



Muhammad Dawam Saleh's Thoughts on the Factors of Success in Education at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the key factors for the success of education at Gontor from the perspective of Muhammad Dawam Saleh. He is an alumnus of Pondok Gontor and the founder and leader of Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah Lamongan. This pesantren applies his analysis of the essence of Gontor's educational success. Additionally, he serves as a member of Gontor's Waqf Board. The research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data was obtained through observation, interviews, and document studies. The results of the study reveal six essential foundations for Gontor's success. First, Gontor successfully implements a well-ordered boarding system, creating a conducive learning environment. Second, Gontor balances religious and general knowledge, providing comprehensive and relevant education. Third, the active use of Arabic and English broadens students' horizons. Fourth, strong discipline is applied in all areas of life, shaping resilient character. Fifth, extracurricular activities and leadership organizations provide valuable experiences for personal development. Sixth, the exemplary behavior of the Kiai in knowledge, practice, and worship serves as an inspiring example for students. An in-depth analysis of these six essences reveals the secret to Gontor's success in producing high-quality, integrity-driven youth. This research contributes to understanding effective and relevant educational strategies for addressing contemporary demands.

Keywords: Education; Nusantara Scholars; Pesantren; Pondok Gontor.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan inovasi pendidikan berbasis lingkungan hidup di pesantren untuk membangun pesantren yang ramah lingkungan. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah keterlibatan pesantren dalam pelestarian lingkungan hidup yang masih terbatas meskipun ajaran Islam secara tegas mendukung nilai-nilai keberlanjutan ekologis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi pustaka kualitatif untuk menganalisis literatur terkait pesantren, pendidikan lingkungan hidup, dan strategi keberlanjutan dalam konteks lembaga pendidikan Islam. Temuan utama penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa pesantren memiliki potensi yang signifikan untuk menjadi agen perubahan dalam pendidikan berbasis lingkungan hidup. Beberapa pesantren telah mulai menerapkan program ramah lingkungan, tetapi berbagai tantangan harus dihadapi, termasuk keterbatasan sumber daya, infrastruktur, dan resistensi terhadap inovasi. Penelitian ini memiliki nilai penting karena memberikan model inovasi pendidikan yang mengintegrasikan ajaran Islam dengan prinsip-prinsip keberlanjutan dan relevan dengan tantangan lingkungan global yang semakin mendesak. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini memperkuat paradigma pendidikan Islam yang ramah lingkungan, yang sejalan dengan upaya internasional untuk mengatasi perubahan iklim.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan; Pesantren; Pondok Gontor; Ulama' Nusantara.

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia plays a vital role in shaping the character and quality of future generations.¹ However, the main challenge is integrating religious values with modern science to remain relevant.² Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is one of the educational institutions that successfully integrates religious values with modern science. This approach makes Gontor

¹ Ajar Dirgantoro, "Peran Pendidikan Dalam Membentuk Karakter Bangsa Menghadapi Era Masyarakat Ekonomi Asean (MEA)," *Jurnal Rontal Keilmuan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 2, no. 1 (2016): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.29100/ppkn.v2i1.321>.

² Hafid Hardoyo, "Kurikulum Tersembunyi Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor," *At-Ta'dib* 4, no. 2 (December 1, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.21111/at-tadib.v4i2.590>.

an appropriate and inspiring educational model in Indonesia.³ The main focus of this article is to analyze Gontor's success factors through the perspective of Muhammad Dawam Saleh, an alumnus and member of the Gontor Waqf Board.⁴

Muhammad Dawam Saleh is a 1972 Gontor alumnus who has first-hand experience of undergoing education there.⁵ As the founder of Pondok Al-Ishlah Lamongan, Dawam Saleh applies the principles of Gontor education in his pesantren.⁶ This provides a deep understanding of how Gontor succeeded by combining religious education and modern science.⁷ His perspective, derived from his direct experience and role in Gontor, provides a new contribution to understanding the pesantren education system.

Gontor is known for its educational model that emphasizes a balance between religious and general sciences.⁸ The curriculum is designed to produce graduates who not only have broad insights but also have strong morality and character. One of the theories underlying this approach is character-based education and leadership. The santri are taught to be independent, disciplined, and responsible, creating a supportive learning environment.⁹

One proof of Gontor's success is its thousands of alums spread across various sectors, ranging from academics, community leaders, and professionals to government officials. Gontor alums often become agents of change who positively impact society, demonstrating the effectiveness of the educational approach applied. Education in Gontor is oriented towards mastering knowledge and building a strong character.¹⁰

As a member of the Gontor Waqf Board, Dawam Saleh has direct access to the policies and strategies implemented at the institution. This body plays an important role in formulating the vision and direction of Gontor education, ensuring that the pesantren remain relevant to the times.¹¹ With his position, Dawam Saleh understands how Gontor maintains tradition and innovation in educating the younger generation.

The educational approach at Gontor reflects modern management principles combined with traditional pesantren values.¹² A focus on discipline, leadership, and moral integrity characterizes the system. Every santri is encouraged to develop their potential in various fields, both academic and non-academic. Extracurricular activities and santri organizations in Gontor are essential platforms for shaping leadership skills and social responsibility.¹³

³ Hardoyo.

⁴ Najmah Zahiroh, "Pergolakan Santri Pondok Pesantren Modern Darussalam Gontor 1965-1967," *Journal Pendidikan Sejarah* 9, no. 2 (2020): 10.

⁵ Faruq Effendi, "Pola Komunikasi Antara Kiai Dan Santri Dalam Menghafalkan Al- Qur'an Di Pondok Pesantren Al- Ishlah Sendangagung Paciran Lamongan" 4, no. 1 (2016): 1–23.

⁶ Effendi.

⁷ Joni, Syamsuri, "Eksistensi Dan Kontribusi Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Dalam Pembangunan Sumber Daya Manusia," *At Ta'Dib* 11, no. 2 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.21111/at-tadib.v11i2.776>.

⁸ Ayu Pramudia and Kusuma Wardani, "Pendidikan Islam Dalam Perspektif Trimurti Pendiri Pesantren Gontor," *MODELING: Jurnal Program Studi PGMI* 11, no. 2 (2024): 200–235.

⁹ Khoirul Anam Addarojat, "Pembentukan Karakter Santri Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Berperspektif Global," 2019, 1–147.

¹⁰ M. Ihsan Dachlofany, *Pendidikan Karakter: Belajar Ala Pesantren Gontor* (Tangerang Selatan: Wafi Media Tama, 2015).

¹¹ Jarman Arroisi, "Manajemen Wakaf Pondok Gontor Analisis Model Pemeliharaan Pengembangan Waka Dan Kesejahteraan Umat," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Hukum Dan Ekonomi Islam* 14(2) (2020): 153–76.

¹² Arif Setiawan, "Peran KH . Imam Zarkasyi Dalam Mengembangkan Pondok Pesantren Gontor Ponorogo" 1 (2024).

¹³ Erni Kunanti Ningsih, "Strategi Pembentukan Karakter Kepemimpinan Santri (Studi Pada Organisasi Pelajar Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Kampus 2 Ponorogo)," *Pascasarjana Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ponorogo*, 2022, 1–279.

Through this approach, Gontor has produced graduates who can adapt to global changes without losing their religious identity.¹⁴ This value-based education is a solution to the education challenges in Indonesia, especially in facing a dynamic and challenging modern era. The balance between religious knowledge and modern science is the primary key to forming a generation that is resilient and has integrity.¹⁵

Previous research on Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor highlighted various aspects of pesantren education and management. Triyawan and Novita examined the education of sincerity and responsibility through the OPPM and Kemisan programs as part of the character-building of Gontor Putri students.¹⁶ Ismail highlighted the vital role of the curriculum in the Gontor education system, which can maintain the tradition and identity of pesantren amid modernization.¹⁷ Rahmi and Darajat examined the charismatic leadership of Kiai Gontor, which played a significant role in improving the quality of education and recognition of pesantren at the national and international levels.¹⁸

The distinction of this article lies in the focus of analysis on the thoughts of Muhammad Dawam Saleh as an alumnus, founder of Pondok Al-Ishlah, and member of the Gontor Waqf Board. Unlike previous studies focusing on systems, leadership, and curriculum, this article offers a direct perspective from a figure with a strategic role in Gontor policy and management. The analysis incorporates Dawam Saleh's experience as a practitioner and pesantren leader in applying Gontor's educational principles, providing unique insights into success factors that have not been widely revealed in previous research.

Analysis from the perspective of Muhammad Dawam Saleh is expected to provide new insights into the development of the education system in Indonesia. This approach enriches the study of pesantren and offers concrete solutions for other educational institutions that want to adopt a similar model. This article emphasizes that integrating religious values and science is the key to achieving a better future for Indonesian education.

METHODS

This qualitative study aims to explore the perspective of Muhammad Dawam Saleh on the key success factors in education at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. The study seeks to thoroughly describe and analyze the key elements contributing to Gontor's success using a descriptive approach, as understood from Muhammad Dawam Saleh's viewpoint.

Data for this research were gathered through multiple methods. *First*, direct observation of activities and the environment at Pondok Gontor provided an in-depth understanding of its educational system, and at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah, Kiai Dawam modeled after Gontor. *Second*, interviews and lectures with Muhammad Dawam Saleh offered direct insights into his views on Gontor's educational success. *Third*, document studies, including books, articles, and

¹⁴ Shapiah, "Transformasi Pesantren Di Indonesia : Peran Dalam Pendidikan Islam," 12, no. 3 (2024): 1001–10.

¹⁵ Miswar Saputra and Murdani Murdani, "Society 5.0 Sebagai Tantangan Terhadap Pendidikan Islam," *ISLAMIC PEDAGOGY: Journal of Islamic Education* 1, no. 2 (2023): 132–45, <https://doi.org/10.52029/ipjie.v1i2.158>.

¹⁶ Andi triyawan and Siska Arie Novita, "Pendidikan Integritas Dan Keikhlasan Di Pondok Gontor Putri," n.d.

¹⁷ Moh. Ismail, "Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren Modern Studi Kasus Pendidikan Pesantren Modern Darussalam Gontor Ponorogo," *At-Ta'dib* 6, no. 1 (2011), <https://doi.org/10.21111/at-tadib.v6i1.553>.

¹⁸ Cinta Rahmi, Deden Mauli Darajat, and Pondok Modern, "Kepemimpinan Kyai Gontor Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor" XI, no. September (2023): 364–401.

reports on the history, philosophy, and educational methods of Gontor, provided additional context and understanding.

The data collected from these sources will be analyzed qualitatively to identify patterns, themes, and insights related to Gontor's key success factors. This analysis will inform the conclusions and interpretations of Gontor's educational success from the perspective of Muhammad Dawam Saleh, offering a comprehensive understanding of the factors that have contributed to the institution's achievements.¹⁹

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor

Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, one of Indonesia's leading Islamic educational institutions, has made significant contributions to character-building and the advancement of knowledge for Muslim generations.²⁰ Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, founded on September 20, 1926, in Ponorogo by Trimurti (KH. Ahmad Sahal, KH. Zainuddin Fannani, and KH. Imam Zarkasyi), has become one of the leading Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.²¹ Since its establishment, Gontor has grown by establishing various educational institutions, including Tarbiyatul Athfal (primary education), Kuliyyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah (secondary education), and Darussalam University. The pesantren also expanded its reach through branches such as Gontor II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, and Gontor Putri I, II, III, IV.²² After the death of KH. Imam Zarkasyi, in 1985, continued the leadership of the second generation, who continued Gontor's vision of educating the younger generation based on pesantren.²³

Gontor has a mission to produce future leaders with a strong pesantren identity, combining Islamic values with modern science. The curriculum of Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah emphasizes a balance between religious and general education,²⁴ covering science, mathematics, and languages, with the main focus on character building and high morality.²⁵ The pesantren instills the values of simplicity and independence and keeps a distance from political affiliations, ensuring a learning environment free from sectarian influences. Gontor's educational philosophy encourages santri to become intelligent individuals, have integrity, and be ready to serve the community.²⁶

¹⁹ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2013).

²⁰ Nely Hidayati, "Manajemen Pesantren Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Peserta Didik Di Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Ponorogo" (Master Thesis, Yogyakarta, Universitas Islam Indonesia, 2020), <https://dspace.uin.ac.id/handle/123456789/28680>.

²¹ Najmah Zahiroh and Wisnu Wisnu, "Pergolakan Santri Pondok Pesantren Modern Darussalam Gontor 1965-1967," *Avatara: Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah* 9, no. 2 (September 9, 2020), <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/avatara/article/view/36407>.

²² Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, "Kulliyatu-l-Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyyah," [Gontor.ac.id](https://gontor.ac.id), n.d., <https://gontor.ac.id/kulliyatu-l-muallimin-al-islamiyyah-gontor-putra/>.

²³ Rahmi, Darajat, and Modern, "Kepemimpinan Kyai Gontor Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor."

²⁴ Fajar Nurrohman, "Kepemimpinan Kiai dalam pengimplementasian nilai-nilai pendidikan Pondok Modern Gontor di Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Rajapolah Tasikmalaya" (Master Thesis, Malang, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2022), <http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id/42592/>.

²⁵ M Turmuzi Tahir, Muhammad Muhammad, and Subki Subki, "Penerapan Kurikulum Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyyah Dalam Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan Pesantren," *Jurnal Kependidikan Islam* 14, no. 1 (2024): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.15642/jkpi.2024.14.1.1-10>.

²⁶ Ahmad Suharto and Dan Andi Triyawan, *Nilai-Nilai Kehidupan Yang Telah Diajarkan Kyai Gontor*, 2021.

Gontor's success is reflected in its thousands of alumni spread across various sectors and its contribution to community development through service programs and partnerships.²⁷ By combining traditional pesantren values and modern elements, Gontor utilizes technology and interactive strategies in learning.²⁸ The support of the alum network in the Pondok Modern Family Association (IKPM) strengthens Gontor's position as an influential institution, demonstrating that pesantren-based education can continue to be relevant and contribute positively to the development of the nation and state.²⁹

Profile of Muhammad Dawam Saleh

Muhammad Dawam Saleh, a cleric and philosophy scholar from UGM Yogyakarta, is an alumnus of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, born in Lamongan on November 9, 1953. Coming from the lineage of Sunan Drajat, Dawam Saleh grew up in an environment that valued scientific heritage and religious tolerance.³⁰ Although not from a family of clerics, his interest in education and Islam was apparent from a young age. After completing his education at Gontor, he continued his studies at UGM while teaching at Pabelan Islamic Boarding School. The influence of Walisongo in spreading Islam peacefully helped shape his moderate and inclusive thinking.³¹

As the founder and leader of Al-Ishlah Lamongan Islamic Boarding School, Dawam Saleh is known for his inspiring leadership in shaping students' character and advancing the pesantren.³² He is active in da'wah and political activities as a form of social contribution while continuing to enrich his horizons through the mastery of foreign languages. His focus on character education and integrating religious and general knowledge creates a pesantren environment that produces a generation with broad insight and high integrity.³³

Educational Success at Gontor According to Muhammad Dawam Saleh

In various events such as opening sermons, meetings with students' parents, graduation ceremonies, and other activities at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah, Muhammad Dawam Saleh highlighted six essential factors behind the success of education at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor. These factors include an organized and orderly dormitory system, which shapes students' discipline and character. Additionally, a balance between religious and general knowledge is emphasized to provide students with a comprehensive education. Using Arabic and English ensures that students are linguistically equipped for religious and global contexts. Discipline, including academic and personal conduct, is strictly maintained to foster responsibility and respect. Extracurricular activities and leadership organizations offer students

²⁷ Ifa Atikah, "Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Di Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Ponorogo," *Institut Agama Islam Negeri (Iain) Ponorogo*, no. April (2019): 1–328.

²⁸ Idam Mustofa, "Pendidikan Nilai Di Pesantren (Studi Tentang Internalisasi Pancasila Di Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Ponorogo)," *Disertasi 1*, no. 1 (2019): 83.

²⁹ Saifullah Ahmad, "Buletin IKPM Gontor," *PP-IKPM Gontor*, 2019.

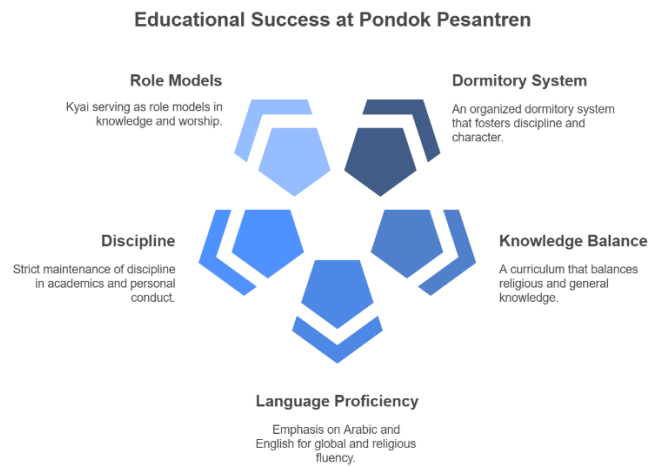
³⁰ A. Rhaeni Subakrun, *KH M. Dawam Saleh: Anak Sopir Yang Mendirikan Pesantren* (Yogyakarta: Bahari Press, 2013).

³¹ M. Arfan Mu'ammam, "Islam Puritan Di Pesantren (Eksistensi Gerakan Purifikasi Dan Dinamisasi)," *Surabaya: Refka Media Pertama*, 2016, 3–5.

³² Sholihah Maratus and Muslih, "Gaya Kepemimpinan Karismatik Kh. Muhammad Dawam Saleh Dalam Manajemen Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah Sendangagung Paciran Lamongan," *MUDIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 1, no. 2 (2019): 1–17.

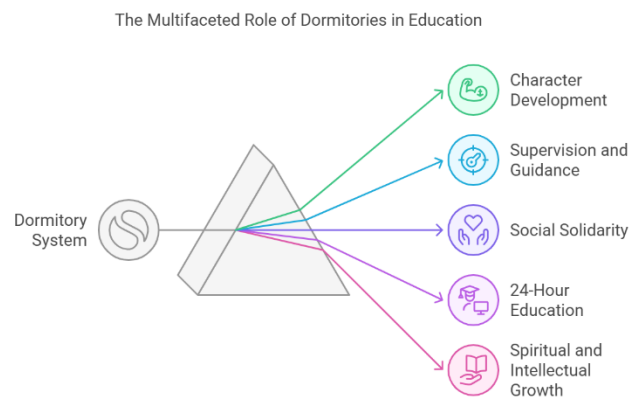
³³ Anis Firrizqiyah, "Peran Kh. Muhammad Dawam Saleh Dalam Pendirian Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah Sendangagung Paciran Lamongan (1986-2014)," 2015.

opportunities to develop soft skills and leadership abilities. Finally, the role models (Uswah Hasan) provided by the Kiai, who lead by example in knowledge, practice, and worship, are important in guiding students' spiritual and personal development.³⁴



First, the Organized and Orderly Dormitory System

Kiai Muhammad Dawam Saleh emphasized that the dormitory system at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor (PMDG) is a key factor in the success of pesantren education. According to him, the dormitory is not just a place to live but the main space for shaping the character, personality, and spiritual quality of santri. With the integration of religious teachings, cultural values, and independence, the dormitories at PMDG create a holistic learning environment, allowing santri to practice these values in their daily lives.



According to Kiai Muhammad Dawam Saleh, the dormitory at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor (PMDG) is the leading vehicle for shaping the character and personality of Santri. Intensive interaction between santri and mentors instills the values of mutual respect, tolerance, and responsibility. The dormitory becomes a social laboratory where santri learns from daily experiences, strengthening moral and spiritual values through the mentor's example. Education in the dormitory lasts 24 hours, allowing santri to develop spiritually, intellectually, and socially through formal and informal activities.

Kiai Dawam also emphasizes that the dormitory system supports planned supervision and guidance, where the supervisor actively monitors and shapes santri behavior. Dormitories

³⁴ Muhammad Dawam Saleh, “Ceramah Umum” (Lamongan, 19 November Jam 20.00, 2023).

create solidarity and togetherness, encouraging santri to live in harmony, work together, and support each other. In Kiai Dawam's view, dormitories are not just a place to live but also an integral part of pesantren education that plays a significant role in forming a generation with strong character, independence, and readiness to contribute to society.³⁵

The contribution of Kiai Dawam Saleh's thoughts in this context emphasizes that the dormitory is not only a physical facility but an integral part of the pesantren education system that plays a significant role in shaping the character and personality of santri, as well as instilling strong spiritual values through continuous learning.

In pesantren, the dormitory is more than just a residence; it serves as a vital space for education and character development. As part of the pesantren's educational system, the dormitory plays a crucial role in shaping students' personalities and instilling spiritual values.³⁶ Through a 24-hour learning process, students practice Islamic values like worship, discipline, and noble character daily.³⁷ This environment fosters independence as students manage their routines, responsibilities, and personal needs.³⁸

The dormitory also emphasizes community and mutual respect, encouraging students to live harmoniously and support one another. Direct interaction with supervisors and teachers provides continuous mentoring and guidance, reinforcing the values taught. As a result, the dormitory becomes a place of learning and a transformative space that shapes students into responsible, disciplined, and spiritually grounded individuals.³⁹

Second, the Balance Between Religious Knowledge and General Science

Kiai Muhammad Dawam Saleh's thinking about the balance between religious and general knowledge is the main principle in education at Al-Ishlah Islamic Boarding School, Paciran Lamongan. Inspired by the philosophy of Pondok Gontor, Kiai Dawam emphasized that this balance is not just a concept but a fundamental need in producing intellectually intelligent and spiritually strong santri.

Kiai Dawam Saleh emphasizes the importance of balancing religious and general knowledge in pesantren education to form intellectually intelligent and spiritually strong santri. Education in pesantren teaches laws and rituals and instills moral and spiritual values that shape the character of santri. Kiai Dawam believes that spiritual intelligence must go hand in hand with intellectual intelligence so that Santri has high moral awareness, can make wise decisions, and is ready to face life's challenges. This balance provides broad benefits, ranging from a comprehensive understanding of the world to ethical formation, mental well-being, and problem-solving abilities.⁴⁰

³⁵ Muhammad Dawam Saleh, "Wawancara Tentang Pendidikan Di Gontor" (Lamongan, 18 September Jam 10.00, 2023).

³⁶ Riskal Fitri and Syarifuddin Ondeng, "Pesantren Di Indonesia: Lembaga Pembentukan Karakter," *AL-URWATUL WUTSQA: Kajian Pendidikan Islam* 2, no. 1 (June 1, 2022): 42–54.

³⁷ Susi Liawati Sabil Mokodenseho, Sarno Hanipudin, *Pendidikan Islam Di Pondok Pesantren* (Yogyakarta: SULUR PUSTAKA, 2024).

³⁸ Abbas Mansur Tamam Upang, Akhmad Alim, "Manajemen Asrama Dalam Meningkatkan Kedisiplinan Santri Tingkat MTs Di Pesantren Al Kausar," *Tawazun: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 15, no. 2 (2022): 327.

³⁹ Wardah Hanafie Das and Abdul Halik, *Pendidikan Islam di Pondok Pesantren: Problematika dan Solusinya*, vol. 1 (Ponorogo, Jawa Timur: Uwais Inspirasi Indonesia, 2020), <https://repository.iainpare.ac.id/id/eprint/1335/>.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Dawam Saleh, "Wawancara Tentang Pendidikan Di Gontor" (Lamongan, 19 September Jam 16.00, 2023).

By applying this philosophy, Al-Ishlah Islamic Boarding School seeks to produce a generation that is academically intelligent and has noble morals. Kiai Dawam's thoughts become the foundation for forming santri who are ready to face life with confidence, uphold religious values, and positively contribute to society.

Islamic education must balance intellectual and spiritual intelligence to form a strong character and a complete personality. The balance between religious and general knowledge creates academically intelligent students who have high moral awareness, can make wise decisions, and behave according to religious principles. The focus on spiritual intelligence becomes the foundation for shaping the attitudes and behavior of santri, equipping them to face various life challenges with integrity and courage.⁴¹

This balance brings many benefits, from a holistic understanding of the world's ethical and moral formation to improved mental and emotional well-being. Santri is also equipped to solve problems from various perspectives, find meaningful life goals, and establish harmonious social relationships, thus creating a tolerant generation that can contribute positively to society.⁴²

Third, The Use of Arabic and English

Muhammad Dawam Saleh emphasized that the success of education in pesantren, especially Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor (PMDG), lies in the balance between religious and general knowledge, including language mastery. In his view, mastery of Arabic and English is an essential key to opening scientific horizons and strengthening the identity of santri in the era of globalization. Arabic allows santri to directly access the primary sources of Islamic teachings, while English opens opportunities to understand the development of modern Islamic thought and interact in the international arena.

Kiai Dawam Saleh emphasizes mastering Arabic and English in pesantren education. Arabic allows santri to understand the Qur'an and Hadith authentically, deepening religious understanding and preventing distortions in interpreting sacred texts. Meanwhile, mastery of English opens access to modern Islamic literature and global research, allowing santri to keep up with developments in science and technology.

According to Kiai Dawam, English proficiency encourages cross-cultural and religious dialogue, strengthens tolerance, and equips santri with diplomacy skills. With this balance, santri has a strong religious foundation and is ready to compete in the global arena as agents of change that benefit the broader community.

Thus, Kiai Dawam Saleh's contribution lies in encouraging language mastery as the main foundation of pesantren education. The balance between Arabic and English enriches Santri's insight and strengthens their position as individuals with solid Islamic integrity ready to compete globally. Under his guidance, the pesantren is directed to produce a generation of students who are knowledgeable, noble, and prepared to become future leaders.

⁴¹ Agus Miftakus Surur, Siti Mahmudah, and Siti Nur Khasanah, "Integrasi Ilmu Agama Dengan Ilmu Umum Untuk Menghadapi Era Globalisasi," *Jurnal Iqra': Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan* 3, no. 1 (June 27, 2018): 140–61, <https://doi.org/10.25217/ji.v3i1.208>; Edi Nurhidin and Maimunatun Habibah, "Desain Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam Transdisiplin," *JALIE: Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education* 5, no. 1 (March 1, 2021): 170–91, <https://doi.org/10.33754/jalie.v5i1.339>.

⁴² Muhammad Firdaus, *Keseimbangan Antara Ilmu Agama Dan Ilmu Umum* (Jakarta: Yayasan Soebono Mantofani, 2020).

Muhammad Dawam Saleh's view above aligns with the basic principles of Islamic education that place language as a key element in deepening religious understanding and expanding global horizons.⁴³ Muhammad Dawam Saleh's explanation of the importance of mastering Arabic and English reflects the knowledge that Arabic is the primary way to access the sources of Islamic teachings.⁴⁴ At the same time, English opens opportunities for santri to engage in global discourse and the development of science.⁴⁵ This is in line with the idea that mastery of Arabic provides direct access to the Qur'an and Hadith,⁴⁶ which allows for a more authentic and in-depth understanding of the sacred texts, as emphasized in the literature related to the role of language in Islamic education.⁴⁷

In addition, Kiai Dawam's emphasis on English as a means of global interaction and cross-cultural dialogue also aligns with the modern perspective that English language skills strengthen the position of santri in facing the challenges of globalization.⁴⁸ English opens access to literature and academic research and expands santri's involvement in interfaith and cross-cultural dialogue, which supports tolerance and global peace.⁴⁹ Thus, this paper emphasizes that the balance of mastery of Arabic and English is an effective strategy in producing a generation of santri who are proficient in religious knowledge and competitive at the international level.⁵⁰

Fourth, Discipline in All Areas

Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor has long been recognized as one of Indonesia's leading Islamic educational institutions. Its success is inseparable from applying strong discipline in all aspects of life at the pesantren (Islamic boarding school).⁵¹ The thoughts of Kiai Muhammad Dawam Saleh emphasize that discipline at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor is not merely a set of formal rules but a fundamental foundation in the formation of the student's character and personality. For Kiai Dawam, discipline plays a role in instilling the students' awareness of responsibility in various aspects of life, whether religious, academic, or social. This creates an educational environment that encourages balanced spiritual and intellectual growth.

⁴³ Mohammad Ridwan, "Membuka Wawasan Keislaman: Kebermaknaan Bahasa Arab Dalam Pemahaman Islam," *Jazirah: Jurnal Peradaban Dan Kebudayaan* 4, no. 2 (December 5, 2023): 97–110, <https://doi.org/10.51190/jazirah.v4i2.100>.

⁴⁴ Intan Sari Dewi, "Bahasa Arab dan Urgensinya dalam Memahami Al-Qur'an," *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 4, no. 1 (2016): 39–50.

⁴⁵ Widha Nur Hidayah, "Konsep Solusi Terhadap Problem Keterampilan (Skills) Berbahasa Inggris Di Lembaga Pendidikan Indonesia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia* 2, no. 10 (October 25, 2021): 1824–34, <https://doi.org/10.59141/japendi.v2i10.314>.

⁴⁶ Muh. Haris Zubaidillah, "Pentingnya Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Pemahaman Al-Quran Dalam Pengembangan Anak-Anak Muslim: Tinjauan Multi-Dimensi," *Research Gate* 1, no. 1 (2023): 2.

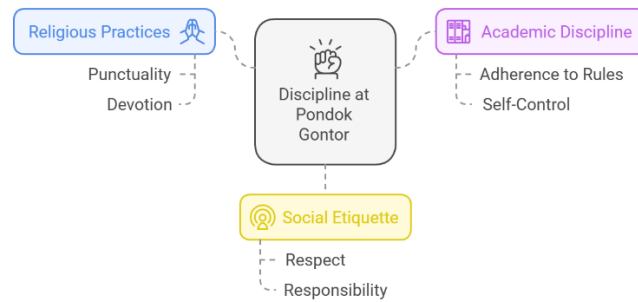
⁴⁷ Asna Andriani, "Urgensi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *Ta'allum: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (June 1, 2015): 39–56, <https://doi.org/10.21274/taalum.2015.3.1.39-56>.

⁴⁸ Ahmad Sakrani, "Integrasi Nilai-Nilai Islam Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris Di MI Al-Islamiyah Bebidas," *Al-Mujahidah* 4, no. 1 (April 13, 2023): 70–81, <https://doi.org/10.51806/al-mujahidah.v4i1.72>.

⁴⁹ Dinara Maya Julijant, "Bahasa Sebagai Medium Komunikasi Antarbudaya," *Pamator* 3, no. 1 (2010): 165.

⁵⁰ Ummah Karimah et al., "Pondok Pesantren Dan Tantangan: Menyiapkan Santri Tangguh Di Era Society," *Al-Fikri: Jurnal Studi Dan Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (June 26, 2023): 42–59, <https://doi.org/10.30659/jspi.6.1.42-59>.

⁵¹ Humas Humas, "Gontor Dan Disiplin," *Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor* (blog), January 12, 2015, <https://gontor.ac.id/gontor-dan-disiplin/>.



Kiai Dawam stresses the importance of self-control and perseverance as part of discipline, which trains students to face challenges with patience and determination. This discipline shapes intellectual intelligence and strengthens mental and moral resilience. Furthermore, discipline at Pondok Gontor aims to instill a sense of responsibility and independence, encouraging students to make decisions consciously and be prepared to face the consequences, thus shaping the character and integrity necessary to contribute positively to society.

Kiai Dawam's main contribution lies in his view that obedience to the pesantren's rules is integral to the students' self-development. Discipline in performing religious duties on time, adhering to class schedules, and maintaining proper manners in daily interactions is not only for short-term benefits but also for instilling noble values that the students will carry with them in life beyond the pesantren.⁵²

Kiai Dawam's perspective on discipline directly contributed to the success of Pondok Al-Ishlah, which he founded in producing outstanding and competitive generations of students. Consistency in implementing discipline creates a conducive educational atmosphere and produces graduates capable of facing global challenges with strong personalities and firm principles.

The concept of discipline at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor aligns closely with the broader emphasis on character development rather than mere rule-following. Discipline is vital for shaping students' personalities, focusing on their spiritual, intellectual, and social growth.⁵³ Kiai Dawam's perspective integrates obedience to the institution's rules and values, which, as highlighted in the description, form a foundational aspect of daily life at the pesantren. This includes punctuality in religious obligations, adhering to schedules, and upholding proper social etiquette—practices that are not just about immediate compliance but also about instilling long-lasting values that the students carry beyond the pesantren.

Emphasis on self-control, perseverance, and accountability further enhances the discipline at Pondok Gontor, making it an essential aspect of academic and spiritual success. Students are encouraged to develop resilience by facing challenges with patience and diligence, as stated in the broader description of the discipline framework.⁵⁴ This comprehensive approach to discipline helps create an environment that fosters independence, integrity, and

⁵² Saleh, "Ceramah Umum."

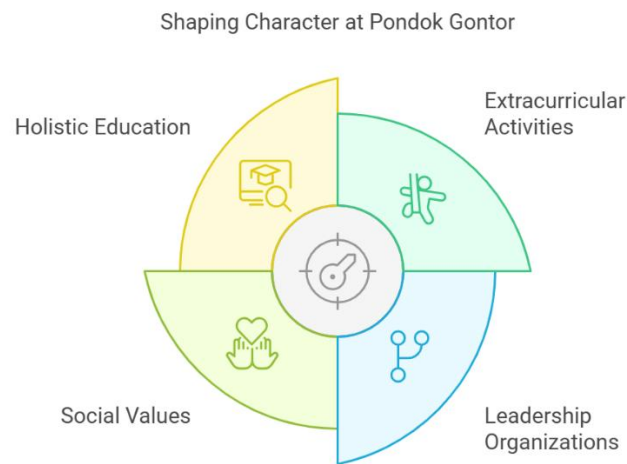
⁵³ Eko Sukmawanto, "Pendidikan Karakter Disiplin Santri di Gontor 5 Banyuwangi" (Masters thesis, Jember, Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, 2017), <http://digilib.uinkhas.ac.id/19848/>.

⁵⁴ Saepul Anwar, "Strategi Penanaman Karakter Disiplin Santri di Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor kampus 3 Darul Ma'rifat Kediri" (Master Thesis, Malang, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2018), <http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id/12647/>.

responsibility. It prepares students not only to succeed within the pesantren but also to become firm, principled individuals capable of contributing positively to society. The disciplined approach at Pondok Gontor thus directly contributes to its reputation for producing students who are well-prepared to meet global challenges with a strong personality and firm principles.

Fifth, Extracurricular Activities and Leadership Organizations

Kiai Muhammad Dawam Saleh's perspective on extracurricular activities and leadership organizations at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor plays a significant role in character development. He views these activities as supplements to formal education and essential tools for fostering strong character and responsible leadership. By providing students opportunities to explore their interests and talents through sports, arts, and religious clubs, these activities help students unlock hidden potential not addressed in the formal curriculum.



Extracurricular activities such as Drama Arena and Panggung Gembira exemplify Kiai Dawam's emphasis on creativity, perseverance, and responsibility. Students learn teamwork, cultural appreciation, and self-expression through these activities through various art forms. This nurtures values of discipline, hard work, and independence, which are key in shaping their character.

Leadership organizations like OPPM and the Scout Coordinator also contribute significantly to character development. Kiai Dawam encourages students to engage in planning and executing activities, helping them develop leadership skills, responsibility, communication, and integrity. These experiences are essential for cultivating wise and effective leadership. Kiai Dawam's thinking also emphasizes social values such as cooperation, mutual assistance, and justice. Activities like gotong royong (community work) teach students to care for others and the environment while fostering solidarity. This instills a strong sense of responsibility within the students as members of a larger community.

In conclusion, extracurricular activities and leadership organizations at Pondok Gontor are crucial in shaping students into individuals with strong faith, knowledge, leadership skills, and social values. Kiai Dawam believes this is an integral part of the holistic education provided by the pesantren, preparing students to become quality leaders who can contribute

positively to society and the nation. His vision has successfully balanced spirituality, intellectual growth, and social responsibility, shaping a generation of principled leaders.⁵⁵

Extracurricular activities and leadership organizations play a crucial role in character development. These activities complement and are tools for shaping strong character and responsible leadership.⁵⁶ By offering students the opportunity to explore their interests through sports, arts, and clubs, they can develop talents not covered by the academic curriculum. These activities foster creativity, discipline, teamwork, and self-expression, helping students unlock hidden potential.⁵⁷

Furthermore, leadership organizations such as OPPM and the Scout Coordinator allow students to practice responsibility, leadership, and teamwork, which are key to developing integrity and effective leadership. The emphasis on social values like cooperation, mutual assistance, and justice through activities like gotong royong strengthens the belief in holistic education, preparing students to be leaders within the pesantren and society. Integrating spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects in these activities reflects the vision of nurturing well-rounded, principled leaders.

Sixth, the Exemplary Role of the Kiai or Leadership

Kiai Muhammad Dawam Saleh's thoughts on the role of Uswah Hasanah (the exemplary role) of the Kiai in shaping the students at Pondok Gontor are highly significant. According to Kiai Dawam, Uswah Hasanah is not just an example or authority figure but also an inspiration that guides students to develop good character and morals. The Kiai is a teacher and a spiritual guide who sets an example in various aspects of life, both religious and daily. The Kiai's role extends beyond teaching religious material and involves shaping noble personality traits.

The Uswah Hasanah of the Kiai is reflected in their daily behavior, which demonstrates sincerity, patience, and perseverance in educating students. Students are expected to practice the values taught daily by emulating this behavior. The Kiai also serves as the guardian of the pesantren's traditions and culture, teaching noble values passed down through generations, ensuring the pesantren consistently promotes Islamic teachings and traditional values. In the context of Pondok Gontor, Kiai Dawam emphasizes that Uswah Hasanah's role also involves leadership development.

The Kiai guides students in religious matters and helps them develop responsible, integrity-driven leadership. The Kiai provides training, direction, and opportunities for students to practice leadership in various aspects of life at the pesantren. According to Kiai Dawam, good leadership requires knowledge and noble character. The Kiai plays a role in instilling values of integrity, responsibility, and ethics in students. By setting a strong example, the Kiai prepares students to be leaders capable of facing the future challenges of society and the nation. Overall, Kiai Dawam's thoughts stress the importance of Kiai's Uswah Hasanah in developing students at Pondok Gontor. Through exemplary behavior, guidance, and nurturing care, the Kiai helps fulfill the pesantren's vision and mission to produce a generation of

⁵⁵ Saleh, "Ceramah Umum."

⁵⁶ Intan Oktaviani Agustina et al., "Peran Kegiatan Ekstrakurikuler Dalam Pembinaan Dan Pengembangan Siswa Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Bintang Pendidikan Indonesia (JUBPI)* 1, no. 4 (2023): 86.

⁵⁷ Meila Weeke Alfulana, Mochammad Fikri Alby Rapsjani, and Ahmad Fauzi, "Kepemimpinan Membentuk Karakter Dalam Pendidikan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia* 2, no. 08 (August 25, 2021): 1387–94, <https://doi.org/10.59141/japendi.v2i08.253>.

Muslim leaders who are strong, moral, and ready to contribute positively to society and the nation.⁵⁸

In Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah, Kiai Dawam's ideas are similarly applied. He emphasizes the significance of Kiai's role as a model of noble character, not only in religious instruction but also in guiding students through personal development and leadership. At Al-Ishlah, the Kiai set an example through daily actions, demonstrating values such as sincerity, patience, and diligence, which students are encouraged to emulate. The pesantren emphasizes the importance of leadership training, where students are entrusted with responsibilities that develop their integrity, commitment, and leadership skills in various aspects of their lives. By applying Kiai Dawam's thoughts, Pondok Pesantren Al-Ishlah nurtures students who are not only academically proficient but also morally upright and prepared to become leaders who can positively impact their communities and society.

Implications of Implementing the Six Pillars of Educational Success in Gontor for the Education Sector

The implementation of the Six Pillars of Educational Success at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor has significant implications for the education sector, including:

First, A Structured and Disciplined Boarding System: This teaches students responsibility, independence, and discipline in their daily lives. The implication is the development of students who are self-reliant and well-organized.

Second, Balance Between Religious Knowledge and General Knowledge: Providing students with a comprehensive and balanced understanding of religious and academic aspects. This produces graduates who are academically knowledgeable and deeply understand religious values.

Third, Use of Arabic and English: Encouraging students to master both languages prepares them to become multilingual individuals capable of adapting to global environments.

Fourth, Discipline in All Aspects: Fostering a sense of responsibility, consistency, and determination in achieving goals. The implication is developing a strong character and focusing on success.

Fifth, Extracurricular Activities and Leadership Organizations: Encouraging students to develop their interests, talents, and leadership skills beyond the academic curriculum. This helps them become talented, experienced individuals ready to face real-world challenges.

Sixth, Exemplary Leadership from the Kiai in Knowledge, Actions, and Worship: Providing a good example for students in various aspects of life, including knowledge, actions, and spirituality. The implication is the development of students who appreciate moral and ethical values.

Overall, applying the Six Pillars of Educational Success at Gontor impacts students' character development and produces graduates who are ready to contribute positively to society and lead with integrity and competence.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the key factors behind the success of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor from the perspective of Muhammad Dawam Saleh reveals six essential elements that

⁵⁸ Saleh, "Wawancara Tentang Pendidikan Di Gontor," 2023.

serve as the foundation for achieving outstanding educational performance. First, a well-organized and disciplined boarding system provides a conducive learning environment for student development. Second, the balance between religious knowledge and general knowledge ensures that students receive a comprehensive education relevant to the demands of the times. Third, the active use of Arabic and English broadens students' horizons and communication skills. Fourth, strong discipline is applied in all areas of life, shaping resilient and responsible characters. Fifth, extracurricular activities and leadership organizations offer students opportunities to develop themselves and their leadership skills. Lastly, the exemplary leadership of the Kiai in knowledge, action, and worship serves as an inspiring model for students, reinforcing moral and spiritual values in shaping their personalities.

By integrating these six essential elements into education, Gontor has successfully produced a generation of young people who are not only intellectually capable but also possess strong moral integrity, robust leadership, and a deep dedication to religion and the nation. Gontor's success in nurturing high-quality young leaders proves that holistic education, grounded in religious values and focused on character building, is the key to securing a bright future for the nation and the country.

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