

## ROLES AND CHALLENGES OF PESANTREN INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS

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### Abstract

Islamic boarding schools, known as pesantrens, serve as institutions dedicated to the preservation of knowledge passed down by their respective kiyai. The significance of pesantrens in Indonesia within the national education framework has expanded, influencing various sectors. Their impact on both national and international education has increased progressively, emphasizing modernization, educational quality, community dynamics within Islamic boarding schools, and human capital. The primary objective of this research is to elucidate the role played by the intellectual network of pesantrens in Indonesia. This investigation is conducted through a comprehensive review of existing literature using qualitative research methods. The analytical approach employed encompasses both descriptive and critical analyses. The study reveals that present-day pesantrens encounter a multitude of challenges that necessitate appropriate solutions. Among these challenges is the emergence of the Islamic reform movement. The enduring presence of pesantrens in Indonesia can be attributed to deep-rooted socio-historical foundations and the robust support of the intellectual network within these institutions. Consequently, these schools continue to fulfill a crucial function in disseminating knowledge within the community. It is evident from this study that the intellectual network of pesantrens plays a pivotal role in shaping societal dynamics. Moreover, this network must be attuned to contemporary challenges in order to ensure the sustained relevance and enhanced quality of pesantrens as key sources of scholarly expertise.

**Keywords:** pesantren; pesantren intellectual networks; Indonesian Islam; Indonesian Islamic scholars

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### Abstrak

*Pondok pesantren merupakan tempat memelihara khazanah keilmuan yang diajarkan melalui kiyai masing-masing. Pesantren di Indonesia telah menjadi bagian penting dalam sistem pendidikan bangsa, dengan pengaruh yang signifikan di berbagai sektor. Kontribusi mereka terhadap pendidikan nasional dan internasional telah berkembang seiring berjalannya waktu, dengan fokus pada modernisasi, kualitas pendidikan, komunitas pesantren, dan sumber daya manusia. Penelitian ini memiliki tujuan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana peran jaringan intelektual pesantren di Indonesia. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian pustaka dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif. Analisis yang digunakan adalah analisis deskriptif dan analisis kritis. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa keberadaan pesantren di masa sekarang menghadapi berbagai tantangan yang perlu dihadapi dengan baik. Tantangan tersebut salah satunya muncul dari gerakan reformasi Islam. Kehadiran pesantren di Indonesia mempunyai akar sosio-historis yang kuat dan dukungan jaringan intelektual pesantren. Kondisi tersebut kemudian membuatnya tetap eksis dalam memegang peran penting dalam keilmuan masyarakat. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kiprah jaringan intelektual pesantren menunjukkan peran penting pesantren di masyarakat. Jaringan intelektual pesantren juga harus melihat tantangan perkembangan zaman supaya eksistensi pesantren sebagai pencetak ulama semakin eksis dan menunjukkan kualitasnya yang lebih baik.*

**Kata Kunci:** *pondok pesantren; jaringan intelektual pesantren; Islam Indonesia; ulama Indonesia*

### مستخلص

المعاهد الإسلامية هي أماكن للحفاظ على الكنوز العلمية التي يدرسها العلماء الخاصون بها. أصبحت المعاهد الإسلامية في إندونيسيا جزءاً مهماً من نظام التعليم في البلاد، ولها تأثير كبير في مختلف القطاعات. لقد تطورت مساهمتها في التعليم الوطني والدولي بمرور الوقت، مع التركيز على التحديث وجودة التعليم ومجتمعات المعاهد الإسلامية والموارد البشرية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى توضيح شبكة المفكرين للمعاهد الإسلامية في إندونيسيا. هذا البحث هو بحث مكتبي باستخدام الأساليب النوعية. والتحليل المستخدم هو التحليل الوصفي والتحليل النقدي. وقد توصل هذا البحث إلى أن وجود المعاهد الإسلامية اليوم يواجه تحديات مختلفة يجب مواجهتها بشكل جيد. وبرز أحد هذه التحديات من حركة الإصلاح الإسلامية. إن وجود المعاهد الإسلامية في إندونيسيا له جذور اجتماعية وتاريخية قوية ودعم شبكات المفكرين للمعاهد الإسلامية. وهذا الشرط يجعلها تستمر في الوجود وتلعب دوراً مهماً في المجتمع العلمي. ويخلص هذا البحث إلى أن تقدم شبكة المفكرين للمعاهد الإسلامية يوضح الدور الهام للمعاهد الإسلامية في المجتمع. يجب على شبكات المفكرين للمعاهد الإسلامية أيضاً أن تنظر إلى تحديات التطورات الحالية حتى يلبح وجود المعاهد الإسلامية أكثر إنتاجاً للعلماء الراسخين وأفضل إظهاراً لوجودها.

الكلمات الرئيسية: المعهد الإسلامي؛ شبكة العلماء للمعاهد الإسلامية؛ الإسلام الإندونيسي؛ العلماء الإندونيسيون

## A. Introduction

The presence of pesantren, a type of Islamic boarding school, in Indonesia is not a recent phenomenon, and there have been ongoing advancements in its structure. The contemporary presence of pesantren serves as evidence of its significant role within societal dynamics. The cultivation of individuals with strong ethical values and the cultivation of

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highly reputable religious scholars establish pesantren as a trusted center for Islamic religious instruction.

The progression of time across different historical periods has solidified pesantren as an established educational institution through its evolution. Nevertheless, certain pesantrens face fluctuations and, at times, fail to conduct educational activities. This poses a challenge for each pesantren to sustain relevance and attractiveness as a hub for Islamic education. The decline of pesantren may stem from deficiencies in their cadre system, ultimately diminishing the influence of future generations on the institution's advancement.<sup>1</sup>

The journey and existence of pesantren pose challenges and foster intellectual networks among Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Its presence in each period plays a crucial role in addressing societal needs. Pesantren can be perceived as an Islamic social institution that originates from, is sustained by, and caters to society. It serves as a catalyst for social transformation and undoubtedly needs to be attuned to contemporary advancements. Given that societal requirements are progressively intricate, pesantren must consistently adapt to current developments, including the modernization of its educational framework. The efforts to modernize pesantren unequivocally do not entail abandoning the cultural heritage that has been cultivated and preserved within its premises.<sup>2</sup>

The role of pesantren within society extends beyond a singular role, serving as an establishment for community empowerment, the cultivation of ulama cadres, religious guidance, and a pivotal cultural center.<sup>3</sup> These roles are commonly referred to as the principles of *li al-tafaqquh fi al-dīn*, signifying the comprehension of religious knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

The historical presence of pesantren in Indonesia has been enduring, with *ulamas*, who are regarded as authorities in Islamic scholarship, playing a crucial role in unifying Islamic traditions within the country. Pesantren has evolved into a hub for educational activities and da'wah, fostering the growth of *ulamas* and future community leaders. Its societal impact transcends religious education, as evidenced by its contributions at national and international levels. The contemporary obstacles confronting pesantren vary across different epochs. Challenges related to modernization, educational standards, empowerment initiatives, human

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<sup>1</sup> Gatot Krisdiyanto et al., "Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren Dan Tantangan Modernitas," *Tarbawi: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 15, No. 1 (June 30, 2019): 11–21, <https://doi.org/10.32939/Tarbawi.V15i1.337>.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad Salehudin, "Konstruksi Jaringan Sosial Pesantren: Strategi Eksis Di Tengah Perubahan," *Religi: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 10, No. 2 (2014): 204–16, <https://doi.org/10.14421/Rejusa.2014.1002-05>.

<sup>3</sup> Pepen Irpan Fauzan and Ahmad Khoirul Fata, "Jaringan Pesantren Di Jawa Barat Tahun 1800-1945: Critical Review Atas Disertasi 'Jaringan Pesantren Di Priangan 1800-1945' Karya Ading Kusdiana," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 17, No. 1 (June 30, 2019): 139–68, <https://doi.org/10.31291/Ilk.V17i1.602>.

<sup>4</sup> Nurcholish Madjid, *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1997).

capital development, among others, necessitate attention alongside the ongoing efforts to uphold educational excellence.

Considering the discussion, numerous scholars have delved into researching pesantren. Among these studies is an investigation focusing on the intellectual networks of pesantren in South Sulawesi. This particular research successfully unveiled the intricate connections among Muslim scholars in the region. The influence of Haramain (Mecca and Medina) on intellectual discourses and Islamic practices in South Sulawesi during the 20th century was notably highlighted. The origins of studying "*kitab kuning*" and engaging in "*halaqoh*" sessions can be traced back to the al-Haram Mosque in Mecca and the Nabawi Mosque in Medina, later transitioning to gatherings at homes known as "Darul al-Arqam." The As'adiyah Islamic Boarding School in Sengkang is recognized as the pivotal point for the proliferation of pesantren, driven by genealogical, ideological, *kitab kuning*, social, and political networks.<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, study focusing on monitoring the religious ideologies and movements within pesantren amidst the era of globalization is paramount. Moreover, it delves into showcasing the essence of Islamic principles embraced by students within the pesantren setting, which remains a pivotal sanctuary for Muslims. Concurrently with the emergence of the millennial generation, the landscape of pesantren in Indonesia is no longer monopolized by traditionalist or fundamentalist-radicalist groups, but has been colored by new pesantren formed by other Islamic groups with different categories.<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, a study centering on public relations strategies for cultivating the reputation of the Islamic educational institution in Pesantren Sidogiri. This study successfully unveils that the endurance of Pesantren Sidogiri can be attributed to the adept implementation of public relations within its milieu. Despite the absence of a formalized public relations curriculum, this phenomenon occurs organically through the support of alumni and the influential figures of the *kyai* and founders.<sup>7</sup>

The initial research primarily examines the historical and regional elements of South Sulawesi, lacking a broader perspective and insight into current obstacles. Conversely, the subsequent study uncovers recent advancements concerning the ideology shaping pesantrens

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<sup>5</sup> Syamsuddin Arief, "DINAMIKA JARINGAN INTELEKTUAL PESANTREN DI SULAWESI SELATAN," *Lentera Pendidikan: Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan* 11, No. 2 (2008): 167–81, <https://doi.org/10.24252/Lp.2008v11n2a3>.

<sup>6</sup> Neny Muthi'atul Awwaliyah, "Pondok Pesantren Sebagai Wadah Moderasi Islam Di Era Generasi Millenial," *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Keislaman* 8, No. 1 (April 30, 2019): 36–62, <https://doi.org/10.35878/Islamicreview.V8i1.161>.

<sup>7</sup> Chusnul Chotimah, "Strategi Public Relations Pesantren Sidogiri Dalam Membangun Citra Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 7, No. 1 (September 3, 2012): 186–210, <https://doi.org/10.15642/Islamica.2012.7.1.186-210>.

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but falls short in addressing the specific challenges encountered and the overarching goals these institutions must strive for. Meanwhile, the third study outlines a successful approach by certain pesantren in managing public relations and curriculum issues. Nevertheless, it overlooks the potential enhancement of the intellectual framework within these schools to tackle fundamental future challenges. Hence, further exploration is required to delve into the role and obstacles faced by the intellectual network of pesantrens. This investigation aims to elucidate how this network contributes to addressing the multifaceted challenges within pesantrens and religious practices in Indonesia, potentially enriching Islamic scholarship, particularly in the realm of Indonesian Islamic education.

This research adopts a qualitative method, falling under the purview of library research, encompassing data collection and literature review pertinent to the subject matter. Library research is deemed qualitative due to its emphasis on interpretation and extraction of meaning from written texts. Diverse scholarly resources such as academic journals, books, manuscripts, among others, serve as foundational pillars for this research. The analytical framework comprises descriptive and critical analyses to dissect the research findings.

### B. Discussion

#### 1. *The Existence of Pesantren in the Indonesian Context*

Islamic education in Indonesia manifests in three distinct institutional variations throughout its development.<sup>8</sup> Initially, there exists *pengajian Al-Qur'an*, denoting the educational procedure of reciting and memorizing the *Al-Qur'an*. This institution, being the oldest and principal in Islamic education, cater primarily to novices exploring the Islamic faith. Subsequently, *pesantren* emerges, characterized by an educational framework where students reside in communal living quarters situated in specific locales. Pesantren stands as the most ancient Islamic educational establishment in Indonesia, offering an enduring option for safeguarding Islamic cultural legacy. Lastly, there is *madrasah*, a state-funded school designed for imparting Islamic education.

Pesantren is commonly recognized as a conventional Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, representing the initial and oldest Islamic educational system in the country. This status is attributed to the inherent Islamic essence intertwined with Indonesian values. The establishment of pesantren has also played a pivotal role in fostering contemporary

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<sup>8</sup> R. W. Hefner, *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics Of Islamic Education In Southeast Asia* (Tokyo: University Of Hawaii Press, 2009).

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educational models and systems observable today.<sup>9</sup> Its significance lies in its contribution to the proliferation and perpetuation of Islam in Indonesia.<sup>10</sup> Certain scholars contend that pesantren adopted an educational framework predating Islam itself. According to Mastuhu, pesantren embodies a traditional educational institution deeply rooted in local customs,<sup>11</sup> tracing its lineage back to traditional Hindu-Buddhist educational establishments.<sup>12</sup>

The establishment of pesantren as a cornerstone of Islamic education presents a significant opportunity for upholding traditions and promoting Islam in Indonesia. Pesantren serves as a traditional Islamic educational institution where individuals engage in studying, embracing, and implementing Islamic teachings. The presence of pesantren within society as a center for knowledge acquisition and as a catalyst for the dissemination of Islam dates back centuries.<sup>13</sup>

Experts argue that pesantren not only function as centers for the transmission of classical texts but also serve as hubs for spiritual and mystical training. Nevertheless, Bruinessen posits that pesantren has its origins in Islamic educational traditions and establishments in the Middle East.<sup>14</sup> Dhofier further asserts that pesantren is deeply rooted in Islamic customs with Sufi undertones, amalgamating aspects of madrasas and Sufi practices.<sup>15</sup> The inception of pesantren is intimately connected to Islam, which has been shaped by Sufi influences. As Islam permeated rural areas, pesantren assimilated the stagnant and syncretic village culture into its historical evolution. The roots of pesantren share similarities with the socio-historical milieu of *surau*, a traditional Islamic educational institution in

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<sup>9</sup> Herman, "Sejarah Pesantren Di Indonesia," *Al-TA'DIB: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Kependidikan* 6, no. 2 (2013): h. 145.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Heriyudanta, "Modernisasi Pendidikan Pesantren Perspektif Azyumardi Azra," *MUDARRISA: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Islam* 8, No. 1 (September 10, 2016): 145–72, <https://doi.org/10.18326/Mdr.V8i1.145-172>.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmad Fauzi, "Manajemen Dana Dan Sumber Dana Pondok Pesantren," *TASYRI': JURNAL TARBIYAH-SYARI'AH ISLAMIYAH* 24, No. 01 (December 15, 2017): 60–76.

<sup>12</sup> Fahrina Yustiasari Liri Wati, "PESANTREN; Asal Usul, Perkembangan Dan Tradisi Keilmuannya," *Madania: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 4, No. 2 (December 29, 2014): 163–86, <https://doi.org/10.24014/Jiik.V4i2.4781>.

<sup>13</sup> Mustofa Aji Prayitno, Rima Nur Ekawati, And Sugiyar Sugiyar, "Harmonisasi Keislaman, Keindonesiaan, Sains Dan Teknologi Strategi Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama Di Lingkungan Pesantren," *Shibghoh: Prosiding Ilmu Kependidikan UNIDA Gontor* 1 (2023): H. 341.

<sup>14</sup> Sembodo Ardi Widodo And Sembodo Ardi Widodo, "Cultivating Cultural Education Values Of Islam Nusantara In MA (Islamic Senior High School) Ali Maksum Krapyak," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, No. 1 (June 1, 2016): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.14421/Jpi.2016.51.1-20xxx>.

<sup>15</sup> Z Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai Dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (Depok: LP3ES, 2011).

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Minangkabau.<sup>16</sup> Initially, *surau* functioned as a local educational establishment that later underwent Islamization.<sup>17</sup>

Hence, the enduring nature of the pesantren institution appears to tacitly suggest that traditional facets of the Islamic world remain pertinent amidst contemporary progressions. The perpetuation of pesantren to this day is not solely attributed to its capacity to make specific adaptations but is primarily ascribed to its inherent essence. This essence, as articulated by Nurcholish Madjid, portrays pesantren not only as an institution synonymous with Islam, but also as a repository of Indonesian authenticity (indigenous).

The significance of pesantren in the trajectory of the Indonesian nation proves challenging to efface. Its impact on Indonesia's trajectory spans the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial epochs. The enduring presence of pesantren in the Indonesian landscape today remains palpable. The inadequacy of the contemporary mainstream education system underscores the necessity of reverting to the educational framework of pesantren, which fosters the integration of ethics and knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Such an integrative educational paradigm will enable the current generation to prioritize moral principles in the nation's life and governance.

Pesantren, boasting a rich historical background and various typologies, stands as an asset for Indonesia. Nevertheless, there has been a recent surge in negative perceptions associated with pesantren, including the notion that it solely focuses on teaching *kitab kuning* through traditional methods like recitations and group discussions. While this traditional pesantren model excels in cultivating students who demonstrate obedience, independence, and proficiency in Islamic studies,<sup>19</sup> criticism has been directed towards its perceived lack of competitiveness in adapting to the demands of contemporary society.

As an establishment deeply rooted in Indonesian culture, pesantren emerged and evolved from the sociological experiences of local communities, fostering an inseparable bond between pesantren and its surrounding environments. This close relationship is evident not only in the origins of pesantren establishments within specific locales but also in the sustenance of pesantren through contributions such as *waqf*, *sadaqah*, grants, and similar

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<sup>16</sup> Muh Mustakim, "Eksistensi Pesantren Sebagai Pusat Pendidikan Dan Perubahan Masyarakat Bangsa Indonesia Di Abad Ke-19 Dan Abad Ke-20," *At-Tajdid: Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah* 5, No. 1 (January 30, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.52640/Tajdid.V5i1.12>.

<sup>17</sup> Rina Febriana Yusutria, "Robohnya Lembaga Pendidikan Surau," *Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Keagamaan* 2, No. 1 (2018): 118–33.

<sup>18</sup> Herman, "Sejarah Pesantren Di Indonesia," H. 146.

<sup>19</sup> Ujang Rohman, Yaya Yaya, And Yuliani Yuliani, "Implementasi Kepemimpinan KH. Adang Kamaludin Dalam Meningkatkan Santri Berkualitas," *Tadbir: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 1, No. 3 (September 30, 2016): 275–85.

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forms of support. Conversely, pesantren reciprocates by offering various forms of 'rewards' to its environmental community, encompassing social, cultural, and economic guidance. Within this framework, pesantren and its kyai assume the role of 'cultural brokers' as described by Clifford Geertz in its broadest interpretation.

Beyond its Indonesian identity, pesantren consistently fosters an interpretation of Islamic teachings that is characterized by friendliness, peace, tolerance, mutual respect, and non-radicalism. It deliberately distances itself from doctrines linked to terrorism, extremism, and heresy, unequivocally rejecting any endorsement of actions such as suicide bombings. The educational focus of pesantren aligns with five key principles. Firstly, Islamic education in pesantren emphasizes nationalism, underscoring the historical contribution of ulama in the fight for the Republic of Indonesia. The *kyai* and *santri* have played pivotal roles in shaping the nation's identity, with nationalism deeply ingrained in the students' ethos. Consequently, genuine pesantren uphold values such as Pancasila, UUD 45, NKRI, and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, rejecting any deviation from these principles as characteristic of pseudo-Islamic boarding schools lacking historical ties to Indonesia.

Secondly, pesantren education fosters a culture of tolerance within Islamic teachings, respecting diverse viewpoints and steering clear of absolutist claims. Thirdly, the Islamic education in pesantren advocates for a moderate interpretation of Islam, rejecting both extreme radicalism and liberalism. This emphasis on balance and the reinforcement of *tawāzun* values distinguishes pesantren as an educational institution. Fourthly, pesantren embraces cultural diversity, promoting *li ta'ārafū* (mutual understanding) over *li tabāghadū* (mutual animosity). Lastly, pesantren education champions an inclusive form of Islam, welcoming individuals of all backgrounds, including those from non-Muslim communities. These foundational principles constitute the cornerstone of pesantren teachings.

The principles instilled in pesantren must be further expanded or augmented to include education on Indonesian identity. The education provided in pesantren is insufficient solely with a focus on religious education, encompassing aspects like studying texts, monotheism, ethics, rituals, history, and other teachings of Islam. In addition to this knowledge, there is a necessity for instilling the values of being a responsible citizen within the framework of national and state life through reinforcing Indonesian education.<sup>20</sup>

A comprehension of national awareness is crucial in preparing the forthcoming generations of the nation to have a deep-seated affection for their country, which can be

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<sup>20</sup> Firman Firman, Bahaking Rama, And Muljono Damopoli, "Realitas Pembelajaran Konten Keislaman Dan Keindonesiaan Di Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah Balikpapan," *Al-Qalam* 26, No. 1 (2020): H. 161.



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achieved through the educational environment of pesantren. Individuals from pesantren are anticipated to depart with the ability to play significant roles in various spheres of national and state existence. Once they leave pesantren, they should be motivated to engage not solely in religious domains but also to contribute in diverse facets of societal functioning.

Fostering patriotism is also a fundamental aspect of pesantren's educational curriculum. This includes the incorporation of community civics, which is aimed at cultivating citizens who exhibit positive traits, possess intellect, hold affection for their nation, demonstrate moral integrity, exhibit competence, embrace democratic values, and practice tolerance. Moreover, within the Indonesian framework, they should be adept at comprehending, analyzing, and engaging in addressing societal, national, and state issues.

Several elements constitute the implementation of community civics as observed by Zindan Baynal Hubi et al.<sup>21</sup> Initially, this involves upholding the traditional teachings of pesantren, particularly in the school of *ahlussunah waljamaah*. Secondly, students are molded into responsible citizens who respect the ulama as the authoritative figures in Islamic knowledge. Finally, the cultivation of positive attitudes is facilitated through the emulation of exemplary behavior as exemplified by the *kyai* or teachers.

### 2. Development of Pesantren in Government Policy

The establishment of pesantren within governmental policy is rooted in a tripartite development framework, specifically focusing on the enhancement of educational, religious, and societal empowerment facets. This principle is articulated in Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren, under Article 4, which delineates the domains of pesantren as encompassing education, da'wah, and community empowerment.<sup>22</sup>

#### 1) Development of Educational Aspects

Pesantren serves not only as a center for spreading Islamic teachings and fostering community development, but also as an educational entity. It has been instrumental in enhancing both the Community Engagement Rate (CER) and Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)

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<sup>21</sup> Zindan Baynal Hubi Et Al., "Peran Pesantren Sebagai Implementasi Community Civics Di Pesantren Nahdlatul Ulama," *Journal Of Moral And Civic Education* 5, No. 1 (2021): H. 61-62.

<sup>22</sup> The three functions of pesantren align with the objectives of pesantren as delineated in Article 3. Within the realm of education, pesantren strives to cultivate individuals who excel in diverse domains, comprehend, and embody the teachings of their faith, and potentially evolve into devout religious authorities characterized by faith, piety, virtuous traits, erudition, autonomy, altruism, equilibrium, and moderation. Operating as a conduit for religious outreach, pesantren endeavors to foster a balanced interpretation of religion and embrace diversity, patriotism, and the cultivation of conduct conducive to religious concord. In the realm of community empowerment, pesantren endeavors to enhance the standard of living for empowered communities by addressing the educational requisites of the populace and promoting the social welfare of the society.

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within the educational sector. Its active involvement has significantly contributed to raising awareness and fostering intellectual growth among the Indonesian populace through unwavering dedication, accountability, and optimal service provision.

The Education Management Information System (EMIS) data from the Ministry of Religion for the second semester of 2022/2023 reveals that pesantren, totaling 39,167 institutions, have played a pivotal role in educating a substantial number of Indonesian individuals, totaling no less than 4,847,197 individuals, with the participation of approximately 353,849 educators.

**Table 1.** Number of Santri and Educators in Pesantren in the Second Semester 2022/2023

No	Form of Pesantren	Number of Institution	Number of Santri	Number of Educator
1	<i>Kajian Kitab</i> Only	23.497	2.485.777	163.728
2	<i>Kajian Kitab</i> & Other Educational Services	15.670	2.361.420	190.121
	Total	39.167	4.847.197	353.849

The contribution of the community to the development of pesantren services surpasses the mere confirmations provided by the government. This can be attributed to the fact that all 39,167 pesantrens were established and overseen by the community autonomously. Consequently, it is imperative for pesantren to be granted optimal support and funding from governmental bodies. The establishment of equitable treatment between pesantren establishments and other educational organizations is undeniably crucial. Nonetheless, it is advisable for pesantren to uphold the standard of their autonomy, encompassing both financial self-sufficiency and administration that is not reliant on any entity, including the government. Pesantren stands as a formidable civil society agent in empowering the populace and adeptly conducting social critique.

## 2) Development of Aspects of Religious Da'wah

The demographic composition of this nation is highly intricate and diverse, encompassing various belief systems, cultural practices, regional dialects, and so forth. Within these intricate and diverse circumstances, pesantren has assumed a pivotal role. It has effectively disseminated religious teachings and ideologies that promote peace, tolerance, and the preservation of both individual and national principles. Pesantren has successfully fostered unity amidst the societal disparities. Hence, it is recommended that pesantren takes the lead in promoting a moderate religious discourse, which involves adopting religious viewpoints, behaviors, and customs that embody the fundamental tenets of religious doctrines, safeguard

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human dignity, and promote the common welfare, while adhering to principles of equity, fairness, and respect for the constitution as a pact of the nation.<sup>23</sup>

The propagation of religious teachings by pesantren contributes to the establishment of an inclusive religious community that steers clear of radicalism. This is due to the belief that various manifestations of extremism are incompatible with the core teachings of religion and disrupt the harmony of communal life, be it in religious or national spheres. Pesantren consistently distances itself from radical tendencies within the religious domain. There exist at least 3 (three) markers of religious extremism. Firstly, it undermines fundamental human values. Upholding and preserving human dignity is deemed a fundamental aspect of religious teachings. Secondly, it contradicts the collective agreements within social and governmental frameworks. In the Indonesian context, Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia serve as the foundational pillars of national unity, whose principles are aligned with the virtuous doctrines of religion. Thirdly, it contravenes legal statutes that aim to regulate societal conduct and promote social order and communal welfare.<sup>24</sup>

### 3) Development of Social Aspects

Pesantren is conceptualized as a social institution whose primary function is to elucidate and implement educational as well as religious knowledge and comprehension for the advantage of the broader society. Given this function, pesantren will evolve into a communal asset, endorsed, and sustained by wider societal strata. Consequently, pesantren ought to open themselves up and engage in endeavors aimed at resolving societal and national issues, as substantiated thus far.

The historical narrative illustrates the tangible contributions of pesantren to social life. On the 22nd of October 1945, pesantren emerged as a driving force in safeguarding the independence of the Republic of Indonesia against Dutch military incursion, leading to the inception of Santri Day.<sup>25</sup> During the period of 1959-1965, pesantren was identified as the "instruments of revolution" and custodians of the unity of the Republic of Indonesia. Prominent national figures, for instance, KH. Wahid Hasyim, a PPKI member, and KH. Saifuddin Zuhri, Minister of Religion in the Old Order era, both nurtured in pesantren. Despite encountering limitations in the New Order era, pesantren remained actively engaged

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<sup>23</sup> Tim Kelompok Kerja Moderasi Beragama Kementerian Agama RI, *Peta Jalan (Roadmap) Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Tahun 2020-2024*, (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama, 2020), H . 20-21

<sup>24</sup> Suwendi, Imron Muttaqin, Nanik Shobikah, Dan Muhammad Faisal, "Strengthening Religious Moderation As Effort To Prevent Extremism In Education Institution", *Journal Of Namibian Studies*, Vol. 34, Tahun 2023, H. 3810-3824.

<sup>25</sup> Ahmad Zayadi Dan Suwendi, *Detik-Detik Penetapan Hari Santri*, (Yogyakarta: Baitul Hikmah Press, 2021).

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in educating and empowering the populace. Prof. Dawam Rahardjo underscored the pivotal role of pesantren as a catalyst for social transformation, particularly in migration schemes, family planning initiatives, community development in villages, establishment of health clinics for the populace, among other initiatives.

Furthermore, throughout history until the present day, pesantren has significantly contributed to enhancing the economic prosperity of the community. Pesantren persist in operating autonomously to fulfill their own needs and those of the neighboring community. Pesantren have made substantial contributions to advancing the economic progress of society. This role has endured since the inception of pesantren. Notably, pesantren are not solely involved in the advancement of agrarian life but have now extended their involvement to industrial progress as well.<sup>26</sup> Hence, pesantren have successfully bridged rural and urban lifestyles.

Through the tripartite framework of education, religious propagation, and community empowerment, pesantren necessitate comprehensive programmatic support, particularly in two key areas. Firstly, the equity program, focusing on regulatory, programmatic, and budgetary equity aspects. Regulatory equity aims to establish a legal foundation and legitimacy for the formal provision of Islamic boarding school services without compromising the essence or caliber of such institutions. Programmatic equity aims to secure tangible assurance in the form of programs or policies to fortify pesantren implemented by the government. Meanwhile, budgetary equity guarantees optimal funding availability to ensure that pesantren establishments are genuinely treated equitably alongside other educational entities.

Secondly, the autonomy initiative addresses various dimensions such as economic, administrative, and cultural elements. The promotion of economic self-reliance aims to enhance the sustainability of pesantren's financial activities, reducing reliance on external entities. Pesantren are known for their unwavering commitment to autonomy, positioning them as a formidable entity within civil society. Administrative autonomy seeks to uphold established academic practices and diverse management strategies within pesantren. Similarly, cultural autonomy endeavors to preserve the distinctive identity and fundamental features of pesantren, which have historically and sociologically demonstrated resilience through their traditions, cultural heritage, and intellectual foundations rooted in the teachings of *kitab kuning* and remarkable distinctiveness.

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<sup>26</sup> Mohamad Mustari and Mohammad Taufiq Rahman, *Ekonomi Pesantren Manajemen Pesantren dalam Pembangunan Masyarakat Desa* (Bekasi: Lintang Publishing, 20129).

### 3. Pesantren Intellectual Network: Present and Future

The realm of pesantren encounters significant challenges concerning the academic pursuits and intellectual connections of pesantren both presently and in the future. From the 18th to the 19th century, the intellectual heritage of pesantren expanded due to interactions with Islamic study hubs in the Middle East, particularly in Mecca and Medina. The traditional Islamic educational system of pesantren faced considerable hurdles in the 20th century, notably with the emergence of Islamic reform movements worldwide. Contemporary intellectuals and Muslim leaders are acknowledging the pivotal role of education in societal progress, particularly in addressing Western socio-economic and cultural dominance.<sup>27</sup> The endeavor to reform Islamic ideology and education essentially commences through an ongoing dialectical engagement involving the Islamic community with historical legacies, Western conventions, and current circumstances.<sup>28</sup>

Eminent figures like Sayyed Ahmad Khan in India and Muhammad 'Abduh in Egypt are recognized as trailblazers of educational transformation in the Islamic sphere. Sayyed Ahmad Khan played a key role in establishing the Aligarh Education Society in India, which later evolved into the Aligarh Muslim University. Conversely, Muhammad 'Abduh pioneered curriculum reforms at Al Azhar, incorporating philosophy and natural sciences into the educational framework, thereby sparking debates among senior ulama. 'Abduh contends that the stagnation of Muslims is a result of the persistent dichotomous scientific approach in Islamic education. The movement towards modernizing Islamic education catalyzed by these luminaries inspired similar initiatives across the Islamic world, including the reform of pesantren education in Indonesia.<sup>29</sup>

Within the Indonesian context, the genesis of pesantren and its intellectual legacy can be attributed to Indonesian students who pursued studies in Mecca and Medina, subsequently returning to their homeland to advance education locally. Essentially, the scientific heritage in Islamic boarding schools was initially intertwined with Islamic learning centers in the Middle East.

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<sup>27</sup> Roziq Syaifudin, "Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam Dalam Kacamata Al-Ghazali Dan Fazlur Rahman," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 8, No. 2 (December 7, 2013): 323–46, <https://doi.org/10.21274/Epis.2013.8.2.323-346>.

<sup>28</sup> Rengga Satria, "Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam Di Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah Canduang," *Geneologi Pai: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 6, No. 1 (June 30, 2019): 15–22, <https://doi.org/10.32678/Geneologipai.V6i1.1923>.

<sup>29</sup> Nasrullah Nasrullah Et Al., "Pembaruan Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam Muhammad Basiuni Imran (1906-1976 M)," *Jurnal Diskursus Islam* 6, No. 1 (April 30, 2018): 135–55, <https://doi.org/10.24252/Jdi.V6i1.7056>.

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There exist two versions pertaining to the historical background of the establishment of pesantren in Indonesia. The initial version posits that pesantren originates from the Islamic tradition itself, particularly the tarekat tradition, with a close affiliation to the traditional educational venues for Sufis.<sup>30</sup> Azyumardi Azra supports this view with evidence indicating that the propagation of Islam in Indonesia primarily involved Tarekat activities.<sup>31</sup> The second version suggests that contemporary pesantren is an adaptation of the boarding school system found in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition in the archipelago.<sup>32</sup> Initially, these boarding schools aimed to impart Hindu teachings, but over time, pesantren underwent significant growth and evolved into prominent educational institutions in Indonesia.<sup>33</sup> With deep socio-historical roots, pesantren have attained a significant standing in the intellectual realm of their society, demonstrating resilience across changing epochs.

The domain of pesantren has fostered numerous distinguished intellectual figures from various ulama in the Malay or Javanese region, proficient in Arabic as well as local languages such as Malay or Javanese. Noteworthy personalities like Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, the author *Sabīl al-Muhtadīn*, Zainuddin al-Sumbawi, Daud al-Fatani, and Mahfuz al-Tarmasi, among others, are integral components of the intellectual network within pesantren. Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, a scholar originating from Banten and residing in the Holy Land, has been exceptionally prolific in producing works across diverse fields of classical Islamic knowledge, some of which have now become essential study materials within pesantren.

Nevertheless, the original cosmopolitan roots of pesantren, linked to the Middle East, have gradually transitioned towards isolation. Recent trends indicate that the scientific traditions of pesantren have started to drift apart and become detached from similar traditions evolving in prominent Islamic study hubs globally, particularly in the Middle East. There are at least two plausible explanations for this shift. Firstly, the rise of the Wahhabi regime in Saudi Arabia led to a disruption in intellectual exchanges between the world of pesantren and the realm of Haramain. The Wahhabi doctrine fundamentally contradicts the Ash'ariyah theological framework that underpins the Sunni-Islamic model cultivated within pesantren.

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<sup>30</sup> Adi Fadli, "Pesantren: Sejarah Dan Perkembangannya," *El-Hikam* 5, No. 1 (2012): 29–42.

<sup>31</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII & XVIII: Akar Pembaruan Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media Group, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Khairuddin Khairuddin, "STUDI KLASIK LEMBAGA PENDIDIKAN ISLAM DI NUSANTARA (SURAU, MEUNASAH DAN PESANTREN)," *Benchmarking* 3, No. 1 (February 24, 2019): 79–93, <https://doi.org/10.30821/Benchmarking.V3i1.6961>.

<sup>33</sup> Sri Haryanto Afandi, "APLIKASI TEORI PSIKOLOGI DALAM PENDIDIKAN PONDOK PESANTREN," *Manarul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmiah Studi Islam* 18, No. 1 (July 1, 2018): 150–69, <https://doi.org/10.32699/Mq.V18i1.936>.

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Educational advancements and transformations within the nation also play a role in this pattern of isolation. The progression of state-funded education, encompassing the widespread availability of both general education (SD/SMP/SMA/SMK) and general education infused with Islamic elements (MI/MTs/MA), supported significantly by state finances in contrast to pesantren, has led to the diminishing status of pesantren as an intellectual establishment. Consequently, the intellectual backing for pesantren to engage in intellectual dialogues with the external environment has dwindled, eventually vanishing entirely. This inclination towards isolation may signify a gradual decline in the quality of intellectual customs within pesantren for various reasons. Notably, the reduced quantity or complete absence of the Arabic book-writing tradition by pesantren *kyai* serves as a simple indicator. Moreover, the active proficiency in Arabic among *kyai* has markedly decreased, showcasing a decline in their "intellectual mastership."

Given these circumstances, it is imperative to meticulously contemplate the establishment of a network for pesantren intellectuals in the current and forthcoming periods. If the Middle Eastern sphere no longer serves as a dependable foundation for constructing the academic realm of pesantren, particularly considering the Western world's lack of historical ties to classical pesantren studies, the solution might lie in positioning Indonesia as a hub for Islamic studies while elevating pesantren as a global focal point for Islamic education.

Several rationales underlie the necessity for this endeavor. Firstly, the evolving Islamic comprehension in Indonesia aligns with a moderate religious outlook that prioritizes human values, upholds human rights, embraces cultural and societal diversity, advocates for peace, justice, tolerance, and a state of equilibrium (*tawāzun*). Secondly, as a predominantly Muslim nation with a richly diverse social and cultural landscape, Indonesia should assume a pivotal role as a gauge of the Islamic civilization it cherishes. Indonesia is anticipated to set a precedent for other Muslim nations worldwide in this context. Lastly, Indonesia's socio-political environment offers a more conducive setting compared to various other Muslim nations. The prevailing socio-political unrest and Islamic progress in several Muslim nations, particularly in the Middle East, is lamentable. This unrest has clouded Islamic focal points, including those in Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia and Brunei, which have failed to seize the opportune moment. Therefore, Indonesia stands out as the prime candidate to emerge as the epicenter of global Islamic optimism.

Fourth, this aspect serves as a compelling rationale for positioning Indonesian Islam as a prominent destination for global education, primarily attributed to the presence of authentic Indonesian Islamic educational establishments, notably pesantren. Pesantren, functioning as a

conventional educational entity, possesses the capacity to perpetuate and uphold the progression of Islamic customs established by scholars across various epochs, transcending temporal constraints. Consequently, the enduring nature of pesantren institutions tacitly indicates the sustained pertinence of the Islamic sphere amidst contemporary progressions.<sup>34</sup>

### **C. Conclusion**

Pesantren encounters formidable challenges concerning the academic pursuits and intellectual networks within the contemporary and forthcoming contexts. Historically, from the 18th to the 19th centuries, the scholarly heritage of pesantren burgeoned through engagements with Islamic educational hubs in the Middle East, particularly in Mecca and Medina. The conventional Islamic educational framework of pesantren encountered significant hurdles in the 20th century, notably amid the proliferation of Islamic reformation movements globally. The endeavor to reform Islamic ideologies and educational paradigms fundamentally hinges on an ongoing dialectical interchange involving the integration of Islamic society with historical legacies, Western conventions, and present-day actualities.

Within the Indonesian landscape, the genesis of pesantren and its scholarly legacy can be traced back to the influx of students from the Indonesian domain who pursued studies in Mecca and Medina, subsequently returning to their homeland to cultivate educational realms domestically. Pesantren boasts profound socio-historical foundations, endowing them with a pivotal status within the intellectual domain of their respective communities.

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<sup>34</sup> Suwendi Suwendi, "Pesantren sebagai Destinasi Pendidikan Islam Global," official web of Islamic mass organization, *nu.or.id*, February 2, 2016, accessed April 15, 2024, <https://nu.or.id/opini/pesantren-sebagai-destinasi-pendidikan-islam-global-d7i7F>.



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