

Social Relations Of Religious Figures With The Village Community Of Segamit, Semende Darat Ulu, Muara Enim Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the social relationships between religious leaders (kyai and santri) and the local community in Segamit Village, Semende Darat Ulu Subdistrict, Muara Enim Regency, South Sumatra. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document review at the Raudhatul Muhtad'in Islamic Boarding School. The findings reveal that the social bonds between religious figures and the surrounding community are built upon three interrelated foundations: shared religious activities, local cultural traditions, and mutual cooperation in daily life. Kyais play a dual role as spiritual authorities and informal social leaders whose guidance extends far beyond the walls of the Islamic boarding school. This study also identifies enabling factors particularly shared worship events, strong norms of mutual aid, and open channels of communication as well as inhibiting factors such as the encroachment of digital technology on direct social interaction and the Islamic boarding school's demanding internal schedule. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of how Islamic educational institutions function as pillars of community cohesion in rural Indonesia.

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Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) are Islamic educational institutions that play a vital role in shaping the character, morals, and social life of the community. In the pesantren educational system, the relationship between the kyai and the santri is a key element that is oriented not only toward the transfer of knowledge but also toward the cultivation of spiritual values, respect (ta'dzim), devotion (khidmah), and exemplary conduct. Traditionally, this relationship reflects a patron-client dynamic, in which the kyai serves as a mentor and protector, while the santri demonstrates loyalty and obedience as

part of the educational process (Andrianto, R., Haryanto, S., et al. 2025).

Social relations between religious figures and the community constitute an important dimension of rural social life because they shape patterns of interaction, social cohesion, and collective participation. Religious figures are not merely responsible for delivering religious teachings but also function as moral authorities who influence community attitudes, decision-making, conflict resolution, and social development. Their presence contributes to the formation of social trust, collective responsibility, and mutual cooperation, which remain fundamental values in Indonesian village communities. Consequently, the quality of social relations between religious leaders and the community significantly affects the sustainability of religious, educational, and social activities.

Village communities generally maintain close social interactions based on kinship, local traditions, and shared religious values. Within this social structure, religious leaders occupy a strategic position as mediators between religious norms and community practices. Community members frequently seek guidance from religious figures regarding family issues, religious rituals, education, and broader social concerns. Nevertheless, increasing educational attainment, economic transformation, and the rapid dissemination of digital information have gradually reshaped community perceptions of religious authority. These developments require religious leaders to strengthen communication, social engagement, and adaptive leadership while preserving religious values and local cultural identity.

Previous studies have predominantly examined the relationship between kyai and santri within the educational context of Islamic boarding schools or explored the managerial role of pesantren in community empowerment. Limited attention has been devoted to understanding the broader social interactions between religious figures and village communities, particularly in rural areas characterized by strong cultural traditions and evolving social dynamics. This gap highlights the need for empirical research that examines how social relations are established, maintained, and transformed within specific local contexts. Therefore, investigating the social relations of religious figures with the village community in Segamit Village, Semende Darat Ulu Subdistrict, Muara Enim Regency offers an important contribution to understanding the interaction between religious leadership and community life in contemporary rural Indonesia.

As modernization and advances in information technology have progressed, the nature of the relationship between kyai and santri has changed. Interactions that were previously hierarchical have begun to evolve into more communicative and participatory ones without losing the core values of the pesantren (Pranata, 2025). These changes have also influenced the relationship between the pesantren and the community, given that the kyai serves not only as an educator but also as a religious figure, a social leader, and a point of reference for the community on various life issues.

At the Raudhatul Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School in Segamit Village, Semende Darat Ulu Subdistrict, social relations among religious leaders, students, and the community are shaped by local sociocultural conditions. These relationships have the potential to strengthen social solidarity, trust, and religious values, but they also face challenges due to social change, the development of digital media, and the community's rising expectations regarding the role of Islamic boarding schools (Khofi, M. B., & Furqon, M. 2024).

Given these circumstances, this study is important for analyzing the nature of social relations among kyai, santri, and the community at the Raudhatul Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School, as well as the factors that influence these relationships. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of social relations within the boarding school environment as both an educational institution and a religious-social institution amid societal changes.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the nature of social relations among kyai, santri, and the community at the Raudhatul Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School in Segamit Village, Semende Darat Ulu Subdistrict. Qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena from the informants' perspectives within their natural context (Sugiyono, 2022).

The research was conducted at the Raudhatul Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School in Segamit Village, Semende Darat Ulu Subdistrict. Research informants were selected using purposive sampling, which involves selecting informants who are considered knowledgeable about and directly involved in social relations within the boarding school community. The informants consisted of religious leaders, boarding school administrators, students, community leaders, and residents living near the boarding school.

The research data consists of primary data obtained through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, as well as secondary data sourced from books, scientific journals, pesantren documents, and other literature relevant to the study.

Data collection methods included (1) observation, to examine social interactions among kyai, santri, and the community, (2) semi-structured interviews, to obtain in-depth information from informants regarding the nature, factors, and impact of social relationships, and (3) documentation, in the form of archives, photographs, pesantren profiles, and other supporting documents.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification. Data validity was tested through source triangulation and methodological triangulation that is, by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure that the data were valid and reliable.

Results and Discussion

1. The Nature of Social Relationships Among Kyai, Santri, and the Community at the Raudhatul Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School

The research findings indicate that social relations among the kyai, santri, and the community at the Raudhatul Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School in Segamit Village are harmoniously fostered through religious interactions, social communication, cooperation, and participation in various community activities. These relations not only exist within the boarding school but also extend into the wider community, thereby fostering mutually supportive relationships.

Based on an interview with KH. Maftuhul Fuad, the head of the Islamic boarding school, the relationship between the boarding school and the community is going well. The community actively participates in religious study sessions, Yasinan gatherings, and other religious activities, while the students help with community social activities such as community service projects and village events. This demonstrates that the interaction between the boarding school and the community is reciprocal, fostering a family-like bond.

The research findings also indicate that the relationship between the kyai and the santri is not merely that of educator and student, but has evolved into one of spiritual and moral guidance. The kyai serves as an educator, mentor, and role model for the santri. Conversely,

santri demonstrate respect (ta'dzim), obedience (tawadhu'), and devotion (khidmah) toward the kyai as part of the pesantren educational tradition.

The involvement of students in various community activities such as religious study sessions, community service, celebrations of major Islamic holidays, and other social activities demonstrates that Islamic boarding schools do not limit students' social activities to the school's internal environment. Instead, students become an integral part of community life, and as a result, Islamic boarding schools are accepted as both social institutions and religious educational institutions.

The findings show that the social relationships formed are associative in nature, as they foster cooperation, unity, and mutual assistance. According to Soerjono Soekanto (2021), social relationships are formed when there is continuous social contact and communication. This is evident in the relationships between kyai, santri, and the community, which are built through intensive communication during various religious and social activities.

Furthermore, the findings of this study also support the patron-client relationship theory, which explains that the relationship between patron and client is based on mutual exchange. In the context of pesantren, the kyai acts as a patron who provides education, protection, and spiritual guidance, while the santri offer respect, loyalty, and obedience as a form of social reciprocity (Andrianto, R., Haryanto, S., et al., 2025). This relationship is not exploitative but develops into one grounded in religious values and a sense of family.

The findings of this study indicate that social relationships between kyai, santri, and the community are built through religious interactions, exemplary behavior, and participation in social activities. These results are consistent with Hakim and Arif (2025), who explain that the relationship between kyai and santri in the pesantren environment is built on the basis of Islamic ethical values, devotion, and respect, thereby creating strong social bonds. Research by Hafidh, Kadarsah, and Nurdin (2025) also indicates that the kyai's interpersonal role as an educator, mentor, and protector of the community is a key factor in fostering harmonious relationships within the pesantren environment. Furthermore, the research by Pranata and Laksono (2025) on the social structure of Islamic boarding schools explains that the relationship between the kyai and the santri forms a social system that serves to maintain the stability of the boarding school's values, norms, and culture. Thus, the findings of this study reinforce the notion that social relations at the Raudhatul Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School are not only educational in nature but also serve as social capital that strengthens community integration.

2. Factors Affecting Social Relations Among Kyai, Santri, and the Community

The results of the study show that social relations among kyai, santri, and the community are influenced by several factors, namely religious factors, local culture, the community's socioeconomic conditions, and the process of modernization.

Religious factors play the most dominant role in shaping social relationships. Various activities such as regular religious study sessions, Yasinan gatherings, religious lectures, celebrations of major Islamic holidays, and communal worship serve as a means of interaction between the pesantren and the community. The frequency of these gatherings fosters mutual trust, improves communication, and strengthens Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah) between the community and the pesantren.

In addition to religious factors, the local culture of the Segamit Village community also plays an important role. The strong traditions of mutual cooperation, solidarity, and mutual respect make it easy for students at the Islamic boarding school to be accepted by the

community. Students not only study at the boarding school but also participate in community activities, allowing social relationships to develop naturally.

The community's socioeconomic conditions also influence patterns of social interaction. The majority of the community works as farmers, so a culture of cooperation remains an integral part of daily life. The spirit of mutual assistance between the community and the pesantren is evident when community members participate in pesantren activities, while the students assist with village activities as well as social and religious activities.

On the other hand, advances in information technology have begun to influence the social interaction patterns of santri. The use of smartphones and social media makes it easier to access information, but it also has the potential to reduce the frequency of face-to-face communication. Therefore, the pesantren monitors the use of technology to ensure that it does not undermine the values of community that are central to pesantren culture.

These findings support the theory of symbolic interactionism proposed by George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, which states that social meaning is formed through an ongoing process of interaction. In this study, religious activities, a culture of mutual cooperation, everyday communication, and symbols of respect serve as the means through which social meaning is formed among kyai, santri, and the community.

The religious, local cultural, and communication factors identified in this study are also supported by the findings of Setiawan and Windayanti (2025), who state that Islamic boarding schools are capable of fostering social transformation in communities through religious activities and sustainable community empowerment. Research by Amiq and Untung (2025) confirms that a good relationship between Islamic boarding schools and the community is greatly influenced by communication management, collaboration with community leaders, and community involvement in boarding school programs. Meanwhile, Qotrunada et al. (2025) explain that although globalization has brought changes to social relationship patterns in pesantren, religious values remain the primary foundation for maintaining relationships between kyai, santri, and the community. The results of this study reveal a similar situation, namely an adaptation to social change without compromising the pesantren's identity as an Islamic educational institution.

3. Factors Supporting and Hindering Social Relations Among Kyai, Santri, and the Community

The research findings indicate that there are several factors that either support or hinder social relations among kyai, santri, and the community at the Raudhatul Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School.

The main supporting factors include religious activities, the development of students' moral character, a culture of mutual cooperation, and open communication between the pesantren and the community. Religious activities serve as a meeting space that strengthens social ties because they involve all segments of the community. The moral education implemented by the pesantren also shapes the students' character, fostering politeness, friendliness, and the ability to maintain good relations with the community.

The culture of mutual cooperation, which is still upheld by the people of Segamit Village, strengthens the partnership between the Islamic boarding school and the community. In addition, open communication through deliberation serves as a mechanism for resolving various issues, thereby minimizing conflict.

On the other hand, there are several obstacles, namely the development of digital technology, the students busy schedules at the pesantren, and differences of opinion regarding certain community activities. Excessive use of social media has led some students

to interact more through digital media than in person. Meanwhile, the pesantren's fairly packed schedule limits students' opportunities to participate in community activities.

Nevertheless, these obstacles did not escalate into a protracted conflict thanks to good communication between the Islamic boarding school and the community. Any differences were resolved through deliberation, ensuring that social relations remained harmonious.

The findings of this study are consistent with Emile Durkheim's theory of social solidarity, which explains that shared values and collective activities can strengthen social integration within a community. Religious activities, mutual aid, and intensive communication constitute forms of mechanical solidarity that remain strong and thriving in the community of Segamit Village. Furthermore, these findings are also consistent with Pranata (2025) research, which states that the ability of Islamic boarding schools to maintain communication with the community is a crucial factor in sustaining their existence amid social change.

Supporting factors such as religious activities, open communication, and a culture of mutual cooperation demonstrate that social capital remains a key strength in maintaining relationships between pesantren and the community. These findings align with Milah's (2025) research, which explains that pesantren's involvement in the community's social and economic activities can enhance trust and strengthen the relationship between the pesantren institution and the surrounding community. Syahputra's (2025) research also indicates that kyai leadership that adapts to the changing times is a crucial factor in maintaining harmonious relationships with both students and the community. On the other hand, research by Qotrunada et al. (2025) reveals that modernization and technological advancements pose new challenges for traditional pesantren because they influence patterns of communication and social interaction. These findings are consistent with the results of this study, which show that the use of digital media can reduce the intensity of face-to-face interaction, although its impact can still be minimized through guidance and supervision by the pesantren.

Overall, the research findings indicate that social relations among the kyai, santri, and the community at the Raudhatul Muhtadin Islamic Boarding School are built on the foundation of religious values, local culture, cooperation, and harmonious communication. The boarding school serves not only as an Islamic educational institution but also as a social institution that plays a role in strengthening social cohesion within the Segamit Village community.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the social relationships between the kyai, santri, and the community at the Raudhatul Muhtadi'in Islamic Boarding School in Segamit Village, Semende Darat Ulu Subdistrict, are harmoniously fostered through religious interactions, communication, cooperation, and participation in various social and community activities. The kyai serves not only as an educator but also as a spiritual guide, social leader, and role model for both the santri and the community. The relationships that have been established are based on Islamic values, respect (ta'dzim), service (khidmah), and a culture of kinship that strengthens social cohesion between the pesantren and the community. These social relationships are influenced by religious factors, local culture, the community's socioeconomic conditions, and the progression of modernization. Religious activities and the culture of mutual cooperation are the primary factors that strengthen the bonds between the pesantren and the community, while advancements in information technology have brought about changes in the patterns of communication and social interaction among santri. Factors that support these social relationships include moral guidance, effective communication, and community involvement in pesantren activities.

Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include the influence of modernization, excessive use of technology, the busy schedule of pesantren activities, and differing viewpoints regarding certain social activities. Nevertheless, these various obstacles can be overcome through effective communication, deliberation, and good cooperation, ensuring that social relations between kyai, santri, and the community remain harmonious.

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