

Systems and Contingency in the Development of Islamic Educational Institutions (A Case Study of Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja, OKU Timur, South Sumatra)

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the application of systems theory and contingency theory in the development of Islamic educational institutions, focusing on Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja, OKU Timur, South Sumatra. As traditional Islamic institutions, pesantren face challenges of modernization, globalization, and digitalization that demand adaptive governance. This research employs a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, using participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis, with data processed through Miles & Huberman's model. The findings reveal that Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja maintains internal stability through curriculum integration, collective leadership, Islamic organizational culture, and strong social networks, while externally adapting through digital learning, regulatory adjustments, and responsiveness to community needs. The discussion emphasizes that integrating systems and contingency theories produces a development model that is both stable and adaptive. The conclusion suggests that pesantren can serve as a model of Islamic education relevant to the challenges of the 21st century, while recommendations highlight the need to strengthen governance based on systems and contingency approaches so that other pesantren in Indonesia can face the modernization of Islamic education.

Keywords: systems theory, contingency theory, pesantren, Islamic education, governance

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, have played a pivotal role in shaping the character, morality, and intellectual development of Muslim communities in Indonesia. Since their inception, pesantren have functioned as centers for the transmission of Islamic knowledge, moral cultivation, and the formation of social leadership grounded in religious values. However, in the contemporary era, pesantren face significant challenges arising from globalization, digitalization, and socio-economic transformation, which demand more adaptive and professional institutional governance ([Between Tradition, 2026](#)).

From the perspective of educational management, pesantren can be understood as complex organizations composed of multiple subsystems. Systems theory emphasizes that organizations are entities consisting of interdependent subsystems, and stability can only be achieved through integration and coherence among these subsystems. Recent studies highlight that pesantren capable of integrating formal and non-formal education, while developing a comprehensive curriculum, are better prepared to meet the demands of Islamic educational modernization ([Zarkasyi, 2020](#)).

Meanwhile, contingency theory asserts that there is no universal management model; organizational success depends on the ability to adapt to dynamic external environments ([Sain et al., 2025](#)). In the context

of pesantren, this implies institutional flexibility in responding to government regulations, technological advancements, and societal needs. Reflective studies on the implementation of the Pesantren Law (UU No. 18/2019) demonstrate that state regulation has encouraged structural and cultural adaptation, even among pesantren previously reliant on charismatic leadership (Zaman, 2024).

Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja (PPNH) in OKU Timur, South Sumatra, serves as a relevant case study for analysis through the lens of systems and contingency theories. The historical trajectory of PPNH illustrates institutional dynamics from its embryonic phase to modern transformation. The founding period (1977-1987) began with simple diniyah activities initiated by KH. Affandi at Trimu Harjo Mosque, which later evolved into a formal educational institution with strong social legitimacy.

The first development phase (1988-2008) was marked by formal legal recognition and academic diversification, while the second phase (2008-2018) demonstrated consolidation of charismatic leadership and institutional expansion. The third phase (2018-2024) represents a transformation toward a university, with STKIP Nurul Huda officially upgraded to Universitas Nurul Huda in 2020 (KH. Afandi, personal communication, May 25, 2026).

Institutional transformation at PPNH Sukaraja can be observed in three key aspects: curriculum, management, and development strategies. The curriculum integrates traditional diniyah education with state-recognized formal curricula. Institutional management has shifted from charismatic leadership to more professional foundation-based governance. Development strategies include diversification of educational units, expansion of branches, and the utilization of digital technology in teaching and learning (H. M. Tasdiq, personal communication, May 25, 2026).

The contributions of PPNH Sukaraja to Islamic education and society are substantial. Academically, the pesantren has produced thousands of alumni active in education, da'wah, government, and economic sectors. Socially, it has engaged in community empowerment through social, economic, and religious programs. Religiously, it has preserved moral and spiritual values amidst modernization by integrating diniyah education with formal curricula (H. M. Tasdiq, personal communication, May 25, 2026).

Thus, the historical periodization and institutional transformation of PPNH Sukaraja demonstrate its adaptive capacity to social environments, state regulations, and contemporary demands. The charismatic leadership of KH. Affandi has been a crucial factor in maintaining the pesantren's vision while fostering institutional innovation (Iman & Jazilurrahman, 2026). His concept of "Pesantren Curriculum" exemplifies how pesantren can transform into modern educational institutions without losing their traditional scholarly roots. Therefore, this study is significant in providing both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of sustainable Islamic educational institutions based on systems and contingency approaches (Hairo, 2025).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of systems and contingency in the institutional development of Islamic education at Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja (Muttaqin, 2025). A qualitative design was chosen to explore complex meanings, lived experiences, and adaptive strategies that cannot be fully captured through quantitative methods (Lidong & Almaki, 2025). Adopting an intrinsic case study design focused on Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja as a single unit of analysis, this research examines institutional phenomena holistically, contextually, and comprehensively, making it particularly suitable for analyzing organizational transformation in pesantren (Bouncken et al., 2026). The investigation was conducted over a six-month period from January to June 2026 at Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja, OKU Timur, South Sumatra a location selected due to its

ongoing transformation toward becoming a university. The subjects and informants of the study included pesantren leaders, educators, students, and community figures directly involved in institutional development (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement and relevance to the research theme, ensuring that the collected data reflected the perspectives of key stakeholders influencing or experiencing the pesantren's transformation (Denieffe, 2020).

Data collection was executed through three primary techniques: participatory observation to capture the dynamics of pesantren life, social interactions, leadership patterns, and teaching practices (Chand, 2025); in-depth interviews with pesantren leaders, teachers, senior students, and community figures to obtain comprehensive insights into institutional strategies and experiences (Chand, 2025); and document analysis involving the systematic review of institutional archives, curricula, activity records, and formal legal documents (Dahal et al., 2024). To enhance validity and reliability, triangulation of sources and methods was applied, ensuring consistency and credibility of findings (Sibbald et al., 2021). Furthermore, data validity was strengthened through triangulation of sources, methods, and theories to reduce bias associated with reliance on a single lens, alongside member checking with informants to verify that analytical interpretations remained accurate, credible, and consistent with participants' lived experiences (Erdmann & Potthoff, 2023).

Data analysis followed the Miles & Huberman model, executed across three iterative stages (Monaro et al., 2022). First, data reduction was carried out by selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data relevant to the research objectives (Mezmir, 2020). Second, data display was structured by presenting information through matrices, narrative descriptions, and thematic categories to facilitate systematic interpretation (Monaro et al., 2022). Third, conclusion drawing and verification were conducted iteratively to ensure consistency between findings and empirical evidence (Lochmiller, 2021). This analytical framework allowed for a systematic interpretation of complex qualitative data, aligning empirical findings directly with theoretical perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Internal System of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja

The internal system of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja demonstrates a relatively strong and integrated institutional stability. This stability is reflected in the integration of the traditional kitab kuning curriculum, which characterizes classical pesantren education, with nationally recognized general subjects. The balance between classical Islamic scholarship and modern educational needs enables the pesantren to produce graduates with dual competencies: mastery of religious knowledge and academic skills relevant to contemporary demands (Arif et al., 2025).

Collective leadership, exercised by the kyai, teachers, and pesantren administrators, strengthens the organizational culture based on Islamic values. This leadership model does not merely emphasize traditional hierarchy but also prioritizes principles of consultation (musyawarah) and collaboration. Consequently, the legitimacy of leadership is reinforced in the eyes of both students and the surrounding community, creating an organizational climate conducive to the advancement of Islamic education (Syahapala & Ikhwan, 2025).

Furthermore, the social network established with the local community serves as a vital social capital that enhances the pesantren's existence. The close relationship between the pesantren and society generates continuous moral, material, and spiritual support. In this regard, the pesantren functions not only as an educational institution but also as a community development center that contributes to social, economic, and religious spheres (Musnandar et al., 2024).

Therefore, the internal system of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja can be considered resilient, as it successfully maintains equilibrium between tradition and modernity, collective leadership rooted in Islamic values, and strong social support from the community. This condition positions the pesantren as an educational institution deeply rooted in tradition while remaining relevant to the challenges of the contemporary era ([Rohmah & Husniyah, 2025](#)).

External Adaptation through the Contingency Perspective

From the perspective of contingency theory, Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja demonstrates a high capacity for adaptation to external dynamics. The pesantren has successfully adjusted to technological developments through the digitalization of learning. The use of online platforms in teaching and learning activities illustrates that the institution does not isolate itself from change but rather seeks to utilize technology as a means of enhancing educational quality ([Zafi et al., 2021](#)).

In addition, the pesantren has aligned itself with government regulations concerning educational standards. This adjustment is evident in the integration of formal curricula into the pesantren's educational system, enabling graduates to obtain nationally recognized qualifications. Such compliance reflects the institutional flexibility to respond to external demands while maintaining its Islamic identity and traditional values ([Muttaqin, 2025](#)).

The responsiveness of the pesantren to community needs also constitutes a significant form of external adaptation. Beyond formal education, the pesantren contributes to social and economic development through community empowerment programs, vocational training, and religious outreach activities. These initiatives ensure that the pesantren remains relevant within the broader societal context and continues to play a vital role in addressing complex social challenges ([Rosowulan et al., 2025](#)).

This adaptive capacity is consistent with the principles of contingency theory, which emphasize that organizations capable of adjusting to their environment are more sustainable. Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja thus serves as a concrete example of how Islamic educational institutions can endure and thrive by adopting adaptive strategies in response to external changes ([Fradito et al., 2025](#)).

Integration of Systems and Contingency Theories

The integration of systems theory and contingency theory in the development of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja produces an institutional model that is both stable and adaptive. Systems theory provides a framework for maintaining coherence among internal subsystems such as curriculum, leadership, organizational culture, and social networks. At the same time, contingency theory offers a framework for adjusting to external dynamics, including technological advancements, government regulations, and community needs ([Universitas Islam Malang, 2023](#)).

The combination of these two theoretical perspectives enables the pesantren not only to survive but also to thrive amidst the challenges of modernization. Internal stability, safeguarded through systems theory, establishes a strong foundation, while external flexibility, facilitated by contingency theory, ensures the institution's ability to adapt to changing circumstances ([Nurani et al., 2026](#)).

This integrative model is highly relevant for other pesantren in Indonesia that face similar challenges. By adopting both systems and contingency approaches, pesantren can preserve their traditional identity while simultaneously responding to the demands of modernization and globalization ([Hadi & Latif, 2023](#)).

Accordingly, Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja exemplifies how Islamic educational institutions can manage robust internal systems while remaining flexible in the face of external dynamics.

This model contributes theoretically to the discourse on institutional development within Islamic education in Indonesia (Keseimbangan Sosial & Analisis Fungsionalis, 2026).

Academic, Social, and Religious Contributions of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja

The contributions of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja to society and Islamic education are highly significant. Academically, the pesantren has produced thousands of alumni who have pursued careers in diverse fields such as education, religious outreach, governance, and economics. These alumni serve as agents of change, disseminating Islamic values across multiple sectors of society (Mardiansyah et al., 2026).

Socially, the pesantren plays an active role in community empowerment through social, economic, and religious programs. It functions as a hub for community activities, offering solutions to pressing social issues such as poverty, unemployment, and moral decline. In this way, the pesantren strengthens its role as both an educational institution and a center for social transformation (Hile & Mu'ammam, 2025).

Religiously, the pesantren safeguards moral and spiritual values amidst the currents of modernization. The diniyah education provided within the pesantren acts as a moral bulwark for students and the wider community, fostering a society that is religious, civilized, and just (Yugo, 2025).

Thus, Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja operates not only as an educational institution but also as a social agent of change that contributes to the formation of a religious and ethical society. Its academic, social, and religious contributions underscore the strategic role of pesantren in national development and in sustaining the relevance of Islamic education in the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of the internal system, external adaptation, the integration of systems and contingency theories, as well as academic, social, and religious contributions, it can be concluded that Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja is an Islamic educational institution that successfully maintains internal stability while demonstrating flexibility in responding to external dynamics. Internal stability is reflected in the integration of diniyah and formal curricula, collective leadership rooted in Islamic values, and strong social networks. These elements ensure that the pesantren remains grounded in classical Islamic scholarship while remaining relevant to the demands of modern education.

From the contingency perspective, the pesantren exhibits a high level of adaptability to environmental changes, particularly through the digitalization of learning, compliance with government regulations, and responsiveness to community needs. This adaptive capacity highlights that the pesantren not only survives but also evolves by employing strategies that align with the challenges of globalization and digitalization.

The integration of systems theory and contingency theory provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for pesantren development. Systems theory safeguards internal coherence, while contingency theory ensures external flexibility. The combination of these approaches produces a model of pesantren development that is both stable and adaptive, making it applicable to other pesantren in Indonesia facing similar challenges.

The contributions of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja extend beyond the academic sphere to social and religious domains. The pesantren has produced alumni who actively serve in diverse sectors, engages in community empowerment initiatives, and preserves moral and spiritual values amidst modernization. Thus, the pesantren can be regarded as a strategic agent of social transformation and Islamic education, serving as a model of institutional resilience capable of addressing the challenges of the twenty-first century.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to KH. Affandi BA, the leader of Pesantren Nurul Huda, and to the entire family of Pesantren Nurul Huda Sukaraja, including the dedicated educators, students, and community figures who provided invaluable support, information, and access throughout the research process. Special appreciation is also extended to fellow academics at Universitas Nurul Huda and the Postgraduate Program of IAIN Curup, particularly the Islamic Education (PAI) Department, for their constructive feedback and critical insights that greatly contributed to the refinement and completion of this paper.

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