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Negotiating Sunnah Practices in Pesantren through Institutionalized *Iltizām*: A Comparative Madhhab Analysis with Pedagogical Implications

Muhammad Alqadri Burga^{1*}, Ruslan Wahab², Reyhan Ruslan³

¹Universitas Islam Makassar, Indonesia. Email: muhalqadriburga@uim-makassar.ac.id

²Universitas Muslim Indonesia, Indonesia. Email: ruslan.ma@umi.ac.id

³Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt. Email: ruslanreyhan54@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract

Although Islamic jurisprudence clearly distinguishes between *wājib* and *sunnah* acts of worship, practices in Indonesian *pesantren* demonstrate that certain *sunnah* observances are institutionalized as binding educational obligations. This study examines how these practices are negotiated as educational norms through a comparative analysis of the Shāfi'ī, Hanafī, and Mālikī madhhabs. Employing a qualitative multiple-case study, the research was conducted at Pesantren As'adiyah Sengkang, DDI Mangkoso, and Yasrib Soppeng in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Data from in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis were analyzed thematically and interpreted through classical *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*. The findings reveal three interrelated stages of institutionalization: normative legitimation by *kiai*, pedagogical operationalization by *ustaz*, and internalization by *santri*. This process gives rise to the concept of *tarbawi* obligation as a form of institutionalized *iltizām* (The Institutionalization of Islamic Legal Commitment in Social Practice), explaining how *sunnah* practices acquire institutional binding force without becoming *wājib shar'ī* (sharī'ah obligation). Comparative analysis further demonstrates that the Shāfi'ī, Hanafī, and Mālikī traditions justify such legitimacy through different juristic doctrines while consistently preserving the distinction between religious and institutional obligations. The study contributes to comparative madhhab scholarship by proposing institutionalized *iltizām* as an analytical framework for explaining how Islamic educational institutions legitimize binding regulations without altering the legal status of *sunnah* acts of worship.

Keywords: Comparative Madhhab; Islamic Education; Islamic Law; Institutionalized *Iltizām*; *Tarbawi* Obligation.

Abstract

Meskipun fikih membedakan secara tegas antara ibadah *wājib* dan *sunnah*, praktik di pesantren menunjukkan bahwa sebagian amalan *sunnah* diberlakukan sebagai kewajiban pendidikan yang mengikat. Fenomena ini umumnya dikaji dalam konteks disiplin pendidikan pesantren dan institusionalisasi norma keagamaan, tetapi masih jarang dianalisis dalam perspektif perbandingan mazhab. Penelitian ini bertujuan



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menganalisis bagaimana praktik tersebut dinegosiasikan sebagai norma pendidikan melalui perspektif komparatif Mazhab Syāfi'ī, Ḥanafī, dan Mālikī. Penelitian menggunakan desain studi multi-kasus pada Pesantren As'adiyah Sengkang, DDI Mangkoso, dan Yasrib Soppeng, Sulawesi Selatan. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik serta diinterpretasikan melalui kajian fikih dan *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa institusionalisasi praktik *sunnah* berlangsung melalui tiga tahapan, yaitu legitimasi normatif oleh *kiai*, operasionalisasi pedagogis oleh *ustaz*, dan internalisasi oleh *santri*. Proses ini melahirkan konsep kewajiban *tarbawi* sebagai bentuk *institutionalized iltizām* yang menjelaskan bagaimana praktik *sunnah* memperoleh daya ikat kelembagaan tanpa berubah menjadi *wājib shar'ī*. Analisis perbandingan mazhab menunjukkan bahwa Mazhab Syāfi'ī, Ḥanafī, dan Mālikī memberikan legitimasi melalui landasan yurisprudensial yang berbeda, tetapi tetap mempertahankan perbedaan antara kewajiban syariat dan kewajiban kelembagaan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian perbandingan mazhab dengan menawarkan *institutionalized iltizām* sebagai kerangka analitis untuk menjelaskan legitimasi regulasi kelembagaan dalam pendidikan Islam tanpa mengubah status hukum ibadah *sunnah*.

Keywords: Perbandingan Mazhab; Pendidikan Islam; Hukum Islam; *Institutionalized Iltizām*; Kewajiban *Tarbawi*.

Introduction

Across Indonesian *pesantren*, acts of worship classified in *fiqh* as *sunnah*, such as *ṣalāt al-ḍuḥā*, *qiyām al-layl*, and specific forms of *wird*, are frequently enforced as institutional obligations binding upon all *santri* (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022). This phenomenon demonstrates that devotional practices that are normatively classified as *sunnah* acquire binding force as institutional regulations within the *pesantren* tradition (Hasan, 2025). Consequently, *santri* are governed not only by Islamic legal norms as individual religious obligations but also by institutional norms enforced through the disciplinary system of the *pesantren* (Solichin, 2018). This pattern is consistently observed at Pesantren As'adiyah Sengkang, DDI Mangkoso, and Yasrib Soppeng in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, where various *sunnah* practices are institutionalized through habituation, supervision, and formal institutional regulations. Empirically, these cases demonstrate that religious norms function not merely as individual legal prescriptions but also derive institutional binding force through educational authority (Harnadi et al., 2021; Yahdi & Fadliyah, 2025). The phenomenon therefore reveals a dynamic relationship between the normativity of Islamic law and institutional practice within the *pesantren* tradition (Hasan, 2025; Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022; Masdin et al., 2025).

Within the Islamic legal tradition, this phenomenon raises a fundamental question concerning the relationship between categories of *shar'ī* legal rulings and obligations arising from regulatory authority (Alias et al., 2025). The distinction between *wājib* and *mandūb* constitutes one of the foundational principles of Islamic legal theory, first articulated in al-Shāfi'ī's *al-Risālah* (1940) and subsequently developed in a more systematic manner by Al-Juwaynī (1997) and Al-Ghazālī (1997) within the literature of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. At the same time, the *uṣūl* tradition developed conceptual doctrines such as *iltizām*, *maṣlaḥah*, *siyāsah shar'īyyah*, and *ʿurf* to explain how binding regulations may legitimately

emerge within social and institutional contexts (Ibn ‘Ābidīn, 1992; Al-Ghazālī, 1997; Ibn Taymiyyah, 1998; Al-Qarāfī, 1998; Mubarrak et al., 2025). Classical discussions, however, generally conceptualize *iltizām* as a commitment voluntarily assumed by individuals or contracting parties who accept specific legal consequences (Ibn ‘Ābidīn, 1992; Al-Sarakhsī, 1993; Al-Kāsānī, 1986; Al-Qarāfī, 1998). Within the *pesantren* context, the issue becomes considerably more complex because such commitment no longer operates solely at the individual level but instead functions as a collective institutional rule established through educational authority (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022; Hasan, 2025; Mustofa et al., 2025; Zainuddin et al., 2024). This raises an important theoretical question regarding how *iltizām* should be understood when it functions as an institutional mechanism without altering the original legal status of an act of worship.

Within the Ḥanafī tradition, this issue is addressed through the doctrines of *‘urf*, *istiḥsān*, and the authority to enact regulations for the realization of public welfare, as elaborated by Al-Sarakhsī (1993) and Ibn ‘Ābidīn (1992). The Mālikī tradition, by contrast, identifies *maṣlaḥah mursalah* as a principal foundation for legitimizing regulations that are not explicitly prescribed in the revealed texts, provided that they remain consistent with the objectives of the *Sharī‘ah* (Al-Shāṭibī, 1997; Al-Qarāfī, 1998). Together, these juristic perspectives extend the classical discussion beyond individual *iltizām* and provide conceptual frameworks for explaining how *sunnah* practices may acquire institutional binding force (Opwis, 2005; Fadel, 2022). Accordingly, the central issue is no longer the legal status of *sunnah* practices themselves but rather how different madhhabs justify the legitimacy of institutionalized *iltizām* without altering their original *shar‘ī* classification (Hefni et al., 2025).

Existing scholarship on this phenomenon has developed along at least three distinct trajectories. The first examines comparative madhhab methodologies of *istinbāt*, legal adaptation, and juristic authority but generally remains confined to normative legal discourse without addressing institutional practices within *pesantren* (Mamun & Muhsin, 2020; Opwis, 2010; Melchert, 2001; Ahmed, 2025; Mustofa et al., 2024b; Najib, 2020; Hamdeh, 2017). The second investigates the institutionalization of Islamic norms within religious institutions by emphasizing authority, governance, and norm formation, yet without connecting these processes to juristic doctrines within the madhhab tradition (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022; Nurtawab, 2025; Mumtaz et al., 2024; Damopolii et al., 2023; Tahmid & Fautanu, 2021). The third approaches habituation and institutional discipline in *pesantren* primarily as educational strategies for cultivating character, obedience, and religious habitus among *santri*, while paying little attention to their underlying juristic legitimacy (Tan, 2014; Mujahid, 2021; Taufiq et al., 2024; Salim et al., 2024). Because these three strands of scholarship have largely developed in isolation from one another, they

have yet to explain how *sunnah* practices acquire legitimacy as institutional regulations through an inter-madhhab dialogue concerning the relationship among *shar'ī* legal categories, institutional authority, and considerations of *maṣlaḥah*.

Against this background, research linking the institutionalization of *sunnah* practices in *pesantren* with comparative madhhab analysis and its pedagogical implications remains limited. This study therefore employs a comparative analysis of the Shāfi'ī and Ḥanafī madhhabs as the two principal juristic frameworks representing different approaches to the relationship between *shar'ī* legal categories and regulatory authority (Wahda et al., 2025), while incorporating the Mālikī perspective as a complementary interpretive framework, particularly with respect to normative justification grounded in *maṣlaḥah* (Al-Shātībī, 1997; Kamali, 2021; Athambawa, 2025). Through this comparative approach, the article introduces the concept of institutionalized *iltizām* as an analytical framework for explaining how commitment to *sunnah* practices becomes institutionalized within educational settings without obscuring the distinction between *shar'ī* obligation and institutional obligation.

Building upon these concerns, this study analyzes the institutionalization of *sunnah* practices as educational norms within *pesantren* from the perspective of comparative madhhab scholarship. The analysis focuses on the process through which *sunnah* practices become institutionalized, the juristic foundations that legitimize such institutional obligations within the Shāfi'ī and Ḥanafī traditions, and the complementary contribution of the Mālikī doctrine of *maṣlaḥah mursalah* in explaining the legitimacy of institutional regulation. In addition, the study examines the pedagogical implications of these institutionalized practices within the educational life of the *pesantren*. By integrating empirical evidence with comparative juristic analysis, this study seeks to make both empirical and conceptual contributions to comparative madhhab scholarship by illuminating the relationship among the normativity of Islamic law, regulatory authority, and religious practice in contemporary Islamic education.

Methods

This study employed a multiple-case study design following Yin (2018) within the qualitative research framework proposed by Creswell and Poth (2018). This design was selected to facilitate comparative analysis across three *pesantren* through the logic of literal replication and theoretical replication, while providing an in-depth understanding of how *sunnah* practices become institutionalized as *tarbawī* obligations within the social context of Islamic boarding schools.

The study adopted a socio-normative approach that integrates qualitative empirical inquiry with normative analysis grounded in *uṣūl al-fiqh*. The empirical component was

used to examine the institutionalization of *sunnah* practices within the daily life of the *pesantren*, whereas the normative component evaluated the legitimacy of these practices through a comparative analysis of the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanafī madhhabs, with the Mālikī perspective serving as a complementary interpretive framework. Integrating these two approaches enabled a comprehensive examination of the relationship between institutional practice and the normative construction of Islamic law.

The Shāfiʿī madhhab was selected because it represents the dominant juristic tradition within Indonesian *pesantren* (Noviarita et al., 2026; Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022; Daud & Fuady, 2021; Halim, 2015). The Ḥanafī madhhab was included as a comparative framework because of its more extensive elaboration of *istiḥsān*, *ʿurf*, and regulatory authority (Al-Sarakhsī, 1993; Al-Kāsānī, 1986; Ibn ʿĀbidīn, 1992). The Mālikī perspective was incorporated as a complementary interpretive lens through the doctrine of *maṣlaḥah mursalah*, thereby enriching the analysis of the juristic legitimacy of institutional regulation (Al-Shāṭibī, 1997; Al-Qarāfī, 1998). The normative-comparative analysis examined major juristic works representing the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanafī traditions, including *al-Risālah*, *al-Burhān*, *al-Mustaṣfā*, *Uṣūl al-Sarakhsī*, and *Radd al-Muḥtār*, while employing the doctrine of *maṣlaḥah mursalah* as an interpretive framework for understanding the empirical findings. The analysis focused on the concepts of *wājib*, *mandūb*, *iltizām*, *istiḥsān*, *ʿurf*, *maṣlaḥah mursalah*, and regulatory authority to identify convergences and divergences among the three madhhabs before comparing these juristic perspectives with the empirical findings concerning the legitimacy of *tarbawi* obligation governing *sunnah* practices.

The research was conducted at three *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in South Sulawesi, Indonesia: As'adiyah Sengkang, DDI Mangkoso, and Yasrib Soppeng. Cases were selected through purposive theoretical sampling based on three criteria: their status as integrated (*kombinasi*) *pesantren*, genealogical relationships among the institutions, and the presence of comparable practices regarding the institutionalization of *sunnah* observances. These characteristics provided an appropriate basis for cross-case comparison.

The study involved 18 participants selected through purposive and snowball sampling. They comprised three *kiai*, who served as the principal actors in constructing normative legitimacy; nine *ustaz*, who were responsible for implementing institutional policies; and six intermediate- and advanced-level *santri*, who directly experienced the implementation of *tarbawi* obligation. Fieldwork was conducted over four months, encompassing the pre-field stage, data collection, preliminary analysis, and verification of findings. During this period, repeated visits were made to each *pesantren*, with approximately sixteen days of observation conducted at each site. Follow-up interviews and observational verification were subsequently undertaken to confirm the consistency

and credibility of the findings.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, limited participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 90–120 minutes were conducted with *kiai* to explore the normative foundations underlying institutional policies, with *ustaz* to understand the implementation of institutional regulations, and with *santri* to examine their lived experiences of *tarbawi* obligation. Observations focused on the implementation of *sunnah* practices, supervisory mechanisms, patterns of compliance, and interactions between *pesantren* authorities and *santri*. Documentary sources included institutional regulations, daily activity schedules, curricula, and religious documents serving as normative references.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2021), combining inductive and deductive analytical strategies. Analysis began with open coding to identify preliminary themes, followed by the organization and refinement of relationships among themes in a process analytically equivalent to axial coding. These themes were subsequently synthesized through selective coding to formulate the core concept of *tarbawi* obligation. A cross-case analysis was then conducted to identify similarities and differences across the three *pesantren*. Finally, all empirical findings were interpreted through a comparative analysis of the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanafī madhhabs, with the Mālikī perspective serving as a complementary interpretive framework.

The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through source and methodological triangulation, member checking with key participants, and the maintenance of an audit trail to ensure the consistency and transparency of the research process. All participants provided informed consent prior to their involvement, and their identities were protected in accordance with established principles of research ethics.

Results and Discussion

The Process of Institutionalizing *Sunnah* Practices through Institutionalized *Iltizām*

The findings demonstrate that the institutionalization of *sunnah* practices within the *pesantren* unfolds through a sequential process involving three principal actors—*kiai*, *ustaz*, and *santri*—whose roles are complementary and mutually reinforcing. *Kiai* establish the normative legitimacy of institutional regulations, *ustaz* operationalize these regulations through pedagogical practices and institutional discipline, while *santri* experience, internalize, and negotiate *tarbawi* obligation in their everyday lives. The interaction among these three actors institutionalizes *sunnah* practices as binding institutional obligations without altering their legal status as *mandūb* within Islamic jurisprudence.

1. Institutionalized *Iltizām* at the Level of Kiai Authority

The institutionalization process begins with the construction of normative legitimacy by the *kiai*, who function as both epistemic and structural authorities within the *pesantren* (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022; Gebril, 2024; Dautović & Hafez, 2019). Documentary analysis indicates that various *sunnah* practices have been formally incorporated into institutional regulations as collective obligations. This finding is corroborated by interviews with both *kiai* and *ustaz*, who consistently emphasized that these institutional policies are not intended to alter the legal status of the acts of worship themselves.

“*Ṣalāt al-ḍuḥā and qiyām al-layl remain sunnah; we cannot transform them into wājib in fiqh. However, within the pesantren, we require them as part of educational training.*” (K2)

This statement indicates that the obligations imposed within the *pesantren* are understood as pedagogical instruments rather than as a reclassification of Islamic legal rulings. This finding is consistent with Tan (2014), who argues that discipline in Islamic education is intended not to alter the normative status of religious practices but to cultivate character through habituation. Unlike Tan’s study, however, which primarily examines the educational dimension, the present study demonstrates that this pedagogical process derives its legitimacy from institutionalized *iltizām*. Consequently, the resulting obligation originates from institutional authority while preserving the legal status of the act of worship as *mandūb*.

Analytically, the legitimacy of *pesantren* regulations extends beyond the formulation of administrative policies and operates instead as a form of institutionalized *iltizām*—that is, the institutionalization of commitment to *sunnah* practices through legitimate educational authority (Lohlker, 2021). Within this framework, the obligation that emerges does not transform the legal status of the practice into *wājib sharʿī*. Rather, it constitutes an institutional obligation whose binding force derives from the legitimate authority of the educational institution (Al-Shāfiʿī, 1940; Al-Sarakhsī, 1993; Ibn ʿĀbidīn, 1992).

Drawing upon the empirical findings and their dialogue with classical *fiqh* literature, this study identifies two complementary mechanisms underlying this process of institutionalization. First, *iltizām* is conceptualized as an institutional commitment through which *sunnah* practices become integrated into collective discipline without altering their original legal status. Second, *taqyīd al-mandūb* refers to the institutional regulation of *sunnah* practices by restricting or organizing their performance in order to achieve specific educational objectives (Al-Qarāfī, 1998; Al-Shāṭibī, 1997; Al-Sarakhsī, 1993). Together, these mechanisms explain how *sunnah* practices acquire institutional binding force without being transformed into *wājib sharʿī*.

From a comparative madhhab perspective, this process remains fully consistent with Islamic legal doctrine because the binding force of institutional discipline derives from institutionalized *iltizām* rather than from any reclassification of the original *sharʿī* ruling. The distinction between *mandūb* and *wājib sharʿī* therefore remains intact, while educational authority legitimately establishes institutional obligations for pedagogical purposes. At the level of *kiai* authority, institutionalized *iltizām* thus functions as the principal mechanism through which institutional legitimacy is constructed, maintaining a clear distinction between obligations imposed by the *Sharīʿah* and those established by institutional authority.

2. Pedagogical Operationalization of Institutionalized *Iltizām*

The second stage demonstrates that normative legitimacy does not automatically produce compliance unless it is accompanied by effective mechanisms of implementation (Tan, 2014). At this stage, *ustaz* function as pedagogical agents who translate normative legitimacy into the everyday practices of the *pesantren*.

Observational data indicate that *sunnah* practices are organized through a structured system of attendance monitoring, supervision, habituation, and educational sanctions. These mechanisms function not merely as instruments of institutional control but also as pedagogical tools that connect institutional norms with the daily lives of *santri* (Damopolii et al., 2023).

Analysis of the empirical data identified three interrelated mechanisms underlying this process. First, the formalization of practice is achieved through scheduled religious activities and the incorporation of mandatory observances into the written regulations of the *pesantren* (Mustofa et al., 2024a). Second, social control is exercised through attendance monitoring, supervision, and educational guidance for *santri* who fail to participate in the prescribed activities. The social-control mechanism also includes educational sanctions (*taʿzīr*) for non-compliance with institutional regulations. In this context, sanctions function as an institutional disciplinary measure intended to reinforce compliance with the *pesantren*'s educational rules. A comparable logic can be observed in the contextual application of *taʿzīr* in Islamic legal practice, where sanctions may be employed by authorized institutions to regulate conduct that is not subject to a fixed *ḥadd* punishment (Syatar et al., 2025). Third, habituation is cultivated through the systematic repetition of *sunnah* practices until they become embedded in the routine life of the *pesantren*.

Together, these three mechanisms establish a pedagogical structure that transforms *sunnah* practices from normative recommendations into collectively binding institutional routines. This finding supports Berger and Luckmann's (2023) this argument posits that institutions sustain social reality through an ongoing process of habitualization.

However, the present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that habitualization within the *pesantren* does more than reproduce social reality; it also generates normative legitimacy grounded in religious authority. Consequently, the institutionalization of *sunnah* practices should be understood not only as a process of social construction but also as a process of normative construction through institutionalized *iltizām*.

From a comparative madhhab perspective, this pedagogical process remains juristically legitimate because the binding force of institutional discipline derives from institutionalized *iltizām* rather than from any transformation of the original *sharʿī* ruling. Accordingly, the repeated implementation of *sunnah* practices does not convert *mandūb* into *wājib sharʿī*; instead, it establishes institutional obligations whose authority is rooted in legitimate educational governance. At this stage, institutionalized *iltizām* functions as a pedagogical mechanism that translates normative legitimacy into collectively practiced institutional discipline while preserving the fundamental distinction between *sharʿī* obligation and institutional obligation.

3. Student Responses to Institutionalized *Iltizām*

The final stage illustrates how institutional obligations, once normatively legitimized and pedagogically operationalized, are experienced by *santri* in their everyday lives. The empirical findings indicate that student responses are not homogeneous but instead develop along three principal patterns: structural compliance, social adaptation, and value internalization.

At the initial stage, most *santri* perform *sunnah* practices primarily because of institutional regulations and supervisory mechanisms.

“Sometimes we participate because we’re afraid of being called by the ustaz, not because of personal awareness.” (S5)

Observational data further reveal that attendance at *ṣalāt al-ḍuḥā* is systematically recorded, while *santri* who fail to attend are required to provide explanations to the *ustaz*. These findings suggest that initial compliance is driven primarily by structural pressure and social control rather than by internal conviction ([Mahmood, 2005](#); [Tan, 2014](#); [Damopolii et al., 2023](#)).

As the educational process progresses, many *santri* gradually enter a stage of social adaptation. At this point, *sunnah* practices are no longer performed solely out of concern for institutional sanctions but also because of the collective culture cultivated within the *pesantren*.

“If these practices were not required, they probably wouldn’t continue. That’s why a system is needed to ensure everyone participates.” (U4)

Within this context, compliance increasingly becomes shaped by the social norms embedded in the *pesantren* environment, making religious practice an integral component

of collective life. This finding supports Berger and Luckmann's (2023) argument that habitualization constitutes a central mechanism in the construction of social reality. The present study, however, extends their perspective by demonstrating that habitualization within the *pesantren* not only reproduces social order but also constructs normative legitimacy rooted in both religious and educational authority. It likewise extends the findings of Ihsan et al. (2021), Taufiq et al. (2024), and Salim et al. (2024) by showing that religious habituation extends beyond character formation and operates as a process of institutionalization legitimized through institutionalized *iltizām*.

At a more advanced stage, some *santri* begin to internalize the underlying values as *sunnah* practices come to be understood as personal religious needs rather than merely institutional requirements.

"At first I joined because it was required, but now it has become a habit." (S3)

Nevertheless, this process is neither uniform nor universal. Some *santri* continue to demonstrate predominantly performative compliance.

"Sometimes I participate because I'm afraid my attendance will be recorded. If there weren't attendance checks, probably not everyone would join." (S5)

This observation is reinforced by the testimony of an *ustaz*:

"Not every santri accepts these practices immediately. Some participate only because of the institutional rules." (U3)

Field observations further revealed considerable variation in the quality of participation. Some *santri* arrived late for religious activities, engaged only minimally during worship, or left immediately after the activities concluded. The study also identified several negative cases reflecting subtle forms of resistance, such as intentionally remaining asleep during *qiyām al-layl* or offering excuses to avoid participation.

"When I'm extremely tired, sometimes I don't wake up and just pretend to be asleep. If someone asks later, I simply say I was sick." (S1)

These findings demonstrate that institutionalization does not necessarily lead to complete internalization. Rather, compliance and resistance emerge simultaneously as integral components of the dynamic formation of *tarbawi* obligation. This finding supports Foucault's (1977) analysis of discipline as a mechanism for producing compliance through continuous surveillance. Unlike the disciplinary institutions examined by Foucault, however, supervision within the *pesantren* is directed not merely toward producing obedient bodies but also toward cultivating religious consciousness through devotional practices regarded as spiritually meaningful. Consequently, institutional discipline in the *pesantren* possesses normative and pedagogical dimensions that cannot be fully explained by the concept of disciplinary power alone.

The findings also resonate with Mahmood's (2001) argument that participation in religious practices can serve as a medium for the formation of religious subjectivity through habituation. Unlike Mahmood's analysis of the Egyptian women's mosque

movement, however, the present study demonstrates that religious subject formation occurs within a framework of institutional regulation explicitly legitimized by *pesantren* authority through institutionalized *iltizām*. Accordingly, at the level of the *santri*, institutionalized *iltizām* does not produce deterministic compliance. Rather, it generates a spectrum of responses ranging from structural compliance to value internalization and the ongoing negotiation of religious commitment.

From a comparative madhhab perspective, the emergence of religious agency should not be interpreted as creating a new category of Islamic legal obligation. Instead, it demonstrates how different juristic doctrines accommodate pedagogical regulation while preserving the distinction between institutional obligation and *wājib sharʿī*. Thus, although *santri* negotiate, internalize, or even resist institutional discipline in different ways, the legal status of *sunnah* practices remains unchanged. What varies across the Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī, and Mālikī traditions is not the legal classification of the acts themselves, but the juristic rationale through which institutional authority is considered legitimate in regulating those practices for educational purposes (Tor, 2024).

Islamic Law Perspectives on Institutionalized *Iltizām* in Pesantren

1. Empirical Evidence: No Transformation of *Sharʿī* Legal Status

The findings demonstrate that the institutionalization of *sunnah* practices across the three *pesantren* does not entail any transformation of their legal status under Islamic law. Based on interviews with *kiai*, *ustaz*, and an analysis of institutional regulations, *ṣalāt al-ḍuḥā*, *qiyām al-layl*, and *wird* are consistently understood as acts of worship classified as *mandūb*. The obligations imposed within the *pesantren* are therefore not intended to reclassify these practices as *wājib sharʿī*, but rather to require compliance with institutional regulations as an integral component of the educational process.

This distinction emerged consistently throughout the interviews. One *kiai* emphasized that the obligations enforced within the *pesantren* do not alter the legal rulings governing acts of worship in *fiqh*.

“We have never said that *ṣalāt al-ḍuḥā* has become a *sharʿī* obligation. What is obligatory is compliance with the *pesantren* regulations.” (K1)

A similar distinction was articulated by an *ustaz*, who clearly differentiated between religious obligation and institutional obligation.

“*Ṣalāt al-ḍuḥā* and *qiyām al-layl* are obligations imposed by the *pesantren*, not obligations imposed by religion.” (U3)

These statements demonstrate a shared understanding among *pesantren* authorities that the obligations established by the educational institution operate solely at the level of compliance with institutional regulations and are not intended to alter the legal status of acts of worship under Islamic law.

This finding is further corroborated by the analysis of institutional documents. The *pesantren* regulations explicitly require *santri* to participate in congregational *ṣalāt al-ḍuhā*, *qiyām al-layl*, and various other *sunnah* practices as part of the daily educational program. However, neither the written regulations nor the participants' explanations suggest that these practices have been transformed into *sharʿī* obligations. Instead, they are consistently presented as institutional rules binding upon *santri* throughout their residence in the *pesantren*, serving as components of character formation, institutional discipline, and the habituation of religious life.

Empirically, the findings reveal a clear distinction between two forms of obligation operating simultaneously within the *pesantren*. On the one hand, *wājib sharʿī* refers to obligations derived directly from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, whose legal status cannot be altered by institutional authority (Al-Shāfiʿī, 1940; Al-Ghazālī, 1997; Al-Juwaynī, 1997). On the other hand, institutional obligation refers to the obligation to comply with *pesantren* regulations, whose binding force derives from educational authority and institutional governance (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022; Mumtaz et al., 2024; Damopolii et al., 2023). Accordingly, the institutionalization of *sunnah* practices within the *pesantren* does not generate new *sharʿī* obligations. Rather, it establishes institutional obligations that function as pedagogical instruments for cultivating discipline and the habituation of religious practice.

These empirical findings demonstrate that *pesantren* authorities consistently distinguish between obligations prescribed by the Sharīʿah and those established by institutional governance. This finding is consistent with Nurtawab and Wahyudi (2022), who argue that the institutional transformation of *pesantren* has proceeded through the strengthening of educational governance and regulatory structures while preserving religious authority as the foundation of the institution. Similarly, Mumtaz et al. (2024) contend that *pesantren* policies constitute an integral component of institutional governance while maintaining the independent authority of the *kiai*. From the perspective of Islamic education, these findings also accord with Tan (2014), who conceptualizes discipline as an essential element of character formation through educational practice. This argument is further supported by Damopolii et al. (2023), who demonstrate that institutional regulations and *taʿzīr* mechanisms within the *pesantren* function as educational instruments rather than as mechanisms for altering *sharʿī* legal rulings. Likewise, Taufiq et al. (2024) show that habituation, exemplary conduct, and institutional culture constitute the principal foundations for cultivating religious habitus within *pesantren*. Nevertheless, these studies do not explain the juristic foundations that permit *sunnah* practices to be institutionalized as educational obligations without altering their legal status under Islamic law.

The present study addresses this gap by demonstrating that compliance with institutional regulations derives its legitimacy through the mechanism of institutionalized *iltizām*. Within this framework, institutional obligations retain the legal status of the underlying acts of worship as *mandūb* without transforming them into *wājib sharʿī*.

This distinction between *sharʿī* obligation and institutional obligation provides the analytical foundation for examining how different madhhabs within the Islamic legal tradition legitimize institutional obligations while preserving the original legal status of *sunnah* practices. The following section develops this juristic analysis through a comparative examination of the Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī, and Mālikī traditions.

2. Comparative Juristic Perspectives on Institutionalized *Iltizām*

The empirical findings presented in the previous section demonstrate that requiring *sunnah* practices within the *pesantren* is not intended to transform their legal status into *wājib sharʿī*. The consistent distinction articulated by *kiai* and *ustaz* therefore raises a fundamental juristic question concerning the legal basis upon which such institutional obligations are considered legitimate within Islamic law. To address this question, the empirical findings are interpreted through a comparative madhhab framework by examining the principal juristic doctrines relating to institutional authority, educational regulation, and the formation of religious discipline.

The empirical evidence indicating that *kiai* consistently distinguish between *sharʿī* obligation and institutional obligation is fully consistent with the normative framework of the Shāfiʿī madhhab. Within this tradition, the legal status of an act of worship may be altered only on the basis of authoritative *sharʿī* evidence (*dalīl*) possessing normative authority (Al-Shāfiʿī, 1940; Al-Juwaynī, 1997; Al-Ghazālī, 1997). Consequently, the obligation to participate in *ṣalāt al-ḍuḥā*, *qiyām al-layl*, or *wird* within the *pesantren* cannot be understood as a modification of their legal status. Rather, it represents the consequence of the *santri*'s commitment to the regulations of the educational institution. Within this framework, the doctrine of *iltizām* explains the voluntary acceptance of binding commitments established through legitimate authority, while *taʿdīb* provides the pedagogical justification for cultivating moral discipline and devotional habituation through educational regulation without altering the *sharʿī* classification of the underlying acts of worship (Al-Shāfiʿī, 1940; Al-Juwaynī, 1997).

The Ḥanafī perspective offers a different juristic interpretation of these findings. Although the Ḥanafī tradition likewise maintains the *mandūb* status of *sunnah* practices, it grants broader regulatory authority to govern social life through the doctrines of *siyāsah sharʿiyyah*, *ʿurf*, and *istiḥsān* (Al-Sarakhsī, 1993; Al-Kāsānī, 1986; Ibn ʿĀbidīn, 1992). Within the *pesantren* context, the obligation to perform *sunnah* practices may therefore be understood as a form of institutional regulation intended to promote social order,

institutional discipline, and educational welfare, provided that such regulations remain consistent with the principles of the *Sharīʿah*.

From the Mālikī perspective, the legitimacy of institutional regulations is principally grounded in the doctrine of *maṣlaḥah mursalah* (Al-Qarāfī, 1998; Al-Shāṭibī, 1997). According to this approach, educational regulations are considered legally legitimate when they promote genuine public benefit (*maṣlaḥah*) and do not conflict with the revealed texts of the *Sharīʿah* (Opwis, 2005; Mubarrak et al., 2025; Mumtaz et al., 2024). Consequently, requiring *sunnah* practices within the *pesantren* is understood not as creating new *sharʿī* obligations but rather as establishing educational instruments that facilitate the cultivation of religious character and advance the objectives of Islamic education in accordance with the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*.

Despite relying upon different juristic doctrines, the three madhhabs converge on a fundamental point. All maintain that the legal status of *sunnah* acts of worship remains *mandūb* and cannot be transformed into *wājib sharʿī* through institutional decisions. Their differences lie instead in the juristic principles invoked to explain the legitimacy of educational regulation. The Shāfiʿī perspective emphasizes *iltizām* and *taʿdīb*; the Ḥanafī perspective relies on *siyāsah sharʿiyyah*, *ʿurf*, and *istiḥsān*; whereas the Mālikī perspective grounds institutional legitimacy in *maṣlaḥah mursalah*. These similarities and differences are summarized in Table 1, which compares the principal juristic doctrines explaining the legitimacy of institutional obligations within the *pesantren*.

Table 1. Comparative Juristic Doctrines on the Legitimacy of Tarbawi Obligation

Juristic Issue	Shāfiʿī Madhhab	Ḥanafī Madhhab	Mālikī Madhhab
Can a <i>sunnah</i> act of worship become <i>wājib sharʿī</i> ?	No. A change in legal status requires definitive (<i>qaṭʿī</i>) textual evidence.	No. The legal status remains <i>mandūb</i> .	No. The legal status remains <i>mandūb</i> .
Basis for the legitimacy of institutional regulations	<i>Iltizām</i> and <i>taʿdīb</i>	<i>Siyāsah sharʿiyyah</i> , <i>ʿurf</i> , and <i>istiḥsān</i>	<i>Maṣlaḥah mursalah</i>
Nature of the obligation	Extra-legal pedagogical obligation	Contextual normative regulation	<i>Maṣlaḥah</i> -based institutional regulation
Regulatory orientation	Formation of moral character (<i>adab</i>) and religious virtue	Social order and collective welfare	Educational welfare within the framework of <i>maqāṣid al-sharīʿah</i>
Limits of legitimacy	Must not alter <i>sharʿī</i> legal rulings	Must not contradict the principles of the <i>Sharīʿah</i> or <i>maqāṣid</i>	Must not conflict with revealed texts or <i>sharʿī maṣlaḥah</i>

Source: Compiled by the authors based on *al-Risālah* (al-Shāfiʿī, 1940), *al-Burhān fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (al-Juwaynī, 1997), *Uṣūl al-Sarakhsī* (al-Sarakhsī, 1993), *Radd al-Muḥtār ʿalā al-Durr al-Mukhtār* (Ibn ʿAbidin, 1992), *al-Furūq* (al-Qarāfī, 1998), and *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿah* (al-Shāṭibī, 1997).

Table 1 demonstrates that the principal differences among the three madhhabs do not concern the legal status of *sunnah* acts of worship, but rather the juristic doctrines through which institutional regulation is justified. All three traditions consistently preserve the classification of *sunnah* practices as *mandūb* and reject any attempt to transform them into *wājib sharʿī* through decisions made by educational institutions. Their common ground therefore lies not in identical legal reasoning but in a shared normative boundary that distinguishes obligations prescribed by the *Sharīʿah* from those established through institutional authority.

These differences further demonstrate that institutionalized *iltizām* is best understood as a concept that may be justified through multiple complementary juristic approaches. The Shāfiʿī perspective emphasizes commitment to legitimate educational regulations; the Ḥanafī perspective highlights the regulatory function of institutional authority in maintaining social order; and the Mālikī perspective underscores the pursuit of educational welfare through *maṣlaḥah*. Accordingly, the contribution of this comparative madhhab analysis is not to determine which juristic tradition offers the most authoritative explanation. Rather, it demonstrates that the legitimacy of institutional obligation rests upon a plurality of complementary juristic foundations within the Sunni legal tradition. This comparative analysis provides the basis for the conceptual model of *tarbawī* obligation proposed in this study, integrating these complementary perspectives into a unified analytical framework.

3. Conceptualizing *Tarbawī* Obligation: A Comparative Juristic Model

The comparative synthesis presented in Table 1 demonstrates that the legitimacy of institutional obligation cannot be adequately explained through a single juristic doctrine. Rather, its normative basis emerges from the interaction between *sharʿī* principles, juristic reasoning, institutional authority, and the educational objectives of *pesantren*. Building upon this synthesis, the present study develops the *Tarbawī* Obligation Model as a conceptual framework for explaining how a *sharʿī* norm is translated into an institutional obligation and subsequently internalized through pedagogical processes. The model conceptualizes institutional obligation not merely as a regulatory instrument imposed by *pesantren* authorities, but as a dynamic process through which normative principles acquire institutional form and are transformed into lived ethical commitments. In this process, *sharʿī* norms provide the foundational legitimacy, institutional regulation translates these norms into concrete rules, and pedagogical internalization enables students to understand, accept, and reproduce them as part of their everyday religious and social conduct. The model therefore highlights a sequential yet reciprocal relationship among normative legitimacy, institutionalization, and pedagogical internalization. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 1, which presents the *Tarbawī* Obligation Model as an

integrated framework for analysing how Islamic legal obligations are constructed, regulated, and internalized within the *pesantren* environment.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Institutionalization of *Tarbawi* Obligation from a Comparative Madhhab Perspective

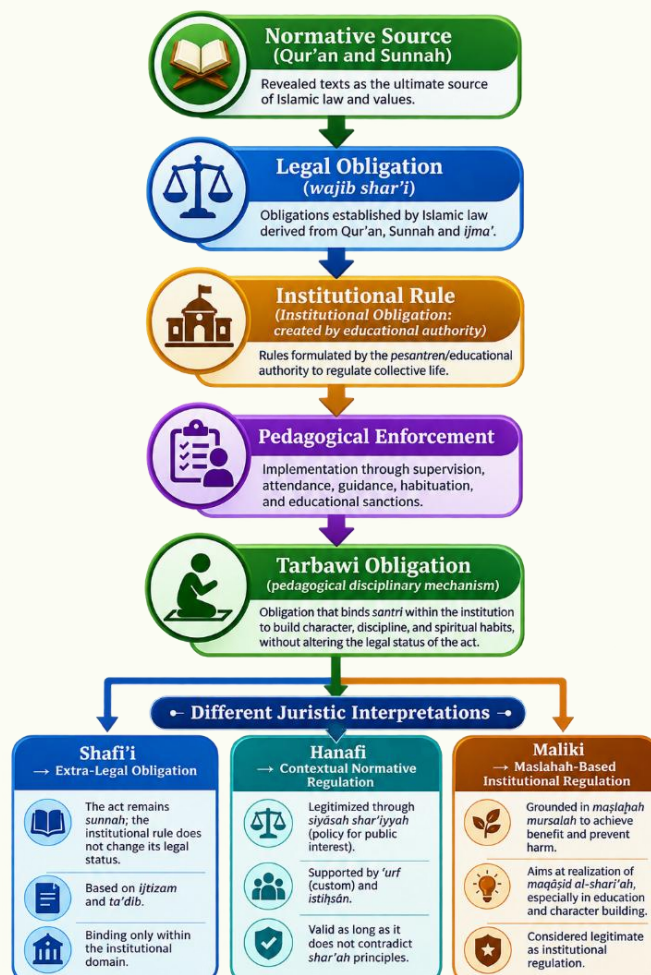


Figure 1 illustrates that the five concepts employed in this study operate at different levels of normativity while forming an integrated and sequential process. At the first level, *wājib shar'ī* (legal obligation under Islamic law) refers to obligations derived directly from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Consequently, their legal status cannot be altered by institutional authority (Al-Shāfi'ī, 1940; Al-Juwaynī, 1997; Al-Ghazālī, 1997). At the second level, the *pesantren* establishes institutional obligations, namely, internal regulations governing the educational life of *santri* without modifying the *shar'ī* classification of the underlying acts of worship (Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022; Damopolii et al., 2023).

Through mechanisms of pedagogical enforcement—including habituation, supervision, educational guidance, and institutional discipline—these institutional obligations are internalized as *tarbawi* obligation, an analytical concept describing the pedagogical internalization of institutional obligation. Within this framework, *tarbawi*

obligation refers to obligations that are binding within an educational context for the purpose of cultivating religious character and moral discipline (Damopolii et al., 2023; Taufiq et al., 2024). Accordingly, the binding force of these obligations does not derive from the creation of new *sharʿī* obligations but rather from the legitimate authority of educational institutions to regulate the cultivation of *adab* and the habituation of religious practice.

This model extends Berger and Luckmann's (2023) theory of institutionalization by demonstrating that the institutionalization of religious practices within the *pesantren* produces not only social order but also normative legitimacy grounded in religious authority. At the same time, it complements Mahmood's (2005) analysis of religious subject formation by showing that such processes occur within a framework of institutional regulation that is explicitly distinguished from obligations prescribed by the *Shariʿah* (Damopolii et al., 2023; Taufiq et al., 2024).

Within this conceptual framework, *tarbawi* obligation receives distinct juristic explanations across the three madhhabs. From the Shāfiʿī perspective, it is understood as an extra-legal pedagogical obligation grounded in the doctrines of *iltizām* and *taʿdīb* (Al-Shāfiʿī, 1940; Al-Juwaynī, 1997). The Ḥanafī tradition conceptualizes it as a contextual normative regulation justified through the principles of *siyāsah sharʿiyyah*, *ʿurf*, and *istiḥsān* (Al-Sarakhsī, 1993; Ibn ʿĀbidīn, 1992). The Mālikī tradition, by contrast, understands it as a *maṣlaḥah*-based institutional regulation, deriving its legitimacy from the doctrine of *maṣlaḥah mursalah* (Al-Qarāfī, 1998; Al-Shāṭibī, 1997). These three formulations therefore do not represent different categories of Islamic legal obligation; rather, they reflect different juristic explanations for the legitimacy of educational regulation within the framework of Islamic law.

Building upon the synthesis of the empirical findings and the comparative juristic analysis, this study proposes the *Tarbawi* Obligation Model as a novel analytical framework for explaining how *sunnah* practices acquire institutional binding force without being transformed into *wājib sharʿī*. The model is not intended to introduce a new category of Islamic legal obligation. Instead, it explains the relationship among *sharʿī* norms, institutional regulation, and pedagogical mechanisms in the institutionalization of religious practices within the *pesantren*. Within this framework, *tarbawi* obligation functions as an analytical construct that bridges Islamic legal doctrine, institutional governance, and *pesantren* pedagogy.

By integrating the doctrines of *iltizām*, *siyāsah sharʿiyyah*, and *maṣlaḥah mursalah* into a single analytical framework, this study demonstrates that the legitimacy of institutional obligation can be explained through multiple complementary juristic doctrines without obscuring the distinction between *wājib sharʿī* and institutional

obligation. Accordingly, the principal contribution of this study extends beyond expanding the discourse on institutionalized *iltizām*; it also offers a conceptual framework that may be applied to analyze comparable institutional practices across diverse contexts of Islamic education.

4. Normative Ambiguity and the Limits of Institutional Legitimacy

The conceptual model presented in Figure 1 demonstrates that institutional obligation may be internalized as *tarbawi* obligation without altering the legal status of the underlying acts of worship. Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that this process of internalization is not understood uniformly by all *santri*. This variation gives rise to the possibility of normative ambiguity, which constitutes an important boundary for the legitimacy of institutionalized *iltizām*.

Although institutionalized *sunnah* practices derive their legitimacy from educational authority, the findings reveal that they are not interpreted in the same way by all *santri*. Several participants acknowledged that, during the initial stages of their education, they perceived *ṣalāt al-duḥā* as an obligation equivalent to the five daily prayers because it was mandatory within the *pesantren*.

One *santri* explained:

“At first, I thought *ṣalāt al-duḥā* was obligatory like the five daily prayers because we performed it every day in the *pesantren*.” (S5)

This finding reveals the emergence of normative ambiguity, a condition in which obligations established through institutional regulations are perceived by some *santri* as obligations prescribed by the Shari‘ah, even though, from the perspective of *fiqh*, their legal status remains *mandūb*. To prevent such misunderstandings, *ustaz* consistently provided explicit clarification regarding the distinction between *pesantren* regulations and Islamic legal obligations.

As one *ustaz* explained:

“We must repeatedly explain to the *santri* that this is an obligation imposed by the *pesantren*, not an obligation prescribed by the Shari‘ah.” (U3)

These findings suggest that the institutionalization of religious practices may generate normative ambiguity when the distinction between institutional regulation and *shar‘ī* obligation is not communicated explicitly. This observation extends the discussions of Asad (1993) and Mahmood (2005) concerning the formation of piety through disciplinary practices. Whereas both scholars emphasize the cultivation of religious dispositions through discipline and repeated practice, the present study demonstrates that such processes also require continuous normative clarification to ensure that pedagogical internalization does not evolve into misunderstanding regarding the legal status of acts of worship.

Building upon the synthesis of the empirical findings and the comparative madhhab

analysis, this study proposes that the legitimacy of *tarbawī* obligation depends upon three normative boundaries. First, institutional regulations must not alter the *wājib sharʿī* status of any act of worship. Second, institutional regulations must be accompanied by ongoing normative clarification so that *santri* clearly understand the distinction between institutional obligation and *sharʿī* obligation. Third, the primary purpose of institutional regulation must remain pedagogical—namely, to cultivate discipline, *adab*, and religious character—rather than to create new religious obligations or function merely as an instrument of behavioral control.

From a comparative madhhab perspective, these normative boundaries represent the common point of convergence among the Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī, and Mālikī traditions. Although each madhhab employs different juristic doctrines to justify institutional regulation, all three maintain that institutional authority cannot modify the legal status of acts of worship established by the *Sharīʿah*. Accordingly, the legitimacy of institutionalized *iltizām* depends not only upon its juristic foundations but also upon the institution's capacity to preserve the distinction between educational authority and *Sharīʿah* authority. By identifying these normative boundaries, the present study extends the literature on Islamic educational governance, demonstrating that the sustainability of institutional legitimacy requires a careful balance among institutional discipline, pedagogical objectives, and normative clarity (Asad, 1993; Mahmood, 2005; Mumtaz et al., 2024).

Pedagogical Implications of Institutionalized *Iltizām* for Student Formation

Having established the juristic legitimacy of institutionalized *iltizām* through comparative madhhab analysis and conceptualized it as *tarbawī* obligation, the discussion now turns to its pedagogical implications. Specifically, it examines how the juristic foundations identified above are translated into educational practice through the formation of religious habitus, the internalization of religious values, and the development of religious agency among *santri*.

1. Habituation as the Foundation of Religious Habitus

The findings indicate that *tarbawī* obligation initially functions as a mechanism of habituation. Most *santri* acknowledged that they began performing *ṣalāt al-ḍuḥā*, *tahajjud*, and *wird* primarily because these practices were required by *pesantren* regulations rather than by personal religious motivation.

One *santri* explained:

“At first, I performed *ṣalāt al-ḍuḥā* because I was afraid of being reprimanded if I didn't participate. Over time, however, not performing it began to feel as though something was missing.” (S4)

Another *santri* stated:

“Initially, I participated because of the *pesantren* rules, but now it has become a habit, even when I return home.” (S3)

These findings demonstrate that continuous habituation gradually shifts the orientation of religious practice from compliance with institutional regulations to a personally sustained religious habit (Tan, 2014; Taufiq et al., 2024). Through the repeated performance of rituals within the collective life of the *pesantren*, *sunnah* practices are progressively transformed from externally imposed requirements into integral components of everyday religious routine.

This process is consistent with Bourdieu's (2020) concept of *habitus*, which explains that durable dispositions are formed through the repeated enactment of practices within structured social environments. The present study, however, extends this perspective by demonstrating that religious *habitus* within the *pesantren* is not merely the product of the reproduction of social structures but is consciously cultivated through pedagogical objectives intentionally designed by educational authorities. In this context, institutionalized *iltizām* connects institutional discipline with the cultivation of *adab*, *tarbiyah*, and *tazkiyat al-nafs*, enabling religious *habitus* to develop not simply as a pattern of social behavior but as an enduring ethical and spiritual orientation (Sahin, 2018).

From the perspective of comparative madhhab, this process of habituation should not be understood as transforming *sunnah* practices into *wājib shar'ī*. Rather, it illustrates how pedagogically legitimate institutional regulation may cultivate enduring religious dispositions while preserving the original legal classification of those practices. Consequently, the formation of religious *habitus* represents the pedagogical outcome of institutionalized *iltizām* rather than evidence of a new category of Islamic legal obligation.

2. From Institutional Discipline to Pedagogical Internalization

The findings further demonstrate that the internalization of religious values occurs as a gradual process. Participants consistently described a transformation from compliance with institutional regulations to the emergence of increasingly autonomous religious consciousness.

One *ustaz* explained:

"At the beginning, they participate because of the rules. After some time, the santri usually develop their own awareness and continue the practices even when they are no longer being supervised." (U5)

This observation was reinforced by the testimony of a *santri*:

"Now, if I don't perform tahajjud, it feels as though something is missing, even when no ustaz is watching." (S6)

These findings indicate that institutional discipline functions as the starting point of the pedagogical process rather than its ultimate objective (Tan, 2014; Mahmood, 2005). Based on this pattern, the present study proposes the Pedagogical Internalization Cycle as a conceptual model explaining the transformation of *tarbawi* obligation into internalized religious consciousness. This process is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Pedagogical Internalization Cycle



Figure 2 demonstrates that *tarbawi* obligation acquires its pedagogical significance through a gradual developmental process rather than through immediate compliance. Institutional discipline constitutes the initial stage of habituation, while the repeated performance of religious practices and continuous social adaptation enable the gradual emergence of deeper religious consciousness (Berger & Luckmann, 2023; Tan, 2014; Taufiq et al., 2024).

These findings corroborate Foucault's (1977) analysis that discipline constitutes a fundamental mechanism in the formation of subjects through surveillance and normalization. Within the *pesantren* context, however, discipline extends beyond the production of compliance. Instead, it functions as a pedagogical instrument that creates opportunities for self-reflection and the voluntary internalization of religious values. In this respect, the findings are more closely aligned with Foucault's (1977) concept of technologies of the self, subsequently developed by Mahmood (2005) in her analysis of ethical self-formation within the Islamic tradition. The present study nevertheless extends this line of argument by demonstrating that the formation of religious subjectivity within the *pesantren* occurs through institutional regulation that consciously preserves the distinction between obligations prescribed by the *Shari'ah* and obligations established for educational purposes. Accordingly, the Pedagogical Internalization Cycle explains that institutional discipline is not the ultimate goal of education but rather the initial stage

through which external compliance is gradually transformed into internalized religious consciousness.

From the perspective of comparative madhhab, this process of pedagogical internalization does not alter the legal status of *sunnah* practices as understood in *fiqh*. Rather, it demonstrates that the juristic doctrines of the Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī, and Mālikī traditions each provide legitimate foundations for institutional regulation through the mechanism of institutionalized *iltizām* while preserving the legal classification of these practices as *mandūb* rather than transforming them into *wājib sharʿī*. Thus, pedagogical internalization should be understood not as a process of legal transformation but as the educational realization of institutionally legitimate commitments grounded in diverse yet complementary juristic traditions.

3. Religious Agency as the Outcome of Institutionalized *Iltizām*

The findings further demonstrate that the formation of religiosity does not occur uniformly across all *santri*. While some develop a deep and enduring commitment to religious practices, others continue to perform them primarily as a consequence of institutional regulations.

One *santri* remarked:

“When I’m being supervised, I participate. But when I’m at home, sometimes I no longer do so.” (S5)

By contrast, another *santri* explained:

“Even though these practices are no longer required when I’m at home, I still try to maintain the habit.” (S6)

These contrasting responses indicate that institutionalized *iltizām* does not produce deterministic compliance. Rather, *santri* retain the capacity to accept, interpret, and negotiate institutional expectations in light of their own religious experiences and reflective processes. The findings therefore suggest that the internalization of religious values is inherently dynamic and does not result in a uniform pattern of religiosity.

This observation further indicates that the relationship between institutional discipline and agency is considerably more complex than a simple dichotomy between compliance and resistance (Bhojani & Clarke, 2023). The findings resonate with Mahmood’s (2005) conception of agency, which understands agency not merely as resistance to authority but as the capacity to cultivate the self through engagement with normative traditions and disciplinary practices. From an educational perspective, this interpretation also aligns with Freire (1970), who conceptualizes learners as active subjects who construct meaning from their educational experiences, and with Giroux (1988), who argues that educational processes create opportunities for learners to interpret and respond to social structures through critical reflection. The present study, however,

demonstrates that religious agency within the *pesantren* is not necessarily expressed through criticism of or resistance to institutional authority. Instead, agency develops through an ongoing process of negotiating institutional regulations while simultaneously acknowledging the legitimacy of religious authority as an integral component of the *pesantren* educational tradition (Bhojani & Clarke, 2023).

These findings also extend Willis's (1977) discussion of students' responses to institutional structures by demonstrating that the responses of *santri* cannot be adequately explained solely through the categories of adaptation or resistance. Based on these empirical findings, this study proposes the concept of negotiated piety to explain a form of religious agency that emerges through spiritual reflection, the selective acceptance of institutional regulations, and the internalization of religious values without rejecting the normative framework of the *pesantren*. Within this framework, agency should not be understood as opposition to authority but rather as the capacity of *santri* to embrace, interpret, and consciously sustain religious practices after the processes of habituation and pedagogical internalization have taken place.

From a comparative madhhab perspective, the emergence of religious agency should likewise not be interpreted as constituting a new category of Islamic legal obligation. Rather, it represents a pedagogical consequence of institutional regulation whose legitimacy is grounded in diverse juristic doctrines. The differences among the Shāfi'ī, Ḥanafī, and Mālikī traditions therefore lie in the juristic foundations they employ to justify institutional obligation, not in any modification of the legal status of *sunnah* acts of worship under the *Sharī'ah*. Consequently, religious agency constitutes the educational outcome of institutionalized *iltizām* while preserving the fundamental distinction between institutional obligation and *wājib shar'ī* that underpins the comparative juristic framework developed throughout this study.

4. Concluding Pedagogical Implications

Overall, the findings demonstrate that institutionalized *iltizām* functions as a bridge between the juristic legitimacy of Islamic law and the pedagogical practices of the *pesantren*. Once legitimized as an institutional obligation, it operates through pedagogical mechanisms that gradually cultivate religious habitus, facilitate the internalization of religious values, and create opportunities for the emergence of religious agency. The findings further indicate that the relationship among institutional discipline, habituation, and the formation of religious subjectivity cannot be adequately explained from a single theoretical perspective. Bourdieu's concept of habitus accounts for the formation of durable dispositions through repeated practice; Foucault and Mahmood illuminate the role of discipline in the formation of religious subjects; while Freire, Giroux, and Willis contribute to understanding the development of agency within educational processes.

Rather than privileging any one of these perspectives, the present study demonstrates that institutionalized *iltizām* provides an integrative conceptual framework that brings these theoretical traditions into dialogue in explaining the formation of *santri* religiosity.

Accordingly, the principal contribution of this study extends beyond explaining the juristic legitimacy of *tarbawī* obligation within Islamic law. It also advances institutionalized *iltizām* as a conceptual framework for understanding how religious norms are translated into character formation, spiritual reflection, and religious agency without altering the legal classification of the underlying acts of worship as *mandūb*.

This study has several limitations. First, its empirical findings are derived from three *pesantren* in Indonesia and are therefore context-specific, limiting their generalizability to the broader landscape of Islamic educational institutions. Second, the juristic analysis focuses exclusively on the Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī, and Mālikī traditions, without incorporating other schools of Islamic law or contemporary developments in Islamic legal thought. Third, the concept of *tarbawī* obligation proposed in this study is developed from the institutionalization of *sunnah* practices within the *pesantren* context and therefore requires further examination across other forms of institutional normativity and Islamic educational settings.

In light of these limitations, several directions for future research are suggested. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine the sustainability of religious internalization and the development of religious agency after *santri* leave the *pesantren*. Comparative studies incorporating the Ḥanbalī and Jaʿfarī traditions, as well as contemporary *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* approaches, would further enrich understanding of the legitimacy and normative limits of institutional obligation within Islamic law. Future research should also investigate the relationship between *tarbawī* obligation, state regulation, and Islamic legal governance across educational institutions, religious organizations, and emerging Muslim digital communities. Finally, further empirical and theoretical work is required to evaluate the broader applicability of *tarbawī* obligation as an analytical framework for explaining the interaction among religious authority, institutional regulation, and the formation of religious subjects across diverse contexts within contemporary Muslim societies.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the institutionalization of *sunnah* practices within the *pesantren* does not alter their legal status by transforming them into *wājib sharʿī*. Rather, it operationalizes their performance through institutional regulations that are binding within the educational context. Throughout the three case-study institutions, *kiai* and *ustaz* consistently distinguished between obligations prescribed by the Shariʿah and obligations established by institutional authority, thereby affirming that the binding force

of these practices derives from educational authority rather than from any reclassification within Islamic law.

From a comparative madhhab perspective, the study further demonstrates that the Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī, and Mālikī traditions all preserve the legal classification of *sunnah* acts of worship as *mandūb* and reject their transformation into *wājib sharʿī* (Utami et al., 2025). Nevertheless, each madhhab relies upon distinct juristic doctrines to justify the legitimacy of institutional regulation. The Shāfiʿī tradition grounds such legitimacy in *iltizām* and *taʿdīb*; the Ḥanafī tradition emphasizes *siyāsah sharʿiyyah*, *ʿurf*, and *istiḥsān*; while the Mālikī tradition derives legitimacy from *maṣlaḥah mursalah*. These findings demonstrate that the legitimacy of institutional obligation within *pesantren* education can be explained through multiple complementary juristic doctrines without obscuring the normative distinction between obligations prescribed by the Sharīʿah and those established through institutional governance.

From the perspective of Islamic education, this study further demonstrates that institutional regulation functions not merely as an instrument of discipline but also as a pedagogical mechanism that promotes habituation, facilitates the internalization of religious values, and fosters the development of religious agency. Building upon the synthesis of the empirical findings and the comparative madhhab analysis, the study develops the concept of *tarbawī* obligation as an analytical framework for explaining the relationship among the juristic legitimacy of Islamic law, institutional governance, and pedagogical practice within the *pesantren*. Accordingly, the principal contribution of this study extends beyond expanding the discourse on institutionalized *iltizām*. It also offers a novel conceptual perspective for understanding how religious norms are translated into educational practices that cultivate character, religious subjectivity, and institutional governance within contemporary Muslim societies.

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