

Strategies of Islamic Boarding Schools Toward Moral Changes in the Millennial Generation

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Abstract

In today's digital era, particularly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the millennial generation is experiencing a crisis of *uswah hasanah* (exemplary role models). After nearly three years of being accustomed to online learning, students' morals and habits have gradually shifted away from religious norms. This situation is further exacerbated by the ease of access to vulgar images and videos that deviate from Islamic teachings, worsening the future outlook of young people's religious values. When formal education fails to offer a solution for parents facing this reality, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) present an educational model that prioritizes moral development through the *salafiyah* system, where the *kyai* (Islamic scholar) serves as the central figure and role model, and the *pesantren* environment becomes the place to internalize and apply knowledge. Through this 24-hour learning method, millennial students—known as *santri*—receive constant supervision and guidance from the *kyai*, both physically (*dzahir*) and spiritually (*batin*), with the aim of shaping them into well-rounded individuals (*insan kamil*). Based on this reality, the author conducted a study to examine how significantly the presence of *pesantren* influences the morality of the millennial generation in its surrounding environment using descriptive and verifiable methods. This is exemplified by KH. Nurhusen Hidayatulloh, leader of *Pesantren Darul Muta'alimin 06 Sumber Agung*, in how he educates his students. Located in the village of *Sumber Agung*, *Way Sulan District*, *South Lampung Regency*—a community largely composed of informal laborers with low levels of education and limited religious understanding—teenagers often lack proper religious guidance from their parents. However, significant changes have been observed: community interest in religious gatherings and *dhikr* has increased, and youth are becoming more actively involved in various religious activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*Pondok Pesantren*) are educational institutions founded by individuals, foundations, Muslim community organizations, and/or society at large, which aim to instill faith and piety toward Allah SWT, nurture noble character, and uphold the values of *Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin*. These values are reflected in humility, tolerance, balance, moderation, and other noble principles of the Indonesian nation, implemented through education, Islamic preaching (*dakwah*), exemplary conduct, and community empowerment within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

To this day, *pesantren* remain the only educational institutions that have consistently preserved their identity as the strongest bastion of moral integrity. This was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when formal educational institutions—both public and private—were instructed to conduct online learning, leading to a disconnect between teachers and students in terms of physical presence and interaction.

This phenomenon has motivated the author to investigate the extent to which the presence of pesantren influences the morality of the millennial generation. Why is this important? Because the moral character of today's youth forms the foundation of the nation's future. The fate of Indonesia in the coming years depends on its youth. If the young generation is morally upright, the vision of a Golden Indonesia (Indonesia Emas) will be attainable. Conversely, if the morality of the youth deteriorates, the nation will face decline—only a matter of time before the consequences unfold.

The subject of this research is Pondok Pesantren Darul Muta'alimin 06, located in Sumberagung Village, Way Sulan District, South Lampung Regency, along with the current condition of the surrounding environment. The author has gathered relevant supporting data and will present the research findings, which will clarify whether the presence of the pesantren has had a significant positive impact on the local community—or, conversely, if it has brought about negative effects.

METHODS

The method used in this research is a qualitative method of a descriptive nature. "Qualitative research is a research method based on the philosophy of positivism, used to examine conditions of natural objects." ([Sugiyono; 2019: 9](#)).

Therefore, we will examine the extent to which:

1. The strategy of the Darul Muta'alimin 06 Islamic Boarding School in Sumber Agung in influencing the moral transformation of the millennial generation in the surrounding environment.
2. The factors that influence the success or hinder the moral education activities at the Darul Muta'alimin 06 Islamic Boarding School in Sumber Agung.

In addition, in conducting this research, we use a narrative study approach. "Narrative study is a study that focuses on narratives, stories, or descriptions of a series of events related to human experiences." ([John W. Creswell; 2019: viii](#)).

Thus, we will describe the history of the Darul Muta'alimin 06 Islamic Boarding School in Sumber Agung, the teaching methods and religious studies conducted at the boarding school and its surrounding environment, as well as the current conditions of the area around the school.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Darul Muta'alimin 06 Islamic Boarding School, Sumber Agung

- a. Definition of Islamic Boarding School (Pondok Pesantren)
According to Imam Bawani, "A *pesantren* is an Islamic educational and teaching institution that generally uses a non-classical method, where a *kiai* (Islamic scholar) teaches Islamic religious knowledge to students (*santri*) based on books written in Arabic by medieval scholars, and the students usually reside in dormitories within the *pesantren*" ([Al-Furqon; 2019: 76](#)).

According to Wardoyo, an Islamic boarding school is a comprehensive educational institution equipped with dormitories, providing advanced Islamic religious education and teaching using an individual learning system ([Suparno; 2021: 55](#)).

b. Islamic Education Methods

In Islamic education, An-Nahlawi, an expert in Islamic pedagogy, proposed educational methods based on the Qur'an and Hadith that are capable of touching the emotions. These include:

1. The *Hiwar* (dialogue) method based on the Qur'an and Hadith
2. The storytelling (*Qur'anic* and prophetic) method
3. The *Amts'al* (parable) method from the Qur'an
4. The exemplary method (*Uswah Hasanah*)
5. The habituation method
6. The reflection (*Ibrah*) and advice (*Mau'izah*) method
7. The encouragement (*Tarhib*) and discouragement (*Tarhib*) method ([Sri Minarti; 2019: 136–143](#))

c. History of Darul Muta'alimin 06 Islamic Boarding School, Sumber Agung

Darul Muta'alimin 06 Islamic Boarding School in Sumber Agung was established on November 26, 2006, and is located in Sumber Agung Village, Way Sulan Sub-district, South Lampung Regency. It was founded by KH. Nur Husein Hidayatullah and Nyai Hj. Nurjanah ([Foundation Document; 2024](#)).

According to Mr. Suwarno, a village official of Sumber Agung, the land where the pesantren stands was donated as a *waqf* (endowment) by a respected community figure, the late H. Suhemi, covering an area of 5,000 square meters ([Community Leader Interview; 2024](#)).

The name *Darul Muta'alimin 06* was adopted from the original pesantren in Tasikmalaya, West Java, as a form of connection (*wasilah*) and blessing (*tabarruk*) to its alma mater. This pesantren is affiliated with one of Indonesia's largest Islamic organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama ([Pesantren Leader Interview; 2024](#)).

d. Learning System at Darul Muta'alimin 06 Islamic Boarding School, Sumber Agung

With the passing of time and the increasing number of students from various regions across Lampung Province, Darul Muta'alimin Islamic Boarding School has adapted its educational system. Initially unstructured, the system has now become more organized.

The educational systems currently applied include:

1. Memorization of Classical Islamic Texts (*Kitab Kuning*) – Students are trained to memorize foundational texts such as *Al-Jurumiyyah*, *Al-Imrithi*, *Alfiyyah*, and *Jauharul Maknun*.
2. Lughat (Vocabulary) Interpretation System – Students interpret the classical texts taught by *kyai* and teachers, memorizing both the content and the meanings.
3. Bandungan System – A general form of group study where the *kyai* explains a text in front of all students, similar to a lecture or sermon.
4. Sima'an System – Students read and recite texts either to fellow students or directly to their teacher or parents during visitation times ([Pesantren Leader Interview; 2024](#)).

e. General Overview of Sumber Agung Village Environment

Sumber Agung Village is part of Way Sulan Sub-district, South Lampung Regency. The village is divided into 4 hamlets (*dusun*) and 15 neighborhood units (RT). The majority of the population works as farmers and gardeners. In terms of formal education, most residents have

only completed elementary or junior high school. Only about 15% have finished high school, and just 1.3% have attained higher education.

The majority of the Sumber Agung population adheres to Islam, with only 0.5% identifying with non-Islamic religions. There are 15 places of worship (mosques and prayer rooms), one elementary school, one junior high school, seven Qur'anic learning centers (TPA/TPQ), and one Islamic boarding school ([Village Archives, 2023](#)).

f. Strategies for Moral Development within the Islamic Boarding School Environment

To instill noble character (akhlaqul karimah) in the younger and millennial generations, the pesantren, in collaboration with the local village government, has implemented early educational programs through:

1. Religious education for early childhood (ages 4 to 12) within the community, conducted through TPA/TPQ at local prayer halls (mushola). This introduces children to religion early on, including learning to read Qur'anic script, understanding the basics of Islam and tawhid through Islamic songs and poetry.
2. Promoting sholawat and Barzanji recitations among Risma (Mosque Youth Organizations) to foster love for Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and emulate his character. This helps reduce teenagers' dependence on gadgets, loitering, or engaging in unproductive and religiously inappropriate social behaviors.
3. Weekly Fiqh studies every Tuesday night, using the Fathul Mu'in textbook to teach the millennial generation the proper way to worship in accordance with the Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah tradition. This has been effective in enhancing religious understanding among youth within the pesantren community.
4. Special dzikir (remembrance of God) sessions every Friday night on the Javanese calendar (Legi), aimed at deepening the youth's understanding of monotheism (tauhid) and strengthening their faith. A stronger faith leads to greater love for Allah SWT and reduces negative behaviors among the millennial generation.

g. Profile of KH. Nur Husen Hidayatullah

As the leader of the pesantren and a respected religious elder in Sumber Agung Village, KH. Nur Husen Hidayatullah is a role model for the community, both in ritual worship (ibadah mahdhah) and non-ritual religious practices (ghairu mahdhah). He is a graduate of Darul Muta'alimin Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya, West Java, where he studied from 1978 to 1992 and mastered various branches of Islamic knowledge ([Foundation Archives, 2021](#)).

2. Definition of Morality (Akhlak)

Akhlak can be understood in two ways: linguistically and terminologically. Linguistically, akhlak is derived from the Arabic language and is a verbal noun (ism masdar) of the verb akhlaqa-yukhliq-ikhlaqan (based on the morphological pattern af'ala-yuf'ilu-if'alan), which means disposition (al-sajiyah), innate nature (at-thabi'ah), habit (al-'adah), noble character (al-muru'ah), and religion (ad-din) ([Suparno, 2021: 17](#)).

Terminologically, as explained in Dairotul Ma'arif, akhlak refers to human traits that have been nurtured or cultivated. Akhlak is often equated with ethics and morality ([Sirujudin Mustofa, 2022: 20](#)).

Imam Al-Ghazali defines akhlak as an ingrained disposition in the soul from which actions arise easily and naturally, without the need for prior intellectual consideration ([M. Hafidz Khusnadin, 2021: 40](#)).

3. Definition of the Millennial Generation

The millennial generation, generally defined as individuals born between 1981 and 1996, possesses distinct characteristics compared to previous generations. One of the defining traits of this generation is their high level of connectivity through technology, especially social media. According to a report by We Are Social and Hootsuite (2022), Indonesia has over 170 million social media users, the majority of whom are millennials. This connectivity allows millennials to access information rapidly and participate more actively in political and social discourse ([Alfrid Sentosa et al., 2024: 205](#)).

Generation Y, also known as the Millennial Generation, includes those born between 1977 and 1998. In 2008, Generation Y members were between 21 and 29 years old. They have interacted with technology from an early age and frequently use instant communication tools such as email, SMS (Short Message Service), instant messaging, and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, this generation enjoys online gaming ([R. Willya Ahmad W. et al., 2019: 190](#)).

CONCLUSION

The strategies implemented by Pondok Pesantren Darul Muta'alimin Sumber Agung in fostering moral transformation among the millennial generation are particularly noteworthy and can be summarized as follows: From the above explanation, it is evident that the presence of Pondok Pesantren Darul Muta'alimin Sumber Agung has a significant impact on enhancing the religious understanding of the millennial generation. This is demonstrated through the various religious activities organized by the pesantren. The strategies employed by the pesantren to engage with millennial youth have proven to be highly effective. Gradually, these efforts are shaping a generation of youth with Islamic character and commendable morals.

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