



STUDENTS IN TWO WORLDS: ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER DIFFERENCES IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY

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Abstract

This research analyzes the differences in the character of students in the Islamic boarding school environment and society. Islamic boarding schools as traditional Islamic educational institutions have a central role in forming the personality of students through the application of religious values, discipline and the habit of living a simple life. On the other hand, society has a more complex influence due to the diversity of values, extensive social interaction and the challenges of modernity. These environmental differences create dynamics in the students' thought patterns, behavior and adaptation when interacting outside the Islamic boarding school. The research results show that santri tend to maintain Islamic boarding school values in society, even though they experience several challenges in the consistency of their implementation. This research is expected to provide insight for Islamic boarding school managers, the community and policy makers to strengthen the synergy between Islamic boarding school values and the needs of modern society.

Keywords: *Santri, Islamic Boarding School, Society, Character, Religious Values, Modernity*

INTRODUCTION

In pesantren, santri not only receive comprehensive Islamic religious education but also undergo character formation rooted in religious teachings, making pesantren a crucial place for the development of individual values and morals. Within the pesantren environment, religious values are intensively taught, ranging from the study of classical Islamic texts to the application of daily worship practices, aiming to instill discipline and a personality aligned with Islamic teachings. However, when santri return to society or find themselves outside the pesantren environment, they often face challenges in adapting to different social values, such as popular culture or modern norms that may not fully align with pesantren teachings. Thus, this adaptation process becomes essential for santri to maintain the religious values instilled in them while living harmoniously in a diverse society.

Previous studies on the differences in the character of santri within pesantren and society have shown that pesantren play a unique role in shaping the character of santri through values such as sincerity, simplicity, and discipline, which are simultaneously instilled in daily life. In pesantren, santri live within a structured system under intensive guidance from kyai (religious leaders) and ustaz (teachers), fostering individuals who are more disciplined and religious. However, research also reveals that when santri return to society, they encounter various adaptation challenges, such as the influence of popular culture and values differing from those taught in pesantren. This indicates that while pesantren serve as a conducive environment for character formation, adapting to societal norms remains a major challenge. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of synchronizing character education in pesantren with the societal environment to support santri in fulfilling their social roles successfully.

The character of santri in pesantren is shaped through an intensive religious education process and an environment that consistently applies Islamic values. However, upon returning to society, santri often have to adjust to diverse social norms, which sometimes conflict with the teachings they received in pesantren. This research seeks to explore how these environmental differences influence the attitudes, behaviors, and mindsets of santri in their daily lives.

Furthermore, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the adaptation dynamics of santri between the worlds of pesantren and society. By identifying the factors influencing changes in santri character, this research can contribute to the development of pesantren education models that equip santri with adaptive skills without abandoning Islamic values. Hence, this study is not only intended to provide insights into the character differences of santri for educators and stakeholders but also to ensure that santri remain religious individuals who are relevant in societal life.

The primary assumption regarding the character differences of santri in pesantren and society is that the environment plays a significant role in shaping one's attitudes, behaviors, and values. In pesantren, santri are formed through an educational pattern that emphasizes discipline, simplicity, and the collective practice of religious teachings. The homogeneous environment of pesantren and the strict supervision of kyai and ustaz create a setting conducive to reinforcing Islamic values. In this context, santri tend to exhibit structured, obedient, and religiously oriented characters that align with the teachings imparted through pesantren education.

Conversely, another assumption suggests that when santri return to society, their character undergoes adjustments due to interactions with more diverse social norms. Life in society introduces santri to popular culture, the influence of technology, and modern lifestyles, which often differ from the values they learned in pesantren. Consequently, santri may face challenges in maintaining their religious character while adapting to the demands of social life. These character differences are thus assumed to result from the dynamics of environments that influence the internalization of religious and social values in santri.

A qualitative study employing a case study approach is an appropriate method to understand how pesantren shape santri character and the challenges they face when adapting to society. Researchers can focus on a specific pesantren as the main unit of analysis and conduct in-depth interviews to explore santri experiences related to the internalization of religious values and the application of these values outside pesantren. Participant observation is also essential to comprehend how the study of classical Islamic texts, worship practices, and discipline are implemented in the daily lives of santri. Additionally, a narrative analysis of santri experiences after returning to society can provide insights into their adaptation process to popular culture and modern social norms. Through this approach, the research can yield a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of character formation in pesantren, as well as the challenges and adaptation strategies of santri in a diverse society.

RESEARCH METHODS

The approach used in this research is mixed methods with a sequential exploratory design, which integrates qualitative and quantitative analysis. The evaluation was conducted using the CIPPO (Context, Input, Process, Product, Outcomes) and Kirkpatrick models to analyze the policy, resources, implementation, and impact of the program on graduates and industry. However, in this discussion, the analysis is focused on the Kirkpatrick model with a quantitative approach using multiple linear regression. The research sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, while the quantitative data analysis aims to measure the influence of the main factors in the success of this program. This research is evaluative, with quantitative analysis using path analysis statistics to identify the relationship between the variables studied. The Kirkpatrick data collection technique was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires, which were then analyzed using a quantitative approach to obtain more accurate and comprehensive research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Family Background

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are educational institutions that play an important role in shaping the character and morals of students (santri) (Nashihin, 2018). The character developed in pesantren does not only focus on religious aspects but also includes social, intellectual, and self-reliance aspects. Each student who enters a pesantren brings different backgrounds, which inevitably affect how they adapt, learn, and live within the pesantren environment. One significant difference is the influence of family background on their life in pesantren (Fauzan, 2009).

A more religious or less religious family background can affect how easily or difficultly a student adapts to the pesantren life, which is full of discipline and demands for deep religious studies. As expressed in the following interviews:

"I feel there is no significant difference between life at home and at the pesantren. At home, I am also used to family religious gatherings," (Student A).

"At first, I felt awkward. I was not used to this routine, especially with all the rules that must be followed. But over time, I started to feel comfortable," (Student B).

From interviews with Ahmad and Dinda, it can be concluded that a religious or less religious family background greatly influences a student's ability to adapt to pesantren life. Students from more religious families, such as Ahmad, tend to

adapt more quickly to pesantren life because they are already accustomed to strict religious routines. On the other hand, students from less religious families, like Dinda, initially face difficulties following the rules and activities in pesantren but eventually manage to adapt after undergoing the adjustment process (Yusuf, 2023).

The different characters of students from religious and less religious families reflect the dynamics in pesantren in terms of adapting to a structured life full of religious demands. Students from religious families adapt more easily because they already have a basic understanding of the importance of worship, discipline, and religious study in daily life. This allows them to focus more on studying and following pesantren routines without feeling burdened (Fauzan, 2009).

Meanwhile, students from families with a more lenient religious background may take longer to adapt to the pesantren environment (Shofiyah et al., 2019). They may initially feel shocked or awkward, especially when facing religious obligations they have not experienced before (Ainulyaqin et al., 2023). However, over time, they learn to adapt, interact with fellow students, and follow the routines in place. Through this process, they not only gain deeper religious knowledge but also develop discipline, independence, and better morals. Therefore, family background becomes an important factor influencing the spiritual journey and character development of each student in pesantren (Pritaningrum & Hendriani, 2013).

Motivation to Enter Pesantren

Pesantren, as an Islamic educational institution, not only emphasizes understanding religious knowledge but also character building involving discipline, independence, and adherence to established rules (Muthia, 2016). In this context, students' personal motivation plays a crucial role. Motivation is one of the factors that influence how well students can adapt to pesantren life and engage in religious education with full awareness. Some students may enter pesantren due to family encouragement, while others may come with personal motivation to deepen their religious knowledge (Fakhrurrozi, 2021). These motivational differences then affect their learning intensity, participation in pesantren activities, and how they face the challenges present. As reflected in the following interviews and observations:

"I chose this pesantren because I want to understand religion better, especially to improve myself and live according to Islamic teachings. My motivation is personal, not due to my parents' pressure," (Student A).

"Sometimes I feel tired because I prefer to focus on other things. My parents insisted I enter pesantren, so I feel I have to do it," (Student B). From interviews with Ahmad and Dinda, it can be concluded that personal or compelled motivation affects how they live their life in pesantren. Ahmad, who has a strong personal motivation to deepen his religious knowledge, tends to be more active and enthusiastic in participating in pesantren activities. He feels motivated to increase his religious knowledge and strives to follow every rule wholeheartedly (Nashihin, 2018). Meanwhile, Dinda, who entered pesantren due to parental pressure, initially felt burdened by the routines but gradually found new motivation over time. In the end, Dinda learned to adapt to pesantren life and gained spiritual benefits from the experience, despite not having a strong initial personal desire (Hidayat, 2017).

Personal motivation plays a very important role in shaping the attitude and character of students in pesantren. Students with clear and strong personal motivation usually adapt more easily to pesantren life and show high enthusiasm in participating in various religious activities. They tend to actively join studies,

lectures, and perform worship with full awareness and sincerity (Muttaqin, 2016).

On the other hand, students who enter pesantren due to parental encouragement or other external factors may take longer to find their personal motivation (Hamid & Sudira, 2013). Initially, they might feel pressured or even not enjoy the pesantren activities. However, over time and through opportunities for reflection and dialogue with friends and teachers, many students eventually find a deeper meaning in pesantren life. Motivation that initially stems from external factors can transform into a more sincere personal motivation, especially as they experience the spiritual and emotional benefits of their time in pesantren. Thus, even though initial motivation may come from external factors, pesantren can still become a place to cultivate and develop stronger and more sustainable internal motivation (Apiyah & Suharsiwi, 2021).

Discipline and Obedience

Discipline and adherence to pesantren rules are two aspects emphasized in the daily life of students (Alfi, 2020). These rules encompass various aspects, from worship obligations and daily schedules to social interactions among students. In pesantren, discipline is not only about time management but also about mindset, attitude, and behavior aligned with religious teachings. However, the level of discipline and obedience among students can vary depending on factors such as family background and their motivation for entering pesantren. This discussion elaborates on how discipline and obedience among students are influenced by these factors based on interviews and observations. As reflected in the following statements:

"Since I was a child, I was taught to be disciplined and manage time. In pesantren, I feel this is normal and should be done to get closer to Allah," (Student A).

Discipline and adherence to pesantren rules are essential values in shaping students' character. However, the level of discipline varies depending on family background and personal experiences (Arifin et al., 2022). Students from families accustomed to religious discipline and structured routines, like Ahmad, tend to adapt more easily to the rule-driven pesantren life (Handono & Bashori, 2013). They see discipline as part of spiritual commitment and a way to get closer to God. For them, the rules in pesantren are not a burden but rather a means to achieve spiritual maturity (Kusumawati & Nurfuadi, 2024).

On the other hand, students from families with a more relaxed or less disciplined religious background, like Dinda, may take longer to adapt to the pesantren system (Zulqarnain, 2016). However, through interactions with disciplined peers and direct experiences, they begin to recognize the importance of discipline in their lives. Their success in adapting and becoming more disciplined shows that discipline is not just about following rules but also about the internalization of taught values and ongoing self-development (Hilmy, 2019). Thus, while initial motivation and family background play a role, the learning process in pesantren gradually teaches students the importance of discipline in their lives, both in religious and daily aspects (Supriyanto, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The conclusions derived from the findings and discussion indicate that family background, motivation for entering the pesantren, as well as discipline and compliance, are significant factors influencing the lives of santri in the pesantren. A family's religious background, whether deeply religious or less so, impacts how santri adapt to pesantren life. Santri from religious families tend to adjust more easily, while those from less religious backgrounds require more time to adapt. However, over time, they often find comfort in the routines of pesantren

life.

Personal motivation also plays a major role in shaping the character of santri in the pesantren. Santri who enter pesantren with strong personal motivation, such as a desire to deepen their understanding of religion, are typically more active and enthusiastic in participating in pesantren activities. In contrast, those who join due to parental pressure or other external factors may initially feel burdened. However, over time, they often discover new motivation, which positively influences their enthusiasm and dedication to religious routines in the pesantren.

Discipline and compliance with pesantren rules are emphasized as critical aspects of santri life. Santri from families with a disciplined religious background are generally more inclined to follow the pesantren rules, viewing discipline as part of their spiritual commitment and a means of drawing closer to God. Meanwhile, santri from more relaxed family environments regarding religious discipline may take longer to adjust. Through interactions and experiences in the pesantren, they come to understand and adopt the importance of discipline in their lives.

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