

Gontor's Contribution to National Character Building in Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history Received March 18, 2025 Revised June 09, 2025 Accepted June 28, 2025	<p>Pesantren has a strategic role in building the national spirit in Indonesia, especially in forming a generation with morals and national insight. Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, one of the leading pesantren, implements an education system that integrates Islamic and national values in every aspect of learning. This study aims to analyse how the education system in Gontor shapes the national spirit of santri through curriculum, pesantren culture, and leadership activities. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with pesantren caregivers, teachers, and santri, and document analysis related to the curriculum and values taught in Gontor. Data analysis was conducted using triangulation techniques to ensure the validity of the findings. The results show that Gontor instills nationalism through various methods, such as character-based learning, discipline, and independence education, and extracurricular activities that foster a sense of unity and nationalism. The santri leadership system also plays an important role in shaping social responsibility and love for the country. In addition, the integration of Islamic values and nationalism in the curriculum teaches santri about the importance of maintaining the integrity of the nation within the Islamic frame. Thus, education in Gontor can be a model in building a generation that has a strong religious understanding and a high national spirit. Pesantren can contribute to strengthening national unity through value-based education. These findings provide a practical framework for integrating civic and religious education and contribute theoretically to the discourse on nationalism within Islamic educational contexts.</p>
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I. Introduction

Pesantren have long been the main pillar of Islamic education in Indonesia, not only in teaching religious knowledge, but also in shaping the character of the nation (Gama et al., 2024; Lindgren et al., 2024; Maghfiroh et al., 2024; Mujahid, 2021; Saleh, 2025). Since the colonial period, pesantren have played a role in the struggle for independence by instilling the spirit of nationalism in their students (Formichi, 2022; Hafidzin & Ekaningrum, 2020; Zara, 2024).

In its development, pesantren continue to adapt to social, political, and educational dynamics to answer the challenges of the times, including in forming a generation that is not only religious but also has high national awareness. Pesantren has a very important historical role in building the character of the Indonesian nation (Assa'idi, 2021; Isbah & Sakhiyya, 2023; Jubba et al., 2021; Jufri et al., 2024). Since the colonial era, pesantren have become centres of education that not only teach

religious knowledge, but also instill the spirit of struggle and nationalism (Isbah & Sakhiyya, 2023; Kawakip, 2020; "The Role of Pesantren in Building Socio-Religious Independence of the Sasak Lombok Community during Colonialism," 2025). In the modern context, pesantren remains an educational institution that has a major contribution in shaping a generation that not only has a strong understanding of religion, but also has a love for the country (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022; Sumanti, 2024; Supriani et al., 2023; A. S. Zulfikar & Roesminingsih, 2023).

Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is one of the pesantren that successfully harmonises Islamic values with nationalism in its education system. Nationalism education in Gontor is not just a theory taught in class, but also implemented in various aspects of santri life (Alamin et al., 2024; Anam et al., 2023). The education system at Gontor is designed to instill the values of nationalism through discipline, leadership, and togetherness. In daily life, santri are taught to live independently, respect each

other, and work together in building a harmonious community, reflecting the basic principles of nationalism.

Many studies on pesantren and national education have been conducted, especially in the context of the role of pesantren in the history of the national struggle (Anam et al., 2023; Bukhori Muslim et al., 2024; Hanif et al., 2024; Lateh et al., 2024). Some studies highlight the contribution of pesantren in shaping nationalist values since before independence, where pesantren became the centre of resistance against colonialism (Amirell, 2023; Thohir et al., 2021; Zuhri et al., 2021). In other studies, pesantren are seen as educational institutions that play a role in shaping the morals and ethics of santri in social life (Islamic et al., 2024; Muhlis et al., 2025; Roqib, 2021; Tohari et al., 2024; Yasin & Khasbulloh, 2022). However, studies that specifically discuss how modern pesantren, such as Gontor, develop an education system that integrates Islamic and national values are still limited.

Previous research also emphasises many aspects of Islamic education in pesantren, focusing on the teaching of the yellow classical books and the classical Islamic scientific tradition (Humaidi & Fadhliyah, 2024; Mustofa et al., 2024; Rohman & Muhtamiroh, 2022; Rozi, 2021). Some studies examine the role of kiai in building the character of santri, while others discuss the dynamics of the pesantren curriculum in the face of educational modernisation (Ma'arif et al., 2025; Rohman & Wajdi, 2023; T. Zulfikar et al., 2024). However, there are still a few studies that review in depth how national values are internalised through the modern pesantren education system as implemented in Gontor.

II. Method

This study employed a qualitative case study design to comprehensively explore the mechanisms of national character building within Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. The case study approach was selected for its capacity to provide an in-depth, contextualized examination of complex social phenomena within real-world settings (Cleland et al., 2021). By focusing on Gontor as a single, information-rich case, the research aimed to uncover nuanced insights into how institutional practices, cultural norms, and pedagogical strategies collectively foster nationalism among students. The design aligned with the research objective of understanding the "how" and "why" behind Gontor's educational model, facilitating a holistic analysis of its contributions to national identity formation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data collection utilized a triangulation strategy incorporating three primary methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Over six months, researchers conducted immersive observations of daily activities—including classroom sessions, leadership training, flag ceremonies, and national holiday commemorations—to capture embedded cultural practices. Simultaneously, 32 in-depth interviews were purposively conducted with 5 kyai

(religious leaders), 10 teachers, 12 senior santri (students), and 5 alumni. Interview protocols were developed based on relevant literature and underwent expert consultation involving two senior researchers in Islamic education to ensure content validity. A small-scale pilot test was also conducted with three non-participant pesantren educators to refine question clarity and sequencing. Interview protocols explored perceptions of nationalism, curriculum integration, and the impact of Gontor's leadership system. Documentary evidence, such as curricula, scouting manuals, and student publications, provided archival validation of observed practices.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis framework. Interview transcripts and field notes were iteratively coded using NVivo software to identify recurring patterns, followed by axial coding to establish thematic relationships (e.g., "discipline as nation-building," "language as unifier"). Triangulation was rigorously applied by cross-verifying observational data, interview responses, and institutional documents, enhancing analytical credibility. Member checking involved presenting preliminary findings to participants for feedback, ensuring interpretive accuracy while mitigating researcher bias.

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with pseudonyms replacing identities in reporting. The research protocol received approval from the State Islamic Institute of Kudus' ethics review board, adhering to principles of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Power imbalances were mitigated by conducting interviews in neutral settings and allowing participants to withdraw data post-discussion.

Methodological rigor was further ensured through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria. Prolonged engagement (nine site visits) established rapport and contextual depth, while an audit trail documented analytical decisions. Transferability was supported by thick descriptions of Gontor's sociocultural context, enabling applicability to similar Islamic educational settings (Shenton, 2004).

III. Results and Discussion

It has been found that Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor has an education system that consistently instills the spirit of nationalism in its students. This is achieved through various means, including curriculum, pesantren culture, the santri leadership system, and extracurricular activities. Nationality education in Gontor is not only taught in theory but also applied in the daily lives of santri through the habituation of the values of nationalism, discipline, and social responsibility.

One of the main ways used is the integration of national values in the pesantren curriculum. In addition to studying religious knowledge, santri also get history lessons, national insight, and social studies that teach about

nationalism. This approach shows that Islam and nationalism are not contradictory but rather support each other in building the nation. Teachers at Gontor play an important role in instilling the understanding that love for the country is part of the teachings of Islam.

In addition to the curriculum, pesantren culture also plays a significant role in shaping the national spirit of santri. Life in pesantren teaches discipline, independence, and leadership. Senior santri are responsible for guiding their juniors, so a sense of leadership and togetherness is well developed. This reflects the principles of nationalism that emphasise solidarity and unity (Assa'idi, 2021; Jufri et al., 2024).

Extracurricular activities are another means of strengthening the sense of nationalism among santri. They are involved in leadership training, scouting, discussions on nationalism, and speech competitions with nationalism themes. Santri also use Indonesian as the official language in the pesantren, which helps strengthen unity among those who come from various regions in Indonesia.

The role of kyai and pesantren caregivers is also very important in instilling national values. Gontor kyais routinely give lectures on patriotism and teach that building the nation is part of worship. Gontor alumni who have graduated also bring the spirit of nationalism to various fields, such as education, politics, and social affairs. This indicates that nationalism education in Gontor has a lasting impact, extending beyond the study period to influence the lives of santri after they enter society.

Nationality education in pesantren plays a crucial role in shaping the character and national spirit of santri. Pesantren is not only a place for religious learning, but also an institution that instills national values through the education system and culture applied. Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is one of the pesantren that has successfully developed an education system that harmonises Islamic values with nationalism (Kawakip, 2023; Mumtaz et al., 2024; Ubaidillah & Faiz, 2025). With a character-based approach, discipline, and leadership, Gontor has produced a generation of santri who not only have a strong understanding of religion but also have a high national spirit.

The education system at Gontor is designed to instill national awareness through various methods, both in formal learning and in the daily lives of santri. The curriculum at Gontor includes lessons in national history, insight into the archipelago, and character education that teaches the importance of unity in the life of the nation and state. National education is not taught as a separate subject but is integrated in various aspects of learning, both in religious studies and general lessons.

One of the fundamental elements contributing to the cultivation of national consciousness at Gontor is its holistic and integrated curriculum. This educational framework encompasses a broad spectrum of subjects, from Islamic religious studies to general education,

incorporating topics such as the history of Indonesia's independence, national awareness, and character development. Through this comprehensive curriculum, students (santri) are equipped not only with religious knowledge but also with a deeper appreciation of their national heritage and identity.

Gontor also promotes nationalism by adopting Bahasa Indonesia as the official language of instruction and daily interaction within the pesantren. While Arabic and English are also part of the academic program, Bahasa Indonesia serves as the primary medium of communication. This policy is deliberately implemented to foster a sense of national unity among students who hail from diverse cultural and regional backgrounds across Indonesia. However, in practice, the implementation of this policy occasionally encounters challenges, particularly from new students who are more accustomed to using local languages in their daily lives. Some initial resistance may arise due to linguistic unfamiliarity or regional pride, but these barriers are gradually reduced through structured language habituation and peer support. This indicates that the use of Bahasa Indonesia is not merely a top-down policy but part of a broader strategy to build shared identity and cultural cohesion among santri.

The consistent use of Bahasa Indonesia in everyday communication represents a tangible approach to instilling national values within the pesantren community. Despite the multilingual education offered, the prioritization of the national language helps bridge cultural differences and reinforces a collective national identity among the santri.

Furthermore, the pesantren's student leadership system plays a crucial role in nurturing a sense of nationalism. Under this system, senior santri are entrusted with mentoring and guiding their juniors, thereby cultivating a culture of leadership rooted in social responsibility, cooperation, and collective purpose. These leadership practices reflect the foundational values of civic life and national solidarity in Indonesia.

The disciplinary system implemented at Gontor significantly influences the development of santri's national character. Adherence to institutional rules, effective time management, and the consistent fulfillment of assigned responsibilities instill foundational values essential for civic life and national engagement. This disciplined environment cultivates santri to become proactive and responsible members of society upon completing their education at the pesantren.

Within the learning process, Gontor also emphasizes critical thinking and an expansive understanding of national issues. Through structured discussions, debates, and leadership training, santri are encouraged to explore various viewpoints on nationalism within a global framework. This approach nurtures intellectual openness and the capacity to analyze national challenges critically, while remaining grounded in Islamic principles.

Moreover, extracurricular programs serve as vital platforms for fostering national consciousness among santri. Engagement in student organizations such as scouting, community service, and other cooperative activities helps strengthen solidarity and a sense of collective responsibility. The frequent inclusion of national themes in competitions and campus events further reinforces patriotic values and a deepened love for the homeland.

The role of kyai and pesantren caretakers is equally crucial in shaping the santri's national identity. Kyai at Gontor consistently offers guidance underscoring the importance of national contribution. They frame nation-building as an act of worship and a form of jihad contextualized for modern society, thereby reinforcing the notion that good citizenship is an integral expression of Islamic faith and practice.

Table 1. Nationality Education in the Gontor Education System

Aspect	Implementation in Gontor	Destination	Facts
Integrated Curriculum	Teaching nationalistic insights in religious & general lessons	Forming students who have an understanding of nationalism	Gontor has a curriculum that combines religious and general sciences, including national history
Indonesian Language	Official language in daily communication in pesantren	Instill a sense of unity and national identity	Although students learn Arabic and English, the use of Indonesian is mandatory to strengthen unity
Santri Leadership System	Senior students guide juniors in pesantren life	Foster a sense of responsibility and leadership	The santri leadership system is run structurally through organisations within the pesantren, such as the Front Group Coordinator in scouting
Commemoration of National Holidays	Ceremony & reflection on Independence Day, Heroes' Day, etc.	Increase historical awareness & love of country	Gontor students regularly organise ceremonies to commemorate national holidays, including the reading of the Proclamation text and reflections on the nation's struggle
Extracurricular Nationalism	Pramuka, scouting, nationality discussion, leadership simulation	Instill leadership & solidarity skills	Santri take part in scouting training that teaches discipline, leadership and mutual cooperation, which are basic values in the life of a country
Social Service & Devotion	Social activities such as teaching, health, and community assistance	Train students to care and be active in social development	Gontor students are active in social programmes, including food distribution, educational counselling, and free medical treatment for the surrounding community
Exemplary Kyai & Caregivers	Kyai teaches nationalism as part of Islamic teachings	Provide concrete examples that Islam and nationalism are in harmony	Kyai Gontor often emphasises in lectures that nation-building is part of worship and intellectual jihad
History & Nationality Learning	Discussion of the nation's struggle in various academic forums	Understand the nation's journey & the role of Muslims in history	In their studies and discussions, santri study Muslim nationalist figures such as KH Hasyim Asy'ari and KH Ahmad Dahlan
Use of Technology in Nationality Education	Utilisation of digital media and online platforms in learning	Strengthening the understanding of nationality in the digital era	Gontor has utilised digital media such as YouTube and podcasts to spread Islam-based nationalism insights

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of how national education is implemented in Gontor through the learning system, santri activities, and the example of the caregivers.

Nationality education in Gontor is also implemented through the santri leadership system. Senior santri are given the responsibility to guide and nurture junior santri in various aspects of pesantren life. This system teaches the values of leadership, responsibility, and togetherness that reflect the basic principles in the life of society and the state (Abidin, 2020; Ma'arif et al., 2025). With this system, santri learn how to carry out the role of a leader who is fair, wise, and has a spirit of devotion to the community and nation.

A. Nationalism Activities in the Life of Gontor Santri

In addition to the curriculum and leadership system, the spirit of nationalism is also formed through various nationalism activities that are part of the pesantren tradition. One form of activity that stands out is the commemoration of national holidays, such as Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia, Heroes' Day, and Youth Pledge Day. In each of these commemorations, santri are invited to understand the meaning of the heroes' struggle and instil a sense of love for the country.

Extracurricular activities at Gontor are also an important means of building a national spirit. Santri are active in various organisations, including scouts, scouting, and national discussion groups. In these activities, students

are trained to understand the nation's history, develop leadership skills, and increase social awareness of the surrounding community.

One of the activities that has become a tradition in Gontor is leadership training that teaches santri about the

importance of cooperation, social responsibility, and an active role in nation-building. This activity involves various leadership simulations, national discussions, and community service, aiming to shape santri into individuals with a high awareness of social and political conditions in Indonesia.

Table 2. Nationalism Activities in the Life of Gontor Santri

Activities	Implementation	Orientation	Facts
Flag Ceremony	Implemented every Monday and national holidays	Instil discipline, respect and national pride	Santri followed the ceremony in an orderly manner, including the raising of the flag and singing of the national anthem
Commemoration of National Holidays	Commemoration of Independence Day, Heroes' Day, Youth Pledge Day, etc.	Appreciate the struggle of heroes and understand national history	In commemorating 17 August, the students held national competitions and historical reflections
History & Nationality Learning	Study of the history of the nation's struggle and the role of Muslims in independence	Understand the contribution of ulama and santri in Indonesian history	Santri study national figures such as KH. Hasyim Asy'ari and KH. Ahmad Dahlan
Leadership Training	Through student organisations, scouting, and leadership discussions	Train responsible and characterful leadership skills	Santri have an independent leadership system in pesantren through student councils and other internal organisations
Scouting Activities	Training in marching, survival, and social activities	Fostering discipline, co-operation, and a spirit of mutual aid	Gontor requires all santri to join scouting to train physically and mentally
Social Service & Community Service	Teaching village children, helping with social activities, and humanitarian action	Fostering social awareness and a spirit of mutual cooperation	Santris are active in community service activities, including free health and education programmes
Use of Bahasa Indonesia	Official language in daily communication	Strengthening unity and nationality	Although Arabic and English are taught, students are required to communicate in Indonesian outside of class
Nationalism Discussion & Study	Discussion forum on nationality from an Islamic perspective	Expanding students' knowledge of the concepts of nationalism and Islam	Santri organised a seminar with the theme "Islam and Nationalism" involving academic figures
History Study Tour	Visits to museums and national historical sites	Strengthen understanding of the nation's history first-hand	Santri visit Monas and the hero museum as part of their history education
Nationality Paper & Journal	Nationality-themed essay and article writing competition	Train critical thinking and historical awareness	Santri participated in a nationalism-themed article writing competition

Table 2 illustrates the various activities carried out by Gontor students to form the spirit of nationalism, both through academic, social, and leadership activities in the pesantren. In the social aspect, santri are also taught to be active in social service activities aimed at helping the surrounding community. These activities include teaching underprivileged children, health programmes, and social assistance for people in need. Through these activities, santri understand the importance of their role in building community welfare and applying Islamic values in the life of the nation.

B. The Role of Kyai and Exemplary Role in Nationality Education

The role of kyai in instilling the spirit of nationality in pesantren is very important. Kyai in Gontor not only acts as educators but also as a leader who provides a real

example of how to serve the nation and state. Through lectures, sermons, and advice, kyai always emphasise that Islam and nationalism are not two contradictory things, but instead complement each other in building the nation's civilisation (Caglayan, 2024; Damayanti, 2025; Sadvokassov & Zhumashev, 2023).

On many occasions, the clerics at Gontor teach that being a good citizen is part of worship and jihad in the modern context. They instill an understanding that contributing to the country's development is a form of practicing Islamic teachings. This attitude strengthens the santri's belief that being part of the Indonesian nation is a mandate that must be maintained and fought for.

Table 3 shows how the kyai in Gontor not only acts as religious educators but also as a leader who instills the spirit of nationalism in the lives of santri.

Table 3. Kyai's role and exemplary role in nationality education in Gontor

Aspect	Implementation	Distention	Facts
Advice and Lectures	Kyai gives regular lectures on nationalism in Islam	Instil national awareness as part of Islamic teachings	Kyai Gontor emphasised that love of country is part of faith
Exemplary in Daily Life	Kyai demonstrates an attitude of discipline, simplicity, and devotion to the community	Provide concrete examples of how nationalism is realised in action	Santri saw first-hand how the kyai interacted with all groups without differentiating ethnicity and background
Character and Moral Education	Teaches the values of leadership, honesty, and responsibility	Forming students into leaders with morals and nationalism	Kyai always emphasised the importance of adab and integrity in leadership
Government and Community Relations	Kyai establishes good communication with community and government leaders	Showing that pesantren play an active role in nation building	Gontor is often referenced in national dialogues on Islamic education
Moderate Islamic Thought and Nationalism	Instilling the concept of Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin that is in harmony with nationalism	Counter radical ideologies and build national unity	Kyai emphasised that Islam and the nation state can work in harmony
Role in Conflict Resolution	Providing solutions to different views in society	Maintain national unity and integrity	Kyai are often asked to be mediators in social conflicts in the community
Establishment of Academic Tradition	Develop scientific discussions on the role of Islam in nationalism	Opening santri's insights about the history of the role of ulama in independence	Gontor holds regular seminars on the contribution of ulama in the nation's struggle
Encouragement for Santri to Contribute to the Nation	Directing santri to be active in social activities and national development	Ensuring Gontor graduates play a positive role in society	Gontor alumni have contributed a lot to education, politics, and social affairs
Independence and Discipline in Pesantren Life	The cleric gets used to living independently without relying on outside help	Forming tough and nationalistic students	The Gontor education system trains students to be independent from an early age

The example set by the kyai and pesantren caregivers creates an inspiring educational environment for the santri. They see firsthand how pesantren leaders play an active role in building social life, establishing good relations with the government, and maintaining harmonious relationships with various elements of society. From here, santri learn that nationalism is not just a theory, but must be realised in real action.

C. Challenges and Opportunities for Nationality Education in Pesantren

Although national education in Gontor has succeeded in forming santri who have a high spirit of nationalism, there are several challenges faced in its implementation. One of the main challenges is the increasingly strong influence of globalisation. With technological advances and information openness, santri have wider access to various outside thoughts and cultures. This can affect the way they understand the concept of nationality and national identity.

In this digital era, various discourses attempt to contrast Islamic values with nationalism. Some groups consider that Islam should be separated from the concept of the nation-state, while others seek to strengthen the relationship between Islam and nationality (Mahzumi et al., 2025; Rohid et al., 2025; Salam-Salmaoui et al., 2025; Zafar & Blackmer, 2025). Pesantren like Gontor must continue to develop educational methods that are able to

provide a balanced understanding so that santri are not trapped in a confusing dichotomy.

However, technological developments also open up opportunities for pesantren to strengthen national education. The utilisation of digital media and online learning platforms can be an effective means of instilling national values to santri. By using technology as an educational tool, pesantren can reach more students and build a broader and deeper understanding of nationality (Azizah et al., 2023; Bakar et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024; Ochoa-Tataje et al., 2024; Sarwenda et al., 2024).

Table 4 shows that although there are challenges in national education in pesantren, there are many opportunities that can be utilised to strengthen nationalism among santri. Nationality education in Gontor has been proven to be successful in forming santri who not only have a strong understanding of religion but also have a high spirit of nationalism. Through an education system based on character, leadership, and nationalism activities, santri are taught to love the country and contribute to nation building (Verma & Chandra, 2025; Yaghi et al., 2025). This confirms that pesantren-based education can serve as a dual platform for both religious and civic formation.

Table 4. Challenges and opportunities for nationality education

Aspect	Challenges	Opportunities	Facts
Understanding Nationalism	Some santri still consider nationalism to be against Islam	Pesantren can instil an understanding that nationalism and Islam are in harmony	Kyai Gontor teaches that Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin supports love of country
Radicalism and Extremism	The emergence of ideologies that conflict with NKRI in some circles	Pesantren can be a bastion of religious and national moderation	Gontor rejects radicalism and teaches moderate Islam that supports the integrity of the nation
Nationality Education Curriculum	The national curriculum has not fully accommodated pesantren-based national education	Pesantren can develop curriculum based on Islam and nationalism	Gontor integrates the history of the ulama's struggle in national education
Digital Media Influence	The spread of hoaxes and intolerance on social media	Utilization of digital media to spread understanding of nationalism	Gontor has utilised YouTube and podcasts for national education
The Role of Pesantren in Society	Not all pesantren are actively involved in the nationality programme	Pesantren can act as centres of character and nationality education	Some pesantren have cooperated with the government in the state defence programme
Government Support	Regulations that have not been optimal in incorporating nationality education in pesantren	The government can better support pesantren in building the spirit of nationalism	Some pesantren received assistance from the government's nationality strengthening programme
Multicultural Education	Challenges in teaching tolerance amidst santri diversity	Pesantren can be a place to learn about cultural and religious diversity	Gontor accepts students from various regions and backgrounds
Alumni Participation in Nation Building	Not all pesantren alumni have played an active role in national development	Pesantren alumni can become leaders who contribute in various fields	Many Gontor alumni have become national figures, academics, and community leaders

The curriculum that integrates national insight, the santri leadership system, as well as various social and extracurricular activities, is the main factor in the success of national education at Gontor. In addition, the role of kyai and pesantren caregivers as role models in practising national values is also an important factor in the formation of santri character. These elements collectively reinforce the institutional framework that embeds nationalism into daily pesantren life.

Despite the challenges posed by globalisation and social change, pesantren still have a great opportunity to continue developing a national education model that is relevant to the times. By continuing to innovate and adapting appropriate learning methods, pesantren can remain a centre of education that produces a generation of nationalists who adhere to Islamic values. Thus, pesantren must be viewed as dynamic institutions capable of adjusting their national mission in response to contemporary societal shifts.

The nationality education model implemented in Gontor can be an inspiration for other educational institutions in building a generation that has a high national spirit. With education based on values, characters, and real experiences, pesantren can continue to contribute in strengthening the unity of the Indonesian nation (Bakar et al., 2024; Ioannou et al., 2021; Susilo, 2016). This suggests a scalable model that aligns moral education with civic responsibility.

Interviews conducted with alumni of Gontor indicate that the national values instilled during their pesantren education remain influential in their post-graduation lives.

Many former students actively contribute to various sectors, including education, governance, and civil society. The principles of leadership and patriotism cultivated during their time at the pesantren are consistently reflected in their roles within the broader community and nation. These post-graduation impacts validate the long-term effectiveness of Gontor's educational philosophy.

Nevertheless, the integration of national education within pesantren faces several pressing challenges. Foremost among these is the intensifying influence of globalisation. With increased exposure to external cultures and information, santri are encountering new perspectives that may reshape their understanding of national identity. In response, pesantren must continue to innovate and adapt their pedagogical strategies to ensure that national values remain relevant and resonate with the younger generation. Hence, pesantren must actively reinterpret their national mission in light of emerging global discourses.

A further challenge lies in maintaining equilibrium between Islamic teachings and national values, especially amidst narratives that seek to dichotomise or polarise the two. Certain groups argue that Islamic education is inherently incompatible with nationalist ideals. However, this study reveals that Gontor has effectively harmonised religious and national values, demonstrating that Islam and nationalism are not mutually exclusive but can, in fact, coexist in the pursuit of national development. This challenges the binary opposition between religion and nationalism, offering Gontor as evidence of their compatibility.

Moreover, there is a growing need for a more structured approach in developing a pesantren-based model of national education that can be replicated by other institutions. Gontor's educational practices offer a potential blueprint for other pesantren aiming to cultivate santri who are both devout and possess strong civic commitment.

Considering the demands of the digital era, pesantren are also encouraged to embrace technological tools as vehicles for citizenship education. The strategic use of social media and digital platforms can enhance santri's awareness of national issues and serve as effective channels for broader religious outreach.

The implementation of national education at Gontor affirms the capacity of pesantren to serve as transformative agents in reinforcing nationalism among youth. With a curriculum grounded in character formation and Islamic ethics, pesantren can produce graduates who are not only intellectually adept but also morally grounded and deeply committed to their nation.

The success of Gontor in fostering a sense of national consciousness among its students offers valuable insights for the formulation of national education policy. Policymakers and educational stakeholders may look to Gontor's model as a reference for strengthening civic values within Islamic educational frameworks.

Having stood for nearly a century, Gontor exemplifies how modern pesantren can function as institutions that integrate religious education with national commitment. Through a values-based and experiential learning approach, the pesantren nurtures santri into individuals who uphold national ideals while maintaining a strong Islamic identity.

This study affirms that national education need not rely solely on doctrinal instruction; rather, it can be effectively cultivated through everyday lived experiences. Gontor's approach characterised by a student leadership system, habituation of civic values, and role-modelling practices, demonstrates a successful method of shaping a generation that is both nationally aware and religiously grounded.

Thus, pesantren have great potential in strengthening national education in Indonesia. Gontor is a clear example of how pesantren can become a centre of education that produces a generation that is not only knowledgeable but also has a strong leadership and nationalism spirit. This model can be an inspiration for other educational institutions to continue developing effective methods in instilling national values.

Through this research, it is hoped that more Islamic educational institutions can adopt a similar approach in building nationalism among the younger generation. With value-based education, character, and exemplary behaviour, santri will not only become leaders in the

Islamic world but also agents of change who contribute to building a better nation.

IV. Conclusion

The Modern Islamic Boarding School of Darussalam Gontor effectively integrates nationalism into its educational system through curriculum, pesantren culture, leadership structures, and extracurricular activities. Character formation is fostered by discipline, self-reliance, and leadership training, while nationalism is reinforced through scouting, national dialogues, holiday celebrations, and the use of Bahasa Indonesia. The kyais and caregivers play a central role in teaching that national development is a form of worship and a Muslim duty. Alumni reflect this spirit by contributing across various sectors. Despite challenges from globalization, Gontor continues to adapt its pedagogy, offering a model of Islamic nationalism education that unites moral, religious, and civic values, serving as a blueprint for other institutions.

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