

Harmonization of Ethics of Compliance and Autonomy of Thinking in Islamic Boarding Schools in the Perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith

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Abstract: The restriction of ethical concepts in Islamic boarding schools was implicitly contrary to freedom of opinion and the development of autonomy of thought in education. Consequently, this research aims to harmonize the traditional ethical values of Pesantren with the need for critical thinking from the perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith. Using a qualitative approach, data was collected through interviews with the head of the boarding school and student representatives from two Islamic boarding schools. Data analysis includes collecting, condensing, presenting, and drawing conclusions. The study results show that ethical teaching was carried out through the book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim* and the rules of conduct supported by weekly instruction. The efforts of Islamic boarding schools in synergizing ethics and autonomy of thinking can be seen through activities such as deliberation, *bahtsul masail*, *sorogan* forums, and suggestion boxes. However, practices were found that limited freedom of thought, such as the lack of room to ask questions, the fear of students in expressing criticism, the dominance of seniority, and the character of caregivers who tended to be authoritarian. The perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith emphasizes that autonomy of thought still needs to be maintained within an ethical framework.

Keywords: *Harmonization of Ethics, Autonomy of Thinking, Islamic Boarding School, Perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith*

Introduction

Islamic boarding school education is full of characteristics, habits, and distinctive patterns that are not even possessed by other

educational institutions. Among the most prominent are related to the leadership of kiai or caregivers in Islamic boarding schools have an essential role. All students must obey and comply with their Kiai Moreover,

there is a significant assertion by Dhofier that pesantren can be conceptualized as a small kingdom, with the Kiai serving as the ultimate authority and source of power within the pesantren's social and institutional structure (Dhofier, 2011). The fact that has developed, the character of kiai leadership in Islamic boarding schools is also diverse (Arifin, 2015).

Islamic boarding schools are Islamic-based educational institutions that have developed and existed for quite a long time in Indonesia. In historical records, pesantren have appeared since the colonial era (Asnia et al., 2024). Pesantren not only teaches religious and general knowledge, but the life of pesantren is designed to form the morals and ethics of students (santri) which are outlined in the form of established policies and regulations. The unique thing about the rules of the pesantren is the tradition of punishment (*ta'zir*) for students who violate the rules (Hidayat et al., 2024).

The rules and regulations applied in pesantren can form good character and morals for students (Puspitarini et al., 2023). This is shown by regulations that are formulated with a positive charge and aim to change behaviour for the better. However, the applicable regulations are inseparable from various challenges. For example, Fathurrohman's research (2023) found that the rules and policies of the pesantren have not been able to be understood comprehensively by all students (Fathorrahman, 2023). Pesantren already have a special code of conduct book, but in practice many do not read and even ignore it. The law of pesantren regulations has not been accepted and implemented optimally because of the lack of understanding of students about the purpose and background of the formation of a rule.

When traced, the causative factor for the lack of optimal implementation of pesantren rules is the lack of transparency and

openness in the formation of rules. The traditional pesantren system still has a feudal and authoritarian impression. As an educational institution, it is time for pesantren to follow global progress to provide more space for expression and dynamic thinking to students and restructure the old system that has been established (Mushthofa & Aminah, 2023). In addition, Islamic boarding schools become the embodiment of a holistic educational institution in shaping future generations of Muslims who are ready to face various problems and challenges of the times (Sufirmansyah & Badriyah, 2022).

The Qur'an and Hadith provide many descriptions of the interaction and ethics of students (students) with teachers. For example, QS. al Kahfi verses 65-70 explain the ethics of the Prophet Moses when he taught the Prophet Khidir, namely manners, patience, obedience, willingness to accept punishment and others (Bakah, 2020). In addition, a book about ethics that is quite familiar, taught in Islamic boarding schools is the Book of *Ta'lim al-Muta'alim*. The book explains how to honour a teacher, including not walking unless allowed, not talking much in front of the teacher before talking or asking questions before being allowed (Nuriyah, 2022). Restrictions in the concept of ethics in pesantren implicitly contradict the fulfilment of the right to freedom of opinion and the formation of autonomy of thinking in education (Siswadi, 2023).

Some previous studies related include; The research was entitled, "Higher-Order Thinking Skills: Strategies to Counter Radicalism of Islamic Boarding School Students" which revealed the importance of encouraging Islamic boarding school students to think critically and creatively and prevent textualism-fanaticism of thinking that often infects students and alumni of Islamic boarding schools (Ardiansyah, 2018) research entitled,

"Critical Education Paradigm in Islamic Boarding Schools" which found that critical education in Islamic boarding schools has been carried out, but theoretically conceptually it has not been done much and the thinking paradigm is still dwelling on the traditions that prevailed before (Samsudin, 2019). The research entitled, "The Relevance of Pesantren Culture : a Review on "The History of Pesantren Ethics in the Nusantara in Nusantara", resulted in the ethics of pesantren born from the process of inculturation between local wisdom and Islamic values, so that the renewal of the system in pesantren is always based on strong considerations (Azizah, 2021). The research entitled, "Shaping the Santri's Inclusive Attitudes through Learning in Islamic Boarding School: A Case study of Al-Anwar Sarang Rembang Islamic Boarding School Indonesia", revealed that Islamic boarding schools are not radicalism institutions and suggested adopting discursive learning in order to be able to transform to create graduates with inclusive character (Rohman & Muhtamiroh, 2022).

The restriction of ethical concepts in Islamic boarding schools is implicitly contrary to the right to freedom of opinion and the development of autonomy of thought in education. This research aims to harmonize the traditional ethical values of pesantren with the need for critical thinking from the perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith as the main source of the law of Islam. Specifically, research on this topic, especially using two samples of Islamic boarding schools with different cultures.

Research Method

The type of research is qualitative and aims to uncover the meaning of social and humanitarian problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method is used as an

effort to understand and reveal the practice of ethical obedience and autonomy of thought in Islamic boarding schools that clash between the issue of compliance and the need for freedom of opinion according to the basic concepts of Islamic law, the Qur'an and Hadith.

The research was conducted on two Islamic boarding schools in the Sarang area, Rembang, Central Java, Indonesia. Consideration of the selection of pesantren based on different cultures and systems between pesantren. The first pesantren has a *salafiyah haditsah* (semi-modern) typology and the second pesantren is purely *salafiyah* (traditional). However, both pesantren are within the scope of the same foundation. The data source is in the form of semi-structured interviews. The data collection technique uses a *purposive sampling system*, with informants from the head of the boarding school and student representatives from each pesantren.

The process of processing and analyzing data through steps includes; 1) *Data Collection*, 2) *Data Condensation*, 3) *Data Display*, and 4) *conclusion drawing/verification* (Ridder et al., 2014). *First, data collection* (data collection), data was collected based on the results of interviews with all informants and tracing the interpretation of the Qur'an and hadith related to the concept of ethics of obedience and autonomy of thinking. *Second, Data Condensation* (data condensation), is the selection, focusing, simplification, abstraction, and transformation of data obtained from *resume* interview transcripts. *Third, data display* (data presentation), data is presented in a narrative descriptive form to describe and understand the situation that occurs. *Fourth, Conclusion Drawing/Verification* (conclusion drawing and verification), concluding aims to explain the formulation of the problem from the research in detail and specifically.

Findings

Part of the effort to harmonize the ethics of obedience and autonomy of thinking in pesantren is to analyze thematically the interview data analyzed using several parameters, including; 1) the teachings of ethics and obedience in pesantren, 2) the integration of the concept of freedom of opinion in daily education, 3) the challenge of harmonizing ethics of obedience and autonomy of thinking, 4) the impact of freedom of opinion on the character of students, 5) the facilities of freedom of opinion in pesantren, 6) the involvement of students in the formation of regulations in Islamic boarding schools, 7) the concept of *sami'na wa atho'na* in kiai, and 8) the leadership of caregivers/kiai related to the ethics of obedience and autonomy of thinking. The details are displayed as follows;

First, about the teachings of ethics and obedience in Islamic Boarding Schools. Based on an interview conducted with the head of a semi-modern boarding school, revealed that *"ethics and discipline in Islamic boarding schools are compiled in the Islamic boarding school rules book. The management appoints senior students who have a role and are respected to give weekly routine advice. We feel that the morals and ethics of students in the current era have deteriorated"*. The implications that occurred in the salaf pesantren, expressed by the head of the boarding school, *"the teachings of ethics and obedience for students are integrated in learning, namely through the book of ta'limul muta'allim and the example of teachers and kiai in daily life. Islamic boarding schools also have regulations that must be obeyed by all students."*

Second, about the integration of the concept of freedom of opinion in daily education. Based on the head of the semi-

modern boarding school, he revealed, *"The learning of the pesantren provides opportunities for students to ask questions and provides a room for deliberation (bahtsu masail), in addition to that it also provides a box of criticism and suggestions in the pesantren. The management also held regular meetings with the head of the room to convey the aspirations of the students"*. As for the implementation in the salaf pesantren, the head of the boarding school said, *"The pesantren provides a deliberative forum to express opinions about science or problems related to religion, students are given the freedom to express ideas and even criticize the opinions of their teachers. Teachers do not feel embarrassed and awkward if the arguments presented turn out to be wrong. Scientific issues are given freedom but regulatory issues must be obeyed in totality."*

Third, about the challenge of harmonizing ethics of obedience and autonomy of thinking. In this regard, the head of the semi-modern boarding school revealed, *"Santri tends to be passive in class because they are reluctant to certain teachers or teachers do not open room for opinions or questions. Junior students tend not to dare to speak up or criticize senior students. The seniority of the pesantren is still felt, they find it difficult to accept criticism and input from junior students"*. The confession from the chairman of the salaf pond is, *"We impose punishment (ta'zir) when violating the rules. The punishment that applies is educational such as reading the Qur'an, memorizing and writing nadzam. The challenge is not too significant, because the majority of students who enter this pesantren already have a high desire to learn, only a small part of them are coerced by their parents."*

Fourth, about the impact of freedom of opinion on the character of students. In this regard, one of the students from the semi-modern Islamic boarding school said, *"For us, we can cultivate a responsible and consistent character, if we have been given space for freedom"*

of thought and opinion, then we must be responsible and consistent with something that we choose and agree on together". As for the point of view of one of the salaf students, he revealed "helping the activeness of students in activities. Like in KBM, we dare to ask questions about things that are not understood, even at the end of learning we are always allowed to ask questions. The stages carried out in the lower class we are only trained in the mental aspect to argue rationally, but the higher the class, the more they begin to argue using the tendencies of salaf books".

Fifth, about the facilities for freedom of opinion in Islamic boarding schools. As expressed by students from semi-modern Islamic boarding schools, "Forums to provide space for freedom of thought and opinion directly in the boarding school are still lacking. Many regulations are formed directly by the management, if the students think, it may only be accommodated a little". As for the information given by the students from the salaf Islamic boarding school, "facilities are provided such as deliberations, discussions, mauqufah, and pond agenda sessions. However, such activities still use polite ethics in arguments".

Sixth, about the involvement of students in the formation of regulations in Islamic boarding schools. In this regard, the chairman of the semi-modern boarding school said, "The management does not involve students directly in the formation, but looks at the existing events/phenomena and captures the possible aspirations of the students. However, we make a regular evaluation forum with the head of the room to see the response, so that a revision or the formation of new rules appears". As for the implementation in the salaf pesantren, the head of the boarding school said, "In the code of conduct book, it is stated, students have the right to submit proposals for the pesantren to the management. Facilities for expressing opinions can be through the head of the room, the head of the complex, and then to the relevant management. All opinions are not immediately

accepted but are heard first and the benefits are taken".

Seventh, about the concept of sami'na wa atho'na in kiai. Based on the presentation from the chairman of the semi-modern boarding school, it was revealed, "I prefer sami'na wa atho'na because what the kiai does must be good for the students. Initially, we understood the concept, yes, what the kiai had to do, but the more it came here, it turned out that what the kiai had done had to be understood and studied carefully". As for the point of view of the chairman of the salaf Islamic boarding school, it was expressed that "We do whatever the kiai orders as long as the kiai orders as long as it does not violate the rules of sharia".

Eighth, the leadership of caregivers/kiai is related to the ethics of obedience and autonomy of thinking. The head of the semi-modern boarding school, revealed, "Caregivers only provide a general overview or general idea, the majority of which are always related to the situation of the students. The caregiver fully submits the technical and policy skills to the management". The head of the salaf Islamic boarding school, revealed, "Some regulations are direct instructions from caregivers and some are handed over authority to the management. Every 3 months there is a meeting of the management with the caregiver, so the rules we make are automatically known and agreed upon together with the caregiver."

Discussion

Description of Teaching Compliance Ethics in Islamic Boarding Schools

Pesantren generally provides moral material in learning. One of the books of morals that is quite phenomenal is *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. Learning with the book has been researched quite effectively and has a positive impact on changing the attitude of students (Setiyono et al., 2023; Sugiyono, 2012). In semi-modern Islamic boarding

schools, it is revealed related to the threat of moral degradation of students. One solution to prevent the moral degradation of the millennial generation is to apply the habituation method of character education. This habituation method starts from the example of Kiai, teachers, administrators and everyone in the pesantren environment. After that, it is developed through forums that touch on the urgency of ethics and morals, including learning, weekly newsletters and so on (Ramdliyah, 2020).

Pesantren has special rules outlined in the rules book as an effort to teach ethics and obedience. However, it is worth noting that the study of (Amaliyah et al., 2023) revealed that the understanding of the 60.3% discipline affects the discipline of students. Thus, it is necessary to reconfirm the students' understanding of the rules formed by the pesantren. All Islamic boarding schools, both semi-modern and salaf impose punishment (*ta'zir*) against violations of the rules. The punishment imposed is educational, such as reciting, writing *nadzam*, congregational prayers, cleaning the environment (*Ro'an*) and so on. Mo'tasim Research (2015) revealed that the punishment (*ta'zir*) in Islamic boarding schools should be in accordance with the expected goals and avoid physical violence (Mo'tasim, 2015). Indirectly, *ta'zir* can make students depressed, traumatized, and embarrassed. However, another positive impact reveals that the *ta'zir* has a considerable influence on making students more disciplined and obedient to the rules (Shelly Selvia & Sutopo Sutopo, 2021). In addition, the punishment imposed in Islamic boarding schools has fulfilled the purpose of sanctions in education, namely the deterrent effect for the perpetrator and for others (Damopolii et al., 2023).

Identification of Ways Pesantren Integrate Autonomy of Thought and Freedom of Opinion in the Learning Environment and Culture

Autonomy of thought and freedom of opinion in pesantren are given space, starting from classroom learning, deliberation, *bahtsul masa'il*, book forum sorogan, routine meetings, suggestion criticism boxes and so on. It was revealed that the *salaf* pesantren provides a wide space and opportunity for students to express and think related to science, but the regulations must be completely obeyed. This admission is in line with F. Rohman's research (2022) which shows that pesantren gives more autonomy and responsibility to students to determine the learning process independently, such as proposing or choosing problems to be studied and discussed (Fathorrahman, 2023).

With freedom of opinion in the classroom during learning, teachers have various characters, especially in semi-modern cottages. Some allow asking questions, others do not open the opportunity to ask questions or opinions. It was found that students were passive during learning and felt reluctant to ask questions. Related to the discovery, there are several weaknesses in the pesantren learning process revealed by Fachrurazi which is quite interesting, among them are (Fachrurazi, 2016);

first the assumption of the narrow and rigid perspective of the students due to the narrowness of the study of knowledge from various perspectives of scholars; *second* mastery of narrow learning methodologies, so that the learning model is oriented towards knowledge transfer (*Transfer of knowledge*), so that the subject of learners (students) cultivates themselves by listening and taking notes. Compliance ethics that are regulated so strictly also make students

afraid to refute or ask questions because it is assumed to be disrespectful behavior.

The part that is still a scourge in pesantren education is the case of seniority (Nurisakhoirini & Widiasih, 2024). Seniority is defined as the desire for power and a sense of respect by juniors. In addition, seniority is considered an integral and derivative part of the culture in the pesantren environment (Khoirini & Widiasih, 2024). According to the admission, senior students still find it difficult to accept criticism from junior students. Seniority in this kind of pesantren, if left unchecked, not only hinders freedom of thought and opinion, but also affects social, mental, psychological and so on interactions.

Regarding the involvement of students in the process of forming regulations, pesantren does not involve them directly but provides space through suggestion criticism boxes, evaluation meetings with student representatives and the like. However, the students' proposals still have to be heard and not all can be realized. However, the consideration of determining a new regulation is still through an initial survey on the prediction of the responsiveness of the implementation of a rule. From these findings, it can be seen that the space for student involvement related to regulations is quite narrow, so an explanation is needed related to the purpose, value, and consequences of each regulation so that students understand why the rules are important and their contribution to character formation (Asadin et al., 2023).

The positive characteristics found when pesantren provide space for freedom of opinion and autonomy to think are a sense of responsibility, consistency, activity and confidence (Arroisi et al., 2024). The responsibility in question is for their own choices so that when given the space of freedom, the students feel that they must be more consistent. In addition, training the

students' active and confident mentality from an early age in presenting arguments that are tendentious and based on representative references. On the contrary, if the pesantren closes itself and is indifferent to freedom of thought, then the increasingly advanced situation makes the pesantren world even more lagging and forms students who are difficult to adapt (Muhajir & Akbar, 2022).

The typology of the pesantren system cannot be separated from the characteristics of kiai as leaders and caregivers of pesantren (Humaisi et al., 2024). Kiai has the freedom to take actions and policies related to pesantren management (Baidhawi, 2021). There was a slight difference between the character of the caregiver (kiai) in the semi-modern pesantren and the salaf.

Regarding pesantren regulations, caregivers in semi-modern pesantren only convey ideas and general descriptions related to something that relates to the lives of students, but the authority related to regulations is fully handed over to the management. However, the regulations at the salaf pesantren are partly instructional from the caregiver. The meaning of obeying the orders of the caregiver also experienced a slight shift between students in each pesantren. The first understanding is that all Kiai orders must be obeyed except out of the shari'a rules. The second understanding is that the orders of the kiai must be understood and studied carefully so that they achieve *the goal* expected. The gap that arises is that students begin to build critical thinking in the direction of studying, deepening, and understanding what the caregiver conveys, not just accepting it rawly.

Obedience or obedience to kiai in Islamic boarding schools that are not well understood can give birth to psychological problems such as forming students who are

passive uncritical and stupid in Islamic thought (Kuswandi & Ridwan, 2023).

*Concrete Examples of Implementation
Compliance and Freedom of Opinion
from the Perspective of the
Qur'an and Hadith*

The Qur'an provides responses and examples related to student ethics to teachers, as stated in Surah al Kahfi verses 65-70 which explain the interaction of the Prophet Moses as a student and the Prophet Khidir as a teacher, as follows;

"Then they both met a servant among Our servants, whom We have given mercy to by Our side and whom We have taught him knowledge by Our side. Moses said to him." May I follow you so that you may teach me the guidance that you have been taught? (6). He replied, "Truly, you will not be able to be patient with me." (67). "And how will you be able to be patient with something, when you do not have sufficient knowledge about it?" (68). He said, "God willing, you will find me a patient man, and I will not oppose you in any matter" (69). He said, "If you follow me, then do not ask me about anything, until I have explained it to you (70)."

The implementation of learning that can be understood from the verse is; *first*, to make a learning contract. Teachers and students should make a learning contract before learning begins, namely agreeing on rules and ethics that must be obeyed and implemented during the learning process. Of course, the learning contract between teachers will be different because it is influenced by educational, social, cultural and so on; *second*, modern learning methods focus more on student activity (*student-centered*). Prophet Khidir in learning allowed Prophet Moses to explore everything observed, think about and convey the results first before a teacher clarified and concluded the content of the learning; *and third* using ethics.

During the learning process, the Prophet Moses showed several good learning ethics, including; 1) arranging good intentions before studying; 2) choosing the best teacher, namely in the context of the verse the Prophet Khidir. In pesantren education, it can be implemented when choosing a caregiver figure (Kiai) who will be a role model; 3) Don't be arrogant. A student is not worthy to boast to his teacher, even though he already knows the knowledge that the teacher teaches; 4) Be patient. During the learning process, students are willing to control their emotions, do not rush to ask questions, interrupt the conversation of the teacher and friends who are talking, always patiently carry out the learning process; 5) Be prejudiced against teachers.

Do not think negatively about learning when you do not understand the meaning and will of the teacher. Likewise in the pesantren environment, one should think positively about the agreed rules and try to understand the purpose; 6) Obey the teacher's orders while being kind. Obedience to kiai, teachers, administrators in pesantren is a good thing in education because it has a positive goal for the good of students (santri); 7) Prepare yourself before learning. Prophet Moses was not a student who was empty-handed and knew nothing when he studied with Prophet Khidir, he prepared himself before studying (Bakah, 2020).

Side by side with the importance of maintaining ethics, education also demands freedom of thought and opinion (Wibowo et al., 2023). The Qur'an and hadith allude to freedom of opinion both in terms of opinion in deliberation and belief (religion) (Fadhil & Sahrani, 2014).

Some of these verses were added by QS. Al Baqarah verse 256 explains that Allah does not command to force a person to convert to Islam but invites them to think, also QS. Al Isra' verse 36 gives freedom to

speak the truth and not spread lies (Jannah & Sholeh, 2021). The Qur'an also regulates the way of communicating, which is explained in QS. Al-Ahzab verse 70 about saying the truth, QS. Al-Baqarah verse 235 is about saying good, QS. Thaha verse 44 about saying the soft, QS. An-Nisa verse 63 says the influential, QS. al-Isra' verse 23 says Your Majesty, and QS. Al-Isra' verse 28 is about saying what is appropriate. Thus, there are ethical considerations in communicating, expressing opinions, criticism and the like.

However, in conveying the ideas or opinions of the Prophet Muhammad in a hadith also gives a warning, *"If you speak (convey) about a matter to a people even though it is not within reach (not understood) by their reason, it will undoubtedly bring slander among them"* (HR. Muslim). Thus, it is important to validate the information to be conveyed so that it is not misunderstood, including not bringing information that disturbs the comfort and peace of a person, group, community and so on. This context can be implemented in the formation and delivery of regulations in Islamic boarding schools to consider the benefits and understanding of the students of the urgency and purpose of forming a rule.

Conclusion

Teaching ethics in pesantren is carried out through the book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim* and the rules in the code of conduct. However, in semi-modern Islamic boarding schools, there is a decline in ethical practices so special training such as weekly advice is needed. The synergy between ethics and autonomy of thinking is carried out through classroom learning, deliberation, *bahtsul masail*, book review forums, regular meetings, as well as criticism and suggestion boxes. However, it was found that practices that limit the autonomy of thinking, such as the lack of

opportunities to ask questions, the fear of students being considered rude when criticizing, regulations that do not open up space for participation, the dominance of seniority, and the style of caregivers that tend to be authoritarian. The Qur'an and Hadith emphasize the importance of ethics in education, such as making learning contracts, using methods that focus on student activity, arranging intentions, choosing good teachers, being humble, patient, prejudiced, obeying teachers in kindness, and preparing before learning. Autonomy of thought is still important, but it must be framed in communication ethics so as not to cause misunderstandings or disturbances in the comfort of others.

The findings can be used as a reference for all Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia for improvements, especially related to the mission of harmonizing ethics of obedience and autonomy of thinking. In addition, it provides a representation of ethical practices and autonomy of thinking that have been implemented. The limitations of informants and time are the limitations of this study. Furthermore, this discovery can be deepened by conducting development research to test the most effective programs and systems projecting the success of synergizing ethics and thinking autonomy.

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