



The Relevance of the KMI Curriculum at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Kunir to Community Needs and Graduate Competence

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the relevance of the KMI curriculum at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Kunir to community needs and graduate competence. While prior studies have examined pesantren curricula from institutional or pedagogical perspectives, little research has assessed curriculum relevance by examining the alignment between graduate outcomes and stakeholder expectations. This study employs a mixed-methods concurrent triangulation design, combining survey data from 100 graduates and 50 graduate users with qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions involving pesantren leaders, teachers, alumni, and community stakeholders. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. The findings indicate that graduates demonstrate strong religious competence (80%), communication skills, and work ethics (75%), reflecting the curriculum's effectiveness in fostering core pesantren values. However, technical and analytical skills remain comparatively weaker (65%), suggesting a gap between curriculum outcomes and labor market demands. The study highlights the need to strengthen employability-oriented competencies, particularly in digital literacy and problem-solving. These findings contribute to the discourse on curriculum relevance in religious education by offering an outcome-based evaluation of pesantren curricula grounded in multi-stakeholder perspectives.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi relevansi kurikulum KMI di PP. Darussalam Kunir terhadap kebutuhan masyarakat dan kompetensi lulusan. Studi sebelumnya umumnya menelaah kurikulum pesantren dari perspektif institusional dan pedagogis, namun masih terbatas yang mengkaji kesesuaian antara output lulusan dengan harapan pemangku kepentingan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan mixed-method dengan desain concurrent triangulation yang menggabungkan data survei dari 100 alumni dan 50 pengguna lulusan dengan data kualitatif melalui wawancara dan focus group discussion yang melibatkan pimpinan pesantren, guru, alumni, dan masyarakat. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, sedangkan data kualitatif dianalisis melalui analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lulusan

OPEN ACCESS

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 09-01-2026

Accepted: 30-04-2026

KEYWORDS

KMI Curriculum,
Pesantren Education,
Graduate Competence,
Community Needs,
Curriculum Relevance

KATA KUNCI

Kurikulum KMI,
Pendidikan Pesantren,
Kompetensi Lulusan,
Kebutuhan Masyarakat,
Relevansi Kurikulum

memiliki kompetensi keagamaan yang kuat (80%) serta keterampilan komunikasi dan etika kerja yang baik (75%), yang mencerminkan keberhasilan kurikulum dalam membentuk nilai-nilai pesantren. Namun, keterampilan teknis dan analitis masih relatif rendah (65%), yang menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan antara hasil kurikulum dan tuntutan dunia kerja. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya penguatan kompetensi berbasis employability, khususnya literasi digital dan kemampuan pemecahan masalah. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada kajian relevansi kurikulum pendidikan keagamaan melalui pendekatan evaluasi berbasis outcome yang melibatkan berbagai perspektif pemangku kepentingan.

Introduction

Pesantren education is increasingly required to respond to the growing complexity of contemporary societal and labor market demands. (Mundiri et al., 2026; Yahya et al., 2024). Traditionally, pesantren institutions have been recognized for their strong emphasis on religious knowledge, moral formation, and character development. (Mujahid, 2021; Zarkasyi, 2020). However, in the current era of rapid socio-economic transformation, these institutions are expected to produce graduates who are not only spiritually grounded but also equipped with a diverse set of competencies, including communication skills, adaptability, digital literacy, and problem-solving abilities. (Zarkasi et al., 2025). The shift in expectations reflects broader structural changes in society, in which educational outcomes are increasingly evaluated for their relevance to real-world challenges and employability demands. (Isbah & Sakhiyya, 2023; Lutfi et al., 2025).

Several studies have identified a persistent gap between the competencies of pesantren graduates and the expectations of modern society, particularly in professional and technical domains. (Ferdinan et al., 2026). Graduates often demonstrate strong religious competence but face limitations when engaging in non-religious sectors such as business, industry, and technology. (Yusuf Amin Nugroho et al., 2025). This condition raises critical concerns regarding the relevance of pesantren curricula in addressing current socio-economic transformations. In the broader global context, the issue of curriculum relevance has become a central theme in educational discourse, particularly regarding the alignment between educational outcomes and societal needs. (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1989). Educational institutions are no longer assessed solely on their ability to transmit knowledge but also on their ability to produce graduates who can function effectively in dynamic and complex environments. (Lambooy, 2004).

Within this context, the Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (KMI) curriculum emerges as one of the most prominent models of integrated pesantren education. The KMI curriculum combines religious and general sciences, character education, and life skills development within a holistic framework. (Masturoh & Mahmudi, 2023). This integrative approach aims to produce graduates who possess a balance between spiritual depth and practical competence. At Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Kunir, the implementation of the KMI curriculum reflects an effort to adapt traditional Islamic education to contemporary demands by incorporating elements of leadership training, social engagement, and practical skills development.

Theoretically, such integration aligns with the principles of outcome-based education, which emphasize aligning curriculum design with expected learning outcomes and societal needs (Mahalingam, 2026). In addition, within the discourse of Islamic education,

scholars have argued that pesantren must continuously reform their educational models to remain relevant without losing their core identity (Azra, 2019). This dual challenge—maintaining religious authenticity while responding to modern demands—places pesantren in a unique position within the broader educational landscape.

Previous studies on pesantren and KMI curriculum have contributed significantly to understanding curriculum design, character formation, and pedagogical implementation. For instance, research has shown that pesantren education is effective in fostering strong religious values and moral integrity. (Fachrudin, 2021), while also beginning to incorporate elements of life skills and social competence (El-Yunusi, 2023). Other studies emphasize the importance of communication skills, entrepreneurship, and technological awareness among pesantren graduates. (Arif, 2013; Nilan, 2009). Furthermore, research on curriculum integration highlights the role of combining religious and general education in preparing graduates to face contemporary challenges.

However, despite these contributions, most existing studies remain limited to internal institutional perspectives, focusing primarily on curriculum design and implementation processes. (Weiss et al., 2021). There is relatively little empirical research that examines how curriculum outcomes are perceived by external stakeholders, particularly alumni and users of graduates. (Uin et al., 2023). This limitation is significant, as modern educational evaluation increasingly emphasizes employability and stakeholder satisfaction as key indicators of curriculum effectiveness. (Andrews & Higson, 2008).

From an employability perspective, the relevance of education is closely linked to the extent to which graduates possess transferable skills applicable across various professional contexts. These skills include not only technical competence but also soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability. (Mutammam et al., 2024; Poláková et al., 2023). In this regard, pesantren education faces a critical challenge in ensuring that its graduates are not only morally and spiritually competent but also capable of competing in a rapidly changing labor market.

This situation highlights a clear research gap. There is still a lack of empirical studies that evaluate the relevance of the KMI curriculum using a multi-stakeholder approach that integrates perspectives from institutional actors, alumni, and graduate users. Existing studies often rely on single-source data, which limits the depth and validity of findings. Moreover, there is insufficient integration between curriculum content, implementation processes, and graduate outcomes within a comprehensive evaluative framework that reflects real community needs and employability demands. (Jorre de St Jorre & Oliver, 2018).

From a theoretical standpoint, this gap can be understood as the absence of a structured evaluation model that systematically connects different dimensions of curriculum relevance. One such model is the Context–Input–Process–Product (CIPP) framework, which provides a comprehensive approach to evaluating educational programs by examining the relationship between societal needs (context), curriculum design (input), implementation practices (process), and educational outcomes (product) (Sankaran & Saad, 2022). Similarly, outcome-based evaluation emphasizes assessing the competencies graduates demonstrate rather than focusing solely on curriculum content or teaching processes. (Morcke et al., 2012).

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by evaluating the relevance of the KMI curriculum at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Kunir in relation to community needs and graduate competence. The study adopts a multi-stakeholder perspective, integrating data from institutional actors, alumni, and graduate users to provide a more comprehensive understanding of curriculum relevance.

Specifically, this research aims to answer the following questions: (1) What aspects of the KMI curriculum content are oriented toward fulfilling community needs? (2) How is the KMI curriculum implemented to support these orientations? (3) What are the implications of the curriculum for the relevance of graduate competence in meeting societal demands?

This study contributes to the field of religious education in several ways. First, it provides an empirical evaluation of the relevance of the pesantren curriculum using a multi-stakeholder approach, which has been relatively underexplored in previous research. Second, it integrates theoretical perspectives from curriculum evaluation and employability studies, thereby strengthening the analytical framework of pesantren education research. Third, it proposes a more comprehensive understanding of curriculum relevance grounded in the alignment among religious, social, and employability competencies.

In a broader sense, this study responds to the growing need for educational models that are both contextually grounded and globally relevant. By examining the KMI curriculum through the lens of community needs and graduate competence, the study offers insights into how traditional Islamic education can adapt to contemporary challenges while maintaining its core values. As such, it contributes not only to academic discourse but also to the practical development of more responsive and adaptive pesantren curricula in the future.

Methods

Research Design. This study employed a mixed-methods approach with concurrent triangulation, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and integrated during analysis. (Finger et al., 1995). This design enables cross-validation of findings and provides a comprehensive understanding of curriculum relevance. The study is theoretically guided by the Context–Input–Process–Product (CIPP) evaluation model, which frames the analysis of community needs (context), curriculum content (input), implementation practices (process), and graduate competence (product).

Research Site and Time. The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Kunir, Indonesia, which implements the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah* (KMI) curriculum. This site was selected due to its integrated curriculum model that combines religious education, general subjects, and life skills development, making it a representative case of a contemporary pesantren that attempts to balance traditional Islamic scholarship with modern educational demands. (Aedi, 2014; Tamam & Syaefudin Sa'ud, 2016). The study was carried out over six months, from June to December 2025, covering stages of instrument development, data collection, and data verification.

Population and Sample. The population of this study consisted of KMI graduates and alumni, including employers, community leaders, and institutional stakeholders. The quantitative sample included 100 graduates and 50 graduate users. Sampling was conducted using purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) graduates who had completed the KMI program, (2) users who had direct experience interacting with or employing graduates, and (3) willingness to participate in the study.

For qualitative data, 19 informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. These informants included pesantren leaders, KMI administrators, teachers, alumni, and graduate users, representing multiple stakeholder perspectives relevant to curriculum evaluation.

Table 1. Research participants

No	Initial	Age/Gender	Education/Position
1	KH. SH	58/Male	Kiai
2	BT	40/Male	Doctor/Head of Al Hidayah Foundation
3	AW	26/Female	Bachelor/Director of KMI
4	MH	38/Male	Bachelor/Deputy Director KMI
5	IT	40/Male	Bachelor/Teacher
6	W	46/Female	Bachelor/Teacher
7	MJ	30/Female	Bachelor/Teacher
8	SH	51/Male	Bachelor /Teacher
9	AM	36/Male	HS Graduate/Graduate
10	UY	48/Male	Bachelor/Teacher
11	WM	38/Male	HS Graduate/Graduate
12	DE	23/Female	HS Graduate/Graduate
13	AR	34/Male	HS Graduate/Graduate
14	SM	35/Male	Bachelor/Graduate
15	AH	50/Male	HS Graduate/Graduate Users
16	S	40/Male	Bachelor/Graduate Users
17	AS	24/Male	HS Graduate/Graduate
18	DR	34/Male	HS Graduate/Graduate Users
19	EF	30/Male	Bachelor/Graduate

Data Collection

Data were collected through four techniques:

1. Survey

A structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (1 = very low to 5 = very high) was administered to graduates and graduate users. (Pranatawijaya et al., 2019). The instrument measured perceptions of graduate competence across five indicators: religious competence, communication skills, work ethics, analytical skills, and technical skills.

2. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences and perceptions regarding curriculum content, implementation, and outcomes. (Fadhallah, 2021).

3. Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

FGDs were conducted to facilitate in-depth discussions among stakeholders and to enrich qualitative findings. (Sugarda, 2020).

4. Observation and Document Analysis

Observations of learning activities and analysis of curriculum documents were conducted to understand the structure and implementation of the KMI curriculum. (Abidin, 2024).

Instrument Validity and Reliability. The questionnaire instrument was developed based on relevant literature on graduate competence and curriculum evaluation. Content validity was established through expert judgment involving two education experts. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha. The results showed that the instrument achieved a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.87 (overall), with construct-level values of 0.85 (religious competence), 0.83 (communication skills), 0.81 (work ethics), 0.79 (analytical skills), and 0.78 (technical skills) for the overall scale, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability. (Hartono, 2018). In addition, reliability testing for each construct exceeded the minimum threshold, confirming that all indicators used in this study were sufficiently reliable for measurement purposes.

Data Analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and frequency distributions, to identify patterns in graduate competence and stakeholder satisfaction. (Hartono, 2018). Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving data coding, categorization, and theme development. (Adelliani et al., 2023). The analysis focused on identifying patterns related to curriculum relevance, implementation processes, and graduate outcomes.

Data Integration. Data integration was conducted through triangulation by comparing findings from surveys, interviews, FGDs, and observations. This approach enhances the credibility and validity of the findings. (Yusuf, 2016).

Research Ethics. This study adhered to ethical research standards. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were maintained, and the data were used solely for academic purposes.

Findings

1. Curriculum Content of KMI Oriented Towards Community Needs

The findings related to the content of the KMI curriculum, oriented toward fulfilling community needs, were obtained through interviews with KMI administrators and an analysis of curriculum documents. Based on the interview results, one informant stated:

“The KMI curriculum is designed to not only emphasize religious understanding but also the development of social skills and practical expertise of santri.” (MH/38/Male/Deputy Director of KMI)

Another informant explained:

“The KMI curriculum of PP. Darussalam Kunir is different from the KMI adopted from Gontor in other pesantren. KMI here seeks to combine Salaf and modern education methods, and integrate them with the government curriculum.” (BT/40/Male/Foundation Chairman)

In addition, the vision of graduate formation was emphasized by a pesantren leader:

“The profile of KMI graduates PP. Darussalam Kunir is to produce alumni who are *imaman lil muttaqien*, able to lead themselves, their families, and the community with devotion to Allah SWT.” (KSH/58/Male/Kiai)

These findings are reinforced by curriculum documents showing that subjects such as Fiqh Muamalah and Akhlaq Tasawuf are designed to contextualize Islamic teachings within social life. The curriculum structure demonstrates a systematic classification of subjects into core religious sciences, including Fiqh, Aqidah, Tafsir, and Hadith, which serve as the foundation for developing students' spiritual and intellectual capacities.

In addition to religious knowledge, the curriculum also includes subjects such as Arabic Language, Sharia Economics, and Entrepreneurship. These subjects are intended to equip students with practical skills relevant to social and economic contexts. Furthermore, extracurricular programs, such as da'wah activities, leadership training, and social service, are designed to foster social responsibility and community engagement among students.

An extracurricular coach stated:

“The main purpose of these activities is to hone the santri's ability to face social challenges and implement the knowledge they learn.” (SH/40/Male/Teacher)

Interviews with alumni also reveal that the curriculum directly impacts their ability to engage with society. One alumnus stated:

“While studying at KMI, I learned a lot about how to solve social problems and understand community needs. The curriculum does not only focus on religious knowledge, but also trains communication skills.” (WM/48/Male/Graduate)

Other alumni confirmed:

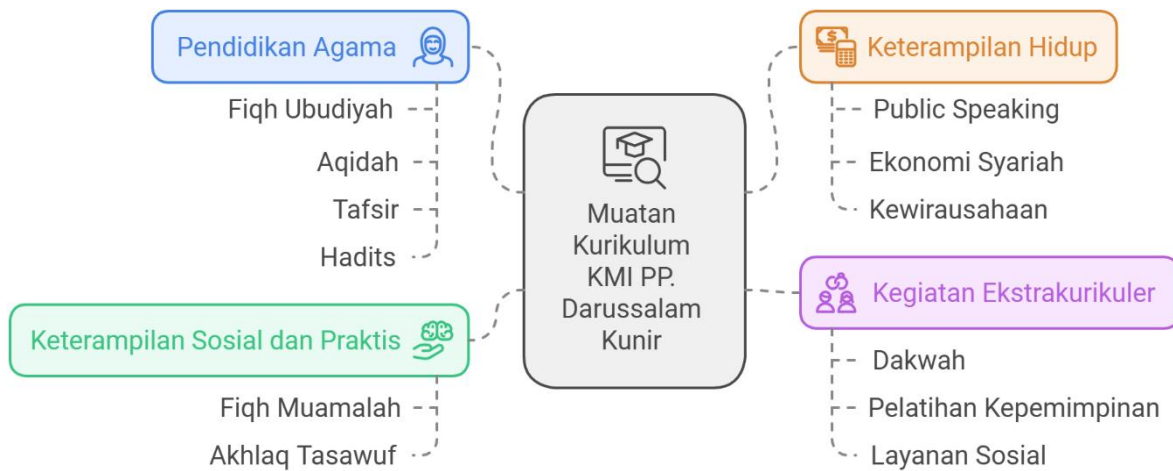
“Extracurricular activities helped us understand how to live in society, especially in leadership and entrepreneurship.” (IT/40/Male/Graduate)

“Khitobah and social training improved my communication skills significantly.” (SM/35/Male/Graduate)

“The KMI curriculum prepared us to take roles in society through both skills and values.” (DE/23/Female/Graduate)

These findings indicate that the curriculum content has been structured to support both religious understanding and the development of social competence.

Figure 1. Curriculum Content of KMI PP. Darussalam Kunir



2. Curriculum Implementation and Learning Practices

The implementation of the KMI curriculum reflects a socially oriented approach that integrates religious knowledge with practical application. Based on interviews with teachers, the curriculum is designed to prepare students to respond to real-life social conditions.

One teacher explained:

“The KMI curriculum not only teaches religious knowledge, but also prepares santri to face social realities and become leaders in society.” (MJ/30/Female/Teacher)

Another teacher stated:

“The subject matter combines religious knowledge with practical skills such as entrepreneurship and leadership.” (UY/48/Male/Teacher)

A further informant emphasized experiential learning:

“We implement learning through direct experience, such as community da'wah and worship practices.” (SH/51/Male/Teacher)

Extracurricular activities also play a significant role in implementing the curriculum. One teacher noted:

“Extracurricular activities such as leadership and social training are essential to develop students' social interaction skills.” (W/46/Female/Teacher)

The Director of KMI highlighted the overall objective of implementation:

“Our focus is to develop santri who are faithful and capable, with a balance between religious knowledge and life skills needed by society.” (AW/26/Female/Director KMI)

These findings show that the implementation process emphasizes experiential learning, knowledge integration, and preparation for social roles.

The implementation of the KMI curriculum reflects a pedagogical model that emphasizes experiential and contextual learning. Data from interviews and observations

show that learning is not limited to classroom instruction but is extended through structured extracurricular activities, daily routines, and community-based practices. This expanded learning ecosystem indicates that knowledge acquisition occurs across multiple settings, allowing students to internalize concepts through continuous engagement rather than isolated instructional episodes. The continuity of exposure across these settings also suggests that learning is reinforced through repetition and habituation, strengthening retention and practical applicability.

Teachers and administrators consistently describe the implementation process as integrative, combining formal teaching with practical application. Activities such as *khitobah* (public speaking), leadership training, and community service are systematically embedded within the learning process. These activities function as extensions of classroom learning, enabling students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-life situations. Moreover, the repetition of these practices reinforces skill acquisition, suggesting that competence development is not incidental but intentionally cultivated through structured exposure and practice. This integrative approach also indicates that learning design is purposive, aligning instructional strategies with expected behavioral outcomes.

The effectiveness of this implementation approach is evident in the development of students' communication skills and social adaptability. Observational data indicate that students are regularly engaged in public speaking, organizational roles, and collaborative activities, which contribute to their confidence and interpersonal competence. In addition, these repeated engagements appear to strengthen students' ability to navigate diverse social situations, suggesting that the curriculum not only transmits knowledge but also shapes behavioral readiness for community interaction. This suggests that the curriculum implementation effectively translates intended learning outcomes into observable, measurable student behaviors, providing empirical support for the effectiveness of experiential learning practices.

In addition, the *pesantren* environment plays a crucial role in reinforcing learning practices. The daily structure of activities, including religious rituals, communal living, and disciplinary systems, creates a continuous learning environment that supports character formation. This environment ensures that learning is not episodic but sustained and embedded within daily life. The integration of formal and informal learning contexts further indicates that character and competence formation are mutually reinforcing processes, supported by both institutional structure and cultural practice. Such an environment allows values and behaviors to be internalized gradually through consistent exposure and social interaction.

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal limitations in implementation practices, particularly in the development of technical and analytical skills. While experiential learning is well-established in social and religious domains, it is less evident in areas that require structured analytical training, such as problem-solving, data analysis, and digital literacy. This suggests that the implementation process, while effective in certain domains, does not yet fully support the development of higher-order cognitive skills. As a result, the pedagogical approach appears uneven in its capacity to foster comprehensive competence formation, particularly in domains that require systematic, technology-supported learning interventions. This imbalance indicates a need for more deliberate integration of cognitively demanding learning activities to complement existing experiential strengths.

3. Graduate Competence and Stakeholder Expectations

The evaluation of graduate competence provides a comprehensive picture of curriculum outcomes from a stakeholder perspective, combining quantitative indicators

with qualitative insights. Quantitative data indicate that 80% of graduate users rate religious competence as excellent, with a mean score of 4.2. Communication skills and work ethics are evaluated positively by 75% of respondents, with a mean score of 4.0. In contrast, only 65% of respondents rate analytical and problem-solving skills as adequate, with a lower mean score of 3.6. These figures illustrate a clear hierarchy of competence domains, suggesting that certain areas are more effectively developed than others within the current curriculum structure.

Table 2. Graduate Competence Based on User Perception (n = 50)

Competency Area	Percentage (%)	Mean Score (1-5)
Religious Competence	80%	4.2
Communication Skills	75%	4.0
Work Ethics	75%	4.0
Analytical & Problem-Solving Skills	65%	3.6

Source: Survey data, 2025

These results point to a differentiated competence profile among graduates. Religious competence emerges as the strongest domain, followed by social competencies, while analytical skills represent the weakest area. This pattern indicates that curriculum outcomes are not uniformly distributed across competency domains but instead reflect the emphasis embedded in both the curriculum content and its implementation. Competencies that are continuously reinforced through daily practices and institutional routines—such as religious observance and communication—tend to be more fully internalized compared to those requiring structured cognitive training.

Qualitative data further reinforce these findings by providing contextual depth. Graduate users consistently report that alumni demonstrate strong moral character, effective communication, and high discipline. These attributes are particularly valued in community-based roles, where interpersonal interaction and ethical conduct are essential for maintaining social cohesion and trust. At the same time, several respondents note that graduates face challenges when required to engage in tasks involving analytical reasoning or technical problem-solving. These challenges often arise in contexts that demand structured thinking, data interpretation, or engagement with technology, highlighting a gap between traditional competence formation and contemporary skill requirements.

Graduate perspectives provide additional insight into this pattern. While most graduates express satisfaction with teaching methods (85%, mean = 4.3) and teacher support (70%, mean = 4.1), a significant proportion (60%) indicates that educational facilities require improvement, particularly to support more effective learning processes. This perception suggests that learning infrastructure plays a non-trivial role in shaping competence outcomes. Limited access to technological resources, digital tools, or specialized learning environments may constrain opportunities for developing analytical and technical skills, even when curricular intentions are present.

Table 3. Graduate Perception of Learning Quality (n = 100)

Indicator	Percentage (%)	Mean Score (1-5)
Teaching Methods	85%	4.3
Teacher Support	70%	4.1
Educational Facilities	60%	3.5

Source: Survey data, 2025

The convergence of quantitative and qualitative data highlights a consistent, mutually reinforcing pattern: the curriculum is highly effective in producing graduates with strong religious and social competencies, but less effective at developing technical and analytical skills. This alignment between different data sources strengthens the internal validity of the findings and suggests that the observed competence profile is not incidental but structurally embedded within the educational process.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the KMI curriculum achieves a high level of relevance in relation to traditional community expectations, particularly in producing morally grounded and socially capable graduates. However, the gap in analytical and technical competencies indicates that curriculum outcomes are only partially aligned with the broader demands of contemporary society, especially those associated with technological advancement and knowledge-based work environments. This suggests that while stakeholder expectations in religious and social domains are largely met, expectations related to modern employability are only partially fulfilled, highlighting the need for a more balanced development of competencies in future curriculum refinement.

Discussion

1. Religious Competence as the Core Strength of the KMI Curriculum

The findings of this study firmly establish religious competence as the central strength of the KMI curriculum at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Kunir. This outcome is not incidental but reflects a deliberate curricular orientation that prioritizes the mastery of core Islamic sciences such as Fiqh, Aqidah, Tafsir, and Hadith as foundational pillars of student formation. In practice, this emphasis is consistently reinforced through both structured classroom instruction and the broader pesantren learning environment, where religious values are internalized as part of daily life. Empirical evidence indicates that 80% of graduate users rated religious competence as excellent, reinforcing the argument that pesantren graduates are still expected to function as moral authorities and spiritual leaders within their communities. This high level of recognition not only reflects the effectiveness of the curriculum but also confirms the continued social legitimacy of pesantren as institutions of moral and religious authority.

From the perspective of the Context–Input–Process–Product (CIPP) framework, this strength demonstrates a strong alignment between community expectations (context) and curriculum design (input). The data show that 85% of community respondents emphasize the importance of religious competence, confirming that pesantren education continues to play a central role in preserving religious values and ethical behavior. (Halil, 2022). This alignment suggests that the curriculum effectively fulfills its foundational mission within the socio-religious context in which it operates, particularly in communities where religious guidance remains a primary expectation. Moreover, this alignment indicates that the curriculum is not only internally coherent but also externally validated by stakeholder perceptions.

At the input level, the structured inclusion of religious subjects ensures a systematic and comprehensive approach to knowledge transmission. This aligns with the concept of

holistic education, which integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. (Masturoh & Mahmudi, 2023). In addition to formal subject matter, the curriculum is supported by a hidden curriculum that emphasizes discipline, ethical conduct, and spiritual practice. Furthermore, the implementation process reinforces religious competence through daily practices, extracurricular religious activities, and institutional discipline, creating a learning environment that extends beyond formal instruction and fosters continuous character development. This integration of formal and informal learning processes deepens and sustains religious competence among students.

However, while this strength is undeniable, it also raises a critical issue regarding curriculum balance. The dominance of religious competence may lead to an uneven distribution of learning emphasis, potentially limiting the development of other competencies that are increasingly required in contemporary contexts. This imbalance reflects not a weakness in religious education itself, but rather a challenge in achieving curricular proportionality. Therefore, this does not imply that religious competence should be reduced, but rather that it should be integrated more strategically with other skill domains—particularly technical, analytical, and digital competencies—to ensure comprehensive and future-oriented graduate development.

2. Social Competence and Pesantren-Based Employability

Beyond the domain of religious formation, the findings indicate that the KMI curriculum demonstrates a substantial, systematically embedded capacity to cultivate social competence, particularly in communication proficiency and the internalization of work ethics. Approximately 75% of graduate users provided positive evaluations of these competencies, suggesting that graduates possess a relatively high level of social adaptability and can function effectively in diverse and dynamic community contexts. This empirical pattern reinforces the argument that pesantren should not be conceptualized merely as institutions of doctrinal transmission, but rather as socially embedded educational systems that actively prepare individuals to assume participatory, mediating, and leadership roles within communal life. In this regard, the KMI curriculum operates not only as a pedagogical framework but also as a mechanism of socialization that shapes behavioral dispositions, ethical orientations, and relational competencies.

Analytically, this outcome can be situated within the experiential character of pesantren pedagogy, wherein learning extends beyond formal classroom instruction and is enacted through lived, embodied, and repetitive practice. Activities such as *khitobah* (public speaking), structured leadership training, organizational participation, and community engagement programs function as pedagogical instruments that facilitate the development of interpersonal, rhetorical, and organizational capacities. These practices enable students to engage continuously in authentic communicative situations, thereby strengthening not only their technical speaking abilities but also their confidence, reflexivity, and ethical awareness. Such findings are consistent with experiential learning theory, which posits that knowledge acquisition is most effective when mediated through cycles of action, reflection, and conceptualization. (Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Within this framework, the pesantren environment can be conceptualized as a socio-pedagogical ecosystem in which competence is constructed through iterative interactions between theoretical knowledge and practical application, rather than through isolated instructional episodes.

From an employability perspective, these competencies correspond to what is widely conceptualized in the literature as “soft skills,” a category that has gained increasing prominence in discussions of graduate readiness and workforce integration. As articulated by Collet et al. (2015), employability is inherently multidimensional, encompassing not only domain-specific knowledge but also dispositional attributes such

as communication, adaptability, ethical orientation, and collaborative capacity. (Collet et al., 2015). Within this conceptualization, the KMI curriculum can be interpreted as effectively fostering what may be termed “social employability,” particularly in roles that require sustained interpersonal engagement, community interaction, and normative responsibility. This positioning highlights a distinctive comparative advantage of pesantren education, namely its capacity to embed character formation and interactional competencies within everyday institutional practices rather than isolating them within discrete or compartmentalized curricular units.

Furthermore, the systematic integration of extracurricular programs into the broader curricular architecture significantly amplifies the development of leadership, teamwork, and organizational competencies. Students are not only trained to communicate effectively but are also required to coordinate activities, manage responsibilities, and navigate complex social dynamics within institutional structures. Empirical evidence from prior studies indicates that participation in such programs enhances students’ adaptability to both social environments and professional contexts. (Rahma & Suryanto, 2022). Consequently, pesantren education presents a distinctive model of competence formation in which social skills are not peripheral by-products but are structurally embedded within the rhythms and routines of daily institutional life, ensuring continuity and contextual reinforcement.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that contemporary conceptions of employability extend beyond social competence alone. While the curriculum demonstrates considerable effectiveness in cultivating interpersonal and ethical dimensions, it remains comparatively limited in addressing the broader constellation of competencies demanded by modern labor markets, particularly those associated with technical expertise, analytical reasoning, and technological literacy. This limitation indicates that, although socially grounded employability is well-developed, it does not yet translate into a fully comprehensive employability profile. As such, a more robust alignment with contemporary workforce expectations necessitates the deliberate integration of additional skill domains, including digital competence, critical thinking, and problem-solving capabilities. Without such integration, graduates may remain socially competent yet structurally constrained in accessing more competitive and technologically oriented professional fields.

3. Technical and Analytical Skill Gap in Pesantren Curriculum

One of the most significant findings of this study is the gap in technical and analytical competencies among graduates. Survey results indicate that only 65% of respondents rated these skills as adequate, making this the weakest dimension of graduate competence. This relatively low evaluation signals not merely a minor deficiency, but a systemic issue that warrants deeper analytical attention, particularly in the context of rapidly evolving labor market expectations and the increasing complexity of knowledge-based economies. The finding suggests that competence formation within the KMI curriculum is unevenly distributed, raising critical questions about how curricular priorities shape graduate outcomes across different domains.

This gap reflects a structural limitation in the curriculum, in which traditional knowledge systems are not yet fully integrated with modern technological and analytical demands. Although the curriculum includes elements such as entrepreneurship and general education, these components appear insufficient to develop higher-order thinking skills and technical proficiency. In particular, the absence of structured exposure to data analysis, digital tools, computational thinking, and applied problem-solving frameworks suggests that students may not be adequately prepared to navigate complex, knowledge-intensive environments. Consequently, the curriculum’s existing design,

while strong in foundational knowledge and value-based formation, does not yet provide the scaffolding required for advanced cognitive skill development. This indicates a need to reconceptualize curriculum content not only as a repository of knowledge but as a platform for developing adaptive and transferable competencies.

From the CIPP framework, this issue represents a misalignment at the product level. While the curriculum design (input) and implementation (process) are relatively strong, the outcomes (product) do not fully meet the expectations of contemporary labor markets. This indicates that curriculum relevance cannot be assessed solely based on design and implementation but must also consider the effectiveness of outcomes in real-world contexts. More importantly, this misalignment suggests that the evaluation of curriculum success must incorporate performance-based indicators that reflect real-world application of competencies, rather than relying exclusively on internal curricular coherence or normative educational goals. In this sense, the findings call for a shift toward outcome-oriented evaluation practices that prioritize measurable graduate performance.

Furthermore, the limited emphasis on digital literacy and problem-solving skills highlights a critical gap in adapting to the demands of the digital era. As noted by Jorre de St Jorre and Oliver (2018), modern graduates are expected to possess transferable skills such as critical thinking, technological literacy, and problem-solving (Jorre de St Jorre & Oliver, 2018). The absence of structured training in these areas suggests that the curriculum requires strategic enhancement, particularly in integrating technology-mediated learning environments, inquiry-based pedagogical approaches, and interdisciplinary problem-solving experiences. Without such integration, the curriculum risks producing graduates who are well-grounded in values but underprepared for technologically driven professional contexts, thereby limiting their capacity to participate in broader economic and professional domains.

This finding also aligns with broader discussions in employability research. Andrews and Higson (2008) emphasize that successful graduates must combine soft skills with technical competencies to remain competitive in modern labor markets. (Andrews & Higson, 2008). The observed imbalance in this study supports the notion of an “asymmetric competence profile,” in which certain competencies are well-developed while others remain underdeveloped. This asymmetry underscores the importance of recalibrating curricular priorities to ensure a more balanced distribution of competencies that aligns with both traditional educational goals and contemporary workforce demands. It also highlights the necessity of viewing competence development as an integrated process rather than a segmented outcome.

In this context, the challenge for pesantren education is not merely to preserve its traditional strengths but to integrate them with new forms of knowledge and skills. Such integration requires not only curriculum redesign but also pedagogical transformation and institutional readiness, including teacher capacity development, infrastructure support, and organizational commitment to innovation. Without these adjustments, graduates may face structural limitations in accessing broader professional opportunities, particularly in sectors that demand high levels of analytical reasoning and technological proficiency. Therefore, addressing this gap is not simply a matter of curricular addition, but a strategic imperative for ensuring the long-term relevance and sustainability of pesantren education in a rapidly changing world. More fundamentally, it calls for a reorientation of educational philosophy toward a more integrative and future-oriented model of competence formation.

4. Theoretical Contribution to Curriculum Relevance in Religious Education

This study makes a significant contribution to the theoretical understanding of curriculum relevance within the context of religious education by integrating the CIPP evaluation framework, employability perspectives, and empirical findings derived from

pesantren education. This integration provides a more comprehensive and multidimensional perspective on curriculum evaluation, shifting the focus from merely describing curriculum structures to critically examining how educational outcomes are manifested in real social contexts.

One of the key theoretical contributions is the formulation of an “asymmetric competence profile,” which describes the imbalance between strong religious and social competencies and comparatively weaker technical and analytical skills. This concept extends existing curriculum evaluation frameworks by emphasizing that educational outcomes are not always evenly distributed across competency domains. Instead, they reflect institutional priorities, cultural orientations, and curricular emphasis embedded within the educational system.

In the context of the KMI curriculum, this asymmetry reflects a deliberate focus on value-based education, prioritizing moral formation and spiritual depth. However, as modern educational demands continue to evolve, this imbalance becomes a critical point of analysis. It suggests that curriculum development should not aim to reduce existing strengths, but rather to strategically enhance underdeveloped competencies in order to achieve a more balanced and adaptive competence profile.

In addition, this study proposes a triadic model of curriculum relevance consisting of three interconnected dimensions: religious competence, social competence, and employability competence. These dimensions interact dynamically to determine the curriculum's overall effectiveness. Religious competence provides moral and spiritual grounding, social competence enables effective engagement within community contexts, and employability competence ensures adaptability in professional and socio-economic environments. This model offers a conceptual bridge between traditional Islamic education and contemporary competency-based frameworks, demonstrating that both paradigms can be integrated rather than positioned as opposing systems.

From a broader perspective, the study reinforces the importance of outcome-based evaluation in educational research. By focusing on graduate competence as the primary indicator of curriculum effectiveness, the study shifts attention from curriculum design and implementation to real-world impact. This approach aligns with contemporary trends in education, in which the success of a curriculum is increasingly measured by its ability to produce graduates who can function effectively in society.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the complex relationship between religious education and modernization. Pesantren institutions operate within a dual framework: preserving religious traditions while simultaneously responding to contemporary societal demands. This dual role requires a curriculum that is both stable in its foundational values and adaptive in its pedagogical and competency orientations. As argued by Azra (2019), Islamic education must undergo continuous reform to remain relevant, not by abandoning its identity, but by integrating new forms of knowledge and skills. (Azra, 2019).

However, the findings indicate that this process of modernization remains partial. While the KMI curriculum has successfully integrated social and religious competencies, it has not yet fully incorporated technical and analytical skills. This condition reflects what can be described as “partial modernization,” where certain dimensions evolve while others remain relatively static. To address this imbalance, pesantren institutions must adopt a more integrative approach that combines religious knowledge, social competence, and technical skills within a unified curriculum framework. This aligns with the concept of holistic education, which emphasizes the development of the whole person across multiple domains.

The theoretical insights generated by this study also have important implications for curriculum development and educational policy. First, the KMI curriculum needs to

strengthen the integration of technical and analytical competencies by incorporating digital literacy programs, problem-based learning, and vocational training modules. Second, pesantren institutions should enhance collaboration with external stakeholders, including universities, industries, and government agencies, to provide students with exposure to real-world challenges and facilitate the transfer of practical skills.

Third, curriculum evaluation should be conducted regularly using a multi-stakeholder approach. By incorporating feedback from alumni, graduate users, and community members, pesantren can continuously improve the relevance of their educational programs. Fourth, improving educational facilities and learning resources is essential, as indicated by the finding that 60% of graduates perceive current facilities as insufficient. This suggests that infrastructural development is a critical component in supporting effective competency formation.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that the KMI curriculum is highly effective in maintaining its core function as a provider of religious and moral education while also showing moderate success in developing social competencies. However, the identified gap in technical and analytical domains underscores the need for further curriculum enhancement. By integrating CIPP, employability, and religious education perspectives, this study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding curriculum relevance. More importantly, it offers conceptual and practical directions for strengthening pesantren education as a key contributor to both spiritual development and socio-economic progress.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the KMI curriculum at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Kunir aligns strongly with community needs, particularly in developing religious competence, communication skills, and work ethics among graduates. These dimensions reflect the enduring strength of pesantren education in cultivating value-based competencies that are socially recognized and culturally embedded. However, the findings also indicate that this alignment is not yet fully comprehensive, as gaps remain in analytical and technical competencies required in contemporary socio-economic contexts. This imbalance suggests that while the curriculum is effective in addressing traditional expectations, it has not yet fully responded to the increasing complexity of modern labor market demands. Thus, the relevance of the KMI curriculum can be understood as partial yet significant, reflecting its strength in value-based education while simultaneously highlighting the need for strategic adaptation to technological advancement and professional skill requirements.

From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes to the discourse on Islamic education by integrating the CIPP evaluation framework with an outcome-based and employability-oriented approach. This integration enables a more systematic understanding of how curriculum design, implementation, and outcomes interact within real societal contexts. The study introduces the concept of an “asymmetric competence profile,” which captures the imbalance between strong religious and social competencies and relatively weaker technical skills. In addition, it proposes a triadic model of curriculum relevance, comprising religious, social, and employability competencies, as an analytical framework for evaluating pesantren curricula. These contributions extend existing literature by offering a more holistic and multidimensional perspective on curriculum relevance. In practice, the study implies that curriculum development in pesantren should prioritize integrating digital literacy, problem-solving skills, and technical competencies. This can be supported through curriculum innovation, the integration of technology-based learning, and strengthened collaboration with external stakeholders, such as universities, industry, and government institutions. Furthermore,

improving educational facilities and learning resources is essential to support the effective implementation of these competencies.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations that should be carefully considered. First, the use of descriptive statistical analysis limits the depth of quantitative interpretation, as it does not allow for more complex analysis of relationships between variables. Second, the focus on a single institutional context may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other pesantren with different characteristics and organizational structures. Third, although the study adopts a multi-stakeholder approach, the number of respondents remains relatively limited, which may influence the representativeness of the data. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ more advanced analytical methods, such as inferential statistics or structural modeling, to enhance analytical rigor. In addition, expanding the research scope to multiple pesantren institutions would provide a more comparative and generalizable understanding of curriculum relevance. Further studies could also explore the integration of digital and vocational competencies within Islamic education in greater depth, particularly in relation to the challenges of the digital era and the evolving demands of the global workforce.

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