

Political Actions of Islamic Boarding School Students in the 2024 Elections: A Study of Traditional and Modern Islamic Boarding Schools

Anggalih Sayekti^{1*}, Nabila Husna², Zahwa Amallya³, Putri Annisya Faradibah⁴

^{1,3,4}Department of Political Sciences, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya 60231, Indonesia

²Department English and Global Studies, College of Liberal Arts, St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York 13617, United States

*Corresponding Author

Email address: 24041614055@mhs.unesa.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Political action is an effort undertaken by individuals or political groups to achieve certain goals. Santri, as a group of people living in a pesantren without digital access, certainly find it more difficult to receive information or the latest news that is currently trending outside, especially regarding election activities, so it is highly likely that there will be changes in the political behavior of the santri group. This study aims to discuss the political actions of santri at the Mambaul Maarif Denanyar Jombang Islamic Boarding School, a traditional Islamic boarding school, and the Darussalam Ngesong Sengon Jombang Islamic Boarding School, a modern Islamic boarding school, in the 2024 Presidential Election. This research was conducted using a literature study method to collect information sources. The results of the study show that there are differences in political actions at the Mambaul Maarif Denanyar Islamic boarding school, where the majority of students choose candidates with a strong religious background, and the organizations and parties that support them are also considered to be as closely related to Islam as possible. The students' obedience to the kiai is very strong in determining their political choices, so that every choice made by the kiai is a reference for his students and cannot be opposed. In contrast, at the Darussalam Ngesong Sengon Islamic boarding school, students are given the freedom to make their own choices, because the kiai is rational and does not feel that he has the right to determine his students' choices.

Keywords: Politics elections, obedience, Islamic boarding school, traditional modern

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a democratic country, with a government led by a president and several ministers. The president and ministers are elected through general elections, which are held

directly by the people. There have been nine general elections in Indonesia since 1955. Based on Law Number 7 Article 4 of 2017, elections are held every 5 years. Elections are also only open to all citizens aged 17 years and above. In the elections, the people are directly given the right to vote without intermediaries, so they have the right to vote for candidates according to their expectations.

In the context of general elections, the role of santri (Islamic boarding school students) is considered very important and influential. Given that Indonesia is dominated by Islam, it is natural for candidate pairs to visit hundreds to millions of Islamic boarding schools to garner support through kiai (Islamic teachers) or ulama (Islamic scholars) to persuade their santri. This is because kiai greatly determine the direction of pesantren development, and santri naturally follow the guidance of kiai as the highest leaders in pesantren who are considered to have broad knowledge of Islam.

Politics is always closely related to social morals, and political ethics need to consider the broader situation and context in order to achieve a balance between good and evil. Poor political ethics can damage the structure or order of a country. Political leaders need to understand the ethics and morals that have been upheld by society, especially Indonesian society, which is still dominated by traditional life. Islamic boarding schools, as Islamic-based educational institutions with morals and ethics based on religion, play an important role in Indonesian politics, especially in traditional communities.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher used the *literature study* method to collect and analyze data from literature relevant to the research topic. This approach was carried out by the researcher by collecting various literature sources such as books, scientific journals, articles, and documents related to the understanding of political life, especially elections in the traditional Mambaul Maarif Denanyar Islamic boarding school and the modern Darussalam Ngesong Sengon Islamic boarding school. The following are several steps in preparing research through the literature study method, which include:

1. Topic Identification: Researchers used topics relevant to their research, namely election activities in traditional Islamic boarding schools and modern Islamic boarding schools.

2. Literature Search: Researchers conducted a search for relevant literature through online databases, library books, and other easily accessible sources. The literature search was conducted using keywords relevant to the research topic.
3. Literature Selection: Researchers evaluate the literature found and make selections based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Relevant and high-quality literature was selected for inclusion in the analysis.
4. Literature Analysis: The researcher carefully read and analyzed the selected literature. Data and information relevant to the role of Islamic boarding schools in gathering votes in elections.
5. Synthesis and Interpretation: Researchers synthesize and interpret findings from the analyzed literature. The information obtained is used to draw conclusions.
6. Writing: Researchers compile research reports that include an introduction, literature methods, discussion of findings, and conclusions.

DISCUSSION

The 2024 elections will be an important event for democracy in Indonesia, including in terms of participation from Islamic boarding schools. Santri, who are part of religious communities spread across various regions, have a major influence in shaping political views and decisions. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how the political attitudes and actions of santri are formed, as well as the differences between traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools.



Figure 1: The 2024 presidential candidates visit a kiai in East Java

Political Actions of Santri in Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools

Santri in traditional Islamic boarding schools, such as Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Ma'arif Denanyar, generally exhibit patterns of political action that are heavily influenced by the figure of the kiai. In the context of the 2024 elections, the political actions of santri can be seen in their tendency to vote for candidates based on who is recommended by the kiai or religious leaders in the Islamic boarding school. This ta'dhim, or obedience, is not only due to the hierarchical structure within the pesantren, but also because they believe that the kiai is a figure who knows better which leaders are good in terms of religion and morals.

Research conducted by Barokah and Kurniawan (2024) in the context of the South Lampung regional elections shows that students at traditional Islamic boarding schools tend to vote based on the religiosity of candidates, affiliation with Islamic organizations (such as NU), and parties that have a religious platform or foundation. In the 2024 elections, this phenomenon also occurred, as seen among santri in the Denanyar area, who showed political loyalty to the instructions of their kiai. This pattern reflects that the political behavior of santri in traditional Islamic boarding schools is still heavily influenced by normative and religious values. The rational aspect of political decision-making is not yet very prominent. This is in line with the concept of "absolute obedience" of santri to kiai as explained by Syarif (2016), where santri tend to entrust their political choices entirely to kiai who are seen as moral and religious figures.

Political Actions of Santri in Modern Islamic Boarding Schools

Unlike traditional Islamic boarding schools, santri in modern Islamic boarding schools such as Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Ngesong Sengon Jombang show a more independent and rational attitude in determining their political choices. In the 2024 elections, santri were given complete freedom to choose the candidates they considered most in line with their aspirations and values, without intervention or pressure from the kyai.

This situation is influenced by the education system in modern Islamic boarding schools, which is more inclusive and open, combining formal education with the development of

critical thinking skills. Students are encouraged to seek information from various sources, actively participate in discussions, and freely express their opinions. This pattern is in line with *the concept of prismatic santri* (Syarif, 2016), namely santri who have shifted from a pattern of traditional obedience to a more independent attitude in understanding and interpreting political information. The Darussalam's profile also explains that the process of modern santri adjusting to their environment creates a dynamic social environment that encourages tolerance, cross-cultural dialogue, and independent thinking. Therefore, the political actions of santri in modern pesantren environments are more reflective and based on personal understanding of national issues and the vision of candidates leader.

Multiculturalism as a Foundation for Strengthening

It should also be emphasized that multicultural education, although not always taught directly, remains an important part of shaping the political attitudes and behavior of students in both types of Islamic boarding schools. In traditional Islamic boarding schools, values such as tolerance, equality, and unity are instilled through communal living and daily traditions. However, the instillation of these values is more focused on maintaining internal harmony, without overly encouraging santri to think critically about political dynamics outside the pesantren.

Meanwhile, in modern pesantren, the spirit of multiculturalism is more evident in the daily lives of santri through their interactions with friends from various regional backgrounds, the use of foreign languages, and a curriculum that combines religious and general studies. All of this helps shape santri who are more open, adaptive, and ready to interact with diverse groups in society. With this background, they also tend to be more independent in determining their political attitudes. These principles are in line with the view of multiculturalism in Islam, which emphasizes the importance of justice, togetherness, and mutual respect for differences (Mahfud, 2010; Ma'arif, 2011).

CONCLUSION

This study proves that the political actions of santri in the 2024 elections have different patterns, depending on the type of pesantren they attend. At the Mambaul Maarif

Denanyar Islamic Boarding School, which is classified as a traditional pesantren, the political actions of the santri are greatly influenced by the figure of the kiai as a moral and spiritual leader. The santri's absolute obedience to the kiai influences their political choices, which are generally in line with the directions given, the main considerations being the candidate's religious background and Islamic party affiliation.

Conversely, in modern pesantren such as the Darussalam Ngesong Sengon Islamic Boarding School, the santri show independence and rationality in determining their political choices. This is driven by a more open education system, which encourages students to think more critically and provides them with easy access to a wide range of information. In addition, the multicultural values that have developed in both types of Islamic boarding schools are also factors that influence the political attitudes of students. Although the approaches differ, this can shape the perspectives and political direction of students. This research was conducted using a literature study method, namely by analyzing various literature such as books, articles, journals, and relevant documents to reveal comparisons between the political behavior patterns of santri in traditional and modern pesantren environments.

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