

Transformation of *Santri* (Pious Individuals) Perception about Learning via Online Media

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ABSTRACT

The revolution of digital technology leads some people to denounce the phenomenon of Islamic teaching via online media. The term "*ustadz Google*" then appears as a criticism to people who learn Islam via the Internet including social media. The research was a survey on the transformation of *santri* perception of Islamic teaching via online media. The research was conducted by a mixed-method (sequential mixed method) and explanatory sequential strategy, namely literature review, quantitative approach, and descriptive statistical analysis method. The participants were *santri* from PP. Langitan Tuban, P P. Mambaus Sholihin Gresik, and PP. Bahrul Ulum Jombang. It was found that the learning for *santri* welcomed to the new era. *Pondok pesantren* in East Java used social media as a medium to learn Islam. The *santri* also became accustomed to the yellow books in the form of PDF files. Kyai not only taught in the boarding school but also broadcasted his teaching activities via social media channels. The method of *sorogan* and *bandongan* also changed. There was a difference between online media as a source of information and online media as a medium of learning. Perception of the *santri* was not as good as their participation or involvement in using online media for learning purposes. *Santri* also rarely searched for information about the legal law (*fiqh*) or Islamic teachings in online media such as Google, YouTube, and others.

Keywords: Transformation, Online Learning, Pesantren, Social Media, Santri.

1. INTRODUCTION

The revolution of digital technology leads some people to denounce the phenomenon of Islamic learning via online media such as Google and social media. The term "*ustadz Google*" then appears as criticism from *santri* which are also known as students of boarding schools, especially to people who learn Islam via the Internet, including Facebook, YouTube, and other social media [1]. The fatwa of *haram* (forbidden) is also issued by a forum of *Bahsul Masail* conducted by one of the boarding schools about Islamic legal law of the use of social media such as Facebook and the like [2].

The term of *santri* in Indonesia and Southeast Asia is generally understood as young students who study Islamic teachings. It also refers to groups of people who learn about Islamic teachings, especially in an institution called *pondok pesantren* (boarding school) [3]. Learning in boarding school generally uses *sorogan* or *bandongan* method, namely the teaching activities done by forming a circle seat where the teacher or *kyai* sits in the middle as the center of teaching and learning

activities done, while the students sit surrounding him [4].

Globalization and post-reform democracy in 1998 have given freedom to develop private television channels and to use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube for driving the transformation in religious activities, Islamic da'wah, and *santri* perspective [5]. One of *kyai* in Central Java even always records and uploads videos of his teachings and da'wah activities from one place to another into his Facebook account [6]. These technology applications are factors which change the perspective of boarding school students to adjust the revolutions these days in many ways, including the learning method [7].

The emergence of many young *ustadz*, da'i, and "*pemuda hijrah*" groups in Indonesia and other countries in the world has increasingly driven the shifting of religious authority in the lives of Muslim communities [8]. The utilization of social media from boarding schools leading to entail negative contents of social media also becomes people's concern. Several

concrete steps can be done here, for example by creating and disseminating content about the cottage, activities, and studies in the boarding schools within 2,800 institutions [9].

The covid-19 pandemic that entered Indonesia in early 2020 has prompted the release of online learning policies from the Indonesian government, including the learning of boarding schools [10]. This condition may also contribute to the increase of using social media as a learning medium, even in boarding schools. This pandemic has changed various dimensions of life, including religious education in boarding schools [11].

2. METHOD

This research used a mixed-method (sequential mixed method) and explanatory sequential strategy [12]. Particularly, this research used a quantitative approach and descriptive statistical analysis method through a survey activity. Participants of this research were *santri* from the three boarding schools consisting of PP. Langitan Tuban, PP. Mambaus Sholihin Gresik, PP. Bahrul Ulum Tambak Beras Jombang. Sample data were collected through online questionnaires to *santri* by convenience sampling. There were about 63 students consisting of 26 male *santri* and 37 female *santri*.

The research used some instruments such as questionnaires consisting of closed-ended questions. The questionnaires have fifteen questions within four questions related to indicators of students' perception of online *kyai* or teachers, three questions related to indicators of students' perception of digital books, three questions related to indicators of perception of religious science in online media and social media, and three questions related to their involvement in learning via online media. Category measurement was ranged on a likert scale from 1 to 5 ranging from very disagree, disagree, hesitate, agree, very agree. This research also used Jamovi 1.6.15 to calculate the mean and standard deviation of each sub-category to be interpreted.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Social media is an online application that has content shared openly; it can also be criticized and formed by its users. Social media provides its users to engage in online activities such as interacting with others, creating contents, editing and sharing both textual and audio-visual contents. Social media also allows users to categorize, label, and recommend existing forms of content [13].

Nicole Fournier-Sylvester [14] concludes that learning via social media has great potential in building education, so it is necessary to strive for supporting it through various means. According to him, this support

has been agreed upon by international organizations and educators around the world. Social media has also provided an open opportunity for Muslims to discuss religion and religious issues freely to impact many things, fatwas, the formation of new communities, religious practices, and so forth [15]. Below is output of the descriptive statistic.

Table 1. The output of the study's descriptive statistics

| Descriptive Statistics | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| | Digital Books | Virtual Kyai | Islamic Teaching | Participation |
| N | 63 | 63 | 63 | 62 |
| Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mean | 3.64 | 3.32 | 3.41 | 2.92 |
| Median | 3.67 | 3.40 | 3.40 | 3.00 |
| Standard deviation | 0.491 | 0.367 | 0.403 | 1.09 |

3.1 Virtual Kyai

The results of questionnaires on the perception of students to learn via online media, especially social media, showed that there were differences from the previous perception of *santri* about variable of *kyai*. The mean score of this variabel was 3,32. Boarding school students (*santri*) in the past times had an image that *kyai* were religious expert leaders who were required to play a role model of religious life only in their *pondok pesantren* where their students stayed [3]. But today *Santri* perceive that the *kyai* in the digital era are not only required to be able to provide knowledge and accuracy in their *pondok pesantren* through studying and doing daily activities in the *pesantren*, but also provide the teaching activities in social media and online media too.

Sorogan and *bandongan* methods are only two learning methods in which students follow lessons by sitting around the *kyai* who are reading and explaining the contents of the yellow book (*kitab kuning*). *Santri* listen to the *kyai* who read each book and give notes in a blank section on the page of the book. This method is commonly used in almost all traditional boarding schools [16], [4], but today this method has changed. Currently, the *santri* not only sit around the *kyai*, but also follow their teaching activities or speeches through the social media accounts belonging to the boarding school or the *kyai* themselves. It can be interpreted as

the *santri's* agreement related to the change of *kyai's* method in instructional Islamic teaching. This is strengthened by *santri* perception which considers that the status of *santri* who learn through social media accounts and the status of *santri* who learn by *bandongan* or *sorogan* method namely by circling their *kyai* is the same one.

Kyai's position as such the only source of religious knowledge for students in his *pesantren* also has begun to shift. The *santri* today think that they may learn through social media of other *kyai* than their *kyai*. In addition, *santri* perceive that *ustadz* and other teachers on social media can also be the source of religious knowledge for them. The *santri's* agreement related to being a student of other *kyai* via online media is great. This result is in accordance with the assumption that religious authority today has begun to decrease from the figure of *kyai* in the boarding school so that the *kyai* now cannot be illustrated as a small king in a small kingdom, namely the boarding school he raised [5].

3.2 Digital Books

It is known that the curriculum of traditional boarding schools generally uses the traditional Islamic books or ones better known as the "yellow books". The mean score of this variable was 3,64. Previously, *santri* generally understood that the learning of yellow books had to use books that were printed on yellow papers and translated at the bottom of the Arabic text by their *kyai* who generally had received a scientific transmission (*sanad*) until reaching the author of these books [17]. This research found that perception of *santri* about this category also began to shift. The *santri* became accustomed to the books in the form of PDF files that could be searched and obtained on the Internet and even shared through social media such as WA, FB, and the like. Research figures related to the students' perception of the printed yellow books and books in the form of PDF files showed a great number. In other words, the *santri* agreed that the printed yellow books had the same position as the books in the form of PDF files.

The *santri* also considered that studying religious science through *kitab kuning*, books, Google, or YouTube videos was basically acceptable and has the same position. However, it did not mean that *kyai* could be replaced by online media, because the teachers/*kyai* were still needed to be role model and to teach the basics and points of Islam and to guide them so that it was not easily carried away by misleading religious information. The *santri* also agreed that social media was just an intermediary (*wasilah*) to convey knowledge and Islamic teachings. The results of this survey differed from the news spread in the past decades about the fatwa of *haram* to use of social media by the early days of its launching. By becoming a learning medium, the

existence of social media can change its law from *haram* (forbidden) to *mubah* (permissible) or even recommended.

3.3 Islamic Teachings via Online Media

There is a change in perception of the *santri* related to the truth of the information in the Internet media such as Google or social media like YouTube and others. In the past decade, Islamic teaching in *santri* perception was information contained in the yellow books and information from their *kyai*, but information about Islam in online media such as Google or social media was also accepted by *santri* as Islamic teaching. The level of mean score related to this variable indicated 3.41. Nevertheless, information related to Islamic science for the *santri* was not enough when searched only via online media or social media. For them, Islamic teaching still needed to be taken from the experts, namely the scholars (*ulama*) and *kyai*. The category of perception related to this category was indicated by a mean value of 3.30 meaning indecisive. In other words, the *santri* still considered information in online media or social media alone was not quite to be considered as Islamic teachings.

The *santri* also think that the source of information about Islamic teachings was no longer only from their *kyai* in their boarding schools but could also be sourced from writings or lectures of *kyai* or *ustadz* which broadcasted via Internet media or social media. So for the *santri* the Islamic information written on the Internet could also be referred to be Islamic science or Islamic teaching. Meanwhile, their perception related to the learning which delivered by using *pegon* (Java language written in Arabic letters) got low agreement.

Perception of the *santri* above was apparently not well-balanced with their participation or involvement in using online media or social media for learning purposes. *Santri* also rarely searched for information about the legal law (*fiqh*) or Islamic teachings in online media such as Google, YouTube, and others. Their involvement in listening to Islamic studies on YouTube or other social media also showed a low level.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The learning for *santri* has welcomed to the new era after the emergence of covid-19. When learning must be done online, some boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) in East Java use social media such as YouTube and Facebook as a medium to continue the learning from their *kyai*. The *santri* have also become accustomed to the form of their yellow books that are no longer in the form of printed paper only, but also yellow books in the form of PDF files. *Kyai* for them are not only *kyai* who

teache in the boarding school but also who broadcast their studies and teachings via his social media channels like YouTube and whatsapp or his writings via online media.

The method of *sorogan* and *bandongan* that became the characteristic of traditional boarding schools has begun to change. By utilizing social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and others, the learning methods in boarding schools now tend to be done by *bandongan* method only while *sorogan* method has not been done. That is a challenge to utilize learning media that allows media designed for conducting the meetings such as Google meet, zoom, and so on

There must be a clear difference between online media as a source of information related to Islamic teachings or Islamic sciences and online media as a medium of learning about religious sciences provided by experts, namely *kyai*, *ustadz*, and scholars (*ulama*) whom they already know. This is very relevant for consideration to change Islamic legal law or fatwa *haram* related to *santri* using online media or social media, especially for learning purposes i.e., as a learning medium.

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