercialization of religious communication through digital platforms. Nawaf (2025), analyzing 45 digital content items from three preacher accounts, identifies three patterns of audience interaction: theological affirmation, fragmented religious debates concerning relatively minor jurisprudential issues, and identity construction through hijrah narratives. These interactions demon-

strate how religious communication becomes a space for both theological engagement and the public construction of religious identity. Hakim & Dahri (2025) similarly identify content monetization and the increasing influence of digital engagement indicators on perceptions of religious credibility. Meanwhile, Rusli & Takbir (2025), drawing on Baudrillard's concepts of simulacra and hyperreality, argue that entertainment-oriented preaching may privilege emotionally attractive representations over deeper religious reflection. Fuadi & Ramadhanita (2025) identify commercialization, standardization, and personalization in online khodam-checking practices, illustrating how spiritual services can be reconstructed according to the characteristics of digital consumption. Alqohar & Maharani (2026) further associate religious content commodification with broader challenges involving misinformation and algorithm-driven consumption.

These findings reveal that digital commodification involves more than the direct sale of religious products or services. It also concerns the transformation of religious credibility, public recognition, and symbolic meaning into resources that may support economic or reputational advantages. For pesantren, the relevance of these mechanisms lies in their potential influence on institutional communication, educational promotion, and the representation of religious authority. Nevertheless, evidence from digital preaching and consumer markets should not be interpreted as proof that the same processes necessarily occur within every pesantren.

The reviewed literature also reveals differences in normative interpretations of commodification. Hakim (2024) adopts a critical position toward the commercialization of religious activities and emphasizes ethical safeguards. Hasan & Hilalludin (2025), however, distinguish between the superficial use of religious labels and the substantive integration of Islamic principles into organizational systems. Nurohmat et al. (2023) identify a related tension in Islamic education, where the financial requirements of educational development coexist with expectations that religious values remain central to institutional practices.

The present synthesis interprets these perspectives as indicating a continuum between economically productive religious activities and practices that undermine religious authenticity. The presence of financial transactions does not, by itself, establish that religious values have been compromised. Rather, the central issue concerns whether institutional claims, economic objectives, and actual practices remain ethically consistent. This interpretation provides conceptual support for Proposition 1 (P1), while also indicating that the boundaries between legitimate economic activity and problematic commodification require context-sensitive assessment.

4.2. Pesantren Responses to Digital Culture: Adaptation, Authority, and Institutional Identity

The reviewed studies indicate that pesantren respond to digital transformation through different patterns of technological adoption, institutional communication, and organizational adjustment. These responses are shaped by educational priorities, leadership orientations, infrastructure, and the perceived compatibility between digital technologies and traditional religious practices. The literature does not support a uniform characterization of pesantren as either resistant to modernization or fully transformed by digital culture. Instead, the available evidence points toward selective and context-dependent adaptation.

Salsabiilaa et al. (2025) demonstrate this pattern through their examination of curriculum management at Pondok Pesantren Imam Asy Syafi'i in Banyuwangi. The institution maintains its traditional salaf educational orientation while selectively incorporating digital technology into student achievement reporting, disciplinary records, payment systems, and occasional film-based learning activities. Technology is positioned as an instrument supporting educational administration and learning rather than as an independent institutional objective. Nevertheless, the study also identifies limitations associated with infrastructure and educator readiness, indicating that selective adoption does not necessarily guarantee effective implementation. The findings suggest that the relationship between tradition and digitalization is negotiated through institutional decisions concerning the purposes and boundaries of technological use.

A broader perspective is provided by Nasir et al. (2026), whose systematic review of 14 articles published between 2021 and 2026 examines digital transformation and character development in pesantren. Their synthesis identifies digital management systems, including the Santri Identity Card and institutional management applications, as instruments through which student activities and discipline can be monitored. Digitalization therefore influences not merely the communication of educational information but also the organization of institutional supervision. The review further identifies hybrid santri identities and leadership arrangements that combine traditional kiai charisma with participatory management practices. These findings suggest that digital transformation may reshape the mechanisms through which pesantren cultivate

discipline, maintain authority, and coordinate educational activities.

Digital platforms also serve as channels for institutional communication and community engagement. Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026) describe how Pesantren Nurul Ali combines interpersonal communication by the kiai, including participation in community gatherings, religious activities, and social events, with the publication of student achievements through Facebook and an official institutional website. This approach illustrates how digital communication may complement established community relationships rather than replace them. Similarly, Najib & Yenuri (2026) emphasize the importance of digital literacy and religious moderation, highlighting the need to address exposure to extremist narratives while encouraging students to produce moderate religious content. In these cases, digitalization is associated with both institutional outreach and the protection of religious educational objectives.

However, digital adaptation also introduces challenges concerning religious legitimacy and the circulation of religious knowledge. Salsabil et al. (2026) describe the development of hybrid scholarly networks that combine traditional sanad-based authority with digital communication platforms. While these networks may broaden access to religious knowledge, they also create tensions associated with fragmented authority, influencer-based legitimacy, and the circulation of unverified religious content. Yasin (2025) similarly identifies competition between epistemic authority grounded in scholarly transmission and performative authority associated with digital visibility. Zaman (2024) connects these developments with patterns of religious information consumption among Generation Z, particularly the risks of simplified religious interpretations and misinformation in environments characterized by rapid and visually oriented communication.

The organizational implications of these developments are equally significant. Az-zuhri et al. (2025) identify digitalization as a process involving educational, ideological, and managerial challenges, including the possibility of religious meaning being distorted through market-oriented communication. Wardhani et al. (2024) highlight difficulties experienced by educators in supervising students' digital activities and recommend periodic evaluation and dedicated institutional mechanisms for monitoring technological implementation. However, their study also acknowledges limitations in explaining the concrete implementation of Islamic value-based curricula in digital settings. This limitation reinforces the need for research that connects technological adaptation with specific managerial arrangements rather than treating digitalization primarily as an instructional issue.

Magfiroh et al. (2026) further identify technological access disparities, limited digital pedagogical competence, and the potential commodification of education as challenges confronting Islamic educational institutions in the context of Industry 4.0. These challenges indicate that the consequences of digital transformation depend not only on the availability of technological resources but also on the organizational capacity to integrate them into educational processes.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital culture creates opportunities for institutional visibility, religious communication, administrative coordination, and educational innovation. At the same time, it introduces tensions involving religious authority, digital dependence, information credibility, and the public representation of Islamic values. These tensions provide support for Proposition 2 (P2), while demonstrating that digitalization does not inevitably displace traditional religious authority. Its institutional consequences are mediated by leadership decisions, educational priorities, and the quality of digital governance.

4.3. Internal Commodification and the Transformation of Organizational Culture

Religious commodification is frequently associated with external market pressures, commercial advertising, and digital consumption. However, the reviewed literature indicates that commodification may also emerge through internal organizational processes. This dimension is particularly important for pesantren because changes in managerial structures may influence the meaning of religious leadership, service, and institutional identity.

As Salimi & Aimmah (2026) identify three interconnected organizational tensions associated with the implementation of modern management practices that are insufficiently integrated with Islamic values. The first concerns the changing position of the kiai within institutional decision-making. Traditionally associated with spiritual leadership and moral authority, the kiai may increasingly operate alongside formal administrative structures involving foundations, standardized operating procedures, and performance indicators. Drawing on Weber's theory of authority, the study interprets this development as a shift toward legal-rational organizational arrangements. Such a shift may improve administrative coordination, but it may also create tensions when formal procedures reduce the meaningful participation of religious leaders in strategic

decisions.

The second tension concerns the transformation of khidmah. Within pesantren traditions, khidmah is associated with service, devotion, and the moral relationship between individuals and the institution. As Salimi & Aimmah (2026) observe that the increasing use of contractual arrangements and measurable work obligations may alter the interpretation of these practices. Activities previously understood as expressions of devotion may become evaluated primarily through formal responsibilities and material compensation. This development raises questions about whether administrative formalization changes the moral significance of service or simply introduces clearer organizational arrangements. The distinction is important because formal employment systems and religious devotion are not necessarily incompatible, provided that organizational responsibilities remain ethically defined and mutually understood.

The third tension involves institutional identity. As pesantren adopt branding strategies, promotional activities, and market-oriented communication, students and their families may increasingly be represented through the language of educational consumers. Such representations may support institutional competitiveness and improve the accessibility of information about educational services. However, they may also encourage institutions to prioritize market attractiveness over the broader religious and social responsibilities associated with pesantren education.

These organizational tensions should not be interpreted as evidence that modern management is inherently inconsistent with Islamic educational traditions. As Salimi & Aimmah (2026) emphasize, the central concern is the absence of an explicit Islamic value framework guiding managerial implementation. The present synthesis therefore suggests that the key issue is not whether pesantren should adopt modern organizational practices, but how these practices can be integrated with religious leadership, moral accountability, and institutional educational objectives.

This interpretation is consistent with Az-zuhri et al. (2025), who identify tensions between tradition and modernity, alongside limitations in adaptive leadership, as important challenges in Islamic educational transformation. Fathoni et al. (2026) offer a complementary perspective through Goffman's dramaturgical approach, interpreting digital environments as spaces in which teachers and students construct public representations of their religious identities. The relationship between front-stage representation and back-stage conduct becomes relevant when institutional branding emphasizes religious authenticity. In this context, the credibility of public religious communication depends partly on its consistency with everyday organizational practices.

The synthesis therefore identifies a common analytical concern connecting internal organizational commodification and digital religious representation: the potential separation between declared religious values and institutional conduct. While external commodification involves the market-oriented circulation of religious symbols, internal commodification may involve the reinterpretation of leadership, service, and educational relationships through managerial and economic categories. Both processes highlight the importance of institutional governance in maintaining ethical consistency.

4.4. Social Capital and Local Wisdom as Institutional Resources

The reviewed literature also identifies social capital and local cultural resources as potentially important foundations for pesantren adaptation. Rather than relying exclusively on formal marketing or administrative modernization, some pesantren maintain institutional relationships through community trust, alumni participation, religious networks, and the moral reputation of their leaders.

Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026) provide an example through their study of Pesantren Nurul Ali. The study reports an increase in student enrollment during 2021–2025 and associates this development with culturally grounded public relations strategies. These strategies include participatory discussions concerning institutional communication, the involvement of alumni and thoriqoh communities as informal promotional networks, and reciprocal evaluation forums involving parents and institutional representatives. The findings suggest that community trust and established religious relationships may support institutional attractiveness without requiring exclusive dependence on conventional market-oriented promotion.

From the perspective of Bourdieu's theory of capital, these relationships can be interpreted as processes through which social, cultural, and symbolic resources contribute to institutional sustainability. The reputation of the kiai, alumni loyalty, and community participation represent resources that may strengthen institutional legitimacy and facilitate the mobilization of economic support. However, the conversion of symbolic or social capital into economic resources does not necessarily imply that religious values have been

commodified in a harmful manner. The ethical implications depend on whether these relationships are maintained through mutual trust and educational commitment or instrumentalized primarily for institutional gain.

Local wisdom also contributes to the preservation of religious identity during institutional transformation. The reviewed literature associates the integration of religious rituals, educational traditions, and community-oriented economic activities with the maintenance of pesantren identity and local socioeconomic engagement. Such practices suggest that adaptation may be grounded in existing cultural resources rather than requiring the replacement of traditional institutional arrangements.

Nevertheless, the evidence requires careful interpretation. The findings reported by Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026) originate from a single institutional setting characterized by established community relationships and charismatic religious leadership. Consequently, the effectiveness of similar strategies cannot be assumed across pesantren with different organizational histories, leadership structures, or levels of community support. Furthermore, enrollment growth provides an indicator of institutional attractiveness but does not independently establish the preservation of religious authenticity or the absence of problematic commodification.

The present synthesis therefore interprets social capital as a potentially protective institutional resource rather than a sufficient guarantee against commodification. Its contribution depends on how community relationships are governed, how religious credibility is maintained, and whether economic and organizational objectives remain aligned with educational values. These findings provide qualified support for Proposition 3 (P3) and indicate the importance of examining the conditions under which cultural and social resources contribute to institutional resilience.

4.5. The Role of Islamic Educational Management: Developing a Value-Based Governance Framework

The preceding findings demonstrate that religious commodification and digital transformation generate interconnected challenges involving institutional legitimacy, organizational identity, leadership, and educational values. To address these relationships, the present study develops a conceptual framework that positions Islamic educational management as a value-based governance mechanism. The framework integrates four managerial functions—planning, organizing, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation—with Islamic ethical principles and the institutional challenges identified in the reviewed literature.

The framework is presented in Table 2. It represents an interpretive synthesis of existing scholarship rather than an empirically validated management model.

Table 2. Proposed Value-Based Islamic Educational Management Framework for Addressing Religious Commodification and Digital Culture

Management function	Underlying Islamic values	Practices identified or informed by the literature	Potential risks addressed
Planning	*Musyawarah*, Islamic educational vision	Participatory planning involving religious leaders, educators, alumni, parents, and community representatives; alignment of curriculum and communication strategies with institutional objectives (Rowiyanto & Syarifah, 2026; Salsabiilaa et al., 2025)	Market-driven decision-making disconnected from educational values
Organizing	*Amanah*, moral leadership, institutional responsibility	Clear administrative responsibilities, meaningful participation of the *kiai* in strategic decisions, and mobilization of alumni and community networks (As Salimi & Aimmah, 2026; Rowiyanto & Syarifah, 2026)	Marginalization of spiritual authority and reduction of moral relationships to administrative obligations
Implementation	*Khidmah*, integrity, ethical digital literacy	Selective technological adoption, responsible religious communication, digital literacy development, and integration of Islamic values into educational activities (Najib & Yenuri, 2026; Salsabiilaa et al., 2025; Wardhani et al., 2024)	Superficial religious representation, misinformation, and technology dependence
Monitoring and evaluation	*Maqāṣid*, *akhlāq*, accountability	Periodic technological evaluation, reciprocal communication with parents, and assessment of both institutional performance and religious educational objectives (As Salimi & Aimmah, 2026; Rowiyanto & Syarifah, 2026;	Exclusive reliance on enrollment, revenue, or digital engagement as indica-

	Wardhani et al., 2024)	tors of institutional success

Planning as the alignment of institutional strategies and religious objectives. The literature suggests that participatory planning can help pesantren establish priorities that reflect both organizational needs and religious educational commitments. Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026) demonstrate the importance of deliberative processes involving institutional leaders and community stakeholders in developing communication strategies. Salsabiilaa et al. (2025) similarly emphasize the relationship between curriculum planning, institutional vision, and the preservation of religious educational traditions. These findings indicate that planning should involve explicit consideration of the purposes and limitations of digital technologies and promotional activities. From the perspective of the proposed framework, planning becomes a mechanism for evaluating whether institutional modernization contributes to educational objectives rather than merely increasing market visibility.

Organizing as the integration of administrative accountability and moral leadership. Formal organizational structures may improve coordination, clarify responsibilities, and support institutional accountability. However, As Salimi & Aimmah (2026) demonstrate that administrative formalization can create tensions when the role of the kiai is reduced to symbolic or procedural participation. The proposed framework therefore emphasizes the importance of preserving meaningful religious leadership while maintaining transparent administrative arrangements. This interpretation is supported by Najib & Yenuri (2026), who identify the relevance of kiai leadership to the internalization of religious values, and Nasir et al. (2026), who describe hybrid leadership arrangements combining traditional authority with participatory management. Magfiroh et al. (2026) further highlight visionary leadership and alumni networks as institutional resources. Together, these findings suggest that organizing should be evaluated through both administrative effectiveness and the quality of moral and participatory relationships.

Implementation as ethically guided technological and institutional practice. The reviewed studies indicate that effective digital implementation requires more than technological availability or the frequency of digital platform use. Az-zuhri et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of ethical digital literacy, while Najib & Yenuri (2026) highlight the need for content evaluation and the production of moderate religious narratives. Hakim & Dahri (2025) recommend strengthening Islamic digital literacy to support critical assessment of religious information, and Alqohar & Maharani (2026) emphasize ethical content production. Within pesantren, these recommendations imply that digital communication should be evaluated according to informational credibility, educational relevance, and consistency with religious principles. Similar considerations apply to institutional entrepreneurship and religious branding. Hakim (2024) and Hasan & Hilalludin (2025) emphasize that honesty, transparency, and the substantive implementation of Islamic principles are essential for preventing religious labels from becoming detached from actual organizational conduct.

Monitoring and evaluation as the integration of institutional performance and religious values. The literature indicates that evaluation represents a particularly important dimension of value-based governance because performance indicators influence organizational priorities. As Salimi & Aimmah (2026) argue that institutional success should not be evaluated exclusively through enrollment growth and financial performance, but should also consider religious and ethical objectives, including akhlāq, community benefit, and the spiritual meaning of educational activities. Wardhani et al. (2024) recommend periodic evaluation and dedicated mechanisms for monitoring technology use, while Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026) demonstrate the relevance of reciprocal evaluation involving parents and institutional stakeholders.

The present synthesis extends these findings by proposing an integrated evaluation approach that considers both organizational performance and the realization of religious educational values. Indicators of administrative effectiveness, financial sustainability, and technological implementation may therefore be examined alongside evidence of educational quality, ethical communication, community trust, and student character development. Importantly, such indicators require careful operational definition before they can be used in empirical assessment. The findings of Nasir et al. (2026) concerning data-based student discipline further suggest that recorded compliance should not automatically be equated with the internalization of moral values.

Taken together, the four managerial functions illustrate how Islamic educational management may contribute to institutional adaptation without treating technological modernization and religious authentic-

ity as mutually exclusive objectives. The proposed framework does not assume that management can eliminate all risks associated with commodification and digital culture. Instead, it identifies governance processes through which these risks may be recognized, evaluated, and addressed in relation to Islamic educational principles. This interpretation provides a conceptual foundation for Proposition 4 (P4).

4.6. Critical Examination of the Conceptual Propositions and Theoretical Implications

The final stage of the analysis examined the four conceptual propositions developed in Section 2.4 against the thematic findings. Because this study employed a qualitative literature-based design, the propositions were assessed through interpretive comparison rather than statistical hypothesis testing. The purpose was to identify their conceptual relevance, the evidence supporting them, and the limitations that should guide future research.

Proposition 1: Religious commodification operates through multiple practices, and its ethical implications depend on institutional integrity. The reviewed literature provides substantial conceptual support for this proposition. Studies of religious advertising, preaching, spiritual services, educational marketing, and organizational practices demonstrate that commodification occurs through different mechanisms and social contexts (Hakim, 2024; Mahardika, 2024; Maulana et al., 2026; Nurohmat et al., 2023). However, the literature also reveals differences in normative judgments. While some studies emphasize the ethical risks of commercialization, others distinguish economically productive activities from practices that exploit religious legitimacy. The present synthesis therefore supports an interpretation of commodification as context-dependent. Nevertheless, evidence from consumer and digital environments cannot be generalized directly to pesantren without institution-specific investigation.

Proposition 2: Digital culture creates opportunities for institutional engagement while introducing tensions involving religious authority and identity. The literature provides consistent support for the coexistence of opportunities and risks. Studies examining digital preaching identify changes in religious legitimacy, audience participation, and platform-based recognition (Nawaf, 2025; Yasin, 2025; Zaman, 2024). Pesantren-focused research further demonstrates that digital technologies can support institutional administration, communication, and educational development (Nasir et al., 2026; Rowiyanto & Syarifah, 2026; Salsabiilaa et al., 2025). However, these findings do not establish that digitalization inevitably weakens traditional religious authority. Instead, they indicate that its consequences depend on institutional context, leadership arrangements, and the governance of digital practices.

Proposition 3: Social capital and moral leadership may support institutional adaptation, subject to contextual conditions. The evidence provides qualified support for this proposition. Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026) demonstrate the relevance of community trust, alumni networks, and culturally grounded communication to institutional attractiveness. Other studies highlight the continuing significance of religious leadership and traditional educational values in organizational adaptation (Najib & Yenuri, 2026; Salsabiilaa et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the available evidence remains largely context-specific. The effectiveness of social capital may vary according to institutional history, leadership credibility, community relationships, and organizational resources. Consequently, the proposition should be treated as a plausible conceptual relationship requiring comparative empirical investigation.

Proposition 4: Value-based Islamic educational management may provide a governance mechanism for addressing commodification and digital transformation. The synthesis offers conceptual support for this proposition by connecting findings concerning participatory planning, moral leadership, ethical digital implementation, and integrated evaluation. As Salimi & Aimmah (2026) identify the organizational risks associated with management practices that lack explicit integration with Islamic values, while Wardhani et al. (2024), Rowiyanto & Syarifah (2026), and Salsabiilaa et al. (2025) provide insights into specific managerial practices relevant to institutional adaptation. However, the reviewed studies do not directly test the proposed four-function framework as an integrated governance model. Its explanatory value therefore remains conceptual, and its practical effectiveness requires empirical validation.

The central theoretical contribution of this study is the integration of three research perspectives that have frequently been examined separately: religious commodification, digital religious culture, and Islamic educational management. Bourdieu's theory of capital helps explain how religious legitimacy, social relationships, and cultural resources may acquire economic significance. Weber's theory of authority provides a perspective on tensions between traditional religious leadership and formal administrative structures. The

analysis of digital religious communication further illustrates how platform-based visibility introduces additional mechanisms of public recognition and legitimacy.

By bringing these perspectives together, the study suggests that pesantren transformation cannot be adequately explained through market pressures, technological adoption, or organizational modernization in isolation. These processes interact within institutional environments shaped by religious traditions, leadership relationships, and educational objectives. Islamic educational management is therefore positioned as a potentially important governance mechanism through which institutions negotiate the relationship between external pressures and internal values.

From the authors' perspective, the most important distinction is not between traditional and modern pesantren, nor between religious authenticity and economic sustainability. Rather, it concerns the degree of consistency between institutional objectives, managerial decisions, and everyday educational practices. Digital platforms may strengthen religious education when they support credible knowledge transmission and responsible communication. Economic activities may contribute to institutional sustainability when they operate transparently and reinforce educational responsibilities. Formal management structures may improve accountability when they preserve meaningful moral leadership and participatory decision-making.

Conversely, institutional problems may emerge when religious identity becomes primarily a promotional resource, when digital visibility substitutes for scholarly credibility, or when managerial performance is assessed without reference to educational and ethical outcomes. These possibilities indicate that the preservation of pesantren identity depends less on rejecting modernization than on developing governance arrangements capable of evaluating its purposes and consequences.

The proposed value-based Islamic educational management framework offers a conceptual response to these tensions. Its contribution lies in integrating managerial functions with Islamic ethical principles and identifying the organizational processes through which religious commodification and digital transformation may be governed. However, the framework remains a theoretical proposition derived from selected literature. Future research should examine its applicability across pesantren with different institutional characteristics, leadership structures, economic resources, and levels of digital development. Such investigations would help determine whether and under what conditions value-based governance contributes to institutional sustainability, educational quality, and the preservation of religious identity.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

This study concludes that religious commodification and digital culture are interconnected processes that influence the institutional identity, religious authority, and management practices of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Religious commodification emerges through external practices, including religious branding, advertising, consumer culture, and digital preaching, as well as internal organizational changes involving kiai authority, institutional promotion, and the transformation of khidmah. The reviewed literature indicates that pesantren may respond to these pressures through selective technological adoption, community trust, alumni networks, and moral leadership, although their effectiveness depends on institutional context. Digital transformation also introduces tensions between traditional sanad-based authority and platform-driven popularity, making religious literacy and institutional integrity increasingly important. The principal contribution of this study is a value-based Islamic educational management framework integrating participatory planning, organizing grounded in moral leadership, ethically guided digital implementation, and monitoring and evaluation based on educational performance and Islamic values. Grounded in amanah, khidmah, and maqāṣid, the framework offers a conceptual approach to balancing modernization, institutional sustainability, and religious authenticity, although its effectiveness requires further empirical examination.

Theoretically, this study extends Islamic educational management scholarship by interpreting religious commodification and digital transformation as interconnected challenges of institutional governance, religious legitimacy, and value preservation. Integrating Bourdieu's theory of capital and Weber's theory of authority provides a conceptual basis for understanding how religious credibility, social relationships, and traditional leadership interact with economic interests and modern administrative structures. Practically, the findings suggest that pesantren administrators should align technological adoption, institutional promotion, and economic activities with educational objectives and Islamic ethical principles. Digital platforms can strengthen learning, religious literacy, administrative transparency, and community engagement when their implementation is guided by responsible management. Institutional success should therefore be evaluated

through financial and organizational performance alongside educational quality, student character development, community trust, and consistency between religious claims and actual practices. This perspective recognizes the potential benefits of modernization while emphasizing ethical accountability and the preservation of pesantren identity.

Pesantren administrators are encouraged to establish institutional guidelines for digital communication, religious branding, and economic activities based on Islamic educational values. These guidelines should clarify responsibilities among kiai, educational administrators, digital media personnel, and business unit managers while emphasizing transparency, information accuracy, responsible use of religious symbols, and the protection of students' dignity and privacy. Participatory decision-making involving educators, parents, alumni, and community representatives should be strengthened to ensure that institutional development remains consistent with religious and educational objectives. Monitoring and evaluation should combine quantitative indicators, including administrative efficiency, digital reach, enrollment, and financial sustainability, with qualitative assessments of learning quality, digital literacy, moral development, and institutional integrity. Future research should empirically examine the proposed framework across pesantren with different leadership structures, educational orientations, and levels of digital adoption. Comparative case studies involving kiai, administrators, educators, students, alumni, and local communities would be particularly valuable for identifying the conditions under which value-based management supports institutional sustainability and preserves religious authenticity.

This study is limited by its reliance on a purposively selected literature corpus rather than an exhaustive or systematic database search, meaning that its findings may not represent the full range of scholarship on religious commodification, digital culture, and pesantren management. Several reviewed publications examine religious advertising, consumer behavior, digital preaching, and spiritual services outside pesantren settings; consequently, their findings serve as comparative insights rather than direct evidence of institutional practices within Islamic boarding schools. Furthermore, some pesantren-focused studies rely on individual institutional cases, limiting the transferability of their conclusions across different organizational contexts. As the study did not collect primary empirical data, the proposed relationships among social capital, kiai leadership, digital governance, religious commodification, and institutional sustainability remain interpretive. The value-based Islamic educational management framework should therefore be regarded as a conceptual contribution rather than an empirically validated model. Future studies should employ more transparent and reproducible literature search procedures, clearly document inclusion and exclusion criteria, and conduct comparative field investigations to assess the framework's applicability and effectiveness across diverse pesantren contexts.

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