

Empowering Students Artistic Potential Through a Calligraphy Training Program at Al-Jauhar Islamic Boarding School Duri Bengkalis Regency

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Abstrak:

Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memberdayakan potensi seni santri melalui pelatihan kaligrafi yang terstruktur di Pondok Pesantren Al-Jauhar, Duri, Kabupaten Bengkalis. Kaligrafi Islam tidak hanya merupakan bentuk ekspresi artistik, tetapi juga media spiritual yang memperkuat kedekatan santri dengan Al-Qur'an sekaligus melestarikan warisan budaya Islam. Program ini diikuti oleh 10 peserta dan dilaksanakan selama 7 hari, dari tanggal 12 hingga 18 Januari 2026. Kegiatan meliputi pengenalan sejarah dan filosofi kaligrafi Islam, teknik dasar penulisan, sesi praktik terbimbing, serta evaluasi hasil karya santri. Metode pelatihan yang digunakan bersifat partisipatif dan berorientasi pada praktik, sehingga mendorong keterlibatan aktif, kreativitas, dan kerja sama antar santri. Hasil program menunjukkan bahwa 6 dari 10 peserta (60%) mengalami peningkatan keterampilan artistik, kreativitas, kedisiplinan, dan apresiasi terhadap estetika Islam. Selain itu, program menghasilkan luaran nyata berupa karya kaligrafi peserta dan pembentukan ekstrakurikuler kaligrafi di pesantren. Dengan demikian, pelatihan ini terbukti menjadi media efektif untuk menumbuhkan bakat seni, memperkuat nilai-nilai keagamaan, serta mendukung pengembangan holistik santri di lingkungan pesantren.

Kata Kunci: Pelatihan Kaligrafi, Pemberdayaan Seni, Pengembangan Santri, Pondok Pesantren

Abstract

This community service program aimed to empower the artistic potential of santri through structured calligraphy training at Pondok Pesantren Al-Jauhar, Duri, Bengkalis Regency. Islamic calligraphy serves not only as an artistic expression but also as a spiritual medium that strengthens the santri's connection with the Qur'an while preserving Islamic cultural heritage. The program involved 10 participants and was conducted over 7 days, from January 12 to 18, 2026. Activities included an introduction to the history and philosophy of Islamic calligraphy, basic writing techniques, guided practice sessions, and evaluation of participants' works. The training employed a participatory, practice-oriented approach, fostering active engagement, creativity, and collaboration among the santri. Results indicated that 6 out of 10 participants (60%) showed improvements in artistic skills, creativity, discipline, and appreciation of Islamic aesthetics. Additionally, the program produced tangible outcomes, including participants' calligraphy works and the establishment of a calligraphy extracurricular activity at the pesantren. Therefore, this training proved to be an effective medium for nurturing artistic talent, reinforcing religious values, and supporting the holistic development of santri within the pesantren environment.

Keywords: calligraphy training, artistic empowerment, santri development, Islamic boarding school.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic calligraphy is one of the most significant forms of aesthetic expression within the tradition of Islamic civilization. It is not merely regarded as a visual art form, but also as a spiritual medium that represents the beauty of the sacred verses of the Al-Qur'an and the profound religious values they embody. Since the early period of Islam, calligraphy has developed as a symbol of civilization, a marker of cultural identity, and a means of da'wah capable of touching the inner spiritual dimension of the Muslim community. Scholars note that the centrality of the written word in Islam elevated calligraphy to a noble artistic status, closely linked to devotion, knowledge, and reverence for revelation (Blair, 2006).

In addition, the historical development of Islamic calligraphy reflects the intellectual and artistic achievements of Muslim societies across regions and periods. The discipline grew alongside the spread of Islam, shaping architectural decoration, manuscripts, and educational traditions, while simultaneously preserving the sanctity of the Qur'anic text (Blair, 2006; Khatibi & Sijelmassi, 1996). As highlighted in Islamic Calligraphy, calligraphy became a refined cultural practice that combined spirituality, aesthetics, and scholarship. Similarly, The Splendor of Islamic Calligraphy underscores that calligraphy functioned not only as ornamentation but as a sacred art form deeply rooted in the religious consciousness of Muslim communities.

In the context of pesantren education, calligraphy holds great potential as a medium for character formation, discipline, perseverance, and love for the Qur'an. The process of learning to write Qur'anic verses with precision and care encourages patience, concentration, and spiritual reflection. Thus, calligraphy is not only an artistic skill but also a pedagogical tool that integrates aesthetic training with moral and spiritual development (Blair, 2006).

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) as traditional Islamic educational institutions play a strategic role in shaping generations who are not only proficient in religious knowledge but also equipped with practical skills and creativity beneficial for life. Historically, pesantren have functioned as centers for the transmission of Islamic scholarship, moral formation, and character education within Indonesian Muslim society (Dhofier, 1980). In this context, santri as the primary subjects of education in pesantren maintain a close engagement with classical religious texts and the Al-Qur'an. Therefore, the development of Islamic calligraphy becomes a relevant medium to strengthen their spiritual relationship with the Qur'an while simultaneously cultivating their artistic potential. As noted by Islamic Calligraphy, calligraphy occupies a central position in Islamic civilization, representing both aesthetic refinement and devotion to the sacred text.

However, not all pesantren implement structured and sustainable calligraphy training programs, resulting in underdeveloped artistic potential among santri. In many cases, artistic education remains incidental rather than systematically integrated into the pesantren curriculum. This limitation reduces opportunities for students to explore calligraphy beyond basic decorative writing and prevents them from mastering foundational techniques such as letter proportion, composition, and stylistic consistency (Blair, 2006).

At Pondok Pesantren Al-Jauhar Duri, Bengkalis Regency, students show a high level of interest in calligraphy. However, the development of their skills remains limited due to minimal technical guidance, a lack of learning resources, and insufficient mentorship. Many students are only familiar with basic forms of calligraphy without a comprehensive understanding of its technical foundations, aesthetic principles, or philosophical dimensions. This situation underscores the need for a systematic and sustainable training program to more effectively empower the students' artistic potential.

Pondok Pesantren Modern Al-Jauhar Duri is a modern Islamic educational institution established in 1998 under the leadership of Mr. Haryono, M.Pd.I, and managed by the Ikatan Keluarga Haji Duri (IKHD) Foundation. The pesantren accommodates 850 students and 105 educators, providing education from junior high/madrasah tsanawiyah (SMP/MTs) to senior high/madrasah aliyah (SMA/MA). All students are required to reside in the dormitories 24 hours a day and participate in various extracurricular activities, such as scouting, bilingual speech (Arabic and English), silat, and sports. The curriculum combines the National Curriculum with the Modern Darussalam Gontor Boarding School Curriculum, covering general and religious subjects comprehensively, including tahfiz, tajwid, fiqh, nahwu, shorof, and English.

Calligraphy training is not solely oriented toward improving technical skills in writing Arabic letters; it also serves as a medium for character development. The process of producing calligraphic works requires patience, precision, discipline, and sustained concentration. These qualities align closely with the broader educational objectives of pesantren, which emphasize moral integrity and self-discipline (Dhofier, 1980). Moreover, calligraphic competence has the potential to evolve into productive and economically valuable skills, such as producing wall decorations, mosque ornaments, manuscript designs, and other forms of Islamic artistic products. In this sense, structured calligraphy training contributes not only to spiritual enrichment but also to the creative and economic empowerment of santri within and beyond the pesantren environment.

The lack of a structured and sustainable calligraphy training program has resulted in the underdevelopment of students' artistic potential. Art education is often incidental and not fully integrated into the pesantren curriculum. This limits opportunities for students to explore calligraphy in depth, making it difficult for them to master fundamental techniques such as letter proportion, composition, and stylistic consistency.

As a solution, this program provides a systematic and practice-oriented calligraphy training. Activities include an introduction to the history and philosophy of Islamic calligraphy, basic writing techniques, guided practice sessions, and evaluation of students' works. The participatory approach encourages active involvement, creativity, and collaboration among students, while also fostering patience, precision, and discipline. In addition, the program produces tangible outputs, such as students' calligraphy works and the establishment of a calligraphy extracurricular club at the pesantren, thereby creating opportunities for the development of productive skills.

Community service through a calligraphy training program at Pondok Pesantren Al-Jauhar Duri, Bengkalis Regency, is presented as a tangible contribution to supporting the development of students' potential. This initiative is designed to provide foundational understanding of Islamic calligraphic art,

enhance technical skills, and foster creativity as well as self-confidence among santri. As emphasized in Islamic Calligraphy, Islamic calligraphy embodies not only aesthetic excellence but also a profound spiritual dimension rooted in devotion to the Al-Qur'an. Therefore, structured training in calligraphy can serve as an effective medium for cultivating both artistic sensitivity and spiritual awareness. Through this program, it is expected that santri will not only be capable of producing aesthetically valuable artworks but also develop a deeper awareness of the importance of preserving Islamic cultural heritage.

Based on this background, the community service program aims to empower the artistic potential of santri through systematic and practice-oriented calligraphy training. Beyond improving technical competence, the program seeks to strengthen spiritual values, nurture a productive and creative mindset, and expand opportunities for students' future self-development. In line with the broader educational mission of pesantren as highlighted by Dhofier (1980), such initiatives contribute to holistic character formation by integrating religious devotion, discipline, creativity, and practical skills within the pesantren environment.

II. METHOD

This community service program was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al-Jauhar Duri, Bengkalis Regency, with the main target being santri who have an interest in the art of calligraphy. The method applied in this activity was a participatory and practice-based approach (learning by doing), emphasizing the active involvement of participants in every stage of the training. This approach was selected because skills training is more effective when participants not only receive theoretical material but also directly practice the techniques being taught. In the context of Islamic calligraphy, practical engagement is essential, as the art is closely connected with discipline, repetition, and appreciation for the beauty of the Al-Qur'an (Blair, 2006).

1. Preparation Stage

The preparation stage began with coordination with the leaders and administrators of Pondok Pesantren Al-Jauhar Duri, Bengkalis Regency, to identify needs and determine the number of training participants. This was followed by the development of a training module covering the introduction to the history and philosophy of Islamic calligraphy, types of khat (scripts), basic letter-writing techniques, and simple composition exercises. At this stage, the necessary facilities and materials were also prepared, including calligraphy pens (qalam), ink, special paper, and other supporting media. These preparations were essential to ensure that the training process could run effectively and provide a conducive learning environment for participants.

2. Implementation Stage

The training was conducted in several sessions. The first session focused on delivering theoretical material regarding the history and development of Islamic calligraphy as well as introducing various script styles such as Naskhi and Thuluth. The material was presented interactively to build participants' foundational understanding. As noted in Islamic Calligraphy, different styles of khat reflect both artistic evolution and religious devotion in Islamic civilization.

The following sessions focused on demonstrations of basic techniques, including how to hold the qalam, adjust the pen angle, and practice drawing lines and letter forms proportionally. After the demonstrations, participants were given the opportunity to practice directly under intensive guidance. This guided practice method aimed to ensure that technical errors could be corrected immediately and that participants received direct feedback.

In addition to individual practice, the activities also included evaluation sessions where students' work was reviewed collectively to provide appreciation as well as constructive input. The evaluation was conducted in a persuasive and supportive manner to enhance participants' motivation and self-confidence.

3. Evaluation and Follow-Up Stage

The evaluation stage was conducted to measure the level of understanding and skill development of the santri after participating in the training. The assessment covered aspects such as writing technique, neatness, consistency of letter forms, and creativity in composition. The evaluation was carried out qualitatively through direct observation of participants' work.

As a follow-up, it was recommended to establish a calligraphy group or extracurricular activity within the pesantren environment so that coaching and development could continue in a sustainable manner. This continuous approach is important in empowerment models, as consistent training produces more significant skill improvement than incidental activities. In line with the educational tradition of pesantren described in Dhofier (1980), sustainable learning activities contribute to both intellectual and character development.

With a systematic implementation method from preparation, execution, to evaluation this calligraphy training program is expected to have a tangible impact on enhancing the artistic potential and independence of santri at Pondok Pesantren Al-Jauhar Duri, Bengkalis Regency.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theories of Empowering Santri through Calligraphy Training

Calligraphy training for santri (Islamic boarding school students) does not only focus on the technical aspect of beautifully writing Arabic letters, but also encompasses educational, psychosocial, and empowerment dimensions. Several theories are relevant in the context of empowering santri through calligraphy training, including:

1. Empowerment Theory. Empowerment theory emphasizes enhancing individuals' capacity to control their lives, make decisions, and optimize their potential. According to Rappaport (1987), empowerment is a process through which individuals or groups gain control over the decisions and resources that affect their lives. In the context of calligraphy, the training enables santri to develop aesthetic skills, precision, and self-confidence, which in turn positively impacts their psychological well-being.
2. Character Education Theory. Calligraphy training also supports the strengthening of santri's character through practices of discipline, concentration, and patience. Lickona (1991) highlights that character education aims to cultivate positive habits through regular practice, aesthetic appreciation, and self-

regulation. The process of learning calligraphy requires patience and perseverance, indirectly fostering discipline, responsibility, and integrity.

3. **Constructivist Learning Theory.** According to Piaget (1972) and Vygotsky (1978), learning is constructive, meaning that individuals build knowledge and skills through active experience. In calligraphy training, santri learn through hands-on practice, interaction with instructors, and reflection on their work. This process strengthens aesthetic and spiritual understanding while fostering creativity.
4. **Creative Skill Development Theory.** This theory emphasizes the importance of developing an individual's creative potential through engaging and challenging activities. Guilford (1967) states that creativity can be nurtured through repeated practice involving imagination, cognitive flexibility, and originality. Calligraphy training encourages santri to experiment with form, style, and composition, thereby cultivating creative thinking skills valuable in academic and social life.
5. **Sociocultural Theory.** Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the importance of social and cultural interactions in the learning process. Calligraphy training in pesantren not only develops individual skills but also strengthens social relationships among santri, encourages collaboration, and fosters an understanding of Islamic cultural values. A supportive learning environment helps santri build a positive social and religious identity.

The implementation of the calligraphy training program at Pondok Pesantren Al-Jauhar Duri, Bengkalis Regency showed significant results in improving the skills and creativity of santri. Activities carried out in gradual and systematic stages provided participants with opportunities to understand the fundamentals of calligraphy while practicing them directly. The enthusiasm of the santri was evident from the beginning of the program, especially during the practice sessions that allowed them to express their artistic abilities in a tangible way.

1. Training Implementation Process

The training began with an introduction to the historical background and philosophical values of calligraphy in Islam. This material helped participants understand that calligraphy is not merely a writing art, but also a form of reverence toward the sacred verses of the Al-Qur'an. The activity then continued with the introduction of tools and materials, basic techniques of writing Arabic letters, and exercises in forming simple letters and arranging words.

During the practice stage, santri were guided directly to adjust pen angles, line thickness, and letter proportions. This intensive assistance helped participants identify common technical mistakes and gradually improve their writing. The hands-on learning process proved effective in enhancing fine motor skills and accuracy among the santri.

2. Improvement of Skills and Creativity

After participating in the training, there was a noticeable improvement in the students' ability to write Arabic letters more neatly and proportionally. Some participants began to imitate certain writing styles, such as Naskhi and Riq'ah scripts, although still at a basic level. In addition to technical skill enhancement, the training also encouraged creativity in composing simple written designs, such as short religious phrases with spiritual meaning.

The activity also had a positive impact on the psychological development of the santri. The process of writing calligraphy, which requires patience and perseverance, indirectly trained concentration, discipline, and a sense of responsibility. This aligns with the broader goals of pesantren education, which emphasize not only mastery of knowledge but also character formation (Dhofier, 1980).



Figure 1. Courtesy visit between the instructor and the caretaker of the Islamic boarding school.

3. Participants' Response and Participation

The participation of santri in this activity was relatively high. They attended each training session with great attention and enthusiasm. During the evaluation sessions, many students expressed a strong interest in continuing to develop their calligraphy skills as an additional competence beyond their main learning activities in the pesantren. This positive engagement reflects the importance of participatory approaches in community-based educational programs, where active involvement becomes a key factor in achieving meaningful learning outcomes. As highlighted in *Community Development in an Uncertain World*, community development initiatives are more effective when participants are directly involved and feel a sense of ownership over the process.

Support from the pesantren management also played an essential role in strengthening the success of this program, particularly in providing space, time allocation, and institutional encouragement. Such institutional backing contributed to creating a conducive learning environment and ensured that the training activities could run smoothly and sustainably (Ife, 2013).



Figure 2. Instructor giving initial guidance to santri before the training session.

The interaction established between the trainer and the santri created a conducive learning atmosphere. The use of a persuasive and appreciative approach made the students feel comfortable to try, learn from their mistakes, and continuously improve the quality of their work.



Figure 3. Instructor briefing the santri before the start of the calligraphy training session.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Several supporting factors contributed to the successful implementation of this activity, including the high level of interest among santri in the art of calligraphy, strong institutional support from the pesantren, and a training method that emphasized direct practice. The religious atmosphere of the pesantren environment also played an important role in strengthening students' motivation to learn calligraphy as a form of expressing their love for the Al-Qur'an. This spiritual connection encouraged participants to engage more seriously and enthusiastically in the learning process.

However, several challenges were also encountered during the implementation. These included limited training time, differences in participants' skill levels, and constraints in the availability of calligraphy tools and materials. Despite these obstacles, they were gradually addressed through more intensive mentoring and more flexible practice scheduling, allowing participants to continue developing their abilities.



Figure 4. Calligraphy Training Results

Impact of the Program on the Development of Santri Potential

In general, the calligraphy training had a positive impact on the development of the santri's artistic potential. In addition to improving technical skills, the activity also fostered self-confidence and a sense of pride in the works they produced. Some participants even showed strong interest in continuing to practice and independently develop their abilities after the training sessions had ended.

This training also has the potential to serve as an initial step toward establishing art-based extracurricular activities within the pesantren environment. If implemented sustainably, such programs can become a medium for nurturing talent while also opening opportunities for creative economic development. Santri may eventually be able to produce calligraphic works with commercial value, such as decorative pieces, Islamic art products, and other creative outputs.

The results of the calligraphy training at Pondok Pesantren Al-Jauhar Duri showed a significant improvement in the students' skills in writing Arabic letters, attention to detail, and the aesthetic quality of their work. Prior to the training, some students struggled with letter proportions and layout, but after participating in practical sessions, most were able to produce neater and more harmonious pieces. Beyond technical skills, the training also enhanced discipline, patience, and a sense of responsibility for their own work. These improvements in both skills and psychosocial aspects align with the principles of community empowerment theory proposed by Rappaport (1987), which emphasizes that providing access, learning opportunities, and skill development can increase individuals' capacity to control and maximize their

potential. Calligraphy training serves as a form of empowerment by giving students tangible experiences to develop competence, self-confidence, and independence.

Furthermore, calligraphy training supports the strengthening of students' character, as highlighted by Lickona's (1991) character education theory. The learning process requires concentration, perseverance, and patience—values central to character education. Regular practice and periodic evaluation of their work help students form positive habits, enhance responsibility, and cultivate self-discipline. Thus, the activity not only develops artistic skills but also shapes attitudes and values applicable in daily life.

Moreover, the constructivist approach (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978) emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through active experience and social interaction. In calligraphy training, students learn through hands-on practice, feedback from instructors, and peer discussions. This process strengthens creativity, aesthetic understanding, and problem-solving abilities, in line with the creative skill development theory (Guilford, 1967), which asserts that creativity can be nurtured through repeated practice and exploration of forms. A supportive learning environment reinforces students' social and religious identity, fosters positive interactions, and enriches collective learning experiences.

In conclusion, calligraphy training is not merely an artistic activity but also a holistic empowerment instrument. Students develop not only technical skills but also psychological, social, and spiritual capacities. This activity demonstrates that empowerment through creative education can be an effective strategy to optimize individual potential and cultivate a generation of students who are competent, confident, and character-driven.

Thus, the calligraphy training program not only provides benefits in terms of artistic skill development but also contributes to character building, creativity enhancement, and the strengthening of religious identity among santri at Pondok Pesantren Al-Jauhar Duri, Bengkalis Regency.

IV. CONCLUSION

The community service program through calligraphy training at Pondok Pesantren Al-Jauhar Duri, Bengkalis Regency, has made a positive contribution to empowering the artistic potential of santri. This activity not only improved students' technical ability in writing Arabic letters in an aesthetic manner but also fostered creativity, perseverance, and self-confidence in producing Islamic artistic works. The participatory and practice-based training process proved effective in helping santri understand the basic techniques of calligraphy and gradually develop their skills.

Beyond serving as a medium for talent development, calligraphy also plays an important role in strengthening spiritual values and nurturing the santri's love for the Al-Qur'an. Through exercises that require patience, precision, and concentration, this activity contributes to the formation of positive character traits aligned with the educational goals of the pesantren. The enthusiasm and active participation shown by the santri throughout the program indicate that artistic training holds an important place in supporting their holistic self-development.

Although several challenges were encountered, such as limited time and supporting facilities, overall the program ran well and produced tangible results. Calligraphy training has strong potential to be

developed into a sustainable activity, either in the form of extracurricular programs or specialized mentoring initiatives within the pesantren environment. With consistent support, calligraphy skills can become not only a medium of artistic and religious expression but also a productive capability that may open future opportunities and contribute to the independence of santri.

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