

# Pros and Cons of Islamic Boarding School Strategy Responding to Changes in Crisis Management Perspective in the midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic

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## Abstract

This study examines the pros and cons of Islamic boarding schools in responding to changing educational patterns during the Covid-19 pandemic. 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, Islamic boarding school-based education patterns are vulnerable to external disturbances, including the Covid-19 pandemic. Second, the pros and cons of Islamic boarding school policies revolve around technical strategies to respond to the pandemic situation as well as in responding to government policies. This research contributes to efforts to improve education management in Indonesia in general, and to structuring a better crisis management foundation for the world of Islamic boarding school-based education.

## Keywords

cons, strategy, change, education, pesantren, pandemic.

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## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the world, including Indonesia, has had an impact on many sectors, including education (Sarnoto & Hayatina, 2021). Islamic boarding schools which have educational patterns are also affected by causing weak teaching and learning activities. 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 (Kahfi & Kasanova, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic is also considered a gray life factor for Islamic education, because it is able to overhaul the order of Islamic education that has been going on comfortably so far. In fact, the predictions of observers say that the future of Islamic education, madrasas and pesantren, in Indonesia is threatened with lost education so that it is feared to give birth to a lost generation (Sarnoto et al., 2021). This is because the Work From Home (WFH) policy, social and physical distancing, and the teaching and learning process (KBM) using an online system makes learning that was originally done outside the network (offline) turns into a network (online). Another problem is 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. 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 (Hannan, Azizah, & Atiya, 2020). One of the triggers for the diversity of responses in the pesantren world is 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/decision on the use of AstraZeneca vaccines. For example, the decision of the scholars and clerics in the NU Bahtsul 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 (Naimah & Juwita, 2021). The polarization of Islamic boarding schools in the midst of this pandemic ideally does not occur, because Islamic boarding schools are educational institutions that are the moral support for the community. 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 the government, of course there are more political reasons why pesantren have different responses, and what concrete benefits for the resilience of pesantren education will they get from their different and similar attitudes to the government. The issue of the resilience of the pesantren-based education pattern in the midst of a pandemic, which is seen from the point of view of resilience management in the midst of a crisis.

## Method

This type of research is library research (Zed, 2008). Researchers collect data from various previous publications, both in the form of books, research results, journals, articles on websites, and so on. The research approach used is the sociology of education approach (Ballantine & Spade, 2011), 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 (Dodds & Swiniarski, 1994), so that in-depth information is obtained about the management of Islamic boarding schools in facing the crisis due to COVID-19. Educational crisis management is closely related to the government's political policies (Boin, Stern, & Hart, 2008). 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 interests (Bob Jessop & Knio, 2018). For this reason, this study will examine two issues in crisis management that were pursued by Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Findings and Analysis

An important finding in this research is that the implementation of education in Islamic boarding schools does not have sufficient resilience, especially when it is hit by a certain crisis. Second, there are pros and cons of pesantren to changes in education patterns;

### Islamic Boarding School and Crisis

Islamic boarding school-based education has proven to be unable to withstand sudden external changes and without precedent, as in the case of facing the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, when the government implemented the policy of Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) which took place from 3-20 July 2020, a number of Islamic boarding schools closed their students and female students. This holiday policy is called a compulsion, accompanied by an alibi that they are helping and supporting government policies (Ikilhojatim, 2021). In addition, the kyai also have no other strategy other than encouraging the students when they are at home to keep trying, be vigilant, and always maintain health protocols and multiply dhikr. Despite all the "copy-paste" suggestions from the government, education in Islamic boarding schools has "ended", because the students had to go back to their respective homes. However, a similar policy does not occur in other Islamic boarding schools. For example, Deputy Governor of Central Java Taj Yasin Maimoen emphasized that learning activities at Islamic boarding schools do not have to be stopped or closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as long as they follow health protocols in an orderly manner (Antoni, 2020). The vulnerability in the management of Islamic boarding schools is based on the vulnerability of health management. This is because Islamic boarding schools are one of the contributors to the COVID-19 cluster. In fact, Islamic boarding schools that are old in age are still part of the contributors to the Covid-19 cluster. This can be seen from the experience of the An-Nur Islamic boarding school, Gunungkidul Yogyakarta (Eleonara, 2021). From there, the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) gave a number of recommendations, so that there would be no new clusters of Covid-19 in Islamic boarding schools (ponpes). According to FSGI records, the new pesantren cluster occurred after the odd semester vacation and face-to-face learning was held again (Zubaidah, 2021). Islamic boarding schools are considered unable to handle students who have just completed their vacation period at home, and are even considered not to have a strategy to prevent the transmission of Covid-19 when face-to-face learning is held again. The bad experience of such pesantren education management received serious attention, one of them from the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions and then they provided input on good and correct governance. FSGI's observation is quite objective, because it departs from the failure of Islamic boarding schools in various places. FSGI noted the emergence of new Islamic boarding schools clusters in a number of areas, namely Tasikmalaya, West Java, Boyolali, Central Java, Bangka Bangka Belitung, and Pekanbaru Riau (Zubaidah, 2021). The former Minister of Religion, Fachrul Razi, in the end took a political policy related to the management of the pesantren which was vulnerable to the crisis, by conveying that there were four (4) conditions that must be met by both madrasahs and pesantren. If these four conditions are met, then the madrasah and Islamic boarding school are allowed to conduct face-to-face learning. This kind of view was conveyed by the Minister of Religion in a webinar entitled "Adjusting Learning Policies in the Time of the Covid-19 Pandemic". On that occasion, the Minister of Religion said there were four things: first, the madrasah/Islamic boarding school environment must be safe from Covid. Second, teachers, ustadz, or other teachers must also be safe from Covid. Third, the students or students must be safe from Covid. Fourth, the implementation of strict health protocols (Kominfo, 2020). The government's perspective, in this case the Ministry of Religion, can be understood that the implementation of Islamic boarding school-based education is one of the causes of the transmission of the Covid-19 pandemic caused by an unsafe environment, unsafe teaching staff and students, and low health protocols. For this reason, the Ministry of Religion will only allow Islamic boarding schools to conduct face-to-face education if certain hygiene and health conditions are met. The Old Minister of Religion's policy continued with the New Minister of Religion,

Yaquut Cholil Qoumas, who said that all teaching and learning processes must run according to health protocols. Including encouraging vaccinations for teachers and students in madrasas and religious colleges (Indonesiagoid, 2021). The government's presence in the midst of pesantren life is no longer just a regulator, but has begun to have an iron fist (Sarnoto & Hayatina, 2021). The government began to act in black and white. Islamic boarding schools have lost their independence in managing education during the pandemic. So like it or not, pesantren must obey government regulations so that the teaching and learning process can be held again. Meanwhile, Islamic boarding schools that refuse government regulations are subject to severe sanctions. For example, the Sukabumi Regency Government will take an inventory and re-examine the facilities and infrastructure supporting the Covid-19 Protocol for all Islamic Boarding Schools in Sukabumi Regency. In addition, to ensure that the health protocol rules are adhered to, the Sukabumi Regency Government will routinely monitor and supervise (Kompas, 2020). Efforts to impose sanctions on Islamic boarding schools that continue to carry out the teaching and learning process during the pandemic with a low level of implementation of the program are considered as excessive political policies. The government has gone too far in interfering with the internal affairs of pesantren education management. Governments that place too much emphasis on sanctions rather than solutions are judged to be not right on target and flawed in their thinking. This was conveyed by a member of the West Java Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), Edi Rusyandi, who considered that there was a sanction clause in the Governor's Decree Number 443/Kep.321-Hukham/2020 regarding the health protocol for the prevention and control of Covid-19 in Islamic boarding schools. Exaggerating (Sukirman, 2020). As a result, because Islamic boarding schools do not have sufficient resilience in providing education and supporting facilities such as health services, Islamic boarding schools become objects of political policy (Sarnoto, 2014), even though these political policies are still controversial, very authoritarian-excessive, and only make pesantren as passive objects in managing their education, not as an independent and sovereign active subject.

### **Pros and Cons of Technical Strategy Responding to Change**

The diversity in the resilience of the pattern of education in pesantren is exacerbated by the discourse around pesantren which only gives rise to pros and cons related to technical strategies for responding to change. Pesantren has become a completely powerless subculture 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 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 (Sarnoto et al., 2021). At the same time, the world is in chaos or war. The General Chairperson of the Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU) Executive Board, KH. Said Aqil Siroj, said that there were several big wars that NU residents had to win. The war referred to here is not physical but a war to influence each other in order to seize, control, and change people's way of thinking. One of them is biological warfare. This new war began when there was a Covid-19 pandemic. Countries that are able to produce vaccines today will come out victorious in this biological war. Meanwhile, countries that cannot afford and can only import will lose. Even though the Covid-19 virus has now appeared many more virulent variants. One of them is the Delta variant from India, which is considered to be more contagious than the original Covid-19 virus (NUOnline, 2021). In a situation where the world is holding a biological war, 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 losing. Said Aqil Sirad said that the fragility of the national health system, one of which was due to the high import of medical equipment (alkes). According to Kiyai Said, currently around 94 percent of medical devices in circulation are imported products. The dominance of imported products marks the fragility of the national health system. Said Aqil then 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 (CNNIndonesia, 2021). The fragile national health system is a macro context for 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 crisis. 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 accelerated (Rosana, 2021). 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. 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.

## Conclusion

Based on the description above, the resilience of the pesantren education pattern in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic is sought through crisis management. 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 that they become passive objects that 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 strictly implementing health protocols, even being able and without protesting 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 Islamic boarding schools, which both imagine the continuity of education during the pandemic, it is carried out at the technical strategy level, not at a substantial level which 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, infrastructure,

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