Educational Policy Analysis: Examining Pesantren Policies and Their Implications on the Independence of Kyai and Pesantren in the Contemporary Era

Nadhif Muhammad Mumtaz[1]✉, Evi Muafiah[2], Doli Witro[3]

[1]Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia
[2]Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ponorogo, Ponorogo, Indonesia
[3]Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Purpose –This study aims to investigate the autonomy of "Kyai" (religious teachers) within Pesantren in making education policy. In examining these policies, it focuses on the evolution of teaching and the implementation of the "Asas Tunggal Pancasila" in Indonesian educational institutions, the struggles of Pesantren policies that led to the birth of Law No. 18 of 2019, and the dark side of the politicization of religion that has implications for educational policies.

Design/methods/approach – This type of research uses qualitative research with a case study of two Islamic boarding schools in East Java (research objects). Primary data sources come from observation and interview results. Secondary data sources come from library sources such as laws, scientific articles (journals), books, etc. Data collection used observation techniques, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation (document analysis). Data analysis techniques used qualitative data analysis techniques, namely data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

Findings – The research reveals that the law empowers Pesantren and Kyai to shape their institutions in alignment with societal demands, traditions, and evolving times. Though the Kyai's independence significantly affects the Pesantren's trajectory, it does not singularly define its identity. The law underscores the imperative for contemporary teaching methods, curriculum evolution, and infrastructure enhancement, urging Kyai to eschew rigid and authoritarian stances.

Research implications/limitations – The research has theoretical implications that two contrasting views concerning Pesantren policies' influence on Kyai's independence vis-à-vis political elites. Proponents ("Yes") highlight Alignment of Interest, Empowerment and Development, and Community Engagement. Opponents ("No") cite the Preservation of Autonomy, the potential for manipulation, and an inherent distrust of political parties.

Originality/value – The research provides direction for the complex interplay between religious education and the political domain in Indonesia.

CONTACT: ✉ nadhif.muhammad@uiii.ac.id

Introduction

In education policy analysis, understanding the dynamics of educational institutions, especially religious education, and their influence on educational practices and societal needs is very important. Religious educational institutions, such as Pesantren (Islamic boarding school), have a significant impact and have long played an important and strategic role in shaping the political landscape and policy direction around the world (Beyers, 2015; Darwanto et al., 2024; Fox, 2018; Teater & Jenkins, 2019; Yusuf et al., 2023).

This educational reform lies in the idea of rationality as a method to develop *ijtihad* in dealing with contemporary issues (Kustiawan, Rasidin, Witro, Busni, et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, Pesantren is known as a center of education and religious guidance, which are most commonly found in society and have a strong influence over various authorities in various areas (Hudaefi & Heryani, 2019; Isbah, 2020). This is because, in line with what Dhofier (1980) and Bruinessen (2008) said, Pesantren has a strong tradition of independence from Kyai (religious teachers)/ leaders when deciding a policy for the community. In addition, the curriculum contained in Pesantren also covers various cross-fields of science, which are felt to cover various community needs and solve problems in a pluralistic society (Azra & Afrianty, 2005; Rasidin et al., 2024).

As we know, this institution not only functions as a center for Islamic teachings but also as a socio-political entity or socio-political movement in the term of Hefner (2009, 2022) that is important in the continuity of people's lives or has significant influence in society. However, sometimes, this is used as a ground for mass mobilization by certain political parties/ elites due to the strong influence of Pesantren/ Kyai in the eyes of society, especially the lower middle class (Budi, 2022).

Based on the description above, this research highlights and analyses the independence of Kyai, the evolution of Pesantren, and the politicization of Pesantren from an education policy analysis; this research examines and explores various education policy issues related to Pesantren and their implications for governance or policies in Pesantren. In addition, this study explores further how Pesantren policies developed in the contemporary era to form the independence of Kyai and the political elite. More specifically, this research examines education policy focused on the evolution of teaching and the implementation of the 'Single Principle of Pancasila' in Indonesian educational institutions, the struggle for Pesantren policy so that Law No. 18 of 2019 was born, and the dark side of religious politicization so that it has implications for education policy.

Methods

This type of research uses qualitative research with a case study of Islamic boarding schools in East Java. Two boarding schools are used as research locations (research objects). In this article, the two research objects are not mentioned directly but are presented with pseudonyms, namely Pensatren A and Pensatantren B. In the selected cases, researchers identified Pesantren, who was involved with the political agenda in formulating policies from year to year, and Pesantren, who maintained their identity without being involved with the political agenda.

Data sources came from two kinds, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data sources came from observation and interview results. The informants in this study were four people, divided into two from Pesantren A and two from Pesantren B. The informants were selected based on a purposive sampling technique that represented various possibilities from various aspects that qualified to be the main sample of this study. Secondary data sources came from library sources such as laws, scientific articles (journals), books, and other library materials related to the research topic.

Data collection used observation techniques, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation (document analysis). In document analysis, the technique used is policy content analysis that focuses on Law No. 18 of 2019 about Pesantren. The data analysis technique used was the Miles et al. qualitative data analysis technique, namely data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

Result and Discussion

1. The Teaching Evolution and Implementing "Asas Tunggal Pancasila" in Indonesian Educational Institutions

The evolution of teaching models and subjects to be taught is an important challenge to navigate the intersection between scientific knowledge and religious knowledge, which tends to be unscientific or dogmatic (Ansori et al., 2022; Mustofa et al., 2023). Another challenge to the evolution of the learning process in Islamic boarding schools is teaching techniques, which were originally teacher centers to become student centers that involve many critical thinking activities (Abidin et al., 2022; Bin Tahir, 2017; Mustakim, 2021; Yahya, 2021).

In this case, Pesantren's role in the evolution of educational institutions lies in how they influence the concept of scientific integration in the curriculum and learning practices (Abidin et al., 2022; Isbah, 2020; Muazza et al., 2018; Nurcendani & Ratnasari, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2024). In this area, Isbah (2020) said that the evolution of every Pesantren policy from not recognizing, recognizing but not fully classifying as the same group as other secular schools fully recognizing, even facilitating and providing its legitimacy makes Pesantren have to transform from being purely traditional educational institutions with student cantered, the authority of the Kyai is absolute, critical thinking does not develop, and several other traditions must turn into institutions that are inclusive and promote critical thinking based learning.

It should be in line with what is expected in the "Asas Tunggal Pancasila," which contains various elements of diversity and values so that they can accommodate the rights of every individual in the learning and teaching process, the divinity which is the basis of life for every citizen, and unity of various interests (Fatah, 2021; Mariyono et al., 2023).

For example, we can see a concrete example in the application of the "Asas Tunggal Pancasila" in the content of the Pesantren curriculum. The curriculum development process involves various stakeholders, such as education policymakers, scholars, and subject matter experts. These stakeholders can develop a curriculum that contains national values and Pancasila principles without reducing existing religious identity or Islamic

boarding school traditions (Firdaus & Abdulkarim, 2022; Iswandi & Abdullah, 2020; Ningsih et al., 2023; Yahya, 2021).

Furthermore, a form of cooperation between educational institutions, in this case, Pesantren, and government or non-government parties provides an improvement and development of what must be determined in the context of Pesantren policies within the Pesantren itself. This partnership can provide a variety of training and other crucial resources to support the policy implementation process and align it with Pancasila or state values (Shaturaev, 2021).

Establishing an inclusive educational institution requires comprehensive collaboration with various parties. Moreover, it is undeniable that Pesantren was reluctant to collaborate with the state, including on the issue of forming Pesantren policies, because the state needed to care about the existence of Pesantren. However, day by day, the state is starting to pay attention to Pesantren and is demanding that Pesantren be directly involved with various agendas and collaborate with various parties to benefit their educational institutions' development process.

2. The History of Struggling Pesantren Policy and the Birth of Law No. 18 of 2019 on Pesantren

Before independence, as we know, Pesantren experienced a phase full of tension with the Dutch or Dutch colonialists before the period of Indonesian independence. The Kyai in the Pesantren provide religious legitimacy and guidance to their students to participate in anti-Western campaigns. They emphasized the values of justice, freedom, and resistance to various forms of oppression by the Dutch (Ridwan, 2020). Therefore, education orientation at that time was more in the form of resistance or jihad against various injustices committed by the colonialists. One concrete evidence is how Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of the Islamic organization Nahdhatul Ulama, declared jihad on November 10, 1945 (Bizawie, 2020).

At that time, a prominent figure emerged from the Dutch side who gave quite a variety of colors in the process of developing Islam and Pesantren, namely Snouck Hurgonje, an intellectual who spent his life in Makkah and the Indies to study Islam and Asia in order to have a significant impact on the transformation Colonial policies towards the Indonesian nation, especially the Muslim community who were in the heat of the Dutch revolt (Burhanudin, 2014; Hasan, 1995; McFate, 2019; Moersidin, Mumtaz, Salsabila, Hasan, Sholihaturrahmaniah, 2022; Peters, 2015; van Koningsveld, 2016). In this case, according to Burhanuddin (2014), there were at least three things/policies that Hurgronje did to dampen the Islamic/ Pesantren movement at that time, including understanding the network of scholars/ intellectuals from the archipelago, changing and directing several things that had the potential for conflict to positive things, collaborating with local people. Meanwhile, Moersidin et al. (2022) classify Hurgronje's policies in this context by facilitating and allowing religious activities that do not have the potential to fight colonialism and prohibiting religious elements as political doctrines to oppose the state.

After the independence period, the development and evolution of Islamic education policies, especially Pesantren, underwent a significant transformation. In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, from the New Order and Old Order to the reform era, the resulting policies were very diverse. In short, this has started since the presence of the National Education System Law as a reference for the education system in Indonesia; this occurred since the old order era with the issuance of Law No. 4 of 1950, where this law briefly explains that religious education is still not mandatory in the eyes of the state and government, and became mandatory when Law No. 2 of 1989 was issued, even though it is not something that is major or is still being duplicated by the national education system. Finally, it became the first grade and entered the national education system when Law No. 20 of 2003. Institutionally, it can be concluded that from not being recognized by the government (UU No.4 1950), to being recognized by the government but not in totality (UU No. 2 1989), to being recognized by the government in totality and openly through Law no. 2 2003 (Soebahar & Abd, 2009).

The legitimacy of the existence of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia is increasingly apparent with the emergence of Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007 concerning Religious and Religious Education, so its position is further strengthened in Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren (Qomar, 2002). The enactment of Law Number 18 of 2019 concerning Pesantren provides recognition/acknowledgment, affirmation, and facilitation that the government must provide for Pesantren in all regions of Indonesia. It has had a significant positive impact on the development of Pesantren in Indonesia. In line with what Usman and Widyanto (2021) said, the positive impact of this law can be seen from the government's obligation to provide special funds for Pesantren. Both in the days of independence and now (DPR RI, 2019).

The following are some of the steps of the journey and the process of issuing an encouraging gift for the development of Pesantren in Indonesia. First, this began with the existence of a Draft Law (RUU) with the issuance of the Decree of the Indonesian People's Representative Council Number: 7/DPR RI/II/2016-2017 concerning the National Legislation Program for the 2017 Priority Draft Law and the National Legislation Program for Changes to the Draft Law of 2015-2019. In this decision, to be precise, at number 43, the status of Pesantren is written with the name Draft for Religious Education Institutions and Pesantren (bphn, 2016). However, over time, in various discussions on the stage of the DPR (House of Representatives) Republic of Indonesia, the name changed to the Pesantren and Religious Education Bill. Moreover, this decision is fixed to become a bill proposed by the DPR on October 16, 2018 (Erdianto, 2018).

The draft Law on Islamic Boarding Schools and Religious Education initially regulated various religious education in Indonesia, such as Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Catholic, Confucian, and Islamic religious education. However, at the end of the ratification stage, it only regulates Pesantren issues. This bill was proposed by the elite of certain political parties, namely by the Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party or PPP) and the Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party or PKB) fractions (DPR RI, 2018; Usman & Widyanto, 2021).

3. The Dark Side of Religion Politicization and Its Policy Implications

The politicization of religion is an act in which religious organizations, groups, or institutions relinquish their authority and instead serve the interests of certain political elites or rulers in society (Hadžić, 2020; Iveković, 2002; Ognjenovic & Jozelic, 2014). It is in line with several studies that say this phenomenon will significantly impact civil liberties and public discourse, especially in democratic societies (Brunello, 2014; Kellstedt & Green, 1993; Philpott, 2007). Even in this case, Brunello (2014), through his study in America, said that when religion is politicized, it will endanger the values of pluralism, create intolerance phenomena, erode social norms and public interests, and in the end, it will deprive a person of personal and intellectual freedom. This discourse has long been a concern for groups supporting the separation of church and state, even before the American Revolution.

Although sometimes beneficial, the disharmony between religion and politics is that religion ranges from uncompromising religious principles, while politics is closely related to compromises that adjust their needs and interests (Demerath, 2019; Halman & Pettersson, 2003; Hefner, 2010; Mueller, 2013). In addition, Demerath (2019) also emphasizes that this will impact the policy-making process, such as how religious figures who are more emotional than prioritizing professionalism for the benefit of the people and religious groups will give more voice to policy consensus, which incidentally is more in favor of their group. At the same time, politics is more pragmatic for the idealism of their elite political party.

In the Indonesian context, this has also happened, especially in the Islamic religion, where the Al-Quran, a holy and sacred book, is used to politicize certain groups (Danial & Husna, 2022; Makinuddin, 2021; Salda et al., 2020). Makinuddin (2021) argues that there are at least several negative things related to the politicization of the Al Quran, such as blocking women's leadership, blocking non-Muslim leaders, symbolic power used to hegemony and dominate the power of certain political elites, etc.

One of the impacts is that minority groups; it is difficult to voice and express aspirations because of the interests of the majority groups in the policies made (Lindsey & Butt, 2016; Nasution, 2016; Tampubolon, 2016; Tampubolon & Aziz, 2021). According to Tampubolon and Aziz (2021), several policies have been affected by the politicization of religion to the detriment of minorities, such as Law Number 1/PNPS/1965 and several other regulations, namely the Regulations for the Establishment of Places of Worship (PBM), which in clause 13,14, 18 paragraph (3) PBM is a requirement that is difficult to implement and a significant obstacle for minorities to build places of worship.

Religion in Indonesian studies has become an essential factor in shaping the political landscape, both Islamic and secular parties (Arakaki, 2011; Picard & Madinier, 2011; Ropi, 2013; Steenbrink, 2015; Tandon, 2019). According to Tandon (2019), Vote-bank-centric politics has become the mainstay strategy and habit of political parties in Indonesia. Many secular parties gradually deviate from their secular agendas and show sensitivity to religious issues because voter sentiment cannot be hurt. At the same time, many Islamic parties try to accommodate secular goals to create a strong people base. It means that religion significantly influences the running of political parties in Indonesia. The concrete

thing that did not take long to happen was during the 2019 election when the Prabowo and Jokowi camps were unable to avoid the politicization of religion by bringing up the issue of hard-line Islam and moderate Islam so that society was divided and conflicts arose in various regions (Fahmi, 2020; Iswandi & Abdullah, 2020; Yudantiasa, 2020).

4. The Independence of Kyai in the Perspective of Policy Content Analysis

This section will focus on discussing the draft of the Pesantren Law No. 18 of 2019 to analyze the extent to which the interpretation of Pesantren Law 18 of 2019 concerning the independence of Kyai. Likewise, by analyzing the objectives, definitions, and some of the actions proposed in the policy design, this study will gain insight into how this policy can impact autonomy and power in the decision-making process of clerics in educational institutions.

We start from the Pesantren law No. 18 of 2019, Chapter 1, regarding the general provision that the definition of Pesantren is a community-based institution founded by individuals, foundations, Islamic community organizations, and/or communities that instill faith and piety in Allah, cultivate noble character and uphold Islamic teachings, *rahmatan lil alamin* which is reflected in the attitude of humility, tolerance, balance, moderation, and other noble values of the Indonesian nation through education, Islamic da'wah, example, and community empowerment within the framework of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2019).

According to the definition of Pesantren, it does not have to be owned by individuals. The identity that forms a Pesantren can come from more than just the Kyai if the Pesantren is built by several people or certain groups of people. In the study of social identity theory, it is explained that in order to form an identity, including in terms of independent identity (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Ashforth & Mael, 2004; M. Husnaini et al., 2023; Tajfel, 1996; Trepte & Loy, 2017), and one of the things that can be done is using symbolic representation, namely using various symbols, logos, texts, and whatever it is that represents something that is associated with members and the identity of the Pesantren. It will also strengthen the Pesantren's sense of identity and differentiate it from others.

Every Pesantren must still uphold the issue of Pesantren independence because it is clearly stated in the Pesantren law No. 18 of 2019, chapter 2 unequivocally states that independence is one of the principles of implementing Pesantren and Chapter 8 regarding the obligation to maintain certain uniqueness and uniqueness that reflects the tradition of Islamic boarding schools.

Even though maintaining the tradition and identity of the Pesantren, namely The Independence Of Kyai, is a must, several things make the independence of Kyai not absolute and superpower, as in the chapters that talk about the issue of curriculum and Pesantren collaboration which requires Pesantren to adhere to the Pesantren law No. 18 of 2019, which tells a Kyai not to be wiser, accept the times, and not be selfish in making a decision.

Institutionally, the Pesantren law No. 18 of 2019, chapters 25 and 26 concerning quality assurance also clearly requires Islamic boarding schools to manage and establish a quality assurance system to maintain traditions, increase professionalism, and maintain the quality of Islamic boarding schools. It indicates a slight bias caused by the authority of the Kyai in the management of Pesantren institutions. The Dewan Masyayikh establishes this quality assurance system; it is the independent institution representing the Dewan Masyaikh in formulating and establishing a Pesantren education quality assurance system.

5. The Teaching Evolution and Implementing "Asas Tunggal Pancasila" in the Perspective of Policy Content Analysis

Changes in the teaching and learning process are clearly emphasized in Pesantren law no. 18 of 2019, chapter 3 point 1 concerning the purpose of holding a Pesantren is to meet the needs of citizens and the community's social welfare amid the current swift currents of globalization and modernization. It also has an impact on the Islamic political movement, and Islamic law in Muslim countries has experienced modernisation and development universally, including Indonesia (Kustiawan, Rasidin, Witro, & Jalaluddin, 2023).

Besides that, in the draft of the Pesantren law No. 18 of 2019, chapter 13 point 2 also clearly explains that learning methods do not have to use classic methods such as sorogan, bandongan, and rote memorization but can also use other learning methods. It indicates that the Pesantren policy allows Pesantren to use student-centered learning methods that place more emphasis on critical thinking than teacher-centered (Abidin et al., 2022; Astuti et al., 2021; Kurniawati et al., 2020).

In the discussion of the Pesantren curriculum, there is also an explanation regarding the permissibility of the Pesantren curriculum involving general or secular subjects. It is clearly explained in the Pesantren law No. 18 of 2019, chapter 18, points 1 and 3, which explains the young education curriculum, which consists of the Pesantren curriculum and the general or secular education curriculum. The results of this curriculum design will also significantly impact student learning methods in the classroom later (Grant, 2010; Könings et al., 2014; Smith & Ragan, 2004; Stes, Coertjens, et al., 2010; Stes, Min-Leliveld, et al., 2010).

The importance of the teaching evolution is also due to the legitimacy of the Pesantren law No. 18 of 2019, chapter 19 point 2, which states that it is appropriate for graduates of Islamic boarding schools to be accepted in any job market. They consider that today's employment needs are always related to critical thinking skills, ICT skills, language skills, Etc. (Geisinger, 2016; Ibna Seraj & Oteir, 2022; Kivunja, 2014; McPeck, 2016; National Research Council, 2012), which are far from the classical Pesantren methods and curriculum.

Our findings state that Pesantren A is more dominant in keeping up with the times in the learning and teaching process due to its more open nature with any party. Meanwhile, Pesantren B is more concerned with maintaining traditional identity, including in the learning process.

As for the Pesantren, which are required to be in line with the values of the "Asas Tunggal Pancasila," clearly emphasized in the Pesantren law No. 18 of 2019, chapter 6 point 2 that Islamic boarding schools must be committed to practicing the values of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and Unity in Diversity. In preaching or teaching their teachings, Pesantren must also be moderate and based on Pancasila values. As contained in the concept of religious moderation (Mundzir et al., 2023; Rusyana et al., 2023).

Therefore, harmony between religious values and the state or nation is a must based on the Pesantren law No. 18 of 2019. In state affairs, Pesantren must be at the forefront, especially in matters of religion. In this case, several political parties are involved in forming policies, such as the Pesantren Law No. 18 of 2019. It does not make Pesantren and Kyai reluctant to communicate with them because policy formation, especially Pesantren's policy, is a matter of state and religion.

It is in line with why what was said by Pesantren A:

"We have three basic principles in running Pesantren, namely the principles of humanity, nationality, and religiosity. Usually, you call it in Arabic terms *insaniyah*, *wathaniyah*, and *Islamiyah*. From this aspect, it is clear that we are not anti-government or political parties, but rather you are collaborative in nature, and your goals are humanity, statehood, and Islam."

6. The Analysis of Pesantren Policy on the Independence of Kyai in Partisanship of Certain Political Elites

In this section, the implications of Pesantren policies, especially those promoted or championed by certain political parties/ elites, namely PKB (National Awakening Party) and PPP (United Development Party), on Kyai's independence in siding with certain political elites are explained. The first part discusses the agreement that Pesantren policies can indeed influence Kyai's independence to side with certain political elites; this part is represented by the symbol "Yes". Furthermore, the second part discusses disagreement that Pesantren's policies can influence Kyai's independence to side with certain political elites; this part is represented by the symbol "No."

"Yes," to be precise, the Kyai are pro and agree that politics is important or that Pesantren policy influences the development of Pesantren and their policy autonomy. Pesantren policies championed by two political parties/ elite can influence their independence from the side of certain political elites; even if possible, this relationship must continue to last in various presidential or local regional head periods. The Kyai's reasons for their agreement on the influence of Pesantren policies on their independence are due to three things: alignment of interests, empowerment and development, and community engagement.

As we know, the concept of "alignment of interest" is rooted in several organizational management sciences. It indicates that when two existences have aligned goals and desires, they are more likely to form a partnership and alliance (Gottschalg & Zollo, 2007; Lado et al., 1992; Nyberg et al., 2010). Even in the study of Gottschalg and Zollo (Gottschalg & Zollo, 2007), this alignment of interests is very important for managing an

institution in a competitive environment. This concept can be useful in analyzing Pesantren's policies in the context of education policies. By applying this concept to education policy analysis, we can assess how the alignment of interests influences Pesantren policies and the implications for educational goals.

In the context of Pesantren/ Kyai and political parties such as PKB and PPP, if these two parties are felt to be able to accommodate the interests of the Kyai/Pesantren, such as religious goals, education, and social justice, then cooperation, even contracts will occur because they feel an interest in they are represented. It is in line with what Kyai Pesantren A said that:

> "We, elite political parties fighting for Pesantren policies and institutions, are related to each other. Political elites who fight for Pesantren policies often consult, discuss, and ask for considerations about how this policy should be made. Moreover, we are openly willing to have that discussion because the results of their policies will also impact how Pesantren policies are made. Simply put, the funding issue in the Pesantren policy will affect how the Pesantren will be developed."

The concept of alignment of interests can also be seen in how Pesantren develops curricula. The involvement of various parties is the key to forming a comprehensive curriculum that can meet the community's needs (Firdaus & Abdulkarim, 2022). With the government's support through its policies, the curriculum in Pesantren also began to develop with the status of new institutions such as junior and senior high schools. The inclusion of science lessons also transforms Pesantren due to the existence of new educational institutions. It is a real impact of the existence of Pesantren policies that accommodate the interests of Pesantren and society.

It is in line with the Pesantren law No. 18 of 2019, chapter 16 points (1) and (2) about "Pesantren carry out educational functions based on each Pesantren's uniqueness, tradition, and educational curriculum. The function of Pesantren Education, as referred to in paragraph (1), aims to form *santri* (students) who are superior in fulfilling Indonesian independence and can face the times." Moreover, chapter 18, point (3), states, "As referred to in paragraph (1), the general or secular education curriculum is regulated in a ministerial regulation" (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2019).

As for the issue of "empowerment and development," it is quite clear that when the role of the Pesantren policy promoted by the two parties is to empower the community and encourage infrastructure development, then taking into account the independence of the Kyai/ Pesantren and siding with the political elite is a commensurate payment or equal. In line with what Ediagbonya (Ediagbonya, 2013) said, empowerment and development are crucial in the world of education, especially regarding economic issues. These two things are a big consideration in the problem of how to make changes to great progress (Feste & Anderson, 1995).

For example, the Pesantren policy clearly emphasizes the state providing a budget for each Pesantren for the development of infrastructure and the welfare of human resources. It is also necessary because of the fast flow of modernization, which requires Pesantren to transform in a more advanced direction. It is in line with the Pesantren law

No. 18 of 2019, chapter 42, that "the central and regional governments support implementing Pesantren' *da'wah* functions through program cooperation, policy facilitation, and funding". Chapter 49, point 1, states that the government provides and manages Islamic boarding schools' endowment funds, which are sourced and form part of the educational endowment fund (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2019).

The final consideration that is commensurate with the payment of the Kyai for depriving them of their independence or freedom in making decisions, especially in matters of partiality for certain political elites, is "community engagement," where the strength of relationships, networks, and involvement from the community is critical for education policymakers and researchers (Ahmed & Palermo, 2010; Joosten et al., 2015). Likewise, political parties until they realize that the grassroots movement is crucial to accommodate people's aspirations (Cavaye, 2004; Head, 2007; Skidmore et al., 2006).

Conversely, when the Kyai are involved in the political agenda in the policy-making process, the policies promoted by the political party will align with what the community wants and needs. It means that the dialectic process of mutual influence between certain political parties/ elites and the Kyai/ Pesantren through Pesantren policies is commonplace and certain. However, in fact, the Kyai/Pesantren do not feel disadvantaged over what happened between them and that particular political party/elite. It is in line with the function of Pesantren in law No. 18 of 2019, chapter 43, that Pesantren carries out community empowerment functions to improve the welfare of Islamic boarding schools and the community (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2019).

What about the 'No' group? It is clear that they disagree, as Pesantren B revealed that:

"Pesantren policies can influence their alignment with certain elites/ political parties. Even though it is clear that two parties carry and fight for aspirations in Pesantren policy, they are still independent and free to determine whose side they should side with in decisions that tend to be close to the political stage."

It is due to the deprivation of the independence of the Kyai in favor of certain elites/political parties, which will have several negative impacts, such as the "preservation of autonomy," where most Pesantren or Kyai have absolute and full authority over what they have to determine for the development of their Pesantren and their life choices. In fact, those who form the style/color of the Pesantren are the Kyai. It concerns the issue of freedom of speech, deciding the direction of life, and taking sides or not taking sides with certain political parties/elite in a democratic country (Bush, 2009; Kadir, 1999; Rico, 2015).

For example, a Kyai who is an expert in *fiqh* will create a Pesantren with the *fiqh* genre, and so will an interpreter Kyai with his Pesantren Qur'an, as well as a strict Kyai, will form a strict and disciplined Pesantren culture. Therefore, the independence of all decisions involving Kyai and Pesantren is absolute; it is difficult for other parties to compromise. Furthermore, according to them, this is important because of an identity. It is in line with the Pesantren Law No. 18 of 2019, chapter 8 point 2, and Chapter 26 point 2 about the function of system management quality that has to maintain the independence and characteristics of Pesantren (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2019).

Next is because of the "manipulation potential." They think political parties/ elites must have great potential to manipulate any movement or organization with a large mass base. It is possible because the political parties/ elites have strong sources of funds and extensive relations to do everything in their interests. We can see this evidence in the literature review about how religion is politicized to cause various negative impacts for both parties, especially the clergy. Therefore, dependence on them is something dangerous. Even though Pesantren tends to be Nahdhatul Ulama, this organization is very dynamic and flexible in dealing with various problems and changing times (Bush, 2009; Kadir, 1999; Khasanah, 2022; Saepulah et al., 2020). On the other hand, to prevent various losses, including those caused by political parties, Pesantren has an internal quality assurance tradition compiled by the Dewan Masyaikh. It aligns with Law No. 18 of 2019, chapter 27, about Dewan Masyaikh (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2019).

On the other hand last but not least is "the belief or doctrine of distrust of parties/ politics"; some studies say that past experiences and beliefs can significantly influence people's beliefs in dealing with a phenomenon (Angstrom & Widen, 2016; Eliade & Adams, 1987; Geertz & Banton, 1966; Keane, 2008). When faced with a political agenda (Armstrong, 2014; Grzymala-Busse, 2016; Wuthnow, 1991), Experiences and religious beliefs (Pesantren) tend to shun and criticize this political agenda. Some religious doctrines say that Kyai or religious leaders close to politics or the government will tend to be far from holiness in religious matters. Even though this is against Law No. 18 of 2019, chapters 37-40 about Pesantren in the *da'wah* Function that in carrying out interactions, especially on the issue of da'wah and spreading teachings, Pesantren must contain national values, love for the motherland, and include preaching in the world of politics (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2019).

It is these three things that seem to be a big consideration for some Kyai and Pesantren to find it difficult to accept political agendas, including entering into contracts, cooperation, and even being intervened by/ with certain elites/ political parties and preferring to be independent and free in developing their Pesantren. Furthermore, does not depend on any party. Therefore, according to them, even though the Pesantren policies championed by certain elites/ political parties have a major impact on their current development, it will not affect their alignment with these elites/ political parties. In simple terms, maybe respect and thanks for their struggle.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Pesantren law No. 18 of 2019 gives authority to every Pesantren and Kyai to develop their Pesantren according to the community's identity, traditions, and needs according to the times. The independence of Kyai indeed has a major influence on the identity of the Pesantren, which determines how the Pesantren will develop, but what needs to be noted is that the definition of Pesantren itself does not refer to individual property, which means that the strength and independence of the Kyai do not form the identity of a Pesantren. It indicates the changes in the way of teaching,

curriculum, and infrastructure emphasized in the Pesantren law no. 18 of 2019 is a must and signals Kyai not to be rigid and authoritarian in managing educational institutions.

On the other hand, there are two decisions to respond to the phenomena behind Pesantren policies, namely the first regarding the agreement that Pesantren policies can indeed affect the independence of the Kyai in favor of certain political elites; this section is represented by the symbol "Yes" which is based on three reasons, namely *alignment of interest, empowerment and development,* and *community engagement*. While the second concerns disagreement that Pesantren policies can affect the independence of the Kyai in favor of certain political elites, this section is represented by the symbol "No," which is also based on three reasons, namely *the preservation of autonomy, manipulation of potential,* and *the belief or doctrine of distrust of parties/politics.*

This research recommends that Kyai be wiser and more careful in responding to Pesantren policies brought by certain political parties will have an impact on their decision to side with certain political elites. In addition, this will also indirectly lead the masses or mobilise *votes* in the discourse on the electoral political stage. As we know, the Kyai's voice in the tradition of Indonesian society is very influential in decision-making, including in the election of leaders.

Declarations

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