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Kiai's National Politics in developing Moderate Santri

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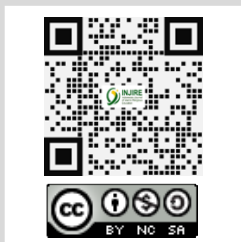
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**Abstract**

This article discusses the role of Islamic scholars (kiai) in cultivating the values of national politics to shape moderate Santri. Confronting the phenomenon of Islamic scholars involved in political contests, both actively and those choosing to remain neutral, this article outlines how kiai plays a role in imparting the values of national politics and analyzes the impact of internalizing these values on Islamic students. Utilizing a qualitative method and a phenomenological approach, the findings in this article highlight the significance of the kiai's role in developing political awareness and patriotism among Islamic students, ultimately contributing to the construction of a better and more just society. The research also notes that the political stance of the kiai is not always reflected in practical political contests; the silence of the kiai regarding external influences can also be considered a political strategy. The national political orientation of the kiai is also manifested through Sufi-influenced actions in society and adaptive attitudes towards local culture.

Keywords:

Kiai; Nationalism; Pesantren; Political Values; Santri.

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas peran kiai dalam mengembangkan nilai-nilai politik kebangsaan untuk membentuk santri yang moderat. Menghadapi fenomena kiai yang terlibat dalam kontestasi politik, baik yang aktif maupun yang memilih tetap netral. Artikel ini menguraikan bagaimana kiai memainkan perannya dalam mengajarkan nilai-nilai politik kebangsaan dan menganalisis dampak internalisasi nilai-nilai tersebut pada santri. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan pendekatan fenomenologi, temuan dalam artikel ini menyoroti pentingnya peran kiai dalam mengembangkan kesadaran politik dan patriotisme di kalangan santri, yang pada akhirnya dapat berkontribusi pada pembangunan masyarakat yang lebih baik dan adil. Penelitian ini juga mencatat bahwa sikap politik kiai tidak selalu tercermin dalam kontestasi politik praktis; diamnya kiai terhadap pengaruh eksternal juga dapat dianggap sebagai strategi politik. Politik kebangsaan kiai juga tercermin melalui tindakan-tindakan bernuansa tasawuf dalam masyarakat serta sikap-sikap yang adaptif terhadap budaya lokal.

Kata Kunci:

Kiai; Moderat; Nasionalisme; Pesantren; Politik Kebangsaan; Santri.

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Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (Pondok Pesantren), as institutions of Islamic education, are often utilized as political tools by politicians with specific interests. This phenomenon is frequently observed during campaign periods, where candidates and their campaign teams visit pondok pesantren in various ways. Fundamentally, the primary goal of these visits is to seek blessings from the kiai, while simultaneously garnering spiritual support and mobilizing the masses (Suradi & Surahman, 2020a, p. 202). During the leadership of President Soeharto, this situation was prevalent. Numerous government officials, including regents, governors, ministers, and Golkar party members, routinely visited Kiai and pesantren. These visits were not merely formal but were also accompanied by the provision of assistance and grants, which had significant impacts (M. Alkaf et al., 2022, p. 148).

In the research conducted by M. Dian Hikmawan et al., the pattern of relationships surrounding the kiai within the hierarchy is continuously maintained and preserved. The kiai act as agents who increase their activities to express themselves as actors of social and political change, particularly in Banten. The behavior of the kiai can be understood as a directive to take actions that are believed to bring about truth and ideal conditions. Such relationships involve various aspects of life within the social, political, and economic realms (Hikmawan et al., 2020, p. 6).

The reality described by M. Dian Hikmawan allows kiai to make significant contributions to various public issues. The role of kiai is not limited to spiritual aspects but extends to broader social aspects of life. In the current leadership crisis, both within the government system and the Indonesian state, which is considered to lack sufficient morality, the resurgence of moral figures like Kiai serves as a solution. Kiai is not only capable of maintaining the morality of the community but also of restoring politics and education in Indonesia by prioritizing the character and morality of the Indonesian nation. The presence of kiai, who are caretakers as well as leaders of pesantren, in their roles and functions can be seen as a unique leadership phenomenon. This occurs because, in addition to managing pesantren, they are responsible for developing curricula, establishing rules, designing evaluation systems, and conducting the teaching process related to religious knowledge. They also serve as mentors, educators, and community leaders. (Suradi & Surahman, 2020b, p. 204).

As researched by Choirul Mahfud, in the last decade, several Kiai or Gus have chosen to engage in political contests (Mahfud, 2016). On the other hand, some kiai or pesantren maintain a neutral stance in politics, choosing to limit their interactions with politicians. The political behavior of Santri cannot be separated from the role of Kiai. In the eyes of their students, kiai are role models and disseminators of knowledge, whose charisma makes their fatwas considered sacred and difficult to reject as a form of theological obedience (Siregar, 2013). The political obedience of Santri to Kiai remains strong, making it challenging to detach from the political decisions of kiai. Any dissent towards the kiai's political views (political choices) is seen as disobedience and, in extreme cases, considered a sinful act for opposing the kiai's decisions (Ifendi, 2020, p. 80).

The political stance of Kiai can be a decisive factor based on rational considerations, rather than merely following the trend (patronage), especially not just pursuing short-term pragmatic goals without being balanced by a strong public commitment between the chosen candidate and the voters. The choices or positions taken by Kiai also embody the spirit of nurturing national identity and act as a means of enlightening and liberating the community from the constraints of uncertainty (M. Alkaf et al., 2022).

Research on National Politics has also been conducted by Romy Hermawan, who in his study explains the initiative of Brawijaya University Malang, particularly the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, as an educational institution concerned with societal issues. The focus is on national political education activities conducted in one of the pesantren (Hermawan & Ngindana, 2020). This effort represents a form of internalizing national political values to the students by external parties. However, this paper focuses on the internal party of the pesantren itself, namely the kiai as the role model.

Research conducted by Rifqil Halim also encompasses a study on national politics within the framework of nationalism combined with dimensions of religiosity (nationalist-religious). In this study, the understanding of nationalism in the pesantren community is derived not only from contemporary literature but also extends to the study of classical texts or the works of traditional scholars. For instance, the understanding of nationalism at the Manba'ul Ulum pesantren is examined through the book *Izhatun Nasyi'in*, which intricately blends the concepts of nationalism and religiosity (Halim, 2022).

As the central figures of Islamic education, kiai play a crucial role in national politics and should have a high level of concern for political matters while maintaining neutrality to exercise their political rights without any bias from external parties. When kiai, as spiritual and intellectual leaders, guide students through classical Islamic texts, they not only provide religious understanding but also incorporate values of nationalism and patriotism. National political education thus becomes an internalization process closely intertwined with religious teachings, shaping students to become not only devout individuals but also responsible citizens.

Based on literature and field observations, the researcher deems it necessary to enrich the study on national politics, particularly within pesantren. Therefore, political education in pesantren is essential for fostering political awareness, political maturity, and, most importantly, to prevent biases in practical politics. Based on the above discussion, the research question that arises is: How do kiai play a role in adapting national political values to students?

Methods

This research is a type of field research because it is not conducted in a library (reviewing books), but rather at a specific location, namely the pesantren. From the perspective of data type, this study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach with a descriptive model, as it aims to gather and comprehensively describe observable facts in the field concerning the problem being addressed. The approach used in this study is phenomenology, which is a strategy of inquiry where the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences (Creswell, 2014, p. 12).

The location of this research is Pondok Pesantren Asy-Sya'ban, and the research period is from February to September 2023. The data sources in this study are chosen purposively, based on the consideration that these sources are directly involved in the pesantren environment: 1) The caretaker of the pesantren, K.H. Miftakhurohman, 2) A teacher, Ustadz Syukron, and 3) A student, Kang Ainun. These sources will provide information regarding the activities of the pesantren and student data useful for the research. Data collection methods include observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. In terms of observation, one of the authors attended the weekly religious lectures delivered by Kiai Miftakhurohman to obtain accurate data.

The data analysis process consists of three stages: 1) Data reduction: Data reduction is necessary due to the volume of data from each source, some of which may not be relevant to the research focus and thus need to be discarded or minimized. 2) Data presentation: This involves describing the findings from the field related to the efforts made by Pesantren Asy-Sya'ban, often presented in a narrative text format for qualitative research. 3) Verification or concluding: Verification is an activity conducted to derive a conclusion that can be tested for its validity based on the data presentation obtained from field sources.

Results and Discussion

Pesantren Culture

According to Mastuhu, terminologically, a pesantren is "a traditional Islamic educational institution that studies, understands, deepens, internalizes, and practices Islamic teachings while emphasizing the importance of religious morals as a guide for daily behavior" (Mastuhu, 1994, p. 55). Nurcholis Madjid describes a pesantren as "an institution that embodies the natural development process of the national education system" (Madjid, 1997, p. 94).

More broadly, a pesantren is defined as an Islamic religious education institution that grows and is recognized by the surrounding community, with a boarding system (campus) where students receive religious education through a study or madrasa system entirely under the authority of one or several charismatic kiai leaders (Mastuhu, 1994, p. 32). According to Koentjaraningrat, the term "culture" etymologically comes from the Sanskrit word "budhayah," which is the plural form of "buddhi," meaning intellect or reason. Thus, it can be inferred that culture pertains to "matters related to intellect and reason" (Koentjaraningrat, 1997, p. 18)."

Given its relation to human intellect and reason, the scope of culture is extensive. Koentjaraningrat states that culture manifests in at least three forms: 1) Culture as a complex of ideas, concepts, values, norms, and regulations. 2) Culture as a complex of patterned activities and behaviors of humans in society. 3) Culture as material artifacts produced by humans (Koentjaraningrat, 1997, p. 15). Saefuddin Zuhry further emphasizes that every individual, community, and society can create a particular culture through their creative endeavors. When such creations are repeated and eventually become a collective agreement, they transform into culture. One community capable of forming a distinctive culture is the pesantren (Zuhriy, 2011, p. 290). There are two forms of culture in pesantren, including the following:

a. Modeling

Historically, regarding modeling and the roots of pesantren tradition, Rahman has explained that "modeling has long been an integral part of Javanese philosophy, where paternalism and the patron-client relationship have strong roots in society" (Mas'ud, 2002b, p. 65). Moreover, in Islamic teachings, modeling can be identified with *uswatun hasanah* or *sunnah hasanah*, which are ideal examples that should be followed by this community (Bruinessen, 2015). The leadership of Prophet Muhammad, which is central and unquestionable in the Islamic world, is continued in Javanese santri society by the Walisongo, who are revered as second only to the Prophet Muhammad. The Walis always believe in their mission as successors to the Prophets, who must be physically involved in community affairs, clarify and resolve issues within society, and serve as embodiments of Islamic ideals and diverse communities. The Walis, emulated by scholars, generally known as kiai, become symbols of integration between religious local leaders and their communities (Soebahar, 2013).

b. Culture Resistance

Maintaining culture and adhering to the basic teachings of Islam is a culture that has developed in pesantren for centuries. This attitude is essentially a logical consequence of modeling. The idea of resistance has also been reflected well in the intellectual tradition of pesantren. The materials taught in these institutions are universal literature developed and transmitted from generation to generation and directly related to the unique leadership concept of the kiai. Its teachings, ancient texts (in a modern perspective) ensure continuity with the right tradition, *al-Qadim al-Shaalih* (the good old things), in preserving the religious knowledge passed down to the Islamic community by the great scholars of the past (Mas'ud, 2002a, p. 29).

Academically, the function of the materials provided in pesantren is to provide access to students, not only to the heritage of the past but also to their role in the future, especially for living a Javanese Muslim-oriented life, emphasizing peace and harmony with God and society.

The principles of pesantren cultural values, related to cultural resistance, are a cultural model built by the Walisongo in the 15th-16th centuries in Java, a continuation of Muhammad's modeling. One form of cultural resistance is the rejection of colonialism by pesantren. The Walisongo mostly used a gentle approach in conveying the teachings of Prophet Muhammad in the archipelago, especially in Java, where trade had previously developed through port routes (in East Java) and had been influenced by Hindu-Buddhist cultural traditions (in Central Java), and Portuguese defense fortifications had been built (in West Java).

According to Said Aqil, the Walisongo employed this method to uphold morals in human culture and social life, to prevent harm, environmental damage, and injustice (Siradj, 1999, p. 151). Therefore, it is often emphasized in Islamic teachings, in order to build a cultured human society, Muslims should refrain from activities that cause harm to non-Muslims and act unjustly.

The struggle of the Walisongo aimed to Islamize with wisdom and acceptance by the local community. Therefore, the message of Prophet Muhammad disseminated by the Walisongo is teachings that can be easily accepted by Javanese traditions and culture. Thus, the goal of the Walisongo was to make Islam more easily understood by the Javanese community with the traditions that had been cultivated between Islam and Java.

The Role of Pesantren

When we look back, the role of pesantren has garnered serious attention from researchers both domestically and internationally. They are interested in the existence and social role of pesantren. For example, Hiroko Horikoshi observed the role of the late Ajengan/Kiai Yusuf Tojiri, who founded and led Pondok Pesantren Cipari (Wanaraja, Garut). According to Horikoshi, kiai are not merely cultural brokers as theorized by Clifford Geertz. In her dissertation, Horikoshi argues that kiai have a significant cultural role. Horikoshi challenges Geertz's theory of cultural brokers in the development process. She reached this conclusion through empirical studies, having spent considerable time living in the pesantren (Horikoshi, 1987).

Horikoshi's findings suggest that kiai are not passive barriers but rather active agents of social change, selectively conveying certain cultural elements to the community while withholding others. Clifford Geertz's concept of "cultural broker" posits that kiai act like dams that hold back many new cultural manifestations and release only a portion of them. Due to many factors beyond the control of pesantren, the remaining culture is directly absorbed by the community. This deadlock in the "cultural broker" role ultimately "kills" the cultural actor as well (Geertz, 2014).

This cultural role is also evident in the "architectural planning" of pesantren in the past. For instance, Pesantren Futuhiyyah Mranggen, located on the outskirts of Semarang, was founded in 1901 by the late KH Abdurrahman bin Qoshidil Haq. It began with a gate beside the central market of Mranggen, Demak Regency. At the center of the pesantren complex stands a mosque, serving as the hub for study and community service. To the north are the students' dormitories. Now, on either side of the mosque are the dormitories and schools under the Futuhiyyah foundation (Yahya, 2014, p. 200).

The above depiction, borrowing the term from KH Abdurrahman Wahid, reflects the active participation of pesantren in architectural planning, following the Javanese cultural symbol of wayang performances. The students are those on a journey toward "perfection of vision," achieving religious knowledge that will become their way of life in society (A. Wahid, 1979).

The teaching and learning process in pesantren is not merely the transfer of Islamic science but also the formation of the students' worldview and behavior once they return to society. Conversely, the kiai are those who have attained the perfection of vision. In the context of Sufism, the pesantren mosque situated in the center represents the battleground for moral struggle among the salikun, whose behavior will be transformed by the *washilun* (Yahya, 2014, p. 200).

Consciously or not, pesantren have made a substantial contribution to development, particularly in shaping moral and spiritual character. This is because pesantren are synonymous with moral workshops, aligning with the assumption that a pesantren graduate is generally seen as a person of noble character and well-versed in religious sciences, particularly Islam.

National political value's

Before delving into the concept of National Politics, it is essential to first define the term "politics." The word "politics" originates from the English word "politic," which means "indicating personal conduct or actions" (Salim, 1994, p. 34). Lexically, the original term means "acting or judging wisely, well judged, prudent" (Echols & Shadily, 1991, p. 1).

This term is derived from the Latin word "politicus" and the Greek word "politico," meaning "relating to a citizen." Both terms also stem from the word "polis," which means "city." The word "politic" was then adopted into the Indonesian language with three meanings: all matters and actions (wisdom, strategy, etc.) regarding the governance of a state or its relations with other states, deceit or cunning, and as the name of a discipline, namely political science (Salim, 1994, p. 34).

In terminology, the word "politics" does not have a fixed definition. There are still differences of opinion among political scholars in defining it. Some prominent figures who have defined the term "politics" include:

- a) Deliar Noer, as quoted by Abdul Mu'in Salim, states that politics encompasses all activities or attitudes related to power and aims to influence by changing or maintaining a certain form of social order.
- b) According to Mariam Budiardjo, also quoted by Abdul Mu'in Salim, politics involves various activities within a political system (a state) that concern the process of determining the system's goals and implementing those goals..

In summary, politics includes all activities or attitudes related to power that aim to influence by changing or maintaining a certain form of social order. Meanwhile, National Politics (Nationalism), etymologically, originates from the word "nation," meaning "people," and "ism," meaning "doctrine." Combined, the term nationalism means "the doctrine of love for one's country" (Kebudayaan, 1995, p. 610); (Mudlofir et al., 2021, p. 387)

In anthropological and sociological terms, a nation is a self-standing community in which each member feels a unity based on race, language, religion, history, and customs. In the comprehensive dictionary of knowledge, the word "nation" has several derivations, one of which is "nationalism." Another derivation is "national," generally defined as originating from one's nation and encompassing a nation.

Therefore, nationalism is an awareness of living together as a nation due to shared interests, a sense of common destiny in facing the past and present, and shared views, hopes, and goals in formulating the nation's future aspirations. To realize this awareness, a high spirit of patriotism and humanity is needed, along with democratization and freedom of thought, which will foster a spirit of unity in a pluralistic society.

Principles of national politics

a. Unity

This principle implies that everyone is obliged to protect and maintain everything within their homeland, fostering an awareness of the importance of national unity and solidarity. According to Bung Hatta, this unity is the first principle of nationalism.

b. Liberation dan Independence

Nationalism recognizes individual freedom from oppressive power or slavery. In this context, nationalism aims to build a reality where oppressed individuals become whole and free. Pluralism should not be a barrier for Indonesia to live together within a state system. Different ethnic groups in Indonesia share an emotional connection as former subjects of Dutch colonialism. This common background allows for unity in the face of imperialism and colonialism within the framework of nationalism.

c. Patriotism

Patriotism is the love for one's homeland and the willingness to sacrifice everything for its prosperity and glory. Thus, nationalism encompasses patriotism. A nation and state represent a pluralistic community with various complementary elements governed by a system aimed at achieving shared goals. Essentially, nationalism is not restricted by ethnicity, language, religion, region, or social strata. It accommodates everything necessary for the life of all living entities (Sargent, 1990, p. 19).

Throughout history, many individuals have sacrificed their most valuable possessions for their nation. In the case of Indonesia, the nationalism of 'Indonesians' during Dutch colonialism

gave birth to the modern Indonesian nation. The diversity of society is not an obstacle to achieving national goals and ideals when nationalism serves as the foundation for life in a pluralistic society (Mudlofir et al., 2021, p. 389).

National Political Insight

Another important theme that emerges from the data analysis is the role of external factors and influences in shaping perceptions and the internalization of political values. Participants discussed the impact of sociopolitical events, media, and the education system on their understanding of national identity and politics. These external factors are seen as shaping their beliefs and practices alongside their religious teachings, thereby adding complexity to the internalization of their political values.

1. The Signification of Patriotism

This study reveals that both kiai and santri consider patriotism a crucial aspect of their identity. This profound sense of patriotism is rooted in their religious beliefs and moral values, reflecting a fusion of Islamic teachings with national identity. The character and nature of pesantren, which are appreciative of local culture, embody highly valuable traits in the context of identity formation within pesantren. This includes values of peace, hospitality, and tolerance as the main pillars of the pesantren's approach to local culture. This understanding is strongly affirmed by the rejection of violent practices (*Penetration Pacifique*) in efforts to engage pesantren in dialogue with local culture.

An important aspect of this approach is the recognition of the historical spread of Islam in Indonesia, which has played a significant role in shaping the character of pesantren. Openness and accommodation towards various beliefs, religious practices, and local traditions are hallmarks of Islam in Indonesia. The softer and more inclusive approach of pesantren towards local culture follows this long tradition, initiated by the Walisongo, particularly Sunan Kalijaga, who successfully integrated the spirit of Islam into local culture (Wijaya, 2019, p. 174). Examples include the traditions of *sekaten*, *mitung dino*, *nyatus*, and *nyewu*, which incorporate *tablil*, illustrating the harmonization between Islamic values and local culture.

In the contemporary era, pesantren remain active in dialoguing with local culture. Many pesantren conduct annual traditions involving wayang performances, which are highly appreciated by the local community. This demonstrates how pesantren continually play an active role in preserving and revitalizing local culture while remaining faithful to the Islamic principles they uphold.

This illustrates how pesantren possess an appreciative nature towards local culture, embodying values of peace, hospitality, and tolerance. Pesantren do not employ violence in their engagement with local culture. The connection to patriotism lies in the fact that pesantren, through their peaceful and accommodating approach to local culture, create an environment where national values and love for the country can grow and flourish. Pesantren not only teach religion but also how to interact and dialogue with the rich and diverse local culture.

In the context of Pesantren Asy-Sya'ban, Kiai Miftakhurohman demonstrates an adaptive approach and integration into the community. This is evident when he explains the current development of pesantren, stating:

"Salaf pesantren means that the kiai emerges first, the kiai is recognized and supported by the community. Only then does the pesantren or its buildings come later. The old way was like that, not suddenly arriving and building a pesantren. If that were the case, anyone could do it, as long as there is money, an alim can be called from outside. If the community supports it and even helps build the pesantren for the kiai, then the community also feels ownership. This is unlike revivalist Islamic groups, which are rarely accepted by people. They are strong financially but do not understand the local community."

Patriotism, or love for the country, often emerges when individuals feel connected to their local culture and community. In the context of pesantren, when students are taught to engage with local culture without using violence, it fosters a deeper sense of involvement in the life of the community and the nation. They learn to respect and appreciate the cultural diversity of Indonesia, which in turn can strengthen their love for the homeland. In conclusion, the relationship between the appreciation of local culture shown by pesantren and patriotism is that a peaceful and tolerant approach to local culture can provide a strong foundation for the development of patriotic attitudes among students and the communities involved with pesantren.

2. Freedom and independence of Pesantren

The independence of pesantren is not only crucial in a historical context but also for the future of Islamic education. Although pesantren are traditional institutions, they remain relevant in providing religious and moral education to the younger generation. Independence enables pesantren to address modern challenges while continuing to be a vital pillar in shaping character and religious understanding within society. With community support, resource development, and efficient management, pesantren will continue to play a strong and sustainable role as Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Regarding the independence of pesantren, K.H. Miftakhurohman states:

"I do not hope for government intervention because it would be burdensome. Pesantren would have less freedom to develop curricula and so forth. If we rely on government assistance, then pesantren will lack freedom and cannot be independent. Just like in the old days during colonial times, pesantren could still operate. The mission of the students was always to uphold what is right and forbid what is wrong, to spread the message of Islam and sustain the religion. They managed without help, and the kiai did not see it as a necessity. If help was offered, they did not refuse, but cautious kiai sometimes rejected it. This is especially true for those of higher stature. Others might frequently submit proposals for assistance. Personally, I believe pesantren must be independent."

K.H. Miftakhurohman illustrates a strong stance on the independence of pesantren within the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. He emphasizes that pesantren should not overly rely on government assistance or intervention, as this could limit their creativity and flexibility in designing curricula and managing daily operations. In his view, pesantren must have complete independence to fulfill their mission of educating students, sustaining the religion, and practicing Islamic teachings. History has shown that pesantren operated effectively even during colonial times, underscoring that independence is a key element in ensuring the continuity of Islamic educational traditions in Indonesia.

Regarding the role of kiai in pesantren, K.H. Miftakhurohman highlights that many kiai prefer pesantren to remain independent. Although they do not necessarily reject help if offered, especially for those pesantren that have achieved a high level, kiai often prefer to maintain the independence of their pesantren. K.H. Miftakhurohman indicates that this also reflects his personal stance, where pesantren should always strive to be self-sufficient in all aspects.

Discussion

The Role of Kiai in Developing Moderate Santri

Several findings highlight the significant role of kiai as mentors in shaping students' understanding of politics and national identity. Kiai serve as trusted sources of information and influence their students' political views, often instilling a sense of responsibility as citizens. As K.H. Miftakhurohman explains:

The caretaker becomes a sunnah hasanah for the pesantren. Therefore, the students feel supervised, and so on. A pesantren must have a kiai or caretaker to act as a protector, advisor, role model, and more. The results will differ between a pesantren with a kiai and one without."

Kiai or caretakers usually play a crucial role in maintaining the relationship between the pesantren and the local community and broader society. They can act as bridges between the pesantren and the surrounding community, promoting tolerance and interfaith harmony. Kiai or caretakers often also promote national and humanitarian values that align with Islam. They can help students understand their roles as responsible citizens in social and political contexts.

According to Mudlofir et al., the spirit of national politics is not just rhetoric or a concept but a principle that must be implemented in a comprehensive educational plan. Education that encompasses specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills is key to building a deep understanding of national politics (Mudlofir et al., 2021, p. 394).

In this context, the role of kiai becomes highly significant. As spiritual and social leaders in pesantren, kiai serve as role models who provide practical examples in developing the soft skills of the students. Kiai not only teach religious knowledge but also demonstrate how to apply national political values in everyday life. They exemplify effective communication, collaboration, and contribution to society and the nation with integrity and dedication.

Ustadz Syukron, a teacher at Pesantren Asy-Sya'ban, explains:

"I am Ustad Syukron, a teacher at Pesantren Asy-Sya'ban, and I have experience studying in Kaluwungu. When I returned to Pekalongan, I decided to follow Kiai Miftah. Kiai Miftah is very diligent and active in practicing tasawuf. I had the opportunity to accompany him when teaching community studies in the mosque, and I was impressed by his dedication. Even until dawn, he continued studying the books without rest."

Through the role modeling of kiai, students can see the concrete implementation of national political values. They learn how to be honest, empathetic, think critically, and contribute positively to society. With the guidance of kiai, these soft skills can develop and become an integral part of the students' character, ultimately helping them become committed members of society dedicated to advancing the nation.

In addition to providing examples in terms of national politics or patriotism, K.H. Miftakhurohman also exemplifies soft skills, which are not taught in school lessons but are very important and useful when students engage in society. This aligns with what K.H. Miftakhurohman stated:

"What is needed now is readiness in skills, mental readiness, primarily because everything must start from honesty. We must produce a generation that is honest and sincere, without merely seeking popularity. A generation that inherits the values of our heroes. Our heroes did not seek to be recognized as heroes."

K.H. Miftakhurohman emphasizes the importance of skill and mental preparation in the current context. He notes that facing the challenges of the modern era requires readiness in skills and mental preparedness, especially the willingness to be honest.

Honesty is a fundamental value in building anything. The growing generation should be nurtured with honest and sincere values, not just seeking popularity or personal gain. Honesty and

sincerity are highly valued, and he believes we should strive to cultivate a generation that inherits these values.

K.H. Miftakhurohman also emphasized the role of the younger generation in inheriting the values of the heroes. He mentioned that historical heroes never performed their heroic deeds with the hope of being recognized as heroes. They acted out of honesty, sincerity, and commitment to the values they believed in. Several important points can be derived from K.H. Miftakhurohman's ideas:

- a. **Mental Readiness**
Mental readiness is a crucial part of soft skills. It includes the ability to manage stress, resilience, and critical thinking skills. In the workplace, this means being able to handle pressure, overcome challenges, and think clearly in complex situations.
- b. **Communication Skills and Honesty**
Being honest is a core value that reflects good work ethics. Good communication skills, including the ability to speak and listen effectively, are examples of important soft skills for interacting with colleagues, superiors, and the community.
- c. **Values of Sincerity**
Soft skills also encompass values such as integrity, ethics, and sincerity. Applying these values in work helps build a positive reputation and maintain good relationships with others in the workplace.
- d. **Avoiding Popularity Orientation**
Soft skills involve the ability to focus on larger goals rather than merely on popularity or personal gain. The ability to work with a team, collaborate, and contribute to collective success is highly valued in many work environments.

In the current context, students and the younger generation need to be empowered with the same values—honesty, sincerity, and commitment to society and the nation. This can help create a generation that is not only oriented towards popularity or personal gain but is also ready to play a role in building society and the nation with integrity and dedication. Therefore, the source underscores the importance of education and character development in producing a generation committed to inheriting the values of the heroes and making them role models in daily life.

Outside Intervention

This study highlights the impact of external factors, such as social events, on shaping the political beliefs of participants. These influences interact with religious teachings, contributing to the multifaceted nature of political identity among students. K.H. Miftakhurohman asserts that:

“Pesantren heavily rely on the kiai; thus, when a kiai passes away, it can cause instability within the pesantren system. Currently, many pesantren operate on a non-NU franchise basis or are affiliated with trans-national movements. However, these branch pesantren are often poorly controlled, resulting in variations in curriculum and teaching methods. High tuition fees are often perceived as a guarantee of quality, but effective management is also crucial. Some luxurious pesantren do not always provide education that meets the expectations of students and their guardians.”

K.H. Miftakhurohman discusses various aspects of pesantren, from dependence on the kiai's role to issues related to franchise-based pesantren. This statement illustrates the complex dynamics within the pesantren world in Indonesia over the years.

Pesantren's heavy reliance on the kiai is a norm within pesantren culture. As spiritual and intellectual leaders, kiai often play a central role in guiding students and running the pesantren. However, a major challenge arises when a kiai passes away. Pesantren often struggle to operate effectively without the strong presence of the kiai.

Furthermore, K.H. Miftakhurohman critiques the growth of non-Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) franchise-based pesantren, especially those affiliated with trans-national organizations (Irham, 2016; Mudlofir et al., 2021, p. 392; D. Wahid, 2015). This indicates diversification in pesantren education approaches. While this can provide more options for students and their families, it also poses risks. In some cases, the main pesantren lacks full control over its branches, leading to differences in curriculum and teaching methods across these pesantren.

Additionally, there is a perception that high tuition fees are synonymous with good quality education. However, K.H. Miftakhurohman emphasizes that the quality of pesantren education depends not only on costs but also on effective management. Focusing too much on high fees can lead to pesantren resembling luxurious hotels, yet the education provided does not always meet the expectations of students and their guardians. In summary, insights into pesantren reveal the complexity of the educational landscape in Indonesia, including aspects such as the role of the kiai, the growth of non-NU pesantren, and the quality of education.

Additionally, there are distinctive characteristics that can be observed through the students. Ainun Najib, one of Kiai Miftakhurohman's students, attests to Kiai Miftakhurohman's mature perspective on politics, as he explains:

"What intrigued me was my inability to see Kiai Miftah openly displaying his political choices. Although he is an alumnus of Pesantren Sarang Rembang, he differs from Kiai Maemun, Gus Najib, Gus Ghofur, or Gus Yasin. He has his own unique way of engaging in politics. However, his methodology or thinking still refers to Pesantren Sarang. According to him, political choices are not binding, and everyone has the freedom to determine their own political direction. Kiai Miftah realizes that as a spiritual leader with a significant following, being too aligned with one political current might only benefit a specific party."

Ainun Najib highlights the discretion with which Kiai Miftah approaches his political choices, emphasizing that such choices are not binding and that individuals should have the freedom to determine their political direction. The importance of caution in political interactions is also stressed, especially in dealings with politicians. Kiai Miftah is cautious about accepting support or assistance from politicians, fearing that it might compromise his neutrality by creating expectations of reciprocation. This testimony reflects Kiai Miftah's wise and cautious approach to politics, aligned with his spiritual leadership role in the pesantren.

In efforts to advance civilization, KH. Mustofa Bisri, as quoted by Imam Yahya, stated that scholars should maintain a distance from power. By doing so, they will wield greater influence than power itself and will not seek to control power solely for personal ambition. This allows them to freely build values and structures that society will implement. Conversely, scholars should not turn the community into mere followers used to support a particular candidate or party according to their personal views. However, maintaining a distance from politicians does not mean having an anti-political or antagonistic stance towards them. The key is to maintain a balanced relationship oriented towards the welfare of the community. (Yahya, 2014, p. 198).

Conclusion

In the context of Indonesian pesantren, the role of the kiai as a spiritual leader significantly impacts the internalization of national politics among students. This article has reviewed how the kiai plays a central role in teaching and instilling national political values, ultimately shaping the political understanding and sense of patriotism among the students. Key elements that support national politics include patriotism, the kiai as a role model, pesantren's independence, and various external factors.

The kiai plays a crucial role in forming a generation of young people with a mature understanding of politics and a commitment to national development. In an ever-changing era, pesantren remain relevant in shaping character and national values. By continually internalizing national political values, pesantren and kiai will continue to be agents of change that advance

society and nurture the spirit of love for the homeland. Therefore, it can be said that the kiai's attitude can significantly influence the behavior of their students.

Research on kiai and national political value to develop moderate santri, while contributing valuable insights, faces several limitations that should be acknowledged. Primarily, the limited timeframe of the study poses a challenge, as it may not allow for a detailed examination of all relevant aspects or the depth of analysis required. Next, the limited scope of the research locus can restrict the generalization of the findings to a broader context. Furthermore, budget constraints act as a limiting factor, hindering the possibility of utilizing more extensive resources for a more comprehensive study. Consequently, it is essential to recognize that this research should be viewed with these constraints in mind, while still acknowledging the valuable contributions it provides.

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