

Navigating the Digital Age: Strategies for Modernizing Pesantren Education with the Islamic Worldview of Darussalam Gontor University

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Abstract

Pesantren is a distinctive religious education institution in Indonesia, especially Java, which has become a well-established institution in the community. They are generally recognized for studying religion and using Arabic and English as their study language. So that the student are in a multilingual education situation. Indonesia has entered the era of modernization, where Modernization is a process of change towards a more advanced or modern society, by leaving the traditional era. So in the pesantren modernization will also run properly, Modernization in pesantren is an important process that aims to update and improve the traditional education system to make it more relevant to the needs of the times. This research serves as the Pesantren Education Modernization Strategy with an Islamic Worldview, which collects data about students' understanding of navigating the digital era during modernization. This research focuses on reviewing the analysis of understanding from pesantren literature on research on understanding Islamic views in the era of modernization and then supported by interviews or questionnaires in several female students. The findings of this study reveal that there are several references or strategies that can be the basis of understanding the Islamic view of modernization in pesantren such as the book islamic worldview, misykat and minhaj which are presented through the MIF and SIF agenda to female students at Pesantren Darussalam Gontor University which can affect their perspective and Islamization of knowledge in the era of modernization which focuses on the purpose of education in pesantren.

Keywords: *Pesantren, Modernizing Education, Islamic Worldview, Strategies Analysis*

Introduction

Pesantren is a distinctive religious education institution in Indonesia, especially Java, which has become a well-established institution in the community. Pesantren, its growth and development are always unique and dynamic. The various educational models and frameworks applied do not make pesantren extinct or degenerate. The existence of pesantren is always interesting to be highlighted, starting from the figure of kiai as the sole authority, santri who often innovate and excel, the pesantren family upbringing model to

the level of curriculum implementation and the accompanying system, does not go unnoticed. pesantren must be open to changing times, where the teaching material provided to students is not only religious sciences and Arabic, but there must also be a system change by teaching general science. Indirectly, there are two parts taught by pesantren¹. 1) material that is diniyah by using Arabic books such as ushul fiqh, hadith, tafsir and so on. 2) general material, namely non-dinational material using books/literature both in Indonesian and English such as Indonesian language, physical science, history, mathematics and others. Indonesia has entered the era of modernization, where Modernization is a process of change towards a more advanced or modern society, by leaving the traditional age. The use of gadgets is part of the lifestyle of life in the age of digital, this condition allows the need for further observation regarding the impact that social media will have on young people, especially how it affects changes in their mindset, attitude, and even behavior in social life.² The use of social media in a certain intensity, can cause these young users or santri to “swallow” rawly the overloading (flood) of information spread on social media which is not necessarily the truth can be clarified. It does not even rule out the possibility that some of the information is just a hoax that is easily spread massively in the virtual world. This can be seen from the phenomenon of the last regional elections, legislative elections and presidential elections. In addition, the digital divide, which refers to the unequal distribution of technology and internet access, poses a threat to equal access to education.

Pesantren is an educational institution unit that even if viewed from a historical perspective is the oldest educational institution in Indonesia, pesantren at least experienced the transformation period of three civilizations: Hindu-Buddhist, Middle Eastern, and Western. From the background of its establishment, the pesantren has played a big role, namely as a mediator of da'wah and modernization of Islam in Indonesia. Therefore, modernization in pesantren must also run properly, Modernization in pesantren is an important process that aims to update and improve the traditional education system to make it more relevant to the needs of the times, so that young people or santriwati can respond to the digital age during modernization. For this reason, pesantren must still exist and survive, and still be able to play the desired role to produce superior human resources who

¹ Nurul Hanani, “Telaah Pemikiran KH . Hasyim Asy ’ Ari Tentang Pendidikan Pesantren Dan Relevansinya Dengan Pendidikan Modern” 2, no. November (2019): 37–54.

² Amar Ahmad, “Media Sosial Dan Tantangan Masa Depan Generasi Milenial” 08, no. 02 (2020): 134–48.

can anticipate fast-paced changes, as well as improve their quality and contribution, so that they become institutions that are no longer exclusive and immune to change, always compatible and relevant to existing developments while maintaining their soul and philosophy of life³. As technology advances, boarding schools must adapt and evolve to ensure that students are prepared for the digital world and have access to the tools and resources needed to succeed.⁴

Universitas Darussalam Gontor is an Islamic educational institution based on Islamic boarding schools and higher education institutions in the country. UNIDA GONTOR as a “pesantren-based university” institution that grows and develops based on Islamic values and traditions becomes very relevant and interesting to study if seen in the context of religion or science, especially in the face of western modernization. There are several references or strategies that can be the basis for understanding the Islamic view of modernization for santri in pesantren such as the book *Islamic Worldview, Misykat and Minhaj* written by Dr. Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, He mentioned four aspects of modernization, namely 1) Teaching methods in general 2) Arabic and English Teaching Methods 3) Educational strategies, which consist of religious education, moral education, physical education, entrepreneurship, organizational education, 4) organization and management of education.⁵, as well as presented through the MIF (Monday Islamization Forum) and SIF (Saturday Islamization Forum) agenda to santri at Darussalam Gontor University which can influence their perspective and Islamization of knowledge in the era of modernization which focuses on the educational goals of pesantren.

Methods

This study involved 50 female students of Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Mantingan, selected by purposive sampling. Participants were selected based on certain criteria, namely between 18-23 years old, and also female students who actively participated in islamisation activities at regular unida for one to 4 years, and were willing to participate in the study.

³ Rahmat Yasin, “Implementation of Wasathiyatul Islam in the Curriculum of Modern Islamic Boarding School Darussalam Gontor (Study of K.H. Imam Zarkasyi’s Thought.)” 14, no. 2 (2019): 75–96.

⁴ Kris Jangjarat, Pongsakorn Limna, and Corresponding Author, “Navigating the Digital Frontier : A Review of Education Management in the Age of Technology” 2023, no. 1 (n.d.): 1–11.

⁵ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, “IMAM ZARKASYI ’ S MODERNIZATION OF PESANTREN IN INDONESIA” 8, no. 1 (2020): 161–200.

This study applied a qualitative descriptive approach to understand the views of female students on (a research problem or issue, such as ‘the effectiveness of project-based learning methods’). Data were obtained through an open-ended questionnaire that gave participants the opportunity to answer narratively based on their experiences and insights.

Result and Discussion

The analysis of the students obtained several points related to strategies for modernizing pesantren education with the islamic worldview. Imam zarkasyi provided a statement that:

This pondok (pesantren) is an Islamic educational institution like any other institution. The difference is only in its teaching method. We use modern teaching method but do not teach something new in religion. This pondok (pesantren) is a waqf for the Muslim ummah and is not the property of the kiai (headmaster of pesantren) anymore. This pondok is not inclined to any political party, therefore its motto is “berdiri di atas dan untuk semua golongan” (Stand above and for all groups). Its educational goal is to produce a Muslim who has noble character, sound body, broad knowledge, and independent mind. The final objective of this pondok is Li i’lai kalimatillah (I. Zarkasyi, 1976)⁶

Darussalam Gontor University provides strategies that can be the basis for understanding the Islamic view of modernization in pesantren through books designed by imam zarkasyi such as Islamic worldview, misykat and minhaj which are presented through the MIF and SIF agenda to santriwati at Darussalam Gontor University which can affect their perspective and Islamization of knowledge in the age of digital which focuses on the educational goals of pesantren.

1. The strategies or aspects of modernization are:

1) Modernizing Madrasah Curiculum

Pesantren Darussalam Gontor uses its own curriculum, Kulliyatul Mu'allimŷn al-Islŷmiyah, which is adopted from the modern madrasa curriculum. In modern madrasahs, the balance in the curriculum between religious sciences and social-natural sciences is maintained. Madrasahs also employ modern teaching methods by using several teaching aids such as

⁶ Syahrudin Sumardi Samindjaya et al., “Imam Zarkasyi’s Contribution to Indonesia’s Modern Waqf Education System,” *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 14, no. 1 (2024): 74–91, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.141.05>.

white boards, projectors, having exams, grading systems and study periods that were never applied in the traditional pesantren system. Imam Zarkasyi argues that there is no dichotomy of sciences in Islam, but the reading of the social-natural sciences from an Islamic perspective has not been conceptually designed, anticipating al-Attas' idea of the Islamization of contemporary science.⁷ In the future there should be Muslim scholars who speak about their expertise from an Islamic perspective, so that the goal is to “produce scholars who have high intellectual capacity and not intellectuals who ‘know’ religion”.⁸

Everything that Imam Zarkasyi has done is still relevant to the modern education system. Utomo concludes that when Imam Zarkasyi emphasizes the function of language for communication, then he uses the ideology of functionalism in educational methods. When Imam Zarkasyi used the methods of lectures, memorization, assignments, structured group discussions and self-study, then he used the method of educational fundamentalism⁹. Thus, Imam Zarkasyi's efforts to modernize the madrasa curriculum did not undermine the madrasa but enriched the system from all angles.

2) Modernizing Hidden Curriculum

Gontor suggested that he seems to believe that curriculum is not only the arrangement of a number of subjects to be taught in the class, but also the whole students' activities within the domain of informal and non-formal education. This non-academic curriculum is now called “hidden curriculum”¹⁰. The pillars that support this hidden curriculum are the presence of kiai and santri, the availability of dormitories and mosques as

⁷ Billah Wahid Asa, “Perspektif KH. Imam Zarkasyi Terhadap Modernisasi Pesantren,” *Tasamuh: Jurnal Studi Islam* 15, no. 1 (2023): 172–96, <https://doi.org/10.47945/tasamuh.v15i1.809>.

⁸ Edi Sugianto Suyuti, “Pendidikan Islam Dalam Prespektif Pemikiran KH Imam Zarkasyi,” *Jurnal Tarbawi STAI Fithrah* 11, no. 1 (2016): 1–23.

⁹ Utomo, “KONSEP BELAJAR MENGGUNAKAN MODEL PROBLEM BASED LEARNING,” 2020, 45–61.

¹⁰ Hafid Hardoyo, “Kurikulum Tersembunyi Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor,” *At-Ta'dib* 4, no. 2 (2008): 191–208.

the center of activities. There are two important things that stand out in the pesantren education system, namely:

a. Moral and Value Cultivation

Imam Zarkasyi taught his students to have four basic moral characteristics, namely noble morals (good morals), a healthy body, broad knowledge, and freedom of thought¹¹. The meaning of freedom here is freedom based on Islamic principles or a free spirit to choose good or bad. However, Imam Zarkasyi divides morals into two categories: physical and spiritual morals. The two categories of morals are summarized by Imam Zarkasyi in the form of the spirit of campus social life, called Panca Jiwa. The Panca Jiwa are: Simplicity, sincerity, independence, Islamic brotherhood, and freedom. Thus, the integration of physical and spiritual morals in the form of Panca Ruh and other pesantren values is quite effective in building the character and mentality of santri in facing the digital era.

b. Skill Education

Imam Zarkasyi designed the hidden curriculum with the aim of inculcating mental skills, as mental skills are more important than work skills¹². Mardiyah also found that the term “learning by doing” which is often mentioned by Imam Zarkasyi is none other than the learning community standardized by UNESCO as an educational principle in which people learn to know/think, learn to do, learn to live together, and learn to be.¹³ The students should be kept busy and should not be free from meaningful activities. He repeats the saying that “Rest or break is nothing but switching from one activity to another”.

3) Modernizing the Institutional system.

¹¹ Asa, “Perspektif KH. Imam Zarkasyi Terhadap Modernisasi Pesantren.”

¹² Arifuddin Arifuddin and Abdul Rahim Karim, *Konsep Pendidikan Islam, Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan*, vol. 10, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.58230/27454312.76>.

¹³ Arvaddin Hamasy Al Qosam, “METODE PEMBENTUKAN KARAKTER KEPEMIMPINAN SANTRI DI PONDOK PESANTREN MUALLIMIN,” n.d.

One of the modernization points pursued by Imam Zarkasyi was the organization of pesantren. Utomo concluded that the most significant modernization of pesantren education designed by Imam Zarkasyi is the dimension of education management, which is very different from the conventional management of traditional pesantren.¹⁴ The way Imam Zarkasyi modernized the education system was by adapting the Islamic school or madrasa system and combining it with the traditional pesantren system environment. This is because Imam Zarkasyi also modernized the pesantren environment to make it suitable for learning and for the cultivation of traditional pesantren values. All time and all activities in the pesantren are designed for the process of mental training, moral education and the inculcation of other values. For institutional modernization, the conversion of pesantren from private or family property to public property through waqf or grants is a strategic step for the sustainability of pesantren and for the guarantee of successful leadership.

2. Implementation of the Islamic worldview of Universitas Darussalam Gontor

The implementation of Islamic views in the era of modernization through reference to books designed by Imam zarkasyi such as worldview, misykat and minhaj books¹⁵ has been proven by several respondents through google form results. The following are the results of the implementation of the Islamic worldview of Darussalam Gontor University:

- a. Influence of the Worldview Book on Understanding Modern Islam:
 - 75% of respondents stated that the book “Worldview” helped them understand the relevance of Islam to modernization.
 - Respondents felt that the concepts in the book encourage an Islamic mindset that is integrated with modern science.
- b. Application of the Values in the Book “Misykat”

¹⁴ Asa, “Perspektif KH. Imam Zarkasyi Terhadap Modernisasi Pesantren.”

¹⁵ Yasin, “Implementation of Wasathiyatul Islam in the Curriculum of Modern Islamic Boarding School Darussalam Gontor (Study of K.H. Imam Zarkasyi’s Thought).”

- 80% of respondents recognized that the book strengthens their understanding of Islamic values in their daily lives, especially in the context of morals and spirituality.
- Most stated that this book is the main reference in Islamic character building.
- c. Relevance of “Minhaj” in Education and Da'wah:
 - 70% of respondents stated that the “Minhaj” book is effective in providing practical guidance for Islamic education and da'wah.
 - The book is seen as relevant as a guideline for integrating religious and worldly sciences.
- d. Level of Use of the Book in Student Life:
 - 65% of respondents actively use concepts from the books in their academic and social lives.
 - Group discussions and intensive studies are methods often used to understand the contents of the book more deeply.
- e. General Impact of Implementation
 - Making a significant contribution in building integration between Islamic values and modern challenges in the campus environment.

Conclusion

The conclusion is that the modernization strategy at Pondok Pesantren Universitas Darussalam Gontor with reference to Islamic worldview namely journals and books on the thoughts of Kh. Imam Zarkasyi such as Islamic worldview books, minhaj and misykat are very helpful in opening the santri's views with modern without leaving Islamic thought, even routine SIF and MIF activities carried out at UNIDA make it easier for santri to discuss in handling challenges in this digital era.

Imam Zarkasyi is the Trimurti Founder of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor Ponorogo, he also modernized the pesantren environment to make it suitable for learning and instilling traditional pesantren values. All time and all activities in the pesantren are designed for the process of mental training, moral education and the cultivation of other values.

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