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STRATEGIES OF PONDOK PESANTREN IN NURTURING AND INCREASING COMMUNITY INTEREST IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

In the context of Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) play an important role in fostering the moral and spiritual development of society. However, the reality shows that many Islamic boarding schools face challenges in attracting community participation. This study aims to analyze the strategies implemented by the Al-Futuhat Islamic Boarding School in Garut to increase community interest in religious activities. This study uses a qualitative approach. The results of the study show that the Al-Futuhat Islamic Boarding School carries out 3 strategies to attract community attention and participation, namely: (1) learning innovation by promoting the 'talaran nadhom' method, (2) innovative programs for the community such as free hajj-umrah and others, (3) establishing close cooperation with community leaders and graduates of this Islamic boarding school.

Keywords: *Da'wah Strategies, Pesantren Development Models, Innovative Strategies.*

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INTRODUCTION

Ideally, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) should serve as educational institutions that develop the potential of students both academically and spiritually. Pesantren must be able to provide a conducive environment for learning and worship, as well as to nurture the character of students so they become individuals with good morals. Additionally, pesantren are expected to adapt to the changing times without neglecting religious values. In this way, pesantren can remain relevant and continue to attract the interest of the broader community. Furthermore, pesantren should be able to serve as effective centers of da'wah (Islamic preaching) in spreading the teachings of Islam within society (Holil et al., 2023, p. 196).

The community's interest in religious activities at pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) is expected to remain high. The presence of pesantren should be a unique attraction for the community to deepen their understanding of religion (Kamila et al., 2022, p. 7). Religious activities

such as Quranic studies, sermons, and regular lectures are expected to attract many participants from various backgrounds. However, community interest largely depends on the strategies and approaches employed by the pesantren. Without the right strategy, pesantren may lose their appeal in the eyes of the community.

In reality, many pesantren face challenges in meeting these expectations. Some pesantren are still lacking in innovation when it comes to developing programs that attract community participation. Additionally, there is a significant gap between pesantren in urban and rural areas. Rural pesantren often lack adequate support and facilities compared to those in cities. As a result, many pesantren struggle to attract community interest in participating in the religious activities they organize (Yazid & Fitri, 2023, p. 266).

This reality shows that many pesantren have not yet been able to adapt to technological advancements and the needs of the times. This makes pesantren less appealing to the younger generation, who are more interested in modern and interactive approaches. This challenge needs to be addressed so that pesantren can remain relevant and attractive to the community. If not, pesantren will increasingly be abandoned and lose their important role in education, da'wah, and community development (Lisdaleni et. al., 2022, p. 196).

The gap between expectations and reality leads to various problems. One of them is the declining interest of the community in participating in religious activities at pesantren. Many people feel that the activities at pesantren are not relevant to their current needs and circumstances. Additionally, the lack of facilities and modern teaching methods makes pesantren less attractive to the younger generation. This results in low community participation in the religious activities organized by pesantren. This gap needs to be addressed promptly so that pesantren can once again become a center of religious activities that appeals to the community (Lisdaleni et al., 2022, p. 196).

Al-Futuhat Islamic Boarding School has proven to be able to attract the attsention of the public to participate in religious activities that are its program. The community is diligent in participating in religious activities carried out there, such as routine hajj on Friday night, the manaqib of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jailani every 3 months, the commemoration of Islamic holidays such as the Prophet's birthday and so on, the study of the yellow book, and others. This phenomenon is interesting to study because there are not many Islamic boarding schools that are able to attract the attention of the public. The results of this research contribute to the development of Islamic boarding schools in order to guard Islamic values that are relevant to the times.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to analyze the strategies of pesantren in increasing community interest in religious activities. The study focuses on Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat in Garut, with a research procedure involving a series of steps including planning, implementation, and evaluation of a structured research process. These steps include identifying and selecting Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat in Garut to be the subject of the study, scheduling field observations and interviews, and data collection. The materials and instruments used in this research include a list of interview questions, observation notes, and software for analysis. Data collection is conducted through in-depth interviews with pesantren administrators and students, analysis of social media related to pesantren activities, and direct observation. Data analysis techniques involve categorizing the collected data into relevant themes. Each theme is analyzed to understand existing patterns and relationships. Subsequently, the data is described descriptively and compared between sources to gain a deeper understanding. The results of the analysis are interpreted to draw accurate and reliable conclusions.

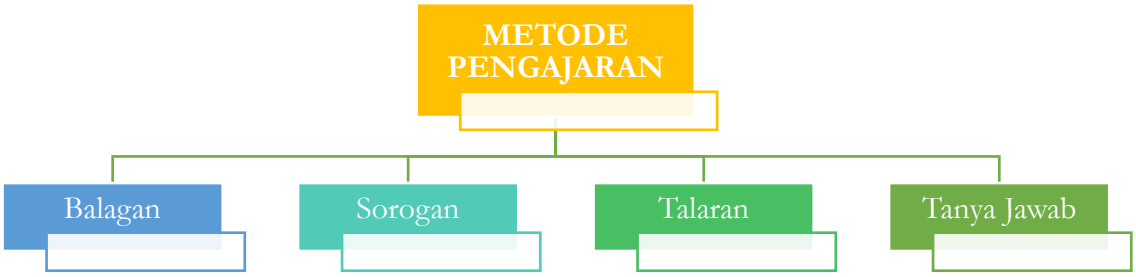
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The strategies of Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut to increase community interest in religious activities involve combining adaptive teaching techniques, active community roles, and the utilization of digital media. The findings presented are divided into three main points: education and learning at the pesantren, the social and cultural roles of the pesantren in the community, and the communication and promotion strategies of the pesantren.

Learning Method Innovation

Based on field observations at Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut, This Islamic boarding school applies 4 learning methods as shown in the picture below.

Figure 1. Teaching Methods at Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut



The *balagan* method is a teaching method for the yellow books (kitab kuning) where the kyai reads the text and students provide explanations or meanings of the text, a process known as "melogat" in Sundanese. The kyai not only reads but also explains the content of the text so that students can understand it (Faujan & Tabroni, 2020, p. 70-73). Meanwhile, the 'sorogan' method is a learning system where students advance one by one to face the teacher directly, starting with reading a text and then repeating the reading or presentation a book to the kyai (teacher) or his assistant (Reksa & Rachmah, 2022, p. 116). Then the *lalaran* –the term used in Al-Futuhat, this is the same as *'lalaran'* known in Javanese Islamic boarding schools— or memorization method is a teaching process where students first memorize prescribed texts and then present their memorization to the kyai or senior students (Faisal & Ahmad, 2022, p. 160). The end question-and-answer method can be understood as a way ofs delivering lessons where the kyai poses questions that must be answered by the students, or vice versa. This method encourages students to express their opinions and thoughts according to their level of understanding (Syafi'i, 2020, p. 43).

Of the four learning methods above that are innovative and able to attract the attention of students, namely the 'talaran nadhom' method. The students sang Arabic shi'ir-shi'ir together. Sometimes they accompany the singing with tambourine or other traditional musical instruments. If classical musical instruments are not found, then they use gallons, drums, and makeshift instruments to accompany the 'talaran nadhom'. A sense of pleasure is seen in them. The content of the lessons in the nadhom that is read is mastered without feeling.

This 'talaran nadhom' activity is videoed and posted on social media owned by the pesantren, either through the official account of the Islamic boarding school or the personal accounts of the administrators and teachers at the Islamic boarding school. In this way, the pesantren is known by the community and attracts their interest to send their children to the pesantren, or just to participate in the activities carried out by the pesantren.

Religious Program Innovation for the Special Societies

What is meant by a certain society is a society that has religious values in itself or has an awareness of learning Islam. Some of the religious activity programs carried out at the Al-Futuhat Islamic Boarding School for this community can be seen in the table below:

Table 4. General Programs at Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut

Program	Time	Information
Classic Book Market	Tentative	There are several programs: 1. Muqorobah 2. Muroh 3. Pardhon These three programs are generally carried out for 40 days or 11 days
Hajj and Umrah Seminar	The month of Rajab & the month of Dzulqa'dah, tentative	-
Manaqib Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani	Every month, tentative	-
Certificate of Dzikr and Sholawat	Once a year in the month of Rabi'ul Awwal	-
Commemoration of Islamic Holidays	Tentative	1. Commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday 2. Commemoration of Isra Mi'raj 3. Haul of Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Jilani
Free Umrah & Hajj	-	Terms and conditions apply

The various programs initiated by Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat can be considered innovative, aligning with the principle of da'wah which requires innovation to attract public interest in religious activities at pesantren. Among the programs available for the general public is the Pasaran Kitab Kuning program, which is further divided into several sub-programs. The three most well-known of these are Muqorobah, Muroh, and Pardhon. These names are acronyms derived from the names of the books to be studied during the program. The term "Pasaran" can be understood similarly to a short-term pesantren. Therefore, the Pasaran Kitab Kuning involves studying certain books over a short period of days without the need to register as a permanent santri.

Muqorobah is an acronym for the books Fathul Mu'in, Fathul Qorib, and Rohbiah, as these three books are the focus of the Muqorobah program. Muroh stands for Fathul Mu'in and Rohbiah, while Pardhon is an acronym for Pasaran Bulan Ramadhan. During the Pardhon program, numerous books are studied, including Tafsir Showi, Jauhar Maknun, Alfiyah Ibn Malik, Jurumiyah,

Shorof Kailani, Nadzom Imriti, Sullam al-Munawaroq, Lamiyyatul Af'al, Uqudullujain, Adabul Mar'ah, Fathul Izzar, and Fathul Qorib. The duration of each program varies, typically lasting 40 days, 11 days, or 17 days, depending on the instructions from the pesantren's leaders.

The Seminar on Hajj and Umrah is a program specifically designed to understand the series of Hajj and Umrah rituals in contemporary times, accompanied by practical sessions to facilitate understanding. This program is usually held in the months of Rajab and Dzulqa'dah, though it can be adjusted according to the guidance of the pesantren's leaders.

For the Peringatan Hari Besar Islam (PHBI) and the monthly Manaqib Syekh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani lectures, the activities are similar to the Friday night activities for santri, involving collective dhikr, recitation of Surah Yasin, and Manaqib Syekh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani, concluded with a sermon or lecture from the pesantren's leaders. Occasionally, external speakers are invited, such as KH. Tubagus Miftah Fauzi from Tasikmalaya, Abuya Uci Turtusi from Banten, Habib Bahar bin Smith, KH. Muhyiddin Abdul Jabbar, Head of Pondok Pesantren Al-Aqthob Purwakarta, KH. Muhyiddin Abdul Qadir Al-Manafi, Head of Pondok Pesantren Asy-Syifa Wal-Mahmudiyah Sumedang, and other scholars.

An interesting aspect of the Manaqib Syekh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani study is the perceived blessings or effective prayers that can be felt quickly. The term barokah, often symbolized as "blessing" in Indonesian Islamic tradition, particularly within pesantren, refers to something that brings goodness or "jalbul khoir." Barokah is considered a divine secret granted by Allah to those He wills, and it is believed one obtains it when their good deeds increase. The practice of ngalap berkah, originating from Javanese, is an effort to draw closer to Allah SWT so that prayers and requests are granted, a practice upheld since the time of the companions and continued today (Setiawan, 2023, p. 22).

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and other Sufi scholars have said: "Bi Dzikri al-Shalihin Tatanazzal al-Rahmat" (by mentioning the righteous, Allah's mercy descends). And Allah says in a hadith qudsi: "I will destroy those who harm My friends (wali) and I will honor, protect, and help those who honor My friends (wali)." From this, it is understood that seeking blessings from the righteous is permissible and considered a way to draw closer to Allah and obtain His mercy. By honoring and respecting the righteous, one can receive goodness, protection, and even effective prayers from Allah (Basid & Maula, 2022).

Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut also has an annual program called Ijazah Dzikir and Sholawat, aimed at connecting the spiritual knowledge chain to the general public and santri who wish to recite dhikr and sholawat but do not have a spiritual teacher. Ijazah can be understood as permission to practice, as some dhikr require ijazah before they can be practiced due to specific

conditions and procedures that must be known. This is important because there is a saying that "those who do not have a teacher will have Satan as their teacher." This principle applies not only to religious knowledge but also to the practice of dhikr. It is crucial because reciting dhikr should not be done carelessly; a guiding teacher is needed to ensure correct direction and intention (Hafidz, 2019, p. 64).

Everyone naturally desires to go on Hajj or Umrah to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina to fulfill the fifth pillar of Islam. However, the high cost can sometimes be a barrier for some people who cannot afford it. Therefore, this pesantren has a program to help those who want to go on Hajj or Umrah but are hindered by costs, namely a program offering free Hajj and Umrah tickets. Not everyone can apply for these free tickets; there are specific qualifications and requirements that must be met. Detailed conditions can only be known by visiting the Pesantren directly.

The above programs conducted by Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut have successfully attracted public interest in participating in religious activities. By offering various opportunities to study religious knowledge deeply and providing practical assistance, the pesantren builds strong relationships with both jamaah and the wider community. The free Hajj and Umrah ticket program also provide access to those who may face financial constraints, expanding public participation in Hajj and Umrah. Through these activities, Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut demonstrates its commitment to enhancing religious education among both santri and the general public.

Pesantren should indeed have engaging programs as part of their responsibility to spread religious knowledge and enhance community involvement in religious activities. These programs not only enrich the learning experience for santri but also bridge the gap between pesantren and the general public, reinforcing the pesantren's role as a center for learning and spiritual development within the community (Al-Faruqi et al., 2023, p. 140).

Such an ideal condition should be maintained and strengthened, as a good relationship between the community and the pesantren is a crucial foundation for mutual progress. When the pesantren successfully establishes a harmonious relationship with its environment, a synergy that benefits both parties is created. The community can support the pesantren through active participation in religious activities and material assistance, while the pesantren can continue to provide benefits through education, preaching, and community empowerment. This mutually supportive relationship not only strengthens the pesantren's existence but also enriches the spiritual and social life of the surrounding community (Kariyanto, 2020, p. 28).

Some of the activities of the Al-Futuhat Islamic Boarding School above are a special attraction for people who have religious attitudes or have basic provisions of religious values in their homes. Meanwhile, the general public who do not have these values is stimulated to be interested in other programs as described in the next section.

Communication and Promotion Strategies for Religious Activities at Pondok Pesantren

Communication and promotion strategies for religious activities at Pondok Pesantren play a key role in attracting community participation. By utilizing various communication techniques, the pesantren strives to reach a broader and more diverse audience. The following is an analysis of the communication and promotion strategies implemented by Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut:

1) Use of Social Media

Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut uses social media as a communication and promotion medium to expand the reach of its religious activities. Promotion is done through social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube, which allow for rapid and widespread dissemination of information. All activities, such as the Pasaran Kitab Kuning, PHBI events, and others, are broadcast live on the official YouTube channel of Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat, reaching a wider audience. The use of social media not only helps in informing the schedule of religious activities but also builds more intensive interactions with the community, especially the younger generation. This strategy has proven effective in attracting community interest in participating in religious activities organized by the pesantren.

The use of social media in promoting various religious activities is one of Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat's strategies to keep up with the increasingly modern times. This aligns with the principle that pesantren must adapt to contemporary developments and needs. It cannot be denied that social media serves as an efficient communication tool in supporting pesantren activities, facilitating information dissemination, and reaching a broader audience. Additionally, social media helps build an active virtual community where students, alumni, and the general public can interact and share experiences. With direct feedback from the audience, the pesantren can make adjustments and improvements in their activity strategies. Social media also serves as a platform to promote the pesantren's achievements and flagship programs, thereby increasing visibility and attracting more community participation (Cendikia et al., 2023, p. 26).

2) Collaboration with Religious Leaders and Alumni

One of the promotional strategies employed by Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut is collaboration with community leaders and alumni. These figures are often invited to give lectures, religious talks, or be speakers at the pesantren's religious events. Their presence not only adds appeal to the events but also enhances the credibility and trust of the community towards the pesantren. Among the figures who have been invited to give religious talks at Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat are KH. Tubagus Miftah Fauzi from Tasikmalaya, Abuya Uci Turtusi from Banten, Habib Bahar bin Smith, KH. Muhyiddin Abdul Jabbar, the caretaker of Pondok Pesantren Al-Aqthob Purwakarta, and KH. Muhyiddin Abdul Qadir Al-Manafi, the caretaker of Pondok Pesantren Asy-Syifa Wal-Mahmudiyah Sumedang. Not only local scholars but also international scholars have been invited to give religious talks, including Sheikh Ahmad Rouhi Al-Jailani, a prominent scholar from Lebanon, and Sheikh Ammar Azmi Al-Rafati Al-Jailani, the Grand Imam of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Palestine, both of whom are descendants of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani.

Relations with religious figures play an important role for Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat in strengthening its position and influence in the community. The presence of respected religious figures at pesantren events not only adds appeal but also enhances the pesantren's credibility in the public eye. Through this collaboration, the pesantren can expand its preaching network, enrich students' learning experiences, and attract more community participation in religious activities. These relationships also help the pesantren maintain and spread traditional Islamic values that are the foundation of religious education. Therefore, strong ties with religious figures become a strategic asset for the pesantren's development and success in spreading Islamic teachings (Malik, 2023, p. 213).

Successful alumni in various fields also play a crucial role in promoting Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut in their environments. They often share positive experiences and promote the pesantren to the surrounding community, which ultimately helps expand the pesantren's reach and attract more people to participate in its activities. The success of these communication and promotion strategies is indicated by the increasing number of attendees at monthly studies and other religious activities. This demonstrates that the communication and promotion strategies implemented by the pesantren have effectively attracted community interest and participation in religious activities, despite the limitations of existing facilities.

Overall, Pondok Pesantren Al-Futuhat Garut has demonstrated success in its communication and promotion strategies for religious activities. Effective use of social media and collaboration with religious leaders and alumni has achieved significant results in attracting

community attention and participation. This indicates the pesantren's adaptation to technological developments and modern communication trends while maintaining the traditional values of pesantren that are still upheld.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that the success of the Al-Futuhat Islamic Boarding School is supported by several factors, including (1) the 'talaran nadhom' learning method which is enjoyable for students who post on social media, (2) innovative programs at the Islamic boarding school such as providing free Hajj and Umrah tickets, as well as the use of technology for communication and promotion, and (3) a close network of cooperation between the Islamic boarding school and community leaders and graduates of this Islamic boarding school.

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