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## EDUCATION FOR EMANCIPATION AND SUSTAINABILITY: THE ROLES OF PESANTRENS IN SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT IN JAVA, INDONESIA

Sufean Hussin<sup>1</sup>(PhD), Mustari Mohamad<sup>2</sup> & Anahita Ghanad<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Pesantrens are religious schools established by communities in Indonesia since 600 years ago to educate children and youth on various subjects concentrating on classical religious texts, including theology and philosophy, as well as life-pragmatic subjects such as business, vocational skills, science, and technology. The existence of pesantrens all over Indonesia demonstrate the autonomy and independence of communities in providing formal education relevant for community building and development, without the assistance and supervision from the former Dutch colonialist, federal government, or provincial government. The most crucial and influential personality in the emergence and establishment of pesantrens all over Indonesia is the religious chief scholar called kiyai who could garner respect and financial contribution within each community. Currently, there are more than 25,000 pesantrens all over Indonesia, 75% of them still very traditional while 25% are modern in their outlook, leadership, and curriculum. Based on the study in Tasikmalaya, Java, this paper highlights the roles of pesantrens in societal development of Java region and the necessary changes for them to make in order to remain acceptable and sustainable in the modern day world. This study used a multiple case study method in which data were collected by means of case observation on 24 pesantrens as well as survey checklist and interviews with 252 participants comprising kiyais, teachers, students, and community leaders. The study found, among others, that even with the onslaught of modernization, most pesantrens in Java prefer to be traditional, and pesantrens graduates are trained with multiple vocational skills and have a high spirit of self-reliance, unlike high school graduates in neighboring countries.

**Keywords:** Emancipation, Sustainability, Pesantrens, Societal Development, Education, Indonesia

[1] Faculty of Education  
University of Malaya  
MALAYSIA

[2] Ministry of Education  
INDONESIA

*Corresponding Author:*  
Faculty of Education  
University of Malaya  
MALAYSIA  
Email: [drsufean@um.edu.my](mailto:drsufean@um.edu.my)



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## INTRODUCTION

Emancipation from the perspective of local communities in Indonesia refers to the ability to be free from the shackles of poverty, illiteracy, and any oppressive elements (Malik, 2005). Sustainability, on the other hand, is thought of as continuity of progress and development without jeopardizing or uprooting the harmony of the community, culture, and ecology. In the local context, some scholars have pointed out that emancipation and sustainability have been the inherent core values of Indonesian local communities for generations, and the pesantrens have been very instrumental in propagating those values (Dhofier, 1982; Malik, 2005; Mustari, 2010; Ziemek, 1986).

In general, the pesantrens, or private Islamic boarding schools, in Indonesia have withstood the challenges of time for centuries, and this is a remarkable feat because the local communities continuously believe and trust that pesantrens are important for a balanced education of children and youth as the curriculum emphasizes three domains, namely religion, vocational skills, and modernity. Because of this, the number of pesantrens in Indonesia keeps on over time. For example, according to the Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, 2000, 2006, 2009), in the 16th-century there were about 613 pesantrens, but in the 19th-century there were about 15,000 pesantrens, in 2006 there were 16,015 pesantrens, and in 2009 there were 24,206 pesantrens of which 56% were traditional, 13% modern, and 31% integrated. More than 5 million students go to pesantrens. It is anticipated that, as Indonesian communities go toward modernity, more and more pesantrens will be of the modern or the integrated types, where students learn religious studies, academic subjects such as English and economics, and vocational skills training. The increase indicates the popularity of the two types of pesantrens, which favorably receive partial financial grants and quality accreditation from the government (Mustari, 2010). Apart from pesantrens, there are about 37,362 Islamic day schools, which have both the religious and modern components in the curriculum; out of the total number, 2,236 (8.6 %) madrassahs belong to the state (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2009).

Many previous studies have repeatedly found the significant contribution of pesantrens in community development in Indonesia, encompassing religious, cultural, economic, and political aspects. For example, Ziemek (1986) and Abdullah (1986) found that social change theory and emancipative development theory are applicable to explain the role of pesantrens in community development in Indonesia. They assert that pesantrens are the significant institutions in making the people in society strengthen their religious faith, adopt new and progressive ways of life, and adapt innovatively to new knowledge and technologies to enhance productivity in agriculture and economic transactions (Malik, 2005). The students in pesantrens execute self-governance (i.e., they set up various committees, without the supervision and intervention of teachers or management staff, to take care of their discipline and welfare, ranging from food preparation to co-curriculum activities), while teachers receive part-time salary from the pesantren management. The kiyai or religious chief of pesantrens are far more influential than government officers in changing the people's mind and way of life (Geertz, 1965; Horikoshi, 1987), and thus the communities do not merely rely on the federal government or provincial government to implement socio-economic policies and infrastructural development (Sukamto, 1999). As Indonesia is a large country with thousands of islands, communities have learned self-emancipation and self-empowerment well in order to sustain their survival and progress (Pambudy in *Gatra*, 3-1-2007). Our study here aims to trace whether there has been a significant change in orientation and contribution of pesantrens in community development, particularly in the Borneo Java region.

Soedjatmoko (2001) and Malik (2005) in their study proposed a list of roles of pesantrens in community development, which are as follows:



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- Pesantrens are instrumental in human resource development because they train students with various vocational and business skills, thus graduates can easily gain employment or be self-employed.
- Pesantrens act as community development centers where people come to learn new knowledge and ideas, apart from learning religious principles and practices to strengthen their spiritual and mental discipline. Pesantrens serve as the focal point that unite people through the spirit of community building and welfare.
- The kiyai of pesantrens are usually considered as influential community leaders who sometimes are supported by the local government. People donate money to the kiyai who usually buy farms and businesses to support the operation and development of pesantrens, as well as provide jobs to local people.
- Big pesantrens sometimes become universities having a pre-school, a hospital, a mosque, several faculties with study programs, and a few research institutes.
- Students of pesantrens learn important concepts of life such as self-empowerment, self-reliance, self-employment, and innovativeness; thus, they do not cause socio-economic conflicts or tensions in the society that arise due to unemployment.

### ***Conceptual Framework and Relevant Theories of the Study***

As mentioned before, the 26,000 pesantrens in Indonesia are experiencing a tussle or a dilemma of choice between two paradigms (i.e., the traditional conservative paradigm and the modernity paradigm). The former has been instrumental in the formation and strength of community culture, spirituality, and morality for several centuries, while the latter forces pesantrens to integrate scientific and technological advancements as well as global trends and developments relevant for modern living. The tussle between these two paradigms becomes the conceptual framework of the study, and the employment of development theory, modernization theory, and social change theory are crucial for informing the paradigm shift and changing roles of pesantrens in Indonesia today. Quality theory in management comes into play by informing the necessary changes and improvements to be made by pesantrens in the context of modernity paradigm, in which quality of services and facilities significantly affects the sustainability and growth of educational institutions (Brennan & Shah, 2000; Tang, 2012).

Development theory suggests that poor communities do not generate sufficient income from their economic activities and they are dependent on external forces, such as the federal government and business corporations, to bring in financial capital and investments that could boost up interregional trade, employment of human resources, income, consumerism, and tax revenues (Griffin, 1991; Midgley, 1995; Rostow, 1960). Communities or local governments should make every attempt to attract various kinds of investors by drawing up strategic initiatives, especially in terms of ready supply of resources such as raw materials and skilled workers, tax incentives provisions, transport accessibility networks, quality social infrastructure, or attractive environment (Midgley, 1995). Not only that, interregional development is vital for overall economic balance and stability, and this should be supported by redistribution of resources and wealth among various regions (Griffin, 1991; Todaro, 1994). Whatever it is, from another vantage point, education and training plays a critical role in supporting human and societal development (Depaepe & Smeyers, 2008; Hussin, 2004).

Modernization theory posits that a traditional society transforms itself to be a modern one whenever great evolutionary forces such as industrialization, capitalism, ideology of democracy, technological innovations, and globalization induce a society to change in many ways, encompassing mind set, culture, structure, institutions, socio-economic transactions, and political governance (Depaepe & Smeyers, 2008; Tipps, 1973). New philosophies and life styles such as progressivism, narcissism, mobility, pervasive capitalism, business-minded relations, mobile electronic gadgets, and mega cities marked the modern society, uprooting long-held traditions and customs of pristine agrarian society such as in Indonesia.



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Social change theory has been argued to be concomitant with modernization theory in terms of similar forces of forces of change, but Parsons (1963, 1971) and his proponents, however, delineate the functional mechanism of societal change as consisting of adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latent pattern maintenance (Poloma, 1979; Soedjatmoko, 2001).

## PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

There were a total of 21,403 pesantrens in Java in 2011, and they were categorized as traditional, modern, and integrated (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2011). In general, the high school type of pesantrens shares a similar curriculum model, which emphasizes three main components, namely religious studies, vocational, and academic. The main purpose of the study was to examine and analyze the roles of pesantrens in community development in West Java. The roles are in terms of socio-economic programs and initiatives, education and training of youth, propagation of spirituality, and transmission of socio-cultural norms and customs in communities. The main questions to be answered in this study were:

1. What is the condition of pesantrens and what make them attractive and significant as educational institutions in Javanese communities?
2. In relation to education and training, what are the roles of pesantrens in community development?
3. What are the leadership roles of kiyai?
4. In view of modernization, what are the expected changes and improvements to be made by pesantrens in order to be relevant for communities in the future?

## METHODOLOGY

Our research utilized the multiple case study method involving 24 pesantrens of the high school type which we selected at random from the Tasikmalaya city district, which is popularly known the "City of Thousand Pesantrens," in West Java. Out of the 24 pesantrens, 8 were traditional type, 8 modern type, and 8 integrated type. We visited the 24 pesantrens to observe their condition and to identify the relevant respondents to be involved in this study. Based on the research questions, data from each pesantren was obtained via an itemized-checklist. Initially, we developed a checklist with 143 items based on the concepts or keywords in the research questions, but after a pilot test session with three pesantrens, we shortened the list to 120 items. The checklist had five parts: (a) physical condition and facilities of pesantrens; (b) curriculum philosophy, goals, and components; (c) roles and contributions of pesantrens; (d) leadership and management of pesantrens; (e) weaknesses and expected changes. Besides that, definitive conceptualization of key concepts or keywords would ensure high validity of data and results of the study.

As many as 252 respondents answered the itemized-checklist, and they comprised 24 kiyai, 24 teachers, 60 students, 60 parents, 54 community leaders, and 30 alumni. We also used the checklist for making observations on the 24 pesantrens which we visited. Abiding by research ethics, we asked the kiyai of each pesantrens involved to sign a letter of consent for participating in the study (Creswell, 2008). We used basic descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage to analyse the overall distribution of responses to all items.

## RESULTS

It is not possible for us to present all the results of the 120 items of our checklist. For the purpose of brevity of this research paper, we select and present the tables of results which we considered interesting for our readers to



understand better the importance of pesantrens in Javanese communities. Other than that, we describe briefly some results in general.

As to the physical condition of pesantrens, the majority of respondents opined that physical condition of buildings, classrooms, and facilities were satisfactory, clean, and safe. All the 24 pesantrens were accessible by road, and almost 80% of the students came from far-away remote and rural villages. All pesantrens had hostels for boys and girls. The tuition and accommodation fees were very affordable, and poor students could opt to work part-time in shops and farms owned by their pesantrens to pay for their fees instead. Table 1 illustrates the pull-aspects of pesantrens in Java.

Table 1  
*Distribution of frequency and percentage of responses regarding the attractive aspects of pesantrens in Java*

No	Aspect	Respondent						
		Kiyai n=24 (%)	Teachers n=24 (%)	Students n=60 (%)	Community Leaders n=54 (%)	Parents n=60 (%)	Alumni n=30 (%)	Column total N=252 (%)
i.	Good and orderly condition of pesantrens	8 (33%)	9 (38%)	19 (32%)	19 (35%)	22 (37%)	10 (33%)	87 (35%)
ii.	Knowledgable teachers and kiyai	10 (42%)	9 (38%)	25 (42%)	19 (35%)	23 (38%)	11 (37%)	97 (38%)
iii.	Pesantrens reflect the life of communities	7 (29%)	11 (46%)	15 (25%)	16 (30%)	17 (28%)	10 (33%)	76 (30%)
iv.	Freedom of learning in pesantrens	6 (25%)	9 (38%)	15 (25%)	14 (26%)	14 (23%)	8 (27%)	66 (26%)
v.	While studying students are free to help parents	4 (17%)	2 (8%)	13 (22%)	9 (17%)	11 (18%)	6 (20%)	45 (18%)
vi.	Affordable fees in pesantrens	3 (13%)	6 (25%)	22 (37%)	24 (44%)	21 (35%)	9 (30%)	85 (34%)
	Row total	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	60 (100%)	54 (100%)	60 (100%)	30 (100%)	252 (100%)

By rows, the results in Table 1 show that the two influential pull-aspects are good and orderly condition of pesantrens, and the kiyai and teachers are knowledgeable in their subject areas. Besides that, freedom of learning religious, academic, and vocational subjects was another pull-aspect that drove students to consider studying at pesantrens.



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In relation to the pull-aspects, we asked the respondents how significant the pesantrens were to the local societies. Table 2 next page portrays the results.

Table 2

*Distribution of frequency and percentage of responses regarding the significance of pesantrens in Java communities*

No.	Significance	Respondents						
		Kiyai n=24 (%)	Teachers n=24 (%)	Students n=60 (%)	Comm- nity leaders n=54 (%)	Parents n=60 (%)	Alumni n=30 (%)	Column total N=252 (%)
i.	Propagation of religious faith	10 (42%)	11 (46%)	24 (40%)	14 (26%)	18 (30%)	10 (33%)	87 (35%)
ii.	Education and Training	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	4 (7%)	5 (9%)	7 (12%)	2 (7%)	20 (8%)
iii.	Economic growth	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	4 (7%)	4 (7%)	2 (3%)	1 (3%)	13 (5%)
iv.	Transmission of Societal norms	11 (46%)	10 (42%)	26 (42%)	15 (29%)	16 (27%)	8 (27%)	86 (34%)
v.	Agricultural production	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	4 (7%)	5 (8%)	2 (7%)	13 (5%)
vi.	Deviance and Crime control	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	1 (2%)	12 (22%)	12 (20%)	7 (23%)	33 (13%)
	Row total	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	60 (100%)	54 (100%)	60 (100%)	30 (100%)	252 (100%)

Results in Table 2 show that pesantrens were most significant to local communities in two aspects: first was religious faith propagation, and second was the enculturation of societal norms. In this regard, the pesantrens in Java communities placed a great emphasis on spiritual development and transmission of societal norms among children and youth. It has been found before that village communities in agrarian societies tend to have high spirituality and religious beliefs. Other significant contributions of pesantrens were control of deviant behaviour and criminal tendencies among youth, besides being the formal institutions for education and training of children and youth with many aspects of life and culture.

Table 3 shows the roles of pesantrens in community development, as analyzed from the responses to the checklist in the study. From our observations, it could be seen that pesantrens in Java fulfil their long-held traditional function as religious educational institutions for people to enhance their spirituality and religious knowledge. That is their preference and priority.



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Thus, it can be inferred that similar function could be found in the thousands of pesantrens in Indonesia, even though some of them have reoriented themselves to modernity, teaching academic subjects, including English language, and computerization.

Table 3

*Distribution of frequency and percentage of responses on roles of pesantrens in community development*

No.	Roles of Pesantrens	Respondents						
		Kiyai n=24 (%)	Teachers n=24 (%)	Students n=60 (%)	Communi- ty leaders n=54 (%)	Parents n=60 (%)	Alumni n=30 (%)	Column Total N=252 (%)
i.	As a religious center for people to enhance spirituality	10 (42%)	9 (38%)	23 (38%)	15 (28%)	25 (42%)	12 (40%)	94 (37%)
ii.	As a center for grooming religious scholars and preachers	8 (33%)	7 (29%)	16 (27%)	17 (31%)	15 (24%)	8 (26%)	71 (28%)
iii.	As a propagation center on religious ethics and principles	4 (17%)	4 (17%)	10 (17%)	4 (7%)	7 (12%)	3 (10%)	32 (13%)
iv.	As a lifelong learning center for learning religious practices for all age groups	2 (8%)	1 (4%)	3 (5%)	7 (13%)	6 (10%)	2 (7%)	21 (8%)
v.	As a consultancy center for resolving conflicts in communities	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	8 (13%)	8 (15%)	3 (5%)	2 (7%)	23 (9%)
vi.	As a consultancy center for family and community development	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	3 (6%)	4 (7%)	3 (10%)	11 (4%)
	Row total	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	60 (100%)	54 (100%)	60 (100%)	30 (100%)	252 (100%)

Schooling time in pesantrens was found to be divided into four parts: early morning (5.00-7.00 am) for prayers and religious lectures; morning session (8.00 am-12 pm) for academic subjects including mathematics and science; afternoon session (2 pm- 5 pm) vocational skills class, and night session (8 pm-11 pm) for Islamic studies including Quran and Arabic language.





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For the traditional pesantrens, the morning session usually focused more on readings on classical religious texts than on academic subjects. Student committees organized co-curricular and games activities every day, including Saturdays and Sundays, without teacher involvement. The main student body, headed by a president, managed student welfare and discipline. All these created a student-based learning and taught students to be autonomous, independent, participative, and resourceful in building up themselves holistically. This is the most remarkable feature of student development in pesantrens that cannot be found in schools in other parts of the world. Table 4 shows the additional or vocational subjects available at most pesantrens.

Table 4  
*Vocational and practical subjects taught at pesantrens as testified by various respondents*

No.	Subject	Respondent						
		Kiyai n=24 (%)	Teachers n=24 (%)	Students n=60 (%)	Communi- ty leaders n=54 (%)	Parents n=60 (%)	Alumni n=30 (%)	Column total N=252 (%)
i.	Agriculture	7 (29%)	8 (33%)	20 (33%)	19 (35%)	14 (23%)	9 (30%)	77 (31%)
ii.	Art and crafts	3 (13%)	3 (13%)	8 (13%)	8 (15%)	7 (12%)	5 (9%)	34 (13%)
iii.	Business	3 (13%)	5 (21%)	11 (18%)	10 (19%)	12 (20%)	4 (7%)	45 (18%)
iv.	English language	17 (71%)	17 (71%)	44 (73%)	36 (67%)	41 (68%)	21 (70%)	176 (70%)
v.	Citizenship	16 (67%)	16 (67%)	41 (68%)	35 (65%)	38 (63%)	19 (63%)	165 (65%)
vi.	Computer and communication technology	9 (38%)	8 (33%)	16 (27%)	19 (35%)	27 (45%)	11 (20%)	90 (36%)
	Row total	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	60 (100%)	54 (100%)	60 (100%)	30 (100%)	252 (100%)

From the results in Table 4, by column total, the two most common subjects available at pesantrens were English language and citizenship education. Even though students did not speak English, they could understand the language which enabled them to retrieve information from books, computer, and Internet sources. Citizenship education was considered important by pesantrens to uphold Indonesia's sovereignty and national principles, and thus pesantrens were part of nationalist institutions in Indonesia, which upheld the doctrine of unity in diversity.





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We asked respondents what initiatives have been made to improve the reputation of pesantrens. Table 5 shows the results obtained from our checklist data. People believed that pesantren management had the financial capacity to build some facilities for community use, and thus pesantrens had the social responsibility to do this. Large and popular pesantrens usually derived revenues from student fees, zakat funds, asset investment returns, and philanthropic donations, and this could enable them to build good facilities for the community. The common way to generate more funds for development would be to increase student enrolment by expanding vocational courses and improving instructional delivery, which would be more attractive to youth. The other way would be by advertising or out-searching for zakat funds and philanthropic donations—as done by famous pesantrens in some provinces. Apart from that, some pesantrens would reorganize or restructure their organization and management so that the local or external communities would see them as professional and effective religious institutions, and this also would attract zakat donations from foreign countries.

Table 5

*Distribution of frequency and percentage of responses for new initiatives crucial for improvement in pesantrens*

No.	Initiatives	Respondent						
		Kiyai n=24 (%)	Teachers n=24 (%)	Students n=60 (%)	Communi- ty leaders n=54 (%)	Parents n=60 (%)	Alumni n=30 (%)	Column total N=252 (%)
i.	Improve facilities such as libraries, clinics, sports, and mosques for community use.	6 (30%)	6 (30%)	14 (23%)	12 (22%)	14 (23%)	9 (30%)	61 (24%)
ii.	Increase student enrolment through advertisements on curriculum outcomes	5 (20%)	7 (29%)	17 (29%)	10 (19%)	9 (15%)	8 (27%)	56 (22%)
iii.	Improve organization structure and management system	4 (17%)	4 (17%)	11 (18%)	7 (12%)	12 (20%)	7 (23%)	45 (18%)
iv.	Increase number of vocational areas and their instructors	5 (21%)	6 (30%)	9 (15%)	10 (19%)	13 (22%)	5 (17%)	48 (19%)
v.	Secure more funds from external/ foreign philanthropists	4 (17%)	1 (4%)	9 (15%)	15 (28%)	12 (20%)	1 (3%)	42 (17%)
	Row total	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	60 (100%)	54 (100%)	60 (100%)	30 (100%)	252 (100%)

Leadership plays a critical role in the growth, significance, and sustainability of organizations. It is not about getting things done the right way, but it is the capacity to change organizations by motivating and inspiring people towards commonwealth and beneficial goals. Table 6 shows the results pertaining to the capacity and influence of kiyai leadership of pesantrens.



Table 6  
*Distribution of frequency and percentage of responses regarding capacity and influence of kiyai leadership*

No	Capacity	Respondent						
		Kiyai n=24 (%)	Tea- chers n=24 (%)	Stu- dents n=60 (%)	Commu- nity leaders n=54 (%)	Parents n=60 (%)	Alumni n=30 (%)	Column total N=252 (%)
i.	Kiyai has a large influence on people in community	13 (54%)	13 (54%)	34 (57%)	27 (50%)	26 (43%)	17 (57%)	130 (52%)
ii.	Kiyai is knowledgeable, respected, and has expert authority and wisdom	10 (42%)	9 (38%)	24 (40%)	15 (28%)	19 (32%)	10 (33%)	87 (35%)
iii.	Kiyai is a community spiritual leader but not a manager of organization; capable people should manage	11 (46%)	13 (54%)	34 (57%)	33 (61%)	33 (55%)	17 (57%)	141 (56%)
iv.	Kiyai is a busy, looming religious figure revered by followers and students	6 (25%)	4 (17%)	7 (12%)	16 (30%)	19 (32%)	5 (17%)	57 (23%)
	Row total %	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	60 (100%)	54 (100%)	60 (100%)	30 (100%)	252 (100%)

Examining the column total percentages in Table 6, it could be seen that the kiyai exerted a large influence on the people in communities who normally viewed them as the humble men of piety and as highly revered spiritual leaders whose words and actions would be the exemplary role-model of good character. The kiyai were thought of as the expert authority in religion and as men of wisdom who possessed extraordinary foresight and emotional insights about worldly and spiritual matters. As the kiyai were busy leaders giving lectures and finding networks at many places, the management of pesantrens was left to the trusted managers who would think about financial and organizational operations. Students and followers learned how to be a kiyai so that they could establish their own pesantrens in other places; this is in fact the reason and mechanism for the spread of pesantrens over the span of several centuries in Indonesia—the concept of replication.



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In our checklist, we also asked about the factors that contribute to the sustainability of pesantrens. Table 7 shows the results.

Table 7  
*Distribution of frequency and percentage of responses on factors related to the sustainability of pesantrens*

No.	Factors	Respondent						
		Kiyai n=24 (%)	Teacher n=24 (%)	Students n=60 (%)	Community leader n=54 (%)	Parents n=60 (%)	Alumni n=30 (%)	Column total N=252 (%)
i.	Diverse forms of contribution by pesantrens to local communities	5 (21%)	5 (21%)	11 (18%)	9 (17%)	12 (20%)	8 (27%)	50 (20%)
ii.	Strong succession plan in pesantrens leadership	2 (7%)	5 (21%)	13 (22%)	16 (30%)	11 (18%)	1 (3%)	48 (19%)
iii.	Improved communication system and facilities today e.g. cellphones and Internet	5 (21%)	4 (16%)	11 (18%)	5 (9%)	11 (18%)	7 (23%)	43 (17%)
iv.	Some management and financial support from the government	4 (17%)	3 (13%)	10 (17%)	10 (18%)	9 (15%)	5 (17%)	41 (16%)
v.	Assistance and commitment from alumni	5 (21%)	4 (16%)	8 (13%)	6 (11%)	8 (14%)	4 (13%)	35 (14%)
vi.	Various forms of contributions from communities	3 (13%)	3 (13%)	7 (12%)	8 (15%)	9 (15%)	5 (17%)	35 (14%)
	Row total	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	60 (100%)	54 (100%)	60 (100%)	30 (100%)	252 (100%)

Examining the column total of Table 7, results show that the important factors for sustainability of pesantrens are diverse forms of contributions by pesantrens to community development, good succession plan in pesantrens leadership, improved communication system and facilities, and support from the government. Alumni, parents, and students felt that pesantrens have made a great impact to community educational and economic development; therefore, they would assist the survival and longevity of pesantrens in whatever manner, and this spirit indeed has been instrumental for the spread of pesantrens in Java or entire Indonesia in the past centuries. Today, modern communication facilities have facilitated good networking among alumni and parents, particularly issues related to pesantren development such as finance, human resource needs, student welfare, and curriculum.



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Besides that, funds and management assistance from the government also contributed to the sustainability and improved quality of pesantrens; perhaps the government should be thankful to the kiyai and pesantrens in building up the education system of Java and Indonesia because it would be such a mammoth task for the government alone to build up the primary and secondary education system in the vast regions of the country.

Among the many factors, finance is of course the most critical factor for the institutional sustainability of pesantrens. In our research checklist, we asked respondents about what they know on the sources of financial revenues for their local pesantrens. The following Table 8 shows the results.

Table 8  
*Distribution of frequency and percentage of responses regarding the sources of finance of pesantrens*

No.	Financial Sources	Respondent						
		Kiyai n=24 (%)	Teacher n=24 (%)	Student n=60 (%)	Communi- nity Leader n=54 (%)	Parents n=60 (%)	Alumni n=30 (%)	Column total N=252 (%)
i.	Donations from parents	9 (38%)	13 (54%)	19 (32%)	33 (61%)	54 (90%)	25 (83%)	153 (62%)
ii.	Philanthropic donations (waqaf)	15 (63%)	15 (63%)	41 (86%)	36 (67%)	42 (70%)	21 (70%)	170 (67%)
iii.	Tuition fees	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	60 (100%)	54 (100%)	60 (100%)	30 (100%)	252 (100%)
iv.	Government grants	5 (21%)	5 (21%)	16 (27%)	13 (24%)	13 (22%)	7 (23%)	59 (23%)
v.	Zakat funds by community	11 (46%)	10 (42%)	29 (48%)	20 (37%)	23 (38%)	11 (37%)	104 (41%)
vi.	Businesses and farms	12 (50%)	11 (46%)	24 (40%)	33 (61%)	31 (52%)	13 (43%)	124 (49%)
vii.	VIP visitors	5 (21%)	5 (21%)	14 (23%)	10 (19%)	11 (18%)	5 (17%)	50 (20%)
	Row total	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	60 (100%)	54 (100%)	60 (100%)	30 (100%)	252 (100%)

Examining the column total of Table 8, it could be seen that all respondents stated that the main sources of revenue for pesantrens were tuition fees, philanthropic donations, donations from parents, and profits from businesses and farms. Initially during the early phase of establishment, the kiyai were the key persons who funded the development and operations of pesantrens, and only later on funds from tuition fees and other sources formed the corpus of main revenue.



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This tradition of self-reliance, sustenance, and autonomy in education has been the identity of communities in Indonesia, even though a majority of the people live below the poverty line. The kiyai provide the initial impetus, and later the people follow and consolidate their resources to educate children and youth; again this is a unique social phenomenon found in Java or Indonesia. Overriding this uniqueness however, the government hitherto allocates minimal funds to some pesantrens, probably as a token of appreciation more than as a compulsory obligation.

The role of pesantrens in Indonesian education has been outstanding in the past centuries and decades, but they still need continuous improvement in order to be relevant with new changes and challenges, but without sacrificing their tradition, beliefs, and values. In our research, we asked the respondents what improvements to be made further by pesantrens in view of future challenges and expectations. Table 9 shows the results.

Table 9

*Distribution of frequency and percentage of responses regarding educational improvements to be made in pesantrens in view of future challenges*

No.	Weakness	Respondent						
		Kiyai n=24 (%)	Teachers n=24 (%)	Students n=60 (%)	Comm- nity leaders n=54 (%)	Parents n=60 (%)	Alumni n=30 (%)	Column total N=252 (%)
i.	Need more general knowledge such as history, logic, and geography	9 (38%)	9 (38%)	23 (38%)	17 (24%)	18 (30%)	11 (37%)	87 (35%)
ii.	More practical sessions for some academic subjects , e.g English, science	12 (50%)	10 (42%)	25 (42%)	19 (35%)	20 (33%)	12 (40%)	98 (39%)
iii.	Better curriculum organization and design	9 (38%)	7 (29%)	17 (28%)	15 (28%)	20 (33%)	8 (27%)	76 (30%)
iv.	Vocational subjects of higher standard	8 (33%)	9 (38%)	24 (40%)	19 (35%)	21 (35%)	12 (40%)	93 (37%)
v.	More organized schooling time from morning to evening sessions	3 (13%)	4 (17%)	9 (15%)	7 (13%)	8 (13%)	4 (13%)	35 (14%)
vi.	Better learning resources	3 (13%)	5 (21%)	14 (23%)	13 (24%)	16 (27%)	6 (20%)	57 (23%)
vii.	More content knowledge for some academic subjects	5 (21%)	3 (13%)	7 (12%)	5 (9%)	4 (7%)	4 (13%)	28 (11%)
viii.	Better organizational structure for division of work and staffing	6 (25%)	3 (13%)	10 (17%)	6 (11%)	7 (12%)	4 (13%)	36 (14%)
ix.	Better leadership and	0	2	2	18	17	5	44



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	management training of staff	(0%)	(8%)	(3%)	(33%)	(28%)	(17%)	(17%)
x.	Subjects not relevant/ suitable for children	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Row total	24 (100%)	24 (100%)	60 (100%)	54 (100%)	60 (100%)	30 (100%)	252 (100%)

Examining the column total of Table 9, we could see that less than 40% respondents gave comments regarding further improvements to be made by pesantrens; more than 60% of them were satisfied with the condition and provisions in pesantrens. Some comments for improvement were focused in the area of curriculum, such as more general knowledge subjects, more practical sessions for English classes, and higher standard of vocational courses. This implies that some pesantrens, especially the traditional religious ones, ought to improve their curriculum design, instructional delivery, and standard of vocational courses in order to improve their popularity and thus attract more students.

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study found that, even in pesantrens in rural communities of Java, students and their parents sought after quality education, especially in terms of quality of teachers and instruction, quality of curriculum, and quality of facilities. Many studies have found that these are the crucial core aspects of educational organizations such as schools, colleges, and universities, especially those private ones (Brennan & Shah, 2000; Tang, 2012; Thune, 1996). Harvey and Green (1993) have identified five broad dimensions pertaining to quality, namely: exceptional, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money, and transformation.

Our study also found that a new dimension of quality was accountability, which can be defined as the explicit statements of outcomes and are published (Kehm, 2010; Vroeijenstijn, 1995) to inform the public of the performance of education institutions (Middlehurst & Woodhouse, 1995). In addition, another new dimension is quality improvement, which involves procedures for improvement that are intended at increasing future performance rather than making judgments on past performance. It is aimed that the criteria and procedures used will strengthen the conditions, motivations, scope and level of information of educational institutions towards quality improvement. Thune (1996) suggests that quality procedures are in the interest of educational institutions and aim at the quality specification set by the internal goals and criteria, or may be made internal by the institutions.

In view of the above explanation, pesantrens ought to improve continuously their quality in all dimensions, because their main source of income come from tuition fees and contributions from parents. They are accountable to students and parents, and thus they must be responsive to quality issues and expectations in order to remain popular, progressive, and sustainable. New initiatives portrayed in Tables 5 and 9 previously illustrate the roadmap to future improvements to be made by pesantrens in relation to many aspects of quality, especially in terms of their organization, building facilities, curriculum, teacher professionalism, instruction, and learning resources. In this regard, interestingly and surprisingly, quality theory seems to encapsulate three other theories in this study (i.e., development theory, modernization theory, and social change theory). Within the modernity paradigm especially, pesantrens today apply the concept of quality to bring changes to themselves as well as the surrounding communities.



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Pesantrens are significant to local communities in terms of faith propagation, enculturation of societal norms, instituting morality and civility, and being the formal institutions for education and training of children and youth (Haedari, 2006). Apart from that, pesantrens have been instrumental in propagating nationalism and the nation building agenda, especially through citizenship education and vocational activities that instill the values of independence, autonomy, self-reliance, and empowerment. Pesantrens have made Indonesia what it is today, a race that is proud of what they are and robustly nationalistic.

The principle of reciprocity can be seen in the results of Table 5, which illustrate the symbiotic relationship between pesantrens and the community: that is, pesantrens act as the centers of lifelong learning, sharing their facilities with the local community and help community development; and in return, the community support the pesantrens financially through tuition fees, philanthropic donations, and zakat funds which are then spent for many purposes, such as for teacher salaries, learning resources, student welfare, and building maintenance. This principle has become ingrained as a long-held tradition in the sustainable relationship between pesantrens and the community. The key person that has made this relationship possible and sustainable over the centuries is the *kiyai*, who embodies several types of leadership such as constructivist leadership, moral leadership, spiritual leadership, cultural leadership, and sustainable leadership (Davies, 2008). The alumni consequently propagate those types of leadership whenever they establish a pesantren in other communities.

## CONCLUSION

Pesantrens have proven that large scale poverty does not or cannot inhibit the institutionalization of formal education in a country such as Indonesia, and that the federal government has played a minimal role in establishing a unified national education system in the past (Prasodjo et al., 1982). The fervent desire of people, however, for education and literacy, especially religious and vocational education, overrides the hurdle of poverty. In such a case, financial poverty is not material poverty as resources for education and training can be obtained in ways and forms within a community to operate an educational institution. This is a unique Indonesian phenomenon which cannot be found in other countries in the world where their education system is very dependent on the federal or state government. Consequently, in Indonesia, modernity, economic development, and social development are not entirely dependent on the government and political leaders; there are other leaders who people respect and are committed to follow—namely the *kiyai* in particular.

This study has demonstrated that the pesantrens are still the vital and relevant educational institutions in Java communities, whether in terms of the traditional religious paradigm perspective or the modernity paradigm perspective (Asy'arie, 1988; Haedari, 2006)). Without the pesantrens, it would be quite impossible for the federal government to finance its formal education system entirely throughout the span of thousand islands in Indonesia. Furthermore, there would also be pervasive illiteracy. Indonesia is indeed indebted to the pesantrens in many ways.

This study has disclosed that the important factors for sustainability of pesantrens are diverse forms of contributions to community development, good leadership, good communications technology, and government support. People in Indonesian society perceive that pesantrens have made a great impact to community educational and economic development, and in return, they assist the development of pesantrens, which must make changes and improvements to remain significant as educational institutions in the future. The government lately has also partially contributed to the sustainability and quality improvement of pesantrens.





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