**Islamic Character Formation in Contrasting Cultures: A Case Study of NU and Muhammadiyah Boarding Schools**

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**Abstract**

 This study aims to analyze and compare the formation of religious identity, internalization of values, and spiritual attitudes of students in two different Islamic education cultures, namely Al-Munawwir Krapyak Islamic Boarding School as a representation of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Yogyakarta as a representation of Muhammadiyah. This study uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, and analyzed using pattern matching strategies based on cross-cultural psychology theories (Hofstede, Berry, and Tajfel). The study results show that the NU pesantren shapes the values and character of the students through internalization based on symbols, traditions, and spiritual relationships. In contrast, the Muhammadiyah pesantren instills values through rational, structural, and discursive approaches. The religious identity of NU students is inclusive and communal, while Muhammadiyah students show normative and argumentative identities. These findings emphasize that the Nusantara Islam and Progressive Islam models are not only an ideological narrative but also function as a cultural framework that shapes the psychological structure of students. This study's novelty lies in identifying an internalized pattern of emotional experience-based values in traditional pesantren and integrating collectivism and rationality in modern pesantren – two things that Western psychological theories have not fully explained. This research contributes to the development of contextual and moderate Islamic education and the basis for policies and further studies in the context of local Islam.

**Keywords:** cross-cultural psychology, pesantren, NU, Muhammadiyah, religious identity, religious moderation

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**Introduction**

With the current rapid flow of modernization and globalization (Ismunandar, 2021), one of the most real tensions in Islamic education in Indonesia occurs within Muslims themselves (Muslimin & Ruswandi, 2022), especially between Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah (Fahruddin, 2025; Nadiyah & Maksum, 2024). The difference in educational culture in NU and Muhammadiyah Islamic boarding schools is not just a variation of methods (Hamami, 2021), but reflects two very contrasting perspectives on religiosity, authority, and the internalization of religious values (Fadzilah et al., 2024; Sumiarti & Azizah, 2024). NU maintains a salaf pesantren system based on kiai (Najib Mubarok, 2019), the yellow book (Adib, 2021), and a thick local tradition, while Muhammadiyah develops modern pesantren based on formal schools (Baidarus et al., 2020), rationality, and universal Islamic values (Pajarianto & Mahmud, 2019). These differences significantly influence the process of forming student identity, attitudes towards authority, and the meaning of religious moderation (Latif & Hafid, 2021; Maemonah et al., 2023). Thus, studying cross-cultural psychology is very important to understand how Islamic boarding school institutions shape religious personalities, social identities, and students' psychological well-being in different cultural frameworks.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah are the two largest Islamic community organizations in Indonesia and the world (Nasih, 2013). NU's traditional base and Muhammadiyah's modernism approach (Malik, 2024) have become the two dominant poles in coloring the national Islamic landscape. According to data from the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (2023), of the total 36,600 Islamic boarding schools spread throughout Indonesia (Lutfiyah et al., 2024), more than 70% are culturally and structurally affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (Fauzi et al., 2023; Maulidati & Abbott, 2024), both directly and in the values and traditions taught. On the other hand, the Muhammadiyah-style boarding school-based education system—known as **Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS**)**—**continues to grow, with more than 440 modern Islamic boarding schools (Ardianto, 2024) formally managed by the Muhammadiyah Organization in various regions. This phenomenon forms **two different cultural value systems**, but both are under the umbrella of Indonesian Islam.

Based on the number of active students reaching more than 4.9 million (Rohmatun & Jannah, 2025), the existence of NU and Muhammadiyah pesantren not only plays a role in education but also in **shaping the religious psychology of the young generation of Indonesian Muslims** (Rahmatullah, 2021). However, until now, there are still few studies that specifically examine the profound differences between the two from the perspective **of cross-cultural psychology**, namely studies that look at how cultural values in a social system affect the way individuals think, feel, and behave (Badaan & Choucair, 2023; Kitayama et al., 2022; Kitayama & Salvador, 2024). Therefore, this research is essential to see how these two large Islamic education systems (NU and Muhammadiyah) shape students' character, identity, and religious attitudes within their respective cultural frameworks.

Previous studies have highlighted the differences in the education system and religiosity values between Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah Islamic boarding schools. Rohman & Herdianto (2022) found that NU pesantren students are more accustomed to affective and symbolic approaches in instilling religious values, while Muhammadiyah students are more guided cognitively and rationally based on the curriculum (Munip, 2012). Meanwhile, Rosidi (2023) shows that the hierarchical pattern of authority and leadership in NU pesantren impacts the emotional closeness of students to kiai, in contrast to the managerial pattern in Muhammadiyah pesantren, which tends to be formal and functional.

In another study, Al Rahmah & Lisnawati (2018) revealed a significant difference in psychological well-being between traditional Islamic boarding school students and modern Islamic-based school students. In addition, Priliyanti & Al-Fath (2024) research noted that students' religiosity is greatly influenced by the cultural context of the organization where they study, regarding worship practices and social interactions. However, most of these studies still emphasize the aspect of education or religiosity alone, and have not explicitly used a cross-cultural psychology framework that examines how organizational cultural values shape students' religious behavior and self-identity. Therefore, this research is essential as a novelty, by offering a cross-cultural psychological approach to compare the dynamics of internalizing values and constructing student identities in two Islamic boarding school systems that are historically and culturally very different.

Seeing the complexity of the differences in the education system and the way of internalizing religiosity in NU and Muhammadiyah Islamic boarding schools (Fahruddin, 2025), it is essential to conduct research that can reveal more deeply how institutional culture shapes the psychological construction of students in living their religious lives. It is not enough to only assess from formal aspects such as the curriculum or daily activities. Still, analyzing how collective values, power relations, authority structures, and communication styles in the pesantren environment shape self-constructiveness, social identity, and attitudes towards diversity is necessary.

Through a cross-cultural psychological approach, this study offers a new way to read the dynamics of students' lives from an internal perspective, namely their subjective experiences as individuals living in an established but ideologically different religious value system. Aspects such as *power distance* between students and kiai (Saputera & Tendean, 2020), individualism-collectivism in social interaction (Laili et al., 2023), and acculturation strategies to global cultures will be the primary focuses dissected in this study (Berry, 2009; Hofstede et al., 2010). This research not only produces a comparative mapping between NU and Muhammadiyah Islamic boarding schools, but can also contribute new theoretical concepts in the discourse of moderation, religious identity, and character education based on local values in the framework of cross-cultural psychology.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze and compare cultural values, religious socialization strategies, and the construction of religious identity of students in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah Islamic boarding schools from the perspective of cross-cultural psychology. This research is designed to answer the central question: How does the culture of religious education institutions shape students' understanding of religiosity, authority, and social diversity? This study explores the differences and similarities in the parenting style of the Islamic boarding school, the form of the relationship between students and teachers/kiai, and how students interpret religious values in daily life. The results of this research can be implemented as a theoretical contribution to the development of locally-based cross-cultural psychology studies and a practical reference for Islamic education policymakers in developing curricula and strategies for developing moderate character in Islamic boarding schools and schools based on their respective cultural values.

**Research Methodology**

This study uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design. This approach was chosen to explore in depth the cultural dynamics, religiosity, and identity construction of students in two ideologically and structurally different models of pesantren, namely the traditional Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) pesantren and the modern Muhammadiyah pesantren. The exploratory case study design refers to the concept developed by Yin (2016), which emphasizes the importance of context in explaining complex social and cultural phenomena. This research was conducted in two Islamic boarding schools that were purposively selected based on the criteria of religious cultural representation of NU and Muhammadiyah, an active learning system, and easy access for observation and interviews, namely Al-Munawwirr Islamic Boarding School, Krapyak (NU), and *Muhammadiyah Boarding School* (MBS) Yogyakarta.

The informants in this study were determined through *purposive sampling techniques* with the following criteria: final level active students, ustaz/kiai/pesantren caregivers, and alums as experience triangulation. The number of 10 informants (5 from each pesantren) is explained in Table 1. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies. Interviews are used to explore students' subjective experiences in understanding religious values, authority, and social life in the pesantren. Observations were made on the dynamics of social relations, interaction patterns, and expressions of cultural values in daily activities. Meanwhile, documentation is carried out on the Islamic boarding school's teaching materials, organizational structure, and official documents.

**Table 1.** Research Informant Code

| **Informant Code** | ***Pesantren*** | **Role** | **Information** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NU-S1 | Krapyak | Students | Final year, active in maulid (Islamic recitation) and tahlil (Islamic recitation) activities |
| NU-S2 | Krapyak | Students | Focuses on studying yellow books and the etiquette of kiai (Islamic scholars) |
| NU-G1 | Krapyak | Ustaz | Fiqh teacher and dormitory supervisor |
| NU-G2 | Krapyak | Kiai | Central figure in the authority structure |
| NU-A1 | Krapyak | Alumni | Graduated 5 years ago, active in the local NU organization |
| MBS-S1 | MBS | Students | Final year, active in the IPM forum |
| MBS-S2 | MBS | Students | Focuses on studying Islamic interpretation and logic |
| MBS-G1 | MBS | Ustaz | Teaching Al Islam Kemuhammadiyahan (AIK) |
| MBS-G2 | MBS | Dormitory Supervisor | Responsible for the boarding system |
| MBS-A1 | MBS | Alumni | Graduated 3 years ago, active student and campus activist |

Data analysis was carried out using *the pattern matching* technique (Yin, 2016), which is by matching patterns of empirical findings from the field with theoretical patterns from cross-cultural psychology, such as the cultural dimension of Hofstede (2010), Berry's (2009) acculturation theory, and Tajfel' s (1974) social identity. This analysis includes data reduction, data presentation, pattern matching, and concluding, as formulated by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). To maintain the validity of the data, this study applied the validity strategy from Lincoln and Guba (1985) through four approaches: *credibility* (triangulation and member checking), *transferability* (in-depth contextual description), *dependability* (audit trail), and *confirmability* (researcher reflection to avoid bias).

Figure 1. Research Flow

**Results**

1. **General Description of Research Locations**

This research was conducted in two Islamic boarding schools that represent two different Islamic education cultures in Indonesia, namely the Al-Munawwir Krapyak Islamic Boarding School, Yogyakarta (a representation of the Nahdlatul Ulama/NU Islamic boarding school) and the Muhammadiyah *Boarding School* (MBS) Pleret, Bantul, Yogyakarta (a representation of the Muhammadiyah Islamic boarding school). These two locations were chosen *purposively* because they retain distinctive, authentic Islamic educational traditions and reflect ideologically and structurally different approaches to religious cultures.

The Al-Munawwir Krapyak Islamic Boarding School was founded in 1911 by KH. Munawwir is a highly respected scholar in the Nahdlatul Ulama (Rosita, 2021). This pesantren is one of the centers for studying classical Islamic sciences, which has consistently maintained the salafiyah tradition until now. Thousands of students from various regions study in Krapyak with the sorogan and bandongan recitation system, study the turats (yellow book) books, and delve into the knowledge of nahwu, fiqh, tafsir, and Sufism (Wahid, 2018). The social life of students is colored by the values of khidmah (devotion), good manners towards the kiai, and habituation of religious traditions such as tahlilan, barzanji, maulid, and istighotsah (Basit & Ummah, 2018). Kiai occupies a central position, not only as a teacher but also as a respected spiritual figure.

Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Yogyakarta represents a modern Islamic education model based on the reformist movement (Handayani & Achadi, 2023). Professionally managed by the Muhammadiyah Organization, MBS combines the national and Islamic curriculum in the boarding school system (Riski, 2022). The educational approach in MBS is based on rationality, critical thinking, and forming a cadre of intellectual scholars (Susiyani, 2017). The relationship between students and ustaz is dialogical, the institutional structure is open and modern (Hidayati et al., 2022), and religious activities are more based on the study of evidence, scientific discussions, and the purification of spiritual practices (Jannah et al., 2024). Students are accustomed to thinking independently, organizing activities, and conveying ideas scientifically in various forums (Mariama et al., 2024). Through these two models of pesantren with different value systems, authority structures, and expressions of religiosity, the research is directed to examine how institutional culture affects student identity formation, the internalization of religious values, and attitudes towards diversity, from the perspective of cross-cultural psychology.

1. **Thematic Findings Based on Interview Analysis**

Table 2. The Beginning of Thematic Coding – Interview Results

| **Informant Code** | **Theme Theory** | **Category Sub-Theme** | **Interview Quotes (Narrative/Core)** | **Initial Interpretation** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NU-S1 | Power Distance (Hofstede) | The relationship between santri and kiai | *"A kiai is like a father. If he commands us, we follow him and don't dare argue."* | Authority relations are very high, demonstrating a strong hierarchy. |
| MBS-S2 | Power Distance (Hofstede) | The relationship between santri and ustaz | *"Here, we can have discussions with the ustaz. As long as we're polite, having differing opinions is okay."* | Relations are more egalitarian, with authority based on function, not charisma. |
| NU-G1 | Acculturation (Berry) | Integration of local culture in da'wah | *"The tradition of celebrating the mawlid (the birth of the Prophet) has been around for a long time. It's our way of conveying Islam gently."* | Cultural integration strategies with Islamic values. |
| MBS-G1 | Acculturation (Berry) | Cultural reform, scripturalism | *"We don't teach additional rituals that aren't based on evidence. We focus on the substance."* | Cultural assimilation and rationalization strategies. |
| NU-S2 | Social Identity (Tajfel) | Group identity, attitudes toward others | *"I'm proud to be a NU student. But we're also taught to respect differences."* | Inclusive identity with intergroup tolerance. |
| MBS-A1 | Social Identity (Tajfel) | Muhammadiyah cadre identity | *"We, Muhammadiyah cadres, must be scientific. We can't just follow the crowd; everything must be based on evidence."* | Exclusive identity based on normative understanding. |
| NU-A1 | Religious Moderation | Tolerance and adaptation | *"When I was in college, I shared a boarding house with a Persian friend, and we could still study the Quran together."* | Open and moderate attitudes resulting from the cultural education process in Islamic boarding schools. |
| MBS-G2 | Value Socialization Strategy | Methods of instilling values | *"We instill values ​​through character development, not just memorization or tradition."* | Values ​​education based on reasoning and the cultivation of discipline. |

1. **Theme 1: Authority Structure and Social Relations**

One of the most striking dimensions that differentiates the lives of students at the Al-Munawwir Krapyak Islamic Boarding School (NU) and *Muhammadiyah Boarding School* (MBS) Yogyakarta is in terms of the structure of authority and the pattern of social relations between students and teachers. Based on the results of interviews and observations, the students in Krapyak showed a very ta'dzim (respect) attitude towards the kiai. The kiai figure is not only seen as a teacher of religious knowledge, but also as a spiritual figure, guardian, and source of moral truth that cannot be denied. A NU student revealed:

"Kiai is like a father or a professor whose knowledge we cannot measure. If he has dawuh, yes, we will go along. No one dared to object" (NU-S1, Interview, May 12, 2025)

This attitude shows a high-power **distance** structure, where the relationship between students and the kiai is hierarchical and one-way. The students' obedience comes from the example and personal charisma of the kiai, which brings blessings. Even in daily interactions, students listen more than express their opinions openly.

On the other hand, students at MBS Yogyakarta describe the relationship with the ustaz as more equal. The ustaz are seen as respected intellectual mentors but can still be discussed openly. One of the MBS students stated:

“Here we can discuss with ustaz. If we don't understand or disagree, as long as we are polite, we can ask questions and express opinions" (MBS-S2, Interview, May 13, 2025)

This relational model reflects**low power distance**, where authority structures are functional and communicative. Students are formed to be critical, active, and independent in thinking, as well as the values upheld in the rational and open organizational culture of Muhammadiyah.

From the perspective of **Geert Hofstede (2010),** the power distance**dimension** describes the extent to which individuals accept that power and authority are not evenly distributed in an institution. These findings suggest that the Krapyak Islamic Boarding School reflects *a* high-power distance culture emphasizing respect for traditional authority. In contrast, MBS reflects a low power distance culture emphasizing dialogue and rationality. This difference shows how the cultural values of educational institutions can shape the way individuals think, interact, and build relationships psychologically.

These findings also align with field observations, where the one-way sorogan and bandongan methods dominate recitation activities in Krapyak. At the same time, a dialogical class system in MBS is applied with a forum for deliberation and scientific halaqah. Thus, the authority structure in the two Islamic boarding schools is not only formally different, but also affects how **students build their self-identity and attitude towards authority**.

1. **Theme 2: Socialization Strategy of Religious Values**

The strategy of instilling religious values is one of the main distinguishing points in the education system at the Al-Munawwir Krapyak Islamic Boarding School and Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Yogyakarta. Field findings show that each institution has a distinctive socialization approach, in line with its religious and cultural orientation. In Krapyak, spiritual values are instilled through an internalization process based on **rites, habituation, and direct Kiai examples**. Students not only learn from the yellow books, but also from daily ritual practices that are full of symbolic meaning. One student explained:

"We have tahlilan activities every night, then there is maulid, barzanji on certain days. There we were taught that Islam is beautiful and full of blessings" (NU-S2, Interview, May 12, 2025)

This process shows that Islamic values are conveyed in a highly contextual form, integrated with the local culture, and affective. The example of the kiai in responding to differences, giving subtle advice, and in the simplicity of life is the primary learning medium for students. Students do not just get religious information, but experience **appreciating values emotionally and symbolically.**

On the other hand, in MBS Yogyakarta, Islamic values are more instilled through cognitive **and rational** approaches. Religious learning is carried out classically with an emphasis on **studying Islamic postulates, interpretations, and logic**, and students are encouraged to understand religion texts textually and systematically. One of the students said:

"We learn Islam through the study of tafsir and fiqh. Ustaz always invites thought. Every opinion must have a basis from the Qur'an and hadith" (MBS-S1, Interview, May 13, 2025)

This approach forms a process of socializing values based on rationality and scientific discourse. Students are used to conveying ideas in forums, such as halaqah or deliberation, and are guided to be critical of all the information received. Religious values are built from logical understanding, not mere habituation or symbolism.

If analyzed with the theory **of cultural acculturation from Berry (2009),** Krapyak shows a pattern of **integration strategies**, in which Islamic values are harmonized with local culture and community traditions. This results in a form of religiosity that is soft, adaptive, and full of symbolic meaning. In contrast, MBS Yogyakarta implements a pattern **of assimilation and value selection**, where local culture is filtered and only those following the central teachings are preserved. This creates systematic, scriptural, and teaching-oriented religiosity.

Both approaches have their effectiveness in shaping the character of students. In Krapyak, values are instilled through emotionally intense affective and symbolic processes. In MBS, values are reinforced through rational understanding and analysis of the text. These differences reflect not only the educational style, but also the fundamental differences in **the way of thinking about culture** and **the formation of the structure of religious cognition of students**.

1. **Theme 3: Religious and Social Identity**

Social and religious identity is essential in forming students' religious attitudes and orientations, especially in the context of the internal diversity of Indonesian Muslims. This study found that Al-Munawwir Krapyak Islamic Boarding School students and MBS Yogyakarta formed their religious identity through very different cultural paths and experiences.

Students in Krapyak build their religious identity through a strong sense of attachment to the pesantren environment, spiritual traditions, and affiliation with Nahdlatul Ulama. They show pride in their identity as NU students and associate it with values such as tolerance, love of tradition, and respect for scholars. A student stated:

"For me, being a NU student is special. We were taught to love tradition and not easily blame others. Islam is rahmatan lil 'alamin, not angry about different prayer readings" (NU-S1, Interview, May 13, 2025)

The statement reflects that religious identity in Krapyak is formed within a **communal and inclusive** framework, where cultural symbols, spiritual values, and social relations (Norwich, 2022; Zajdel & Helgeson, 2024) become an integral part of the meaning of being a Muslim. The students feel that they are part of a large group (ingroup) that is tasked with spreading Islam with a polite approach and local culture.

Meanwhile, in MBS Yogyakarta, religious identity is more formed through a rational approach, ideological strengthening, and the search for meaning that comes from understanding the evidence. Muhammadiyah students tend to identify themselves explicitly as cadres of the modern da'wah movement who are responsible for spreading pure and scientific Islam. A student said:

"In Muhammadiyah, we are accustomed to thinking logically and scientifically. I am proud because our teachings are based on the Qur'an and hadith. If it is different, we will discuss it with arguments." (MBS-S2, Interview, May 13, 2025)

This identity emphasizes **clarity of roles and boundaries**, and has a normatively exclusive tendency, not in the sense of rejecting other groups, but in terms of clinging to doctrinal purification. According to the text, students form an "ingroup" based on the correct understanding, and perceive the "outgroup" as a group that requires clarification or awareness of da'wah.

In the perspective **of Social Identity Theory (1979), the** formation of group identity (ingroup) serves to provide self-esteem, social direction, and justification for attitudes towards other groups (outgroup). In Krapyak, the identity of the ingroup is formed through local values, loyalty to the Islamic boarding school, and cultural symbols. Attitudes towards other groups tend to be neutral or tolerant, since the basis of acceptance is the experience of tradition and diversity. In MBS, ingroup identity is built through normative argumentation and religious rationality; The relationship with the outgroup is carried out in a da'wah manner, but it is still selective and evidence based.

These findings suggest that institutional culture plays a significant role in shaping how students perceive themselves as part of the broader Muslim community. These differences in identity formation can affect how students behave towards the plurality of religious practices, both in the internal scope of Islam and in social life.

1. **Theme 4: Moderation and Attitudes to Diversity**

Attitudes towards the diversity of religious practices and views of moderation are essential dimensions that reflect the success of religious education in shaping the character of open, tolerant, and contextual students. This study found that the Al-Munawwir Krapyak Islamic Boarding School and the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Yogyakarta showed a form of religious moderation, but with a substantially different approach.

Students in Krapyak tend to accept and appreciate differences in religious practices, both in the pesantren's internal environment and social life. This is reflected in the narrative of a student:

"We often recite together with friends from outside NU. Even though the way of reading prayers is different, we never have a problem. The important thing is to respect each other" (NU-S2, Interview, May 14, 2025)

This acceptance was born from experience-based education on the diversity of rituals, such as tahlilan, qunut, manaqiban, and maulid, which historically have often been debated in the context of Islamic organizations in Indonesia. In Krapyak, differences are considered part of the richness of Islamic traditions, not threatening the integrity of teachings. This approach creates an inclusive inner space that blends in with the local culture, which psychologically forms emotional and social moderation in everyday life.

In contrast, at MBS Yogyakarta, religious moderation is expressed through a more normative and rational approach, emphasizing the importance of explaining differences scientifically. A student said:

"If there are differences of opinion or worship practice, we will study it first. If it turns out that there is indeed a difference in evidence, we respect it. But we still believe that what we hold is the most correct" (MBS-S1, Interview, May 14, 2025)

Moderation in the context of SBM is more intentional, educational, and evidence-based. They are not easily blamed but are still critical of practices not based on Nash. This attitude makes students tolerant in discourse, but selective in practice. Differences are positioned as a da'wah discourse, not merely a reality that must be accepted passively.

These two approaches represent two different moderation models. Krapyak shows moderation based on culture and social experience (cultural moderation) (Fuadi et al., 2024; Zulkarnaen et al., 2023). Meanwhile, MBS shows moderation based on rationality and purification of teachings (conceptual moderation) (Hadiyanto et al., 2025; Nasir & Rijal, 2021; Zamzami et al., 2023). Both reflect the principle of *wasathiyah* in the context of each organizational culture, in line with the concept of religious moderation according to the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (Helmy et al., 2021), which includes a commitment to nationality, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation to local culture. Although the expression patterns are different, the two pesantren have formed a model of moderation that follows the values of cross-cultural psychology, namely openness to differences, self-control of extreme reactions, and the ability to coexist in diverse Islamic practices.

1. **Analysis of Patterns of Findings and Comparisons Between Islamic Boarding Schools**

After conducting a thematic exploration of the four main dimensions in pesantren life—namely the structure of authority, the socialization strategy of religious values, socio-religious identity, and attitudes towards diversity—several patterns of differences and similarities can be drawn between the al-Munawwir Krapyak Islamic Boarding School and the Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) Yogyakarta. These differences are not only institutional, but also reflect the deep cultural character that shapes the education system and the psychology of students. To make it easier to understand the pattern, the following is a summary in the form of a comparison table:

Table 3. Comparison of Cross-Islamic Boarding Schools: Krapyak (NU) and MBS (Muhammadiyah)

| **Psychological Aspects of Culture** | **Krapyak Islamic Boarding School (NU)** | **MBS Yogyakarta (Muhammadiyah)** | **Related Theories** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Authority Structure | Hierarchical, based on the charisma of the kiai, high reverence | Functional, open to discussion, rational relationships | Hofstede – Power Distance |
| Value Socialization | Symbolic, through rituals, exemplary behavior, and local traditions | Rational, curriculum- and text-based | Berry – Acculturation |
| Religious Identity | Inclusive, loyal to NU and local culture | Normative, scientific, loyal to understanding the principles | Tajfel – Social Identity Theory |
| Attitudes Toward Diversity | Tolerant of different practices, cultural moderation | Moderate with normative selectivity, based on principles | Religious Moderation – Ministry of Religious Affairs |

After pattern matching with a cross-cultural psychological approach, most of the findings align with the theoretical mapping that has been designed. The hierarchical authority structure of Krapyak students reflects a **high power distance** index as interpreted by Hofstede (2010), while in MBS, authority is low and functional. The value socialization strategy in Krapyak is **integrative and affective,** as Berry (2009) explained in the acculturation model, while in MBS, the approach is more **selective and cognitive**.

In terms of identity, Tajfel and Turner (1979) explained that individuals form social identities based on group membership (ingroup) and differentiation from other groups (outgroup). NU students show an ingroup pattern based on cultural values and traditions, while Muhammadiyah students build their identity from ideological positions and religious rationality. In terms of moderation, both showed alignment with the value of tolerance, but with different approaches: NU through cultural experience, Muhammadiyah through logic and educational approaches.

However, there are also **local findings that are not fully explained by global theory**. For example, in Krapyak, it was found that shared social experiences in collective religious activities shape the practice of moderation and respect for differences. This aspect is not explicitly described in Berry or Hofstede's framework, which tends to be more macro and structural. On the other hand, MBS students accustomed to critical thinking also show high collectivism values in organizational aspects and deliberative decision-making. This combination is uncommon in Hofstede's theory of individualism-collectivism, which usually considers crucial thinking a product of individualism.

Therefore, the patterns of the results of this study not only strengthen existing cross-cultural psychological theories but also open up the possibility of local variants or adaptations typical of Indonesia. These findings show the importance of contextual reading of the cultural reality of Islamic education and contribute to the development of cross-cultural psychology based on the local wisdom of Islamic boarding schools.

**Discussion**

This research shows that the educational culture in the NU and Muhammadiyah Islamic boarding schools reflects institutional differences and represents two major paradigms in Islam in Indonesia, namely Nusantara Islam and Progressive Islam. These two models affect the curriculum and learning methods and more deeply shape the psychological structure, social relations, and construction of students' religious identity systemically. Findings on the structure of authority, strategies for socializing values, group identity, and attitudes towards religious and cultural differences are concrete evidence of how institutions' ideological construction and cultural values work at the psychosocial level. Thus, this discussion not only reviews what was found, but also why these findings are significant, what should be done next, and the typical contribution of pesantren as a cultural-spiritual space in Indonesia's Islamic education context.

First, this study answers that the value difference between NU and Muhammadiyah is rooted in ideological paradigms that are culturally standardized in the concepts of Nusantara Islam and Progressive Islam. Islam Nusantara, which is a characteristic of NU, carries Islam that is rooted in local traditions, has an accommodative pattern, and upholds manners, solemnity, and diversity of religious practices (Nasikhin et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2023). This is evident in the hierarchical but loving relationship between santri and kiai and the internalization of values through ritual and collective appreciation (Nasikhin, N., & Raharjo, 2022). On the contrary, Muhammadiyah expressly carries the spirit of Progressive Islam, which is a paradigm of Islamic reform based on rationality, purification of faith, and modern education that encourages students to think critically, be open to knowledge, and be active in shaping society through the principles of social monotheism (Arifin et al., 2022; Rusmawati, 2024). The difference between these two paradigms explains why NU students build religious identities based on local cultural values and hereditary practices (Schmidt, 2021), while Muhammadiyah students build identities based on textual rationality and loyalty to the modern da'wah movement.

Second, these results are significant because they show that religious moderation does not belong to one approach, but can grow from various cultural paths. Krapyak shows culture-based moderation, from living in the diversity of Islamic traditions. MBS shows rationality-based moderation, from scientific arguments to differences. These findings are contextual in the social situation of Islam in Indonesia, which has recently been colored by exclusivism and polarization. When extreme religious narratives grow in the public sphere, the educational model of pesantren – both NU and Muhammadiyah –shows that religion can be studied and instilled with a peaceful, polite, and argumentative approach.

Third, regarding applicative implications, the cross-cultural psychological approach provides a map of a deeper understanding of how religious identity is formed in a living cultural context. NU and Muhammadiyah students are not only different in how they learn religion, but also in how they experience religion affectively, symbolically, and cognitively. Therefore, the approach to Islamic education should not only focus on teaching materials or cognitive competencies, but also build an ecosystem of values following the local cultural background. This research suggests that Islamic educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding schools, begin to realize the importance of integrating these two poles of approach: the values of manners and traditions of Islam Nusantara and the rationality and social transformation of Progressive Islam. Strengthening religious moderation at the grassroots level will be much more effective if it is based on a complete understanding of the cultural values that shape how students understand the world.

Fourth, this discussion also highlights that pesantren is not just a religious school, but a social-spiritual environment that shapes personalities collectively and symbolically. In Islamic boarding schools, values are instilled through memorization and daily experiences: solemnizing recitals, interpreting joint prayers, submitting to kiai, or discussing the meaning of Islam critically. Therefore, the strength of pesantren education lies in cultural consistency and an educational inner atmosphere, not only in the curriculum structure. In this context, cross-cultural psychology is a very relevant analytical tool because it can capture meanings not captured by normative educational theories alone.

Finally, it is essential to emphasize that the results of this study do not aim to compare which is better between NU and Muhammadiyah Islamic boarding schools, but to show that both present a moderate and grounded face of Islam with different characteristics. This is where the strength of Indonesian Islam lies: in its structured diversity, the tolerance instilled through culture, and the awareness that differences in ways are not differences in direction. For this reason, future research is suggested to expand the context of loci and methods, as well as raise new themes such as gender, digitalization, or generational change in the context of pesantren values, so that Islamic education is spiritually strong and socially adaptive.

**Suggestion**

This study concludes that the institutional cultural differences between the Al-Munawwir Krapyak Islamic Boarding School (NU) and Muhammadiyah Boarding School Yogyakarta (Muhammadiyah) shape the religious and psychological character of students with different but complementary approaches in building religious moderation in Indonesia. Santri in Krapyak are formed through a hierarchical authority structure and the internalization of values based on local traditions, symbolic rituals, and collective spiritual experiences that produce an inclusive, communal-oriented, and empathetic personality towards the diversity of Islamic practices. On the other hand, students in MBS Muhammadiyah are honed through a rational, discursive, and evidence-based education system, with a functional authority structure and the formation of a more normative and ideological religious identity, resulting in a person who is critical, independent in thinking, and selective in behaving towards differences. This finding answers the formulation of the problem that institutional culture greatly influences the way students understand religiosity, authority, and diversity, through internalization mechanisms that are consistent with cross-cultural psychological theories—namely, power distance (Hofstede), acculturation strategies (Berry), and social identity (Tajfel). This study finds the novelty that the model of internalization of values based on collective emotional experience in Krapyak and the combination of structural collectivism with individual rationality in SBM is not fully explained by Western theory, suggesting the existence of local variants in the formation of the religious psychology of students that are typical of Indonesia. However, this study has limitations because it was conducted in only two locations with a qualitative approach so that it cannot be generalized widely; Therefore, follow-up research is recommended using a quantitative approach or mixed methods on a more diverse population of pesantren in various regions to strengthen the validity of the findings and produce a more comprehensive generalization of Islamic educational culture

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