
The Concept of Community-Based Education at Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin, Sumberpucung, Malang Indonesia

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Abstrak:

The People's Islamic Boarding School is a concept of pesantren education that is different from Islamic boarding schools in general whose orientation is to empower the people with the background and social problems of the community. The Al-Amin People's Islamic Boarding School in Sumberpucung Malang, has a different concept from other Islamic boarding schools. Learning activities that are not in the pesantren are not centered in the pesantren area, but can be located in the middle of the community. In accordance with the ideals of its founder, Ustad Abdullah Sam to alleviate social problems such as gambling, robbery, thuggery, and infidelity, this pesantren is not only a center for religious development, but also develops community empowerment programs such as economy, agriculture, and trade. With a program like this slowly, the social problems of the community can be solved. The breakthrough made by Ustad Abdullah Sam in social and community change can gradually improve the standard of living and culture of Sumberpudung village. Sumberpucung Village has changed to be peaceful, safe, peaceful, and the economic life of the community has increased.

Key Words: people's islamic boarding school, social problems, social change, standard of living

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a central role in human life because it has a highly dominant influence across various dimensions of human existence. According to Purwanto (2006), education has a dominant role in shaping the quality of individuals. Through education, humans acquire various forms of knowledge, which enable them to improve their quality of life in a better direction. One form of education that has grown and developed in Indonesia is the *pondok pesantren* (Islamic boarding school).

Pondok pesantren, commonly referred to as *pesantren*, is a form of education that is very familiar in Indonesia. Historically, pesantren existed and developed long before Indonesia's independence. Islamic boarding school education is believed to be the forerunner of education in Indonesia. Dhofier (2011) even states that pesantren have existed in Indonesia since the 11th century, coinciding with the arrival and development of Islam in the region.

When compared with other forms of education in Indonesia, pesantren can be considered the oldest educational institution and are regarded as an indigenous cultural product of Indonesia (Sulthon & Moh. Khusnuridlo, 2006), since the term *pesantren* is uniquely known and developed only in

Indonesia. Usman (2013) explains that pesantren is an educational institution deeply rooted in Indonesia, a country with a Muslim-majority population. From a historical perspective, pesantren are considered institutions that have been able to survive and sustain their activities while maintaining a distinctive Indonesian educational model.

Initially, pesantren functioned as institutions focused on developing Islamic religious education. Over time, they became more organized and structured, marked by the emergence of regular religious study sessions (*pengajian*) (Putri et al., 2023). This educational model then developed more rapidly, indicated by the establishment of dormitories to accommodate students (*santri*) who lived around the pesantren.

Historically, pesantren emerged and developed within Muslim communities, where early Islamic scholars established them among residential areas and made the community the object of their *dakwah* (religious outreach), using social realities and community problems as their medium (Wati, 2014). Many Western researchers have argued that the presence of pesantren has contributed to the emergence of social movements, economic development, political dynamics, and the cultural landscape of the nation. This demonstrates the significant role of pesantren in education, which experienced rapid growth, especially after Indonesia's independence, as marked by the increasing number of pesantren and students (Mufidah, 2012).

The close relationship between pesantren and community life has enabled them to survive and develop over time, even to the present day. This role allows pesantren to be defined as a form of community-based education, as their existence is inseparable from society. In practice, pesantren are managed independently, developed according to the needs of the community, and their curricula are designed based on the characteristics and demands of the society (Fuad, 2015).

The concept of community-based education is rooted in the view that education is essentially a social activity carried out by the community. This is evident in educational components such as vision, institutional mission, educational foundations and goals, curriculum, teaching methods, educators, evaluation, graduates, and infrastructure—all of which are aligned with societal needs and expectations. Suharto (2005) defines community-based education as a form of education where most decisions—covering inputs, processes, outputs, and even funding—are designed and planned by the community. This view aligns with Shihab (1993), who argues that educational concepts and goals cannot simply be transferred from one country or society to another. Pesantren should grow and develop within their own communities, much like clothing that must be tailored to fit the wearer's size, shape, and preferences, based on identity, worldview, and values within a particular society.

Community-based education is education oriented toward society. Thus, it can be understood as a democratic form of education that involves the community broadly, across diverse backgrounds, by utilizing various potentials and providing wide opportunities for all stakeholders—including local communities, parents of students, and pesantren stakeholders—to participate in improving the quality of education. The ultimate goal is to produce outcomes that directly benefit the community.

One example of community-based pesantren is *Pesantren Rakyat* (People's Islamic Boarding School), a concept that differs from conventional pesantren and represents a relatively new innovation in the pesantren world. Its orientation focuses on empowering the people, especially those with diverse and complex social backgrounds and problems, through specific approaches.

One such community-based pesantren that has grown and developed is *Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin* in Sumberpucung, Malang. This pesantren is particularly interesting to study due to its distinct system and methods compared to conventional pesantren. While traditional pesantren generally position the institution as the center of learning, *Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin Sumberpucung Malang* adopts a different approach, where learning is not centralized within the pesantren but instead takes place within the community by utilizing existing local potentials.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to objectively understand an activity with the aim of discovering new knowledge. This research aims to gain a deeper understanding of concepts (Moleong, 2000). Community education is implemented at Pesantren Rakyat Sumberpucung Malang, emphasizing the disclosure of meaning and processes within a natural setting as a direct data source. This study is designed using a case study approach focused on a single research object and emphasizes in-depth exploration in accordance with the research focus. Pesantren Rakyat Al Amin Sumberpucung Malang was selected because it differs from most pesantren, as it serves as a pioneer of community empowerment, not only as a place for learning religious knowledge but also as a center for community development.

DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

The Essence of Pesantren Rakyat (People's Islamic Boarding School)

The term *Pesantren Rakyat* is not new in the field of education. It has been known since its early emergence around 1998. Ustadz Abdullah Syam is the initiator of this concept. He resides at Jalan Koprul Suradi RT 07 RW 01, Sumberpucung, Malang. A native of Sumberpucung, Malang, he is a graduate of the State Islamic University (UIN) Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Faculty of Psychology. Previously, he studied (nyantri) under K. Masduqi Mahfudz for approximately five years at his pesantren in Mergosono, Malang (Suprayogo, 2015).

The idea of *Pesantren Rakyat* had actually been proposed earlier by the Minister of Religious Affairs in the early 1970s. At that time, Mukti Ali introduced the concept of community and pesantren development. He proposed the idea of skill-based education in pesantren, although a concrete formulation had not yet been established. His idea tended to expand the function of pesantren beyond merely religious institutions. Pesantren were expected to respond to various societal issues. This initiative aimed to improve the quality of life in rural areas, which are closely connected to pesantren. Through this role, pesantren would interact more intensively with rural communities, encouraging and utilizing their potential to enhance the welfare of villages and their people (Amsariah, 2008).

The establishment of *Pesantren Rakyat* is particularly interesting to study because it differs from conventional pesantren. While traditional pesantren generally focus on teaching religious concepts within dormitories, *Pesantren Rakyat* not only teaches religion but also aims to address various social problems faced by the community. Humam (2020) notes that such a concept strengthens the role of pesantren in social empowerment, providing synergistic solutions for community life. Its activities are also different: whereas traditional pesantren activities are centered within the institution, *Pesantren Rakyat* activities are designed based on community needs, with a collaborative concept of learning and teaching. Participants even evaluate their learning outcomes collectively.

With this people-centered educational concept, pesantren education becomes accessible to various groups without age restrictions and can be implemented in a more flexible, open, free, affordable, and functional manner. In addition to teaching religious knowledge, *Pesantren Rakyat* applies these teachings directly within society. As a result, the presence of Islam is genuinely felt, addressing real-life problems and becoming a blessing for all. According to Subaidi and Laila (2016), this strengthens the role of *Pesantren Rakyat* as not merely a center for religious instruction but also as a platform for social empowerment.

However, the concept of *Pesantren Rakyat* is still not widely known. This is because it is relatively new and its development remains limited. Suprayogo (2016) states that the concept only emerged in recent years in Malang, which explains its limited recognition. Nevertheless, due to its transformative impact on society, it has gained public sympathy. Therefore, deeper studies are needed so that the concept can be better understood and disseminated throughout the country as part of efforts to improve national education.

From an educational system perspective, *Pesantren Rakyat* represents a manifestation of community-based education as stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Article 55 paragraph 1, which explains that communities can organize education based on their religious, social, and cultural characteristics. This reinforces Abdullah Syam's goal that *Pesantren Rakyat* is not merely about obtaining certificates or diplomas, but about gaining knowledge, insight, and practical skills needed in daily life, grounded in principles of cooperation and mutual assistance. Therefore, its educational system synergizes with the community. Individuals with expertise in agriculture, livestock, crafts, and other fields are invited to teach at the pesantren (Sam, 2023).

In essence, pesantren have enormous potential in nation-building. Most pesantren are located in rural areas, making them deeply familiar with social issues. According to Zubaidi (2007), there are three reasons why pesantren are deeply rooted in society. First, pesantren activities run almost 24 hours a day, functioning as religious, social, and community development institutions in an integrated and optimal manner. Second, pesantren generally rely on and are embedded within community life, as most are located in villages. Third, pesantren enjoy strong public trust, as evidenced by parents entrusting their children to them.

The emergence of *Pesantren Rakyat* represents an innovative transformation of pesantren to reflect and maximize their potential. Basyit (2017) states that pesantren reform aims to refunctionalize their role so that their contribution as agents of change can be directly felt by society. In this context, pesantren are not only institutions for religious education but also entities that actively care about social issues.

The strategic role of pesantren in society, according to Zubaidi (2007), can be carried out through three main activities. First, raising community awareness, especially by supporting marginalized groups and facilitating their empowerment to overcome poverty and backwardness. Second, encouraging active participation and self-reliance by enabling communities to identify their problems, formulate life goals, evaluate their conditions, and take action independently. Third, acting as pioneers in solving community problems in a proper and ethical manner so that people can live better lives.

Thus, *Pesantren Rakyat* can develop through creative activities that directly engage with society. These include religious study models such as regular recitations (*pengajian*), *majlis taklim*, *manaqib*, and others aimed at strengthening religious understanding and faith values. Additionally, they can engage in community empowerment activities such as creative economic initiatives, training programs, cooperative development, and life skills education to enhance practical competencies in various fields.

History of Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin, Sumberpucung, Malang

“Sumberpucung” is a village located in the Sumberpucung District, Malang Regency, East Java Province, where the main sources of livelihood for the community are farming and trading. Sumberpucung is situated to the south of Sumberpucung Station, and the local community often refers to it as the “Kidul Stasiun” area (South of the Station) (Fuad, 2015). It is in this village that Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin was established, specifically in the southwestern part of Malang City or the western part of Malang Regency. The pesantren was founded in 2008 by Ustadz Abdullah Sam, who is also its founder and caretaker. He is a graduate in psychology from the State Islamic University Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

According to Suprayogo (2015) and Humam (2020), the establishment of Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin was motivated by Ustadz Abdullah Sam's concern over the chaotic social conditions in Sumberpucung, which were prone to criminal activities such as gambling, robbery, thuggery, infidelity, and being home to one of the largest prostitution areas in Malang. Having been born and raised in Sumberpucung, Ustadz Abdullah Sam deeply understood the social issues faced by the community. Thoifah (2018) notes that the relatively homogeneous nature of the community—in terms of religion, occupation, and culture—inspired him to carry out da'wah (Islamic outreach) that reached marginalized groups, those with low levels of education, and weak economic conditions. Thus, on

Wednesday, June 25, 2008, a community-based pesantren was established in the underdeveloped Sumberpucung area.

Fanani (2022) adds that Ustadz Abdullah Sam also aspired to address the economic and educational problems of the community. Therefore, the establishment of Pesantren Rakyat not only focused on religious studies but also developed community empowerment programs in areas such as the economy, agriculture, livestock, and trade. The issue of school dropouts or children unable to continue to higher levels of education due to their parents' financial limitations also received serious attention from him. Over time, the presence of this community-based pesantren gradually changed the negative habits in Sumberpucung. Ustadz Abdullah Sam succeeded in slowly transforming behaviors such as alcohol consumption, gambling, and robbery (Suprayogo, 2016). He aimed to improve the socio-religious conditions of the environment through natural, cultural, and participatory approaches. He chose practical methods in developing Islamic outreach, particularly for the *abangan* community (nominal Muslims), for whom conventional preaching methods were often ineffective (Miftahusyai'an, 2017). Ustadz Abdullah Sam sought to initiate social and cultural change through gradual, small-scale efforts, eventually leading to an accelerated process of social transformation. As a result, the curriculum used at Pesantren Al-Amin differs from that of other pesantren. It is people-based, addressing community needs, with people-centered economic systems, discussions, management, and social interactions. In all aspects of life, the concept is community-oriented while remaining firmly grounded in the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

One example of the pesantren's efforts to improve the economic life of the Sumberpucung community includes providing business capital loans, distributing livestock such as goats for free, supplying plant seeds, creating job opportunities, renovating houses for underprivileged residents, and covering educational expenses for children from low-income families. These initiatives have contributed to improving the economic conditions of the people (Faishol, 2018).

Through the efforts of Ustadz Abdullah Sam, the village gradually experienced an improvement in both living standards and cultural life compared to the past. Sumberpucung has transformed into a peaceful, safe, and harmonious village where residents live in unity and strong social bonds. The economic life of the community has become more organized, and many who were previously unemployed are now working (Fuad, 2015).

The Concept of Pesantren Rakyat Al Amin Sumberpucung Malang

Pesantren Rakyat (People's Islamic Boarding School) differs from pesantren in general. The fundamental difference lies in its orientation, which is directed toward empowering the community through various approaches. According to Suprayogo (2015), Pesantren Rakyat has distinct goals and characteristics compared to conventional pesantren. Its existence is closely tied to the term "rakyat" (people), meaning that it is intended to be accessible and beneficial to all members of society without exception. Its orientation focuses on empowering people who face serious social problems such as poverty, low levels of education, and negative habits like gambling, alcoholism, and even prostitution.

Pesantren Rakyat, initiated by Ustadz Abdullah Sam, aims to provide solutions to the deeply rooted and serious social problems faced by the community in his area, namely Sumberpucung village. Therefore, appropriate concepts and strategies are required to address such conditions. While pesantren in general aim to teach students (*santri*) to understand and practice Islamic teachings, Pesantren Rakyat is oriented toward alleviating various life problems faced by the community (Suprayogo, 2015).

The differences between Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin Sumberpucung and conventional pesantren can be seen in terms of culture, curriculum, and concept. This pesantren is community-based; therefore, its curriculum and activities are directly integrated with the community. There are no special buildings used for learning (Jumain, 2015). The students vary in age, ranging from toddlers, teenagers, youth, adults, to even the elderly. Learning takes place without desks, based on the principle that every

place can be a learning space and every event contains learning value. Thus, learning does not rely on buildings, but rather on collaboration and synergy with the surrounding environment (Sam, 2023). Students can learn anywhere, such as in student forums, youth gatherings, tahlil events, seminars, discussions, casual meetups, coffee shops, prayer rooms (musholla), mosques, markets, train stations, rice fields, and factories (Jumain, 2015).

Another difference lies in its highly flexible learning system. The learning materials are adjusted to the needs of the students, with diverse teaching methods. Educational activities at Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin include:

1. Madrasah diniyah (religious classes),
2. Youth mental strengthening,
3. Legal assistance,
4. Organizational mentoring,
5. Media for public opinion dissemination,
6. Assistance for victims of divorce, infidelity, economic hardship, etc.,
7. Assistance for individuals with mental health issues such as stress, depression, and drug abuse, and
8. Support for school dropouts (Thoifah, 2013).

The activities of Pesantren Rakyat are not limited to teaching classical Islamic texts but also involve mobilizing the community to find solutions to social problems. Therefore, students are categorized into three types: core students, non-residential students (santri kalong), and supporting students. Core students live and study in the pesantren, though their number is limited. Santri kalong attend regularly but do not stay overnight. Supporting students include any community members who wish to learn knowledge or skills to develop their potential (Sam, 2023).

Learning activities at Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin also differ through the Family Empowerment Post (POSDAYA), which has developed a “pesantren without walls” program. This program conducts learning in residents’ homes, allowing students to directly interact and integrate with the community, helping them understand real-life social conditions. This approach also strengthens interaction among students (Ardiansyah, 2018).

Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin Sumberpucung has also developed formal education by establishing schools ranging from early childhood education (PAUD) to senior high school (SMA) (Humam, 2020). The introduction of formal education does not eliminate the core people-centered concept. Instead, it allows students to develop their potential through educational levels. The educational concept uses a moving class method, where students at certain levels can participate in learning at other nearby schools (SDII, 2024).

In addition to its focus on education, Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin Sumberpucung contributes to social activities such as youth mental development, support for school dropouts, legal assistance, and family mentoring. Youth mentoring includes motivating reluctant children to return to school, helping unemployed individuals find work, and rehabilitating drug addicts. Assistance for school dropouts involves communicating with families and encouraging children to return to school, either within the pesantren or elsewhere. Legal assistance is provided through advocacy and defense for people whose rights have been violated. Family mentoring includes counseling, consultation, and religious guidance for issues such as divorce, infidelity, delinquency, mental health problems, and drug rehabilitation (Humam, 2020).

Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin Sumberpucung also develops the economic sector by establishing financial institutions and community business groups (KUM). One such institution is BMT Pesantren Rakyat, which serves the financial needs of the local community. A community business group, KUM Rakyat Bersatu, has also been established. These institutions work synergistically to promote local economic development. Business units include services such as rice milling rentals and generator/water pump rentals. Additional assistance is provided to community groups such as the Markisa group, which operates businesses in goat and rabbit farming, compost production from animal

waste, waste banks, coffee production, cardboard recycling, and agricultural seed development (Ma'ruf, 2020).

The role of Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin Sumberpucung demonstrates its existence as an institution rooted in people-centered values. Its role goes beyond merely integrating with the community; it actively provides solutions to social problems. This supports Mufidah's (2012) view that Pesantren Rakyat reflects an institution whose activities and empowerment are based on local wisdom, capable of transforming students' mindsets and behaviors to become more sensitive to social relationships.

CONCLUSION

From the data presented above, it can be concluded that:

1. Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin Sumberpucung was established based on the concern of Ustadz Abdullah Sam over the turbulent social conditions in the Sumberpucung community, which are prone to criminal activities such as gambling, robbery, thuggery, infidelity, and adultery.
2. The Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin Sumberpucung, initiated by Ustadz Abdullah Sam, aims to provide solutions to the increasingly severe and complex social problems faced by the surrounding community. He introduced an innovation by making the pesantren not merely a place for religious development. Thus, its orientation is to help the community overcome various life challenges they face.
3. Learning activities in the pesantren rakyat differ from those in conventional pesantren. While traditional pesantren usually serve as centralized learning places for students, learning activities in the pesantren rakyat can take place in residents' homes, allowing students to learn directly with and within the community, thereby gaining a better understanding of real social life.
4. The learning activities at Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin are highly flexible. The learning materials are tailored to the needs of the students. Educational activities include:
 - a) madrasah diniyah (Islamic religious classes),
 - b) youth mental strengthening,
 - c) legal assistance,
 - d) mentoring organizations,
 - e) media for public opinion dissemination,
 - f) assistance for victims of divorce, infidelity, economic hardship, etc.,
 - g) assistance for individuals with mental health issues such as stress, depression, and drug abuse, and
 - h) support for school dropouts.
5. Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin Sumberpucung also develops formal education by establishing schools ranging from early childhood education (PAUD) to senior high school (SMA), while maintaining its core concept so that students can develop their potential through formal educational pathways.
6. Pesantren Rakyat Al-Amin Sumberpucung also develops the economic sector by establishing financial institutions and community business groups (KUM). BMT "Pesantren Rakyat" and the community business group "Rakyat Bersatu" were founded to serve the needs of the surrounding community and work synergistically to promote local economic development. One of the developed business units includes services such as rice milling rentals and generator/water pump rentals. Other forms of assistance include support for the Markisa community group, which runs businesses such as goat and rabbit farming, compost fertilizer production from rabbit urine and goat manure, a waste bank, a coffee factory, cardboard recycling, and agricultural seedlings.

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