



The Growth of Pesantren in Indonesia as the Islamic Venue and Social Class Status of Santri

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 20 Feb.2021

Received in revised form: 24 Apr. 2021

Accepted: 4 May 2021

DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2021.93.21

Keywords:

pesantren, boarding schools,
social transformation, cultural
change, modern era

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study is an attempt to examine the role of Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) on social status of *santri* in Indonesia. The study aimed to find out what social class the *santri* in Pesantren are viewed by the society; to what extent they enjoy being a part of historical and cultural legacy and social setting; and how pesantren acted as a social agent to transform the social status of *Kiyai* and *santri*.
Research Methodology: This research used a quantitative approach to data analysis by using questionnaires.

This study has used the Smart-PLS to analyze the relations among variables. A close observation of their lifestyle and contribution to society further shows how pesantren have contributed to improving the socioeconomic status of students who had attended the pesantren. **Findings:** The support system and facilities at pesantren help the *santri* to achieve a respectable position in the society. Pesantren act as social reformers, and such educational institutions that can serve as cornerstones for bringing a change in the society. **Implications for Research and Practice:** Such change is compatible to scientific and ICT enabled modern infrastructural and technology-based systems. The study recommends not to consider pesantren merely as a religious school, but as a modernized institution that gives competitive knowledge, scientific approach, positive attitude and a cultural value rooted in Islamic ideology.

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Introduction

Pesantren (Islamic Boarding Schools) in Indonesia started as a traditional education system based on a mosque or boarding school, but it is now growing into a modern institution that offers education at all levels, including primary, junior high, high school, and tertiary education. According to the Ministry of Religion, there are 28,194 IBSs in 2020, with a total of 5 million students. There are 21,263 IBS in Java, which includes West Java, Banten, DKI Jakarta, Central Java, and East Java, with 1.5 million students (Ministry of Religion, 2020). The emergence of pesantren indicates a further expansion of Islamic study groups located in mosques or the houses of *kiyai* and a symbol of Islamic resistance and identity among the *santri* community (Isbah, 2020; Ismail, 2021). These Islamic Boarding Schools (henceforth, IBS) in 2020 have emerged as the epicenter of social transformation, and are helping transform the competence of *santri* or students of pesantren into something higher in quality (Isbah, 2020; Putro, 2021).

Pesantren education is a system for academic and personal growth has so far been termed as education to teach practical skills and provide social support (Nurhayati & Nurhidayah, 2019). It enables *kiyai* and *santri* to become a part of social welfare-based pesantren parenting in order to develop them well-rounded, capable individuals (Ruslin et al., 2019). Specifically, pesantren has worked as a class transformation force in which *santri* are raised from the lower social class to a class of competence and skills. Pesantren education has definitely proved to be a good educational platform for the poor and the underprivileged. In the history of Pesantren, they have proven to be a place where "care" is provided to disadvantaged children from socially and economically vulnerable families. It is through the pesantren that they are able to learn to become successful people in life (Ismail, 2021). There are leaders and politicians that show concern with pesantren. For example, KH. Nur Iskandar, SQ, caretaker of the Ash-Shiddiqiyah Islamic boarding school, was able to conquer the capital city of Jakarta. Muhaimin Iskandar, the DPR-Deputy RI's Chairman, Abdul Azis, a member of the DPRD Central Java, and Imam Akhfas, a member of the DPR-D Banyumas, are a few others who are associated with Pesantren. KH. Ma'ruf Amin, Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Ida Fauziyah, Minister of Manpower, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, Governor of East Java, and Asip Kholbihi, Regent of Pekalongan district, are among the pesantren students who are currently executive officers. There are among hundreds of *santri* who have been elected by Indonesians to different positions ranging from village head to president of the Republic of Indonesia (Putro, 2021).

The role of pesantren has become prominent to form the social status of the Muslim in the Indonesian society that takes various roles in the country. The religious leaders and ulama from the pesantren education went on to do various things, from working in various professions to teaching in non-pesantren mosques and in other regions of the country. While a number of them have been able to start similar IBS to meet the spiritual and academic needs of Muslims (Putro, et. al, 2021). Pesantrens have social resilience, are able to develop communities, build scientific and cultural traditions, as well as being economically independent. This level of competence places pesantren in the Indonesian social system between the upper- and lower-class categories. In agreement, Ruslin et al. (2019) suggests pesantren parented students are those who

have received social welfare benefits, protection, and the environment support in line with the Child Social Welfare Institution standards (LKSA).

The main objective of this paper is to supplement the shortcomings of prior studies and analyze how pesantren has helped students with different educational backgrounds to move up in their educational careers. In particular, this paper also explains not only the potential of the pesantren in facilitating class change, but also the significance of the role of the pesantren for sustainability of the pesantren tradition. The researcher notes that pesantren institutions are not only centers where students learn about religious values, but they are also places, where students become empowered, where they become well-educated and prosperous. Although pesantren provide an alternative education option for the lower classes of society, they also provide life-long support to the *santri*, which goes a long way in developing community. Since community development is becoming increasingly relevant, the importance of pesantren has also increased with the time.

Review of Literature

Rise and Growth of Pesantren

The growth of pesantren education (Islamic Boarding School) was made primarily with the aim to combat the regional Islamist terrorism (Gentzkow and Shapiro 2003) though the Indonesians soon deciphered 'the spirit of education' and 'socialization' process in this type of education (Downer, 2007; Nilan, 2009). A pesantren is no doubt developed upon the erstwhile madrasahs (day schools) but in modern Indonesia. It includes a *pondok* (dormitory) and rightly called boarding schools. In a more formal language, pesantren are also called *pondok* pesantren. *Pondok* literally means a 'hut', while pesantren means 'a place of the *santri* or a student'. While erstwhile madrasahs laid more emphasis on the "socialization" process within family and community, pesantren were involved in shaping environments for the coming generation and mortifying their "formative years" (Geertz, 1960). They were 'total institutions' where various 'mortifications of the self' took place, a kind of "reconstruction" which normally would not take place in open social contexts. Though pesantren used to be equated with asylums and prisons, the ground reality of IBSs is that they are growing into institutions that can produce pious modern Muslim citizens with a thirst for knowledge of subjects like Islamic theology, law, Arabic grammar, mathematics, logic, and natural sciences (Geertz, 1960). They were 'total institutions' where various 'mortifications of the self' took place, a kind of "reconstruction" which normally would not take place in open social contexts. Though pesantren used to be equated with asylums and prisons, the ground reality of IBSs is that they are growing into institutions that can produce pious modern Muslim citizens with a thirst for knowledge of subjects like Islamic theology, law, Arabic grammar, mathematics, logic, and natural sciences (Geertz, 1960).

In the past, pesantren were found only in Java, but today the pesantren are commonly established in other regions of Indonesia as this term has been adopted by the central government to refer to IBS (Azizah, Ningsih, & Djunaidi, 2020). The

development of pesantren is thus tremendous, showing a huge increase all over Indonesia. Table 1 shows the number of pesantren, *santri* and education units operated by pesantren in Java.

Table 1

Number of pesantren and its santri in Java by 2020

No	Province	Number of pesantren	Education unit	Santri staying in pondok	Non-staying santri
1	West Java	8343	5465	148.987	306.728
2	Banten	4579	2884	60.897	96.842
3	DKI Jakarta	102	28	17.355	6.568
4	Central Java	3787	1992	166.605	132.269
5	East Java	4452	794	323.293	241.006
		21.263	11.163	717.137	1.500.500

Source: Ministry of Religion, 2020

The modern day pesantren are advanced form of Madrasahs as they share many common characteristics: mosque, dormitory, students (popularly called *santri*), and *kiyai* (an Islamic scholar who leads pesantren). The central place is occupied by a mosque where the students and *kiyai* pray five times a day, and do other activities that involve a large number of people, such as public lectures, collective prayers, and public preaching. The house of the *kiyai* is commonly located beside the mosque and the dormitory where the students reside (Kholifah, 2020). The modern day pesantren also commonly have class rooms and other school buildings. The teaching of Islamic texts is organized mainly after prayer times.

Based on the aforementioned facts, the hypothesis framed is as under:

H1: *The rise and growth of Pesantren have positive impact on the social status of santri.*

Pesantren as Social Agency

Since the establishment of pesantren as IBS institutions, they have become agencies that have the ability and capacity to encourage social changes and influence the lives of those they reach (Recht & Grynszpan, 2019). To understand the importance of pesantren in Indonesia, we must remember that Islamic values and traditions are an inseparable part of the Indonesian society. In turn, it enables pesantren education to directly influence people's mindset and social behavior (Mustafa et al. 2018). Since pesantren teaches and instills values and traditions that are seen as forms of authority and obedience, it can exercise social control and influence for community development (Ismail, Tahlil, Nurussalam, & Kesuma, 2020).

In pesantren, we have all the social resources, including various models, to ensure that self-practices and those of others contribute to a social change (Busyairi, 2017; Bano, 2010; Garibay, 2018). Pedagogies that emphasize human values taught by the Qur'an and Hadith (known as Hadith pedagogies) are created and fostered by pesantren, whose goals include encouraging creativity and promoting social justice (Ma'Arif, 2018). According to Abu-Nimer and Nasser (2017), IBS have come to function as institutions that serve to promote peaceful values and harmony within the community.

Pesantren have been viewed as intermediaries that help to both spread knowledge and generate progress by encouraging resources, empowering development in all areas, and developing scientific and technological advancement (Prayitno, Ngalim, Rohmadi, & Riyanto, 2018). According to Abdelnour et al., (2017), the formation of pesantren as a catalyst (agent of change) is also influenced by the support of the pesantren leader actors. Likewise, the most important actors in educational policymaking are the ulamas, whose efforts, include significant participation in making education policies (Abdelnour et al., 2017). It is vital that such actors play an active role in school initiatives, as they possess significant power and influence to help students achieve education objectives, especially by fostering positive character development and development of competencies (Parag & Janda, 2014).

IBS has been serving for years as leaders in the push for a new form of education that focuses on learning and development from a holistic perspective while also incorporating customs and values found in the local community (Abubakar, 2018). Rokhman et al. (2014) report that pesantren could shape attitudes, behaviors, and mastery of technology. In addition, pesantren act as information transfer hubs as well as molders of attitudes, character behaviors, and mastery of technology. Despite their success, however, Azizah, Ningsih, and Djunaidi (2020) identified some failures of pesantren education like failing to develop aptitude and mastery of technology, expertise in Islamic sciences and failing to transform the society as expected. This leads to the formulation of second hypothesis of this study as under:

H2: *Pesantren as social agency has positive impact on the social status of santri.*

Social Responsibility of Pesantren

A pesantren is an educational institution that is responsible for both its functions and objectives in society. Pesantren also has a social responsibility that consists of two essential components, namely theological responsibility and management responsibility. In addition to their roles as messengers of truth, spreaders of goodness, and agents of change, Supratno, Subandiyah, and Raharjo (2018) identifies the theological responsibilities seen in the role of pesantren. At the same time, management responsibility can be seen in implementing policies and decisions that benefit society. In agreement, Hedblom et al. (2019) stated that a pesantren's social responsibility is based on spiritual values aimed at maximizing Islamic teachings by ensuring that the school avoids behavior that deviates from religion so that the pesantren has a strong influence on shaping values in students' daily lives. The ukhuwah Islamiyah also recognizes pesantren as an institution that produces students

with good spiritual and spiritual capacities, and as an entity that is able to apply Islamic values in society (Zaki, Widiastuti, Yudha, Wijayanti, & Mi'raj, 2020).

As a religion-based educational institution, pesantren not only have a spiritual responsibility for practicing Islamic values and traditions, but they are also socially responsible. As a social responsibility, the Tebuireng Islamic boarding school employed helpers who offered their services in pesantren and served the needs of students. For example, they will help cook or wash clothes in exchange for meals or a small amount of money as compensation (Indriasari, Ealdryani, Manti, Hidayanti, & Mappajanci, 2019). As long as the pesantren tradition existed, the exchange of mutually-beneficial social interactions continued. Moreover, as an institution, pesantren empowered their students (Thahir, 2014). Zaki et al. (2020) which is demonstrated in the form of increased potential of students to perform tasks through various types of life skills.

In compliance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, pesantren demonstrated commitment to develop long-term sustainable resources and uphold good social values, morals and ethics (Patriadi, 2017; Fua et al., 2018). When pesantren were transformed into IBS, they emphasized Islamic values in their curricula and instructional methods, as evident in the application of curricula and instructional methods that also included texts from the Qur'an to help students understand their religion (Hussain & Read 2015; Amin et al. 2019). Another concern was to develop competence and character based on Islamic religious values and laws (Hayah, 2017). Students learnt many life skills and social etiquettes required in everyday life which included cleanliness, security, and repair of facilities. Hence, the third hypothesis of the study is framed as:

H3: *Social responsibilities of Pesantren have positive impact on the social status of santri.*

Class Mobility

Pesantren are involved in various aspects of students' development including the uplift of their social class. They provide opportunities for students to develop their life skills by developing their business skills, as explained by Isbah (2016). Considering that the majority of students are from impoverished families and have a hard time financially, pesantren enriches students by letting them take part in businesses according to their skills where the profits from the business are used to cover their education and living expenses (Isbah, 2016). Hasan (2012) believes that such a role of pesantren to raise the social levels of students has given rise to a new social class of students that adhere to Islamic values but which is separate from the traditional Muslim class.

In discussing the role IBS play in facilitating students' ability to improve their class status, Baba (2011) stated, "These institutions play a role in promoting students' skill in securing dominant national jobs." Hefner (2016) felt that religion-based education emphasized leadership training and da'wah training for students so that many of them will attain well-paying jobs and climb the social ladder. While IBS helps students master Islamic disciplines, by prepare students to explore and master Islamic science, also known as Tafqquh Fid Din, which results in da'i cadres who study religion and

give fatwas (Istikhomah, 2017), it also helps foster financial independence for the community and self-sufficiency. Pesantren thus has a notable shift in their positioning and focus on issues like economic, social, and political issues (Ma'Arif, 2018). IBS provides not only Islamic education but also social mobility (Nuha, 2016). Finally, Lazuardi et al (2017) also indicate that pesantren contributes significantly to social change, class mobility, and the emergence of democracy, work ethic, and sustainable education. Consequently, the fourth hypothesis of the study runs thus:

H4: *Class mobility also has positive impact on the social status of santri.*

Methodology

This study is to investigate the impact of rise and growth of Pesantren as social agency, social responsibilities of Pesantren and class mobility on the social status of *santri* in Indonesia. A questionnaire was adapted to collect data in this quantitative study. This study used simple random sampling to select the respondents. This research respondents were the students of Pesantren who received questionnaires by making personal visits. A total of 1100 questionnaires were distributed out of which 760 questionnaires were received after three weeks which is approximately 69.09 percent response rate.

The smart-PLS was employed in this study to examine the relations among variables and also due to a large sample size and hypotheses testing as the purpose of the study (Hair Jr, Babin, & Krey, 2017). In addition, four predictors were used like rise and growth of Pesantren (RGP) with eight items, Pesantren as social agency (PSA) with six items, social responsibilities of Pesantren (SRP) with five items and class mobility (CM) with four items. Finally, the social status of santri (SSS) was taken as the predictive construct with five items. These constructs with their relations are highlighted in Figure 1.

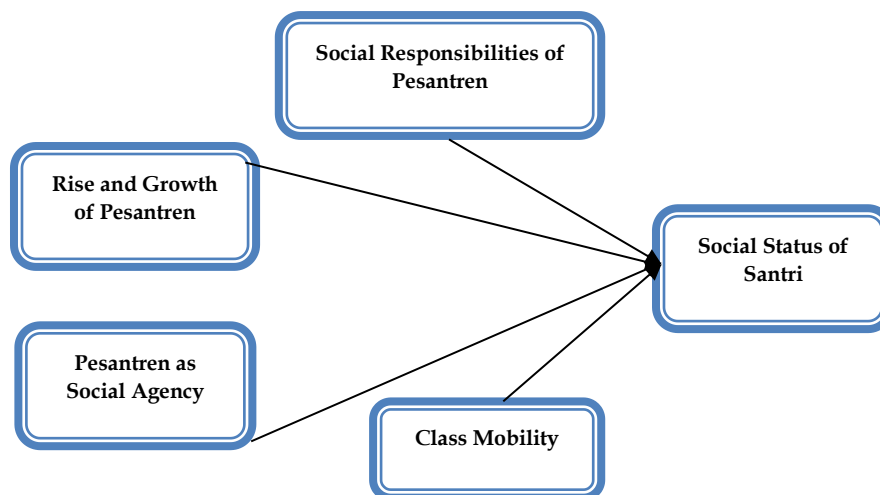


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

Results

The outcomes of this study show the relationships among the items called convergent validity. The results reveal that factor loadings along with AVE values are larger than 0.50 and Alpha and CR values are more than 0.70. These values indicate a high relationship among items. These results are mentioned in Table 2.

Table

: Convergent validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Class Mobility	CM1	0.837	0.767	0.841	0.574
	CM2	0.688			
	CM3	0.864			
	CM4	0.613			
Pesantren as Social Agency	PSA1	0.792	0.890	0.916	0.644
	PSA2	0.843			
	PSA3	0.820			
	PSA4	0.775			
	PSA5	0.788			
	PSA6	0.796			
Rise and Growth of Pesantren	RGP1	0.763	0.882	0.908	0.585
	RGP2	0.765			
	RGP3	0.815			
	RGP4	0.778			
	RGP5	0.750			
	RGP6	0.743			
	RGP8	0.736			
	Social Responsibility of Pesantren	SRP1			
SRP2		0.846			
SRP4		0.826			
SRP5		0.808			
SRP3		0.808			
Social Status of <i>Santri</i>	SSS1	0.798	0.849	0.898	0.689
	SSS2	0.840			
	SSS3	0.847			
	SSS4	0.847			
	SSS5	0.833			

The discriminant validity was also calculated to check the relationships among the variables. The results show that Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) values are lower than 0.85. These values indicate low relationship among variables. These results are mentioned in Table 3 followed by their Measurement model assessment as graphic illustration in Figure 2.

Table 3

Discriminant validity

	CM	PSA	RGP	SRP	SSS
CM					
PSA	0.502				
RGP	0.490	0.629			
SRP	0.512	0.616	0.764		
SSS	0.521	0.675	0.710	0.737	

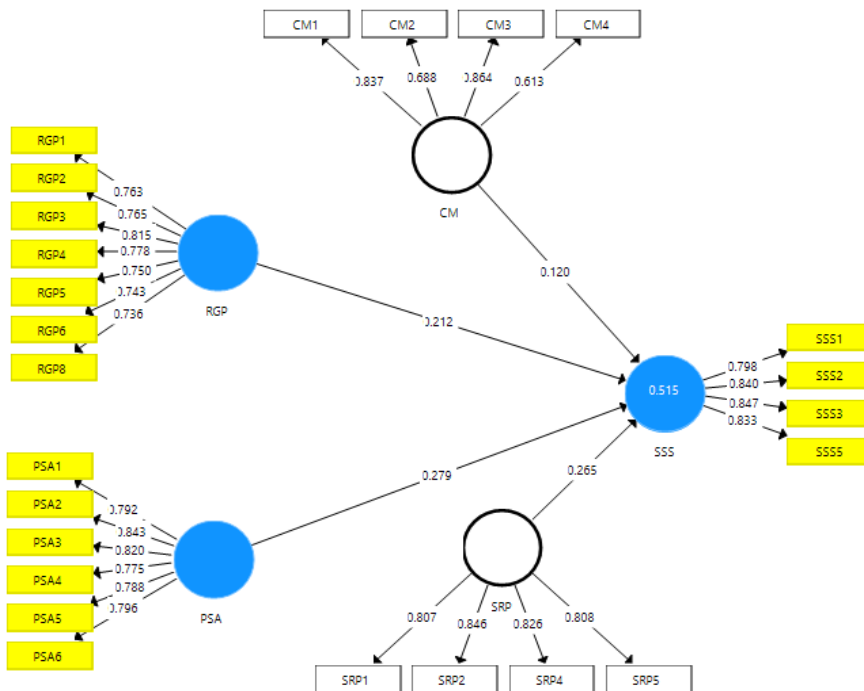


Figure 2: Measurement model assessment

The path analysis in Figure 2 shows that all the predictors such as rise and growth of Pesantren, Pesantren as social agency, social responsibilities of Pesantren and class mobility have positive association with social status of santri in Indonesia and thus H1, H2, H3 and H4 are accepted. This nexus among the constructs is shown in Table 4 followed by the Structural model assessment (Figure 3).

Table 4

Path analysis

Relationships	Beta	S.D.	T Statistics	P Values	L.L.	U.L.
CM -> SSS	0.120	0.028	4.207	0.000	0.065	0.180
PSA -> SSS	0.279	0.038	7.327	0.000	0.203	0.354
RGP -> SSS	0.212	0.043	4.966	0.000	0.133	0.297
SRP -> SSS	0.265	0.041	6.534	0.000	0.182	0.338

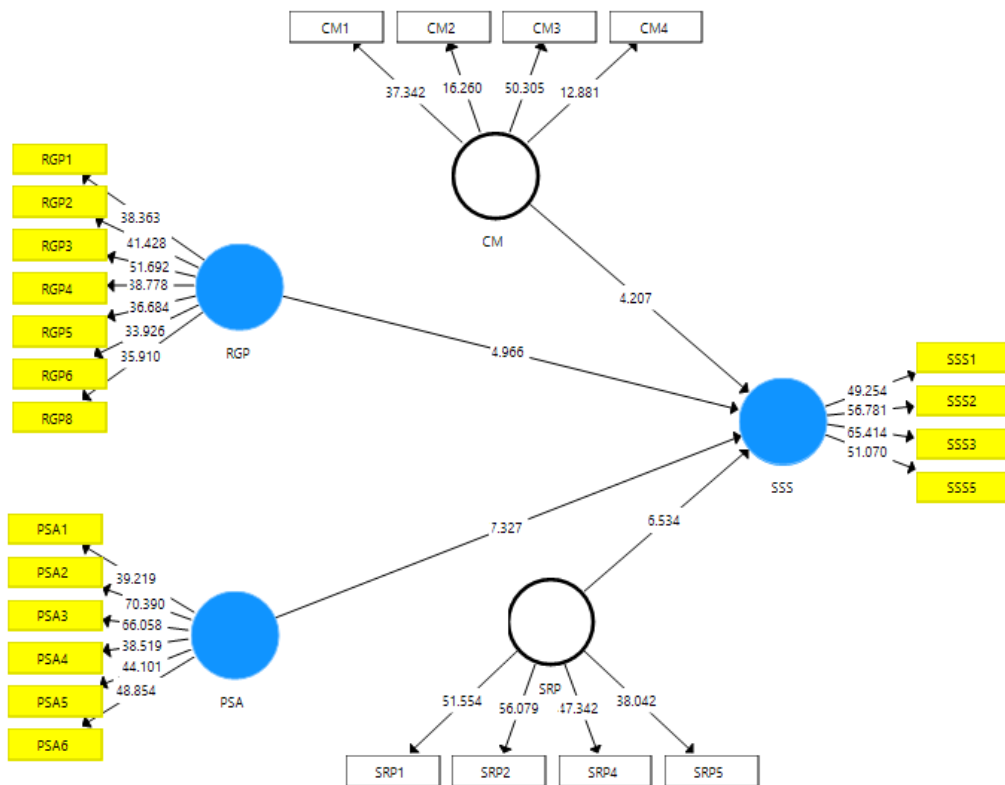


Figure 3: Structural model assessment

Discussion Conclusion and Recommendation

The study outcomes reveal the rise and growth of Pesantren and having a positive association with the social status of *santri* in Indonesia, which is evidence of the growth of the increase in the ability of the pesantren to provide strong social support to *santri*. This outcome is similar to the research outcomes of Adib and Yudhanto (2018), who also exposed the positive linkages among Islamic boarding schools and the social status of students. In addition, the outcomes of this study also revealed that Pesantren as the social agency has a positive association with the social status of *santri* in Indonesia because it increases the ability to provide social support to the *santri*. This outcome matches with the research outcomes of Puad and Ashton (2020), who also exposed the positive linkage among Islamic boarding schools as the social agency and social status of students. Moreover, the results also indicated the responsibilities of Pesantren has a positive nexus with the social status of *santri*, which is in line with the output of Rahman, Welis, and Indika (2020), who also found a high responsible Islamic boarding school contributing to the rise in the social status of *santri*. Finally, the results have also exposed how class mobility also increases the social status of *santri*, which is similar to the findings of Lopes Cardozo and Srimulyani (2018), who also investigated the role of class mobility in the increased growth of social status of students. Thus, the results exposed that pesantren have established themselves as agents in the class struggle. A pesantren is more than a place for children to learn about religion and/or grow. It has indeed become a center for combating "poverty" or "deprivation" and transforming these negative characteristics into something good. Though a majority of *santri* (students) belonged to above-average families whose parents were farmers, small traders, or village officials, there were also a few *santri* who belonged to broken home families; who were neglected children, destitute or lost, or whose families were no longer able to care for and educate them. In this latter case, parents only viewed pesantren as capable of restoring their children to a straight and moral path, and help them get rid of their curse of poverty. These outcomes are similar to the result of Syamsul (2018) who also investigated that the existence of pesantren and its growth will also improve the student social status. This highlights the significance of pesantren in a Muslim society as a source of class upliftment. Facts reveal that pesantren students who were from lower or struggling-class families have greatly benefited from the positive motivation and nurturing models that they have received from pesantren. Parents believe that these pesantren really played the role of IBS to prepare their children for success in modern society. This motivated them to choose the path of education though IBS for their children.

Conclusion and Implications

The findings of this study prove that IBS, outside their traditional roles in religious, social, and moral context, are still found to be capable of acting as social agents in order to increase the social class of *santri* who serve the *kiyais* at pesantren. *Santris* who belong to poor and disadvantaged families are delegated to *kiyai* as students, who dedicate themselves to the cause of learning knowledge from the respective *kiyais*. The findings show that in due course, the *santri* ends up having social, intellectual, and

spiritual competence needed by society. After the completion of his education at the IBS, the *santri* returns to society where he is eligible to hold a higher social status either as a *kiyai*, a religious leader, a lecturer or a government official. This success entirely depends upon the role played by the *kiyai* at the IBS and the process of education that takes place. Students from the lower classes are rightly served by pesantrens, thanks to the *kiyai* who serve as social agents. This eventually increases public recognition of all pesantrens.

To conclude, since this study was not based on a specific pesantren nor highlights the role of any specific pesantren, it is difficult to comment on the process that takes place in a pesantren. However, the primary data from the sample of the study and the secondary documentation provided sufficient information to recognize the role of pesantren as social change agents. However, the study felt various shortcomings of time and small sample size that prevented an in-depth understanding of the subject. In order to overcome these limitations, further research is recommended with larger sample size and a bigger regional coverage. This study has guided the policymakers who should develop the policies related to strengthen the role of pesantren in the society that could improve the social status of the students. This study also suggested to the relevant authorities of the pesantren that they should improve the positive growth of the pesantren by implementing effective policies that could increase the social status of the students.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has some directions for future study that is the limitations of the present study. This study has taken only four predictors such as the rise and growth of Pesantren, Pesantren as the social agency, and social responsibilities of Pesantren and class mobility and ignored the other relevant and important factors that could also enhance the social status of the students. Therefore, the current article suggested to the upcoming researchers that they should add those factors that are important for improving the social status of students and ignore by the present study. In addition, the present study also ignored the mediating and moderating impact in the research model and recommended that future studies should add mediation or moderation in their studies. Finally, this study is focused only on the Pesantren in Indonesia, and that is the reason for the narrow scope and suggested that future studies must add other countries in their analysis.

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