The Existence of Pesantren Culture as an Indonesian Islamic Educational Institution

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Abstract: Pesantren was an Islamic educational institution which has been legalized following the needs and along with the development of times. The students’ principles of ethics, morality, religion, and independence were strengthened, which distinguish pesantren from other educational institutions. These goals can be compared to the range of scientific-technological knowledge and technical abilities which were needed to develop religious scientists. Pesantren for Indonesian Muslims surely became the focus of scientific and technological progress, which was not only a traditional Islamic educational institution that only focuses on religious affairs.

Keywords: characteristics of culture; existence, pesantren; islamic education

Introduction

The status of ulama, or theologian, is very important for Indonesian Muslims. His fatwa was heard and noticed, and his way of life became a role model. All of this is due to the reach and the diversity of knowledge. Throughout the history of Islamic civilization, many academics have made significant contributions to science (Amhar, 2022). The contributions are not only about religious sciences such as tafsir fiqh, theology, and so on, but also disciplines such as mathematics, chemistry, physics, botany, medicine, astronomy, and so forth.

Al-Jabar al-Muqabalah (780-850) by Muhammad Ibn Musa Al-Khawarizmi is the earliest traditional Muslim science literature in the East and West (Rosen, 2009). As opposed to Roman numerals, which did not include zeros, the Arabic notation approach known as Arabic numerals made it easier to calculate logarithms and decimals. Al-Khawarizmi decimal point technique provides additions from top to bottom as well as a summary of the astronomical number of exposures (Suhail, 2021).
Muslims were eager to learn science at the time. Caliph Must Al-Rashid, for example, established Baitul Hikmah as a translation center of Greek and Syrian texts into Arabic, followed by his sons, Al-Ma’mun (Khalidi & Dajani, 2015). Hunain bin Ishaq, Qusta bin Luqa, Yahya bin Abi Mansur, Sabian Sabit bin Qurra, and Jabir bin Hayyan who were the translators at Baitul Hikmah (A. Latif, 2019). The state paid them 500 dinars per month. Al-Ma’mun said to have paid the translator's salary directly.

Al-Ma’mun also sent an envoy to King Leo, an Armenian from Rome, to ask for ancient Greek works translated into Arabic to increase the number of literature resources that had previously been translated (Makrufi, 2017). As a result, the Arabians seized Mediterranean domination from the Greeks in the 11th century (Greene, 2014). Therefore, the statement that Islam (Arab) served as a communicator between Greek and European civilizations was not excessive.

However, when Baghdad fell to the East (1258) and Cordoba fell to the West (1258), the flames of the Muslim intellectual spirit were extinguished (1258) (Jenkins, 2011). The Ottoman Empire, located in Constantinople (Istanbul), placed more importance on the consolidation of power by strengthening its famous war fleet. The failure to penetrate the fortress of Vienna in 1683, on the other hand, indicated a shift of European supremacy to the East (Heß et al., 1994). Europe was on the threshold of revival. Thus, when Europe ruled the Islamic world at the end of the 17th century, the collapse of Muslims in all aspects of life began. The emergence of fatalistic views among Muslims exacerbates the problem (Aksa, 2020). They did not put up with the situation that happened to them and their people. The debate was not about scientific or technical progress, but about fiqh and ubudiyah, which seem to be the most important part of Muslim life. As a result, Muslims lag far behind Europeans.

When Muslims awoke from their long slumbers, they were surprised by how far Europe had lagged behind them, particularly in economics, science and technology (Zúquete, 2018). After that, Muslims began a campaign to conquer Europe. But European colonization has infiltrated Muslim societies, they have little time to consider economic issues or scientific and technical advances. They had to fight hard to escape the occupation. This is what the Muslim archipelago experienced during three and a half centuries of Dutch colonization. The development of anti-colonial emotions towards society is one of the reactions of Muslims. The dogma embedded in their thoughts and emotions is about the violence of colonial societies and religious divisions. A proverb, "that resembles a community is surely a part of the community itself" has spread, and Muslims no longer take for granted what comes from the West, from clothing to education (Young, 2013). It is as if the West does not conform to Muslims and goes against the principles of Islam.

Pesantren responds to Islamic principles, especially the spirit of war against the invaders, as an educational institution that is available to all Muslims throughout the whole country (Karim et al., 2022). It can be understood if pesantren at first does not include extensive courses in the curriculum. Islamic education in boarding schools is solely religious. Common themes began to enter and were introduced in pesantren only after the school was established.

It is natural if the percentage of religious and general knowledge in pesantren is no longer relevant. The relevant question is what and how the responses of pesantren in this globalization era when society has begun to enter the digital era. Pesantren has a quite hard challenge in achieving its goals. The
most noticeable change is an emphasis shift on public education. With the transition from an industrial era to a digital era, society's emphasis has shifted from "learning to seek knowledge" to "learning to prepare for getting a job". Public schools, rather than boarding schools or Islamic schools, are more attractive to parents as a result of this emphasis shift. As a result, some boarding schools have built work-oriented public schools since the 1980s (Börjesson et al., 2016).

However, just because Pesantren has met the community demands for work-oriented education, it does not show that the goal of pesantren is realized. The task of boarding school is getting harder since pesantren must meet the educational demands of those who have shifted their emphasis to the job market. Pesantren should also maintain its continuity as an Islamic-minded tafakkuh fi al-din educational institution.

Research Method

The descriptive and written information from specialists or literature studies is the main emphasis of this qualitative inquiry, which has as its goals philosophical writing and thought. A review of the literature, in-depth discussion, and documentation are the strategies employed in this study. Reviewing related books and written records helped gather both primary and secondary data. By combining biographical reconstruction and inductive analysis, the data were examined. The analysis was based on information on sociocultural and religious background, educational attainment on a higher level, character traits, and historical leadership examples. In the last step, the data on the leadership, a national hero for improving Indonesia’s Islamic education, was concluded.

Result and Discussion

Secularization and Advancement of Knowledge

Entering school is a stage in a person’s life before entering a career life (Woods et al., 2013). Only a few students solely attend school to study. This is in contrast to pesantren theology in general, which teaches the students that learning is a way to release people’s ignorance while getting their relationship closer to God (Herdiansyah et al., 2019). If a person can get a job with a great salary because of the knowledge that they have, it is a gift from God that they should be grateful for.

According to Tri Dharma Pondok Pesantren, you will see the following points: 1) Piety to Allah SWT., 2) Good scientific progress, and 3) devotion to religion, society, and the country shows that pesantren is more than just an institution of religious education. As mentioned in the second point above, science and technology education is possible to be developed in boarding schools, in purpose that the boarding school graduates will be able to interact in a very close global environment (Yusuf, 2015).

Theologian comes from a large number of Islamic housing institutions. No theologian was born out of pesantren. However, not everyone who attends boarding school becomes a theologian. When the dynamics of society change rapidly, the goal of boarding schools nowadays and in the future is to produce valuable theologians, which means the “academics who are intellectual” and “the intellectuals who are the theologians” This is because those experts are needed in this modern era (Kamla, 2015). Countries around the world are competing to improve their human quality. They realize that a country which can produce high-quality human beings will have the ability to compete. Countries that fail to produce
exceptional individuals, which produces low levels of output, will eventually become spectators, or at best loyal clients of commodities produced by industrialized countries.

Our country's undeniable supremacy in facing globalization is its science and technology comprehension, as well as the high quality of its human resources. Mastery of science and technology, as demonstrated by the experience of many countries such as the United States, Japan, Germany, and others, shows that science and technology are key components which drive the growth of these countries. Advances in science and technological expertise have accelerated the transformation of society in various aspects of life, which in Indonesia is referred to as "development" (Ellitan, 2020; Litvinenko, 2020; Marjuni, 2022).

However, the mastery of science and technology requires ethical vision and moral direction to achieve Indonesia's development goals of producing successful human beings. As evidenced by the history of industrialized countries, the growth of scientific and technological expertise that occur without ethics and moral will have a detrimental influence, which makes society further away from its axis (from its existential spiritual center). As a result, enormous humanitarian issues such as environmental disasters, tensions that lead to conflict and war, ethical values crisis, dislocation, alienation, spiritual emptiness, and so on.

Therefore, the growth and mastery of Indonesian science and technology should be based on morals and ethics. Otherwise, Indonesia will simply repeat the catastrophic experience caused by the destructive impact of science and technology, which lacks moral awareness. Here lies the obligation and responsibility of Indonesians to fight for moral and ethical science and technology, and not fight for science and technology for its benefit (Masoud, 2017; Monshipouri et al., 2017).

As a result, Djuwairiyah equipped four important human resources in the context of globalization: 1) People who have character, especially those who are honest and have social capital: reliable, appreciative of hard work, honest, and inventive. In other words, ethical and obedient individuals who obey religious principles. 2) Competent and intelligent; this intelligence must be developed in line with the potential of each individual. 3) Entrepreneur (self-employed). Since entrepreneurial skills are often inventive and not tied to anything rigid, these skills can be used not only in economics and business, but also in many aspects of life, so that the word "unemployed" is not associated with individuals, and 4) Competitive, human resources needed in an open global existence are those who are competitive to always generate more value and improve the quality of their work (Alfawaiare & Atan, 2021; Karman, 2019; Tayibnapis et al., 2018).

Indonesia has enough basic assets to achieve this target. The fact that Indonesian society and state are deeply religious and adhere to their religious beliefs is one of its most important powers. The dogma that incorporates moral and ethical principles can further be used with an ethical-moral point of view for science and technology advancements. Despite the country's current success and growth, Indonesians' knowledge of religious values has increased, which leads to efforts to build technological science with more potential moral and ethical insights (Kumar et al., 2022; Sovacool, 2014).

In the process of socio-cultural transformation that occurs as a result of growth, the religious character of the Indonesian nation is not eroded through "secularization". This seems to be related to the fact that Muslims make up the majority of Indonesia's population. According to Ernest
Gellner, Islam is the religion with the most secular opponents. As a result, in contrast to the experience of Europe (and Western countries), sociocultural revolutions and scientific and technical advances have caused secularization, which further distanced society from religious and moral values.

However, socioeconomic progress in Indonesia has a strong tendency to revive religion, which caused an increasing number in religious "enthusiasm", if it is not religious revival. The revival of this holy soul will have an impact on the progress of new pesantren. Although it is considered "limited" in the social-religious realm, Pondok Pesantren is famous as a traditional Islamic educational institution that has helped the development of human resources to achieve the perfection described above. Pesantren, as an Islamic educational institution, has traditionally played an important role in the development of the intelligence and dignity of Muslims.

How Pesantren Responds to the Challenges

The yellow holy book is used to educate religious sciences in Islamic education in Pesantren (classical). In addition, a student’s height can be rated based on his or her ability to read and understand literature. Therefore, in pesantren, sorogan, wetonan, or bandongan methods and recitation are widely used.

Pesantren as a very old educational institution is known as an educational media that serves all socio-economic society such as blue blood or nobles and something like that, as well as the poor (Fauzia et al., 2022). Abdurrahman Wahid claimed that in the early stages, Pondok Pesantren was surely a system, and its learning not only covered religious themes but also the general sciences. In other words, pesantren competes with other colonial boarding schools which are only open to the privileged (M. Latif, 2016; Martono, 2023; Thahir, 2014).

Thus, pesantren is a religious organization as well as an educational institution that has existed in society since the 15th century. It is also the oldest Islamic religious and educational institution in Indonesia. Since it was invented, pesantren has provided teaching to those who are still illiterate. Pesantren was once the only indigenous educational institution and has made a significant contribution to literacy development and cultural literacy societies (Fakhruzzaizi et al., 2021; Manshur, 2020). In other words, pesantren plays an important role in the development of resources.

The basic premise that pesantren is at the central of the social structure of rural Islam and its conservative implications, stagnant, and orthodox culture may no longer be relevant, as seen from the current state of pesantren. Since the end of the XIX century, pesantren has been able to make modifications and changes in response to the dynamics of life nowadays.

At least, this is seen from the development of diverse views about the existence of boarding schools. Manfred Ziemek, for example, believes that pesantren is at the vanguard of not only religious reform, but also educational, cultural, and socio-political progress (Syafiq & Rahardja, 2023). Zamakhsyari Dhofier said that in the past decade, the career of pesantren underwent significant changes and played a role in the process of changing the lives of Indonesian people (Dhofier, 2011). This is supported by Himawan Bayu Patriadi research that pesantren is now undergoing substantial development although in a way that is increasingly contrary to its image (Patriadi, 2017).

There is a serious question such as why pesantren is still operating. It is necessary to examine the characteristics of pesantren that have not been affected by global turmoil due
to the flow of change or modernization since it was established in various regions of the world, especially the Islamic world. Traditional Islamic educational institutions, such as pondok pesantren in Indonesia, have changed as a result of the expansion of public education throughout the Islamic world during the modernization period. As a result, some people turn to general education, while others adjust and receive more or less common educational materials and procedures. It is available in conventional Islamic educational institutions in the Middle East (such as madrasah, kuttab and masid). The increasing pace of change and modernity destroyed traditional Islamic educational institutions. This happened in Turkey and Egypt (Kamali, 2001).

Turkish and Egyptian experiences revealed that traditional madrasah and madrasah have transformed due to modernization. Sociological and political circumstances support it and become the causes of the necessity for the reformation of these institutions. However, this is different from what happened in Indonesia. Traditional Islamic education in Indonesia, such as pesantren, continues to grow and develop as if it is unaffected by the currents of modernization. It is, perhaps, because of the sociological, cultural, and political conditions of Indonesia which causes pesantren is still under surveillance.

It must be recognized that modern education was brought by the Dutch colonists, not by Muslims themselves. Furthermore, modern education has had an impact on Indonesia’s traditional Islamic education system. Various Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia have had various reactions to this topic. Certain surau-surai in Minangkabau are flexible and adaptive in adjusting to modern education so certain surau-surau in Minangkabau have been turned into "Nagari schools" (village schools/communities / volkscholen). Meanwhile, some surau took a similar stance with pesantren in Java, which was more hesitant to adapt to the modern education offered by Dutch colonists. This reaction was triggered by a relatively diverse component of historical experience in the process and expansion of Islamization, as well as interactions with Dutch rulers (Houben, 2003). Meanwhile, some surau took a similar approach to pesantren in Java islands, which were more unwilling to adjust to the contemporary education provided by Dutch colonists. This reaction was triggered by various historical experiences in the process and the spread of Islamization, as well as encounters with Dutch rulers.

Similar to the colonial pesantren, pesantren in the independence period, the New Order, responded to the expansion of the public education system by the government by increasing the scope of its teaching until the current Reformation era (Kosim et al., 2023). The first stage is to expand the pesantren curriculum to include more topics or abilities. Second, establish educational institutions and infrastructure to improve public education. Several boarding schools make innovations which cause changes in them, both in terms of the materials taught, methods, and management so that Pesantren is no longer just an educational institution that only teaches religious sciences, but also develops a variety of disciplines through established educational institutions. It shows that pesantren has changed rapidly in response to the desires and expectations of the times (Asrohah, 2011).

From this point of view, it appears that pesantren is and has seen new changes in the system innovation framework, which are: 1) Habituation with modern methodologies. 2) Increase the emphasis on functional education, which requires openness to make progress. 3) Diversify programs and activities
more openly, such as opportunities to provide students with a wide range of information beyond religious lessons and skills needed by the world of career. 4) It can serve as a centre for community development. As a result, pesantren underwent a cultural, structural, and value revolution (Fauzan & Rohmadi, 2021; Hilmy, 2011; Susilo & Dalimunthe, 2019).

This tendency should be promoted not only as an idea of value for the caretaker but also at a more realistic and pragmatic level of necessity. Because of the modifications and adjustments mentioned previously, pesantren can not only exist and survive but also because of its existential character, which is not only referred to as an institution that is not only identic with its Islamic meaning but also contains the original meaning, meaning of Indonesia (Nusantara).

Conclusion

It is impossible to overstate the importance of pesantren in our country. Since pre-independence, pesantren has been used to disseminate Islamic teachings to the broader community. Theologian was born from pesantren and his scientific contribution continues until this day. Pesantren cooperated with other components of the nation to fight for state sovereignty during the colonial struggle. When the motherland seized independence, pesantren played an important role in completing the journey of the motherland, especially in the field of Islamic education and the religious and moral growth of Islamic society. What Pesantren has achieved should be seen as a devotion to the culture of the Muslim community and the Indonesian state. However, pesantren must re-read its existence to keep up with the dynamics of the times that have now reached the level of globalization. The goal is that the boarding school be able to provide more than what has been donated before.

Globalization has now reached every corner of the world. Indonesia is no exception to this norm. Globalization is inevitable. This is inevitable. No one is invulnerable to globalization effects, including education, especially pesantren education. Whether we like it or not, boarding schools must take action quickly, precisely, and wisely. Globalization should be seen as a challenge rather than a danger to pesantren civilization. The existence of boarding schools that are always threatened by the dynamics of times evolution, will not just disappear because of globalization. This is not to say that pesantren is a school which has a dormitory, on the other hand, pesantren must respond by re-evaluating and refocusing their philanthropic activities for the state.

The reorientation of pesantren that can be done is to make pesantren more visible as an Islamic educational institution committed to the development of Indonesian Muslims' resources. Pesantren provides benefits in this effort that are practically incomparable to other social educational institutions, such as ethical, moral, and religious values, unity, humility, and independence, for several names. When these concepts are contrasted with the level of science and technology of every santri and their technical ability in the boarding school, it becomes astonishing. Pesantren can advance science and technology for Indonesian Muslims and no longer only focus on religious affairs.

The development of human resources offered by boarding schools focuses not only on the cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor components but also on the theoretical and practical characteristics which answer all the needs of Santri’s pragmatic life after graduating from the boarding school. With this type of growth plan, pesantren’s output is expected to be able to
compete with other countries in the world. These points of view expose many small biases against pesantren, including labels such as traditional, old-fashioned, archaic (stagnant), and many indirect stigmas. As a result, as mentioned in the proverb that governs it, “al-muhafadzatu ‘ala qadimi al-shalih wa al-akhdhu bi al-jadid al-ashlah,” pesantren will continue to grow as time goes by (preserving goodness, (whether from the old things and making new things better).

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