

Revitalizing Islamic Boarding School and Madrasah Traditions to Strengthen Islamic Civilization in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam

Sadiyah¹

¹ Universitas Islam Nusantara Bandung, Indonesia. E-mail: sadiyah.pwk@gmail.com

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Abstract: Islamic education in the Malay Archipelago region plays a strategic role in maintaining the continuity of Islamic civilization and cultural identity. This study aims to analyze the revitalization of Islamic educational traditions through Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia and madrasahs in Brunei Darussalam in the face of the dynamics of the modern era. This study uses a comparative qualitative approach with a cross-country literature review design. Data were collected from national and international journal articles, academic books, and official documents from Islamic educational institutions. Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing based on the Miles and Huberman model. The results show that Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have high flexibility in social adaptation and educational innovation, while madrasahs in Brunei Darussalam have developed in a structured manner through state policies based on the Malay Islamic Beraja ideology. Revitalization in both countries simultaneously integrates traditional values with contextual curriculum renewal. This study confirms that Islamic education functions not only as a means of transmitting religious teachings, but also as an instrument for preserving the cultural and moral identity of society. These findings contribute conceptually to the strengthening of the Islamic civilization of the Archipelago and open up directions for the development of a sustainable Islamic education model that is responsive to global challenges.

Keywords: Islamic civilization, Islamic education, pesantren, madrasah, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam



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Introduction

Islamic education in the Malay-Nusantara region has a strategic position in shaping character, cultural identity, and the continuity of Islamic civilization. In Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools have been centers for the transmission of knowledge, spiritual guidance, and the strengthening of Islamic culture since the pre-colonial era (Sari et al., 2020). Meanwhile, in Brunei Darussalam, Islamic education is systematically integrated into the framework of the Malay Islamic Beraja ideology, which places religion as the moral and social foundation of the nation (Dullah, 2024). These two models of education play a role not only in shaping Muslim individuals but also as cultural institutions that preserve the continuity of Islamic traditions amid global change. The development of globalization and digitalization requires traditional Islamic educational institutions to adapt without losing their religious roots. This condition is an important basis for the need to revitalize the pesantren and madrasah systems in the Malay-Nusantara region.

Despite their strong historical roots, pesantren and madrasah institutions face a number of substantive challenges. In Indonesia, issues include the weak integration of local cultural values into the curriculum and limited innovation in responding to developments in educational technology (Maskur, 2022; Nurazizah et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Islamic educational institutions in Brunei Darussalam are still trying to balance the preservation of tradition and the demands of modern educational innovation (Mabud, 2024). This gap shows the need for comparative studies that can describe how both countries implement revitalization strategies to maintain Islamic character while improving the quality of education. Identifying these problems is an important foundation for understanding the direction of strengthening Islamic education in the global era.

A literature review shows that Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs are cultural and intellectual institutions that shape the Islamic civilization of the Malay Archipelago. Pesantren in Indonesia have been able to develop an approach that integrates religious and modern knowledge in a contextual manner (Munjiat, 2023), while madrasah in Brunei are prepared to produce a generation that is both religious and competent in facing the demands of the 21st century (Dullah, 2024). In addition, the preservation of local values and wisdom has proven to play an important role in maintaining the distinctive Islamic identity of the archipelago (Fitriani, 2025). These literature confirm the great potential of traditional Islamic educational institutions in maintaining harmony between religious values, local culture, and modernity.

The relevance of this research lies in the importance of maintaining the continuity of Islamic civilization through the strengthening of traditional educational institutions. The Islamic civilization of the archipelago was formed through a historical process that combined Islamic values with adaptive and inclusive local cultures. Pesantren in Indonesia and madrasah in Brunei are an integral part of this cultural heritage. However, rapid social change, the penetration of global values, and the challenges of digitalization require these institutions to revitalize themselves in order to remain relevant. Strengthening the functions of pesantren and madrasah is a strategic effort to maintain an Islamic identity that is rooted in tradition while also being responsive to the developments of the times.

Based on this context, this study aims to analyze the forms and strategies of revitalizing Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia and madrasahs in Brunei Darussalam in strengthening Islamic civilization. Specifically, this study is directed at: (1) identifying the mechanisms of revitalization of traditional Islamic education in both countries; (2) comparing education policies and practices in their respective national contexts; (3) evaluating the contribution of Islamic boarding schools and madrasahs to the preservation of Islamic values and Malay culture; and (4) formulating strategic recommendations for strengthening tradition-based Islamic education in the global era. Thus, this study is expected to provide conceptual and practical contributions to the development of Islamic education and the preservation of Malay-Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia in a more sustainable manner.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a focus on comparative analysis to understand the dynamics of the revitalization of traditional Islamic education in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam. A qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to describe phenomena in depth and contextually, especially those related to the historical, cultural, and institutional values that underlie the traditions of

Islamic boarding schools () and madrasahs. This study applies a comparative-exploratory design through a *cross-country literature review* to compare policies, educational models, and revitalization practices in both countries. The research data sources include national and international journal articles, academic books, research reports, and official government documents related to Islamic education, national curriculum, and institutional policies. Data were collected through documentation studies by searching various scientific databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and SINTA, focusing on publications from the last 10 years to obtain an overview of contemporary Islamic education revitalization.

Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out to select, focus, and simplify information relevant to the context of pesantren and madrasah revitalization. Data presentation was carried out in the form of thematic descriptions so that patterns, similarities, and differences between countries could be seen clearly and systematically. The final stage of drawing conclusions was carried out through in-depth interpretation of the findings obtained. To ensure data validity, the study applied source triangulation by comparing various academic documents and official policies, as well as evaluating data credibility and consistency through critical document analysis. With this method, the study is expected to produce a comprehensive understanding of the revitalization strategies of Islamic educational institutions in strengthening Islamic civilization in the Malay-Archipelago region.

Results and Discussion

Results

The literature review shows that the revitalization of Islamic education in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam focuses on strengthening religious values in different social and cultural contexts. Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia and madrasahs in Brunei have strong historical roots in the Malay-Nusantara Islamic scholarly tradition. (Rahim, 2022) explains that pesantren are educational institutions that combine religious and social functions with a distinctive cultural approach. (Mohd Salleh, 2022) highlights that the Islamic education system in Brunei was formed through state policies to strengthen the philosophy of Malay Islam Beraja. Various studies show that both countries have developed educational models that are relevant to the modern era without abandoning Islamic values. The revitalization process in both countries took place through curriculum reconstruction, learning innovation, and the adaptation of local values to the contemporary education system. The literature reviewed emphasizes the importance of the continuity of Islamic scientific traditions in the face of rapid social change.

A review of Indonesian literature shows that Islamic boarding schools are centers for character building and the dynamic development of Islamic knowledge. (Mulyadi, 2021) explains that curriculum reform in Islamic boarding schools aims to strengthen the integration between religious and general knowledge. (Oviensy, 2023) adds that Islamic boarding schools have the ability to adapt to the needs of the times through technology-based learning innovations and local wisdom. The role of kiai and santri remains a key element in maintaining the authenticity of the scientific traditions of Islamic boarding schools. Modernization does not eliminate spiritual values but expands the scope of the social functions of Islamic educational institutions. (Rahman & Latif, 2023) mention that Islamic boarding schools also play a role in producing a generation of Muslims with high social awareness through a community-based approach. Changes in teaching patterns are made by adapting to the cultural context without shifting the basic values of Islamic education that have been ingrained for centuries.

A literature review on Brunei Darussalam shows a more structured and state-controlled approach to education. (Noor & Asiyah, 2023) explain that the Islamic education system in Brunei is based on the principles of Malay Islam Beraja, which is the national ideological foundation. (Yunos, 2020) assesses that curriculum reform is carried out through the strengthening of character education and Islamic morality linked to national identity. (Mohd Salleh, 2022) notes that madrasahs in Brunei apply a formal approach with a consistent evaluation system under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Religious education has become an integral part of national development () through the unification of

Malay spiritual and cultural values. A literature review also shows the Brunei government's efforts to adapt religious teaching methods to developments in information technology. This education model demonstrates the integration of traditional and modern values, which are systematically organized in national policy.

Comparative literature analysis shows that the approaches to revitalizing Islamic education in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam have fundamental differences in their structure and management patterns. Indonesia places the community and independent institutions as the main drivers, while Brunei centralizes Islamic education policy within the government system. (Hussin, 2024) notes that these structural differences have resulted in unique educational models in each country. Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have developed as flexible institutions in the face of social change, while madrasas in Brunei show high stability due to strong national regulations. The literature also shows that both countries are oriented towards shaping a generation of Muslims who are knowledgeable and have strong character. Differences in social context and policy have created diversity in Islamic education models in the Malay-Nusantara region. The literature review shows the dynamics of revitalization influenced by the interaction between religion, culture, and political systems in each country.

The literature reviewed also highlights historical aspects that have influenced the direction of Islamic education in both countries. Indonesia inherited a pesantren system that grew out of a traditional community with a cultural leadership structure, while Brunei developed a state-institutionalized religious education system from the beginning of its independence. (Oviensy et al., 2023) asserts that the scientific tradition in Indonesia tends to emphasize the independence of educational institutions, in contrast to Brunei, which emphasizes the continuity of national ideology. A study conducted by (Noor & Asiyah, 2023) shows that the Islamic education system in Brunei is maintained in line with the values and direction of state policy. (Mulyadi, 2021) explains that the dynamics of Islamic education in Indonesia continue to undergo transformation to adapt to the times. Literature sources show that the two countries have different strategies for preserving the Islamic civilization heritage. This pattern of development is influenced by the social, cultural, and political contexts surrounding each country.

Table 1.
Comparative Analysis of the Revitalization of Islamic Education

Analysis Aspect	Indonesia (Pesantren and Madrasah)	Brunei Darussalam (Madrasahs and Religious Schools)
Data Sources	National journal studies and Islamic education policy documents	International journal studies and reports from the Ministry of Religious Affairs
Orientation Education	Integration of religious and general knowledge based on local wisdom	Instilling Malay Islamic Beraja (MIB) values as the basis of state ideology
System Institutional	Autonomous and community-based community	Centralized and regulated by the government
Curriculum	Adaptive to social and technological changes	Uniform, focused on moral and spiritual education
Role of the Government	Supports through regulation and limited funding	Very strong in Islamic education policy and supervision
Islamic Civilization Values	Spirituality, morals, and local wisdom	Islamic national identity based on Malay culture
Objectives Revitalization	Modernization based on tradition and institutional independence	Modernization based on national Islamic ideology

Primary Literature Sources	Rahim (2022), Mulyadi (2021), Oviensy et al. (2023)	Noor & Asiyah (2023), Yunos (2020), Mohd Salleh (2022), Hussin (2024)
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A literature review after the presentation of the table shows the relationship between social, cultural, and political dimensions in the formation of Islamic education systems in both countries. (Rahim, 2022) highlights that Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have the ability to adapt to various social conditions without losing their fundamental Islamic values. The study describes how Islamic boarding schools serve as a means of reproducing moral values and religious knowledge through a contextual education model. (Mulyadi, 2021) explains that the flexibility of pesantren makes them a social space that is open to innovation and renewal without shifting their identity as traditional institutions. This literature shows the social dynamics that enrich the sustainability of community-based Islamic education systems in Indonesia.

A literature review from Brunei Darussalam shows that the state-managed religious education system emphasizes ideological consistency. (Noor & Asiyah, 2023) explain that every education policy in Brunei is directed at supporting the national vision through the principle of *Melayu Islam Beraja*. (Yunos, 2020) notes that curriculum renewal is carried out to ensure compatibility between religious values and the demands of modern times. (Mohd Salleh, 2022) emphasizes the importance of an approach that balances spirituality and academic discipline in shaping the younger generation. International literature describes how this centralized system creates stability in Islamic education values in Brunei without reducing its relevance to global changes. This study also shows how religious education policy is an effective means of strengthening national identity and social solidarity.

A final analysis of various literature sources describes that the revitalization of Islamic education in both countries took place along different historical and ideological paths, but complemented each other in the context of Malay-Nusantara Islamic civilization. (Hussin, 2024) explains that Indonesia emphasizes strengthening community participation in Islamic education, while Brunei relies on state control as a guarantor of its ideological direction. (Oviensy et al., 2023) shows that both models are rooted in the spirit of preserving Islamic values that are integral to Malay culture. The literature reviewed shows the dynamics of Islamic education that reflect a balance between tradition and modernity in two different cultural contexts. This literature review provides an in-depth picture of the differences in orientation, structure, and objectives in the revitalization of Islamic education, which is an important part of the continuity of Islamic civilization in the Malay-Nusantara region.

Discussion

The study shows that the revitalization of Islamic boarding schools and madrasas in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam is a process that is not only oriented towards the modernization of education, but also towards strengthening the values of Islamic civilization. The concept of *Islamic civilization* in the Malay-Nusantara context is rooted in a blend of religion, culture, and social systems that have given rise to a distinctive Islamic identity in this region. (Mulyadi, 2021) explains that Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have become the main forum for instilling spirituality, morality, and knowledge that balances religious and worldly knowledge. Meanwhile, (Noor & Asiyah, 2023) shows that the Islamic education system in Brunei was developed through the principles of *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB), which is the core of the national civilization. This theoretical analysis shows that Islamic education in both countries plays an important role in preserving Islamic values rooted in local culture without neglecting the challenges of global modernity. The literature reviewed shows the integration of theological and sociocultural dimensions in building the foundations of a contextual and sustainable Islamic civilization.

The revitalization approach of Islamic boarding schools and madrasas in both countries illustrates the dynamic relationship between tradition and renewal in the Islamic education system. (Rahim, 2022) explains that Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia not only function as educational institutions but also as centers for the dissemination of knowledge and social values that reflect a balance between faith and scientific progress. In contrast, (Mohd Salleh, 2022) explains that madrasahs in Brunei Darussalam implement a more formal system with a centralized curriculum to strengthen the

formation of religious and national character. This comparison shows differences in orientation caused by the political and social contexts of each country. However, both models of Islamic education contribute to the preservation of Islamic identity in modern society. This perspective reinforces the understanding that Islamic education plays a strategic role in maintaining the continuity of Islamic civilization values through the integration of local traditions and universal Islamic principles.

The results of literature research also show that the process of revitalizing Islamic education in Indonesia emphasizes institutional independence and community participation. (Dullah, 2024) asserts that the dynamics of Islamic education in Indonesia grow from strong social roots through the active role of the community and kiai in managing Islamic boarding schools. This pattern differs from Brunei, which relies more on a formal education structure controlled by the state as a representation of the Malay Islamic Beraja (MIB) ideology. (Yunos, 2020) explains that the approach to religious education in Brunei is designed to strengthen social stability and national loyalty through an institutionalized Islamic value system. Analysis of this literature reveals two major paradigms in strengthening Islamic civilization: the civil society paradigm in Indonesia and the state paradigm in Brunei. These two paradigms complement each other in showing how Islamic education can function as an instrument of civilization that is adaptive to different social and political conditions.

A study of the theory of Tamadun Islam Nusantara shows that the values of Islamic education in Indonesia and Brunei have the same epistemological basis, namely tauhid, adab, and knowledge. (Zulkifli, 2024) emphasizes that Islamic education in the Malay-Nusantara region has always prioritized the formation of insan kamil who are moral and knowledgeable. This concept is realized in educational practice through the teaching of classical texts, moral guidance, and active involvement in society. (Fitriani, 2025) adds that the integration of local wisdom into Islamic education is a concrete form of cultural adaptation that strengthens the identity of the Nusantara civilization. In Brunei, the same principle is applied in the form of learning based on Islamic royal values that maintain a balance between religion and Malay culture. The connection between theory and practice illustrates that the revitalization of Islamic educational institutions is not only an academic endeavor, but also part of a civilizational effort that reinforces Islamic values in the context of local culture.

An overall analysis of the literature shows the significant contribution of Islamic education in strengthening Islamic civilization in the Malay-Archipelago region. (Hussin, 2024) explains that the renewal of the Islamic education system in Southeast Asia is an important strategy in maintaining Islamic civilization values amid globalization. (Oviensy et al., 2023) shows that Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia function as centers of social and intellectual reproduction for Muslims, capable of producing religious and community leaders. On the other hand, the Islamic education system in Brunei serves to reinforce the country's ideology based on Islamic values, creating moral and social stability at the national level. The literature reviewed illustrates that both countries have developed different models of Islamic education in form, but share a similar goal in preserving the integrity of Islamic civilization heritage. This study affirms that Islamic education remains a key pillar in maintaining the continuity of Islamic civilization values in the Malay-Nusantara region.

Conclusion

The results of the study show that Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia and madrasahs in Brunei Darussalam play a central role in maintaining the continuity of Islamic civilization in the Malay-Nusantara region. Both institutions serve as forums for character building, strengthening spiritual values, and preserving the intellectual heritage of Islam that has been rooted for centuries. The modernization of the education system does not erase traditional values, but rather enriches scientific practices based on Islamic teachings. Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia show more diverse dynamics with a flexible and adaptive learning model () to social changes. Madrasahs in Brunei Darussalam display a stable system with consistent state policy support for Islamic education. The revitalization of both shows that Islamic education remains the main axis in maintaining the identity of Malay-Islamic civilization amid the tide of globalization.

A comparison of the two education systems reveals that the success of revitalization is greatly influenced by the integration of religious values and state policy. Indonesia stands out through collaboration between Islamic boarding schools, civil society, and Islamic higher education institutions.

Brunei Darussalam strengthens its Islamic education system through a national strategy based on the *Malay Islamic Beraja* ideology as the moral foundation of the nation. State policy plays a major role in maintaining continuity between tradition and innovation in education. The Islamic education models developed by both countries demonstrate a balance between spirituality, rationality, and social values that shape the character of modern Muslim societies. The synergy between local values and global vision makes Islamic education in both countries an example of the implementation of a civilization that is deeply rooted yet adaptable.

The implications of this research emphasize the importance of developing Islamic education based on local traditional values integrated with the needs of the times. The values of scholarship, independence, and moderation inherited from Islamic boarding schools and madrasas can be used as a foundation for strengthening the character of the young Muslim generation. Increased cross-border academic cooperation is needed to expand the exchange of knowledge and innovation in Islamic civilization-based curricula. Future research can focus on the development of digital technology and contextual Islamic learning methodologies in both countries. Strengthening collaboration between educational institutions, governments, and communities is a strategic step in realizing sustainable Islamic education that is relevant to the future of Malay-Nusantara civilization.

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