

The Construction of Santri Reality Regarding Learning at Alkhairat Ambon Pesantren: A Study of Cultural Communication in the Formation of Santri Meaning, Values, and Identity

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze how santri construct social reality regarding the implementation of activities in pesantren through a cultural communication perspective, particularly in the formation of meaning, values, and identity. The study employs a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative exploratory case study approach. The primary subjects are santri, with supporting informants including *ustaz/ustazah*, pesantren leaders and administrators, family members/parents, school committee members, and other stakeholders involved in educational activities. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed using Berger and Luckmann's theory of the social construction of reality, particularly the concepts of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. The findings indicate that the learning reality of santri is constructed through multilayered communication processes, including teacher-santri communication, peer communication, santri-parent communication, and institutional communication. These practices not only strengthen students' mastery of learning materials but also construct values of independence, responsibility, discipline, togetherness, and respect for educational authority. The study further reveals that the construction of santri learning reality operates dialectically: the pesantren shapes santri through values, rules, norms, and communication practices, while santri simultaneously reproduce and reconstruct the learning culture through their everyday actions. The study positions teachers, santri, and parents as three key actors within a communication ecosystem supported by the pesantren institution, media, school committees, government, learning activities, and peer tutors. This process demonstrates that cultural communication in pesantren functions not merely as a medium of knowledge transmission but also as a mechanism for value internalization and the formation of santri identity.

Keywords: *Social Construction of Reality, Santri, Cultural Communication, Pesantren Learning, Peer Tutoring, Santri Identity.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Pesantren is one of Indonesia's longstanding Islamic educational institutions and has played an important role not only in religious education but also in the formation of social values, moral dispositions, and collective identity. Its educational function extends beyond the transmission of religious knowledge because learning takes place within an institutional environment characterized by shared norms, values, traditions, routines, and social relationships. Previous studies have shown that pesantren education integrates character formation into curricular, extracurricular, co-curricular, and habituation-based activities, making the pesantren a social environment in which educational values are continuously practiced in everyday life (Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020; Miftahuddin et al., 2024).

The distinctive character of pesantren means that its educational reality cannot be understood solely through classroom-based learning. Santri live and interact within an intensive social environment involving teachers, pesantren leaders, peers, senior students, parents, and institutional structures. These interactions occur both during formal learning and through everyday activities outside the classroom. Consequently, pesantren education constitutes a comprehensive learning process in which students acquire knowledge not only through direct instruction but also through observation, experience, habituation, exemplary

behavior, discussion, peer interaction, and participation in everyday practices. Hidayat and Bujuri (2020), for example, demonstrate that character education in pesantren is integrated across intracurricular, extracurricular, co-curricular, and habituation activities. Similarly, Miftahuddin et al. (2024) show that character formation in an Islamic boarding school is embedded in educational content and everyday institutional practices.

Within this context, learning can be understood fundamentally as a communicative process. Teachers communicate knowledge, values, expectations, and behavioral norms; santri respond, interpret, and negotiate these messages; peers exchange experiences and provide mutual assistance; parents contribute through support and supervision; while the pesantren institution establishes the structural environment in which these interactions take place. Communication, therefore, is not simply a mechanism for transmitting information from a sender to a receiver. It is also a process through which individuals interpret experiences, construct meanings, and develop understandings of themselves and their social environment. From a cultural communication perspective, communication and culture are closely intertwined because meanings, values, and social practices are produced and expressed through interaction (Chen, 2009).

This perspective is particularly relevant to understanding the position of santri as active participants in the construction of educational reality. In educational settings, students do not merely receive institutional messages; they interpret and reproduce meanings through their interactions and everyday practices. From the perspective of the social construction of reality, Berger and Luckmann (1966) conceptualize social reality as a dialectical process involving externalization, objectivation, and internalization. In this process, individuals produce social realities through their actions, while institutionalized realities subsequently shape individual consciousness and behavior. The relevance of this perspective to education lies in its ability to explain how institutional norms and practices become meaningful realities for learners through repeated interaction and internalization. Contemporary scholarship continues to use Berger and Luckmann's framework to examine the relationship between social interaction, institutionalization, and the construction of socially recognized reality (Dreher & Vera, 2016; Sica, 2016).

Accordingly, the institutional reality of pesantren may not necessarily correspond completely to the subjective reality experienced by santri. An activity defined institutionally as a learning activity, for example, may be interpreted by santri as an experience of discipline, responsibility, obligation, social interaction, character formation, or an opportunity to develop independence. Such differences demonstrate that educational reality contains an important interpretive dimension. Santri are not passive recipients of a reality predetermined by the institution. Rather, they experience, interpret, respond to, and reproduce various forms of interaction within their everyday lives. Through these processes, santri develop understandings of what it means to be a learner, what it means to be a member of a pesantren community, how relationships with teachers should be maintained, how peer relationships should be constructed, and how pesantren values should be enacted in everyday life.

The cultural dimension of this process is particularly significant. Communication in educational institutions takes place within systems of symbols, norms, traditions, language, habits, and collective experiences. These cultural elements provide interpretive frameworks through which educational messages acquire meaning. In pesantren, respect for teachers, patterns of interaction between senior and junior santri, collective learning, peer tutoring, repetition of learning materials, and daily routines constitute communicative practices that are simultaneously educational and cultural. Thus, learning communication in pesantren can be conceptualized as cultural communication because knowledge transmission occurs simultaneously with the transmission, negotiation, and internalization of values and identity.

Research on shared values in Pesantren Sidogiri, for instance, demonstrates that sustained collective values contribute to the construction and maintenance of Islamic educational identity (Kawakip & Sulanam, 2023).

This perspective also highlights the relationship between institutional structure and santri agency. Learning does not necessarily depend exclusively on direct teacher–student instruction. Independent learning, peer tutoring, collaborative learning, and everyday interaction provide spaces in which santri actively participate in producing and reproducing knowledge and values. Such practices indicate that the educational process is distributed across multiple actors and social settings. The pesantren provides institutional norms, curriculum, rules, and values, while teachers, peers, parents, and santri themselves participate in translating these elements into everyday educational practices. Studies of pesantren character education similarly demonstrate that values are cultivated through integrated educational activities and sustained habituation rather than through classroom instruction alone (Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020; Rusydiyah & Matrapi, 2020).

Although previous studies have extensively examined pesantren as a setting for Islamic education and character formation, less attention has been given to how santri themselves construct the meaning of learning activities through multilayered communication processes. Existing studies tend to emphasize institutional models, character education programs, shared values, or curriculum implementation (Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020; Kawakip & Sulanam, 2023; Miftahuddin et al., 2024). The interactional dimension, particularly how communication among teachers, santri, peers, parents, and institutions contributes to the construction of learning reality, value internalization, and santri identity, requires further empirical attention. This gap is important because understanding pesantren education requires not only examining what the ins

B. METHOD

This study employed a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative exploratory case study design. The constructivist paradigm was selected because the study sought to understand educational reality from the experiences, interpretations, and meanings constructed by actors involved in the learning process. The exploratory case study design enabled an in-depth examination of communication patterns and learning practices within their natural institutional and cultural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

The study was conducted at Pesantren Alkhairaat Ambon. The primary participants were santri, while supporting informants included *ustaz/ustazah*, pesantren leaders or administrators, parents, school committee members, and other stakeholders involved in educational activities. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct experience and involvement in the learning process and their ability to provide relevant information concerning communication patterns and learning practices at the pesantren.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. First, participant observation was conducted to examine learning activities, teacher–santri interactions, independent learning, peer tutoring, group learning, and everyday communication practices within the pesantren environment. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the subjective experiences, interpretations, and meanings constructed by santri and supporting informants regarding their learning experiences and communication practices. Third, document analysis was used to obtain information concerning learning activities, educational structures, institutional practices, and other relevant documents.

Data analysis was conducted iteratively throughout the research process. First, the collected data were identified and organized according to emerging themes related to learning communication and santri experiences. Second, the data were categorized and interpreted using

Berger & Luckmann's (1966) social construction of reality framework, particularly the processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Third, relationships among communication practices, value formation, habituation, and the construction of santri identity were examined to develop an integrated interpretation of the learning process. The analysis focused not only on what communication occurred but also on how repeated interactions were interpreted and transformed into shared meanings, values, and identity.

The trustworthiness of the findings was strengthened through source and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from santri, teachers, pesantren administrators, parents, and other relevant informants. Methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. This process was undertaken to enhance the credibility and consistency of the interpretations.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Learning Reality as a Reality of Everyday Life

The findings indicate that learning at Pesantren Alkhairaat Ambon is not confined to formal classroom activities. Formal instruction constitutes the main institutional structure, but the learning process continues through independent study, discussion, peer tutoring, repetition of learning materials, group activities, and interactions within the pesantren environment. Learning is therefore constructed by santri as a continuous part of everyday life rather than as an activity that begins when the teacher enters the classroom and ends when the lesson is completed.

This finding is consistent with the characteristics of pesantren education, in which educational values are integrated into curricular, extracurricular, co-curricular, and habituation activities (Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020). In this context, education is not simply a process of transferring knowledge but a process through which students encounter and reproduce particular patterns of behavior and social relations. Syafe'i (2017) similarly explains that pesantren have historically functioned not only as institutions of religious instruction but also as institutions for character formation.

From the perspective of Berger and Luckmann (1966), the continuity of learning can be understood through the dialectical relationship between externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Externalization occurs when santri express themselves through learning activities, including reading, discussing, reviewing lessons, and participating in peer learning. When these activities are repeatedly performed, they become institutionalized patterns and acquire an objective character. Learning consequently becomes understood as a normal and expected part of pesantren life. Through internalization, santri subsequently recognize continuous learning as part of what it means to be a santri.

The important point is that the learning reality is not merely imposed by the institution. It is reproduced through everyday practices. The pesantren provides the structure, but santri actively participate in reproducing the learning culture. Thus, the learning reality at Pesantren Alkhairaat Ambon can be understood as a socially constructed reality sustained through repeated communication and habituation.

2. Independent Learning and the Construction of Santri Agency

One of the important findings is the presence of independent learning as an integral component of the santri learning experience. Santri review learning materials, read independently, discuss difficult topics with peers, and seek additional understanding without always depending on direct teacher intervention. This finding indicates that learning

communication does not always take the form of direct interpersonal communication between teacher and student.

Independent learning also involves an intrapersonal dimension. Santri communicate with themselves through reflection, repetition, interpretation, and organization of knowledge. The learning process therefore involves both interpersonal and intrapersonal communication. The ability to organize learning independently indicates the emergence of agency because santri begin to take responsibility for the process and outcomes of their own learning.

This finding is important from the perspective of social construction. Santri are not passive recipients of an institutional reality. They actively interpret and reproduce that reality through their own actions. In Berger and Luckmann's (1966) framework, repeated individual actions can become habitualized and eventually acquire a taken-for-granted character. Independent learning consequently moves from an individual activity toward a shared understanding of what a responsible santri should do.

The development of independence also corresponds with findings from research on pesantren character education. Rusydiyah and Matrapi (2020), for example, found that independence is one of the central values cultivated through the Panca Jiwa tradition in pesantren. Hidayat and Bujuri (2020) likewise demonstrate that character education in pesantren is implemented through integrated activities and habituation rather than through formal classroom instruction alone.

The present finding extends this discussion by showing that independence is not only an educational value communicated by the institution. It is constructed through actual learning practices. In other words, santri learn independence by experiencing and practicing independent learning. This distinction is theoretically important because it places agency at the center of the process of identity formation.

3. Peer Tutoring as Horizontal Communication

Peer tutoring represents another important finding concerning the transformation of learning communication. In formal classroom communication, teachers generally occupy the position of primary knowledge providers. Through peer tutoring, however, santri can become sources and mediators of knowledge for other santri. The communication pattern consequently shifts from a predominantly vertical relationship toward a more horizontal interaction: Teacher → Santri becomes: Teacher ↔ Santri ↔ Santri. Peer tutoring allows knowledge to circulate within the santri community. A santri who understands particular learning material can explain it to another santri. The tutor simultaneously reinforces his or her own understanding through the act of explaining. Thus, peer tutoring produces two interconnected outcomes: knowledge transmission and social solidarity.

This finding is supported by recent research on peer interaction in Islamic boarding schools. Wahono et al. (2026) found that peer relationships and collaborative learning constitute important dimensions of character development in modern pesantren. Similarly, research on peer tutoring in Islamic boarding schools has identified peer teaching as a collaborative strategy that can facilitate learning and address differences in students' learning abilities.

More recent research on peer teaching in pesantren also shows that such practices can coexist with traditional teacher-centered learning. Ramadhan et al. (2026), for example, describe peer teaching as a form of pedagogical adaptation through which pesantren learning can become more participatory while maintaining its traditional educational orientation.

From the perspective of cultural communication, peer tutoring is significant because it demonstrates that the santri community is not merely a recipient of institutional culture. Santri participate in producing and reproducing that culture. The tutor becomes a temporary mediator

of institutional knowledge, while the learner becomes an active participant in constructing meaning. Therefore, peer tutoring represents an important mechanism through which learning culture is reproduced horizontally.

4. Repetition of Learning Materials and the Objectification of Knowledge

Repetition of learning materials is another important finding. At first glance, repetition may appear to function primarily as a pedagogical technique for strengthening memory. However, the findings demonstrate that its significance is broader. Repeated activities gradually establish routines, and routines may subsequently acquire the status of normal practices.

From Berger & Luckmann's (1966) perspective, habitualization reduces the need for individuals to reconsider an action each time it is performed. In the pesantren context, repeated learning practices gradually become understood as normal components of santri life. Repetition therefore contributes to the objectification of learning culture.

The significance of repetition is also related to the broader pattern of habituation in pesantren education. Hidayat and Bujuri (2020) found that character education in pesantren is integrated into everyday activities and habituation. Similarly, Miftahuddin et al. (2024) show that Islamic character formation in boarding-school education is embedded in curricular content and institutional practices.

The present study therefore suggests that repetition does not merely reproduce knowledge; it also reproduces expectations about how a santri should learn. Persistent engagement with learning gradually transforms learning from an externally organized activity into an internalized cultural practice.

5. Teacher–Santri Communication as Pedagogical and Cultural Communication

The relationship between teachers and santri constitutes a central component of the learning communication system. The findings show that teachers do not function merely as transmitters of subject matter. They also function as cultural actors whose communication conveys norms, values, attitudes, and behavioral expectations.

Teacher communication operates through both verbal and non-verbal dimensions. Verbal communication conveys explanations, instructions, corrections, questions, and academic feedback. Non-verbal communication, including gestures, attitudes, examples, discipline, and everyday conduct, communicates additional meanings. Santri therefore learn not only from what teachers say but also from how teachers behave. This finding is consistent with Zubaidah and Masyfirah (2023), who found that educational communication between teachers, ustaz/ustazah, and santri is important in the development of student character and that language functions as an important medium through which character is shaped.

The teacher's role can consequently be understood as simultaneously pedagogical and cultural. When teachers explain learning materials, they facilitate knowledge acquisition. When they demonstrate discipline, respect, responsibility, and appropriate interaction, they communicate cultural meanings. The teacher therefore becomes part of the cultural environment through which santri construct their understanding of what constitutes appropriate conduct. This interpretation is also consistent with Kawakip and Sulanam (2023), who demonstrate that shared values in pesantren contribute to the construction of Islamic educational identity. Their study emphasizes that institutional identity is maintained through values and practices shared by members of the educational community.

6. Santri–Parent Communication and the Continuity of Learning

The findings further demonstrate that learning reality extends beyond the relationship between pesantren and santri. Parents constitute another important actor in the learning communication system. Independent learning at home and communication concerning students' learning development establish continuity between the pesantren environment and the family environment.

The communication network can be represented as: Pesantren → Santri → Home/Family and Parents ↔ Pesantren. Through this network, learning does not terminate when santri leave the pesantren environment. Instead, the meaning of learning is extended into the family context. Parents may receive information about learning progress, provide supervision, encourage independent study, and participate in addressing learning difficulties.

This finding reinforces the argument that character and learning practices in pesantren cannot be understood exclusively within the institutional boundary of the school. Hidayat and Bujuri (2020) emphasize the importance of collaboration between pesantren, parents, and the broader social environment in sustaining character education when students are outside the pesantren environment.

From the perspective of social construction, communication between parents and pesantren expands the social space in which learning values are objectified. Values initially promoted by the pesantren can receive reinforcement within the family environment. Consequently, the learning reality becomes more stable because it is supported by multiple social contexts rather than by the pesantren alone.

7. Pesantren Values and the Process of Internalization

The findings indicate that pesantren values are not communicated exclusively through formal learning materials. Values are also communicated through everyday practices. Discipline is constructed through routines; responsibility through assignments and obligations; independence through independent learning; solidarity through peer tutoring; and respect through relationships with teachers and other members of the pesantren community.

This finding supports the argument that character education in pesantren is embedded in the totality of educational activities. Hidayat and Bujuri (2020) found that character education is integrated into intracurricular, co-curricular, extracurricular, and habituation activities. Rusydiyah and Matrapi (2020) similarly demonstrate that pesantren values such as sincerity, modesty, independence, Islamic brotherhood, and freedom are cultivated through the institutional culture of pesantren.

Kawakip and Sulanam (2023) further demonstrate that shared values can become an important foundation for the construction and maintenance of Islamic educational identity. The present study extends this argument by explaining how values move from institutional prescriptions into individual identity through everyday communication and repeated practices.

In Berger and Luckmann's (1966) framework, this process represents internalization. Santri gradually cease to perceive discipline, responsibility, independence, and solidarity merely as external institutional demands. Instead, these values become incorporated into their understanding of themselves and their role within the pesantren community. Education thus becomes a process through which institutional meanings are transformed into subjective meanings.

8. Construction of Santri Identity

The findings indicate that santri identity is constructed through repeated social experiences involving teachers, peers, parents, and the pesantren institution. Identity is

therefore not limited to an administrative status or institutional label. It emerges through processes of interaction, recognition, habituation, and internalization.

Four interconnected dimensions can be identified in the construction of santri identity. First, the santri develops an identity as a learner, characterized by responsibility for acquiring knowledge. Second, the santri develops an identity as a member of the pesantren community, characterized by participation in shared norms and values. Third, the santri develops an identity as an autonomous individual, demonstrated through independent learning and decision-making. Fourth, the santri develops an identity as a socially responsible person, demonstrated through cooperation, peer assistance, and respect for others.

This finding is consistent with Kawakip and Sulanam's (2023) argument that shared values are closely related to the construction of Islamic educational identity. It is also consistent with Miftahuddin et al. (2024), who demonstrate that character formation in Islamic boarding schools is closely connected to the integration of educational content and institutional practices.

The contribution of the present study lies in emphasizing communication as the mechanism connecting institutional values and individual identity. Values do not automatically become identity simply because they are written in rules or taught in classrooms. They become meaningful when repeatedly communicated, experienced, practiced, interpreted, and internalized by santri.

9. Learning as a Mechanism of Cultural Reproduction

The findings reveal two simultaneous dimensions of pesantren learning. The first is the pedagogical dimension, through which learning produces knowledge and academic competence. The second is the socio-cultural dimension, through which learning produces values, norms, patterns of interaction, and identity.

These dimensions cannot be separated. When teachers teach subject matter, they simultaneously teach ways of relating to knowledge. When santri study together, they learn cooperation. When they participate in peer tutoring, they learn social responsibility. When they engage in independent learning, they develop autonomy.

Learning therefore functions as a mechanism of cultural reproduction. The cultural system of the pesantren is reproduced through everyday communication and practice. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that pesantren character education is embedded in the broader educational culture rather than isolated in particular subjects (Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020; Rusydiyah & Matrapi, 2020).

At the same time, cultural reproduction should not be interpreted as simple repetition. Santri interpret and adapt the cultural meanings they encounter. The learning culture is therefore reproduced through an active process of interpretation. This explains why pesantren culture can maintain continuity while simultaneously adapting to changing learning practices.

10. The Dialectic between Pesantren Structure and Santri Agency

An important contribution of this study is its finding that the relationship between pesantren and santri is not unidirectional. The pesantren provides institutional structures consisting of rules, schedules, curriculum, norms, authority, and established interaction patterns. However, santri possess agency in responding to, interpreting, and reproducing these structures.

Agency can be observed through independent learning, peer tutoring, group learning, and the interpretation of everyday educational experiences. Santri therefore operate simultaneously within institutional structures and as actors who reproduce those structures.

The relationship can be summarized as: Pesantren structures santri → Santri reproduce and reconstruct pesantren culture. This relationship corresponds closely with Berger and

Luckmann's (1966) dialectical conception of social reality. Institutions emerge from human activity, become objectified as external realities, and subsequently shape individuals through internalization. Individuals, however, remain participants in the continuing reproduction of the social world.

The finding also contributes to understanding pesantren as a dynamic educational institution. The stability of pesantren culture does not necessarily mean that all practices remain unchanged. Instead, continuity can be maintained because institutional values are continuously reconstructed through the actions of new generations of santri.

11. The Triangular Learning Communication Model

Based on the overall findings, this study proposes a Triangular Learning Communication Model consisting of three central actors: teachers/ustaz/ustazah, santri, and parents. These actors are embedded within the broader institutional environment of the pesantren and are connected through peer tutors, learning groups, media, school committees, and other educational stakeholders.

Conceptually, the model can be represented as follows:

TEACHERS/USTAZ/USTAZAH ↔ SANTRI ↔ PARENTS

with:

PEER TUTORS / LEARNING GROUPS

as an important horizontal communication mechanism, while:

PESANTREN INSTITUTION

provides the institutional environment consisting of norms, values, curriculum, rules, authority, and learning structures.

The model can therefore be represented as:

PESANTREN INSTITUTION



NORMS – VALUES – CURRICULUM – RULES



TEACHERS ↔ SANTRI ↔ PARENTS



PEER TUTORS / LEARNING GROUPS



INDEPENDENT LEARNING – GROUP LEARNING – PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES



VALUE INTERNALIZATION



SANTRI IDENTITY

The model demonstrates that learning communication does not operate through a simple linear sender–receiver mechanism. Teachers communicate knowledge and values to santri; santri respond, interpret, and reproduce those meanings; peers facilitate horizontal knowledge exchange; and parents extend the learning process into the family environment.

The model is therefore better understood as a communication ecosystem. The pesantren institution establishes the structural context, teachers provide pedagogical and cultural guidance, santri participate as learners and active agents, peers facilitate horizontal interaction, and parents strengthen continuity between pesantren and family life.

This finding is particularly relevant to contemporary studies of pesantren education. Research on peer interaction shows that relationships among students can contribute to collaborative learning and character development, while research on shared values demonstrates that collective practices contribute to institutional identity. The present model

connects these dimensions by positioning communication as the mechanism through which knowledge, values, and identity circulate across the pesantren learning ecosystem.

12. The Triangular Model through Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction Theory

The proposed model can be directly connected to the three processes of social construction formulated by Berger & Luckmann (1966): externalization, objectivation, and internalization.

Externalization occurs when teachers, santri, and parents engage in communication and educational practices. Teachers teach and guide, santri learn and participate, parents provide support, and santri engage in peer tutoring. These activities represent the expression of actors within the social world. At this stage, communication is highly dynamic. Individuals express expectations, knowledge, values, experiences, and interpretations. Learning reality is therefore initially produced through human action.

When these actions are repeated, they develop into recognizable patterns. Independent learning becomes a habit; peer tutoring becomes an accepted learning practice; parent–pesantren communication becomes part of the educational system; and institutional rules become established norms. The repeated practices consequently acquire an objective character within the pesantren community. Santri encounter these practices not simply as individual choices but as an established social reality. This process explains why the pesantren learning culture can persist across generations. As Kawakip and Sulanam (2023) demonstrate, shared values can become institutionalized and contribute to the continuity of Islamic educational identity.

Internalization occurs when the objective reality of the pesantren becomes incorporated into the consciousness of individual santri. Santri begin to understand learning as a responsibility, discipline as a value, independence as a personal quality, and solidarity as an expected social practice. At this stage, institutional reality becomes subjective reality. Santri no longer act only because rules require them to do so; rather, they increasingly understand and interpret the practices as part of who they are.

The complete process can therefore be summarized as: Communication → Repeated Practice → Habituation → Objectivation → Internalization → Identity. This sequence represents one of the central theoretical contributions of the study. It shows how everyday communication transforms institutional values into lived experiences and ultimately into elements of santri identity.

The findings contribute to the study of pesantren education by bringing together three dimensions that are often examined separately: learning communication, cultural reproduction, and identity construction. First, the study demonstrates that learning communication is not merely a technical mechanism for transferring information. Communication is also a cultural process through which meanings, values, norms, and behavioral expectations are produced and reproduced. Second, the findings show that pesantren culture is reproduced through both vertical and horizontal communication. Teacher–santri communication represents the vertical dimension, while peer tutoring and group learning represent horizontal communication. Parent–pesantren communication further expands the process beyond the institutional environment. Third, the study demonstrates that santri identity emerges through the interaction between institutional structure and individual agency. Santri are shaped by institutional values, but they also reproduce and reconstruct those values through everyday practice.

This perspective complements existing research on pesantren character education. Previous studies have established that character formation is integrated into the institutional culture and daily activities of pesantren (Hidayat & Bujuri, 2020; Rusydiyah & Matrapi, 2020; Miftahuddin et al., 2024). The present study advances this discussion by identifying

communication as the relational mechanism through which that integration occurs. Thus, the novelty of this study lies not simply in identifying values such as independence, discipline, responsibility, solidarity, and respect. Rather, it explains how those values are socially constructed through communication, repeated practices, habituation, and internalization within the pesantren learning ecosystem.

The findings indicate that learning at Pesantren Alkhairaat Ambon is simultaneously a pedagogical, communicative, cultural, and identity-forming process. The pesantren provides the institutional structure, teachers communicate knowledge and values, peers facilitate horizontal learning, parents sustain educational continuity, and santri actively interpret and reproduce the meanings they encounter. The resulting learning reality is therefore neither entirely imposed by the institution nor entirely produced by individual santri. It emerges dialectically through continuous interaction between structure, communication, practice, and agency.

D. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that santri construct the reality of learning at Pesantren Alkhairaat Ambon through continuous processes of cultural communication. Learning extends beyond knowledge acquisition to the construction of meaning, values, norms, habits, and identity. Through formal learning, independent study, peer tutoring, discussion, interaction with teachers, and communication with parents, santri actively experience and reproduce their educational reality. Consistent with Berger and Luckmann's perspective, these processes involve externalization, objectivation, and internalization, through which learning practices are transformed into shared meanings, habitual patterns, and ultimately elements of santri identity.

The findings further reveal that teachers, santri, and parents constitute three central actors within a broader learning communication ecosystem, supported by peer tutors, learning groups, and the pesantren institution. This ecosystem combines vertical and horizontal communication, enabling santri to function not only as recipients but also as active producers and mediators of knowledge. Theoretically, the study highlights learning in pesantren as a culturally mediated process of social reality construction. Practically, strengthening participatory communication, independent learning, peer tutoring, teacher role modeling, and sustained pesantren–parent communication can support the development of meaningful learning and santri identity. Thus, pesantren learning simultaneously transmits knowledge, constructs meaning, internalizes values, reproduces culture, and shapes identity.

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