



# The Development of Kuttab Institutions within the Cultural Dominance of Traditional Pesantren (Islamic Boarding Schools)

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Islamic education in East Java has long been dominated by traditional pesantren affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which has formed a strong socio-religious and cultural foundation. In recent years, however, the re-emergence of Kuttab as a classical Islamic educational model has introduced a new dynamic within this established landscape.

**Objective:** This study aims to analyse the development of Kuttab institutions in East Java, examining their characteristics, challenges, and adaptation strategies within the dominant pesantren culture. **Method:** The research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, document analysis, and review of relevant scholarly literature. **Result:** The findings indicate that Kuttab has gained positive acceptance among parents seeking Qur'anic and character-based education for early-age children. Nevertheless, the institutions face challenges related to legal recognition, curriculum standardisation, teacher professionalism, infrastructure, and socio-cultural perception. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that sustainable development of Kuttab requires regulatory reinforcement, contextual curriculum development, professional capacity building, and institutional collaboration. **Contribution:** This study contributes to the discourse on contemporary Islamic education by providing contextual insights into the interaction between revitalised classical models and entrenched traditional educational systems in Indonesia.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Indonesia has a long historical trajectory, deeply rooted in the tradition of pesantren, the oldest and most influential Islamic educational institutions, particularly in East Java (Arif et al., 2020). This region is widely recognised as a centre for the development of traditional pesantren closely associated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and as a socio-cultural and religious environment that has produced many prominent Islamic scholars (Anshori et al., 2024). For centuries, the pesantren education system has earned strong public trust due to its emphasis on deep religious learning, character formation, and the preservation of scholarly traditions grounded in classical Islamic texts, commonly known as *kitab kuning* (Imamuddin, 2025). The strong social structure of pesantren, the close relationship between *kiai* (religious leaders) and *santri* (students), and the extensive kinship networks among scholars have established pesantren as a dominant institution in Islamic education in East Java.

However, the dynamics of modernisation, the growing demand for character education, and renewed awareness of Qur'an-based learning and ethical formation have revived a classical Islamic educational model known as *Kuttab* (Rustandi et al., 2025). Historically, Kuttab refers to an early Islamic elementary educational institution that

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existed during the era of Muhammad, primarily focusing on teaching reading and writing, memorisation of the Qur'an, and the cultivation of moral discipline and character (Ulum et al., 2024). In Indonesia, this model began to reemerge with the establishment of Kuttab Al-Fatih in 2012. The presence of Kuttab as a nonformal educational institution offers a new alternative within the landscape of formal schooling and pesantren education.

In recent developments, the classical Islamic educational model of Kuttab has once again gained attention (Ifendi, 2021). Since the establishment of Kuttab Al-Fatih in 2012, this model has expanded as an alternative Qur'an-based elementary education that emphasises moral conduct (*adab*) (Muzayanah, 2020). The emergence of Kuttab institutions in East Java represents a particularly interesting phenomenon, as they develop within the strong and well-established cultural dominance of traditional pesantren.

The emergence of Kuttab in East Java is noteworthy because it operates within the hegemony of traditional pesantren culture (Fitri, 2021). On the one hand, Kuttab has received positive responses from communities seeking structured Qur'anic education from an early age (Suryana & Nurachadijat, 2023). On the other hand, Kuttab institutions face several challenges, including issues related to legal recognition, accreditation, curriculum standards, teacher readiness, and perceptions among some pesantren communities who view this model as less aligned with NU traditions. Furthermore, differences in educational orientation between the relatively Salafi-modern curriculum of Kuttab and the classical orientation of traditional pesantren require processes of cultural negotiation and adaptation.

The primary problem addressed in this study concerns how Kuttab institutions can sustain their existence within the dominant cultural environment of traditional pesantren in East Java. In addition, this study examines how socio-cultural interactions between Kuttab institutions and traditional pesantren occur, and how Kuttab seeks to build social legitimacy, manage regulatory challenges, and adapt its curriculum within a local context strongly shaped by NU Islamic traditions.

Several previous studies have examined Kuttab from different perspectives. Chaer (2015) analysed Kuttab as a representation of classical Islamic elementary education. Affandi (2020) focused on the role of Kuttab in the development of foundational Islamic literacy, while Riduwan & Mahmud (2023) explored the Kuttab educational system within the broader context of Islamic educational modernisation. Meanwhile, studies on traditional pesantren have also been widely conducted, including research by Qotrunada et al. (2025), which examines the social structure and traditions of pesantren, and by Badruddin & Supriyadi (2022), which discusses the dynamics of contemporary Islam in Indonesia. However, most of these studies remain normative-historical in nature or focus on the national context and have not specifically examined the development of Kuttab in regions characterised by strong dominance of traditional pesantren culture, such as East Java.

Based on the existing literature, a research gap exists in the analysis of the socio-cultural relationships between Kuttab institutions and traditional pesantren within a specific local context. Few studies have examined in depth the strategies of adaptation, negotiation, and legitimacy construction employed by Kuttab within an established Islamic educational environment. Likewise, analyses of regulatory challenges, curriculum integration, and social acceptance within traditional Islamic cultural settings remain limited.

Therefore, this study aims to: describe the development of traditional pesantren in East Java as a socio-historical context; analyze the emergence and development of Kuttab institutions in the region; and identify the challenges, opportunities, and adaptive strategies employed by Kuttab within the dominant environment of traditional pesantren. This research is expected to contribute to the study of contemporary Islamic education and to provide a reference for the development of contextual, inclusive, and sustainable Qur'an-based educational models in East Java.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive case study design. A qualitative approach was selected because the research seeks to obtain an in-depth understanding of the social and cultural phenomena underlying the development of Kuttab institutions in East Java, within the context of the dominance of traditional pesantren culture. The case study design is used to explore institutional dynamics, social interactions, and Kuttab's adaptive strategies within an established Islamic educational environment. In this study, the Kuttab phenomenon is treated as a specific case, analysed contextually and comprehensively.

## 2.2 Research Object

The object of this research is Kuttab institutions operating in East Java, particularly those located in areas with a strong traditional pesantren base. The study focuses on institutional development, curriculum systems, educational orientation, patterns of relationships with surrounding communities, and the regulatory and social challenges these institutions face. Research informants consist of Kuttab administrators, teachers, and individuals who understand the presence and role of Kuttab within pesantren environments.

## 2.3 Data Collection

Research data were obtained from two types of sources: 1) Primary data, collected through in-depth interviews with key informants to explore information regarding the history of establishment, institutional vision and mission, learning systems, and the challenges faced by Kuttab institutions; 2) Secondary data, obtained through document analysis and literature review, including institutional documents, academic journals, books, historical archives of pesantren, Islamic education regulations, and scholarly articles related to the development of Kuttab and traditional pesantren.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, information from interviews and documentation was selected, categorised, and focused on the research questions. The data were then presented in a descriptive-analytical form to identify patterns, relationships, and emerging dynamics. The final stage involved reflective and continuous conclusion drawing to ensure consistency between field findings and the theoretical framework applied in the study.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Result

#### Interview Findings

Based on in-depth interviews with administrators and educators of Kuttab institutions in East Java, it was found that the primary motivation for establishing Kuttab is the desire to provide education grounded in the Qur'an and to cultivate *adab* (ethical conduct) more intensively from an early age. One administrator stated that Kuttab was designed to "restore the spirit of classical Islamic education, which emphasises character formation before the mastery of extensive knowledge" (Informant JK, 2025). This statement indicates that Kuttab's main orientation is moral development and the internalisation of Qur'anic values.

From a curricular perspective, informants explained that learning activities primarily focus on Qur'anic memorisation (*tahfidz*), the habituation of daily ethical practices, and the introduction of basic general subjects such as mathematics and language. Several administrators also noted that the integration of religious and general knowledge is being refined to better align with students' needs and the requirements of national education regulations.

Regarding community acceptance, most informants reported that parental responses have been largely positive, particularly among families seeking a more structured form of Islamic elementary education. Nevertheless, several challenges remain, including questions about legal recognition, the continuity of students' educational pathways, and differences in educational approaches compared with traditional pesantrens. One educator emphasised that "effective communication with community leaders and the pesantren environment is essential to prevent misunderstandings about the orientation of Kuttab" (Informant AF, 2025).

In addition, the interviews revealed that the main challenges faced by Kuttab institutions include limited infrastructure and the need to enhance teacher competencies, particularly in teaching methodologies and the integration of educational technology. Administrators highlighted the importance of continuous professional training and collaboration with other educational institutions to maintain institutional quality and sustainability. Overall, the interview findings suggest that Kuttab institutions in East Java are developing with relatively strong social support; however, they still require improvements in legal recognition, professional capacity, and cultural adaptation to ensure their long-term sustainability.

Based on interviews, document analysis, and a literature review, this study finds that the development of Kuttab institutions in East Java reflects a complex dynamic. Kuttab has emerged as an alternative model of Islamic elementary education within the context of the historically and culturally entrenched dominance of traditional pesantren. The main findings of this study are summarised in the following table.

**Table 1.** Development and Characteristics of Kuttab in East Java

No	Findings Aspect	Description of Research Findings
1	Socio-Historical Context	East Java represents a strong base of traditional pesantren affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama, characterized by a social structure centered on <i>kiai</i> leadership, the study of classical Islamic texts ( <i>kitab kuning</i> ), and networks of traditional Islamic scholarship.
2	Emergence of Kuttab	Kuttab institutions have developed since 2012 as a nonformal educational model based on the Qur'an and the cultivation of <i>adab</i> , inspired by the educational model of Kuttab Al-Fatih.
3	Curriculum Orientation	The curriculum focuses on Qur'anic memorization ( <i>tahfidz</i> ), <i>adab</i> , basic theology ( <i>aqidah</i> ), basic Islamic jurisprudence ( <i>fiqh</i> ), Arabic language learning, and the integration of general subjects such as mathematics and the Indonesian language.
4	Learning Methods	Learning is conducted through contextual approaches, character formation, habituation of ethical conduct ( <i>adab</i> ), and the integration of spiritual and academic values.
5	Community Acceptance	Kuttab institutions are generally well received, particularly by parents seeking intensive Qur'anic education for their children from an early age.
6	Legal Challenges	Some Kuttab institutions do not yet possess formal status equivalent to schools or madrasahs, resulting in limitations related to regulation and accreditation.
7	Educator Professionalism	The quality of educators varies and still requires improvement in pedagogical competence and the integration of science and religious knowledge.
8	Facilities and Infrastructure	Several Kuttab institutions operate with limited facilities, often utilizing mosques or community spaces for learning activities.
9	Relationship with Pesantren	Cultural adaptation and dialogue are required due to differences in orientation between Kuttab (salafi-modern) and traditional NU pesantren.
10	Adaptation Strategies	Strengthening contextual curricula, establishing collaboration with pesantren and formal schools, and pursuing legal recognition are important steps for institutional sustainability.

Based on Table 1, it can be concluded that the development of Kuttab institutions in East Java takes place within a social context largely dominated by traditional pesantren affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Consequently, the presence of Kuttab requires processes of both cultural and institutional adaptation. Kuttab has emerged as an alternative form of Islamic elementary education that emphasises memorisation of the Qur'an, the cultivation of *adab* (ethical conduct), and the integration of religious and general knowledge. It has received positive responses, particularly from parents seeking Qur'an-based education for their children from an early age. Nevertheless, these institutions continue to face several challenges, including legal recognition, curriculum standardisation, educators' professional capacity, and infrastructure limitations. In addition, differences in religious orientation from traditional pesantren require dialogue and collaborative strategies for Kuttab to establish broader social legitimacy. Therefore, the sustainability of Kuttab institutions largely depends on their ability to strengthen regulatory compliance, improve educational quality, and adapt to the well-established local Islamic cultural context.

**Table 2.** Challenges and Development Strategies of Kuttab

No	Major Challenges	Impact	Development Strategies
1	Regulation and Legal Status	Limited access to funding and formal recognition	Strengthening regulatory frameworks and institutional registration
2	Curriculum Standardization	Variations in the quality of learning outcomes	Development of an integrated curriculum combining religious and general knowledge
3	Social Perception	Skepticism among some traditional communities	Cultural dialogue and collaboration with pesantren institutions
4	Financial Sustainability	Dependence on parental contributions and donations	Development of inclusive financing models and subsidy systems
5	Teacher Professionalism	Uneven quality of instruction	Training in teaching methodologies and integration of educational technology

Based on Table 2, the main challenges faced by Kuttab institutions in East Java are both structural and cultural. Regulatory and legal issues limit formal recognition and access to funding support, making the strengthening of institutional status an urgent necessity. Variations in curriculum design and teaching quality indicate the need for greater standardisation and integration between religious and general knowledge to ensure more consistent educational quality. In addition, social perceptions among some members of traditional pesantren communities require

cultural dialogue and institutional collaboration in order to build mutual trust. Challenges related to financial sustainability and teacher professionalism further highlight the importance of human resource capacity development and inclusive funding models. Overall, the table demonstrates that the future of Kuttab institutions largely depends on strategies that strengthen institutional frameworks, improve educational quality, and foster synergy with the established system of Islamic education in East Java, particularly those associated with Nahdlatul Ulama.

### 3.2. Discussion

#### a) The Development of Traditional Pesantren in East Java

The development of traditional pesantren in East Java has deep historical roots dating back to the nineteenth century. During this period, the number of pesantrens on the island of Java was estimated at around 300, indicating the extensive network of traditional Islamic education. A *kiai's* (Islamic scholar's) reputation was the primary factor in determining a pesantren's influence and attractiveness. Scholars who had studied at renowned centres of Islamic learning, such as Mecca or Al-Azhar University, gained greater social and religious legitimacy, thereby making the pesantren they led widely recognised at the national level. During the colonial period, pesantren were also viewed as potential centres of resistance to Dutch rule, particularly because they functioned as spaces for community development outside the direct control of the colonial government (Faizi, 2023).

Colonial policies that restricted Islamic activities in urban areas encouraged the development of pesantren in rural regions (Roqib, 2021). Religious leaders established centres of Islamic learning beyond the reach of colonial political authority, allowing pesantren to function as relatively autonomous social institutions. The influence of *kiai* extended beyond religious education into broader aspects of village life. The spread of Islam occurred largely through grassroots communities and coastal trading networks (Jatmika, 2022). From this process emerged a distinctive pesantren culture that eventually became one of the major cultural traditions alongside royal court traditions. The high level of respect accorded to *kiai* was also linked to pre-Islamic social structures that placed religious figures within elite social positions.

Within the socio-political structure of Javanese society, *kiai* often occupy highly respected positions and are sometimes metaphorically described as “local rulers” within their pesantren communities. Their authority encompasses religious guidance, social leadership, and even political influence (Wiyoto et al., 2020). The relationship between *kiai* and *santri* (students) forms a strong bond of loyalty, comparable in some ways to the hierarchical relationships between rulers and bureaucratic officials within traditional royal systems (Ngarawula & Roseli, 2025). Due to these structural similarities, pesantren historically tended to develop outside the centres of royal political power. In Central Java, which served as the core of traditional political authority, pesantren did not expand as extensively as they did in East Java. Consequently, East Java later became known as the primary base of traditional pesantren affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama religious tradition (Roqib, 2021).

Several prominent pesantren subsequently emerged and gained significant influence in East Java. Among the earliest was Pesantren Tegalsari in Pacitan. This was followed by other major institutions such as Pesantren Sidogiri, Pesantren Tremas, Pesantren Langitan, Pesantren Jampes, and later Pesantren Tebuireng, Pesantren Lirboyo, and Pesantren Sukorejo. Kinship ties among *kiai*, teacher–student relationships, and alum networks created a strong and enduring social system that continues to shape Islamic education in the region today. The scholarly tradition cultivated within these pesantren emphasises mastery of *tawhid*, *fiqh*, and *muamalah*, primarily through the study of classical Islamic texts known as *kitab kuning*, many of which were authored by scholars from the Middle East (Faizi & Ali, 2024).

Alongside pesantren, another form of Islamic educational institution, the *kuttab*, also developed. The term *kuttab* derives from the Arabic root meaning “to write” and historically served as a place where children learned basic literacy skills. In practice, kuttab institutions taught Arabic reading and writing, memorisation of the Qur'an, and the fundamentals of Islamic teachings. Over time, the term *kuttab* became closely associated with Qur'anic education for young children, with the primary objective of developing basic literacy while simultaneously instilling moral and ethical values.

Historically, the kuttab institution has been known since the early period of Islam and even predates the establishment of formal madrasah systems such as the Nizamiyyah Madrasah. In the historical periodisation of classical Islamic education, the kuttab represents one of the earliest forms of educational institutions. These institutions were generally simple in structure and were often conducted in teachers' homes or in spaces surrounding mosques (Wajdi et al., 2024). Two main characteristics of kuttab can be identified: the first focuses on literacy and Qur'anic memorisation (*kuttab awwal*), while the second includes the teaching of language, ethical conduct, and basic religious knowledge (*kuttab qanuni*). From these modest institutions emerged generations of Qur'an memorisers

and scholars of Islamic jurisprudence who later played significant roles in shaping Islamic intellectual traditions in many regions, including Indonesia.

The emergence of kuttab as a form of elementary Islamic education has long been recognised in Arab societies and was known even in pre-Islamic times. In the historical development of classical Islamic education, kuttab institutions emerged before formal madrasah systems. The establishment of the Nizamiyyah madrasahs marked a new phase in the institutionalisation of Islamic education. Nevertheless, earlier institutions such as the kuttab continued to operate according to their traditional character, although the number of institutions and participants gradually declined. Initially, kuttab education was conducted in the homes of teachers (*mu'addib* or *mu'allim*), in the homes of Qur'an memorisers, or in mosques and their surrounding courtyards. From these learning environments emerged prominent scholars of Islamic jurisprudence and Qur'an memorisers. The instructional materials commonly included reading and writing exercises using Arabic proverbs and poetry that conveyed moral and cultural values.

#### b) The Development and Influence of Kuttab in East Java

The process of Islamization in Indonesia occurred relatively peacefully and gradually reached most regions of the archipelago. Islam spread through trade networks, cultural preaching (*da'wah*), and social interactions rather than through military domination, allowing it to adapt to existing local social structures. From a socio-political perspective, Islam's influence contributed to the emergence of Islamic kingdoms and the formation of new social systems (Matin, 2013). Along with this process, Islamic educational traditions from major centres of civilisation, such as the Middle East, were also adopted, including the educational model known as *the kuttab* (Najmuddin, 2025). In Indonesia, institutions with similar functions appeared in the forms of *surau*, *pesantren*, and *meunasah*, which served as centres for teaching the Qur'an, basic religious knowledge, and moral formation.

During the Dutch colonial period, Islamic education faced considerable pressure due to policies that prioritised Western-style schooling (Isfayanti, 2025). Nevertheless, traditional institutions such as *pesantren* and basic religious study circles continued to survive as centres for character formation and the preservation of Islamic identity within society (Solihin et al., 2020). The kuttab model, in its localised forms, persisted as a community-based non-formal educational system. Entering the modern era, institutions explicitly using the name *Kuttab* began to reemerge, such as Kuttab Al-Fatih and Kuttab Ibnu Abbas. These institutions integrate Qur'anic memorisation (*tahfidz*), character education, and general academic subjects within a more structured educational framework.

In Indonesia, the revival of the modern kuttab movement was marked by the establishment of Kuttab Al-Fatih in Depok in 2012, initiated by Budi Ashari, a graduate of the Islamic University of Madinah. This institution emerged as a nonformal alternative educational model registered under a Community Learning Centre (*PKBM*). Historically, a similar educational pattern had long existed in Indonesian society through *nggon ngaji*, a traditional setting where children learned to read and write the Qur'an before continuing their studies in *pesantren*. Therefore, a clear continuity can be observed between local Islamic educational traditions and the classical concept of kuttab.

The development of kuttab in East Java is an interesting phenomenon, as the region is widely known as a stronghold of traditional Islam closely associated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Educational systems such as *pesantren*, *madrasah diniyah*, and Qur'anic learning centres (*TPQ*) have been firmly established in the region for centuries (Zahra, 2025). The emergence of kuttab institutions, whose curricula often reflect a Salafi-modern orientation emphasising the integration of the Qur'an, *adab*, and general knowledge, was initially perceived as a new educational model distinct from the *pesantren* tradition. However, in several areas such as Malang, kuttab institutions have gradually gained acceptance as an alternative form of Islamic elementary education that focuses more intensively on early childhood development.

Despite their relatively rapid growth, kuttab institutions in East Java face several challenges, including issues of formal legal recognition, curriculum standardisation, teacher quality, limited educational facilities, and financial sustainability. To maintain their growth and institutional stability, it is necessary to strengthen regulatory frameworks, improve teacher professionalism, develop curricula aligned with local cultural traditions, and promote collaboration with *pesantren* and formal schools. With appropriate adaptation, kuttab institutions have the potential to become an alternative model of Islamic education that remains rooted in Qur'anic values and moral development while also responding effectively to contemporary society's demands.

## 4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

### 4.1 Research Implications

The findings of this study indicate that the presence of Kuttab institutions in East Java has strategic implications for the development of contemporary Islamic education, particularly within communities historically dominated by traditional pesantren systems associated with Nahdlatul Ulama. From a practical perspective, stronger regulatory frameworks and clearer institutional status are needed so that Kuttab institutions can obtain formal recognition and adequate institutional support. From a pedagogical perspective, integrating Qur'anic education grounded in the Qur'an, cultivating *adab* (ethical conduct), and developing general academic knowledge must be systematically developed to align with national education standards while maintaining its Islamic identity. In addition, the social implications highlight the importance of constructive dialogue and collaboration among Kuttab institutions, pesantren, and formal schools to create an inclusive and complementary Islamic educational ecosystem in East Java.

### 4.1 Research Contributions

This study provides an academic contribution by presenting a contextual analysis of the development of Kuttab institutions in a region characterised by the strong dominance of traditional pesantren culture. The research enriches the literature on Islamic education by demonstrating how a revitalised classical educational model interacts with, adapts to, and negotiates within an established socio-religious structure. Furthermore, the study offers an analytical framework for understanding institutional adaptation strategies, regulatory challenges, and the dynamics of social acceptance that may serve as a reference for studies on alternative Islamic education in other regions. Thus, this research not only offers a descriptive account but also provides a conceptual basis for understanding the transformation and diversification of Islamic education in Indonesia.

## 5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

### 4.1 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the research scope is limited to several Kuttab institutions in East Java, so the findings cannot be generalised to the national level. Second, the qualitative approach using a case study design emphasises depth of analysis rather than breadth of data, so variations in Kuttab practices in other regions are not fully represented. Third, the limited availability of quantitative data such as the number of students, graduate continuation rates, and comparisons of academic outcomes with other educational institutions restricts a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of Kuttab education. In addition, the dynamics of the relationship between Kuttab institutions and traditional pesantren are strongly influenced by local contexts, which may differ across districts and cities.

### 5.1 Recommendation for Future Research Direction

Given these limitations, future studies are recommended to expand the geographical scope to obtain comparative insights across provinces or regions with different socio-religious characteristics. Quantitative or mixed-method approaches are also needed to measure the effectiveness of Kuttab curricula, students' memorisation achievements, character development outcomes, and the educational continuity of Kuttab graduates. Furthermore, in-depth research on collaborative models between Kuttab institutions, pesantren, and formal schools could provide new perspectives on the integration of Islamic educational systems. Studies on public policy related to the regulation of nonformal religious education are also important in order to support the sustainability and institutional strengthening of Kuttab in the future.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The development of Kuttab institutions in East Java demonstrates both positive progress and significant challenges. Within a social context strongly shaped by the traditional pesantren culture affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Kuttab has emerged as an alternative form of Islamic elementary education that emphasises learning based on the Qur'an, the cultivation of *adab* (ethical conduct), and character formation from an early age. Its presence has been well received by some segments of society, particularly parents seeking intensive Qur'anic education that prioritises moral development.

However, the development of Kuttab has not yet reached its full potential due to several constraints. These include the absence of clear regulatory frameworks and legal recognition, the lack of standardised curricula, limita-

tions in educational facilities and infrastructure, varying levels of teacher competence, and limited formal recognition from government institutions and broader society. Furthermore, cultural differences between the relatively Salafi-modern orientation of Kuttab education and the traditional NU pesantren culture have led to cautious attitudes among certain community groups.

For Kuttab institutions to develop sustainably, several strategic efforts are required. These include adapting educational practices to East Java's local cultural context, strengthening legal status and accreditation mechanisms, improving teacher professionalism, developing contextual and integrative curricula, fostering collaboration with pesantren and formal schools, and expanding educational access for broader segments of society. Through these efforts, Kuttab has the potential to become an important component of the Islamic educational ecosystem in East Java and to contribute to the development of a generation that is Qur'an-oriented, ethically grounded, and responsive to contemporary society's demands.

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### Author Contribution Statement

The author declares that the entire research and writing process for this article was conducted independently. The author assumes full responsibility for all data associated with this research. No other individual contributed as a co-author or made any significant contribution to the content of this work.

### Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

The author declares that Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology was used in a limited capacity as a supporting tool for language editing and writing refinement. All ideas, analyses, data interpretations, and the scientific substance of this article are entirely the responsibility and intellectual work of the author. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [IJRIS GenAI Tool Usage Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work."

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research and publication of this article, whether financial, institutional, or personal, that could influence the objectivity and integrity of the study.

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