



## **Pesantren as Convalescence of Children's Mental Health: A Case Study at The Asy-Syarifiy Islamic Eco-Boarding School Lumajang, East Java, Indonesia**

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**Abstrak:** The lockdown of Covid-19 has brought many significant changes to human routines in daily life, including for children, although now it has entered the endemic phase. The activities of children who usually go to school and play are very limited due to the lockdown so their activities are only limited at home which brings changes to the psychological state and mental health of children, such as excessive saturation, and gadget addiction. However, changes in children's mental health during the pandemic did not seem to occur much in children studying at pesantren, because teaching and learning activities at pesantren continued to run as usual, because despite the lockdown every day they still interacted with the same people. This article is descriptive qualitative research with a socio-religious approach that examines the role of pesantren in Lumajang named Asy-Syarifiy to heal mental disorders in children, and how the education system relates to the mental health of students. Data collection was carried out by involving observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews. This research found, first, some parents sent their children to the Asy-Syarifiy to deepen their religious knowledge while at the same time healing children who were stressed due to the pandemic. Second, outdoor learning methods and an eco-pesantren concept can reduce children's stress.

Keywords: *Pesantren, Mental-Health, Children, Pandemic, Endemic*

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### **Introduction**

Since the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) swept across the world, prompting a very drastic change in self-regulation as a social being. In March 2020, WHO declared that COVID-19 had reached a pandemic status, putting the world on maximum alert and growing and evolving to dimensions that have yet to be measured. World Health Organization (WHO), (2020) positive with any symptoms (Suryani, 2020). The disease causes the application of actions or behaviors that limit freedom of activity where medical equipment and personal protection are not adequate. In addition to these factors, increased financial losses will contribute to widespread emotional distress and an increased risk of psychiatric disorders (Riska and Aminah, 2021).

Various efforts have been made by the government to break the chain of the spread of this virus, including by issuing Government Regulation Number 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions in the Context of Accelerating the Handling of Covid-19 which resulted in the restriction of various activities including schools. Meanwhile, Learning from Home (BDR) activities were officially issued through the Circular Letter of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 36962/MPK.A/HK/2020 regarding online learning and working from home to prevent the spread of Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) (kemendikbud, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disastrous impact on the world of children. In addition to social access with friends at school, as well as self-exploration with the surrounding environment (Wahidah et al, 2020). So, don't be surprised if children need a mood booster from adults (parents, teachers, and other families) to stay excited and have fun learning "at home". There are more than 2.2 billion children in the world, which is about 28% of the world's child population, who experience mental health changes (Rahmayanthi, 2021). Those aged between 10 to 19 years make up 16% of the world's population (UNICEF, 2019). COVID-19 has affected the lives of people all over the world including children and youth in an unprecedented way. Around the world, prevention from COVID-19 infection is isolation and social distancing strategies to protect against the risk of infection (Syah, 2020).

During a pandemic, all children's learning activities are shifted to online learning, where children only study at home, this causes children to become too bored, on the other hand, children can also become addicted to gadgets which affect their mental health, and some even become anti-social (Kurniati et al, 2020). However, this is not the case for many children who study in Islamic boarding schools. Most of the teaching and learning processes in Islamic boarding schools are still the same as usual and are not online because they still interact with the same people every day. One of the Asy-Syarifiy Lumajang Islamic boarding schools continues to carry out offline learning during the pandemic. Meanwhile, religiosity is often considered closely related to mental health. It is not surprising that pesantren, which are Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, are often claimed capable of strengthening the religiosity of children. So many parents enter this boarding school during a pandemic for the reason that children can still study offline and avoid screen time addicted to gadgets, especially playing games.

### **Literature Reviews**

Mental health in Islamic boarding schools, or pesantrens, has been the focus of several key studies, highlighting critical aspects that affect the psychological well-being of students. A prominent study by Duna Izfanna (2020) discusses adolescent mental health in these schools. This research revealed that emotional issues and hyperactivity/inattention are the most significant problems, with average scores of 8.88 and 8.59 respectively. It was found that female students experience more significant emotional problems (9.52) compared to male students (8.24), and students in the 3rd year of junior high school showed the highest scores (9.27). This study also highlights the contribution of pesantren education in developing positive behaviors, peer relationships, and prosocial behavior among students.

Another study conducted by Fuadi, M. A., & Arisandi, B. (2022) provides additional insights into factors influencing the mental health of students in pesantrens. The results of this study indicate the influence of external factors such as the increasing number of students with mental disorders, the impact of modernization, and the perception of pesantrens as alternative treatment centers. Internal factors, such as the knowledge and attitudes of the clerics (kiai) towards changes, were also identified as important aspects.

Overall, the existing literature demonstrates that mental health in pesantrens is influenced by a variety of factors, both internal and external. This research is crucial for understanding the complexities of mental health issues in the context of traditional Islamic

education and offers guidance for more effective interventions and support for the mental well-being of students.

## Methods

Judging from the type of data, the research used is qualitative. The type of approach used in qualitative research is a descriptive approach. The type of qualitative descriptive research used in this research is to describe the solution to existing problems based on the data. This qualitative descriptive study was to obtain information and results from the role of Islamic boarding schools in mental recovery for children during the Covid-19 pandemic. The subject of this research is the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic Boarding School which is located in Pandanwangi Village, Tempeh District, Lumajang Regency. The data collection technique is using observation and interviews. In addition, the data collection technique is documentation activities. The data collection instrument used is the human instrument or the researcher himself which functions to determine the research focus, select data source informants, collect data and analyze data and draw conclusions. Other instruments are interview guides and observation sheets.

Among the previous works of literature discussing children's mental health during a pandemic are; Tabi'in, A. (2020) "Problematika Stay At Home Pada Anak Usia Dini Di Tengah Pandemi Covid 19" which article describes the problems and challenges of parents in dealing with their children during a pandemic (tabi'in, n.d). Then Wardani and Ayriza "Analisis Kendala Orang Tua Dalam Mendampingi Anak Belajar di Rumah Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19" which explains the problems of parents when their children study online at home during a pandemic (Wardani et al, 2020). Furternore, Wulandari, H., & Purwanta, "Pencapaian Perkembangan Anak Usia Dini di Taman Kanak-kanak selama Pembelajaran Daring di Masa Pandemi Covid-19" (Wulandari, et al, 2021). From some literature that explains mental health during a pandemic, no one has discussed it concerning Islamic boarding school education.

## Result and Discussion

### Management Of Islamic Boarding Schools During A Pandemic

Islamic Boarding School Education Management is essentially a process of structuring and managing Islamic Boarding School institutions that involve human and non-human resources in mobilizing to achieve the goals of Islamic Boarding Education effectively and efficiently (Ramli, 2017). What is called "effective and efficient" is management that successfully achieves the target perfectly, quickly, and safely. While the opposite is "ineffective" which is management that does not succeed in meeting goals because there is mismanagement, then inefficient management is management that succeeds in achieving goals but through wasting or wasting both time and money (Ramli, 2017).

To overcome the downturn caused by the pandemic, the administrators of the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic Boarding School created a pesantren empowerment program, in this case, there is physical and non-physical management (Husein, 2021). Physical management includes the development of the economy during the Covid-19 pandemic. Among them is the development of vegetable farming that can still run. And that's where the money comes in from that business. That way, at least the economic condition of Asy-Syarifiy will still be

helped during this pandemic. The major vegetable farming business is part of the realization of the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic Boarding School's empowerment program.

Meanwhile, non-physical management includes Islamic Boarding School Education Curriculum and Teaching System. In the beginning, before the Pandemic teaching was normal and simple, then during the Pandemic Class hours became a bit irregular because they had to adjust, communicate and coordinate with parents, students, other teachers, parents, and school principals (Omer, 2005). However, the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic boarding school is consistent with continuing to use the old curriculum by arranging schedules by cutting or closing class hours as needed during this pandemic and also remains under the control of the kyai and teachers in the pesantren.

Furthermore, the teaching system can be interpreted as a method used to convey goals (Susanto, 2018). Most pesantren implement a teaching system that we often know, namely: sorogan, bandungan, memorization, and many others (Rahardjo, 1988). Most of the time during this pandemic, Islamic boarding schools use the online recitation method. Reciting online for students who are at home even still requires the cooperation of parents or guardians to support and assist online learning at home, at least to prepare for the needs of technology and everything related to it either after or before online learning takes place so that students can take part in online recitations with good. Also, not all teachers are fast, responsive, and can operate technology, so Islamic boarding school administrators who are mandated to manage pesantren management during this pandemic are demanded responsibly as well as teachers to help as well as support and prepare matters related to the online recitation system. Meanwhile, the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic boarding school continues to do offline learning, because all the teachers stay in the pesantren every day. This is also due to the lack of effectiveness of learning if done online, one of which is due to the lack of adequate facilities such as the lack of a projector

### **Pandemic and Mental Health During**

Mental health, defined as the absence of mental disorders, is vital for overall well-being. Common mental health issues include anxiety and a lack of peace, which can lead to more serious mental disorders (Rahmayanthi et al, n.d). Maintaining mental health involves fulfilling both external and internal needs (Rahman, 2018).

During the pandemic, notable changes in children's mental health were observed. Behavioral and emotional changes, such as irritability, increased dependency on parents, lack of focus, and regressive behaviors like thumb sucking, were more evident in children adapting to pandemic restrictions (Sejati et al, 2020). The pandemic's limitations on social activities led to frustration, nervousness, and boredom in children (Sonartra, 2021).

### **The Way Asy-Syarifiy Reduces Children's Stress**

The Regent of Lumajang established the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic Boarding School in 2020. It is the first Islamic boarding school in Lumajang District to be environmentally conscious and a pilot Islamic boarding school with the best environmental management. This is because the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic boarding school, which has been renamed Asy-Syarifiy Islamic Eco-Boarding School, cultivates a beautiful and clean environment (memorandum.Co.id, n.d). The ecologically friendly idea presented by the Asy Syrifiy Islamic Boarding School is a possibility that needs to be fostered by the government, according to Yuli Harismawati, the head of the Lumajang Regency Environmental Service.

Eco-Pesantren is an idea that will eventually be applied in other institutions (memorandum. Co.Id, N.d). So, do not be surprised if Asy-Syarifiy with the concept of an environmentally friendly boarding school is one of the few pesantren that is considered to be able to heal children's mental health, especially since the pesantren is very green, beautiful and the atmosphere is calm (Syarifah, 2022).

There are 6 students at the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic boarding school who are transfer students from non-Islamic boarding schools. Among them are santri X students from South Jakarta, who were deliberately transferred to the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic boarding school by their parents during the pandemic because since the X pandemic they have experienced unstable emotions and excessive screen time. This causes X to experience sleep disturbances and cannot be separated from the cellphone screen, especially games. Furthermore, based on information from the administrators of the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic boarding school also experienced the same thing, especially most students who previously did not study at the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic boarding school experienced extraordinary boredom during online learning, until they were addicted to gadgets because there was no other entertainment during the lockdown (Sholehuddin, 2021).

Based on information from the administrators of the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic boarding school also experienced the same thing, especially most students who previously did not study at the Asy-Syarifiy Islamic boarding school experienced extraordinary boredom during online learning, until they were addicted to gadgets because there was no other entertainment during the lockdown. Meanwhile, to deal with students who have already been affected by mental disorders such as gadget addiction, are handled specifically by pesantren psychologists and special teachers. Where the students are more invited to learn while playing, this is intended so that the students can be detached and forget their gadgets. Currently, these students can socialize and communicate with their friends, and gradually they are also not tempered because of addiction to these gadgets (Husain, 2021).

## Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental effect on both physical and mental health, particularly on vulnerable populations like children. Children who have COVID-19 infection may be more susceptible to this mental condition, thus it requires extra monitoring. Changes in emotions and behavior, depression, anxiety, insomnia, and incapacity were all discovered during the pandemic. Another concern that healthcare professionals, parents, and other caregivers need to be aware of during the COVID-19 pandemic is children's mental health. Treatment is started as soon as feasible once prevention and early diagnosis of mental illnesses in children are implemented.

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