

Negotiating Faith and Pedagogy: A Systematic Review on the Professional Identity of English Teachers in Islamic Boarding Schools

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ABSTRACT

The professional identity of English teachers in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) represents a complex intersection of pedagogy, faith, and institutional culture. Unlike in secular settings, professionalism in *pesantren* is inseparable from religious and moral commitments, where teaching English is viewed as both an academic and spiritual endeavor. Despite growing interest in teacher identity studies, limited systematic evidence exists on how this identity is constructed within Islamic educational contexts. This study aims to synthesize existing research on the professional identity of English teachers in *pesantren*, focusing on how it is conceptualized, what factors influence its formation, and which theoretical and methodological trends characterize current scholarship. Using the PRISMA framework, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted on studies published between 2005 and 2025. Data were extracted and thematically analyzed to identify conceptual patterns, contextual influences, and theoretical orientations across 30 relevant publications related to teacher identity, English language teaching, and Islamic education. The review reveals that teacher identity in *pesantren* is grounded in the integration of pedagogical competence, moral integrity, and spiritual devotion. Identity construction is mediated by institutional culture, *kiai* leadership, and faith-based values. Teachers demonstrate agency by negotiating between modern pedagogical methods and Islamic ethics. The literature converges around sociocultural, identity-in-context, and ecological frameworks, with qualitative research dominating and mixed-method approaches emerging. The review advances theoretical understanding by embedding moral and spiritual dimensions within identity frameworks. Practically, it underscores the need for faith-based professional development programs that align Islamic values with contemporary pedagogy. Future research should employ longitudinal and comparative designs to explore how teachers' moral reasoning and professional agency evolve across diverse *pesantren* contexts.

Keywords: professional identity; English teachers; Islamic boarding school

INTRODUCTION

The professional identity of teachers has become a central theme in educational research, influencing how educators define their roles, values, and sense of agency within institutional and sociocultural frameworks. In English language teaching (ELT), this identity extends beyond personal perception, reflecting how teachers interpret pedagogical responsibilities amid ideological, cultural, and ethical challenges (Beijaard & Meijer, 2017; Varghese et al., 2016). Within faith-based education, particularly in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), professional identity takes on a multidimensional character that merges pedagogical expertise with spiritual and moral commitments. Teaching English in *pesantren* is viewed not only as an academic pursuit but also as a spiritual mission grounded in Islamic educational philosophy that unites faith (*iman*), knowledge (*ilm*), and character (*akhlak*) (Azra, 2015). This integration transforms teaching into an act of devotion and moral guidance, positioning English teachers as both educators and ethical role models. Consequently, the intersection of faith and pedagogy within *pesantren* offers a unique and underexplored context for examining how professional identity is formed, negotiated, and enacted within moral and religious educational frameworks.

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Existing research on teacher professional identity has been conducted across diverse educational settings, employing sociocultural, ecological, and agency-based frameworks to understand how teachers' self-concepts evolve through interaction, reflection, and institutional influence (Beijaard et al., 2004; Priestley et al., 2015; Wenger, 1998). These frameworks emphasize that identity is contextually situated and dynamically shaped by teachers' experiences, beliefs, and relationships. However, much of this scholarship focuses on secular or Western contexts, leaving faith-based environments—where professional identity is intertwined with spiritual and communal commitments—largely understudied (Trent et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2018). Although a few recent studies have explored Islamic educational settings (Rissanen, 2018; Almayez, 2022), their findings tend to be fragmented and descriptive rather than integrative. This gap reveals the absence of a comprehensive synthesis that connects religious values, pedagogical practices, and institutional structures in shaping teachers' professional identities. Consequently, systematic evidence remains scarce regarding how English teachers in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) negotiate their dual roles as educators and moral agents while navigating the complex intersections of faith, pedagogy, and professionalism.

Previous studies on teacher professional identity emphasize key influencing factors such as moral responsibility, institutional culture, and teacher agency (Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013; Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015; Rissanen et al., 2018). These dimensions highlight the interplay between personal values, professional ethics, and contextual constraints in shaping teachers' self-concept. However, limited research attempts to integrate these elements within a comprehensive conceptual framework, particularly in faith-based educational contexts where identity construction involves spiritual as well as pedagogical considerations (Almayez, 2022; Qoyyimah et al., 2023). The negotiation between Islamic ethics and modern English language teaching (ELT) methodologies remains underexplored, despite its relevance to the professional experiences of English teachers in *pesantren* (Ibrahim Hamada, 2022; Islam & Ilfiah, 2024). This lack of synthesis underscores the need for a systematic review that consolidates theoretical orientations and empirical findings to explain how religious, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions interact in shaping teacher identity. Addressing this gap is vital to enrich scholarly understanding of teacher professionalism in Islamic contexts and to develop professional development programs that harmonize pedagogical innovation with moral and spiritual integrity (Azra, 2015; Succarie, 2024).

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework (Page et al., 2021) to critically examine and synthesize existing research on the professional identity of English teachers in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The review is designed to address three primary objectives: first, to identify how English teachers' professional identity is conceptualized within Islamic educational contexts; second, to determine the key personal, institutional, and sociocultural factors influencing its development; and third, to analyze the dominant theoretical and methodological trends that characterize current scholarship in this area. Through these aims, the study seeks to construct a comprehensive understanding of how English teachers negotiate the intersection of faith, pedagogy, and professionalism. This synthesis also highlights how *pesantren* teachers integrate Islamic moral values with global ELT practices, reflecting a distinctive model of professional identity formation rooted in spiritual and ethical dimensions. Ultimately, the study aspires to contribute both theoretically and practically by enriching academic discourse on teacher identity in faith-based education and informing professional development programs that align Islamic values with pedagogical innovation.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to critically synthesize existing research on the professional identity of English teachers in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The SLR method was chosen for its methodological rigor, transparency, and ability to provide a comprehensive overview of prior studies (Snyder, 2019; Keele, 2007). By systematically identifying, evaluating, and integrating empirical findings, the review aimed to develop a coherent understanding

of how teacher identity is conceptualized and constructed within faith-based educational contexts. The review followed the PRISMA 2020 framework (Page et al., 2021), which consists of four structured phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. This structured procedure ensured that data selection and synthesis were both replicable and unbiased. Applying this design strengthened the validity and consistency of the findings while allowing a transparent mapping of theoretical and methodological trends in the literature. Overall, the SLR approach provided a robust foundation for analyzing how faith, pedagogy, and professionalism intersect in Islamic educational environments.

As this study is a systematic review, it does not involve human participants. Instead, the participants refer to empirical research articles examining the professional identity of English teachers in Islamic or faith-based educational contexts. A total of 30 peer-reviewed studies published between 2005 and 2025 were selected as the primary data. Sources were retrieved from major academic databases, including Scopus, ERIC, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar, using Boolean operators and key search terms such as professional identity, teacher identity, English teachers, Islamic school, boarding school, and *pesantren*. The inclusion criteria required that studies (1) focused on English teacher professional identity, (2) were conducted in Islamic or faith-based settings, (3) were written in English or Indonesian, and (4) contained empirical data. Non-empirical works, such as conceptual papers and theses, were excluded. The screening and selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (Page et al., 2021), involving the removal of duplicates, title and abstract screening, and full-text evaluation. Each article was catalogued using a coding matrix summarizing its author, purpose, context, methodology, and key findings to ensure analytical transparency.

Data were analyzed using thematic synthesis as proposed by Thomas and Harden (2008), which comprises three key stages: initial coding of relevant findings, organization of these codes into descriptive themes, and the generation of higher-order analytical themes. Each selected study was examined in detail to capture how teacher professional identity was conceptualized, the contextual and institutional factors influencing it, and the theoretical as well as methodological approaches employed. Through repeated reading and systematic coding, emerging themes were refined to highlight similarities, contrasts, and conceptual links among studies. This iterative process allowed the researcher to synthesize diverse empirical perspectives into a cohesive understanding. Thematic synthesis thus provided both depth and flexibility in interpreting data, enabling the review to uncover how English teachers' professional identities are shaped, negotiated, and enacted within the moral, cultural, and pedagogical dynamics of Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the systematic findings derived from the reviewed literature, organized according to the three research questions (RQs). Each subsection begins with an introductory paragraph explaining the analytical focus, followed by a summary table highlighting the key themes, and a descriptive narrative elaborating on the main findings. The presentation remains descriptive and objective, outlining patterns identified across the studies without extended interpretation, which will be addressed in the subsequent Discussion section.

Conceptualization of Teacher Identity in Islamic Boarding Schools

The first research question explores how English teachers' professional identity is conceptualized within Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Through thematic synthesis, the reviewed literature reveals that professional identity in this context is strongly influenced by religious values, moral expectations, and the institutional ethos of *pesantren*. Teachers are positioned as both educators and moral exemplars, embodying the dual responsibility of linguistic instruction and character formation. The following table summarizes the key themes that describe how teacher identity is defined and understood in the *pesantren* setting.

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Table 1

Conceptualization of Teacher Professional Identity in Islamic Boarding Schools

Theme	Description	Key Sources
Faith-integrated professionalism	Teacher identity merges pedagogical competence with religious devotion; teaching English is viewed as <i>ibadah</i> (spiritual duty).	Azra (2015); Mahmood & Shakir (2019); Abdalla et al. (2022)
Moral and spiritual leadership	Teachers act as <i>murabbi</i> (moral educators) who model Islamic ethics and guide students' character development.	Pribadi (2022); Qoyyimah et al. (2023); Rissanen et al. (2018)
Contextualized pedagogical identity	Identity is shaped by <i>pesantren</i> culture, authority of <i>kiai</i> , and communal norms defining "good teaching."	Nu'man (2025); Almayez (2022); Islam & Ilfiah (2024)

The reviewed studies reveal that the professional identity of English teachers in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) emerges as an integration of pedagogical expertise, moral integrity, and religious devotion. Teaching is viewed not merely as a linguistic task but as an act of service and worship within the broader mission of Islamic education (Azra, 2015; Mahmood & Shakir, 2019). Professionalism, therefore, encompasses both intellectual competence and spiritual sincerity, positioning teachers as moral exemplars who foster students' character alongside language proficiency. The *pesantren*'s institutional structure reinforces this identity through its collective discipline, ethical expectations, and hierarchical leadership centered on the *kiai*, whose authority shapes teachers' conduct and values (Nu'man, 2025; Qoyyimah et al., 2023). These religious and cultural dynamics cultivate a professional identity that is fluid yet deeply rooted in communal faith and tradition. Consequently, identity formation among *pesantren* English teachers reflects a continuous process of moral and pedagogical alignment, where teaching becomes both a professional responsibility and a manifestation of spiritual commitment. In this sense, teacher identity in *pesantren* is contextually grounded, ethically oriented, and sustained through ongoing participation in a faith-based educational community.

Factors Influencing Teacher Identity Formation

The second research question focuses on the factors that shape or influence the formation of English teachers' professional identity in Islamic boarding schools. The findings indicate that identity construction is not a linear process but rather a negotiation between personal agency, institutional norms, and socio-religious values. The reviewed studies collectively highlight how teachers exercise agency, draw upon faith-based motivation, and navigate the tensions that arise when aligning pedagogical innovation with traditional religious expectations. The themes identified through synthesis are summarized in the following table.

Table 2

Factors Shaping English Teachers' Professional Identity Formation

Theme	Description	Key Sources
Professional agency	Teachers exercise agency in aligning global ELT pedagogies with Islamic values through reflective adaptation.	Priestley et al. (2015); Qoyyimah et al. (2023); Eteläpelto et al. (2015)
Faith-based motivation	Teaching English is perceived as <i>ibadah</i> , reinforcing moral commitment and resilience.	Abdalla et al. (2022); Islam & Ilfiah (2024); Almayez (2022)
Negotiated identity and tensions	Teachers face challenges reconciling secular ELT materials with <i>pesantren</i> ethics, balancing obedience and innovation.	Rissanen et al. (2018); Day (2018); Succarie (2024)

Findings reveal that English teachers' professional identity formation in pesantren contexts is influenced by intertwined personal, institutional, and cultural factors. Agency emerges as a critical factor as teachers reconcile the pedagogical demands of modern ELT with the moral imperatives of Islamic education (Priestley et al., 2015; Eteläpelto et al., 2015). Many adopt contextualized teaching strategies, blending communicative learning principles with religious instruction (Qoyyimah et al., 2023). Religious faith functions as a primary source of motivation, framing teaching as a sacred obligation rather than a mere profession (Abdalla et al., 2022; Islam & Ilfiah, 2024). This moral motivation enhances teachers' sense of purpose and resilience, reinforcing the integration of spirituality into pedagogy. However, tensions persist between institutional conservatism and innovative pedagogical aspirations. Teachers often struggle to adapt Western-oriented curricula within a faith-based moral framework (Rissanen et al., 2018; Succarie, 2024). Institutional hierarchies and social expectations can limit autonomy, yet teachers navigate these constraints creatively through moral framing and selective content adaptation. The identity formation process is thus a continuous negotiation between pedagogical ideals, institutional power, and spiritual responsibility.

Theoretical and Methodological Trends

The third research question examines theoretical and methodological trends across studies investigating teacher professional identity in Islamic educational contexts. The synthesis reveals consistent reliance on identity, agency, and community-based theoretical frameworks, while methodological tendencies lean toward qualitative, interpretive designs. These trends reflect both the complexity of identity research and the contextual richness of Islamic education studies. Table 3 summarizes the dominant theoretical orientations, methodological approaches, and geographical distribution found in the reviewed literature.

Table 3
Theoretical and Methodological Trends in the Reviewed Literature

Aspect	Findings	Key Sources
Dominant theories	Beijaard's identity-in-context, Wenger's Communities of Practice, Priestley's ecological agency, and moral agency frameworks dominate.	Beijaard et al. (2004); Wenger (1998); Priestley et al. (2015); Rissanen et al. (2022)
Methodological approaches	Qualitative designs (narrative inquiry, case study, phenomenology) are most prevalent; SLR and mixed methods are emerging.	Zein (2017); Wulyani (2017); Succarie (2024); Islam & Ilfiah (2024)
Geographical focus	Most studies originate from Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia) and the Middle East, with limited cross-regional comparison.	Qoyyimah et al. (2023); Almayez (2022); Abdalla et al. (2022)

The reviewed body of literature reveals a notable convergence around sociocultural and context-based perspectives on teacher identity. Foundational frameworks such as Beijaard's (2004) concept of dynamic identity construction and Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice remain influential, highlighting how professional identity evolves through social participation and contextual interaction. More recent approaches, including the ecological model of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015), extend this understanding by emphasizing the relational and value-laden nature of identity formation within institutional and moral settings. Collectively, these frameworks conceptualize teacher identity as context-sensitive, continuously negotiated, and ethically informed by teachers' interactions with their communities. Methodologically, the field remains dominated by qualitative research designs—particularly narrative inquiry and case study—that explore teachers' lived experiences (Zein, 2017; Wulyani, 2017). However, an emerging trend toward mixed methods and systematic reviews (Succarie, 2024; Islam & Ilfiah, 2024) indicates growing methodological diversity. Most studies are situated in Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern contexts, offering valuable cultural insights but underscoring the

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need for cross-regional and comparative research to capture broader variations in how professional identity is constructed within faith-based educational environments.

Discussion

This section discusses the implications of the findings presented in the previous section. It interprets how the conceptualization and formation of English teachers' professional identity in Islamic boarding schools are shaped by religious, institutional, and pedagogical factors. The discussion also connects the findings with established theoretical frameworks and reflects on their contribution to understanding teacher identity in faith-based educational settings.

Integrating Religious Context and Professionalism

The findings indicate that the concept of teacher professionalism in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) is deeply intertwined with the institution's spiritual and moral foundations. English teachers perceive their professional identity as an expression of faith and ethical duty, aligning with Beijaard et al.'s (2004) view of identity as contextually situated and socially negotiated. Within this moral-spiritual orientation, professionalism extends beyond pedagogical expertise to include the embodiment of Islamic virtues such as sincerity (ikhlas), trustworthiness (amanah), and humility (tawadhu'). This perspective resonates with Wenger's (1998) theory of identity-in-participation, in which teachers construct professional meaning through continuous engagement within a shared religious and cultural community. Consequently, professional identity in pesantren is formed collectively, sustained through religious practices, institutional norms, and communal ethics that define teachers' moral and instructional conduct. The process is dynamic, evolving as teachers interact with the pesantren's moral framework and the expectations of their faith-based educational roles, ultimately shaping an identity that unites spiritual devotion with professional integrity.

The integration of faith and professionalism functions simultaneously as a guiding moral framework and a source of personal empowerment for teachers. Through their spiritual commitments, teachers find deeper meaning and validation in their professional roles, which strengthens both their pedagogical authority and their social standing within the pesantren community (Rissanen et al., 2018; Pribadi, 2022). This fusion of spirituality and professional ethics fosters a holistic understanding of teacher identity that emphasizes moral integrity alongside instructional expertise. Moreover, it reframes professionalism beyond technical competence, positioning it as a reflection of religious devotion and communal responsibility. Unlike Western perspectives that prioritize individual autonomy, this model places moral accountability—to God, the institution, and society—as the foundation of professional practice. Consequently, Islamic boarding schools represent an alternative paradigm of teacher identity that unites faith, ethics, and education. Within this model, professionalism is expressed through spiritual sincerity, ethical conduct, and a sense of service that integrates pedagogical excellence with moral purpose, offering a distinctive contribution to global discussions on professional identity in education.

Negotiating Agency, Faith, and Pedagogy

The findings indicate that English teachers in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) demonstrate professional agency through a delicate balance of institutional expectations, pedagogical innovation, and personal faith. This aligns with Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson's (2015) ecological model of teacher agency, which highlights how teachers' actions are influenced by cultural, structural, and temporal contexts. Within the pesantren environment, educators continuously negotiate between the demands of globalized English teaching methodologies and the ethical framework of Islamic education. In doing so, they engage in what Day (2018) terms "adaptive professionalism," where pedagogical flexibility and moral commitment coexist. Teachers creatively reinterpret communicative and task-based learning strategies to ensure that classroom practices align with religious and cultural values (Islam & Ilfiah, 2024). This adaptive process reflects a dynamic negotiation between modernity and tradition, enabling teachers to uphold both pedagogical relevance and faith-based authenticity. Rather than adopting Western methodologies wholesale, teachers contextualize them within Islamic

moral discourse, ensuring that learning remains both effective and ethically grounded. Such negotiation underscores the complexity of teacher identity formation in pesantren, where professionalism is enacted not through resistance to change but through the thoughtful reconciliation of spiritual ideals and educational innovation.

These negotiations also expose the emotional and ethical complexities embedded in the teaching profession within faith-based contexts. English teachers in pesantren often face dilemmas when secular ELT materials or cultural content conflict with Islamic moral values, compelling them to make conscious ethical decisions about instructional content and methodology (Succarie, 2024; Rissanen et al., 2018). Such situations demand not only pedagogical adaptability but also moral discernment, as teachers strive to uphold religious integrity while maintaining effective language instruction. Rather than perceiving these challenges as barriers, many educators treat them as catalysts for deeper professional and spiritual growth. Through ongoing reflection, dialogue with peers, and ethical self-assessment, teachers develop a resilient professional identity that harmonizes pedagogical competence with religious commitment. This process exemplifies reflective professionalism, where identity formation arises from continuous moral reasoning and adaptive practice. It shows that teacher identity in pesantren is an active, evolving construct—one that responds to the moral tensions of globalized education while remaining rooted in spiritual values. In this sense, pesantren teachers embody what can be described as contextually grounded and ethically conscious agency, transforming potential conflicts into opportunities for self-renewal and professional coherence.

Institutional Implications for Teacher Development

Institutional culture and leadership are central to the formation and sustainability of teachers' professional identities in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). The kiai, serving as both a spiritual mentor and educational authority, establishes the ethical and pedagogical foundations that guide teachers' professional behavior. This dynamic reflects Wenger's (1998) concept of learning as social participation, where identity is developed through shared engagement in community practices. Within the pesantren environment, professional growth occurs collectively through activities such as mentorship, collegial collaboration, and participation in religious rituals that strengthen teachers' sense of belonging and moral alignment (Azra, 2015; Pribadi, 2022). These interactions foster a culture of mutual accountability, where professionalism is defined by adherence to both institutional discipline and religious values. This community-based model of teacher development provides not only pedagogical coherence but also emotional and ethical support, ensuring that teachers' professional roles are continuously reinforced by collective purpose. As Day (2018) suggests, a sustainable teacher identity thrives in environments that encourage reflection and shared moral vision. In pesantren, this is achieved through a balance of spiritual mentorship and pedagogical collaboration, allowing teachers to integrate professional competence with religious devotion. Thus, institutional leadership becomes a vital force in nurturing reflective, faith-oriented professionalism.

Despite the strong role of institutional culture in shaping teacher identity, the findings highlight the importance of developing more structured and systematic forms of continuous professional development (CPD) within pesantren. Effective CPD should balance institutional commitment with opportunities for pedagogical renewal and innovation. Islam and Ilfiah (2024) emphasize that CPD programs combining Islamic values with contemporary teaching methodologies help teachers cultivate reflective professionalism, allowing them to refine their instructional practices without compromising religious integrity. Such integration fosters teachers' ability to critically engage with new pedagogical trends while maintaining alignment with the pesantren's moral vision and educational philosophy. When pesantren institutions promote professional learning that encourages inquiry, creativity, and reflection, they nurture what Rissanen et al. (2022) term "ethical agency"—the capacity to act responsibly within moral and contextual boundaries. This approach empowers teachers to harmonize spiritual devotion with professional growth, creating a more dynamic and sustainable model of identity formation. Institutional support of this kind ensures that teachers' development is not only grounded in faith-based principles but also responsive to global educational advancements, positioning pesantren as a model of innovative yet morally anchored teacher professionalism.

Theoretical and Methodological Insights

The synthesis of the reviewed studies indicates that future investigations into teacher professional identity within Islamic educational contexts should employ more integrative theoretical perspectives. Combining Beijaard's identity-in-context framework, Wenger's social theory of learning, and Priestley's ecological model of teacher agency offers a multidimensional understanding of how educators navigate moral, institutional, and pedagogical complexities. These frameworks collectively highlight that teacher identity is not static but a dynamic interplay between context, social participation, and reflective agency. However, to capture the full depth of identity formation in faith-based settings, these models need to be expanded through the inclusion of moral agency theory (Rissanen et al., 2022), which emphasizes teachers' ethical reasoning and value-based decision-making in professional practice. Integrating these perspectives would enable researchers to examine more comprehensively how faith, ethics, and pedagogy intersect in shaping teachers' professional self-concepts. Such a synthesis would also contribute to developing contextually relevant theories that account for the moral and spiritual dimensions of teacher identity—an aspect often overlooked in mainstream Western discourses on professionalism and educational practice.

Methodologically, the reviewed literature reveals a strong reliance on qualitative approaches, particularly case studies and narrative inquiries, which offer detailed and contextually rich understandings of teachers' lived experiences (Zein, 2017; Succarie, 2024). While these methods provide valuable depth, they often limit the generalizability of findings across diverse Islamic educational contexts. To advance the field, future studies should incorporate longitudinal and comparative designs that trace the evolution of teacher identity across various pesantren and cultural environments. Such approaches would allow researchers to examine how faith-based, institutional, and pedagogical factors interact over time in shaping professional identity. Additionally, the integration of mixed-method designs, systematic literature reviews, and meta-syntheses could broaden the analytical scope of teacher identity research in Islamic settings. These approaches can help map more systematically the relationships among identity, agency, and religious values, providing a more holistic understanding of professional development within moral-educational frameworks. Ultimately, the discussion underscores the need for both conceptual refinement and methodological diversification to capture the dynamic, context-dependent, and ethically grounded nature of teacher identity in Islamic educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review examined three key dimensions of English teachers' professional identity within Islamic boarding schools (pesantren): its conceptualization, the factors shaping its development, and the prevailing theoretical and methodological orientations. The findings indicate that teacher identity in pesantren emerges from the integration of pedagogical expertise, moral values, and religious devotion. Teaching is perceived not only as a professional responsibility but also as a spiritual act of service and faith (Azra, 2015; Islam & Ilfiah, 2024). The formation of this identity is strongly influenced by institutional culture, leadership roles, and faith-based principles, requiring teachers to balance global pedagogical trends with Islamic ethical frameworks. Theoretically, the literature converges around sociocultural and ecological perspectives (Beijaard, 2004; Priestley et al., 2015; Wenger, 1998), framing teacher identity as dynamic, relational, and contextually situated within moral communities. Methodologically, most research relies on qualitative approaches such as narrative inquiry and case studies; however, recent shifts toward mixed-method designs and systematic reviews reflect increasing methodological breadth and a growing effort to capture the complex, value-oriented nature of teacher identity in faith-based educational environments.

Theoretically, this review enriches the understanding of teacher professional identity by emphasizing the interconnection between faith, pedagogy, and institutional culture within Islamic educational contexts. It advances existing frameworks—such as the identity-in-context and ecological agency models—by situating them within the moral and spiritual realities of pesantren life. This

integration highlights how professional identity in Islamic settings is not only shaped by pedagogical competence but also by ethical consciousness and spiritual commitment. On a practical level, the findings suggest the need for professional development initiatives that harmonize Islamic values with modern pedagogical practices. Faith-based CPD programs can nurture reflective professionalism and strengthen teachers' moral agency, enabling them to engage with global educational innovations without compromising religious integrity. Furthermore, the leadership of kiai and pesantren administrators is essential in sustaining this balance through mentorship, collective reflection, and value-oriented institutional policies. Such efforts ensure that teacher professionalism in pesantren remains both ethically grounded and pedagogically progressive.

For future research, empirical investigations using longitudinal, narrative, and comparative approaches are essential to provide a deeper understanding of how teacher identity develops and transforms across different pesantren and cultural settings. Such studies could explore the evolution of teachers' moral reasoning, emotional engagement, and intercultural interactions over time, offering richer insights into the lived complexities of faith-based professionalism. Additionally, employing mixed-method systematic reviews or meta-syntheses would allow researchers to map more precisely the interconnections among teacher identity, professional agency, and religious values. This methodological expansion would help move beyond context-specific descriptions toward broader theoretical generalizations. By linking conceptual frameworks with empirical evidence, future research can construct a more holistic and contextually nuanced picture of teacher identity—one that fully acknowledges its moral, spiritual, and pedagogical dimensions within Islamic education. Ultimately, such scholarship will strengthen the theoretical and practical foundations for understanding and supporting teachers' professional growth in faith-oriented educational environments.

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