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Embodied Knowledge in NU Pesantren: Islamic Arts, Traditional Pedagogy, and Cultural Transmission in Tasikmalaya

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ABSTRACT

This study examines zapin, hadroh, and marawis as forms of embodied pedagogy within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) pesantren in Tasikmalaya, Indonesia, based on a multi-sited ethnographic investigation involving 247 santri aged 12-24. Data were generated through 156 hours of participant observation, 42 video-documented rehearsal and performance sessions, and 18 semi-structured interviews with key pedagogical actors. Analysis identified five interconnected mechanisms shaping moral learning: somatic inscription through repetitive bodily practice, relational ensemble-based pedagogy, traditionalist epistemology as a generative constraint, gender-differentiated modes of ethical embodiment, and the longitudinal integration of learned dispositions into everyday behavior. Engagement in Islamic arts was associated with substantial gains in motor competence (70-126%), higher moral development among art-intensive cohorts ($d = 0.78$, $p < 0.012$), and sustained reductions in behavioral infractions over 24 months (62-89%, $p < 0.001$). The findings demonstrate that embodied artistic practice enables Islamic moral knowledge to be internalized as durable bodily habit rather than abstract instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic pedagogy within pesantren has historically developed through modes of learning that integrate bodily discipline, collective rhythm, and sensory participation alongside textual study. In Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) pesantren, educational processes frequently extend beyond cognitive transmission, embedding religious knowledge within patterned corporeal practices that are enacted, repeated, and refined through everyday ritual and artistic activity. Islamic arts such as zapin, hadroh, and marawis occupy a central position in this pedagogical landscape, functioning not merely as cultural expressions but as structured modes of learning through which ethical sensibilities and religious dispositions are cultivated through the body.

Recent scholarship on Islamic education in Indonesia has increasingly noted the limitations of instructional models that rely primarily on verbal explanation or normative exhortation, particularly in relation to the long-term internalization of moral conduct among younger generations navigating digitally saturated social environments (Maulida, Gunara, & Jenuri, 2024). Within pesantren contexts, pedagogical attention has therefore shifted toward practices that enable values to be learned experientially. Artistic training grounded in rhythm, posture, and collective coordination provides a means through which akhlak is developed through disciplined repetition, allowing theological principles to be apprehended as embodied habits rather than abstract prescriptions.

Empirical studies on Islamic arts education demonstrate that marawis, hadroh, and zapin practices contribute to character formation by fostering discipline, cooperation, emotional regulation, and communal responsibility through sustained practice and performance (Maulida et al., 2024; Rahmawati, Lestari, & Husen, 2026; Putri et al., 2025). Research on zapin in pesantren settings highlights how controlled movement and



postural precision encode ethical refinement, while studies of hadroh emphasize affective synchronization and collective devotional experience. However, much of this literature remains confined to single-site descriptions or outcome-oriented evaluations, offering limited insight into the embodied mechanisms through which knowledge is transmitted across institutional contexts.

What remains insufficiently examined is how Islamic arts operate as interconnected pedagogical systems within NU pesantren that share theological orientations yet cultivate distinct forms of embodied learning. Existing studies rarely address how bodily practice functions as an epistemic medium across multiple pesantren, nor do they comparatively analyze how similar religious frameworks generate differentiated somatic pedagogies. This gap obscures the relational dynamics through which embodied knowledge is reproduced within pesantren educational ecologies.

This article addresses this gap through a multi-sited ethnographic study conducted in three NU pesantren in Tasikmalaya, West Java: Pondok Pesantren Cipasung (zapin), Pondok Pesantren Nuurud Da'waah (hadroh), and Pondok Pesantren Nurudda'wah Cigadog (marawis). Drawing on anthropological perspectives that conceptualize embodiment as a foundational site of cultural knowledge (Csordas, 2021) and methodological approaches attentive to sensory and corporeal learning (Pink, 2015), the study examines how pedagogical authority is enacted through bodily demonstration, rhythmic correction, and intercorporeal interaction between ustadz and santri (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

This study differs from existing scholarship by offering a comparative, multi-sited ethnographic analysis of Islamic arts as embodied pedagogical systems, demonstrating how shared NU theological orientations generate distinct yet structurally related modes of somatic knowledge transmission across pesantren contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to elaborate on the somatic and sensory mechanisms in the transmission of religious knowledge and the formation of morals through Islamic art in Islamic boarding schools. Specifically, this study is designed to answer two main research questions: (1) How do bodily practices in the arts of zapin, hadroh, and marawis function as epistemic media that transmit knowledge and realize pedagogical authority through inter-bodily interactions between ustadz and santri? and (2) How does the same theological orientation of Nahdlatul Ulama produce, shape, and reproduce different forms of somatic pedagogy in these three Islamic boarding school loci? By achieving these objectives, this article is expected to map the relational dynamics that have been neglected so far, as well as provide theoretical contributions regarding the importance of body-based experiential learning in the ecology of contemporary Islamic education.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study adopts a qualitative ethnographic research design grounded in an embodied ethnography approach. Ethnography is employed to investigate how knowledge is produced, transmitted, and internalized through everyday practices situated within specific institutional and cultural contexts. In contrast to methods that privilege verbal articulation or measurable outcomes, ethnography enables close engagement with lived experience, allowing researchers to examine how meaning emerges through practice, interaction, and sustained participation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; O'Reilly, 2020).



The embodied ethnographic orientation positions the body as a primary site of learning and knowledge production. Rather than treating bodily action as secondary to cognition, this approach attends to how movement, rhythm, posture, and sensory attunement function as epistemic processes through which cultural and religious knowledge becomes durable and transmissible (Csordas, 2021). Such an approach is particularly appropriate for Islamic pedagogical settings in pesantren, where arts-based training and ritualized repetition play a central role in shaping ethical disposition and religious discipline.

Quantitative, survey based, or experimental methods are insufficient for capturing these processes because they abstract learning from its situated, sensory, and relational dimensions. Embodied learning unfolds through iterative participation and tacit adjustment, aspects that remain inaccessible to standardized instruments. Ethnography's emphasis on prolonged engagement, contextual sensitivity, and reflexive interpretation provides analytical access to these pre-reflective dimensions of practice (Pink, 2015). Accordingly, embodied practice is treated in this study not only as an object of analysis but also as the primary medium through which pedagogical knowledge is enacted and sustained.

Research Sites and Case Selection

The research is designed as a multi-sited ethnography conducted across three NU-affiliated pesantren in Tasikmalaya, West Java. A multi-sited approach enables comparative analysis of how shared theological orientations are realized through distinct artistic and pedagogical practices across institutional settings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; O'Reilly, 2020). Rather than assuming institutional homogeneity, this design recognizes that knowledge transmission takes shape through locally specific configurations of practice, authority, and tradition.

All selected pesantren share core characteristics of the NU educational ecosystem, including adherence to traditionalist Islamic jurisprudence, residential learning structures, and the integration of Islamic arts within pedagogical routines. At the same time, each pesantren foregrounds a different artistic tradition zapin, hadroh, or marawis allowing for comparative examination of how embodied pedagogies vary within a shared theological framework. This case selection strategy enables analysis of both convergence and differentiation in embodied knowledge transmission within NU pesantren contexts.

Table 1. Research Sites and Islamic Art Practices

Nu	Pesantren	Islamic Art	Address	District	Regency	Province
1	Pondok Pesantren Cipasung	Zapin	Jl. KH. Ruhayat, Ponpes Cipasung	Singaparna	Tasikmalaya	West Java
2	Pondok Pesantren Nuurud Da'waah (Yayasan Minda Al-Miftahiyyah)	Hadroh	Jayamukti	Leuwisari	Tasikmalaya	West Java
3	Pondok Pesantren Nurudda'wah Cigadog	Marawis	Jl. Cigadog, Kp. Nanggorak Pengkolan	Leuwisari	Tasikmalaya	West Java



Fieldwork Duration and Access

Fieldwork was conducted over a period of approximately four to six months, allowing for sustained engagement with daily pedagogical routines and artistic training cycles. Prolonged immersion is central to ethnographic validity, as it enables the researcher to move beyond episodic observation toward familiarity with habitual practices and relational dynamics that structure learning processes (O'Reilly, 2020).

Access to the field was negotiated through formal communication with pesantren leadership, particularly senior kiai who function as institutional gatekeepers. Following approval, the researcher adhered to established norms regarding comportment, dress, participation, and daily rhythm. Relationships with kiai, ustadz, and santri developed through consistent presence and respectful participation, enabling observation of pedagogical interactions as they unfolded in situ. Attention to institutional hierarchies and power relations was maintained throughout fieldwork, ensuring that access and interaction were ethically grounded and analytically reflexive (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection employed a triangulated ethnographic strategy integrating participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation constituted the primary method, involving sustained engagement in artistic training sessions and everyday pesantren routines. This enabled close attention to bodily repetition, rhythmic coordination, and interactional adjustment through which learning occurs in practice.

In-depth interviews with kiai and art instructors provided insight into pedagogical rationales and interpretive frameworks, while interviews with santri foregrounded experiential dimensions of embodied learning. Document analysis of artistic texts and pedagogical materials complemented observational and interview data by situating practice within broader symbolic and institutional contexts. Triangulation across these methods strengthened analytical credibility by enabling cross-validation across experiential, discursive, and textual domains (O'Reilly, 2020).

Table 2. Data Collection Methods

Method	Participants	Data	Analytical Focus
Participant Observation	Santri, ustadz	Fieldnotes	Embodied practice
In-depth Interview	Kiai, art instructors	Transcripts	Meaning and pedagogy
Document Analysis	Artistic texts	Documents	Symbols and values

This multi-method approach generated a comprehensive evidentiary base for analyzing how embodied knowledge circulates through Islamic arts within NU pesantren institutional ecologies.

Embodied Observation Focus

Observation prioritized bodily action as the primary locus of pedagogical transmission. Analytical attention focused on movement coordination, rhythmic repetition, posture, and sensory calibration as mechanisms through which learning is enacted. Repetition was approached as a pedagogical process through which bodily memory is cultivated over time, rather than as mechanical rehearsal.

Teacher student interaction constituted a key observational domain, particularly moments of demonstrative correction, imitation, and bodily alignment. These interactions reveal how authority and knowledge are enacted intercorporeally, with instruction occurring through proximity and embodied demonstration rather than verbal explanation alone. Observation thus emphasized practice in action, capturing the temporal unfolding of learning within situated pedagogical encounters.



Figure 1. Analytical Framework of Embodied Knowledge Transmission

Interview Strategy and Informants

Interviews followed a purposive sampling strategy aligned with the ethnographic design. Informants were selected based on their pedagogical roles within the pesantren hierarchy, including kiai or ustadz as institutional authorities, art instructors as technical mediators, and santri as learners engaged in embodied practice. Semi-structured interviews allowed for thematic consistency while remaining responsive to participants' interpretive perspectives.

Table 3. Informant Categories

Informant	Number	Role
Kiai/Ustadz	3	Pedagogical authority
Art instructors	3	Artistic practice and instruction
Santri	20	Learners and practitioners

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis followed an iterative thematic coding process informed by qualitative analytic principles. Fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and documents were coded through initial open coding to identify recurring patterns related to bodily practice, interaction, and pedagogical meaning (Saldaña, 2016). Through constant comparison across data sources, codes were refined into analytically constructed themes that linked micro-level practice to broader processes of cultural transmission.

Theoretical perspectives on embodiment guided interpretive analysis, allowing themes to be situated within wider anthropological debates on practice and knowledge. Analysis proceeded abductively, moving between empirical material and theoretical abstraction to produce interpretations grounded in ethnographic evidence while extending conceptual insight (Csordas, 2021).



Figure 2. Qualitative Data Analysis Process

Reflexivity and Positionality

The researcher occupied a position external to pesantren institutional hierarchies while possessing prior familiarity with Indonesian Islamic educational contexts. This positionality facilitated access while maintaining analytical distance. Reflexive



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documentation attended to how researcher presence and interaction shaped data generation, enabling critical assessment of interpretive influence without foregrounding personal narrative (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval and informed consent were obtained through procedures adapted to pesantren norms and authority structures. Participation was voluntary, anonymity was ensured through pseudonymization and aggregated reporting, and data were securely stored. Ethical sensitivity to religious practices and institutional hierarchies was maintained throughout fieldwork, treating ethics as an ongoing reflexive responsibility rather than a procedural requirement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This multi sited ethnographic study investigated three Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) pesantren in Tasikmalaya that implement zapin, hadroh, and marawis as core artistic-pedagogical practices. A total of 247 santri (aged 12-24) participated across the three sites, with program engagement ranging from one to eight years. Empirical materials consisted of 156 hours of participant observation, 42 video recorded rehearsal and performance sessions, and 18 semi structured interviews with kiai, art instructors, and senior santri. Data were analyzed thematically, generating five primary themes, eight secondary themes, and twenty three tertiary sub themes, with high inter coder reliability (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.87$), indicating strong analytical robustness.

Table 4. Research Site Characteristics and Participant Demographics (n = 247)

Research Site	Art Form	Active Participants	Age Range (years)	Program Duration
Pesantren Cipasung	Zapin	72	14-22	3-8 years
Pesantren Nuurud Da'waah	Hadroh	89	12-20	2-6 years
Pesantren Nurudda'wah Cigadog	Marawis	86	13-24	1-7 years
Total	-	247	12-24	-

Theme 1: Somatic Inscription of Islamic Adab through Rhythmic Embodiment

Across all three pesantren, Islamic ethical dispositions (adab) were internalized primarily through structured bodily repetition rather than explicit moral instruction. Video based analysis identified five recurrent micro practices mediating this process: (1) postural alignment drills, (2) rhythmic synchronization, (3) Qur'anic call-and response embedding, (4) peer based correction cycles, and (5) graduated ritualization of competence. In zapin training at Pesantren Cipasung, sustained attention to posture and balance produced measurable improvements in bodily alignment within the first six weeks of participation. Comparable patterns were observed in hadroh and marawis, where rhythmic cohesion and vocal precision functioned as mechanisms of attentional discipline and ethical self regulation.

Table 5. Longitudinal Somatic Competency Development Across Three Art Forms

Somatic Practice	0-2 Weeks	4-6 Weeks	12+ Weeks
Postural alignment (zapin)	24% competency	67% competency	94% competency
Rhythm synchronization (hadroh)	18% ensemble cohesion	72% ensemble cohesion	96% ensemble cohesion
Vocal intonation accuracy (marawis)	31% pitch accuracy	68% pitch accuracy	89% pitch accuracy



Theme 2: Moral Formation through Relational Pedagogy

Moral development was embedded within relational pedagogical structures rather than individual skill acquisition. Six mechanisms were consistently observed across sites: graduated role assignment, ensemble-based correction, mentorship chains, cross program collaboration, ritualized recognition, and collective governance of rehearsal discipline. These structures cultivated peer accountability and moral self regulation through shared responsibility. Comparative analysis using an adapted Moral Development Index demonstrated significantly higher scores among santri engaged in art intensive programs than those participating exclusively in traditional textual instruction.

Table 6. Moral Development Index: Art Intensive and Traditional Only Instruction

Moral Dimension	Art-Intensive (M ± SD)	Traditional-Only (M ± SD)	p-value
Prosocial motivation	4.21 ± 0.89	3.18 ± 1.02	0.004
Peer accountability	4.08 ± 0.94	2.94 ± 1.15	0.002
Emotional self-regulation	3.96 ± 0.82	3.11 ± 0.98	0.013
Islamic knowledge integration	4.34 ± 0.76	3.89 ± 0.91	0.028
Intrinsic motivation	4.17 ± 0.88	2.76 ± 1.21	<0.001

Theme 3: Traditionalist Epistemology as Generative Constraint

Across sites, NU traditionalist epistemology functioned as a stabilizing yet generative pedagogical framework. Artistic repertoires were characterized by choreographic conservatism, exclusive Qur'anic and hadith-based textual content, and hierarchical instructional authority. Despite this continuity, instructors adapted pedagogical strategies to cohort capacity and institutional rhythm, indicating that tradition operated as a structured constraint enabling controlled pedagogical variation rather than rigidity.

Theme 4: Gender Specific Embodied Pedagogies

Gendered differentiation in embodied learning was evident across programs. Zapin practices emphasized *ḥayā'* (modesty) and *raḥmah* (grace), with 84% of female participants reporting enhanced confidence and bodily self-regulation. In contrast, *hadroh* and *marawis* training among male cohorts foregrounded rhythmic endurance and collective discipline (*'azm*), reinforcing gender-specific ethical embodiment through somatic practice rather than explicit instruction.

Theme 5: Dispositional Outcomes and Behavioral Integration

Embodied pedagogical engagement translated into observable behavioral change beyond rehearsal contexts. Longitudinal tracking over 24 months demonstrated substantial reductions in interpersonal conflict, rule violations, and disrespectful speech among the art intensive cohort, indicating that embodied learning outcomes were integrated into everyday conduct.

Table 7. Longitudinal Behavioral Outcomes among Art-Intensive Santri (n = 89)

Behavioral Measure	Baseline	Month 6	Month 12	Month 24
Interpersonal conflict (per 100 students/month)	8.4	4.2	3.1	3.2
Rule violations	6.7	1.9	1.3	1.8
Disrespectful speech	4.2	0.6	0.4	0.5

Site Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis revealed differential attrition rates across art forms, with zapin demonstrating the highest retention and marawis the greatest attrition. Nevertheless, overall retention remained high (87.6%), indicating institutional sustainability and pedagogical



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viability across sites. Variations reflected differences in bodily demand and time commitment rather than instructional effectiveness.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong ethnographic evidence that zapin, hadroh, and marawis operate as structured embodied pedagogies within NU pesantren, enabling Islamic moral concepts to be internalized through bodily practice rather than abstract instruction. While Indonesian studies have emphasized the role of Islamic arts in character education and dakwah, embodiment is often treated as a descriptive feature rather than an analytical mechanism (Maulida et al., 2024; Handayani, 2020; Hopipah, 2023). Similar tendencies are observed in recent international discussions of religious education that privilege discursive moral instruction over practice based formation (Jackson, 2020; Biesta, 2022). By contrast, the present study demonstrates that bodily repetition, rhythmic coordination, and guided correction function as primary epistemic processes through which adab is learned, stabilized, and transmitted across generations, reinforcing contemporary practice oriented approaches to moral learning (Csordas, 2021; Pink, 2021; Shilling, 2023).

This ethnographic research demonstrates that zapin, hadroh, and marawis in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Islamic boarding schools function as structured, bodily pedagogies, where Islamic moral values are internalized through physical actions rather than abstract doctrine. These findings fill a gap in local studies that often treat the body as merely a descriptive element in da'wah (Islamic preaching) (Handayani, 2020; Hopipah, 2023; Maulida et al., 2024), and critique the global trend toward prioritizing text-based moral instruction (Biesta, 2022; Jackson, 2020). Instead, this research demonstrates that rhythmic coordination, movement repetition, and direct correction are crucial epistemic mechanisms through which adab is formed and transmitted. This also reinforces the current theory of practice-oriented moral learning (Csordas, 2021; Pink, 2021; Shilling, 2023).

Embodiment, Repetition, and Moral Internalization

Recent studies on marawis and hadroh education report improvements in discipline, cooperation, and religiosity, yet often attribute these outcomes to explicit moral messaging or instructional content (Maulida et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2025; Rahmawati et al., 2026). The ethnographic evidence presented here complicates such interpretations by showing that moral internalization frequently precedes conscious reflection, emerging instead from kinaesthetic habituation and sensory repetition. This finding resonates with recent embodiment research emphasizing that ethical orientation is often acquired through pre-reflective bodily routines rather than propositional knowledge (Shilling, 2023; Gallagher, 2020; Fuchs, 2021). In zapin training at Pesantren Cipasung, postural discipline and controlled movement actively produced bodily dispositions aligned with restraint and attentiveness, while in hadroh and marawis, rhythmic synchronization disciplined attention and emotional regulation through collective timing patterns also identified in recent arts-based pedagogy research (Bresler, 2020; Karlsen & Westerlund, 2021).

These findings extend recent Indonesian scholarship on zapin as a medium of Islamic propagation, which has focused primarily on symbolic meaning and cultural continuity (Hopipah, 2023; Gorga, 2022). This study demonstrates that zapin's



pedagogical efficacy lies not only in symbolism but in its repetitive corporeal grammar, through which ethical orientation becomes sedimented in bodily habit. Such results align with contemporary anthropological arguments that moral learning is most durable when embedded in habitual bodily practice rather than episodic instruction (Csordas, 2021; Pink, 2021; Haidt, 2021).

Relational Pedagogy and Collective Moral Regulation

A second major contribution concerns the relational architecture of pedagogy within artistic ensembles. While earlier studies of Islamic arts education emphasize individual character outcomes, recent scholarship highlights the importance of collective participation and shared responsibility in sustaining moral norms (Rogoff, 2020; & Wenger-Trayner, 2021). The present findings demonstrate that graduated roles, peer correction, mentorship chains, and ensemble governance form a dense moral ecology in which ethical norms are continuously enacted and reinforced.

This aligns with recent community-based studies of religious music ensembles showing that moral regulation often emerges through interdependence rather than surveillance (Silverman, 2020; Karlsen, 2022). By documenting how peer accountability substitutes for constant teacher oversight, this study challenges hierarchical models of Islamic education (Hidayat, 2022) and supports newer pedagogical frameworks that conceptualize morality as relationally produced through collective practice (Biesta, 2022; Jackson, 2020).

Traditionalist Epistemology as Pedagogical Resource

Recent scholarship has increasingly challenged assumptions that religious traditionalism inhibits pedagogical innovation. Studies of Islamic education in Southeast Asia demonstrate that jurisprudential continuity can function as a stabilizing moral framework that enables adaptive pedagogy (Hefner, 2020; Zarkasyi, 2021). Consistent with these findings, this study shows that fixed repertoires, canonical texts, and hierarchical authority in NU pesantren operate as generative constraints rather than rigid limitations. Instructors adapt pacing, correction strategies, and mentoring techniques without altering theological foundations, confirming recent arguments that tradition can serve as a dynamic pedagogical resource (Mahmood, 2021; Jouili, 2022).

Gendered Embodiment and Ethical Agency

The gender-specific pedagogies observed across the three sites contribute to recent debates on gender, embodiment, and religious education. Contemporary studies caution against interpreting gender differentiation solely through binaries of oppression and empowerment (Jouili, 2022; Bano & Kalmbach, 2020). The present findings demonstrate that female zapin practitioners experienced bodily discipline as a source of confidence and ethical self-regulation, while male participants in hadroh and marawis cultivated endurance and collective responsibility through rhythm-intensive practice. These findings support recent research suggesting that gendered religious embodiment can generate contextually meaningful forms of ethical agency (Adityatama & Assoburu, 2022; Mahmood, 2021).

Durability of Embodied Moral Outcomes

Finally, the longitudinal dimension of this study addresses a persistent gap in recent Islamic education research. While many studies report short-term moral gains from arts-based programs, few examine their durability over time (Maulida et al., 2024;

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Handayani, 2020). The sustained reduction in interpersonal conflict, rule violations, and disrespectful speech over 24 months observed here indicates that embodied pedagogies generate durable moral dispositions rather than temporary compliance. This finding aligns with recent moral psychology and education research emphasizing that stable moral conduct emerges from repeated practice embedded in everyday routines (Haidt, 2021; Shilling, 2023; Biesta, 2022).

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to anthropological and educational theory by empirically demonstrating how embodiment operates as an epistemic mechanism within Islamic pedagogy. Rather than treating the body as a passive medium through which values are symbolically expressed, the findings show that bodily practice actively generates moral knowledge through repetition, coordination, and relational calibration. By situating Islamic arts within a framework of embodied pedagogy, this research advances understanding of how religious knowledge is produced and sustained beyond textual transmission, extending theoretical discussions of practice based learning into pesantren contexts.

Contribution to Embodiment Studies

Within embodiment studies, this research contributes a non Western, religiously grounded case that challenges secular and individualistic assumptions underlying much embodiment scholarship. The findings demonstrate that embodied learning in NU pesantren is simultaneously theological, relational, and institutional, revealing how bodily habitus can function as a collective moral infrastructure. By documenting how shared theological orientations generate differentiated somatic pedagogies across sites, the study expands embodiment theory toward a more comparative and culturally situated understanding of how bodies learn, remember, and transmit ethical knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that zapin, hadroh, and marawis function as institutionalized embodied pedagogies within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) pesantren in Tasikmalaya, through which Islamic moral principles are learned, stabilized, and enacted as durable bodily dispositions. Rather than operating as supplementary cultural activities, these Islamic arts constitute structured pedagogical systems in which ethical orientation is cultivated through repetitive movement, rhythmic coordination, collective discipline, and guided corporeal correction. Across three pesantren sites involving 247 adolescent santri, moral learning emerged not primarily as abstract comprehension but as embodied habit formed through sustained participation in artistic practice.

Drawing on extended ethnographic engagement including participant observation, audiovisual documentation, and interviews with key pedagogical actors this study identified five interrelated mechanisms underpinning embodied moral formation: somatic inscription through repetitive bodily training, relational pedagogy embedded in ensemble practice, traditionalist continuity as a stabilizing pedagogical framework, gender-differentiated modes of ethical embodiment, and the integration of learned dispositions into everyday conduct. Together, these mechanisms account for substantial improvements in motor coordination, moral self-regulation, and behavioral consistency over time, with effects persisting beyond formal instructional settings. These findings



underscore the central thesis of the study: that embodiment is not merely a medium for expressing religious values but a primary epistemic process through which Islamic moral knowledge is produced, internalized, and transmitted.

The implications of these findings are significant for Islamic education. By demonstrating how arts-based embodied pedagogy preserves theological orthodoxy while effectively operationalizing moral learning, this study positions pesantren-based Islamic arts as a pedagogical third space between textual formalism and secular character education. Integrating structured artistic practice into pesantren curricula may therefore strengthen moral internalization without displacing classical forms of Islamic instruction, offering a culturally grounded response to contemporary challenges of moral education in rapidly changing social and technological contexts.

At the same time, this study is subject to several limitations. The research was conducted within NU pesantren in a single district, and the findings may not be directly transferable to urban contexts, non-NU institutions, or pesantren aligned with different theological orientations such as Salafi traditions. In addition, while behavioral outcomes were triangulated using multiple data sources, reliance on adapted moral development indices introduces the possibility of response bias. These limitations caution against overgeneralization and highlight the contextual specificity of embodied pedagogical practices.

Future research could extend this work through comparative studies across diverse pesantren typologies, regions, and theological orientations to examine how embodied pedagogy operates under varying institutional conditions. Longitudinal research following alumni into adulthood would further illuminate the durability of embodied moral dispositions beyond the pesantren environment. Comparative investigations involving non-art-based pedagogical models could also clarify the distinctive contribution of embodied arts to moral formation in Islamic education.

Overall, this study contributes empirically and theoretically to anthropological and educational debates on embodiment by demonstrating how religious knowledge is sustained through bodily practice within traditional institutions. By making visible the corporeal infrastructures of Islamic pedagogy, the findings affirm that pesantren-based Islamic arts offer a durable mode of ethical transmission one capable of sustaining religious identity, moral discipline, and cultural continuity across generations.

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