

STRENGTHENING STUDENTS' SELF-RELIANCE VALUES THROUGH ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL EDUCATION STRATEGIES DURING THE GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the educational development strategies in fostering student independence at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, MAN 1 Ciamis during the Covid-19 pandemic. As the oldest of Islamic education in Indonesia, pesantren faced a dual challenge: maintaining the continuity of character education while ensuring the health and safety of students. A descriptive-analytical method with a qualitative approach was employed. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings show that leaders and religious teachers fostered independence by habituating students to daily religious and educational activities, such as congregational prayers, recitations, self-reliance tasks, and instilling religious values. The learning objectives targeted students' responsibility, discipline, initiative, and integrity. Teaching methods included sorogan, bandungan, lectures, discussions, modeling, habituation, and the use of rewards and punishments. During the pandemic, the school formed an internal task force to maintain health protocols. As a result, students demonstrated positive changes, including improved independence, discipline, learning motivation, and environmental awareness. The study recommends strengthening religious routines and active mentor involvement to support student independence in the new normal era.

Keywords: educational strategy; student independence; pesantren; Covid-19 pandemic

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan strategi pengembangan pendidikan pesantren dalam membina kemandirian santri di Pondok Pesantren Darussalam MAN 1 Ciamis selama masa pandemi Covid-19. Pesantren sebagai lembaga pendidikan Islam tertua di Indonesia memiliki tantangan ganda, yaitu mempertahankan keberlangsungan pendidikan karakter sambil memastikan kesehatan santri. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif-analitik dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pimpinan dan guru agama menerapkan pembinaan kemandirian santri melalui pembiasaan kegiatan harian seperti shalat berjamaah, pengajian, tugas mandiri, serta penerapan nilai-nilai religius dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Tujuan pembelajaran diarahkan agar santri mampu bertanggung jawab terhadap diri sendiri, memiliki inisiatif, kedisiplinan, dan integritas dalam menjalani kehidupan. Metode pembelajaran yang digunakan antara lain: sorogan, bandungan, ceramah, diskusi, keteladanan, habituasi, serta reward dan punishment. Di masa pandemi, pesantren juga membentuk gugus tugas internal untuk menjaga protokol kesehatan. Hasilnya, santri menunjukkan perubahan positif berupa peningkatan kemandirian, kedisiplinan, motivasi belajar, dan kepedulian terhadap lingkungan. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penguatan pembiasaan religius dan keterlibatan aktif pembimbing untuk mendukung kemandirian santri di masa adaptasi kebiasaan baru.

Kata kunci: strategi pendidikan; kemandirian santri; pesantren; pandemi Covid-19

Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia that have proven to play an important role in producing a generation that is not only capable in Islamic science, but also has a strong character, noble character, and is independent in various aspects of life. In the midst of globalization and multidimensional crises, the existence of Islamic boarding schools remains relevant as a moral fortress and a center for the formation of personality based on religious values. *Pesantren* not only carry out the function of transmitting Islamic knowledge, but is also responsible for the formation of the character of students through a holistic approach that integrates spiritual, social, and cognitive aspects.¹

One of the large Islamic boarding schools that continues to show its existence is the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in Ciamis, West Java. Founded in 1929 by K.H. Ahmad Fadlil, this *pesantren* has become an Islamic educational institution that organizes formal and non-formal education in an integrated manner. With the number of students reaching more than 2,500 people from various regions, this *pesantren* implements a dormitory-based education system and emphasizes independence as one of the core values in fostering students.² Students are not only taught religious knowledge, but also educated to be responsible for personal needs, maintain cleanliness, manage time, and get used to an orderly and directed collective life.

Independence in the context of *pesantren* education is not only interpreted as the ability to live without the help of others physically, but also includes the ability to think critically, make decisions,³ solve problems, and foster awareness of self-responsibility to God, others, and the

environment.⁴ Islamic boarding school education places these values in the practice of students' daily lives, through a system of habituation, example, and social responsibility that is gradually instilled. Bandura's⁵ social learning theory provides the basis for this approach, emphasizing that human behavior is formed through a process of observation, imitation, and reinforcement, which is very thick in the pattern of *pesantren* education.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic that has hit the world since early 2020 has disrupted the educational order globally, including in the *pesantren* environment. UNESCO⁶ noted that more than 1.5 billion students worldwide were directly affected by the closure of educational institutions.⁷ *Pesantren* as a community-based educational institution faces a double challenge: maintaining the sustainability of religious education and character development on the one hand, and ensuring the health and safety of students on the other (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020).

The Darussalam Islamic Boarding School MAN 1 Ciamis is one of the Islamic boarding schools that continues to carry out the face-to-face education process during the pandemic, with adaptation and innovation in the coaching system. This Islamic boarding school formed the Internal Task Force of Covid-19 Mujahid Volunteers (GTIRMC), carried out health protocols in a disciplined manner, and integrated the strengthening of independence in the daily activities of students. Activities such as washing one's own clothes, maintaining room cleanliness, cooking independently, and health counseling are part of an educational strategy that shapes the character of students who are tough, independent, and responsible.⁸

⁴ Maryam A. Al-Jaber and Sami G. Al-Ghamdi, "Effect of virtual learning on delivering the education as part of the sustainable development goals in Qatar" *Energy Reports*. 6 (2020).

⁵ A Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*, vols. (Prentice Hall, 1977).

⁶ U.N.E.S.C.O., "Education: From disruption to recovery," 2020, Available: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>.

⁷ Ririn Noviyanti Putri, "Indonesia dalam Menghadapi Pandemi Covid-19" *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi*. 20.2 (2020): 705.

⁸ Sadih, "Strategi pengembangan pendidikan pesantren dalam membina kemandirian santri pada masa pandemi Covid-19."

¹ Zamroni, *Paradigma pendidikan masa depan*, vols. (Bigraf Publishing, 2001).

² D Sadih, "Strategi pengembangan pendidikan pesantren dalam membina kemandirian santri pada masa pandemi Covid-19," 2024.

³ A Majid, *Pendidikan karakter*, vols. (Rosdakarya, 2012).

Although various studies have discussed the role of pesantren in shaping the character of students in general,⁹ there are still very limited studies that specifically examine how pesantren education strategies in fostering student independence are carried out during the pandemic, especially through a practical approach and habituation that is adaptive to crisis conditions.¹⁰ Therefore, this study aims to describe the educational development strategy implemented by the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School MAN 1 Ciamis in fostering the independence of students during the Covid-19 pandemic, by highlighting the role of leaders, religious teachers, and the process of changing student behavior as a result of the coaching.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the educational development strategy in fostering the independence of students at the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School MAN 1 Ciamis during the Covid-19 pandemic. The qualitative approach focuses on the meaning, understanding, and interpretation of social phenomena in a natural context without manipulation or control of variables¹¹. The descriptive-analytical method is used to describe the existing facts and analyze the patterns and relationships that emerge from field data.¹²

The research was carried out at the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School MAN 1 Ciamis, West Java, which was chosen purposively because it continued to carry out face-to-face learning during the

pandemic by implementing health protocols and strengthening character development based on religious values¹³. The research subjects consisted of pesantren leaders, religious teachers, active students, and alumni who were directly involved in the coaching process during the pandemic. Informants were selected using the purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of informants based on their involvement, experience, and understanding of the research focus.¹⁴

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies. The interviews were conducted to obtain data from key informants related to strategies for fostering student independence during the pandemic. Observation is used to observe the daily activities of students in the coaching process. Meanwhile, the documentation includes an analysis of official documents of the pesantren such as activity schedules, coaching guidelines, and documentation of daily activities.¹⁵

The data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman analysis model, which consisted of three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification.¹⁶ The analysis was conducted inductively to find thematic patterns that were relevant to the focus of the research. The validity of the data is maintained by the source triangulation technique and the member checking technique, which is the return of temporary findings to informants to obtain clarification and validation.¹⁷

⁹ A Alfian, "Merdeka belajar: Pesantren dan kemandirian santri Al-Amien Prenduan" *Dirosat: Journal of Islamic Studies*. 5.1 (2020): 45–56.

¹⁰ H Gunawan, *Pendidikan moderasi beragama di pesantren: Studi kasus di Pesantren Darussalam Ciamis dan Cipasung Tasikmalaya* (Disertasi, vols. (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, 2022).

¹¹ Sugiyono, *Metode penelitian pendidikan: Pendekatan kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*, vols. (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2017).

¹² W Surakhmad, *Pengantar penelitian ilmiah: Dasar, metode, teknik*, vols. (Tarsito, 1992).

¹³ Gunawan, *Pendidikan moderasi beragama di pesantren: Studi kasus di Pesantren Darussalam Ciamis dan Cipasung Tasikmalaya* (Disertasi).

¹⁴ Bambang Prasetyo and Lina Miftahul Jannah, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Teori dan Aplikasi*, vols. (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2007).

¹⁵ Sadiyah, "Strategi pengembangan pendidikan pesantren dalam membina kemandirian santri pada masa pandemi Covid-19."

¹⁶ Miles Matthew and Huberman Michael, 2002. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook of New Methods*, vols. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publication, 2002).

¹⁷ A. Chaedar Alwasilah, *Pokoknya Kualitatif, Dasar-dasar Merancang dan Melakukan Penelitian Kualitatif*, vols. (Jakarta: Dunia Pustaka Jaya, 2003).

Results and Discussion

Overview of Educational Strategies for Fostering Student Independence

The results of this study show that the educational development strategy implemented by the Darussalam MAN 1 Ciamis Islamic Boarding School in fostering student independence during the Covid-19 pandemic was carried out in a planned and comprehensive manner. The strategy includes: (1) the role of leadership in fostering student independence, (2) learning objectives that are integrated with independence values, (3) learning methods applied during the pandemic, and (4) real impacts on student behavior and character.

1. Leadership of Islamic Boarding Schools in Fostering Independence

The leadership of the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School plays an important role in emphasizing the importance of fostering independence in the midst of a crisis situation. In the document, it is stated that Kyai and religious teachers not only provide normative instructions, but also become role models in living a disciplined and independent lifestyle. Coaching is carried out through habituation of routine activities, such as congregational prayers, recitations, and dormitory environment cleanliness activities. These activities are still carried out during the pandemic with adjustments to health protocols such as maintaining distance, washing hands, and using masks.¹⁸

The leadership of the pesantren is also responsive to the threat of the pandemic by forming the Internal Task Force of Covid-19 Mujahid Volunteers (GTIRMC) consisting of students and administrators. This team plays an active role in monitoring health protocols, spraying disinfectants, and health education for students. This shows that Islamic boarding schools not only survive systemic disruptions due to the pandemic, but are also able to adapt the coaching system to remain relevant and effective.

¹⁸ Sadiah, "Strategi pengembangan pendidikan pesantren dalam membina kemandirian santri pada masa pandemi Covid-19."

2. The Learning Purpose of Religious Teachers in Building Independence

Religious teachers at the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School set learning goals that not only focus on the cognitive aspects of Islam, but also on the affective and psychomotor aspects that support the formation of independent character. The document explains that teachers direct students to take responsibility for themselves, have the initiative in completing tasks, and be disciplined towards the time and order of the pesantren.¹⁹ The learning process is directed at the realization that independence is part of the practice of Islamic values in daily life.

For example, students are trained to prepare personal study schedules, complete assignments without waiting for orders, and are able to resolve conflicts between friends through deliberation. Independence is defined as the ability to consciously regulate, adjust, and correct behavior. This kind of learning approach is in line with the principles of Islamic character education which is oriented towards the habit of pious deeds in daily life.

3. Learning Methods During the Pandemic

Various methods are applied by teachers in fostering student independence, with special modifications to deal with the pandemic situation.²⁰ Traditional methods such as sorogan (one-on-one teaching) and bandungan (collective lectures) are maintained, but they are carried out with a limited distance and number of participants. In addition, lecture methods, group discussions, direct examples, and the assignment of individual and group assignments are used to accustom students to take responsibility for their own learning process.

Habituation is the dominant method applied during the pandemic. Daily activities such as sweeping, washing clothes, preparing worship supplies, and keeping rooms clean are made part

¹⁹ Sadiah.

²⁰ Nikodemus Thomas Martoredjo, "Pandemi Covid-19: Ancaman atau Tantangan bagi Sektor Pendidikan?" *Jurnal Pendidikan*. 2.1 (2020): 1–15.

of the hidden curriculum that shapes students' life skills and personal responsibilities.²¹ Teachers also use an educational reward and punishment system. Students who consistently maintain discipline and cleanliness are appreciated, while violations of discipline receive warnings and coaching.

4. Changes in Student Behavior as a Result of Coaching

The coaching carried out during the pandemic showed real results in changing student behavior. Based on the documentation and interviews in the document, students become more independent in managing themselves, increasing in time discipline, and more aware of the importance of maintaining cleanliness and health. In addition, students also show improvements in terms of confidence, communication skills, and cooperation in small groups.²²

Some students are given the responsibility of being the coordinator of the cleaning group or worship supervisor, which encourages the growth of a sense of responsibility and initiative. The results of this coaching show that educational strategies carried out during the pandemic are not only adaptive, but also effective in forming sustainable independent character.

Pesantren Leadership in Forming an Independent Environment

The strategy for developing *pesantren* education in fostering student independence during the Covid-19 pandemic at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School MAN 1 Ciamis was implemented in a systematic and holistic manner. It involved the strengthening of religious values, the habituation of independent behavior, and the application of disciplined routines under the guidance of religious teachers and caregivers.

These efforts were integrated across academic, spiritual, and socio-emotional domains of student development.

A key element in this strategy was the role of *pesantren* leadership. The leaders played a central role in directing the coaching process, ensuring that students' daily routines continued during the pandemic, albeit with adjustments to meet health protocols. Activities such as congregational prayers, religious recitations, book learning, and dormitory routines were maintained with strict supervision and physical distancing measures.²³

To further support this, the *pesantren* established the Internal Task Force of Covid-19 Mujahid Volunteers (GTIRMC), comprised of students and administrators. This task force was actively involved in health monitoring, mask distribution, disinfectant spraying, and ongoing health education for students.

This leadership approach not only emphasized the spiritual mission of the *pesantren* but also prioritized safety and the cultivation of independent character during a crisis. It aligns with Bandura's²⁴ social learning theory, which underscores the importance of modeling and reinforcement. In this case, the *kyai* and teachers served as role models, demonstrating disciplined and independent behavior that students could observe and emulate.

Learning Objectives Integrated with Independent Character

The interview data in the document states that religious teachers have a clear learning goal, namely for students not only to understand Islamic teachings textually, but also to live the life of Islamic boarding schools independently. Teachers accustom students to set their own schedules, prepare worship equipment, maintain the cleanliness of the room

²¹ Dwi Astutik, "Implementation of Multicultural Education Through School Social Capital Relationships in Creating Social Harmonization" *QALAMUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Agama*. 15.1 (2023): 1–16.

²² Sumarlin Mus and Andi Mappincara, "Manajemen Pembelajaran Boarding School" *PEMBELAJAR: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan, Keguruan, dan Pembelajaran*. 3.1 (2019): 24.

²³ Abdul Hakim and N. Hani Herlina, "Manajemen Kurikulum Terpadu di Pondok Pesantren Modern Daarul Huda Banjar" *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam*. 6.1 (2018): 111. Banjar City, West Java Province. The results of the research show that: (1

²⁴ A Bandura, *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*, vols. (Prentice-Hall, 1986).

and environment, and comply with a busy schedule of activities without depending on others.

This goal is both applicable and contextual. In the learning process, students are invited to understand that worship is not only a spiritual activity, but also part of discipline and responsibility education. As emphasized by Megawangi,²⁵ good character education is one that is able to internalize values into daily actions, not just memorization.

Variety of Learning Methods as Adaptive Efforts

The methods used by teachers and coaches during the pandemic are very diverse and adaptive to crisis situations. The data shows that the sorogan method is maintained to strengthen individual interaction between teachers and students. The bandungan method is carried out in small groups with distance management, while the lecture and discussion method is combined with hands-on practice.²⁶

In addition, exemplary methods have become very effective in pandemic situations.²⁷ Teachers show how to wash hands correctly, wear masks, and maintain distance in daily activities. This is not only for health reasons, but also part of fostering the social responsibility of students. Assignments (individual and group tasks) are geared towards personal responsibility training and decision-making. In fact, rewards are given to the students who are the most disciplined and active in maintaining the cleanliness of the environment, while sanctions are given in an educational manner to instill a learning effect.

This approach is in line with the principles of contextual teaching and learning which relate learning materials to real situations in the field.²⁸

²⁵ R Megawangi, *Pendidikan karakter untuk membangun masyarakat madani*, vols. (Indonesia Heritage Foundation, 2004).

²⁶ Meylan Saleh, "Merdeka Belajar di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19" *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Hardiknas*. 1 (2020): 51–56.

²⁷ Latifah Latifah and Ngalimun Ngalimun, "Pemulihan Pendidikan Pasca Pandemi Melalui Transformasi Digital Dengan Pendekatan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam Di Era Society 5.0" *Jurnal Terapung : Ilmu - Ilmu Sosial*. 5.1 (2023): 41.

²⁸ D W Johnson, "The role of digital platforms in educational

In this case, the pandemic is a concrete medium of character education for students.²⁹

Impact on Student Behavior Change

Observation and interview documents show that students have experienced a significant increase in the aspect of independence. Students are starting to get used to compiling activity agendas, managing their own study time, and being able to solve personal problems without relying much on caregivers. Some students are also assigned as small group coordinators who are responsible for the regularity of daily activities. In the interview, it was stated that students feel more confident and ready to live a life outside the pesantren because they are used to living a disciplined and independent life.³⁰

This shows that the development of independence during the pandemic is not only adaptive, but has shaped a long-term mindset and character.³¹ These findings reinforce the statement of Abidah³² that independence is not formed instantly, but through a process of habituation that is consistent and supported by a supportive system.

Overall, the strategy carried out by the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School shows the effectiveness of a value-based coaching approach, exemplary, and consistent habit strengthening. Despite being in limited conditions due to the pandemic, *pesantren* are able to turn challenges into opportunities to strengthen the core values of Islamic education, especially in the aspect of independent character formation. This strategy should be a reference for other Islamic boarding

collaboration" *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*. 19.4 (2016): 102–112.

²⁹ FARID AGUS SUSILO, "Peningkatan Efektivitas Pada Proses Pembelajaran" *MATHEdunesa*. 2.1 (2013).

³⁰ Ahmad Muhakamurrohman, "Inovasi Dan Modernisasi Pendidikan Pondok Pesantren" *Ibda', jurnal kebudayaan islam*. 12.2 (2014): 109–118.

³¹ Soleha, "Sistem Pendidikan Pesantren dalam Membangun Karakter Bangsa dan Bernegara" *EDUGAMA: Jurnal Kependidikan dan Sosial Keagamaan*. 03.01 (2017): 1–19.

³² Azmil Abidah et al., "The Impact of Covid-19 to Indonesian Education and Its Relation to the Philosophy of 'Merdeka Belajar'" *Studies in Philosophy of Science and Education*. 1.1 (2020): 38–49.

schools in developing coaching models that are relevant to the challenges of the times.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the educational development strategy implemented by the Darussalam MAN 1 Ciamis Islamic Boarding School during the Covid-19 pandemic has succeeded in fostering the independence of students effectively through a holistic, adaptive, and religious values-based approach. The coaching process is carried out through strengthening pesantren leadership, learning objectives that are integrated with character values, the application of varied learning methods such as sorogan, bandungan, example, and habituation, as well as evaluation that emphasizes real changes in student behavior. The leadership of the pesantren plays a big role in creating a disciplined and supportive environment, while religious teachers carry out the role of spiritual guides as well as facilitators of independent character formation. Adaptation to the pandemic situation does not reduce the quality of coaching, but rather strengthens the internalization of the values of responsibility, discipline, and independence through the active involvement of students in maintaining health and carrying out pesantren activities independently.

The positive changes shown by students, such as increased independence in self-management, discipline, and concern for the social environment, show that the strategies implemented are relevant to the needs of today's character education. These findings imply that pesantren as traditional educational institutions have great potential in developing character education models that are contextual, flexible, and resistant to crises. Thus, the Islamic boarding school education strategy during the pandemic is not only a form of response to emergencies, but also a model of long-term character development that can be used as a reference for other Islamic educational institutions.

This research provides practical implications that pesantren have great potential as a center

for building contextual and resilient independent character to crises. The strategy implemented by the Darussalam Islamic Boarding School can be used as a model of community-based coaching that integrates religious values, discipline, and adaptation to change. This model can be applied not only in Islamic boarding schools, but also in boarding schools and value-based educational institutions.

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