

Reconstructing Integrative Islamic Education to Strengthen Critical Thinking in Pesantren

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Abstract

- Purpose** : This study investigates the reconstruction of integrative Islamic education and its implications for strengthening critical thinking among students in an Indonesian pesantren. It addresses how integrative Islamic education is implemented, how it can be reconstructed through Fazlur Rahman's perspective, and how such reconstruction may support students' critical thinking.
- Method** : A qualitative descriptive-critical design was employed at Pesantren Modern Datok Sulaiman Palopo, South Sulawesi, focusing on senior secondary-level students and relevant educational informants. Data were collected through passive participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, using interview and observation guides as research instruments. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with source, technique, and time triangulation used to strengthen credibility.
- Results** : The findings show that integrative Islamic education is implemented through formal learning, pesantren-based religious learning, and religious-value habituation, but its development of critical thinking remains constrained by limited opportunities for reflection, technological influences, and value formation that does not always foster personal awareness. The proposed reconstruction emphasizes strengthening teachers' roles as learning facilitators, developing reflective and dialogic learning, connecting habituation with meaning and reflection, and strengthening pesantren literacy.
- Conclusion** : These findings suggest that integrating knowledge, values, reflection, and contextual learning can provide a stronger pedagogical foundation for developing students who critically interpret, question, and connect Islamic knowledge with everyday realities.

Keywords: Integrative Islamic Education; Critical Thinking; Educational Reconstruction; Fazlur Rahman; Pesantren Education.

1. Introduction

Critical thinking has become a central concern in contemporary education because students are increasingly expected not merely to acquire information but to evaluate evidence, consider alternative perspectives, question assumptions, and connect knowledge with complex real-world problems. This demand is particularly important in education systems facing rapid technological change, information abundance, and social complexity. The OECD's PISA framework, for example, increasingly emphasizes students' capacity to generate, evaluate, and improve ideas, while its 2022

data indicate that opportunities for students to express ideas, evaluate alternatives, and engage in cognitively demanding learning are associated with stronger creative-thinking performance (OECD, 2024). In Indonesia, the issue is equally relevant: OECD data indicate that fewer than 60% of Indonesian students reported regularly employing critical-thinking strategies, while fewer than half reported regularly connecting new knowledge with existing knowledge in mathematics learning (OECD, 2024). These challenges raise an important question for Islamic education: how can educational systems preserve religious values and traditions while simultaneously developing learners who are reflective, analytical, intellectually independent, and capable of responding to contemporary realities?

Integrative Islamic education in this study refers to an educational orientation that brings together religious knowledge, general knowledge, reason, values, and lived experience rather than treating religious and secular knowledge as separate domains. Within this perspective, education should move beyond the transmission of religious information toward the development of intellectual and moral capacities. Critical thinking refers here not simply to cognitive performance measured through standardized tests, but to students' capacity to understand, consider, question, reflect upon, and respond to problems by connecting knowledge with Islamic values and real-life circumstances. This distinction is important in a pesantren context. For example, rather than asking students only to memorize a religious ruling, an integrative lesson may ask them to examine the reasoning behind the ruling, compare it with a contemporary problem, discuss alternative interpretations, and determine how the underlying Islamic values can be applied responsibly. Such an approach is consistent with the study's conceptualization of critical thinking as understanding, considering, and responding to problems based on Islamic values rather than quantitatively measuring cognitive ability.

Recent studies increasingly demonstrate the importance of integrating critical thinking into Islamic education. In one systematic review, Septiyanti (2023) examined 19 studies identified through Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar to investigate how Islamic education contributes to critical-thinking development. The review identified substantial challenges associated with rote learning, limited curriculum integration, and tensions between classical Islamic educational traditions and contemporary demands. The findings imply that Islamic education possesses considerable potential for developing higher-order thinking, but this potential depends on curriculum reform, teacher development, and pedagogical approaches that encourage reasoning rather than memorization. Similarly, Andreucci-Annunziata et al. (2023) systematically reviewed systematic reviews on critical-thinking conceptualizations and instructional strategies. Their analysis demonstrated that critical thinking is conceptualized in multiple ways and that instructional strategies need to be aligned with clearly defined cognitive and dispositional dimensions. This finding suggests that strengthening critical thinking requires more than adding isolated classroom activities; it requires coherent alignment among educational philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.

Evidence from Indonesian Islamic educational settings further supports this argument. Dalimunthe and Siregar (2024) investigated integrative learning strategies for developing critical thinking in Islamic Religious Education through a qualitative study involving four teachers and 120 students at the secondary-school level in Padang. Their findings emphasize interactive and

reflective learning as important mechanisms for encouraging students' critical engagement with Islamic subject matter. The study implies that Islamic education can become a meaningful context for critical-thinking development when students are actively involved in interpreting and discussing knowledge rather than simply receiving it. In another study, Zarkasyi et al. (2024) examined critical-thinking development at a modern Islamic boarding school using a qualitative case-study design based on interviews, observations, and documentation. The study found that academic forums, scientific discussions, critical reading, observation, curiosity, and reflection contributed to the development of students' critical-thinking capacities. Its findings highlight the importance of institutional culture and extracurricular academic activities in complementing classroom instruction.

Research specifically addressing curriculum integration in pesantren has produced similar evidence. Ridwan (2025) investigated how the integration of pesantren and formal-school curricula contributed to students' critical reasoning through qualitative field research using observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicated that curriculum integration supported the development of students' critical reasoning both inside and outside the classroom, suggesting that critical thinking can emerge when students experience continuity between formal academic learning and the intellectual traditions of pesantren. Likewise, Aziz et al. (2023) examined the implementation of a philosophical framework for fostering critical thinking among Indonesian Islamic boarding-school students using a mixed-methods design involving document analysis, observation, interviews, and surveys. The study emphasized the relevance of philosophical frameworks for transforming Islamic education into a context that supports critical inquiry. More recently, Falaah et al. (2025) explored Islamic critical thinking through inquiry-based learning in pesantren using qualitative field research involving observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The study reported that values such as open-mindedness, pursuit of truth, and ethical dialogue enhanced students' intellectual engagement and participation in classroom discussions.

Taken together, these studies establish several important points. First, critical thinking is increasingly recognized as a necessary outcome of contemporary Islamic education rather than an educational objective belonging exclusively to secular or scientific disciplines. Second, curriculum integration, inquiry, dialogue, reflection, critical reading, and contextual learning can create conditions conducive to critical-thinking development. Third, pesantren provide a particularly important setting because they combine formal education, religious instruction, habituation, and community life. Nevertheless, existing research tends to examine either particular teaching strategies, curriculum integration, academic activities, or general philosophical approaches. Comparatively less attention has been given to reconstructing an existing integrative Islamic education system through an explicit Islamic educational philosophy and then examining its implications for students' critical thinking. This distinction is important because reconstruction involves more than implementing a new teaching technique; it concerns reconsidering the relationship between knowledge, values, habituation, reflection, teachers' roles, and students' intellectual development.

This gap is particularly significant in relation to the thought of Fazlur Rahman, whose educational orientation emphasizes overcoming the separation between revelation and reason and

developing an Islamic intellectual tradition capable of engaging contemporary realities. Recent scholarship continues to identify Rahman's thought as relevant to the integration of Islamic intellectual tradition with modern knowledge and educational reform (Amelina et al., 2026). However, much of the existing discussion remains conceptual or philosophical rather than grounded in an empirical examination of how Rahman's ideas can be used to reconstruct educational practices within an operating pesantren system. The present study responds to this limitation by treating reconstruction not as a replacement of pesantren traditions, but as a process of strengthening existing practices through greater integration of habituation, understanding, reflection, dialogue, and contextual interpretation. The underlying empirical study similarly found that integrative education was already manifested through formal learning, pesantren learning, and religious habituation, but that opportunities for reflection and the development of personal awareness remained limited.

Accordingly, this study aims to reconstruct integrative Islamic education from Fazlur Rahman's perspective and examine its implications for strengthening critical thinking among students in pesantren. The study addresses three questions: (1) How is integrative Islamic education implemented at Pesantren Modern Datok Sulaiman Palopo? (2) How can integrative Islamic education be reconstructed based on Fazlur Rahman's perspective and the empirical findings of its implementation? and (3) What are the implications of this reconstruction for students' critical-thinking development? These questions directly correspond to the study's original research formulation.

To answer these questions, the study employs a qualitative descriptive-critical approach and examines the educational practices of Pesantren Modern Datok Sulaiman Palopo, South Sulawesi, where national curriculum components and Islamic educational principles are combined. Data are generated through passive participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, with triangulation across sources, techniques, and time used to strengthen credibility. The analysis proceeds through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analytical logic first identifies how integration operates in practice, then critically compares these practices with the principles of Fazlur Rahman's educational thought, and finally formulates a reconstruction oriented toward stronger reflection, dialogue, contextualization, and intellectual engagement. Rather than predicting a statistically measurable increase in critical-thinking scores, the study anticipates that such reconstruction will create stronger conditions for students to interpret, question, connect, and reflect upon Islamic knowledge in relation to everyday realities.

The study contributes to Islamic education research in three respects. Theoretically, it connects Fazlur Rahman's intellectual reconstruction with empirical evidence from a contemporary pesantren, thereby moving discussion of integrative Islamic education from abstract philosophical discourse toward an empirically grounded educational framework. Pedagogically, it proposes a shift from predominantly transmissive instruction toward teachers' roles as facilitators of reflective and dialogic learning, while strengthening the relationship between habituation, understanding, and reflection. The study specifically identifies the need to strengthen teachers' facilitative role because classroom practices may remain dominated by knowledge transmission, limiting students' active intellectual engagement. Practically, the findings provide pesantren educators and leaders with a basis for developing learning environments that preserve religious identity while cultivating

critical, reflective, and contextually responsive students. In this sense, the novelty of the study lies not simply in asserting that Islamic education should develop critical thinking, but in proposing a reconstruction of integrative Islamic education that strengthens the existing pesantren tradition through the deliberate integration of knowledge, values, habituation, reflection, dialogue, and contextual reasoning.

2. Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive-critical research design to examine the reconstruction of integrative Islamic education and its implications for critical thinking among students in a pesantren. A qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of educational practices, participants' experiences, reflection processes, and the relationship between Islamic knowledge and students' ways of thinking rather than to measure critical thinking through standardized quantitative tests. The study was conducted as a contextual case study at Pesantren Modern Datok Sulaiman Palopo, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, an institution that combines the national curriculum with Islamic educational principles.

The study focused on three interconnected constructs: integrative Islamic education, educational reconstruction based on Fazlur Rahman's perspective, and critical thinking. Integrative Islamic education was examined as the integration of religious and general knowledge, curriculum, learning practices, religious habituation, and students' lived experiences. Reconstruction referred to the reformulation of existing educational practices based on empirical findings and Fazlur Rahman's intellectual framework rather than the replacement of the pesantren's existing educational identity. Critical thinking was operationally defined qualitatively as students' ability to understand, consider, question, reflect on, and respond to issues by connecting knowledge with Islamic values and everyday realities; it was explicitly not treated as a quantitatively scored cognitive variable.

The analytical sequence followed the order of the research questions: (1) identification and analysis of the existing implementation of integrative Islamic education; (2) reconstruction of the educational model using Fazlur Rahman's perspective; and (3) examination of the implications of the reconstructed approach for students' critical-thinking development. This sequence was retained in the Results to ensure direct alignment between research questions, data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Participants

The research was conducted at Pesantren Modern Datok Sulaiman Palopo, located in Palopo City, South Sulawesi. The setting was purposively selected because the pesantren already implemented an educational system combining the national curriculum and Islamic principles, making it appropriate for examining integrative Islamic education in an authentic institutional context.

The primary data were obtained from members of the pesantren community who could provide information concerning educational implementation and students' intellectual development. The manuscript identifies three representative categories of informants: students, school/pesantren leaders, and educational supervisors/teachers. The empirical material

specifically includes senior-secondary-level female students (santriwati), Islamic Education teachers, and general-subject teachers. Examples of documented informants include Muspirah Rampean and Nur Latifah as students, and Ilmayani Jufri, Nisa Zakiyatul Fauziah, and Tri Wahyu Baiti Ningsih as teachers.

Important methodological clarification: the thesis manuscript does not clearly specify a total sample size (n), a formal sampling technique, or explicit inclusion/exclusion criteria in the Methods section. Therefore, these details should not be invented for the journal article. For a Scopus submission, the final manuscript should explicitly report: (a) the total number of interview participants, (b) their distribution by role, (c) the sampling strategy used (e.g., purposive sampling, if that was actually used), and (d) the criteria for selecting participants. The current manuscript establishes the participant categories and their relevance but does not provide sufficient information to report these parameters precisely.

Instruments

Three complementary data-collection instruments were used: a semi-structured interview guide, an observation guide, and a documentation protocol. The interview guide was designed to obtain detailed information concerning the implementation of integrative Islamic education, learning processes, value internalization, reflection, and students' patterns of thinking. Semi-structured interviewing was selected because it provided a consistent set of core questions while allowing follow-up questions to develop according to participants' responses.

The observation guide was used to systematically record educational processes and behaviors occurring in the pesantren environment. Observations focused particularly on the implementation of integrative Islamic education in classroom and pesantren activities. The researcher used passive participant observation, meaning that the researcher observed educational activities without directly participating in them.

Documentation was used as complementary evidence and included relevant institutional documents, archives, and educational records that could clarify the implementation and context of integrative Islamic education. The three instruments were therefore deliberately combined to permit triangulation across participants' accounts, observed practices, and documentary evidence.

Because the study was qualitative, no questionnaire, standardized critical-thinking test, numerical scoring system, or statistical reliability coefficient was employed. Instrument credibility was addressed through triangulation rather than internal-consistency testing. The manuscript reports source, technique, and time triangulation: information from different informants was compared; interviews were compared with observations and documents; and information was checked across different times and situations.

Data Collection

Data collection followed a sequential process. First, the researcher identified the pesantren as the research setting and established access to the educational environment. The setting was selected because its educational system integrates national curriculum components with Islamic principles.

Second, the researcher conducted direct observations of educational activities using passive participatory observation. The observations were directed toward identifying how integrative Islamic education was enacted in classroom instruction, religious learning, habituation, and the relationship between educational activities and students' everyday experiences.

Third, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with relevant members of the pesantren community. Interviews explored participants' experiences and perceptions of integrative education, learning practices, value internalization, reflection, and the development of students' thinking. The flexible interview format allowed the researcher to pursue issues emerging from participants' responses while maintaining alignment with the research questions.

The manuscript documents interviews conducted during April 2026, including interviews with Muspirah Rampean on April 3, Nur Latifah on April 7, Ilmayani Jufri on April 6, Nisa Zakiyatul Fauziah on April 9, and Tri Wahyu Baiti Ningsih on April 9.

Fourth, relevant institutional documents and archives were examined to supplement observational and interview data. Documentation was treated as supporting evidence rather than as a substitute for primary field data.

Fifth, the researcher compared information obtained through the three collection techniques and across different sources and times. This triangulation procedure was used to establish consistency and credibility before proceeding to interpretation and reconstruction.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a descriptive, non-statistical qualitative procedure based on three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This approach was selected because the study aimed to identify meanings and patterns within educational practices rather than estimate statistical relationships among variables.

During data reduction, interview transcripts, observation records, and documentary information were reviewed and organized according to their relevance to the three research questions. Particular attention was given to evidence concerning integrative curriculum practices, learning methods, religious-value habituation, reflection, teacher roles, student participation, and manifestations of critical thinking. Irrelevant or repetitive information was condensed while retaining evidence necessary for interpretation.

During data display, the reduced information was organized descriptively and systematically so that patterns in the implementation of integrative Islamic education could be identified. The displayed data were organized around educational practices and their relationship to reflection, value internalization, and students' intellectual engagement.

During conclusion drawing and verification, the researcher compared emerging patterns with the research questions and the conceptual framework derived from Fazlur Rahman. Conclusions were developed from the reduced and displayed data and were verified through cross-checking among sources, techniques, and collection times.

For the article, the analytical procedure was organized into three sequential analytic outputs corresponding to the Results: (1) implementation of integrative Islamic education, (2) reconstruction of integrative Islamic education from Fazlur Rahman's perspective, and (3) implications for critical-thinking development. This structure preserves the analytical logic of the original study and enables each research question to be answered directly.

No statistical software, inferential statistical tests, significance levels, or effect-size calculations were used because the study employed qualitative rather than quantitative analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The study involved human participants within an educational institution and therefore required attention to voluntary participation, privacy, confidentiality, and responsible handling of interview and observational information. Participants' statements were reported in the thesis primarily through role-based identification, such as students and teachers, although some participants are identified by name in the original research documentation.

3. Findings

The findings are presented in the same sequence as the three research questions: (1) implementation of integrative Islamic education, (2) reconstruction of integrative Islamic education from Fazlur Rahman's perspective, and (3) implications of the reconstruction for students' critical thinking. Because the study used qualitative analysis, the results are reported as recurring patterns and documented observations rather than numerical effect estimates. The original study explicitly defined critical thinking in terms of students' abilities to understand, consider, and respond to issues based on Islamic values, rather than through quantitative cognitive testing.

Implementation of Integrative Islamic Education

The data showed that integrative Islamic education at Pesantren Modern Datok Sulaiman Palopo was implemented through three principal educational domains: formal general-subject learning, formal Islamic Religious Education (PAI), and pesantren-based religious learning and habituation. Across these domains, teachers and pesantren educators connected learning materials with moral values, everyday experiences, religious practices, and, in several instances, contemporary scientific phenomena.

a. Integration in General-Subject Learning

General-subject learning, particularly in science-related subjects such as physics and biology, contained instances in which scientific concepts were connected with Qur'anic references and phenomena in everyday life. The observed approach generated student participation in the form of questions concerning natural phenomena and scientific processes. Students demonstrated particular interest when lessons addressed phenomena that could be directly connected with their experiences.

The questioning observed in these lessons, however, was predominantly at a basic level. Students commonly asked questions beginning with "why" and "how," but the questions did not consistently develop into deeper analysis or independent connections between scientific concepts and Islamic perspectives. In the documented physics lesson, the teacher reported that students' questions were generally general in nature and that the connection between scientific material and Islam was frequently supplied by the teacher.

Thus, the results showed two simultaneous patterns: greater student curiosity in selected general-subject lessons and limited independent development of that curiosity into deeper critical inquiry.

b. Integration in Formal Islamic Religious Education

In formal PAI learning, religious materials were connected in several instances with moral conduct, social interaction, and students' everyday lives. Teachers reported attempts to relate religious concepts to students' behavior and social circumstances. The data also showed attempts to connect religious knowledge with contemporary knowledge, including medical knowledge.

The integration, however, was not consistently present in every lesson. Classroom instruction was frequently characterized by one-way delivery and close reliance on textbook content. Student interviews documented requests for more extensive explanations, including historical background, differences of scholarly opinion, and deeper explanations of religious issues.

The data also identified limited reading habits among students as a feature of the learning process. One teacher reported encouraging students to read learning materials before class so that they would have questions to bring into classroom discussion.

c. *Integration in Pesantren-Based Learning*

Pesantren-based learning was conducted regularly through religious activities, including learning sessions after the dawn and evening prayers. These activities included kitab learning and hadith study, with religious material presented in relation to meaning, background, and contemporary circumstances.

The strongest pattern of value integration appeared in the pesantren's structured habituation practices. Religious values were reinforced through worship, manners, discipline, compliance with institutional rules, and repeated daily activities. The data indicated that habituation was more consistently structured in the pesantren environment than in other learning domains.

At the same time, the data showed that students' observable behaviors were frequently associated with institutional rules, supervision, and the surrounding environment. The evidence therefore recorded a distinction between regular performance of habituated behaviors and students' personal articulation of the meaning underlying those behaviors.

Areas of Strength and Limitations in Existing Implementation

Across the three educational domains, the results identified several established practices: integration of religious values with everyday life, contextualization of selected academic materials, regular religious habituation, and opportunities for students to ask questions in selected general-subject lessons.

The data also identified several limitations. Classroom interaction in some PAI lessons remained predominantly teacher-directed; discussion opportunities were limited; students' reading habits were reported as weak; and students' questions in science lessons generally remained at an initial level rather than developing into extended analysis.

The study additionally recorded challenges associated with technology and social media. Institutional-level observations and interviews indicated that religious instruction and habituation had not uniformly prevented exposure to undesirable influences from social media. The findings also identified limited systematic evaluation of students' development within the residential environment.

Reconstruction of Integrative Islamic Education Based on Fazlur Rahman

The analysis of the empirical findings produced a reconstruction consisting of four principal components: (1) strengthening the teacher's role as learning facilitator, (2) developing reflective and dialogic learning, (3) strengthening meaning-making within value habituation, and (4) strengthening the pesantren literacy culture. The reconstruction was formulated as an enhancement of existing pesantren practices rather than as a replacement of the pesantren's basic educational character.

a. *Strengthening Teachers' Roles as Learning Facilitators*

The findings showed that teachers already performed functions as knowledge providers and guides for students' values. However, classroom activities remained substantially oriented toward material delivery, while opportunities for students to develop their own ideas and participate actively in thinking processes were limited. The results also documented limited development of teachers' roles in promoting literacy and intellectual traditions among students.

The reconstructed model therefore specified a stronger facilitator role, including opportunities for students to ask questions, express opinions, participate in guided discussions, read, write, and communicate ideas. Suggested classroom activities included group discussion, open-ended questioning, and analytical assignments.

b. Developing Reflective and Dialogic Learning

The results identified limited structured discussion and reflection as characteristics of the existing learning environment. Student discussions were reported to occur but were not yet systematically incorporated into learning activities.

The reconstructed approach consequently incorporated open-ended questions, analytical tasks, opportunities to summarize or rewrite students' understanding, and structured discussion. These activities were positioned within the existing learning structure rather than as a replacement for the existing curriculum.

c. Strengthening Meaning in Value Habituation

The results showed that religious habituation was already systematically embedded in pesantren life through worship, manners, discipline, and institutional rules. The reconstruction added a distinct emphasis on connecting these practices with explicit processes of meaning-making and reflection.

The proposed reconstruction therefore linked practice, understanding, and reflection as successive and interconnected elements. Reflection activities included discussion of values, reflection on personal experiences, and connecting daily behavior with Islamic principles.

d. Strengthening the Pesantren Literacy Culture

The results identified reading, discussion, and writing as areas requiring further development. The reconstruction consequently incorporated more systematic use of existing literacy activities, including reading materials, recording or summarizing understanding, discussion, and writing.

The proposed approach also included greater use of the pesantren library and more structured opportunities for students to discuss texts and communicate their understanding. The documented findings indicated that student discussions remained limited and that literacy activities needed stronger integration with daily pesantren routines.

Implications for Students' Critical Thinking

The study treated the implications of reconstruction as conceptual rather than as experimentally demonstrated effects. No quantitative pretest-posttest measurement or statistical estimate of changes in critical-thinking performance was reported. The implications identified in the analysis concerned the potential development of students' abilities to analyze, evaluate, reflect, and connect knowledge with everyday realities.

Four areas of potential development were identified corresponding to the reconstructed components:

Tabel 1. Areas of Potential Development were Identified Corresponding

Reconstruction component	Reported critical-thinking implication
Teacher as facilitator	Greater opportunities for students to ask questions, discuss information, and articulate ideas
Reflective and dialogic learning	Greater opportunities to examine issues, express viewpoints, and reflect on learning
Meaning-making in habituation	Greater connection between religious practices, understanding, and personal reflection
Pesantren literacy culture	Greater opportunities to read, process information, discuss, and communicate understanding

The reconstructed approach was therefore associated in the findings with a learning process characterized by greater participation, reflection, dialogue, and contextual engagement. The documented outcome was not an empirically measured increase in critical-thinking scores but an identified set of educational processes through which students could become more accustomed to understanding, questioning, reflecting on, and connecting knowledge with everyday life.

Overall Pattern of Findings

The results produced a consistent three-stage pattern. First, integrative Islamic education was already present through formal academic learning, PAI, pesantren learning, and religious-value habituation. Second, the existing implementation contained identifiable limitations, particularly limited reflection and discussion, teacher-dominated instruction in some contexts, weak reading habits, and incomplete internalization of values. Third, the resulting reconstruction consisted of four interconnected components teacher facilitation, reflective-dialogic learning, meaningful value habituation, and strengthened literacy culture with their reported implications centered on creating greater opportunities for students to participate in, reflect upon, question, and contextualize their learning.

4. Discussion

This study found that integrative Islamic education at Pesantren Modern Datok Sulaiman Palopo is already embedded in formal academic learning, Islamic Religious Education, pesantren-based religious learning, and daily religious habituation. However, the existing integration is stronger at the level of combining subjects, values, and routines than at the level of developing sustained reflection, dialogue, and independent meaning-making. Students demonstrated curiosity, particularly in science-related learning, but their questions generally remained at an initial level. Similarly, religious habituation was consistently practiced, yet was not always accompanied by students' explicit personal understanding of the values underlying those practices. On this basis, the study reconstructed integrative Islamic education around four interconnected elements: strengthening teachers as facilitators, developing reflective-dialogic learning, strengthening meaning within value habituation, and developing a stronger pesantren literacy culture. The study therefore supports all three research questions, but the third must be understood as a qualitative implication rather than a statistically demonstrated causal effect, because critical thinking was not measured through a standardized quantitative instrument.

The first research question how integrative Islamic education is implemented at Pesantren Modern Datok Sulaiman Palopo is supported. The evidence indicates that integration is not absent; rather, it operates through multiple educational spaces. General subjects, PAI, and pesantren learning each contribute different forms of integration, while religious habituation provides a continuous experiential dimension. This finding is important because it suggests that the principal challenge is not whether integration exists, but how deeply integration penetrates the processes through which students interpret and use knowledge. The empirical data show that teachers have attempted to connect academic content with everyday phenomena and moral considerations, but classroom interaction can still remain teacher-directed and textbook-oriented.

The second research question how integrative Islamic education can be reconstructed from Fazlur Rahman's perspective is also supported. The reconstruction does not require abandoning the pesantren's existing system. Instead, it requires moving from structural integration toward epistemological, pedagogical, and experiential integration. This distinction represents an important contribution of the study. Simply placing religious and general subjects within the same institution does not necessarily produce integrative thinking. Integration becomes more substantive when students are enabled to connect knowledge, values, reasoning, experience, and contemporary problems.

The third research question what implications the reconstruction has for students' critical thinking is supported at the level of qualitative educational processes, but not as an experimentally established effect. The study found that the proposed reconstruction creates stronger opportunities for students to ask questions, engage in dialogue, reflect on experiences, interpret values, read critically, and connect knowledge with real-life circumstances. Consequently, the article should avoid claiming that the model "increased" critical-thinking scores. Rather, it is more accurate to state that the reconstruction provides pedagogical conditions conducive to the development of critical thinking. This distinction is essential because the study explicitly defines critical thinking qualitatively rather than through quantitative cognitive measurement.

The central mechanism explaining the findings is the distinction between knowledge transmission and knowledge reconstruction. Fazlur Rahman's educational thought challenges the separation between revelation and reason and emphasizes the need to understand Islamic teachings in relation to their historical and contemporary contexts. His double movement methodology requires movement from understanding the historical context of revelation toward identifying broader moral principles and then applying those principles to contemporary circumstances.

Applied pedagogically, this framework explains why the existing integration at the pesantren is only partially sufficient. Students may encounter religious knowledge and scientific knowledge within the same institutional environment, yet still experience them as separate cognitive domains if teachers primarily transmit predetermined answers. The finding that students ask "why" and "how" questions but do not consistently develop them into deeper analysis illustrates this mechanism particularly clearly. The problem, therefore, is not a lack of student curiosity but a limited pedagogical pathway for transforming curiosity into sustained inquiry.

The same mechanism appears in religious habituation. Repeated worship, discipline, manners, and adherence to institutional rules establish behavioral patterns, but habituation alone does not guarantee reflective internalization. The findings indicate that students' behaviors can remain

influenced by rules, supervision, and the institutional environment. The reconstructed model therefore links practice with meaning and reflection, allowing students to consider not only what they do but also why the practice matters and how its underlying values apply to their lives.

The role of teachers is consequently central. Within the reconstructed model, teachers move from being predominantly transmitters of knowledge toward facilitators of inquiry, dialogue, reflection, reading, and interpretation. This is consistent with the Rahmanian emphasis on rational engagement and dialogical interaction. The study's theoretical framework also associates dialogic learning with students' ability to respond to differences of opinion, reason constructively, and pursue understanding through interaction rather than passive reception.

The findings are broadly consistent with Yuni et al. (2021), who examined integrative-interconnected learning between religious knowledge and science using a qualitative descriptive approach. Their study reported that contextual integration between Islamic values and scientific reasoning encouraged students to become more analytical, evaluative, and reflective. The present study extends this finding by showing that integration alone does not automatically produce advanced critical thinking. At Datok Sulaiman, students displayed curiosity, but opportunities to transform that curiosity into deeper analysis remained inconsistent. The difference may partly reflect the institutional context: the present study examines an entire pesantren education system rather than a specific integrative classroom strategy.

The findings also converge with research emphasizing the importance of critical-thinking-oriented Islamic education. Jannah et al. (2024), for example, frame critical thinking as an important direction for the future of Islamic education, while Musthofa and Ali (2021) identify systemic, traditional, and cultural factors as relevant to critical-thinking development in Indonesian Islamic education. The present findings provide empirical detail to this broader argument: teacher-centered learning, limited reading habits, and strong dependence on institutional routines can constrain the transition from knowledge acquisition to critical engagement.

The findings are likewise compatible with recent scholarship on Fazlur Rahman. Celine et al. (2025), using a literature-based approach, argue that Rahman's integration of reason and revelation through double movement is relevant to developing religious, critical, and adaptive learners in the digital era. The present study complements that conceptual argument with empirical evidence from a pesantren. However, there is an important difference: whereas the previous study primarily establishes theoretical relevance, this research identifies concrete pedagogical mechanisms facilitation, dialogue, reflection, meaningful habituation, and literacy through which Rahman's orientation can be translated into educational practice.

The findings also correspond with contemporary scholarship emphasizing the elimination of dichotomies between religious and modern knowledge. Kartikasari's discussion of Rahman highlights the need to integrate scientific knowledge and moral education rather than treating them as competing domains. Yet the present study adds an important qualification: curricular integration is necessary but insufficient. The integration must also occur in classroom interaction, students' reasoning processes, value internalization, and their capacity to relate knowledge to lived realities. This may explain why the pesantren can already demonstrate substantial structural integration while still encountering limitations in students' reflective and critical engagement.

Theoretically, the study advances the literature by repositioning integrative Islamic education as a process of epistemological and pedagogical integration rather than merely curricular integration. This refinement is significant for scholarship on Fazlur Rahman because it connects the abstract principle of integrating revelation and reason with observable educational processes. The study suggests that Rahman's reconstructionist orientation becomes educationally meaningful when it is translated into opportunities for students to move between knowledge, interpretation, moral reasoning, and contemporary application. In this respect, the study adds an empirical dimension to previous predominantly conceptual discussions of Rahman's educational thought.

The study also contributes to critical-thinking scholarship in Islamic education by showing that criticality does not have to be framed as detached rationalism. In the pesantren context, critical thinking can be understood as reasoned, reflective, morally oriented engagement with knowledge and problems. This is compatible with the study's theoretical emphasis on *ta'aqqul*, *tafakkur*, *tadabbur*, and *tadzakur*, in which cognitive processes remain connected to ethical and religious commitments.

Practically, the findings suggest that pesantren leaders should avoid treating curriculum integration as the endpoint of reform. Teachers should be supported in using open-ended questions, structured discussion, analytical assignments, reflective writing, and contextual problem-solving. Religious habituation should be accompanied by opportunities to discuss the meaning and contemporary relevance of the values being practiced. Meanwhile, literacy should become part of the pesantren's intellectual culture rather than an activity confined to formal academic lessons. These recommendations are directly aligned with the four components identified by the study: facilitative teachers, reflective-dialogic pedagogy, meaningful habituation, and literacy development.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the qualitative descriptive-critical design provides contextual depth but does not establish causal relationships between the reconstructed model and changes in students' critical-thinking ability. The reported implications therefore represent qualitative evidence and pedagogical propositions rather than experimentally demonstrated effects.

Second, the study was conducted in a single pesantren, Pesantren Modern Datok Sulaiman Palopo. Institutional culture, leadership, curriculum structure, teacher characteristics, and student demographics may differ substantially across other pesantren, limiting direct generalization.

Third, critical thinking was not assessed using a standardized instrument or quantitative performance measure. Although this was consistent with the study's qualitative orientation, it prevents direct comparison of the magnitude of critical-thinking development across students or institutions.

Fourth, the evidence relied substantially on observation, interviews, and documentation. These sources are valuable for contextual understanding but remain susceptible to researcher interpretation, participant self-presentation, and observational bias. Triangulation reduced this risk but could not eliminate it completely.

Fifth, the reconstruction was derived analytically from existing practices rather than implemented and evaluated as a fully operational intervention. Consequently, the proposed four-component reconstruction should not yet be presented as a validated instructional model. It is more

appropriately characterized as an empirically grounded reconstruction framework requiring subsequent implementation and testing.

Future studies should directly address these limitations through multi-site, mixed-method, and intervention-based research. First, comparative research involving different types of pesantren modern, traditional, and integrated pesantren could examine whether the four reconstructed components operate similarly across institutional contexts. A useful research question would be: How do pesantren type, institutional culture, and teacher characteristics influence the implementation of integrative Islamic education for critical-thinking development?

Second, future researchers should develop or adopt validated instruments for assessing critical thinking alongside qualitative evidence. This would allow researchers to investigate whether participation in reflective-dialogic and literacy-oriented learning is associated with measurable changes in analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and contextual problem-solving.

Third, the proposed reconstruction should be implemented experimentally or through design-based research. Future research could ask: Does systematic implementation of the four-component reconstruction produce measurable improvements in students' critical-thinking performance compared with conventional pesantren instruction? Such research would provide evidence that the present qualitative study cannot establish.

Finally, longitudinal research is needed to determine whether reflective value habituation produces sustained changes in students' moral reasoning and intellectual independence. This is particularly important because the present study identified a gap between repeated behavioral practice and personal internalization. Research following students over several semesters could examine whether systematic reflection transforms externally regulated behavior into more autonomous moral reasoning.

The central contribution of this study is to demonstrate that the challenge facing integrative Islamic education is not simply the separation of religious and general knowledge, but the incomplete integration of knowledge, reasoning, values, reflection, and lived experience. The Pesantren Modern Datok Sulaiman Palopo already possesses important foundations for integration, particularly through its combination of formal learning, religious education, pesantren learning, and structured habituation. What remains necessary is a deeper pedagogical transformation in which teachers facilitate inquiry, learning becomes more dialogic and reflective, habituation is connected with meaning, and literacy becomes part of the intellectual culture of the pesantren. Through the lens of Fazlur Rahman, these findings position integrative Islamic education as a process of continually reconstructing inherited knowledge and practices so that Islamic values can be understood and applied intelligently within contemporary realities. The resulting framework offers a theoretically grounded and contextually relevant pathway for developing students who are not only religiously committed but also capable of questioning, reasoning, reflecting, and engaging critically with the world around them. This is the study's principal contribution to contemporary Islamic education research.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the reconstruction of integrative Islamic education to strengthen critical thinking among students in pesantren, with particular attention to the educational practices of

Pesantren Modern Datok Sulaiman Palopo and their alignment with Fazlur Rahman's perspective. The study demonstrates that strengthening critical thinking in Islamic education requires integration that extends beyond the structural combination of religious and general knowledge toward deeper integration of knowledge, values, reflection, dialogue, and lived experience.

Four principal findings emerged. First, integrative Islamic education is already implemented through formal general-subject learning, Islamic Religious Education, pesantren-based religious learning, and religious-value habituation. Second, existing practices remain constrained by teacher-directed instruction, limited opportunities for sustained reflection and dialogue, weak literacy habits, and incomplete internalization of values. Third, the reconstruction consists of four interconnected components: strengthening teachers as learning facilitators, developing reflective-dialogic learning, connecting value habituation with meaning and reflection, and strengthening the pesantren literacy culture. Fourth, these components provide pedagogical conditions for students to question, reflect, interpret, and connect knowledge with contemporary realities, although the study does not establish a statistically measured causal improvement in critical-thinking performance.

Theoretically, the study extends the application of Fazlur Rahman's reconstructionist perspective by translating the integration of revelation, reason, values, and context into concrete educational practices. Practically, educators and pesantren leaders should strengthen teacher facilitation, incorporate open-ended discussion and reflection, connect religious habituation with meaning-making, and institutionalize literacy activities. Policymakers should support teacher development and pesantren programs that integrate religious commitment with critical and reflective learning. Future research should implement and empirically test this reconstruction across multiple pesantren using longitudinal or mixed-method designs and validated measures of critical thinking.

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