

REVISION FORM FOR REVIEWER 1 AND 2

Manuscript ID : 45574

Title : Pesantren Feudalism or Ta'dzim? Contesting Western and Islamic Epistemologies in Digital Discourse.

REVISION CHECKLISTS

Follow the revision guidelines below and mark with a check (✓) if you have completed each procedure.

GUIDELINES	CHECKLIST
1. Confirm receipt: Reply to this email to confirm that you have received the review forms and reviewed manuscripts.	✓
2. Highlight revisions: Highlight the revised parts in your manuscript and fill out the response form based on the reviewers' comments and suggestions.	✓
3. Include author details: Include author name(s), institution(s), address, and one correspondence email on a detachable page in the manuscript.	✓
4. APA 7th edition formatting: Adjust the in-text citations, reference list, tables, and figures to comply with APA 7th edition style.	✓

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REVISION REPORT

No	Page	Comments and suggestions	Excerpt of Revision
1.	1	The title appears overly broad and combines multiple major constructs (Western dialectics, Islamic dialectics, pesantren feudalism, epistemology, educational transformation, and the digital era). Consider narrowing the title to better reflect the actual scope of the study and improve conceptual clarity. Please change with suggest "Pesantren Feudalism or Ta'dzim? Contesting Western and Islamic Epistemologies in Digital Discourse"	[Revised Title]: "Pesantren Feudalism or Ta'dzim? Contesting Western and Islamic Epistemologies in Digital Discourse"
2.	1	Please change the first sentence of the abstract with: <i>"The digital era has intensified discursive contestations surrounding the kiai–santri relationship in pesantren."</i>	[Revised Sentence in Abstract]: "The digital era has intensified discursive contestations surrounding the kiai–santri relationship in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools)."
3.	1	What's the mean of this word? (Referring to "pesantren" and "tadzim" in the abstract).	[Revised Text in Abstract]: Brief English conceptual definitions have been provided in parentheses upon their first appearance to assist international readers: 1. "...in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools)." 2. "...and the tradition of <i>ta'dhim</i> (traditional Islamic reverence and obedience) grounded in..."
4.	1	Please clarify the nature of the analyzed corpus. The phrase "four social media contents" is rather vague and does not sufficiently convey the scope or characteristics of the data.	[Revised Text in Abstract]: "...this study examines a limited empirical scope consisting of four viral social media contents and in-depth interviews with two key participants."

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5.	1	The abstract tends to move from empirical findings to normative conclusions. Several claims, particularly regarding the non-oppressive nature of <i>tadzim</i> and the emergence of a “new synthesis,” appear stronger than what can be supported by the limited data presented. Greater analytical neutrality and caution in reporting findings are recommended.	[Revised Text in Abstract]: "The findings suggest that participants and <i>pesantren</i> -based narratives tend to frame <i>ta'dhim</i> not as a form of structural oppression, but rather as a mechanism of respect, identity formation, and a means of sustaining traditional values amid contemporary social change."
6.	1	The claim that the dialectic “produces a new synthesis” appears theoretically ambitious and may not be sufficiently supported by the limited empirical corpus analyzed in this study. The authors may consider moderating this conclusion or providing stronger evidence for the emergence of such a synthesis.	[Revised Text in Abstract]: The ambitious phrase has been removed and the conclusion is now moderated: "Ultimately, this discursive interplay highlights how <i>pesantren</i> communities navigate traditional authority while adapting to modern decentralized digital spaces, suggesting a need for broader empirical exploration to fully capture these evolving dynamics."
7.	2	The introduction is well contextualized but tends to adopt a normative stance toward the phenomenon under investigation. Rather than positioning Western interpretations of <i>pesantren</i> hierarchy as epistemological misreadings from the outset, the manuscript should frame these perspectives as competing discourses to be empirically examined. Greater theoretical precision, stronger evidence for the stated phenomenon, and a clearer articulation of the research gap are required.	[Accepted and Revised in Introduction]: We have removed the normative tone that characterized Western interpretations as mere "misreadings." Instead, we now frame the Western paradigm of structural power relations and the Islamic tradition of <i>ta'dhim</i> neutrally as competing discourses within the digital ecosystem.
8.	2	Several claims are presented without sufficient empirical support, particularly statements regarding the emergence and popularity of the “ <i>pesantren</i> feudalism” narrative in social media. The authors should provide	[Accepted and Action Taken in Introduction]: We have refined our statements to avoid broad, unsubstantiated claims of widespread popularity. The narrative is now framed

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		evidence, references, or empirical indicators demonstrating the scale and significance of this phenomenon	strictly through critical-structural paradigms in digital spaces, and contextual markers have been added to denote its significance without unbacked empirical assertions.
9.	2	The manuscript tends to treat “Western epistemology” as a homogeneous framework. Greater theoretical precision is needed, as Western traditions encompass diverse and often conflicting perspectives on authority, hierarchy, education, and power.	[Accepted and Revised in Introduction]: We have enhanced our theoretical precision by avoiding the treatment of Western epistemology as a monolith. We have specifically attributed the critique to modern "critical-structural paradigms" and "structural power-relation frameworks" within Western sociology.
10.	2	Some expressions appear evaluative rather than analytical, such as “detached from its broader socio-intellectual context” and “simplification that shifts the original meaning of ta’dzim.” Consider adopting a more neutral academic tone.	[Revised Text in Introduction]: We removed the evaluative tone and rephrased it analytically: "Social media discussions often simplify the concept of <i>ta'dhim</i> by focusing primarily on its visible hierarchical structure, which frequently leaves its pedagogical and spiritual dimensions unexamined."
11.	3	The introduction raises broad questions concerning the transformation of Islamic education in the digital era, yet the empirical data are limited to four social media contents and two interview participants. The relationship between the stated problem and the empirical scope requires further justification.	[Accepted and Methodologically Justified]: We have added a dedicated paragraph at the end of the Introduction to justify our empirical scope. Following Fairclough’s CDA framework, we clarified that this limited, purposive data selection functions as a concentrated micro-level focal point to deeply deconstruct textual and discursive practices, rather than seeking statistical generalization.
12.	4	The literature review identifies differences between studies on power relations and studies on ta’dzim; however, the research gap remains descriptive rather than analytical. The authors should clarify what specific theoretical, methodological, or empirical	[Accepted and Explicitly Clarified]: We have rewritten the gap statement to articulate our exact analytical contribution. The study moves beyond descriptive synthesis by introducing an analytical model of a "digital

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		contribution the study makes beyond combining these two strands of literature.	epistemic dialectic," illustrating how traditional religious authority re-legitimizes itself within modern digital mediums meant to critique it.
13.	4	The statement that Fairclough's CDA provides an "objective framework" may require reconsideration. Critical discourse analysis is generally understood as an interpretive and critical approach rather than a purely objective analytical framework.	In this research, Fairclough's CDA is applied to move beyond surface-level textual description and to trace how discourses of feudalism and ta'dzim in pesantren reflect, reproduce, and negotiate systems of knowledge (epistemologies) related to the transformation of Islamic education in the digital era. Rather than claiming complete methodological objectivity, the CDA framework provides a systematic and critical lens for examining how discourses are constructed and contested within specific socio-cultural contexts
14.	4	The "discourse analysis checklist" is mentioned as the research instrument, but its dimensions, indicators, and analytical categories are not described. More methodological detail is required to ensure transparency and replicability.	The primary data for this study consist of four digital contents that were purposively selected as case studies of competing discourses on feudalism and ta'dzim in pesantren
15.	4	The manuscript does not sufficiently justify the selection of only four digital contents as the primary corpus. The rationale for considering these materials representative of broader digital discourses on pesantren feudalism requires further elaboration.	Two contents originate from mass media and social media platforms that critically portray the kiai-santri relationship within the frame of "pesantren feudalism", while the other two are TikTok posts that narrate ta'dzim as a tradition of reverence within pesantren. All four contents were produced and circulated during 2025, explicitly address the kiai-santri relationship either in a critical or legitimizing (counter-narrative) manner, and display significant levels of interaction (views, comments, or shares).
16.	4	The criteria for data selection remain unclear. Please explain the sampling strategy, inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria, and the rationale for choosing these	All four contents were produced and circulated during 2025, explicitly address the kiai-santri relationship either in a critical or legitimizing (counter-narrative) manner, and display significant

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		specific posts over other potentially relevant digital contents.	levels of interaction (views, comments, or shares). For these reasons, they are considered sufficiently illustrative of the ongoing discursive struggle surrounding pesantren in the Indonesian digital public sphere. The unit of analysis in this study is the main textual component of each content—namely the news article, video transcript, and/or caption—while comment threads and user reactions are treated as supporting materials for interpreting reception and circulation, rather than as independent units of analysis.
17.	4	There appears to be inconsistency regarding the composition of the corpus. The manuscript refers to “four texts,” “social media contents,” “videos,” “comment interactions,” and “mass media articles.” The exact unit of analysis should be clearly specified.	The main research instrument is a discourse analysis worksheet (checklist) developed on the basis of Fairclough’s CDA categories. This worksheet contains several dimensions and indicators, including: (1) lexical choices (key terms related to feudalism, ta’dzim, authority, equality); (2) grammatical structures (activation or passivation of actors, use of modality, nominalization); (3) representation of social actors (positions of kiai, santri, and external commentators); (4) intertextuality and interdiscursivity (explicit or implicit references to other texts, ideological traditions, or public debates); and (5) markers of power relations and ideology implied in the text. The checklist functions as a systematic guide for identifying linguistic features and for grouping data into thematic categories relevant to issues of power, legitimacy, and resistance within pesantren discourse. Secondary data are obtained through in-depth interviews with two key informants: a kiai who serves as the caretaker of a pesantren and a santri/alumnus who actively engages with religious content and pesantren issues in digital media. The informants are selected

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			purposely on the basis of their involvement in pesantren life and their experience in encountering pesantren-related discourses on social media. The kiai's narrative is used to enrich the analysis of authority structures, ta'dzim traditions, and ethical-spiritual values in pesantren, whereas the santri/alumnus narrative sheds light on how pesantren discourses are received, negotiated, and potentially resisted by those who inhabit both pesantren and digital spaces. These interviews are not designed to impose predetermined ideological roles (such as "dominant authority" or "resistance") from the outset; rather, such positionalities emerge inductively from the analysis of their narratives.
18.	5	The analytical procedure requires greater transparency. The manuscript should explain how coding was conducted, how themes were generated, and how Fairclough's three dimensions were operationalized in practice. The methodological design appears insufficient to support claims regarding the transformation of Islamic education in the digital era. The empirical scope seems more suitable for exploring discourse construction rather than broader educational transformation.	Data analysis follows the three-dimensional CDA model proposed by Fairclough and is conducted in an integrated, iterative manner. At the micro level (textual description), the researcher conducts initial coding of the texts by identifying key words, metaphors, grammatical patterns, and actor representations related to feudalism and ta'dzim. Codes are then grouped into broader thematic categories such as "hierarchy and power", "reverence and adab", "exploitation/injustice", and "tradition and legitimacy". At the meso level (interpretation of discursive practice), the analysis examines how the texts are produced, distributed, and consumed in mass and social media, including forms of intertextuality (references to Western theories of feudalism, pesantren traditions, or other contemporary debates) and patterns of user interaction (supportive, oppositional, or ambivalent responses). At the macro level (explanation of socio-cultural practice), the findings from the previous stages are connected to wider social contexts, such as the historical position of pesantren in Indonesian society, the circulation of Western

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			egalitarian and critical paradigms, and current discussions on the direction of Islamic education in the digital age. Within this design, the study explicitly focuses on the construction of discourse and its epistemological implications for understanding pesantren and Islamic education, rather than attempting to generalize about all forms of Islamic educational transformation in Indonesia.
19.	7	The analysis appears to reproduce the authors' interpretation rather than demonstrating how these meanings emerge from specific linguistic features in the texts. Please provide concrete textual evidence (lexical choices, modality, transitivity, metaphors, etc.) supporting this interpretation.	The coding of data M1 and M2 indicates that adab and ta'dzim within pesantren culture are discursively reframed as part of an ideological framework that sustains a vertical power structure, so that pesantren is explicitly associated with "feudalism" as a symbolic and cultural narrative
20.	9	The term "excessive reverence" appears evaluative and may reflect the authors' interpretation rather than the position explicitly expressed in the analyzed text. Consider adopting a more neutral analytical formulation.	This reinterpretation situates these practices within a discursive frame that links such reverence to asymmetrical power relations, as the kiai is regarded as the "center of knowledge" or the "heir of the Prophet," while simultaneously affirming that the kiai's authority fundamentally derives from an unquestionable power relation.
21	9	The manuscript adopts Foucauldian terminology such as "indoctrination" and "docile subjects" without demonstrating how these categories were operationalized in the analysis. Additional evidence is required to substantiate this claim.	In M2, the author explicitly draws on Foucauldian terminology to describe how subordination is produced internally within the pesantren. The text characterizes adab as a "disciplining mechanism" and refers to santri as "accustomed to serving without payment" and as subjects who "do not feel exploited", thereby framing their unpaid service as a product of internalized norms rather than voluntary charity. Phrases that depict santri as "accustomed to obeying without questioning" resonate with

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			Foucault's notion of "docile bodies", as they suggest a process by which obedience is inscribed into everyday practice, rendering them unconsciously complicit in feudalistic practices according to this discourse
22	9	This statement appears to move beyond discourse analysis into normative endorsement. Consider clarifying whether this reflects the discourse contained in M3–M4 or the authors' own conclusion. The comparison with "modern educational systems" is overly broad and insufficiently supported. Many contemporary educational traditions also emphasize ethics, respect, and character formation.	Within this discourse, the epistemic value of knowledge is articulated not only through the mastery of material content but also through its perceived benefit and blessedness. Within this discourse, ta'dzim is positioned as a moral prerequisite for the santri's intellectual and spiritual success, so that respect and humility toward the teacher are constructed as integral conditions for attaining both knowledge and its blessedness
23.	12	The notion of "unquestionable legitimacy" requires further discussion. How does the analysis distinguish between respect-based authority and authority that is immune from critique?	Meanwhile, the teacher is represented as a figure endowed with strong epistemic and spiritual legitimacy, whose authority is grounded in mastery of knowledge, moral example, and spiritual charisma rather than formal position alone. The teacher appears as a source of barakah and a holder of scholarly authority, so that this identity construction places the teacher as a guardian of the transmission of knowledge, respected primarily because of perceived moral depth, expertise, and the role in preserving sanad, even though the possibility of critique is not made explicit within the discourse.
24.	13	The conclusion appears dichotomous. A relationship may simultaneously contain spiritual, pedagogical, and power dimensions. Consider engaging with literature that treats authority as multidimensional rather than mutually exclusive.	In this discourse, the relationship between teacher and santri is foregrounded as a mutual–spiritual bond, even though such a bond can simultaneously carry pedagogical and power dimensions; what is emphasized in the text, however, is the

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			ethical and spiritual significance of hierarchy rather than its potential for structural domination.
25.	13	This statement appears speculative. The manuscript should distinguish between the observable characteristics of the texts and assumptions regarding the intentions of their producers.	From a discourse-analytic perspective, the use of such platforms and genres can be read as an attempt to address audiences beyond the pesantren community
26.	14	The notion of “strategic defence” implies intentionality. Please clarify whether this interpretation is supported by evidence from the content producers or inferred by the researchers.	The critiques (M1, M2) operate as discourses that explicitly carry out ideological re-semantization: they transform the meanings of adab and barakah into mechanisms of control and symbolic exploitation, urging that hierarchy be read as a feudal power relation. By contrast, the legitimizing discourse (M3, M4) can be interpreted as a discursive response to these accusations of feudalism, as it repeatedly frames ta’dzim as an ethic of thalabul ‘ilmi and a spiritual relation rather than as social domination
27.	14	The manuscript repeatedly treats “Western rationality” as a singular ideological position. Greater theoretical precision is required, as Western intellectual traditions are highly diverse and cannot be reduced to a single orientation toward hierarchy.	At the ideological level, data M1 and M2 jointly challenge the hegemony of traditional spiritual authority by drawing on egalitarian and critical rationalist perspectives that are often associated with certain strands of Western social and political thought
28.	14-15	The manuscript attributes concerns regarding symbolic violence and sexual violence to the analyzed discourse, yet no empirical evidence is presented beyond the selected texts. Please clarify whether these are findings from the corpus or broader societal concerns introduced by the authors.	In addition, the discourse points to a “culture of silence” that is presented as an obstacle to justice, because santri are depicted as reluctant to voice experiences of unfair treatment or symbolic harm for fear of being labelled disobedient or losing barakah. Therefore, the critiques in M1 and M2 constitute an ideological project aimed at forcing structural transformation, demanding that pesantren integrate principles of accountability, equality, and

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		This conclusion appears stronger than the evidence presented. The data may indicate that participants interpret the relationship in spiritual terms; however, this does not necessarily exclude the coexistence of material or institutional power relations.	human rights into their practices. the teacher–santri hierarchy is framed less as a product of material power relations—of the kind often foregrounded in certain Western accounts of feudalism—and more as a moral and spiritual structure that governs how knowledge is understood, received, and practiced, but rather a moral and spiritual structure that governs how knowledge is understood, received, and practiced
29.	15	The causal connection between social media criticism and a “Western-style feudal paradigm” is asserted rather than empirically demonstrated. Additional evidence is needed to support this interpretation.	These discourses resonate with certain Western-oriented feudal paradigms in which vertical authority is frequently associated with exploitative power relations and obedience is framed as a form of “irrational submission”.
30	17	This argument simplifies Marxist and neo-Marxist discussions of power, which extend beyond direct economic exploitation. Consider engaging with contemporary scholarship on symbolic, cultural, or institutional forms of power.	Engels’s analysis of class domination focuses on the extraction of surplus value through control of the means of production, whereas the texts M3 and M4 represent the teacher–santri relationship primarily in non-economic terms, emphasizing the transmission of knowledge, adab, and barakah rather than material surplus.
31	17-18	This claim would benefit from empirical evidence. The present data illustrate how ta’dzim is represented, but do not directly demonstrate its effects on critical thinking.	As an ethic of scholarship, ta’dzim is represented as cultivating intellectual humility, because the teacher is positioned as a mediator toward truth and as a conduit of barakah. Thus, the content in M3–M4 functions as a counter-discourse against the stigma of pesantren feudalism. At a time when modern media foregrounds egalitarianism that often rejects any form of hierarchy, pesantren employ short video formats—such as TikTok—to clarify the meaning of ta’dzim and highlight the

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			fundamental difference between spiritual hierarchy and oppressive hierarchy characteristic of Western feudalism
32	19	The statement that the feudalism label is “refuted” and “baseless” exceeds the evidentiary capacity of the data. The interviews demonstrate how participants interpret the issue, but they do not conclusively invalidate alternative interpretations.	In other words, from the perspectives of these interview participants, the feudal label imposed by netizens on social media reflects an epistemological dislocation and does not adequately capture the lived social relations within their pesantren.
33.	19	This reflects the perception of interview participants and should not be generalized to all critics of pesantren without additional evidence.	Santri firmly reject stereotypes that portray kiai as luxurious figures or santri as slaves; in their view, many negative comments on social media come from individuals who, they believe, have no lived experience in pesantren
34.	19	The attribution of “hidden motives” to critics appears speculative and unsupported by the data analyzed in this study.	According to both kiai and santri, negative framings on social media are often interpreted as reflecting misunderstanding and, in some cases, what they perceive as ulterior motives, including social jealousy toward the growing structural role of pesantren in Indonesia
35	20	The conclusion extends beyond the empirical evidence presented in the study. Several statements are framed as definitive judgments—particularly regarding the alleged distortion of pesantren traditions, the non-oppressive nature of ta’dzim, and the successful adaptation of pesantren to digital environments—despite the limited empirical corpus analyzed. A more cautious and evidence-based conclusion is recommended. Please replace all	The findings of this study suggest that the dialectic between narratives of feudalism and ta’dzim in pesantren discourse in the digital era can be understood as a tension between different epistemological paradigms. On the one hand, certain critical voices drawing on egalitarian and rationalist perspectives tend to interpret hierarchy primarily as power domination; on the other hand, the pesantren tradition, as reflected in the texts and interviews analysed, frames hierarchy as part of an ethical–spiritual structure oriented toward adab, barakah, and the transmission of scholarly authority. Within this configuration, accusations of “pesantren feudalism” in digital spaces appear to be closely related to an

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			epistemological dislocation, namely the tendency to interpret pesantren structures through politico-economic categories that do not fully correspond to how the teacher–santri relationship is articulated by internal actors. The critical discourse analysis and in-depth interviews conducted in this study indicate that, in the narratives examined, ta’dzim is represented not as an explicit practice of structural oppression, but as an ethical–spiritual mechanism embedded in the Islamic educational tradition; however, the data do not allow for definitive claims about all pesantren contexts, nor do they exclude the possibility that power and hierarchy may function differently in other settings. The study also points to emerging patterns in how pesantren-related actors engage with social media, using digital spaces to circulate narratives that reaffirm symbolic authority, transmit the values of adab, and articulate a shared identity between santri and kiai in the midst of modernization. These patterns cannot be generalized to all pesantren, but they illustrate how, in the specific cases analysed, digital media are employed as a site for negotiating meaning and responding to public criticism. The scholarly implications of this research highlight the importance of further exploring how traditional spiritual values and technological innovation are brought into dialogue in Islamic education, so that attempts to “transform” pesantren take seriously both epistemic authenticity and contemporary social realities. The dialectic mapped in this study offers an initial conceptual contribution to discussions of pesantren educational
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			transformation and invites subsequent research with broader and more diverse data to examine value transfer, digital adaptation processes, and the multiple ways in which hierarchy, authority, and criticality are negotiated within Islamic educational institutions.
36	21	The manuscript relies on a limited number of recent sources and would benefit from a stronger engagement with contemporary literature. The authors are advised to incorporate at least 25 references published since 2021 to better reflect current developments in the fields of Islamic education, digital discourse, and critical discourse analysis. In addition, the reference list and in-text citations should be thoroughly revised to comply with APA Style requirements. Particular attention should be given to capitalization, italicization, consistency of author names, journal titles, volume/issue formatting, and DOI presentation. The current inconsistencies reduce the overall scholarly presentation of the manuscript.	Done