



POLARIZATION OF ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS IN RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT POLICIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC FROM A CRISIS MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article examines the perspective of crisis management regarding the response of Islamic boarding schools to government policies in handling the transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic, where there is polarization among Islamic boarding schools in carrying out their education patterns, some follow government recommendations in carrying out health protocols and some refuse. This type of research is library research with qualitative methods. Data were collected from library sources with a sociological approach. The theory used is crisis management. The findings of this study are as follows: first, the occurrence of pros and cons of pesantren in responding to change. Second, the Polarization of Islamic Boarding Schools in carrying out education management patterns in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. This research contributes to efforts to improve education management in Indonesia in general.

Keywords: Polarization, Islamic Boarding School, Policy, Covid-19 Pandemic.

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji perspektif manajemen krisis terkait respon pondok pesantren menyikapi kebijakan pemerintah dalam penanganan penularan wabah pandemic covid-19, dimana terjadi polarisasi dikalangan pesantren dalam menjalankan pola pendidikannya, sebagian mengikuti anjuran pemerintah dalam menjalankan protokol kesehatan dan sebagiannya menolak. Jenis penelitian adalah penelitian pustaka dengan metode kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan dari sumber kepustakaan dengan pendekatan sosiologis. Teori yang dipakai adalah manajemen krisis. Temuan penelitian ini adalah sebagai berikut: pertama, terjadinya Pro Kontra pesantren dalam Menyikapi Perubahan. Kedua, Polarisasi Pesantren dalam menjalankan pola manajemen pendidikan ditengah pandemi Covid-19. Penelitian ini berkontribusi bagi upaya perbaikan manajemen pendidikan di Indonesia pada umumnya, dan penataan fondasi manajemen krisis yang lebih baik bagi dunia pendidikan berbasis pesantren.

Kata Kunci: Polarisasi, Pondok Pesantren, Kebijakan, Pandemic Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in almost all of the world, including Indonesia, is suspected by many to have caused the weakness of teaching and learning activities in Islamic boarding schools¹. In addition, the management of the institutional administration and the *pesantren's* economy was also shaken. Consequently, teaching and learning activities must be carried out using online learning methods. And this was done in order to follow the government's directives on preventing the wider spread of the pandemic. It is the same in the economy. *Pesantren* must survive and remain stable and even have to take advantage of existing opportunities to face real challenges.²

The response to the pandemic in Islamic boarding schools is quite diverse, this is because the religious paradigms of *pesantren* are also diverse, some are conservative and some are non-conservative/progressive. Conservative-based Islamic boarding schools are more reserved and tend to fight the existence of Covid-19 by not fully following the health protocols recommended by the government. While others, who are more progressive, prefer to be open to all policies taken by the government as an effort to prevent and overcome Covid-19.³ Although the responses of Islamic boarding schools to Covid-19 tend to vary, in general, Islamic boarding schools are responsive, namely willing to accept the application of social-physical distancing, and issuing religious fatwas containing theological explanations about the necessity to follow health protocols. They also provide procedures for carrying out religious rituals in emergency situations during the pandemic.⁴

Among the triggers for the diversity of Islamic boarding schools' responses to government policies in handling the Covid-19 pandemic are partial cases, such as the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine. So many observers say that Islamic boarding schools play a strategic role in the community, as educational institutions and Islamic da'wah, in providing legal statements/decisions on the use of AstraZeneca vaccines. For example, the decision of the scholars and clerics in the NU *Babtsul Masail* (LBM) Forum in responding to the use of the AstraZeneca product vaccine as permissible is the answer that the wider community has been waiting for because there is a fatwa that says its use is haram.⁵

Ideally, the polarization of Islamic boarding schools in the midst of a pandemic does not need to happen, because Islamic boarding schools are educational institutions that are the

¹ Ahmad Zain Sarnoto et al., "The Urgency of Education Crisis Management Based on Islamic Boarding Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Linguistics and Culture Review* 5, no. S3 (2021): 1764–74, <https://lingcure.org/index.php/journal/article/view/2000/836>.

² Shofiyullahul Kahfi and Ria Kasanova, "Manajemen Pondok Pesantren Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19 (Studi Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Ulum Kedungadem Bojonegoro) Management of Islamic Boarding Schools During the Covid-19 Pandemic (Study of Mambaul Ulum Islamic Boarding School Kedungadem Bojonegoro)," *Pendidikan Berkarakter* 3, no. 1 (2020): 26–30.

³ Senata Adi Prasetya and Muhammad Fahmi, "Reorientasi, Peran Dan Tantangan Pendidikan Islam Di Tengah Pandemi," *Tarbawi* 9, no. 1 (2020): 21–38, <https://doi.org/10.36781/tarbawi.v9i1.3128>.

⁴ Abd Hannan, Siti Azizah, and Husna Atiya, "Dinamika Pesantren Dalam Merespons Pandemi Covid-19 Di Madura (The Dynamics of Islamic Boarding Schools in Responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic in Madura)," *Journal of ISMAC* 2, no. 4 (2020): 113–35, <https://doi.org/10.36548/jismac.2020.4>.

⁵ Konik Naimah and Dwi Runjani Juwita, "URGENSI PESANTREN DALAM PENGGUNAAN VAKSIN ASTRAZENECA DI MASA PANDEMI C-19 (The Urgency of Islamic Boarding Schools in the Use of the ASTRAZENECA Vaccine During the C-19 Pandemic)," *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*, 6(11), 951–952. 3, no. 1 (2021): 15–38.

moral support for the community⁶. The rejection of Islamic boarding schools towards government programs and different attitudes from the government must be seen as internal considerations for Islamic boarding schools to maintain their existence. However, when dealing directly with power and government, of course, there are more political reasons why *pesantren* have different responses, and what concrete benefits for *pesantren* education management will they get from their different and similar attitudes to the government. The issue of managing the pattern of *pesantren*-based education in the midst of a pandemic, which is seen from the point of view of education management in the midst of a crisis, has not been widely studied by previous researchers.

METHOD

This research is included in the type of library research category⁷. Where the researcher collects data from various previous publications, either in the form of books, research results, journals, articles on websites, and so on. The research approach used in the sociology of education approach,⁸ which looks at the behavior of Islamic boarding school-based education managers in Indonesia in dealing with the pandemic. The theory used is crisis management theory in education,⁹ so that in-depth information is obtained about the management of Islamic boarding schools in facing the crisis due to COVID-19. Crisis management in education is closely related to government political policies¹⁰. Thus, the management of *pesantren*-based education in this study is important to see in relation to the policies issued by the government, especially related to efforts to overcome the pandemic in Indonesia. In addition, crisis management in the world of education cannot be separated from social conflict, especially when it relates to various political, economic, and social interests¹¹. Differences or polarization within the *pesantren* community will be analyzed in this study, especially in their response to government policies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pros and Cons of Islamic Boarding Schools in Responding to Change

In responding to changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic in maintaining the pattern of education in Islamic boarding schools, there has been a discourse around the pros and cons of technical strategies for responding to change. *Pesantren* are almost completely helpless when it comes to the health aspect. Discourses related to *pesantren*, education, and the pandemic only concern how *pesantren* should implement health protocols optimally, look for religious

⁶ Ahmad Zain Sarnoto and Lamy Hayatina, "Polarization of the Muslim Community Towards Government Policies in Overcoming the COVID- 19 Pandemic in Indonesia," *Linguistics and Culture Review* 5, no. July (2021): 642–52, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37028/lingcure.v5nS1.1449>.

⁷ Mestika Zed, *Metodologi Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2008).

⁸ Jeanne H. Ballantine and Joan Z. Spade, *Schools and Society: A Sociological Approach to Education* (SAGE Publications, 2011).

⁹ D Dodds and Swiniarski, *The First 120 Minutes: A Guide to Crisis Management in Education* (Toronto: Canadian Education Association., 1994).

¹⁰ A. Boin, E. Stern, and P. Hart, *The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership Under Pressure* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511490880>.

¹¹ Bob Jessop and Karim Knio, *The Pedagogy of Economic, Political and Social Crises Dynamics, Construals and Lessons* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2018).

arguments that support the government's political policies in order to break the chain of transmission of the corona virus, as well as the pros and cons of receiving vaccinations with certain types of vaccines. They are all technical and very insubstantial. There is no contribution from within that *pesantren* can give to the nation and state, let alone to the world.

In a situation where the world is facing a war against the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not only Islamic boarding schools that are unable to move to fight from within, but the state and the Indonesian government itself are also powerless. According to Kyai Said Aqil Sirad, the fragility of the national health system, one of which is due to the high import of medical equipment (alkes). According to him, currently, there is around 94 percent of medical devices in circulation come from imported products. The dominance of imported products marks the fragility of the national health system. Kyai Said Aqil suggested that the government would improve the national health system, by increasing the ratio and reliability of domestic health facilities, such as hospitals and health centers.¹²

The fragility of the national health system has a macro impact on the *pesantren* health system which is also fragile as a micro context. When there is a crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the organization of Islamic boarding school activities, including education in it, must also accept defeat in a global war. Islamic boarding schools are forced, like it or not, to talk and debate about technical issues and strategies that are not substantial. Because *pesantren*, like the state, cannot do more, let alone think about creating their own health products, which are useful for the health services of students, religious teachers and clerics, so that teaching and learning activities are not disrupted by this kind of health crisis¹³.

When Islamic boarding schools are no longer moving and cannot do much to maintain their independence, Islamic boarding schools inevitably become passive objects for every government policy program. For example, when Vice President Ma'ruf Amin reviewed the process of implementing face-to-face learning at *Pondok Pesantren Darunnajah*, Jakarta, the government really acted very superior and asked for the vaccination process for *pesantren* administrators, teachers, administrators, and employees to be accelerated¹⁴. Meanwhile, the *pesantren* can only agree with, support, and cooperate with the government with one common hope, which is to be able to return to holding face-to-face education as before the pandemic arrived. The rest, Islamic boarding schools can only refuse trivial things, such as certain types of vaccines, but accept other types of vaccines. This means that the management of Islamic boarding schools and all their policies only focuses on technical matters and strategies for responding to change, without actually being able to offer new alternatives, due to their inherent weakness, which is much weaker than the state's position.

In this weak and lacking situation, both in terms of health infrastructure and policies, Islamic boarding schools are not independent, even in terms of narratives and solutions. The Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) is an external institution outside Islamic

¹² CNNIndonesia, "PBNU: 94 Persen Alkes Impor Tanda Sistem Kesehatan Rapuh," Retrieved from <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/>, 2021.

¹³ Ahmad Zain Sarnoto, "Resistance of Education Design Based on Islamic Boarding School in the Midst of The Covid-19 Pandemic: Study of Crisis Management," in *ICONIS: International Conference on Islamic Studies*, 2021, 151–62.

¹⁴ Francisca Christy Rosana, "Tinjau Pondok Pesantren, Maruf Amin Minta Vaksinasi Untuk Guru Dan Santri Dipercepat," Retrieved from <https://bisnis.tempo.co/>, 2021.

boarding schools, but after seeing the big gaps in the weaknesses of Islamic boarding schools, FSGI dared to build a narrative about what is good for *pesantren* to cover the gaps. Likewise, when it sees the gaps in the weaknesses of *pesantren*, the government dares to build legislation whose clauses threaten *pesantren* with sanctions. The weakness of Islamic boarding schools becomes capital for external institutions to regulate, suggest, and frame them in a definitive narrative, which *pesantren* itself can only do passively and accept. There is no strong resilience system in the body of the *pesantren*, especially regarding the education it provides, so that the *pesantren* can be independent. The only ability of *pesantren* is religious fatwas whose orientation is predictable, namely supporting the direction of government policies and installing bodies that are fully dependent on the government.

Polarization of Islamic Boarding Schools in carrying out education management patterns

The pandemic has taught many things for the implementation of Islamic boarding school-based education management. Health infrastructure facilities and the ability of Islamic boarding schools to provide education are not the same¹⁵. The government's political policy should not be haphazard, not in the name of preventing the transmission of Covid-19 in the *pesantren* cluster, but harming the *pesantren* itself. Member of the West Java DPRD Commission III who is also the Deputy Chair of the West Java GP Ansor PW, Edi Ruysandi, said that the government's efforts to break the Covid-19 chain in the *pesantren* environment were positive and good things. However, the clause to impose sanctions on *pesantren* that violates it is an excessive measure. Rusyandi also added that Islamic boarding schools need solutions, not sanctions. Problems in Islamic boarding schools are in the form of health facilities and services, the availability of masks, hand sanitizers, the food needs of kyai and santri, all of which must be the government's attention. The provincial government must help *pesantren* so that this health protocol takes place and is implemented optimally.¹⁶

The government's policy is considered excessive in imposing sanctions on *pesantren* that violate the *prokes*, not only because they are not present to provide solutions, but also because the government is partially present to *pesantren*. For example, when some Islamic boarding schools have received thousands of doses of vaccine, other *pesantren* are undergoing mass vaccination, and the government claims to have accelerated the *pesantren* vaccination process, but at the same time, there are still many Islamic boarding schools that have not received the Covid-19 vaccine. This can be seen from the statement by *Rabithah Ma'ahid Islamiyah* (RMI) of the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board (PBNU), who said that although there were reports from a number of Islamic boarding schools that had received the Covid-19 vaccine, there were still many Islamic boarding schools that had not received the Covid-19 vaccine.¹⁷ This means that the government is present as a sanctioning agent is not a solution, it is an inappropriate action,

¹⁵ Sarnoto, "Resistance of Education Design Based on Islamic Boarding School in the Midst of The Covid-19 Pandemic: Study of Crisis Management."

¹⁶ Ecep Sukirman, "Anggota DPRD Jawa Barat: Pesantren Butuh Solusi, Bukan Sanksi (West Java DPRD Member: Islamic Boarding Schools Need Solutions, Not Sanctions)," Retrieved from <https://www.Pikiran-Rakyat.Com/>, 2020.

¹⁷ F. E. Permana, "Masih Banyak Pesantren Yang Belum Dapat Vaksin Covid-19," <https://www.Republika.Co.Id/> 21 Maret 2021, 2021.

because the pattern of the resilience of *pesantren* management, including education in it, is not uniform.

In responding to the vaccination policy in Islamic boarding schools, there is a polarization between the pros and cons. If some Islamic boarding schools do not differentiate between types of vaccines, then there are some Islamic boarding schools that accept certain vaccines and reject other types of vaccines. This can be seen from the case of the rejection of Islamic boarding schools in East Java to the vaccination program with AstraZeneca by the government. Caretaker of Amanatul Ummah Islamic Boarding School, KH. Asep Saifuddin Chalim, openly said that his party refused to inject the AstraZeneca vaccine at the educational institution he managed. Asep Saifuddin Chalim strictly forbids tens of thousands of students, students, and teachers at his educational institution from receiving injections with the Covid-19 vaccine produced in the UK.¹⁸

This is different from other Islamic boarding schools that are willing to receive vaccinations with AstraZeneca. This can be seen from a number of kyai and caretakers of Islamic boarding schools in East Java Province, who stated that their party was ready for injections using AstraZeneca. This phenomenon was also conveyed by President Joko Widodo during a visit to Sidoarjo Regency. The President said that he had met with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), East Java, and met with clerics in East Java Province to discuss the AstraZeneca vaccine. According to Jokowi, the MUI and the Kiai in East Java are ready to be given the AstraZeneca vaccine and will soon be used in their Islamic boarding schools¹⁹. This is independent of their respective religious ideologies as well as the president's political interests with AstraZeneca, but what is most prominent is the phenomenon of the attitude of *pesantren* towards the AstraZeneca vaccine being part of the material supporting the polarization of *pesantren*.

Because Islamic boarding schools are experiencing polarization, both because of differences in the ability to support infrastructure and differences in religious ideology and political interests, this has an impact on the implementation of education in *pesantren*. For Islamic boarding schools which are completely limited, both in terms of infrastructure and superstructure (religious ideology and political networks), the practice of providing education is different. Islamic boarding schools that are unable to guarantee the safety of their students take a policy to repatriate or suspend education. However, Islamic boarding schools are quite capable in terms of infrastructure and political networks, so the implementation of education will continue to be carried out while still complying with health protocols.

Thus, the resilience of *pesantren*-based education is not the same²⁰. The background factors also vary, ranging from financial ability, political network capabilities, and the ability of health support facilities which ultimately have a major influence on the sustainability and sustainability of Islamic boarding school education during the pandemic. Islamic boarding schools that have many capabilities are more resilient in facing the pandemic crisis, so that the

¹⁸ E. E. Budianto, "Blak-Blakan Pengasuh Ponpes Di Mojokerto Tolak Vaksin AstraZeneca," [https://News.Detik.Com/27 Maret 2021, 2021](https://News.Detik.Com/27%20Maret%202021,2021).

¹⁹ Presidengoid, "Pondok Pesantren Di Jawa Timur Siap Terima Vaksinasi AstraZeneca," [https://Www.Presidenri.Go.Id/22 Maret 2021, 2021](https://Www.Presidenri.Go.Id/22%20Maret%202021,2021).

²⁰ Jiahui Chen et al., "Prediction and Mitigation of Mutation Threats to COVID-19 Vaccines and Antibody Therapies," *Chemical Science* 12, no. 20 (2021): 6929–48, <https://doi.org/10.1039/d1sc01203g>.

implementation of teaching and learning activities can continue while implementing the implementation of health protocols and even providing health services independently, even contributing to the health of the community around the *pesantren*. However, Islamic boarding schools are weak from all sides, they are forced to take time off, even when they return to implementing teaching and learning activities. they are accused of being the cause of the transmission of the virus and framed in the narrative of the “*pesantren* cluster”. This last category of *pesantren* is not only suffering from the virus attack but is also threatened with legal sanctions due to regulations made by the government.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, the pros and cons of responding to changes in the education system and the occurrence of polarization in responding to government policies among Islamic boarding schools are part of the response and efforts to maintain the pattern of *pesantren* education in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic in a crisis management approach. However, the crisis management of the *pesantren* education world during this pandemic tends to be passive-affirmative. Islamic boarding schools are powerless to take steps that grow from their internal awareness because they are constrained by many obstacles in the form of infrastructure and human resource capacity, so they become passive objects that will surely affirm all government policies. To survive in the midst of a pandemic crisis, the management of Islamic boarding schools is more about supporting all government policies, such as the strict application of health protocols, even being able and without protest to receive sanctions from the government if they are considered to have violated the *prokes* rules. By acting passively and affirming the government's political policies, the implementation of *pesantren* education is much more sustainable. The implementation of teaching and learning activities can be carried out within the corridor frame that has been determined by the government. If anyone acts actively, it becomes part of the minority and is unpopular. There are few cases where *pesantren* try to diverge from government policy, but this phenomenon is an exception. Even if there are pros and cons within the *pesantren*, which both imagine the sustainability of education during the pandemic, it is carried out at the level of technical strategy, not a substantial level that really offers alternatives and novelty. This is because the *pesantren* itself has not been able to get out of its internal constraints, such as the lack of infrastructure, facilities, and human resource capacity to contribute more for the students and for the surrounding community, especially in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic.

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