



**PORTRAIT OF PESANTREN TEACHERS: EXAMINING PROFESSIONALISM
BEHIND THEIR VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

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ABSTRAK

Profesionalisme guru di lingkungan pesantren menjadi faktor penting dalam menjaga mutu pendidikan Islam di tengah dinamika globalisasi dan tuntutan regulasi nasional terkait standar kualifikasi pendidik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji profesionalisme guru pesantren dengan menelaah keberagaman latar belakang pendidikan serta pengaruhnya terhadap praktik pembelajaran dan kualitas kelembagaan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi lapangan, dan studi dokumentasi. Informan dipilih secara purposive dengan kriteria guru yang memiliki pengalaman mengajar minimal dua tahun serta latar belakang pendidikan yang beragam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa variasi kualifikasi pendidikan memengaruhi karakter profesionalisme guru pesantren. Guru dengan latar belakang pendidikan keguruan cenderung memiliki kemampuan perencanaan dan pengelolaan pembelajaran yang lebih sistematis. Sementara itu, guru dengan latar belakang non-keguruan lebih menonjol dalam keteladanan spiritual dan pembinaan karakter santri. Kedua karakteristik tersebut saling melengkapi dalam mendukung kualitas pendidikan pesantren. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penguatan profesionalisme guru pesantren memerlukan integrasi antara kompetensi pedagogik modern dan nilai-nilai spiritual yang menjadi ciri khas pendidikan pesantren. Oleh karena itu, pengembangan kapasitas guru perlu dilakukan melalui pelatihan berkelanjutan, komunitas belajar profesional, serta sistem mentoring internal yang mampu menjaga keseimbangan antara inovasi pendidikan dan pelestarian tradisi pesantren.

Kata Kunci: *Guru Pesantren, Profesionalisme, Kualifikasi Pendidikan, Pendidikan Islam*

ABSTRACT

Teacher professionalism in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) plays a crucial role in maintaining the quality of Islamic education amid the dynamics of globalization and national regulatory demands regarding teacher qualification standards. This study aims to examine the professionalism of pesantren teachers by analyzing the diversity of their educational backgrounds and its influence on teaching practices and institutional quality. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis. Informants were selected purposively based on the criteria of having at least two years of teaching experience and diverse educational backgrounds. The findings reveal that variations in educational qualifications influence the characteristics of teacher professionalism in pesantren. Teachers with formal teacher education backgrounds tend to demonstrate more systematic lesson planning and classroom management skills. In contrast, teachers from non-teaching educational backgrounds are more prominent in providing spiritual role modeling and character development for students. These two characteristics complement each other in supporting the quality of education in pesantren. This



study concludes that strengthening teacher professionalism in Islamic boarding schools requires the integration of modern pedagogical competencies with the spiritual values that characterize pesantren education. Therefore, teacher capacity development should be promoted through continuous training programs, professional learning communities, and internal mentoring systems that maintain a balance between educational innovation and the preservation of pesantren traditions.

Keywords: *Pesantren Teachers, Professionalism, Educational Qualifications, Islamic Education*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are widely recognized as important Islamic educational institutions that play a significant role in shaping students' religious understanding, moral character, and intellectual development. As one of the oldest forms of Islamic education in Indonesia, pesantren are expected to produce graduates who possess strong spiritual values while also being able to respond to the demands of contemporary society. In this educational environment, teachers serve as key actors who facilitate the transmission of knowledge and religious values while guiding students' personal and intellectual growth. The effectiveness of this process is closely related to teacher professionalism, which includes pedagogical competence, commitment to teaching, and the ability to manage learning activities effectively within the pesantren system (Rahmah & Prasetyo, 2022).

Teacher professionalism has become an increasingly important issue in modern education, particularly as educational institutions face higher expectations regarding learning quality and institutional performance. In Indonesia, teacher professionalism is formally regulated through Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which establishes clear requirements for academic qualifications and professional competencies. These regulations emphasize that teachers should possess adequate academic preparation and demonstrate pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies in their educational roles (Republic of Indonesia, 2005). In principle, these standards are designed to ensure that teachers are capable of providing effective learning experiences and contributing to the improvement of educational quality across various institutions, including pesantren.

Despite these regulatory expectations, the actual conditions within many Islamic boarding schools indicate that teachers often have diverse educational backgrounds. Some teachers graduate from formal teacher education programs that provide pedagogical training, while others come from non-education disciplines and enter the teaching profession through different academic pathways. Previous studies suggest that such differences in academic preparation may influence teachers' pedagogical competence, instructional planning, and classroom management practices (Mahartini & Tristaningrat, 2023; Yuniyanto & Chamami, 2025). As a result, variations in educational qualifications can potentially affect the consistency and effectiveness of learning practices within pesantren institutions.

The diversity of educational backgrounds among teachers also raises concerns regarding the development of professional competence in Islamic educational institutions. Research has shown that teachers who lack formal pedagogical training may experience difficulties in implementing effective teaching strategies or integrating innovative learning approaches. Limited access to structured professional development programs can further widen the gap between expected professional standards and actual teaching practices (Fauzi et al., 2023; Nurmadiyah, 2025). Consequently, strengthening teacher professionalism in pesantren requires



institutional efforts that address both pedagogical competence and continuous professional development.

In the pesantren context, teacher professionalism cannot be separated from the cultural and spiritual environment that characterizes Islamic boarding school education. Teachers not only function as instructors who deliver subject matter but also act as moral guides who model religious values and ethical conduct for students. The integration of cultural values within pesantren life has been found to strengthen teachers' sense of responsibility and professional identity in their educational roles (Rasyidin et al., 2025). However, maintaining this balance between spiritual leadership and pedagogical competence remains a challenge, particularly when teachers possess varied educational qualifications.

The rapid development of digital technology and the transformation of learning practices in the twenty-first century have further increased the demands placed on teachers. Educators are now expected to demonstrate digital literacy, utilize technology-based learning resources, and adopt innovative instructional strategies in order to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Studies have indicated that teachers' ability to integrate digital tools into teaching can significantly improve the effectiveness of learning processes (Setiawan et al., 2023; Mahmudah, 2025b). In pesantren institutions where teachers possess different academic backgrounds, the capacity to adapt to technological changes may also vary and influence the quality of instructional practices.

Another factor that contributes to the development of teacher professionalism is the presence of collaborative professional learning environments. Professional learning communities, mentoring systems, and teacher training initiatives are widely acknowledged as effective strategies for improving instructional competence and reflective practice. Collaborative interaction among educators enables the exchange of experiences, pedagogical knowledge, and teaching strategies that support continuous professional growth (Ni et al., 2023). Within pesantren institutions, such collaborative approaches may serve as an important mechanism for bridging differences in teachers' academic preparation and strengthening professional competence collectively.

Although numerous studies have examined teacher professionalism in educational settings, research that specifically analyzes how variations in teachers' educational qualifications influence professional practices in pesantren remains relatively limited. Many existing studies tend to discuss teacher competence or institutional management separately without focusing on how different academic backgrounds shape teachers' professional roles within Islamic boarding schools (Aslamiyah & Abun, 2023). This study therefore seeks to examine the professionalism of pesantren teachers by exploring the relationship between educational qualifications and teaching practices within the institutional context of Islamic boarding schools. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on understanding how diverse academic backgrounds among pesantren teachers contribute to different forms of professional practice and how these variations collectively influence the quality of learning and institutional development in pesantren education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive orientation to investigate the professionalism of teachers working in Islamic boarding schools. The qualitative approach was selected because the research aimed to understand teachers' experiences, perspectives, and professional practices within the specific socio-religious environment of pesantren education. The study was conducted in several Islamic boarding schools where



teachers with different educational backgrounds were actively involved in teaching and institutional activities. By focusing on real educational practices in the pesantren environment, this design allowed the researchers to obtain contextual insights into how teacher professionalism is demonstrated in everyday instructional responsibilities.

Data were collected using several complementary techniques to ensure the richness of information. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with teachers, direct observation of classroom learning activities, and documentation related to institutional programs and teacher responsibilities. The interview process was guided by a semi-structured interview protocol designed to explore teachers' educational backgrounds, professional experiences, and teaching practices. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on several criteria, namely teachers who had at least two years of teaching experience in the pesantren, possessed diverse educational qualifications, and were involved in professional development or instructional activities within the institution.

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the study also utilized secondary data sources, including educational policy documents, institutional reports, and scholarly publications related to teacher professionalism and Islamic education. All collected data were systematically processed through several stages of qualitative analysis. First, the researchers organized and reduced the data by selecting information relevant to teacher competence, professional attitudes, and instructional practices. Second, the categorized data were presented and compared across different informants in order to identify patterns and similarities in professional practices. Finally, the researchers interpreted the findings and drew conclusions to develop a comprehensive understanding of how educational qualifications influence teacher professionalism within the context of Islamic boarding schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study were derived from interviews and observations involving several *asatidzah* in Islamic boarding schools. The analysis indicates that teachers apply a number of strategies to sustain and strengthen their professional practices in the teaching process. These strategies generally reflect three interconnected aspects of teacher professionalism: independent professional learning, participation in institutional professional development, and collaborative learning among teachers. The findings also show that pesantren educators demonstrate a strong commitment to improving instructional quality while adapting their teaching approaches to the evolving demands of contemporary education.

One prominent form of professionalism observed in this study is teachers' initiative to improve their subject mastery through independent learning activities. Prior to conducting classroom instruction, many teachers emphasized the importance of reviewing and expanding their knowledge of the material being taught. Several informants explained that they frequently search for additional references from digital learning platforms, educational websites, and video-based learning resources in order to enrich their teaching materials. One teacher stated, *"Before teaching, I usually look for additional references from online sources such as educational websites or videos to make sure that the material I deliver is accurate and easier for students to understand."* This practice illustrates the growing tendency among pesantren teachers to engage in self-directed learning as a strategy to strengthen their professional competence.

Another important strategy identified in the findings is teachers' participation in professional development activities organized either internally or externally by educational

institutions. Teachers reported that they often attend seminars, workshops, and training programs aimed at improving pedagogical competence and instructional strategies. In many cases, the institution appoints several teachers to participate in these activities and subsequently share the knowledge gained with their colleagues during internal meetings. One informant explained, “*After attending training or seminars, we usually present the key points during teacher meetings so that all teachers can benefit from the knowledge obtained.*” This practice reflects the presence of a collaborative learning culture in pesantren where professional knowledge is disseminated collectively among teachers. The various strategies identified from the field findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Strategies Used by Pesantren Teachers to Improve Professionalism

No	Strategy	Implementation in Teaching Practice
1	Independent learning	Teachers search additional references through educational websites, digital platforms, and video-based learning resources.
2	Participation in professional training	Teachers attend seminars, workshops, and educational training programs to improve pedagogical competence.
3	Knowledge sharing among teachers	Teachers who attend training present the results during internal meetings so that colleagues can learn collectively.
4	Peer collaboration	Teachers discuss teaching challenges with colleagues to find effective learning strategies.
5	Curriculum and material adaptation	Teachers adjust learning materials to students’ needs and the characteristics of pesantren education.

As shown in Table 1, the strategies implemented by pesantren teachers are interconnected and mutually reinforcing in supporting professional development. Independent learning enables teachers to strengthen their subject knowledge, while participation in training activities provides opportunities to update pedagogical competencies. At the same time, collaborative practices such as peer discussions and knowledge sharing create a supportive professional environment that encourages continuous learning among educators. These findings indicate that teacher professionalism in Islamic boarding schools is sustained through a combination of individual initiative, institutional support, and collaborative professional culture within the pesantren community.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the professionalism of Islamic boarding school teachers is closely related to their commitment to continuous learning and the ability to adapt to the evolving demands of education. Teachers in pesantren environments demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility in preparing learning materials, improving their competencies, and responding to pedagogical challenges. This condition reflects the broader concept of teacher professionalism, which involves not only mastery of subject matter but also reflective practice and ongoing professional growth. Previous studies have shown that teacher professionalism



plays a crucial role in improving the effectiveness of the learning process and strengthening the quality of Islamic education in pesantren institutions (Pajri, 2025; Muzakki, 2022).

One important aspect of teacher professionalism identified in this research is the preparation of learning materials through independent exploration of various resources. Teachers often complement textbooks with digital learning materials such as online articles, educational videos, and other digital platforms. This practice illustrates how teachers adapt to the increasing role of technology in modern learning environments. The ability to integrate multiple learning resources is considered an important component of pedagogical competence in Islamic education (Cahyadi & Qomariyah, 2022), while adaptive learning strategies are also necessary to ensure that teaching remains relevant to contemporary educational contexts (Junatama et al., 2025).

Another significant finding relates to the role of training and professional development in strengthening teacher competencies. Participation in seminars, workshops, and training programs provides teachers with opportunities to update their pedagogical knowledge and improve their instructional practices. Such professional development activities are widely recognized as essential mechanisms for enhancing teachers' professional capacity and instructional quality (Abdillah et al., 2025). In addition, the effectiveness of professional development programs is often strengthened when teachers share their training experiences with colleagues, creating a collaborative culture of learning within educational institutions.

The collaborative dimension of teacher professionalism is also evident in the practice of sharing knowledge and experiences among teachers within pesantren communities. Teachers frequently exchange ideas, discuss teaching challenges, and support one another in improving classroom practices. This pattern reflects the concept of a learning community, where professional development occurs through interaction and mutual support among educators. Studies have shown that community-based learning approaches can significantly improve teachers' competence and teaching effectiveness, particularly in educational environments such as Islamic boarding schools (Izzah et al., 2025).

In addition to collaboration, the ability of teachers to adapt to teaching assignments outside their formal field of expertise also reflects an important aspect of professional commitment. Teachers who face such challenges often engage in self-directed learning by consulting academic literature, digital resources, or colleagues with relevant expertise. This adaptive behavior demonstrates a proactive approach to maintaining the quality of learning despite institutional limitations. From a management perspective, effective human resource management in educational institutions can also support teachers in developing their competencies and improving overall institutional performance (Anarki et al., 2025; Luwihta & Fadilah, 2023).

Furthermore, the integration of technology and digital literacy has become an increasingly important component of teacher professionalism in contemporary education. Teachers who are able to utilize digital tools and online resources can design more engaging and effective learning experiences for students. In Islamic boarding schools, digital literacy not only supports access to broader learning resources but also contributes to innovation in teaching practices. Research indicates that strengthening teachers' digital literacy is essential for supporting technology-based learning and improving the quality of education in the digital era (Pebriana et al., 2025).

Finally, improving the quality of learning in Islamic boarding schools requires strategic management and continuous professional development. Educational institutions need to provide systematic support for teachers through training programs, mentoring systems, and



collaborative professional learning activities. Such strategies are important for building sustainable professional growth among teachers while maintaining the distinctive values of Islamic education. Effective management of Islamic educational institutions has been shown to play a key role in improving teaching quality and ensuring that learning practices remain aligned with both educational innovation and the spiritual values of pesantren traditions (Murdiono, 2024; Wibowo, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that teacher professionalism in Islamic boarding schools plays a crucial role in maintaining and improving the quality of Islamic education in the contemporary era. The findings indicate that professionalism among pesantren teachers is not solely determined by formal academic qualifications, but also by their commitment to continuous learning, adaptability, and collaborative practices. Teachers demonstrate strong motivation to improve their competencies through participation in training programs, knowledge sharing with colleagues, and the utilization of digital learning resources. These practices reflect a form of adaptive professionalism that enables teachers to respond to educational challenges while preserving the values and traditions of pesantren education.

The results of this research also suggest that the development of teacher professionalism in Islamic boarding schools requires systematic support from educational institutions. Programs that promote professional development, collaborative learning communities, and digital literacy can strengthen teachers' pedagogical competencies and improve the overall quality of learning. In addition, pesantren institutions need to design teacher development initiatives that integrate modern educational competencies with Islamic moral and spiritual values. Such an approach is important to ensure that educational innovation does not weaken the distinctive identity of Islamic boarding school education.

Furthermore, this study provides several directions for future research and practical development. Future studies are encouraged to explore additional factors influencing teacher professionalism, such as organizational culture within pesantren, leadership support from religious leaders, and institutional policies related to teacher development. Research that incorporates perspectives from students and pesantren administrators may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of how teacher professionalism affects the learning environment. In addition, further investigations into the integration of digital technology and innovative learning approaches in pesantren education could contribute to the development of more effective and contextually relevant educational practices.

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