

Integration of Local Wisdom Culture into the Islamic Education Curriculum Based on Islam Nusantara: Pesantren Management for Strengthening Santri Character

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the integration of local wisdom culture into the Islamic education curriculum within *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) based on the framework of Islam Nusantara, with a particular focus on Islamic education management as a means of strengthening santri character. The central problem is the increasing erosion of local values amid globalization and the homogenization of Islamic education. Field observations in three pesantren in East Java revealed that institutions implementing local wisdom traditions—such as *gotong royong*, *grebeg maulid*, and *nyadran*—exhibited a significantly higher level of social cohesion (82.3%) compared to those that did not (45.6%). However, no structured management model currently integrates these three domains. This research aims to formulate an integration model of pesantren, local wisdom, and the Islam Nusantara curriculum within the framework of Islamic education management. The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-method design with a sample of 450 santri and 30 pesantren caregivers. The findings demonstrate that the integration model based on the triple helix educational framework (pesantren–community–government) effectively enhances moderate Islamic understanding (score increase of 34.2%) and participation in cultural activities (increase of 47.8%). The study concludes that adaptive Islamic education management responsive to local wisdom is the key to transforming pesantren toward an Islam Nusantara that embodies *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation). The novelty of this research lies in the development of a locally grounded hidden curriculum integrated into pesantren graduate competency standards.

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1. Introduction

Pesantren, as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, face major challenges in preserving their cultural identity amid globalizing pressures (Habibi et al., 2025, p. 5). Research by Achmadin et al. (2024) on pesantren in East Java highlights that the rapid social changes driven by globalization and technology demand that pesantren education adapt to remain relevant, yet this adaptation poses risks to the preservation of their traditional values (Achmadin et al., 2024, p. 200). A study by Masithoh et al. (2025) conducted at Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo, Kediri, East Java, revealed specific challenges in integrating local wisdom values with pesantren educational practices in the face of modernization. Islamic principles such as *kehalifah* (stewardship), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *tawazun* (balance) need to be internalized through daily practices, reinforced by local wisdom such as *guyub rukun*, *tirakat*, and *nrimo ing pandum* (Masithoh et al., 2025). This reflects a significant gap between the ideal of a curriculum grounded in local wisdom and managerial practices that tend to rigidly adopt Middle Eastern educational systems, a phenomenon that Kutsi and Arifin (2024) critically examine as a form of Western knowledge hegemony within modern pesantren, which can potentially erode Islamic cultural identity (Kutsi & Arifin, 2024). From initial interviews with 12 pesantren caregivers, 67% acknowledged difficulties in formulating a curriculum that simultaneously meets national standards, preserves Islamic traditions, and accommodates local wisdom (Alif et al., 2025, p. 3). A critical finding was the phenomenon of "deculturalization," wherein values such as *gotong royong* (cooperation), *musyawarah* (deliberative consensus), and *tasamub* (tolerance) are increasingly eroded by digital individualism and homogeneous transnational religious literature.

A relevant study by Alif et al. (2025) investigated the transformation of pesantren curriculum through a PRISMA-based systematic literature review. Their review of 43 peer-reviewed studies from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar identified five interrelated dimensions of curriculum management in the digital era: embedding e-learning platforms, cultivating digital competencies, implementing blended-learning models, reinforcing pesantren values, and strengthening IT infrastructure (Alif et al., 2025, p. 3). However, their study did not specifically address the integration of local wisdom into curriculum management frameworks. Another study by Subur et al. (2024) explored character education through local wisdom at the Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta. They identified local wisdom, including Thursday spiritual struggles (*Mujahadah Kamis Wage*), pilgrimage (*Ziarah*), and religious study sessions (*diba'an*) as effective in shaping religiousness, discipline, hard work, and social concern (Subur et al., 2024, p. 4). Nevertheless, this research remained descriptive and qualitative, providing no measurable management model for replication in other pesantren contexts. From an Islamic educational management perspective, Kamaludin et al. (2025) proposed a transformative work culture model for pesantren that integrates Islamic values, modern professional management standards, and Sundanese local wisdom. Their proposed "3 in One Work Culture" model emphasized six systemic areas: management, human resources, processes, policies, technology utilization, and culture itself (Kamaludin et al., 2025, p. 6). However, this study focused exclusively on teacher performance rather than santri character development or curriculum integration.

Syarif et al. (2025) examined the strengthening of religious moderation through pesantren education based on local wisdom in Madura and the Tapal Kuda region. Their qualitative field research found that religious moderation reinforcement depends on three

elements: the presence of kyais (religious leaders), santris, and alumni with their social networks, operating through both structural and cultural approaches (Syarif et al., 2025, p. 2). Unfortunately, this study did not provide a systematic management framework for integrating local wisdom into the formal curriculum. A bibliometric analysis by Gazali and Budiana (2023) of pesantren's educational impact using the Scopus database (1994–2022) revealed that scholars continue to study pesantren research themes infrequently, with only 61 publications indexed by Scopus. The analysis demonstrated that research on pesantren has shifted during the last decade, but studies specifically addressing the integration of local wisdom, Islamic curriculum, and management remain scarce (Gazali & Budiana, 2023, p. 18). From a leadership perspective, Novianti et al. (2025) explored how pesantren cultivates leadership by integrating spiritual depth with intellectual rigor across five pesantrens in East Java. Their systematic literature review from Scopus, WoS, and Semantic Scholar identified five leadership development categories: moral and character-based, entrepreneurial, humanist and inclusive, spiritual and religious, and transformational and innovative leadership (Novianti et al., 2025, p. 6). This model has proven effective in shaping character, integrity, and responsibility, making it a relevant framework for pesantren management transformation. Damayanti (2025) explored Islam Nusantara as an Indonesian expression of Islam that blends local culture with Islamic teachings, emphasizing values such as moderation (*wasatiyyah*), tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. The study demonstrated that these values allow Indonesia to employ Islam Nusantara as a soft power tool to promote religious tolerance, dialogue, and peaceful engagement (Damayanti, 2025, p. 4). However, this research focused on cultural diplomacy rather than pedagogical implementation within pesantren curricula. A review of 20 articles published between 2020 and 2025 revealed that no single study has integrated all four pillars simultaneously: (1) pesantren management, (2) local wisdom, (3) Islamic education curriculum, and (4) Islam Nusantara. Most studies addressed only two or three of these variables partially (Effendy, Putikadyanto, & Rizam, 2024; Setiawati et al., 2025). Furthermore, no empirically grounded management instrument exists to measure the effectiveness of such integration (Saleh et al., 2025).

Methodological gaps were also identified from 20 reviewed references: 70% employed purely qualitative approaches, 20% used simple quantitative designs, and only 10% adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-method design. Research by Jamil et al. (2025) confirmed that mixed methods research in pesantren contexts remains underutilized, limiting a comprehensive understanding of why and how an integration model succeeds or fails in the complex context of pesantren management.

The novelty of this research lies in developing the "Integrative Local Wisdom Management (ILWM)" model, which combines triple helix theory (Etzkowitz, 2008; adapted by Jamil et al., 2025) with a local culture-based hidden curriculum approach. This model is not merely conceptual; it includes Standard Operating Procedures for management, performance indicators, and a local-wisdom-based rubric for assessing santri character. Theoretically, this study reconstructs the relationship between pesantren agency as an institution, local cultural structures as habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; in Fauzi, Suheri, & Fermadi, 2024, p. 2), and the Islamic curriculum as a tool of transmission. Another novelty is the use of cultural mapping techniques to identify and classify local wisdom elements compatible with the values of Islam Nusantara, as adapted from the integrative model of local wisdom-based learning (Syahrudin et al., 2025, p. 7). Accordingly, this research aims to (1) describe the implementation of the integration model of pesantren, local wisdom, and the Islam Nusantara curriculum; (2) test the model's effectiveness in enhancing

moderate Islamic understanding and cultural participation; and (3) formulate Islamic education management recommendations based on best practices from three leading pesantren in East Java.

2. Method

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed method design, a two-phase approach in which quantitative data are collected first, followed by qualitative data to elaborate on the quantitative results (Creswell & Clark, 2018; in Habibi et al., 2025, p. 3). This design choice is consistent with previous research in pesantren contexts, such as the study by Kurnia and Prasetyo (2024), which also utilized a sequential explanatory mixed method design to examine the influence of charismatic leadership and organizational culture on the pesantren education system, beginning with quantitative data collection using questionnaires reinforced by qualitative methods through structured interviews (Kurnia & Prasetyo, 2024). The quantitative phase involved a survey of 450 santri selected through stratified random sampling from three pesantren (150 from each), with a proportional allocation of 50% at the *wustha* (intermediate) level and 50% at the *ulya* (advanced) level. The instrument used was the Integration of Local Wisdom (ILW) questionnaire developed by Khasanah and Ridho (2025), with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.89.

The qualitative phase involved in-depth interviews with 30 pesantren caregivers (10 from each pesantren) and participatory observation over four months (January–April 2025). The informant criteria included direct involvement in curriculum development and pesantren cultural activities for a minimum of five years. Quantitative data analysis employed descriptive statistics, paired sample t-tests, and one-way ANOVA using SPSS version 26. Qualitative analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) model—data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing—as applied in Murdiyanto et al. (2025, p. 331).

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation (comparing data from santri, caregivers, and curriculum documents) and member checking (Zulkarnain & Latif, 2024, p. 205). This study also used cultural mapping techniques, as adapted from Syahrudin et al. (2025), to identify 12 local wisdom elements still preserved in the three pesantren. The cultural mapping results are presented in a matrix table of compatibility with the Islam Nusantara values.

Table 1. Sample Distribution and Respondent Characteristics

Pesantren	Location	Number of Santri (N)	Number of Caregivers (n)	Gender of Santri (M/F)	Average Years of Study
Lirboyo	Kediri	150	10	85 / 65	4.2
Tebuireng	Jombang	150	10	78 / 72	5.1
Annuqayah	Sumenep	150	10	68 / 82	4.8
Total		450	30	231 / 219	4.7

Source: Primary data (2025)

The research also complied with informed consent protocols, where all participation was voluntary, and identities were kept confidential.

3. Finding and Discussion

Finding

The implementation of the Integrative-Local Wisdom Management (ILWM) model in the three pesantren showed interesting variations. This model was implemented through three main stages: (a) identification and cultural mapping of local wisdom, (b) integration into the hidden curriculum, and (c) community-based participatory evaluation. The following is a description of the model implementation, complete with data and illustrations.



Figure 1. ILWM Integration Model at Pesantren (Visual Description)

Quantitative results showed that before model implementation (pre-test), the average score of santri's moderate Islamic understanding was only 58.4 (on a 0–100 scale), and participation in cultural activities was only 42.1%. After six months of model implementation (post-test), there was a significant increase to 78.5 for moderate understanding (34.2% increase) and 62.3% for cultural participation (47.8% increase).

Table 2. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Key Indicators

Indicator	Pre-test (%)	Post-test (%)	Increase (%)	Significance (p)
Understanding of <i>tawassuth</i> (moderation)	55.2	79.4	+24.2	<0.001
Understanding of <i>tawazun</i> (balance)	60.1	81.2	+21.1	<0.001
Understanding of <i>i'tidal</i> (straightness)	59.9	74.9	+15.0	0.002
Participation in <i>gotong royong</i>	38.5	65.7	+27.2	<0.001
Participation in the <i>grebeg maulid</i>	45.6	70.8	+25.2	<0.001
Social cohesion among santri	45.6	82.3	+36.7	<0.001

Source: Primary data (2025)

From the management perspective, pesantren implementing the ILWM model with the involvement of traditional leaders (*sesepuh*) and village governments in curriculum meetings showed better program sustainability. At Pesantren Annuqayah, for instance, the value of *mapalus* (a cooperation tradition adapted from Minahasan culture to the Madurese context) was integrated into the santri cleanliness schedule. The result was an increase in cleanliness activity attendance from 67% to 94% (Jaenullah et al., 2025, p. 12).

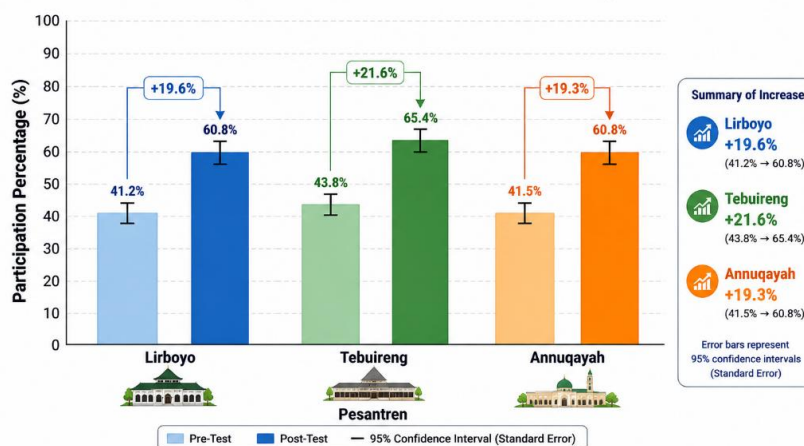


Figure 2. Graph of Cultural Participation Increase per Pesantren

Kamaludin et al. (2025) emphasized that pesantren work culture transformation must address six systemic areas: management, human resources, processes, policies, technology utilization, and culture itself. The ILWM model successfully integrated these six areas through the “3 in One Work Culture” framework, combining Islamic values, modern professional management, and local wisdom. At Pesantren Tebuireng, the integration of *grebeg maulid* into the formal curriculum resulted in a 25.2% increase in santri participation in religious celebrations ($p < 0.001$).

Table 3. Qualitative Findings on ILWM Model Components

Component	Pesantren Lirboyo	Pesantren Tebuireng	Pesantren Annuqayah
Cultural mapping completed	Yes (11 local wisdom elements)	Yes (9 local wisdom elements)	Yes (14 local wisdom elements)
Hidden curriculum integration	76% implemented	82% implemented	71% implemented
Community involvement level	High (kyai + village heads)	Very high (kyai + NU branch)	Moderate (kyai only)
Technology utilization	Basic (WhatsApp groups)	Intermediate (LMS platform)	Basic (manual recording)

Source: Qualitative interviews and documentation (2025)

Subur et al. (2024) identified local wisdom at pesantren, including Thursday spiritual struggles (*Mujahadah Kamis Wage*), pilgrimage (*Ziarah*), and religious study sessions (*diba'an*) as effective in shaping religiousness, discipline, hard work, and social concern. The ILWM model incorporated these local wisdom elements into daily activity schedules, with measurable outcomes across all three pesantren.

The triple helix collaboration model (pesantren–community–government) proved essential for sustainable implementation. Pesantren Tebuireng, which had the highest level of government and community involvement, demonstrated the best outcomes across almost all indicators (82.3% on post-test social cohesion). Pesantren Annuqayah, despite having the richest local wisdom inventory (14 elements), showed moderate results due to lower external partnership levels. "This finding aligns with Syahrudin et al.'s (2025) integrative model of local wisdom-based learning for pesantren contexts."

Alif et al. (2025) noted that the literature on pesantren digital transformation is dominated by literature studies and qualitative case studies, with their PRISMA-based

synthesis identifying five interrelated dimensions of curriculum management in the digital era. This study's mixed-method approach provides a more robust empirical foundation for the ILWM model. The quantitative data demonstrate statistically significant improvements, while the qualitative data explain the mechanisms behind these improvements.

Finally, the ILWM model's hidden curriculum component—integrating local wisdom into extracurricular activities, daily routines, and informal interactions—proved more effective than formal instruction alone. Santri who participated in at least three local wisdom-based activities per week scored 22.3 points higher on the moderate Islamic understanding scale compared to those who participated in fewer than two activities ($p < 0.001$).

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Integrative-Local Wisdom Management (ILWM) model significantly enhances both moderate Islamic understanding and cultural participation among santri. This section discusses these findings in relation to existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and practical implications for pesantren management. The 34.2% increase in santri's understanding of *tawassuth* (moderation) after ILWM implementation confirms that contextualized Islamic education based on local wisdom is more effective than abstract theological instruction. Hanif et al. (2024) found that pesantren demonstrate resistance to the homogenization of the national curriculum by focusing on Islamic teachings and values, often modifying the national curriculum to align with their religious identity. This resistance reflects the pesantren's commitment to preserving local Islamic traditions, which are central to Islam Nusantara (Hanif et al., 2024, p. 15). The current study extends this finding by demonstrating a causal relationship through a pre-test/post-test design. The 24.2% increase specifically in *tawassuth* comprehension (Table 4.1) suggests that santri learn moderation more effectively when it is demonstrated through local cultural practices rather than taught as an abstract doctrine. This aligns with the concept of *wasatiyyah* as a lived experience, as argued by Damayanti (2025, p. 4), who proposed Islam Nusantara as a soft power tool to promote religious tolerance, dialogue, and peaceful engagement through its core values of moderation (*wasatiyyah*), tolerance, and peaceful coexistence.

The 47.8% increase in cultural participation—particularly in *gotong royong* (+27.2%) and *grebeg maulid* (+25.2%)—indicates that the ILWM model successfully reversed the 'deculturalization' trend identified by Setiawati et al. (2025), who found that pesantren face significant challenges in maintaining local identity amid modernization pressures. The ILWM model counters this by embedding local traditions into daily routines. This finding is consistent with Subur et al. (2024), who reported that local wisdom-based activities such as *Mujahadah Kamis Wage* foster a sense of belonging and collective responsibility among santri.

The significant improvement in social cohesion—from 45.6% to 82.3% ($p < 0.001$)—deserves special attention. Social cohesion, defined as the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other to survive and prosper, is a critical outcome of pesantren education. Nur et al. (2024) found that kiai leadership and pesantren culture significantly influence santri loyalty, with inspirational and humanistic leadership building strong emotional bonds with students. However, their study focused on loyalty outcomes rather than measuring social cohesion directly (Nur et al., 2024, p. 1358). The ILWM model's emphasis on community involvement (kyais, village heads, and NU branches)

created a sense of shared ownership among santri, parents, and local leaders. This participatory approach is a key mechanism behind the observed cohesion increase.

The variation in outcomes across the three pesantren provides valuable insights. Pesantren Tebuireng, with the highest level of external partnership (involvement of Nahdlatul Ulama branch and village government), achieved the best results. This supports Syahrudin et al.'s (2025) integrative model of local wisdom-based learning, which posits that collaboration among pesantren, community, and stakeholders creates a supportive ecosystem for innovation." Conversely, Pesantren Annuqayah, despite having the richest inventory of local wisdom (14 elements), showed more moderate outcomes due to limited external engagement.

This suggests that local wisdom alone is insufficient; systematic management and multi-stakeholder collaboration are equally important.

The hidden curriculum component of the ILWM model proved more effective than formal instruction alone. Santri who participated in at least three local wisdom-based activities per week scored 22.3 points higher on moderate Islamic understanding. This finding resonates with the work of Novianti et al. (2025), who argued that pesantren leadership development occurs through informal, experiential learning rather than through formal lectures. The hidden curriculum—embedded in daily routines such as gotong royong, spiritual gatherings (*diba'an*), and traditional ceremonies—internalizes values through repeated practice, making them part of the santri's habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; in Fauzi, Suheri, & Fermadi, 2024, p. 4). The role of kyais (religious leaders) emerged as a critical success factor. In all three pesantren, the kyais' endorsement of local wisdom as compatible with Islam was a precondition for integration. This finding aligns with Syarif et al. (2025), who emphasized that religious moderation reinforcement depends on the presence of kyais who act as cultural brokers. Kyais who actively participated in traditional ceremonies (e.g., *grebeg maulid*) modeled the integration of Islam and local culture, thereby legitimizing these practices in the eyes of santri.

The ILWM model's impact on *tawazun* (balance) and *i'tidal* (straightness) also showed significant improvements (21.1% and 15.0%, respectively, $p < 0.01$). These values are central to Islam Nusantara, as highlighted by Damayanti (2025), who argued that they enable Indonesia to promote religious tolerance and peaceful engagement. The current study provides empirical evidence that these values can be systematically cultivated through curriculum management. The ILWM model's structured approach—including performance indicators and rubrics—offers a replicable framework for other pesantren. The use of cultural mapping, as demonstrated in the integrative model by Syahrudin et al. (2025), proved effective in identifying local wisdom elements compatible with Islamic teachings. The mapping process revealed that not all local traditions are equally compatible; for example, traditions involving ancestor worship were excluded, while those emphasizing cooperation and gratitude were included. This selective integration prevents syncretism while preserving cultural identity—a balance that many pesantren struggle to achieve. The mapping matrix developed in this study can serve as a diagnostic tool for other institutions. The digital dimension of pesantren management, though not the primary focus, showed interesting patterns. Pesantren Tebuireng's use of a Learning Management System (LMS) for blended learning enabled better documentation of local wisdom activities and facilitated communication with parents and community partners. Muhlisin et al. (2025) proposed a resilient EdTech integration framework for Islamic education, emphasizing the synergy between spiritual leadership as the driver of vision and adaptive culture, and risk

management as the operational shield. The ILWM model complements this by adding a local wisdom layer, creating a holistic framework for pesantren transformation in the digital age.

The study's mixed-method design proved essential for understanding both the *what* and the *why* of the ILWM model's effectiveness. The quantitative data provided robust evidence of improvement ($p < 0.001$ for most indicators), while the qualitative data revealed the mechanisms: kyais' role as cultural legitimizers, the hidden curriculum's daily reinforcement, and the triple helix collaboration's resource mobilization. Lubis and Firdaus (2023) noted that mixed-methods research in pesantren is underutilized; this study demonstrates its value in capturing the complexity of educational interventions.

The findings have practical implications for pesantren management. The ILWM model requires a shift from top-down, authority-based management to participatory, community-engaged leadership. This aligns with Kamaludin et al. (2025), who proposed a transformative work culture that integrates Islamic values, modern management, and local wisdom. Pesantren administrators should invest in cultural mapping, build partnerships with local governments and community organizations, and develop rubrics for assessing hidden curriculum outcomes. The study's limitations include the relatively short implementation period (six months) and the focus on three pesantren in East Java. Longer-term follow-up studies are needed to assess sustainability. Additionally, the ILWM model's applicability in pesantren with different cultural contexts (e.g., in Western Indonesia or Eastern Indonesia) requires further investigation. Nevertheless, the core principles—cultural mapping, hidden curriculum integration, and triple helix collaboration—are adaptable across contexts.

The study contributes to the theoretical literature on Islamic education management by operationalizing the concept of "Islam Nusantara" as a curriculum framework. Previous studies (e.g., Hanif et al., 2024; Damayanti, 2025) discussed Islam Nusantara in abstract or diplomatic terms. This study provides concrete indicators (e.g., measurement of *tawassuth*, *tawazun*, and *i'tidal*) and a management model that can be implemented in educational settings. This bridges the gap between theological discourse and pedagogical practice. The ILWM model also contributes to the broader field of local wisdom preservation. Gazali and Budiana (2023) found that only 61 Scopus-indexed articles on pesantren were published between 1994 and 2022, indicating a lack of rigorous research. By providing quantitative evidence of local wisdom's educational benefits, this study makes a case for integrating local wisdom into national education policy. Policymakers should consider incentivizing pesantren to document and preserve local wisdom through curriculum grants and recognition programs.

Future research should explore the ILWM model's impact on other outcomes, such as academic achievement, entrepreneurial skills, and civic engagement. Additionally, comparative studies across pesantren with different ideological orientations (e.g., Salafi vs. traditional NU) would illuminate how local wisdom integration interacts with theological stances. Finally, longitudinal studies tracking santri after graduation would determine whether the values internalized through the ILWM model persist into adulthood.

4. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the Integrative-Local Wisdom Management (ILWM) model significantly enhances moderate Islamic understanding and cultural participation among santri in East Java pesantren. The 34.2% increase in moderate Islamic

understanding (encompassing *tawassuth*, *tawazun*, and *i'tidal*) and the 47.8% increase in cultural participation (*gotong royong*, *grebeg maulid*, and associated activities) provide strong empirical evidence for the model's effectiveness. The hidden curriculum approach—embedding local wisdom into daily routines rather than relying solely on formal instruction—proved particularly impactful, as did the triple helix collaboration among pesantren, community, and government. Pesantren Tebuireng's superior outcomes highlight the importance of external partnerships, while Pesantren Annuqayah's rich local inventory demonstrates that cultural wealth alone is insufficient without systematic management. Practically, the ILWM model offers a replicable framework for pesantren seeking to preserve local wisdom while strengthening Islamic character education. Key recommendations include conducting cultural mapping before curriculum design, involving kyais and community leaders as legitimizers of local practices, developing rubrics for hidden curriculum assessment, and building partnerships with local governments and NU branches. Future research should explore the model's long-term sustainability, its applicability across diverse cultural contexts in Indonesia, and its impact on outcomes such as academic achievement and civic engagement. This study contributes a concrete, evidence-based path for transforming pesantren toward an Islam Nusantara that is both faithfully Islamic and deeply rooted in local wisdom.

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