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Kiai-Led Da'wa through Islamic Education: Social Transformation in Wonosobo, Indonesia, 1950–2024

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ABSTRACT

Background. Islamic education in Wonosobo developed as a strategy of kiai-led da'wa, integrating religious knowledge, moral formation, institutional development, and community service. However, the historical process through which pesantren traditions enabled institutional and social change remains insufficiently explained.

Purpose: This study analyzes continuity and change in kiai-led da'wa through the development of Islamic education and explains its contribution to social change in Wonosobo from 1950 to 2024.

Method: This study employed historical narrative inquiry combined with the historical method, with structuration theory guiding interpretation. Data were collected from February to July 2026 through in-depth interviews with ten informants: three kiai, three community members, two santri, and two alumni. Interview accounts were examined through source criticism, compared across informants, and triangulated with observations, documents, and relevant scholarly literature.

Results: Kiai-led da'wa developed through the strengthening of religious education within pesantren, community study groups, and Sufi orders; the integration of religious and general education through formal and vocational institutions; and the expansion of da'wa through digital media, philanthropy, and spiritual assistance. These developments preserved the study of classical Islamic texts, scholarly lineages, moral formation, and the exemplary conduct of kiai. This continuity and change broadened educational access and pathways, opened employment opportunities for graduates, and connected religious formation with community service.

Conclusion: Kiai-led da'wa contributed to social change in Wonosobo through the development of Islamic education and the expansion of activities addressing community needs. The study's conceptual contribution lies in explaining how the preservation of religious traditions accompanied the renewal of institutions, learning approaches, and social services. Islamic education thus served as a means of da'wa, connecting individual religious formation with community development.

KEYWORDS

Historical Narrative Inquiry, Islamic Education, Kiai-led Da'wa, Pesantren, Social Change

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has developed through the interaction of state policies, institutional

initiatives, and religious practices. Understanding this development requires examining how kiai and communities connect religious teaching with education and respond to changing social needs. Chaplin (2020) shows how religious ethics develop through communal interaction and the interpretation of religious teachings in specific social settings, while Senay et al. (2025) examine the relationship between state institutions and religious actors. Together, these studies indicate that educational change involves both institutional arrangements and the practices through which communities transmit religious knowledge and organize community life.

Kiai and pesantren connect religious learning, da'wa, and community life. A kiai is a religious leader and educator, while a pesantren is a residential Islamic educational institution that combines the study of religious texts, moral formation, and community engagement. Karim et al. (2025) examine how pesantren contribute to socioeconomic activity and the development of santri. Rofiqi et al. (2026) and Malik (2024) show how educational institutions respond to changing social needs while maintaining inherited values.

This study defines da'wa as a religious and social practice encompassing teaching, moral formation, institutional development, and community service. Millie (2023) examines the relationship between Islamic education policy, da'wa, and graduates' religious practices, while Kloos (2026) examines religious teaching in the context of broader educational and social developments. From this perspective, Islamic education is a means through which kiai transmit religious knowledge and organize activities addressing community needs. The study therefore examines how these practices develop across generations and contribute to social change. The continued study of religious texts and emphasis on moral formation can accompany changes in educational levels, curricula, communication, and community services. Examining this relationship helps explain whether new activities extend established educational purposes or reflect changing priorities in local Islamic education.

Previous research addresses three related areas. The first concerns policy, modernization, and institutional adaptation. Awaludin (2024) maps Islamic education research, while D'Agostino and Asadullah (2025) identify gaps in comparative research. Bazzi et al. (2026) and Kosim et al. (2023) examine relationships among religion, educational policy, and institutional development. Ihsan et al. (2024) examine the relationship between national and religious curricula in Indonesian madrasas, while Qazi (2023) examines how curriculum textbooks shape students' religious and national identities in Pakistan. Rodliyah et al. (2024) examine pesantren-based vocational education. These studies explain institutional arrangements but provide less insight into how changes in education over time relate to the history of local da'wa.

The second area concerns kiai, religious leadership, and social change. Suresman and Faqihuddin (2026) review the kiai's educational and social roles, extending earlier discussions of religious leadership by Geertz (2014). Millie (2025) examines the relationship between pesantren teaching practices and formal administrative procedures. This study extends this discussion by examining how kiai work with santri, families, teachers, alumni, and communities over successive historical periods. It therefore examines educational development as a collective process rather than attributing change solely to individual leadership.

The third area examines digital da'wa and religious learning. Maemonah et al. (2023) and Akmaliah (2020) examine institutional representation and religious authority in online settings. Rohmatulloh et al. (2022) connect traditionalist preaching with santri identity and pesantren networks, while Aidulsyah (2023) and Raya (2025) examine religious identities and changing forms of da'wa. Larsson and Willander (2025) review the circulation of Islamic knowledge through social media, and Suresman et al. (2025) trace developments from sorogan to digital learning. These

studies explain contemporary practices, but further historical research is needed to understand how these practices relate to earlier educational institutions and forms of community engagement.

Despite these contributions, the relationship between the preservation of religious traditions, educational renewal, and the expansion of da'wa's social functions has not been adequately examined within a long-term account of local history. This study addresses this gap by tracing how religious learning developed alongside formal schooling, vocational education, digital communication, and community services. It explains the connections among these developments rather than examining institutional modernization, religious leadership, and digital da'wa separately. This study differs from previous research in both its analytical focus and historical scope: it examines the relationships among religious practices, educational institutions, and social activities within the same locality. This approach allows changes in one area to be understood in relation to developments in others, without assuming that all changes follow the same pattern.

Wonosobo provides a relevant case because its educational history encompasses pesantren, majelis taklim, Sufi orders, formal educational institutions, and more recent digital and social initiatives in an agrarian region of Central Java. Sanad refers to the chain of scholarly transmission, adab to ethical conduct, and riyadlah to spiritual discipline; sorogan is a form of individual instruction in religious texts. Majelis taklim are community forums for religious learning. Examining these practices alongside institutional developments makes it possible to trace what persisted, what changed, and how education's relationship with community life developed across generations. The study examines these institutions and activities within the same historical account without treating a single institution as representative of Wonosobo. This historical scope connects educational developments across changing circumstances.

Two complementary frameworks guide the analysis. The perspective of continuity and change identifies the religious practices, educational purposes, and institutional arrangements maintained, adapted, or expanded across historical periods. Rofiqi et al. (2026) examine contemporary organizational adaptation in pesantren. Giddens's (2016) structuration theory explains how actors draw on and reshape rules and resources through repeated practices. Religious norms, scholarly transmission, and ethical expectations are examined as rules; institutions, social networks, economic support, policies, and technology are examined as resources. The first framework identifies historical patterns of continuity and change; the second explains how kiai and other participants contribute to these patterns. The analysis first traces changes in educational activities and their continuing religious purposes, then examines the actors, relationships, and resources involved. Using the two frameworks together connects the sequence of historical developments with an explanation of how educational practices were sustained and expanded in Wonosobo.

This study aims to analyze continuity and change in kiai-led da'wa through the development of Islamic education and to explain its contribution to social change in Wonosobo from 1950 to 2024. The study's original contribution is to connect the preservation of religious traditions with educational renewal and the expansion of community services across the phases of consolidation, adaptation, and reconfiguration. These phases structure the historical account, while the analysis explains how education connects religious formation with changing community needs. The study asks: (1) How were continuity and change in kiai-led da'wa expressed through the development of Islamic education in Wonosobo between 1950 and 2024? (2) How did Islamic education as a means of kiai-led da'wa contribute to social change in Wonosobo?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study combines historical narrative inquiry with the historical method to reconstruct da'wa and Islamic education in Wonosobo during 1950–2024. Ryall and Willis (2025) inform the critical interpretation of memory and interview context, while Cole et al. (2024) inform the interpretation of participants' experiences through narratives, and McKibben and Breheny (2023) examine the temporal dimensions of narrative research. Historical evidence and remembered experience are therefore examined together.

Ten informants were purposively selected: three kiai, three community members, two santri, and two pesantren alumni, anonymized as R1–R10. Selection prioritized educational experience, institutional responsibilities, and knowledge of relevant figures, institutions, and events. These categories offered perspectives on religious leadership, learning experiences, educational trajectories, institutional responsibilities, and relationships with the wider community. Data collection spanned February–July 2026, six months distinct from the historical period examined. In-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face in Indonesian, recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. Questions addressed educational conditions, challenges, kiai and community initiatives, institutional development, value transmission, changing da'wa practices, and education's relationship with community life. Each account was interpreted in relation to the informant's experience, memory, social position, and proximity to events.

To contextualize and corroborate the interview accounts, the study also drew on non-participant observations, pesantren archives, institutional documents, and scholarly literature. Sharp et al. (2024) explain how oral histories provide insight into lived experiences when interpreted in context and alongside other evidence. External criticism examined provenance, dates, authorship, and authenticity; internal criticism assessed consistency, proximity to events, memory biases, and narrators' interests.

Analysis combined temporal reconstruction of sequences and turning points with thematic examination of knowledge transmission, adab, spiritual discipline, institutionalization, vocational education, digital da'wa, and social engagement, as well as contextual interpretation of social positions, politics, policies, and institutional interests. Ghanbar et al. (2024) inform methodological transparency in interpreting narrative connections. Consolidation (1950–1966), adaptation (1967–1998), and reconfiguration (1999–2024) organize changes without assuming rigid historical boundaries.

Squire et al. (2024) assess code saturation by tracking the emergence of new codes across interviews. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) report saturation within 9–17 interviews, particularly in homogeneous populations with narrow objectives; this range does not establish saturation in the present sample. Wutich et al. (2024) distinguish sample requirements across analytical approaches, reinforcing the need to assess adequacy rather than infer it from ten interviews alone. Drawing on Hennink et al. (2017), code saturation was checked by examining whether final interviews generated new codes or themes, while meaning saturation was checked through the depth of explanations within existing themes. These checks addressed thematic coverage and interpretive depth. DiStefano and Yang (2024) distinguish planning, provisional assessment, and final confirmation, providing methodological support for examining saturation across multiple sources. Tight (2024) cautions against unsupported saturation claims, while Rahimi and Khatooni (2024) explain saturation as a context-dependent process requiring systematic analysis. Accordingly, the final interviews were examined for both conceptual novelty and explanatory clarity. Triangulation compared testimonies across informants with observations, archives, institutional documents, and scholarly literature, including verification by key informants. Agreement strengthened

interpretations; differences required contextual explanation. These procedures supported data adequacy for the research questions without equating corroboration with saturation.

The application of structuration theory at the interpretive stage follows Giddens's (2016) view that rules and resources constitute both the medium and the outcome of recurrent social practices. Structuration theory was applied after the historical reconstruction and source criticism had been completed. The concepts of rules and resources were used to analyze how religious values, sanad, adab, and scholarly legitimacy guided action, while pesantren, educational institutions, alumni networks, community support, economic resources, state policies, and technology enabled the development of da'wa. Recurrent practices were understood as processes that simultaneously sustained and transformed the structures of Islamic education. Within this framework, the kiai was not treated as a solitary agent but as part of a network of social relations involving santri, families, teachers, foundations, alumni, government institutions, and local communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Consolidation Phase, 1950–1966

The consolidation phase (1950–1966) centered on Qur'anic learning, classical Islamic texts, adab, spiritual discipline, and congregational life. Informants locate these activities in pesantren, majelis taklim, and Sufi orders during a period of limited formal schooling. Abbas (2021) and Smith-Hefner (2019) provide broader perspectives on religious education and social life, while Fibiger (2023) situates the political changes of 1965–1966 that mark the endpoint of this phase.

Pesantren provided religious instruction, while majelis taklim and Sufi orders connected learning with wider congregations. Shadiqin et al. (2025) examine connections between pesantren and Sufi networks in Aceh, while Bhatt et al. (2025) discuss how Islamic texts, language, and learning interact within Muslim communities. In Wonosobo, the figures identified by informants included Kiai Hasbullah of Bumen, Kiai Muntaha of Kalibeber, Kiai Dimyati of Kalilawang, Kiai Idris of Kauman, Kiai Ibrahim of Jawar, Kiai Masykur of Bumen, Kiai Zainudin of Tempelsari, Kiai Ghozali Syihab of Siwatu, and Kiai Dimyati of Kaliwiro. Their activities connected textual instruction, spiritual guidance, and exemplary conduct. The accounts place teacher–santri relationships and the kiai's religious knowledge at the center of these educational networks.

These networks linked learning with religious practice. Pink (2020) explains the role of textual reading, translation, and oral instruction, while Shadiqin et al. (2025) and Sahri (2024) examine Sufi practice and religious formation. A'yun (2026) addresses religious responses to political and ideological tensions. The Wonosobo accounts show how these activities operated together: instruction in Islamic texts accompanied spiritual exercises and religious assemblies, allowing learning to continue across pesantren and community settings.

The following testimony indicates that the transmission of religious knowledge and spiritual formation occurred concurrently:

> "Kiai Hasbullah of Bumen, Kiai Zainudin of Tempelsari, and Kiai Ibrahim of Jawar conducted study sessions in the Qadiriyah wa Naqsyabandiyah Sufi order, thereby maintaining a balance between the classical scholarly tradition and Sufi practices" (R1 and R2, personal communications, 2026).

The relationship between instruction and practice can be understood through ta'lim, religious teaching; tarbiyah, moral formation; ta'dib, ethical conduct; and riyadlah, spiritual discipline. Alkouatli (2024) examines the conceptual foundations of inquiry with Muslim educators, while Agbaria and Muff (2025) examine the integration of civic issues into Islamic education. Kostadinova (2024) discusses edep as ethical formation, and Yazaki (2024) examines spiritual

discipline through a Sufi–Zen comparison. In the testimony of R1 and R2, the study of classical texts and Sufi exercises formed connected activities. Their combination extended religious learning beyond textual knowledge to habits, conduct, and spiritual practice among santri and congregants.

This integration is evident in the following accounts provided by members of kiai families:

> "Kiai Muntaha al-Hafidz promoted Islamic education through the Qur'an and classical Islamic texts, while Kiai Masykur bin Abdul Hamid developed madrasah education and socioreligious cadre formation. Kiai Hasbullah of Bumen, meanwhile, served as a Sufi teacher to other kiai in Wonosobo, enabling moral values to be communicated to the community in contextually meaningful ways" (R5, personal communication, 2026).
>
> "Kiai Dimyati bin Syihab of Kaliwiro conducted religious study assemblies oriented toward cultivating adab and deepening the congregation's spiritual life. Kiai Ibrahim of Jawar combined pesantren education with Sufi practices, while Kiai Idris of Kauman developed education through exemplary moral conduct in social life" (R3, personal communication, 2026).

Table 1. Patterns of Da'wa Consolidation, Education, and Social Transformation in Wonosobo, 1950–1966

Da'wa Orientation	Kiai's Educational Practices	Social Transformation
Strengthening Islamic beliefs; cultivating *adab* and spiritual discipline	Pesantren-based instruction in the Qur'an and classical Islamic texts; *majelis taklim*; Sufi orders; instruction in Islamic jurisprudence and theology; habituation of religious practices; and moral exemplarity	Reported strengthening of religious learning and congregational ties amid political instability and ideological contestation

The accounts of R1, R2, R5, and R3 show continuity in religious teaching alongside the use of different educational settings. Qur'anic instruction, classical texts, adab, and spiritual discipline were maintained through pesantren, religious assemblies, and Sufi networks. Kiai Muntaha's textual teaching, Kiai Masykur's madrasah initiatives, and the spiritual guidance associated with Kiai Hasbullah illustrate different ways of organizing this shared educational orientation. Rofiqi et al. (2026) examine organizational adaptation alongside the preservation of pesantren traditions. The Wonosobo case adds a historical account of how educational relationships extended across institutions and congregations while retaining their religious purposes.

In Giddens's (2016) terms, religious obligations and norms of adab provided rules through which teachers and learners organized their conduct. Pesantren, religious assemblies, Sufi networks, and relationships among kiai provided resources for sustaining instruction. Repeated study, worship, dhikr, service, and cadre formation connected these rules with everyday activity. The relationship was reciprocal: established practices guided learning, while their continued enactment maintained the educational networks described by informants. Social change in this phase concerned the organization of religious learning across community settings and the formation of relationships that supported subsequent educational development.

The Adaptation Phase, 1967–1998

The adaptation phase (1967–1998) involved the development of madrasas, schools, and higher education alongside pesantren learning. Purdey et al. (2020) situate the New Order's institutional and political arrangements, while Sen and Hill (2010) explain the transition associated with Reform in 1998. Within this period, the Wonosobo accounts trace changes in educational

levels, curricula, qualifications, and institutional responsibilities. Classical Islamic texts and adab remained part of learning as formal education expanded.

Formal institutions connected pesantren learning with general subjects and recognized qualifications. Isbah (2020) examines pesantren within Indonesia's changing educational context, while Sofi and Jenks (2026) discuss learning, religious faith, and globalization. In Wonosobo, educational expansion linked the kiai's teaching activities with schools, administrative arrangements, and pathways to further study. The institutional histories described below show how this connection developed in Kalibeber, Bumen, and Siwatu.

These changes are evident in the development of educational institutions initiated by Kiai Muntaha al-Hafidz:

> "Kiai Muntaha al-Hafidz, the leader of Al-Asy'ariyyah Islamic Boarding School in Kalibeber, established a range of formal educational institutions, including Hj. Maryam Kindergarten, Takhassus Al-Qur'an Junior High School, Takhassus Al-Qur'an Senior High School, Takhassus Al-Qur'an Vocational High School, Ma'arif Islamic Junior High School in Kalibeber (now State Islamic Junior High School 2 Wonosobo), Ma'arif Islamic Senior High School in Kalibeber (now State Islamic Senior High School 2 Wonosobo), and the University of Qur'anic Sciences" (R6, personal communication, 2026).

R6's account brings together institutions established at successive stages, extending from early childhood education to higher education. Their relationship with Al-Asy'ariyyah connected Qur'anic learning with general education, recognized qualifications, and opportunities for further study. Educational adaptation thus involved the development of different levels and functions of education around an existing pesantren.

A similar pattern emerged in Bumen:

> "Kiai Masykur bin Abdul Hamid of Bumen initiated the development of Islamic education by establishing Al-Futuhiyyah Islamic Boarding School in 1973. In 1983, the succeeding generation established separate Al-Futuhiyyah Islamic junior secondary schools for male and female students to meet the local community's demand for formal religious education" (R5, personal communication, 2026).

Educational development in Siwatu followed a similarly gradual pattern:

> "Kiai Ghozaly Syihab established Miftahul Huda Darul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School in 1968. The development of multilevel education subsequently continued with the establishment of Miftahul Huda Islamic Kindergarten in 1970 and Miftahul Huda Islamic Primary School in 1991" (R7, personal communication, 2026).

The accounts from Kalibeber, Bumen, and Siwatu describe institutional development through successive educational levels. R5 and R7 identify specific establishment dates, connecting changes in provision with the work of kiai and subsequent generations. D'Agostino and Asadullah (2025) examine diversity in faith-based education. The Wonosobo cases show how this diversity developed within local institutional histories: pesantren teaching continued while kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary institutions served learners at different stages. These arrangements linked religious education with longer pathways through formal schooling. R7 describes the institutional sequence in Siwatu: the pesantren established in 1968 was followed by a kindergarten in 1970 and a primary school in 1991. In Bumen, the 1973 pesantren was followed by secondary institutions established by the next generation in 1983. These accounts connect educational expansion with different age groups and successive generations of institutional leadership. They also show that adaptation took different local forms. The continuity lay in the relationship with the pesantren, while the timing and educational levels reflected the development of each institution. Formalization therefore proceeded through particular institutional histories within the wider regional pattern.

Curricular adaptation accompanied institutional expansion. Hefner (2023) discusses religious and moral formation, while Ihsan et al. (2024) examine the relationship between national and religious curricula. In Wonosobo, classical texts, adab, and spiritual learning continued alongside general subjects, assessment, and formal qualifications. The two forms of provision served connected purposes: pesantren maintained religious instruction, while schools and madrasas organized academic learning within recognized educational levels. Continuity therefore concerned the purposes and practices of religious learning; change concerned the curriculum and institutional arrangements through which education was provided.

Expansion also redistributed educational responsibilities. Lukens-Bull (2013) and Tan (2012) discuss organizational and institutional changes in Islamic education. Schools and madrasas required principals, teachers, administrative staff, and coordination with government agencies alongside the kiai's religious leadership. Institutional management consequently involved more differentiated roles. Kiai continued to guide the religious orientation of education, while other participants organized teaching, curricula, and administration. This development connected personal guidance with collective institutional responsibilities and provided an organizational basis for education across successive levels.

In addition to formal education, adaptation also extended to vocational learning. Pesantren-based business enterprises provided santri with practical work experience while helping to support the pesantren's educational activities. An alumnus of Pesantren Al-Asy'ariyyah explained:

> "Kiai Muntaha al-Hafidz developed several pesantren-based business enterprises, including the Al-Hikmah general store, the Nusa Usaha public telephone service, the Nusa Usaha savings and loan unit, Al Lion Photo Studio, El Nusa Photocopy Center, Hj. Maryam Polyclinic, a printing business, and Al-Asy'ariyyah Car Rental, which provided transportation services" (R6, personal communication, 2026).

Interviews and observations describe santri taking part in customer service, transaction recording, inventory management, task allocation, and operational accountability. These activities connected vocational learning with the everyday operation of pesantren enterprises. Work experience accompanied religious instruction and formal schooling through tasks requiring discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and organization. The enterprises therefore served both institutional and educational functions: they supported pesantren activities and provided settings in which santri could develop practical skills relevant to work beyond agriculture.

An alumnus connected recognized qualifications with graduates' entry into different occupations:

> "The integration of formal schooling into the pesantren enabled santri and members of the surrounding community to obtain formally recognized qualifications that could be used when applying for employment. Many have since become teachers, university lecturers, entrepreneurs, politicians, and government officials. These opportunities have improved people's lives by broadening their employment prospects beyond farming in their villages" (R5, personal communication, 2026).

R5 identifies teaching, university employment, entrepreneurship, politics, and government service as occupational pathways associated with formal education. This account connects educational qualifications with access to roles beyond village agriculture. Choi et al. (2024) examine vocational education and work, while Whittington (2010) explains how actors use rules and resources in practice. In Wonosobo, curricula and qualification requirements shaped educational activity, while schools, teachers, institutional networks, and business enterprises provided resources for learning. Kiai and institutional administrators connected these resources with religious education. The resulting educational pathways linked textual knowledge, academic

qualifications, and practical experience. Within the continuity-and-change perspective, the transformation concerned the range of education and occupations available to santri and community members. Within structuration theory, qualifications and organizational roles became resources through which graduates could participate in professional, administrative, political, and economic life. The link between education and occupational participation is expressed through two forms of preparation. Formal schooling provided recognized qualifications that graduates could present when seeking employment, as R5 explains. Enterprise activities provided experience in transactions, records, cooperation, and responsibility, as described in the interviews and observations. These forms of preparation connected institutional development with the practical requirements of participation outside the pesantren. The social dimension of adaptation thus involved changes in how learners could move between religious education, further study, work, and public responsibilities. The occupations named by R5 give this relationship concrete expression within the informant's account.

Table 2. Patterns of Adaptation in Da'wa, Education, and Social Transformation in Wonosobo, 1967–1998

Da'wa Orientation	Educational Practices and Resources	Social Transformation
Expanded access to education; integration of religious and general education; vocational training for santri	Formal schools and madrasas; multilevel curricula; classical Islamic texts; student-managed business enterprises	Expanded educational pathways and occupational opportunities described by informants, including teaching, university employment, entrepreneurship, politics, and government service

The Reconfiguration Phase, 1999–2024

The reconfiguration phase (1999–2024) involved digital communication, philanthropy, spiritual assistance, and wider community participation alongside established educational institutions. Power and Warburton (2020) examine the political context following the New Order, while Schmidt (2021) discusses religious representation in media. The Wonosobo accounts connect these developments with changes in the organization and delivery of da'wa through pesantren, mosques, foundations, and community networks.

The post-New Order setting provided opportunities for association and collaboration that local actors used to organize activities beyond formal instruction. A kiai involved in community empowerment connected this development with foundations and assistance programs:

> "Before the Reform era, the form and scope of our activities were largely confined to education within the pesantren. After 1998, greater freedom of association, the establishment of foundations, and opportunities for collaboration emerged. These developments enabled us to expand da'wa through community assistance programs" (R9, personal communication, 2026).

Digital media added channels through which younger kiai and pesantren communities communicated religious teaching. Bunt (2025) examines Islamic communication online, while Campbell and Bellar (2023) discuss relationships between digital religion and established practices. In Wonosobo, the development connected pesantren scholarship with the recording and circulation of teaching beyond religious study sessions. An alumnus described the involvement of younger religious figures:

> "Younger figures from the pesantren community, including Gus Fadlurrohman Al Faqih, Gus Khairullah Al-Mujtaba, Kiai Ahmad Rofiq Masykur, and Kiai Ismail

> Tempelsari, began using digital media to extend the reach of their da'wa among the wider public" (R8, personal communication, 2026).

A young kiai in Wonosobo explained:

> "We began using digital media because how people accessed information was changing and the reach of face-to-face religious instruction was limited. Rather than uploading the entire content of each session, we selected, condensed, recorded, or adapted the material to make it accessible to a wider audience. Although the mode of delivery changed, scholarly lineages, textual references, and procedures for reviewing the material were retained" (R8, personal communication, 2026).

R8 describes a change in presentation alongside continuity in scholarly references and review procedures. Religious material was selected, condensed, recorded, and adapted for circulation through short videos, posters, activity documentation, and brief messages. Larsson and Willander (2025) and Marei (2024) examine the representation and circulation of Islam through social media. The Wonosobo account shows how this process involved educational decisions about content and delivery. Recordings and digital posts allowed material from religious study sessions to be archived, shared, and accessed at different times, extending the settings in which learning could take place. The steps described by R8 also clarify the role of actors in educational change. Selecting material, shortening explanations, recording sessions, and reviewing content involved decisions about how existing teaching could be communicated through a different medium. The content therefore passed through an educational process before circulation. Scholarly references guided preparation, while recording and distribution technologies provided resources for presenting the teaching in several additional formats. This relationship connects continuity in the treatment of religious knowledge with change in its communication. It also locates digital development within the work of pesantren teachers and associated participants rather than attributing educational change to technology alone.

Content appeared on the accounts @santri_wonosobo, @pp.alasyariyyah, @pp.darussalikin, @serambippfam1734, @alfa.alimasykur, @MIQAlHikamWonosobo, and @pptqalasyariyyahpusat. Posts included religious study sessions, sermons, documentation of pesantren activities, and responses to contemporary issues. Commenting and sharing features allowed users to respond to religious content, circulate it, and discuss it with others. These activities connected the delivery of religious teaching with audience participation in its circulation.

Changes in communication also connected religious teaching with new forms of public interaction. Saat and Burhani (2020) discuss religious authority in relation to established institutions, while Andok (2024), Marei (2024), and Campbell (2020) examine its expression through media. In R8's account, scholarly lineages, textual references, and content review remained part of the preparation of digital material. Their continuation connected the kiai's established teaching practices with online presentation and discussion. The change described by the informant concerned how teaching was prepared and communicated, with inherited scholarly practices continuing to guide its content.

Studies by Rozehnal (2022) and by Larsson and Willander (2025) examine the circulation of religious knowledge and the presence of religious actors online. The Wonosobo case connects these discussions with the educational work of local pesantren. Religious figures communicated through digital accounts while remaining associated with particular teachers, institutions, and communities. R8's explanation links the adoption of media to changing access to information and the practical limits of instruction within a single gathering. Digital da'wa consequently developed through the interaction of existing educational relationships with additional opportunities for recording, distribution, and discussion.

Reconfiguration also involved social activities organized through mosques, foundations, congregations, volunteers, and community networks. Kitooke and Mahon (2024) review community-oriented praxis in teacher education, while Tappel et al. (2025) examine collaborative social innovation involving religious organizations in shared spaces. In Wonosobo, philanthropy connected religious instruction with economic and educational assistance. A kiai described this relationship through the activities of Al-Fatah Mosque:

> "Kiai Umar Sholeh transformed Al-Fatah Mosque in Jaraksari into a center for community activities. Its philanthropic programs provided economic and educational assistance, enabling congregants to understand the connection between religious practice and social concern" (R9, personal communication, 2026).

R9's account connects assistance with congregants' understanding of religious practice and social concern. Collecting, managing, and distributing aid provided activities through which participants encountered community needs and exercised shared responsibility. Abu-Ras et al. (2024) review mosque-based public health interventions, illustrating the role of mosques in community health promotion. The Wonosobo evidence contributes an account of the mosque as a setting for learning through service: religious teaching was expressed through assistance, and congregational participation connected individual observance with community activity. The educational function of da'wa therefore extended beyond instruction to the organization of shared social responsibilities.

The expansion of da'wa was also evident in spiritual assistance, as described by a religious leader in Wonosobo:

> "Kiai Mutolib of Darul Majnun Islamic Boarding School in Mergosari guided the rehabilitation of people with mental health conditions through *dhikr* and *mujahadah*. The Dzikrul Ghofilin Foundation in Erorejo also incorporated *dhikr* and *tawajuh* water into its spiritual assistance program" (R10, personal communication, 2026).

R10 describes dhikr, mujahadah, and other spiritual practices within organized assistance programs. Mahmood and McAloney-Kocaman (2026) examine religious influences on Muslim clients' experiences of psychological support, while Cohen et al. (2025) examine the development of a curriculum to educate religious leaders about blood pressure in Tanzania. In Wonosobo, practices associated with spiritual formation were incorporated into assistance provided through pesantren and foundations. This development extended the setting and purpose of religious guidance: spiritual discipline remained central, while its organization addressed people seeking support. Together with philanthropy and digital teaching, these activities show the diversification of educational and social functions within kiai-led da'wa. Across these community programs, the educational relationship extended from the transmission of knowledge to participation in assistance. Mosque activities connected religious observance with the provision of aid, while spiritual programs organized guidance through established religious practices. These different settings connected the kiai's teaching role with forms of service directed toward community needs.

Table 3. Patterns of Reconfiguration in Da'wa, Education, and Social Transformation in Wonosobo, 1999–2024

Da'wa Orientation	Digitalization and Community Empowerment	Social Transformation
Social concern; spiritual maturity; religious understanding	Digital religious content and interaction; philanthropic learning; spiritual assistance; involvement of mosques, pesantren, foundations,	Additional channels for religious learning and discussion; participation in philanthropic activities and spiritual assistance;

Da'wa Orientation	Digitalization and Community Empowerment	Social Transformation
	congregations, volunteers, and community networks	continued use of scholarly lineages, textual references, and exemplary conduct

Across the three phases, the Wonosobo evidence connects changes in educational settings with the continuing purposes of religious learning. In consolidation, instruction and spiritual practice linked pesantren with congregations and Sufi networks. In adaptation, formal institutions and business enterprises connected religious education with academic qualifications and practical skills. In reconfiguration, digital communication and community programs added settings for teaching, participation, and service. The continuity-and-change perspective brings these relationships into a historical account: later activities developed alongside established practices, while the organization of learning expanded to serve different educational and social needs.

Structuration theory explains the practical relationships underlying this development. Religious instruction, ethical expectations, and scholarly transmission guided how participants taught, learned, and organized activities. Institutions, qualifications, enterprises, foundations, and communication technologies provided resources for these practices. Kiai, teachers, santri, alumni, families, and congregants used these resources through teaching, administration, work, media production, and assistance. Their participation maintained religious education while developing arrangements through which it could operate in schools, workplaces, digital settings, and community programs. Social transformation was expressed through these changes in educational pathways, occupational participation, organizational responsibilities, and forms of service.

The case contributes to existing literature by connecting institutional adaptation, religious leadership, and digital da'wa within the same local history. Rofiqi et al. (2026) discuss adaptation in pesantren, Rodliyah et al. (2024) examine vocational education, and Suresman et al. (2025) trace changes in learning models. The Wonosobo findings link these concerns through the activities described by informants: religious teaching continued as formal education, work experience, and digital communication developed. The case also extends discussions of social participation by showing how mosque-based philanthropy and spiritual assistance formed part of the educational functions of da'wa. Its contribution is therefore an explanation of how education connected the preservation of religious practices with changes in opportunities, institutional roles, and community engagement across generations.

CONCLUSION

Kiai-led da'wa contributed to social change in Wonosobo from 1950 to 2024 through the development of Islamic education and community services. The study's conceptual contribution is to show how continuity in religious learning, ethical formation, and scholarly transmission provided a foundation for institutional renewal. These practices were maintained as educational pathways, vocational opportunities, digital communication, and social services expanded. Structuration theory explains this relationship through the collective actions of kiai, teachers, santri, alumni, families, and communities, who used institutional, social, and technological resources to sustain religious education while responding to changing needs.

The study focuses on a single locality and draws on retrospective accounts interpreted alongside documentary and observational evidence. Its historical reconstruction is shaped by informants' memories, social positions, and experiences of the events they describe. Future research

could compare other regions and examine institutional records, graduates' educational and occupational trajectories, and community experiences to clarify how these processes develop across different social and historical contexts.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work, the first author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist with language refinement, grammar improvement, and paragraph organization. Following its use, all content was thoroughly reviewed, edited, and verified by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the final manuscript.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing; Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation; Supervision; Validation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation; Supervision; Validation.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

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