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Negotiating Tradition and Innovation in Classical Islamic Text Education: The Implementation of Peer Teaching in Islamic Boarding Schools

Mohamad Fazar Ramadhan^{1✉}, Ferianto², Iqbal Amar Muzaki³

¹⁻³Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the negotiation process between pesantren learning traditions and pedagogical innovation through the implementation of the peer teaching method in the study of the Kitab Kuning at the Nurul Hidayah Al-Mida Islamic Boarding School in Karawang. This study was motivated by the dominance of traditional learning methods such as sorogan and bandongan, which are teacher-centered, resulting in relatively limited student participation in the learning process. The study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving the pesantren leadership, ustadz, student tutors, and student learners. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The research findings indicate that the implementation of peer teaching does not replace the boarding school's traditional learning practices but rather creates a "third space" that bridges traditional pedagogical values with contemporary learning needs. Through group discussions, peer tutors, and collaborative interactions, peer teaching fosters increased student participation, strengthens knowledge retention, and promotes self-directed learning without diminishing the teachers' scholarly authority. The research findings also produced the Pesantren Pedagogical Hybridization Model (PPHM), which explains that peer teaching functions as a mechanism of pedagogical hybridization that bridges pesantren traditions and modern learning innovations. This study affirms that pedagogical transformation in pesantren can occur through a process of adaptation and integration with tradition, resulting in learning that is more participatory, contextual, and relevant to the needs of contemporary Islamic education.

✉ Email Correspondent:
mohfazar8@gmail.com

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Introduction

Pesantren are among the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, playing a crucial role in the transmission of Islamic knowledge, character development, and the preservation of religious traditions within the community (Maghfiroh & Muttaqin, 2025 ; Zhang et al., 2021) . The sustainability of Islamic boarding schools is determined not only by their curriculum and institutional systems but also by the learning traditions passed down through generations via the study of the Kitab Kuning (Kwatera, 2025 ; Ardiansyah & Ujihanti, 2017) . The Kitab Kuning serves as the primary source for the study of Islamic sciences such as fiqh, tawhid, akhlak, tafsir, and nahwu-sharaf, which are taught through various traditional methods, such as bandongan, sorogan, and wetonan (Suhendi et al., 2021) . These traditions have become the pedagogical identity of Islamic boarding schools, distinguishing them from other educational institutions.

Educational developments in the contemporary era require Islamic educational institutions to implement various innovations without losing their character and traditions (De Backer et al., 2021) . Changes in student characteristics, advancements in information technology, and demands for more participatory learning encourage Islamic boarding schools to adopt various pedagogical approaches that are more relevant to the needs of the times (Pardjono, 2016) . In this context, learning is no longer viewed as a one-way transfer of knowledge from teacher to student, but rather as a process of knowledge construction that involves the active participation of students in building their own understanding (Recha & Hidayati, 2026) . Therefore, various learning innovations have begun to be introduced within the pesantren environment as an effort to enhance the effectiveness of learning without undermining the deeply rooted traditional values (Jabar, 2025 ; King & Datu, 2022) . One of the challenges still faced in the teaching of the Kitab Kuning is the low level of active participation by some students in the learning process (Isohäätä et al., 2017) . Teaching methods centered on the ustadz often result in students acting as mere recipients of information, thereby limiting opportunities for discussion, expressing opinions, and constructing understanding independently (Zaitunah & Yanto, 2023) . This situation leads to variations in students' levels of understanding and retention of the material studied. At the same time, the complexity of the Kitab Kuning material demands learning strategies capable of helping students understand Islamic concepts more deeply and sustainably.

Various studies indicate that collaborative learning significantly contributes to enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes (Lyons et al., 2021) . Research on *peer teaching* demonstrates that students' involvement as peer tutors can improve conceptual understanding, communication skills, and knowledge retention through the "learning by teaching" process (Habibi et al., 2026) . Furthermore, peer interaction can create a more comfortable learning environment, encouraging students to feel more confident in asking questions and discussing material they do not yet understand (Hertiavi & Kesaulya, 2020) . These findings suggest that peer teaching has the potential to serve as a relevant alternative learning strategy for implementation in Islamic education, including in the study of Kitab Kuning at Islamic boarding schools. Nevertheless, most previous research on peer teaching has been conducted primarily in the contexts of public schools, higher education, and science education (Kimiloglu et al., 2022) . Research examining the implementation of *peer teaching* in the study of the Kitab Kuning within the pesantren

environment remains relatively limited. Furthermore, previous studies generally focused on the method's effectiveness regarding learning outcomes, while the aspect of negotiation between pesantren pedagogical traditions and modern learning innovations has received little attention (Yang et al., 2022) . In fact, the application of innovations within the pesantren environment cannot be separated from the process of adaptation to values, culture, and traditions that have long been established.

In addition to the research gap, there is also a practical gap occurring in the field. On one hand, pesantren are required to maintain the tradition of Kitab Kuning learning as part of their institutional identity. On the other hand, the need for more participatory and student-centered learning is increasing (Gal & Fallik, 2021 ; Hernández-Sellés et al., 2019) . This situation creates a need for a learning model capable of bridging tradition and innovation in a balanced manner so that the learning process maintains the scholarly authority of the ustadz while providing a broader space for student participation. This study employs a social constructivist perspective and the concept of tradition-innovation negotiation in education to understand how peer teaching methods are implemented in the study of the Kitab Kuning * . This perspective views knowledge as constructed through social interaction and dialogue among learners, while educational innovation does not necessarily replace existing traditions but can interact and negotiate with the values developing within an educational community. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, peer teaching is understood not as a replacement for traditional methods but as a form of pedagogical adaptation that strengthens the learning process without eliminating the distinctive characteristics of boarding school education.

The Nurul Hidayah Al-Mida Islamic Boarding School in Karawang was selected as the research site because it is one of the boarding schools that has begun integrating the peer teaching method into the study of the Kitab Kuning. The implementation of this method demonstrates an effort to develop more participatory learning while maintaining the boarding school's scholarly traditions. These conditions make the boarding school a relevant context for examining the relationship between tradition and innovation in Islamic educational practice. Based on the above, this study aims to analyze the negotiation process between tradition and innovation in the teaching of the Kitab Kuning through the implementation of peer teaching at the pesantren. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of pesantren pedagogy and Islamic education studies, as well as a practical contribution to the development of a more participatory and adaptive Kitab Kuning learning model. The novelty of this study lies in the analysis of peer teaching not merely as a learning method, but as a space for negotiation between pesantren pedagogical traditions and the demands of contemporary educational innovation, resulting in a collaborative learning model rooted in pesantren culture.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the negotiation process between pesantren learning traditions and pedagogical innovations through the implementation of *peer teaching* in the study of Kitab Kuning at the Nurul Hidayah Al-Mida Pesantren in Karawang. A qualitative approach was chosen because the research does not focus on measuring relationships between variables, but rather on interpreting experiences, social practices, and the dynamics of

learning that occur within the pesantren environment. The research location was selected purposively because this pesantren has integrated the *peer teaching* method into Kitab Kuning instruction without abandoning the long-established learning traditions of the ". The research subjects consisted of 10 informants selected purposively based on their level of involvement in the implementation of Kitab Kuning learning based on peer teaching. The informants comprised 1 pesantren leader, 1 Kitab Kuning instructor, 3 students serving as peer tutors, and 5 student participants in the learning process. The criteria for selecting informants included active involvement in the peer teaching program for at least one semester, an understanding of the Kitab Kuning learning process, and a willingness to provide in-depth information regarding their experiences and views on the implementation of this method. This study employs the "*Third Space*" perspective proposed by Homi K. Bhabha to analyze how the intersection between pesantren pedagogical traditions and modern learning innovations shapes new adaptive and hybrid learning practices (Bhandari, 2022) .

Data collection was conducted through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentary analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008) . Observations were conducted to gain an understanding of the learning process of the Kitab Kuning, interaction patterns between ustadz, peer tutors, and students, as well as the dynamics of *peer teaching* implementation in learning activities. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach to explore the informants' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations regarding the presence of *peer teaching* methods within the pesantren environment. The interviews took place from January to March 2026, with an average duration of 45–60 minutes per informant. All interviews were recorded with the informants' consent and subsequently transcribed for data analysis. Meanwhile, documentation was used to supplement the data, consisting of learning archives, activity records, learning materials, and student evaluation documents relevant to the research focus. The researcher acted as the primary instrument (*human instrument*), playing a role in collecting, interpreting, and making sense of the research data. To ensure data credibility, the study applied source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from various informants and data collection methods.

Data analysis is conducted interactively following the model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 2022) . During the data reduction phase, the researcher conducted processes of selection, categorization, and coding of data based on themes related to pesantren learning traditions, *peer teaching* innovations, and forms of negotiation emerging in learning practices. The reduced data was then presented in the form of descriptive narratives to identify patterns of relationships among categories and uncover the meanings embedded in the informants' experiences. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and conducting continuous verification by linking empirical findings to Homi Bhabha's concept of *the Third Space*. To enhance the validity of the findings, the researcher also conducted member checking with several key informants—including pesantren leaders, supervising ustadz, and student tutors—to ensure the researcher's interpretations aligned with the experiences they described. Through this process, this study seeks to explain how the implementation of *peer teaching* is not merely an innovation in teaching methods but also serves as a space for negotiation that bridges tradition and innovation in

pesantren pedagogy, thereby yielding learning practices that are more participatory, contextual, and relevant to the needs of contemporary Islamic education.

Results

Negotiating Tradition and Innovation in the Teaching of Classical Islamic Texts

The research findings indicate that the implementation of *peer teaching* in the study of the Kitab Kuning at the Nurul Hidayah Al-Mida Islamic Boarding School in Karawang occurs through a process of negotiation between the boarding school's pedagogical traditions and the need for contemporary learning innovations. This negotiation is not interpreted as a conflict between traditional and modern methods, but rather as an effort to integrate both into a single learning system that preserves the boarding school's identity. In practice, the *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods remain the primary foundation of Kitab Kuning instruction, while *peer teaching* functions as a supporting strategy that reinforces students' understanding of the material being studied.

Based on the results of observations, learning begins with a *bandongan* session where the ustadz reads the text of the kitab, translates it, and explains the content to all students. After this process is complete, students are divided into small groups guided by peer tutors. Within these groups, students discuss the material that has been presented, ask questions, and review concepts deemed difficult to understand. This learning pattern demonstrates that the implemented innovation does not displace the ustadz's role as an academic authority but creates new opportunities for students to participate more actively in the learning process.

Interviews with the boarding school leadership revealed that the implementation of *peer teaching* stems from the need to improve the quality of learning without losing the characteristics of boarding school education that have been passed down through generations.

"We realize that the character of today's students differs from that of students in the past. They need a more active and communicative learning environment. However, we continue to maintain pesantren learning methods such as bandongan and sorogan because they are part of the scholarly tradition that must be preserved. Therefore, we implement peer teaching not to replace these traditions, but to complement them." (IF-01/Pesantren Leader, interview, February 12, 2026).

This statement indicates that educational innovations in Islamic boarding schools are implemented in a selective and adaptive manner. Tradition is not viewed as an obstacle to change, but rather as a foundation that must be preserved in every process of educational reform. Thus, *peer teaching* serves as a form of pedagogical adaptation that seeks to address the learning needs of students without undermining the long-established values of the boarding school.

Similar findings were also identified in interviews with teachers of the Kitab Kuning. According to the informants, the presence of peer tutors helps extend the learning process, which previously only lasted during the duration of the study session.

“In the past, after I explained the material, the learning session would usually end. Now, with peer tutors, the material is discussed again in small groups. Students who haven’t understood can ask the tutors and discuss the parts that are unclear. So the learning process becomes longer and more dynamic.” (IF-02/Ustadz Teaching the Kitab Kuning, interview, February 15, 2026).

These findings indicate that *peer teaching* expands students’ learning spaces through horizontal interactions among learners. Whereas the learning process was previously dominated by a vertical relationship between the teacher and students, the implementation of peer tutors creates a new pattern of interaction that enables more intensive knowledge exchange. In addition to creating new interaction patterns, the research results show that the implementation of *peer teaching* also alters students’ roles in the learning process. In the traditional learning system, students tend to act as recipients of information conveyed by the teacher. However, through peer tutoring, students gain the opportunity to become active participants in the learning process. One peer tutor explained that their role is not merely to repeat the material already explained by the teacher but also to help their peers understand the text’s content using simpler language.

“Usually, after the ustadz explains, I try to explain it again to my groupmates using language that’s easier to understand. Sometimes I also give examples related to daily life so they can grasp it better.” (IF-03/Student Tutor, interview, February 18, 2026).

This statement indicates that peer tutors function as knowledge mediators who bridge the content of the Kitab Kuning with the students’ learning experiences. The presence of tutors fosters a more egalitarian form of communication, making it easier for students to grasp material previously considered difficult. From the perspective of the participating students, the presence of peer tutors also offers a different learning experience compared to conventional instruction. Some students admitted they feel more comfortable asking questions of their peers rather than directly to the ustadz.

“Sometimes we feel hesitant to ask the ustadz directly because we’re afraid our questions are too basic. When asking a peer, it feels more relaxed, so we’re braver to ask until we truly understand.” (IF-04/Participating Student, interview, February 20, 2026).

This indicates that *peer teaching* not only introduces innovative learning methods but also fosters a more inclusive and participatory learning environment. Closer relationships among students facilitate a natural learning process through discussion, Q&A, and collaboration in understanding the material.

Table 1. Forms of Negotiation Between Tradition and Innovation in Classical Islamic Text Learning

Learning Aspects	Pesantren Tradition	Peer Teaching Innovation
Scholarly Authority	Ustadz as the primary source of knowledge	Peer tutors as learning facilitators
Learning methods	Bandongan and sorogan	Group discussions and peer tutors
Communication patterns	Vertical (teacher-student)	Horizontal (student-student)
Role of students	Recipients of knowledge	Active participants in learning
Source of understanding	of Explanations from the ustadz	Explanations from the ustadz and peer tutors
Learning environment	Formal and structured	Collaborative and participatory

Source: Results of research data analysis, 2026.

The data in Table 1 show that the implementation of *peer teaching* does not eliminate the main elements of the pesantren learning tradition. On the contrary, this method complements the existing system by providing a broader space for student participation. Therefore, the innovation that occurs is integrative in nature, rather than replacing the traditions that had previously developed.

Overall, the research results indicate that the application of *peer teaching* creates a space where tradition and innovation meet in the study of the Kitab Kuning. The pedagogical traditions of the pesantren are maintained through the presence of ustadz, the *bandongan* method, and *sorogan*, while innovation is realized through the involvement of peer tutors and collaborative learning. This situation indicates that changes in pesantren education do not occur through the elimination of tradition, but rather through a process of negotiation that yields new learning practices better adapted to the needs of contemporary students.

The Role of Peer Teaching in Increasing Student Participation

Research findings indicate that the implementation of *peer teaching* significantly contributes to increased student participation in the study of the Kitab Kuning. Before this method was implemented, the learning process tended to be one-sided, dominated by the ustadz's explanations through the *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods. Under these conditions, some students merely acted as listeners and note-takers of the material presented. Although these methods were effective in transmitting religious knowledge, students' opportunities to actively engage in discussions and explore the material remained relatively limited. Following the implementation of *peer teaching*, the pattern of learning interactions shifted, marked by an increase in questioning, discussion, and students' involvement in explaining the material to their peers.

Based on the observations, peer-tutor-led group discussions created a more dynamic learning environment compared to traditional classroom instruction. The students were seen to be more active in asking questions, offering responses, and discussing issues related to the Kitab Kuning material. Interactions took place not only between the tutors and group members but also among the group members themselves. This indicates that *peer teaching* successfully fosters a more collaborative and participatory learning environment. An interview with one of the participating students revealed that the presence

of peer tutors creates a sense of comfort during the learning process, making them more confident in sharing their opinions and asking questions.

“In large study sessions, I usually just listen because I’m too shy to ask questions. But when learning in small groups, I’m more confident asking questions because it’s my own friends explaining, and the atmosphere is more relaxed.” (IF-05/Participating Student, interview, February 22, 2026).

This statement indicates that social closeness is one of the reasons for the increased student participation. The more egalitarian relationship between tutors and participants allows students to share their learning difficulties without hesitation. This situation differs from conventional learning, which tends to position the ustadz as an authoritative figure, causing some students to feel less confident about asking questions directly. A similar finding was also shared by another informant who admitted that it was easier to understand the material when discussions were conducted with peers.

“When the ustadz explains, there are sometimes terms or topics I find hard to grasp. After we revisit them in a group, the tutor usually explains them in simpler language, making it easier for me to understand.” (IF-06/Participating Student, interview, February 22, 2026).

This data indicates that increased student participation is marked not only by the courage to ask questions but also by their involvement in the process of building shared understanding. Through group discussions, students gain the opportunity to clarify material, exchange perspectives, and connect the content of the Kitab Kuning with their own experiences. In addition to impacting student participants, *peer teaching* also enhances the academic participation of students serving as tutors. Based on interview results, the tutors admitted to having a greater responsibility to prepare themselves before learning activities take place. They must review the material, understand the teacher’s explanations, and prepare a presentation style that is easy for their group members to understand.

“Since I was appointed as a tutor, I have to study first before teaching my friends. Usually, I reread the material, look for additional explanations, and note down key points so that during the discussion I can answer their questions.” (IF-07/Student Tutor, interview, February 24, 2026).

This statement indicates that *peer teaching* fosters the development of academic responsibility and learning leadership among the students. Tutors no longer serve merely as recipients of knowledge but also as facilitators who support the group learning process. Consequently, the resulting participation is not only quantitative—through increased learning engagement—but also qualitative—through the development of communication skills, leadership, and problem-solving abilities. A similar perspective was shared by the teacher in charge of the Kitab Kuning, who observed changes in students’ learning behavior since the implementation of the *peer teaching* method.

“In the past, only a few specific students were active. Now, almost all groups are seen discussing. Even students who were previously passive have started to dare to express their opinions and answer their peers’ questions.” (IF-02/Instructor of the Kitab Kuning, interview, February 25, 2026).

This finding indicates that *peer teaching* has successfully expanded learning participation, which was previously dominated by only a small number of students. Learning activities have become more inclusive because every group member has the opportunity to contribute according to their individual abilities.

Table 2. The Impact of Peer Teaching on Student Participation

Participation Aspect	Conditions Before Peer Teaching	Conditions After Peer Teaching
Willingness to ask questions	Relatively low	Increased
Engagement in discussion	Limited to a few students	More evenly distributed
Interaction among students	Less intensive	More active and collaborative
Confidence in learning	Relatively low	Increasing
Learning independence	Limited	More developed
Academic leadership	Not yet evident	Emerging among peer tutors

Source: Results of research data analysis, 2026.

The data in Table 2 show that the implementation of *peer teaching* resulted in significant changes in the patterns of student participation. This improvement is evident in the students’ willingness to ask questions, engagement in discussions, independent learning, and the emergence of academic leadership skills among student tutors. These findings indicate that learning is no longer entirely centered on the teacher but has evolved into a collaborative process that actively involves all students.

Overall, the research results show that *peer teaching* plays a crucial role in creating a more participatory learning environment in Islamic boarding schools. Through more egalitarian interactions, intensive group discussions, and the active involvement of students as both tutors and participants, this method is able to improve the quality of student participation in the study of the Kitab Kuning. Thus, *peer teaching* is not only a pedagogical strategy to enhance understanding of the material but also a means of empowering students as active agents in the learning process.

Strengthening Knowledge Retention through Peer Teaching

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of *peer teaching* not only increases students’ participation in the study of the Kitab Kuning but also contributes to strengthening knowledge retention. In this study, knowledge retention refers to students’ ability to recall, understand, and restate the material they have learned over a specific period of time. Based on observations during the learning process, students involved in *peer teaching* activities demonstrated better ability in reviewing material, explaining fiqh concepts, and connecting the content of the Kitab Kuning to issues encountered in daily life. These findings indicate that the learning process does not stop at the stage of information reception but evolves into a process of knowledge construction and reproduction through social interaction among students.

Based on the interview results, the peer tutors admitted that the responsibility of explaining the material to their peers encouraged them to study the material more deeply compared to when they were merely acting as ordinary learners. Before leading a group discussion, tutors typically review the material, note down key points, and prepare answers to potential questions from group members. These activities indirectly create a rehearsal process that strengthens the retention of information in long-term memory.

“When I’m a tutor, I have to understand the material first before explaining it to my friends. Because I often read and review the explanations, the content of the book becomes easier to remember compared to when I’m just listening to the teacher’s explanation.” (IF-07/Student Tutor, interview, February 28, 2026).

This statement indicates that teaching serves as an effective learning tool for peer tutors. The process of re-explaining material to others requires a deeper understanding, ensuring that the knowledge acquired is not merely rote memorization but also conceptual. In other words, tutors do not merely recall information but also reorganize that knowledge so it can be understood by their group members. Interviews with other tutors revealed similar findings. According to the informant, the process of answering questions from group members often helps reinforce their understanding of the material being studied.

“Sometimes there are questions from my peers that make me have to open the textbook again and look for additional explanations. It is precisely through that process that I come to understand and remember the material being studied better.” (IF-08/Student Tutor, interview, March 1, 2026).

This data indicates that *peer teaching* fosters a reflective learning process. Tutors do not merely convey information but also evaluate their own understanding when faced with questions or feedback from group members. This activity contributes to strengthening knowledge retention because it involves higher-order thinking processes that go beyond simply memorizing the material. From the perspective of the student participants, the presence of peer tutors also helps improve retention of the Kitab Kuning material. Some students admitted that they found it easier to remember the material when it was re-explained through group discussions compared to simply listening to the teacher’s explanation in a traditional classroom setting.

“If I only hear it once during the lesson, there are usually parts I quickly forget. But after discussing it again in the group and asking each other questions, the material is easier to remember.” (IF-09/Participating Student, interview, March 3, 2026).

This statement indicates that group discussions provide students with the opportunity to actively review the material. Unlike one-way instruction, which positions students as mere recipients of information, *peer teaching* encourages students to engage in the information processing process through activities such as asking questions,

answering, and re-explaining the material they have learned. Another finding shows that the use of simpler language by peer tutors helps students understand the content of the Kitab Kuning, which is often considered difficult because it uses classical Arabic and complex religious terms.

“Tutors usually explain things using language that’s closer to everyday life. That’s why I find it easier to understand the book’s content and remember the discussions.” (IF-10/Participating Student, *interview*, March 3, 2026).

This data indicates that the process of simplifying language and providing contextual examples contributes to strengthening students’ conceptual understanding. Good understanding is one of the key factors influencing a person’s ability to retain information in long-term memory. In addition to the interview data, observation results show that students who are active in *peer teaching* groups are better able to restate the material they have learned when asked questions by the teacher at the next meeting. They are not only able to recite the contents of the Kitab Kuning, but can also explain the meaning, legal purpose, and examples of its application in daily life. Meanwhile, students who were less active in group discussions tended to struggle when asked to explain the material in detail. These findings indicate that active engagement in the learning process is closely linked to the strengthening of knowledge retention.

Table 3. The Contribution of Peer Teaching to Students’ Knowledge Retention

Activities in Peer Teaching	Impact on Knowledge Retention
Rereading the material before teaching	Strengthens the process of information repetition
Re-explaining the material	Deepening conceptual understanding
Answering group members’ questions	Developing reflection and elaboration of knowledge
Group discussion	Reinforcing memory through social interaction
Use of contextual examples	Facilitating understanding and retention of information
Question-and-answer sessions among students	Reducing misconceptions and reinforcing memory

Source: Results of research data analysis, 2026.

Based on Table 3, the strengthening of knowledge retention occurs through various learning mechanisms that emerge in *peer teaching* practices. The process of material repetition, social interaction, reflection on understanding, and the provision of contextual examples are factors that support the formation of a deeper understanding that lasts longer in the students’ memory. Thus, *peer teaching* functions not only as a strategy to enhance learning activities but also as a pedagogical mechanism that strengthens the process of knowledge internalization in the study of the Kitab Kuning.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the implementation of *peer teaching* makes a significant contribution to strengthening students’ knowledge retention. Through collaborative activities such as teaching, discussing, answering questions, and reviewing material, students have the opportunity to reconstruct their existing knowledge. These findings demonstrate that learning that involves active student participation tends to result in a stronger and more sustainable understanding compared to learning that merely

positions students as recipients of information. Therefore, *peer teaching* can be viewed as an effective pedagogical innovation in supporting the study of the Kitab Kuning within the pesantren environment.

Discussion

The research results indicate that the implementation of *peer teaching* in the study of the Kitab Kuning at the Nurul Hidayah Al-Mida Islamic Boarding School in Karawang cannot be understood merely as a change in teaching methods, but rather as a process of negotiation between the boarding school's pedagogical traditions and the demands of contemporary educational innovation. This finding demonstrates that changes occurring within the pesantren environment take place adaptively and selectively, where new elements are adopted without eroding the foundational traditions that have become the institution's identity. In this context, the *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods remain preserved as the core of the transmission of Islamic knowledge, while *peer teaching* functions as a supportive mechanism that expands students' participation in the learning process. These findings indicate that innovation in pesantren education does not always take the form of replacing old practices but can emerge through an integration process that produces new, more contextual forms of pedagogy (Aris & Syukron, 2020) .

This phenomenon can be explained through the concept of the "*Third Space*" proposed by Homi K. Bhabha. According to Bhabha, the encounter between two distinct cultural systems does not necessarily result in the domination of one over the other, but rather gives rise to a "*third space*" that enables negotiation, adaptation, and the creation of new meanings (Bhandari, 2022) . In this study, the pesantren learning tradition and the innovation of *peer teaching* do not exist in a mutually exclusive relationship but form a new pedagogical space that combines the characteristics of both. The ustadz retains his role as an academic authority and guardian of the pesantren's scholarly lineage, while the santri gain a broader space to actively participate through discussion and collaborative learning. Thus, the implementation of *peer teaching* can be understood as a manifestation of the "*third space*" in pesantren pedagogy—a space of encounter that generates hybrid learning practices between tradition and innovation (.

The concept of hybridity, which lies at the core of Bhabha's thought, is also evident in the shift in learning interaction patterns observed in this study. Prior to the implementation of *peer teaching*, learning relationships primarily occurred vertically between the ustadz and the students. After the method was implemented, horizontal interaction patterns emerged, involving intensive communication among students through study groups. However, this change did not eliminate the existing authority structure. Scholarly authority remains with the ustadz, while peer tutors function as facilitators who assist in the process of understanding the material. This situation indicates that the hybridity that has emerged is not a form of resistance to tradition, but rather the result of a negotiation that allows for the emergence of more flexible and participatory learning practices without losing the fundamental character of pesantren education.

Research findings also indicate that *peer teaching* contributes to increased student participation in the learning process. Students who were previously more passive have become bolder in asking questions, expressing opinions, and engaging in group discussions. These findings align with Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, which

emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through social interaction. According to Vygotsky, the learning process occurs optimally when learners interact with others who possess higher abilities within a learning community (Pardjono, 2016 ; (Double et al., 2020) . In the context of this study, peer tutors act as *more knowledgeable peers* who help group members understand material within their *zone of proximal development* (Recha & Hidayati, 2026) . Through these interactions, students gain the opportunity to actively construct knowledge, rather than merely receiving information from the teacher.

The social constructivist perspective helps explain why *peer teaching* can enhance students' engagement in learning the Kitab Kuning. When learning takes place in small groups, closer social relationships create a more comfortable and egalitarian learning environment. Students no longer feel hindered by the social distance that often arises in formal teacher-student relationships. This environment allows them to more freely ask questions, discuss challenges they face, and test their understanding through dialogue with peers. Consequently, the learning process becomes more active and participatory as knowledge is built through ongoing social interaction.

The results of this study reinforce the findings of various previous studies indicating that *peer teaching* has a positive impact on students' engagement in the learning process. Various studies have found that peer tutors can enhance students' learning motivation, communication skills, and self-confidence because the learning process takes place in a more collaborative atmosphere (Jannah et al., 2025) . However, this study offers a different perspective as it was conducted within the context of a pesantren, which possesses distinctive pedagogical characteristics. While most previous studies have treated *peer teaching* as a standalone learning strategy, this study demonstrates that the method can function effectively when integrated with existing pesantren learning traditions. In other words, the effectiveness of *peer teaching* in the pesantren context is determined not only by the method itself but also by its ability to align with the culture and traditions of the educational institution where it is implemented.

Another important finding in this study is the contribution of *peer teaching* to strengthening students' knowledge retention. The research data show that both tutors and learners experienced improved ability to recall, understand, and restate the material from the Kitab Kuning after participating in collaborative learning activities. This finding can be explained through constructivist learning theory, which posits that deep understanding is formed when learners actively process and reconstruct the information they receive (Zaitunah & Yanto, 2023) . In *peer teaching* activities, tutors not only receive information from the ustadz but also reorganize that knowledge before explaining it to group members. This process demands higher cognitive engagement, thereby strengthening conceptual understanding and knowledge retention.

These findings are also consistent with the "*learning by teaching*" principle, which states that teaching is one of the most effective forms of learning. When someone must explain a concept to others, they are required to understand the material more deeply, identify relationships between concepts, and simplify information so that others can understand it. These activities promote cognitive elaboration, which contributes to the strengthening of long-term memory (Moeller et al., 2020 ; Alqurashi, 2021) . In the context of this study, student tutors indirectly undergo a deeper learning process because they

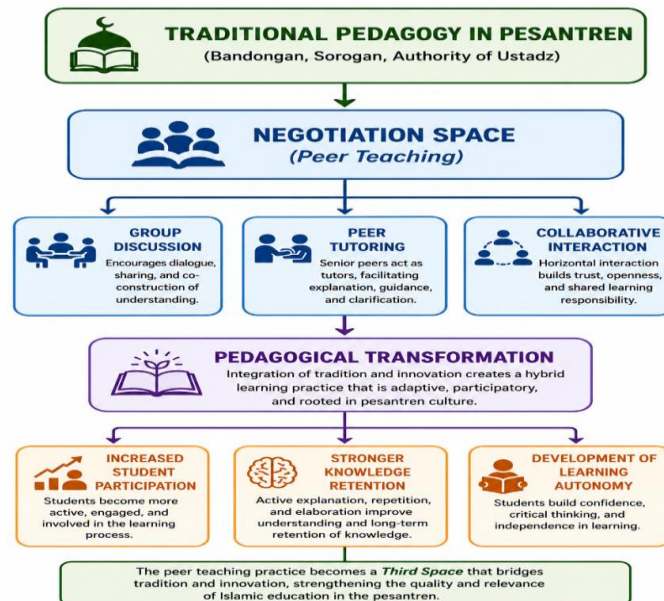
must prepare themselves before leading group discussions and answering questions from their group members.

Additionally, improved knowledge retention is influenced by the social interactions that occur during the discussion process. Through activities such as asking questions, answering, and re-explaining the material, students actively review the information. From an educational psychology perspective, repetition accompanied by meaning-making contributes more significantly to the formation of long-term memory than mechanical repetition through rote memorization alone. Therefore, *peer teaching* not only helps students recall the content of the Kitab Kuning but also understand the meaning and relevance of the material studied in daily life.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the implementation of *peer teaching* in Islamic boarding schools results in a hybrid pedagogical transformation. This transformation does not lead to the elimination of traditional boarding school learning practices but rather to the creation of a new space that brings together tradition and innovation within an adaptive educational practice. This finding enriches the study of Islamic education by demonstrating that pedagogical modernization does not always have to be achieved through the replacement of old systems, but can be realized through a process of negotiation that respects tradition while opening space for renewal. From Homi K. Bhabha's "*Third Space*" perspective, the implementation of *peer teaching* in pesantren can be understood as a practice of pedagogical hybridity that produces a collaborative learning model rooted in pesantren culture (Le et al., 2018 ; Brouwer et al., 2022) . Therefore, the primary contribution of this study lies in revealing how educational innovation can emerge from within the tradition itself, thereby producing a form of learning that is more participatory, effective, and relevant to the needs of contemporary Islamic education.

Based on the research findings, the researchers developed a conceptual model called *the Pesantren Pedagogical Hybridization Model (PPHM)*. This model explains that the implementation of *peer teaching* functions as a space for negotiation (*third space*) that brings together the pedagogical traditions of the pesantren with collaborative learning innovations. In this model, the *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods remain the foundation of knowledge transmission, while *peer teaching* acts as a mediating mechanism that enables the emergence of new, more participatory interaction patterns. This negotiation process yields pedagogical transformations, including increased student participation, strengthened knowledge retention, the development of academic leadership, and the growth of independent learning. This model extends Homi K. Bhabha's *Third Space* theory into the context of Islamic education by demonstrating that pedagogical innovation in pesantren occurs through a process of hybridization between tradition and renewal, rather than through the replacement of one by the other.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Peer Teaching-Based Pedagogical Hybridization in Pesantren



Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of *peer teaching* in the study of the Kitab Kuning at the Nurul Hidayah Al-Mida Islamic Boarding School in Karawang constitutes a form of negotiation between the boarding school's pedagogical traditions and contemporary learning innovations. The *peer teaching* method does not replace traditional learning practices such as *bandongan* and *sorogan*, but functions as a complement that strengthens the effectiveness of learning. From the perspective of Homi K. Bhabha's *Third Space*, *peer teaching* forms a hybrid space that brings together traditional pesantren values with modern collaborative learning approaches, resulting in learning practices that are more adaptive, participatory, and remain rooted in pesantren culture.

Research findings also indicate that *peer teaching* contributes to increased student participation, enhanced knowledge retention, and the development of independent learning. Through group discussions, peer tutoring, and collaborative interactions, students gain opportunities to actively construct knowledge, thereby deepening their understanding of the Kitab Kuning curriculum. The primary theoretical contribution of this study is the development of the Pesantren Pedagogical Hybridization Model (PPHM), which explains that *peer teaching* functions as a space for negotiation (*third space*) that bridges pesantren pedagogical traditions with modern learning innovations. This model enriches the study of pesantren pedagogy by demonstrating that the transformation of Islamic education can occur through a process of hybridization between tradition and renewal, rather than through the replacement of one by the other.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations because it was conducted at a single Islamic boarding school with a limited number of informants; therefore, its findings cannot yet be generalized to all Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study employed a qualitative approach and thus did not quantitatively measure the impact of *peer teaching* on students' learning outcomes. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a

greater number of Islamic boarding schools with diverse characteristics and to utilize *mixed-methods* or experimental approaches to further test and develop the PPHM model within various Islamic educational contexts.

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