

## CONSTRUCTING ETHICAL CRITICAL THINKING AT *PESANTREN*

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### ABSTRACT

*Santri* has been viewed as students who respect their *kiai* (teacher), parents and senior teachers, and might not able to think critically. The research aims to investigate efforts to foster students' ethical critical thinking at *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Kediri, East Java. This study uses a qualitative approach and sociological-phenomenological methods. Data obtained through observation and interviews. The research findings show that the patron-client pattern a pattern of relations between *kiai* and *santri* at *pesantren* can have both positive and negative impacts. The positive impact can be seen from the form of good relations and mutual respect between the *kiai* and students. Meanwhile, the negative impact refers to students' fatalistic attitude towards life and an uncritical scientific view. Critical education in *pesantren* has practically been implemented even though partially. Education in *pesantren* is currently required to build an integrative educational paradigm by involving all human potential in fostering a critical, creative and democratic culture in addition to upholding ethics.

Keywords: Critical Reasoning, Ethics, *Santri*

### ABSTRAK

Ada pandangan rancu terhadap cara berpikir dan sikap santri, selalu hormat kepada *kiai*, orang tua dan guru senior, dan tidak berdaya pikir kritis. Artikel ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan upaya pembinaan berpikir kritis yang beretika di kalangan santri pondok pesantren di Kediri, Jawa Timur. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode sosiologi-fenomenologi. Data diperoleh melalui observasi dan wawancara. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan, pola patron-klien di pesantren yang merupakan pola hubungan antara *kiai* dan santri dapat berdampak positif dan negatif. Dampak positif dilihat dari wujud hubungan baik dan saling menghormati antara *kiai* atau guru dan pelajar. Sementara itu, dampak negatifnya muncul sikap fatalistik terhadap kehidupan dan pandangan saintifik yang tidak kritis. Pendidikan kritis di pondok pesantren secara praktis telah dilaksanakan, walaupun belum secara meluas. Pendidikan di pondok pesantren saat ini dituntut membangun paradigma pendidikan integratif dengan melibatkan seluruh potensi manusia dalam membina budaya kritis, kreatif, dan demokratis di samping menjunjung etika.

Kata Kunci: Etika, Nalar Kritis, *Santri*

### INTRODUCTION

*Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) serves to provide Islamic values to the societies using various model, strategy, and individual approach. It has its own way to deliver Islamic teaching in a traditional manner (Das et al., 2016). Some Islamic education institutions are generally considered unfit to develop graduates who are able to make a creative contribution to the modernization process and the social transformation that the country needs. For some *pesantren* institutions, modernization is considered as "the root of the problems faced this religious education institution" (Pohl, 2006).

*Pesantren* is inseparable from its students or *santri*. Unlike students in conventional school, students at *pesantren* have their own thinking paradigm. *Santri* in general have attitude which is identical with the term *sam'an wa tho'atan* (always bowing their heads when passing by *kiai* (teacher)). Given this condition, students at *pesantren* are considered not to have critical thinking. This may happen because of the *kiai* leadership model; the authority of *kiai* at *pesantren*, the teaching methods that tend to be monotonous, and students' perception of the teachings conveyed by *kyai* as an established truth and the students' obedience to the *ustadz* (Madjid, 1997; Samsudin, 2019)

Education system in *pesantren* might not provide space for critical and creative thinking on the part of students. *Pesantren* are still considered incapable to critically and creatively appreciate their own scientific treasures. It generally adopts monologue pattern of educational methodology. In this globalized era, *pesantren* are challenged to contribute a positive impact on people around the world. Future Islamic education should be characterized by integrating international cultural capabilities like rational, dynamic and competitive relationship into their education system (Fauzi, 2006; Novianto et al., 2022)

Educational experts have expressed their concern to criticize *pesantren* education system. Majority of *pesantren* institution do not promote tradition of criticism for example to correct statements made by the *kiai*. They do not provide method of comparison between several schools of thought, encourage memorization in learning, and prefer rote method rather than reasoning. Those factors hinder students' critical power in Islamic boarding schools (Sarwenda, 2014; Fauzyyah et al., 2019) and students tend to be passive and in fact this is what has hampered their intelligence (Qomar, 2005)

The traditional methods applied in this *Pesantren* are not entirely bad or cannot be used at all (Qomar, 2005). The methods include *sorogan* and *bandongan*. *Sorogan* method has a high level of effectiveness and significance in achieving learning outcomes because this method is considered to provide opportunities for teachers to supervise, assess and guide students optimally. *Bandongan* or *wetonan* method has an impact on the intimacy between students and teachers in achieving and accelerating learning material (Wahyu, 2020). However, these two methods are rarely used by students to achieve learning goals. As a result, students could not demonstrate their critical and creative thinking because learning process is dominated by the teacher (Natsir, 2020)

Education is actually a liberating practice. Paulo Freire suggest that concept of liberation in education occurs when humans can recognize themselves, the potential that exists to gain freedom (Khoirul, 2021). Islamic education method is expected to respect students' freedom and emphasize the freedom of students to discuss, debate and conduct dialogue within the limits of politeness and respect (Adnan, 2015). Therefore, critical education in Islam highly upholds the freedom of opinion and thought of students so that they can develop the potential that Allah has bestowed upon them.

Studies on the relationship between *kiai* and student in learning process have been conducted by researchers. *Pesantren* have embraced the traditional method in learning Islamic religious material. It is very common that students at *pesantren* academic community are very submissive in their learning and they rarely express their criticism (*sami'na wa atbo'na*). Misbah, (2019) investigated the relationship between the *santri* and the *kiai* at *pesantren*. His findings revealed that students expressed high loyalty to their *kiai*. This happens because *kiai* figure, in general, is often perceived by society as a perfect person who puts forward the appearance of virtuous behavior that should be obeyed by his followers. The relationship that exists between the *kiai* and the *santri* at *pesantren* has a positive impact on the character education of the *santri*, their religious and social practices, the reverence of the *santri* and obedience to what the *kiai* commands.

Researchers have investigated the pattern of paternalism that exists between *Kiai* and *santri* at *pesantren*. Siswanto & Yulita (2018) explored the pattern of paternalism that exists between *kiai* and *santri* at *pesantren*. Their relationship is influenced by several factors that cause the patronage culture to survive. The factors include *Kiai's* charismatic leadership, spiritual foundation, the lifelong bond between *Kiai* and *santri*. Ma'arif (2010) reported that the model of the patron-client relationship between the *kiai-santri* embrace strong relationship and has implications for *santri* and society obedience to their *kiai*. Like *santri*, the society who lives with *pesantren* show their strong emotional connection with the *kiai*. This subordination culture not only marks the relationship between the *kiai* and the community but also extends to the relationship between the community and the *kiai's* family. Pratama & Yani (2018) revealed that *santri* in general has the nature of *tawadblu'* or obedient to their *kiai*. As a result, *pesantren* has developed the culture places *kiai* to have social status recognized by the community. In this type of culture, *kiai* is viewed as people who has a high level of religious knowledge. *Kiai* are highly respected obeyed by the students.

There is a scarce of literature focusing on students critical and ethical reasoning at *pesantren* in Indonesia. Some researcher have discussed students' critical reasoning. Muzamil (2014) argues that critical reasoning is an urgent matter to be implemented at *pesantren*. Critical reasoning enables students to be able to answer contemporary problems. It is expected that *santri* who are equipped with critical reasoning are able to unravel the complexities of moral problems facing the society. They may propose and offer religious solution when traditional ethical provisions are not sufficient to solve the social religious. This can happen if *santri* are skilfull in critical reasoning and they can carry out moral and critical reasoning. Harbi (2020) concludes that that the application of critical reasoning can be applied to several subjects like philosophy.

The previous studies have not investigated the dominance of ethics and the lack of critical thinking among *santri* at *pesantren*. The present study tries to investigate the dynamics of *santri* critical reasoning and their ethics of learning. It sought to explore how *pesantren* develop their students to have critical thinking skill.

## METHOD

The method used in this study is sociological-phenomenological qualitative. Therefore the data collected is mostly qualitative data, namely data presented in the form of verbal words not in the form of numbers (Creswell, 2012; Sidiq & Choiri, 2019) The focus of this research is to investigate the development of critical thnking of *santri* at *pesantren*. It collected data on how *pesantren* build students' critical thinking. This study reviews existing ideas, treatments, and or situations, especially regarding the dynamics of students' critical reasoning and learning ethics (Krippendorff, 2019; Fadli, 2021). The present study took place at *pesantren* in Kediri as one of the cities that labels itself as a *santri* city in East Java. Kediri was chosen because the city serves as the repository for *kiai* with more than 250 *pesantren*. It is makes Kediri a more varied place to collect the data. The research is carried out intensively, in detail and in depth on an organization or phenomenon that occurs regarding the dynamics of students' critical thinking and learning ethics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigates the application of critical thinking for *santri* at *pesantren*. The data collected will be described in this section. There are four categories made regarding the findings of the present study.

### Developing Critical Thinking at *Pesantren*

The study found that students' critical thinking skills are developed through learning material in the subject *bahsul masâil*. The learning activities have some patterns. Students in one group will explain the contents of the book. This learning activity boosts their understanding sharpens their reasoning power to process language and learning material. After presentation, students hold discussion. The stage serves as a medium to complement each other in their effort to understand and discuss the topic. They exchange ideas and understand each other. The subject facilitates *santri* at *pesantren* to answer actual and factual problems in the society. *Pesantren* caters program *Lajnah Bahsul Masâil* which has at least five levels. The levels include: deliberation based on the book *Al-Mahalli*, *Fathul Mu'in*, and *Fathul Qarib*; general *Bahsul Masâil*, and tsanawiyah and aliyah class levels; *Bahsul Masâil pesantren*; sending delegates to various *Bahsul Masâil* activities; publish the results of deliberations and *Bahsul Masâil*. As a quality assurance, *pesantren* selects *santri* who are not only good at reading *kitab kuning* but also skilful in critical thinking. *Pesantren* has adjusted the class level and is applied to the *bahtsul masail* activities which are held every week. *Pesantren* requires every student who passes aliyah to write a chapter from *kitab kuning* to develop scientific literacy. *Lajnah Bahsul Masâil* pondok *pesantren* with its main programs namely *sorogan*, deliberation, and *bahsul masail* can function as a venue for forging the students skills, creativity and intellectual qualities, cultivating a critical and innovative spirit towards various disciplines of the religious sciences, especially *fiqh*. *Bahsul Masâil* can be prepared early on by qualified cadres to accommodate the various differences of thought that are developing among the *ummah*.

There are several criteria to meet critical thinking skill. Beyer (1990) offers standards of good thinking from a philosophical perspective which can be used to develop students' thinking. First, reasoning. It used to obtain or conclude information obtained systematically based on logical principles. It serves as a demonstration or to find out the validity of a claim or claim. To achieve this, reasons are presented in the form of arguments or a series of statements. Arguments have several levels from simple to complex which are; argument recognition, argument analysis, argument evaluation, argument making. Second, critical judgment. This involves the structure and skills of critical thinking and has a tendency to evaluate objectively rather than blindly accept a particular knowledge. Third, criteria to produce quality thinking in finding the truth. The involves determining the accuracy of the arguments and reasons presented based on logical criteria. Fourth, point of view. It refers to the ability to not only see from one side or element but also see other possibilities that can be considered for making decisions regarding a particular case. Fifth, dialogue. It can be applied to by asking and answering problems. Sixth, character (dispositions). Some philosophers assert that critical thinking does not only speak or involves techniques, skills and procedures alone, but also involves mental devices (emotions and feelings) as a distinction or out of habit the ways other people act (Beyer, 1990).

Critical thinking is not easy to understand and define. It has the concept to digest and determine a definition of criteria that can be used as a common reference (Moon, 2007). It has the richness of the concept (Belecina & Ocampo, 2018). Critical thinking has wide differences in assessment at every level of the community. It can be applied in general to critical thinkers, even between teacher and teacher, and student and student (Moon, 2007). Critical thinking can be used in every day activity. Cottrell (2005) states that almost every day we need to use basic critical thinking skills to avoid acting wrong. Critical thinking is a disciplined intellectual process to design concepts in evaluating information as a guide for action (Utami et al., 2017). Thinking is a combination of cognitive and mental activities to produce a decision (Cottrell, 2005) and s a process that is accepted by reason and fosters trust (Bariroh & Triyanto, 2022).

Freire (2005) expresses criticism of the Concept of Bank-Style Education. Within this condition, students will only be able to memorize what the teacher tells them. This method is what Freire calls bank-style education. Pupils are considered as empty glasses and must be filled completely. Students lack creativity because they are not accustomed and trained to use their brains to create something new. Freire sequenced the bank-style educational process as follows: (1) teachers teach, students are taught; (2) the teacher knows everything, the student knows nothing; the teacher thinks, the student thinks; (4) teachers tell stories, students listen to stories; (5) the teacher determines the rules, the students are governed; (6) the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, the student agrees; (7) the teacher acts, the student imagines himself acting through the teacher's actions; (8) the teacher chooses the material and content of the lesson, the student (without being asked for his opinion) adapts to the lesson; (9) the teacher confuses the authority of science and the authority of his office, which he does to impede the freedom of the student; and (10) teachers are subjects in the learning process, students are mere objects (Freire, 2005; Bahri, 2019).

Freire (2005) argues that teachers who use bank-style education as a way of teaching students have made a process of dehumanizing their students. To change this kind of educational style, teachers need to initiate communication that assumes that students are also human. Teachers need to change the paradigm "the dichotomy between humans and the world: by assuming that humans exist solely in the world, not with the world or other people, humans are spectators and not creators". To solve this problem, Freire found a new formulation in his educational philosophy, which he called "education for the oppressed". Then a new purpose of education was born, namely education as a practice of liberation. Freire promotes the praxis of reflection and action (Freire, 2005).

Thinking is one of the characteristics of humans that distinguishes them from animals. Animals have awareness but are limited only to the level of instinct while humans have the awareness to think and have varied intelligence and some are even above average (genius). Critical thinking can be distinguished between a psychological symptom and a philosophical principle. Elaine Johnson (2002) argues that critical thinking can be reflected on the thinking process. Specifically critical thinking can also be defined with the ability to evaluate systematically. In addition, a directed and clear process in mental activities such as solving problems, making decisions, analyzing assumptions, conducting scientific research and so on (Jonhson, 2002). Critical thinking refers to an intellectual discipline which is characterized by active and skilful process in conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing or evaluating information gathered from experience, observation, reflection reasoning, and communication as a guide for belief or action (Nugraha et al., 2017).

Critical thinking is always associated with creative thinking. Creative thinking is required to solve problems because problems will not be solved properly without the ability to think creatively to find solutions. Johnson (2002) views creative thinking as a mental activity that fosters original ideas and new understandings. Therefore, the ability to think critically and creatively can enable students to solve problems in a systematic and organized manner with original and innovative solutions (Jonhson, 2002).

In educational theory, critical pedagogy has come into existence to deal with the challenges of the civilization. It is the awareness of human strengths in thinking that gives birth to critical pedagogy. Even though it was first set against the backdrop of various world problems and rebellions by people seeking freedom from oppressed regimes or human conditions (Freire, 2005). Compared to other educational theories, critical pedagogy is still in its infancy and was pioneered by Immanuel Kant. The philosopher is famous for his masterpiece *The Critique of Pure Reason*. However, critical pedagogic thoughts only received

a wide response from the public when Paulo Freire's book was published in the 1970s entitled 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

Critical pedagogy is a response to the problems in education. In the 21st century, the process of globalization and the rapid development of technology and science may accelerate the process of dehumanization. It is necessary to suppress dehumanization caused by the assimilation of global culture without boundaries, political issues, economics and so on. Transformative critical education is considered to be able to reduce social problems, democracy, emancipation, hegemony, ideology, and other global problems that often trigger disharmony in the world community (Freire, 2005).

Critical education is often referred to liberation education. The concept elaborates both Freire's concept of *consientizacao* (consciousness) and the concept of Islamic education. Critical education can be an alternative for the education system in Islamic educational institutions today especially *pesantren*. In the concept of liberation or transformative pedagogy, learning refers to interaction activities between teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. In addition, learning is intended to dismantle all forms of hidden cultural awareness as an effort to generate new cultural awareness. Education should give birth to intelligent generations who have the ability to think in depth (analytical or critical), creative, egalitarian, noble character, and democratic attitude so that they can become human agency or creative persona (Kamal & Nata, 2017).

### **Relationship between *Kiai's* and *Santri* at *Pesantren***

The study found that *santri* at *pesantren* exhibit the traditions to respect *kiai* and the family. *Santri* demonstrate good attitude (*adab*) towards *kiai*. The environment of *pesantren* is also very supportive in the formation *adab* to *kiai*. *Santri* at *pesantren* receive not only learning material from *traditional book* (*turâs book*) but also examples from *kiai* in their daily life. *Kiai* demonstrates good attitude both in words and action that serve as an example to follow by the *santri*. The relationship between the *kiai* and *santri* takes various forms. *Kiai* is positioned not only as a teacher but also as a spiritual educator for the *santri*. The type of relationship supports *santri* to carry out the mission of Islamic *da'wah*, spreading Islam that is blessed *rahmatan li al-âlamîn*. In this relationship, *santri* receive instruction on faith, *adab* (etiquette), religious arguments so that they are ready to face the ups and downs of world life. The relationship between the *kiai* and the *santri* does not stop there. A *kiai* will be a protector for *santri*. On the one hand, *santri* work together to provide service for *kiai*. On the other hand, *kiai* is involved as a primary consideration for *santri* in their very personal matters. *Santri* usually ask *kiai* to guide them for a decision to choose a job, the decision to choose a future wife, determine the name of the child. *Santri* usually come to their *kiai* to seek for a solution to their problems in life. Therefore, the relationship between *kiai* and *santri* is no longer limited to students and teachers. However, it is transformed more into an 'inner ideological' relationship that implements the forms and values of long-life education. In the friendly relations that they build and care for, there is a constant spirit of learning from one another, transformation of values, transformation of culture and religious traditions.

The relationship between *santri* and *kiai* in the *pesantren* shows high loyalty. This occurs because *kiai* figure, in general, is often perceived by society as a perfect person who puts forward the appearance of virtuous behavior that should be followed by his followers. The pattern of the relationship between the *kiai* and the *santri* can be categorized as a dialectical relationship. Dialectical relationship refers to a relationship in which two parties mutually influence each other. The interaction of the two parties produces other results from the form of the two actions of the two parties. One of the uniqueness of the *pesantren* tradition is that the relationship between the *kiai* and the *santri* is so strong and sacred. The relationship between students and *kiai* is marked by full of obedience, sincerity and respect of *santri* for the

high charisma of the *kiai*. The pattern of the relationship between the *kiai* and the *santri* is related to the leadership *kiai* at *pesantren*. In this case, *kiai* and *santri* who are united at *pesantren* develop their own relationship patterns. *Kiai* leads at *pesantren* and *kiai* leadership style builds the pattern of relationship between *kiai* and *santri* (Misbah, 2019).

The relationship pattern between the *kiai* and his students in the *pesantren* can be divided into two parts. *First*, the relationship views the *kiai* or teacher as someone who absolutely must be respected. *Kiai* might be considered to have supernatural powers that can bring luck (blessings) or others to *santri*. In this relationship pattern, *santri* fear if he is sworn by *kiai* that his knowledge will not be useful. Therefore, *santri* try to show their obedience to *kiai* so that their knowledge is useful. They try their best to avoid attitudes that can invite the curse of the *kiai*. The feeling of respect and obedience of the *santri* to the *kiai* is absolute and cannot be broken. In addition, respect to *kiai* must be shown in all aspects of *santri* life. *Santri* should not forget their *kiai*. To forget *kiai* may bring *santri* a big disgrace. *Santri* may face the threat to lose the blessing of *kiai*. In this case, *santri* try to implement good attitude toward *kiai* based on the learning material from *kitab kuning*. One way of respecting the *kiai* is not to walk in front of him, not to sit in his place, not to start a conversation except with his permission, not to talk much in front of the *kiai*, not to ask anything when he is tired, to keep time and not to knock on the door of his house or room, but have to wait until he comes out, and respecting *kiai* and his family (Fathonah et al., 2020)

*Second*, a reciprocal relationship between *kiai* and *santri*. In this type of relationship, *santri* view their *kiai* as their own father and the *kiai* considers his *santri* as a gift from God who must always be protected. When it comes to parent role, the *kiai* is a place where students complain especially if the students have problems that they cannot solve on their own. *Kiai* position himself as a parent who is considered to be able to solve problems wisely. *Kiai* expresses concern on *santri's* individual problems and social problem that occur between students (Kadir, 2019).

Patron-client relationship has its own explanation. The term patron comes from a Spanish expression which etymologically means 'someone' who has power, status, authority and influence. The term client means 'subordinate' or the person who is ordered and ordered. Furthermore, the pattern of patron-client relationships is an alliance of two community groups or individuals who are not equal, both in terms of status, power, and income, thus placing the client in a lower position (inferior), and the patron in a higher position (superior). Or, it can also be interpreted that a patron is a person who is in a position to help his clients. This pattern of relations in Indonesia is commonly referred to as the father son relationship where the father gathers power and influence by building a large family or extended family. The patron-client relationship itself has been going on for quite a long time. Patron-client relationship is an unequal relationship which exists individually between a community leader and a number of his followers. Furthermore, this kind of relationship is based on the exchange of services where the client's dependence on the patron is paid or reciprocated by the patron by providing protection to his client (Setiawan, 2016).

Patron-client relationship has its way to ensure its existence. In order to ensure the continuity of the patron-client relationship, the actors both superior and inferior exchange the goods or services. This exchange must be balanced. This may mean that the rewards or costs exchanged should be approximately the same in value. It can be either in a short term or long term. The two parties involved in patron-client relationship maintain the spirit to continue to ensure an adequate balance in exchange transactions. It reveals a fact that the benefits given by others must be reciprocated (Subekti & Fauzi, 2018).

At *pesantren*, patron-client relationship can be observed when dealing with the relationship between *kiai* and *santri*. In *pesantren*, the relationship between *kiai* and *santri* is marked by trust, authority, and charisma. Those values are highly appreciated at *pesantren*. The values contained in the *pesantren* contain three elements that lead to the formation of patron-client relationships (Setiawan, 2012). First, the patron-client relationship is based on an unequal exchange which reflects differences in status. *Santri* is positioned as a client. They receive many services from *kiai* who serves as the patron at *pesantren*. *Santri* is bound and dependent on the *kiai*. Second, the patron-client relationship is personal. The pattern of personal reciprocity between the *kiai* and the *santri* creates a sense of trust and dependence in the mechanism of the relationship. The culture of respect expressed by *santri* to the *kiai* which tends to be an individual cult. Third, the patron relationship is comprehensive, flexible and has no time limit. This patron-client relationship places the *kiai* in a high, influential, and authoritative position in front of *santri*. The patron-client relationship between *kiai* and *santri* at *pesantren* should be understood by including the setting of the atmosphere, time, and place. The setting is an effective educational process because both *kiai* and *santri* depart from the same point namely sincerity.

The charisma of *kiai* plays significant role to shape the relationship between *kiai* and *santri*. It can be a determining factor for the existence of patron-client culture at *pesantren*. The charismatic leadership of the *kiai* allows *santri* to view their *kiai* as an ideal figure (Muhakamurrohman, 2014; Amal, 2018; Ichsan, 2019). *Santri* view *kiai* as someone who is considered consistent in practicing the teachings of Islam. They believe that *kiai* as a religious figure needs to be followed. They see *kiai* as a figure whom they idolize and love. Obedience to the *kiai* sets the values that have been institutionalized in *pesantren*. It means that the obedience to *kiai* reflect *santri* personality to achieve a true Muslim. As a results, *santri* must submit to their *kiai* by obeying the rules of *pesantren* and the policies made for *santri*. *Santri* should express their high respect and obedience because they believe that to achieve knowledge from *kiai*, *santri* should respect *kiai*. This type of obedience has been taught in traditional book, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. With respect to *santri* obedience to *kiai*, the book states "Those who seek knowledge should remember that they will never gain knowledge or knowledge will be of no use, unless he respects his knowledge, and also puts his trust in it. respect to the *kiai* who taught him" (Setiawan, 2012).

Charismatic leadership may ignore democratic values. In other words, the emergence of a charismatic form of leadership may put democratic values at risk because the leadership is irrational (Siswanto & Yulita, 2018). All orders given to *santri* at *pesantren* are almost absolutely carried out as long as they do not conflict with Islamic law. Students may not realize what the implied purpose behind an order from *kiai* but they believe that *kiai's* order is correct and has a good purpose for *santri*. *Santri* are very sure that behind the *kiai* orders there is a blessing if carried out. Once *santri* tries to disobey the *kiai* orders, he is at risk to face something bad. This form of interaction closes the gap for a student to criticize let alone fight against his *kiai*.

Another factor contributing to patron-client relationship at *pesantren* is due to blessings. The relationship between *kiai* and *santri* should be seen in a spiritual perspective. *Kiai's* and *santri* relationship can be valid all the time. This is to say that the relationship last forever starting from their period of studying and after they finished studying at *pesantren*. Saying bad words to *kiai* is regarded as an insult that is not allowed. *Santri* believes that breaking this rule means *santri* want to receive something bad. To avoid bad things, *santri* must make total surrender to *kiai*. *Santri* should always obey *kiai* as long as their obedience is not contrary to Islamic law.

*Santri* view that *kiai* is a person who is close to God. They believe that *kiai* permission can bring anything to happen to *santri*. They may achieve God blessing through their *kiai*. Getting the blessing of the teacher will definitely bring *santri* to achieve the blessing of Allah. Therefore, *santri* try their best to achieve useful knowledge by achieving blessings from *kiai*. Theoretically speaking, the distribution of God blessings mentioned above is closely related to the emanation of God's light which imprints on the *kiai* and then distributes it to the *santri* (Setiawan, 2016).

### **The Dynamics of *Santri's* Critical Thinking and Ethics**

The study found that at *pesantren*, *santri* are taught about a simple life. *Santri* have their own habits to demonstrate their simple life. When leaving to recite *kitab kuning*, *santri* wear loose but polite clothes. *Santri* are required to have good morals such as not fighting among students at *pesantren* and being polite to others. *Pesantren* also always holds an annual *da'wah safari* agenda. This usually happens during Ramadhan month. The program is aimed at interacting *santri* directly with the community. After participating in the program, *santri* are trained to make papers to develop their critical reasoning. *Santri* at *pesantren* are emphasized to always have good morals with the aim of becoming a good habit. When *santri* reach their final year, *santri* are assigned the task of writing scientific papers. This assignment is usually the result of discussions on *bahsul masâ'il* studies. The learning system at *pesantren* can shape *santri's* character to become students who are independent, disciplined, responsible, honest, and foster intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence. Independence is nurtured in *santri* because they are used to taking care of themselves independently. *Santri* learn discipline when they establish worship that is carried out daily. The program and activities shape *santri's* attitude of responsibility. *Santri* learn to develop their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence studying traditional book to learn Islamic religious knowledge (*tafaqqub fi ad-dîn*).

*Pesantren* have high flexibility and show their open attitude to systems outside themselves. When it comes to matters of *aqida-shari'a*, *pesantren* have shown to consistently maintain their worldview. The open attitude of this *pesantren* is the door for the development of a critical education model to deliver for *santri*. *Pesantren* have decided positive and negative values to maintain. The positive values in the *pesantren* include activities to organize education are seen as worship to God, Good relationship and mutual respect between teacher-student, the view that learning is essentially to seek knowledge and not seek classes or diplomas, the importance of developing social solidarity (Masud, 2019; Dahlan, 2016; Qurtubi & Hudi, 2022). *Pesantren* have warned their *santri* not to commit negative values. Negative values include fatalistic attitudes to life and uncritical scientific views.

There is a need to tackle fatalistic paradigm and to develop a critical paradigm for *santri* at *pesantren*. Islamic education was experiencing a setback. One of the causes is the reduction or disappearance of the critical thinking tradition namely the philosophical tradition. At *pesantren*, critical thinking is something that has not been widely discussed, let alone implemented. This may happen because of historical factors or the method of approach used at *pesantren*. Critical thinking should be taught for *santri* at *pesantren*. If they have the ability to perform critical thinking, they can face the dynamic world they live. This is in line with the goals of education in the globalized era that is to develop critical thinking to prepare for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Santri* should be taught critical thinking at *pesantren*. They learn traditional book as their main characteristic of learning at *pesantren* (Abdullah, 2016). Critical thinking can be applied in the learning process. In the context of developing religious thought, such a study is very necessary and has a significant function. However, this kind of study must be dynamic meaning that it can be adapted to the times. The study of traditional book which has been a *pesantren* tradition according to some circles has weaknesses. First, it does not follow the

development of modern *fiqh* science. In the sense that the teaching of the *kitab kuning* in most *pesantren* tends to use books authored by old traditional scholars. Their knowledge does not rule out the possibility that they are no longer relevant to the present. In general, intellectual work revolves around textual interpretation. The dynamics of social development takes place so quickly. Unfortunately, *pesantren* only respond by drawing general conclusions from these mature laws. They then used the conclusion to answer complex social challenges. Second, *pesantren* use traditional teaching method like *sorogan* and the *bandongan* to teach traditional book (Hasibuan et al., 2018). The methods need to be supported by other methods to achieve learning outcomes.

The *fiqh* paradigm at *pesantren* needs to be reconstructed in order to accommodate the development of the phenomenon of the changing world. In the context of *fiqh* reconstruction, there are several steps that need to be taken. First, the theological revolution. Some *pesantren* believe that *fiqh* is a static and unchangeable law of God's product. This kind of belief makes *fiqh* stagnate and cannot respond to the changing world. *Fiqh* is a product of scholars who cannot be separated from the influence of the context of the times and the location of the *ulama*; Second, eliminate the dichotomy. The dichotomy of the world and the hereafter, *of fardu ain* and *fardu kifayah*, worship and *mu'amalah*, individual and social and other dichotomies. Third, cultivate a research tradition (*istiqra'*). Social life brings various legal events or phenomena and they also develop from time to time. With the increasingly swift currents of globalization, *Fiqh* as a dimension of Islamic law must be able to respond to these developments. It is necessary to conduct a research before enacting a law. Fourth, dynamics, contextualization and actualization of old concepts. The *fiqh* that has been held so far must be connected with the times. To achieve this, *fiqh* needs to be actualized and contextualized with the times. Since *fiqh* is understanding, it should be dynamic in rhythm with the pulse of the times to respond to the social problems (Hasani & Hamid, 2020).

The development of logical, rational, progressive and critical thinking is very important in the context of rebuilding Islamic civilization. In the context of the *pesantren* world, it is the *pesantren* community that must be more progressive. This is a capital for the development of civilization. The civilization of the global era refers to thought and science that have been dominated by Western civilization. Western civilization in many ways is not in accordance with the teachings of Islam which is the core of *pesantren*.

*Pesantren* should promote learning process where the focus on teacher-student interactions. It may shift the paradigm from teacher as the one learning resources. *Pesantren* can open the possibility of interacting teacher with all learning resources used in achieving the desired goals. This type of education focuses on "how to teach students" and not on "what students learn" (Hasbullah & Zainudin, 2020). Teachers can be said to have professional accountability if they are able to develop good, interesting, logical and systematic teaching preparation. They should avoid students' boredom to make them interested in paying attention to lessons. Teachers should prepare for their teaching activities. This preparation is a form of professionalism of a teacher (Pramudya et al., 2022).

In education, method can be defined as a way that must be taken to achieve a goal. Teaching and learning refer to activities that take place between teachers and students. Learning method can be interpreted as various ways or methods that must be followed. Method facilitates teaching and learning process between teachers and students to achieve a learning and educational goal (Inah, 2015).

Teachers should be aware of the importance of a concept in learning. They must know the concept to teach and deliver learning material with full awareness and responsibility. They need to take into consideration that not all students are enthusiastic about the lessons presented. In many occasions, students' absorption, concentration, and intelligence toward a

particular learning material is different. This is what requires the teacher to be creative in packaging and delivering lessons. The lesson should be as attractive as possible. Learning method can be used to create attractive lesson. Learning method can be designed to foster student curiosity about the material and learning interest (Jamin, 2018).

Teachers are expected to generate students' creativity to think and act (Sagala, 2015). Students' creativity can be applied in their life. In other words, students not only learn theory but also practice to benefit in their daily life. Students' creativity enables them to overcome all the problems they face in life. Students should understand materials/concepts/information in the learning process because their understanding greatly influences their attitudes, decisions, and ways to solve problems.

In the learning process, teachers are required to create an atmosphere that makes students actively respond to their lessons. Creating communicative conditions between students and teachers is a necessary condition to fulfill. The atmosphere provides opportunities for students to actively ask, question and propose new ideas. This kind of learning atmosphere is called *PAKEM* (*pembelajaran aktif, kreatif, efektif, dan menyenangkan*) which means active, creative, effective, and fun learning. The It will be able to grow the critical and creative power of students. In this condition, students and teachers are in a position of subjectivity. Basically, students have curiosity and like to imagine. This is a special asset to develop the critical attitude and creative thinking of students (Jannah, 2018).

### **The Concept of Critical Education in Islam**

The study found that at *pesantren* involved in this study, critical education has been carried out practically at *pesantren*. When it comes to conceptual aspect, critical education has not been achieved theoretically. A paradigm of thinking is formed which is based on everything that has existed and happened before. These values are considered correct and used as a benchmark in acting, and behaving in life at *pesantren*. The orientation of education at *pesantren* is not only sufficient in the teaching process but it should also educate, foster, and direct the formation of *santri* mental, attitudes and religious personalities. The education at *pesantren* should pay attention to the formation of *santri* character who have independence and discipline. Successful study at *pesantren* is determined not only by academic ability but also by sincere attitude, persistence, and morals. *Pesantren* have contributed to the country. It can be seen from their alumni who have succeeded in becoming national figures and they are influential in both religious and political circles. In building public trust, *pesantren* carry out several quality assurance measure. This is done to continue to increase the competitiveness of students and develop *pesantren* so that they are always in tune with the developments and needs of the times while still maintaining traditionalist culture.

Islamic education does not hinder or become a barrier for someone to be successful in the world of professional work. There is an unfair view that sees Islamic education is only for achieving the afterlife. The ultimate goal of Islamic education is inseparable from the purpose of a Muslim's life namely worshiping Allah SWT (Iswantir, 2017). Islamic education also has an educational concept that can be said to be well established although it must continue to make revisions. In terms of learning methodology, Islamic education also has a reliable learning methodology. Islamic education was very instrumental in finding learning methodologies which were then followed and developed by Europeans. Al-Ibrasyi (1996) mentioned that the lecture and dialogue method (*muhadhorob*) has been applied since classical times by Muslim scholars and this can be proven by the discovery of the methodology.

Quran has outlined the principle of education. It is very clear the command to use all the potential that has been given to humans include all aspects; cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and natural abilities. Quran has ordered humans to use all of this potential which is clearly reflected in its suras, including "the command to think (*la'allakum*

*tatafakkarun*), the command to use reason as reason (*afalaa ta'qilun*), the command to observe (*afalaa yandzuruum*), the command to understand in detail (*liyatafaqqahu*), the command to contemplate the secrets of nature or something (*afalaa yatadabbaruum*), the command to do something (*i'maluu 'ala makaanatikum*), the command to read (*iqra'*), the command to write (*'allama bilqalam*)."

Islamic philosophers have thought about and create or formulate various effective learning methods for students. Ibn Khaldun tried to formulate effective teaching and learning methods through his learning theory (*malakah* and *tadrij*). Based on this view, Ibn Khaldun reformed the teaching methods used at that time (drill and *tahfiẓ*) gave rise to a parrot and verbalistic culture. He also strongly opposes the rote method and verbalism in education because it will burden students and turn off their critical power. Walidin Ibn Khaldun has the view that students are placed as subjects rather than objects. Thus the learning orientation is student-centered (Faizah, 2022).

Improving the education system that displays the reflective dimension of an educational institution is urgently needed at this time. Various proven strategies and methods can be applied to the Indonesian education system and particularly at *pesantren*. However, every educational institution, especially teachers as the spearhead of the educational process, is still required to make creative innovations and breakthroughs to make students find meaning in their education process. When this condition is met, students can be developed to be graduates who are reliable in various fields.

The spirit of the character built by *pesantren* has implications for learning attitudes and behavior. Learning attitude is crucial for learning to succeed. This also happens to the attitude of diversity. Learning behavior and attitude contribute to *santri*

intellectual development at *pesantren*. Sincerity, obedience, patience, and gratitude to Allah are the necessary conditions of life to develop at *pesantren*. These things are factors that motivate students to be enthusiastic in worship, study Islam, and live in simplicity. Living in *pesantren* provides benefits such as: interaction between teachers and students intensively, controlling students more easily, providing simulations or stimulation of learning, and provide a good opportunity for habit.

Islamic education is the future choice and becomes a reference in developing the potential of students and the forerunner of world civilization. Professional development for educators especially in terms of critical/transformational pedagogy must also be achievable over time (Hui & Seow, 2022). Since the Law on *pesantren* has been enacted, at least there are main areas that can be developed at *pesantren* including: digital literacy, core literacy, science, information, visual, technology, multicultural awareness, and global knowledge. For this reason, the ability *santri* to learn and understand with good analytics can be improved by using a critical thinking approach (Hafidzi, 2020). Therefore, Islamic religious education must be managed professionally based on science and quality. The Islamic education system was immediately reformulated according to the dynamics of the times, market needs, and local wisdom to develop and prepare future muslim scholars (Das et al., 2016).

The global character at *pesantren* is very well known. The weakness of Islamic education comes from the community and its orthodoxy. Islamic education management must dominate the four priority domains: quality development, development of innovation and creativity, corporate network and the realization of regional autonomy (Khoiri, 2014).

*Pesantren* should apply educational management to run well. *Pesantren* should focus to develop talent, competence and skills, logic, rational analysis and spiritual development of *santri*. In traditional *pesantren*, education management is still filled with charisma and the *kiai's* authority factor. As a result, the policy is still top-down. This is the *kiai's* instructional policy. Modern *pesantren* have changed their management patterns. They have implemented

participatory management. Participatory management is one of the fundamental school-based indicators (MBS). MBS is a school management model that is very relevant to educational autonomy based on state of a democratic society (Setyaningsih, 2017). Community development is stimulated by the acceleration of science and technology. This affects the existence of *pesantren* in carrying out the educational process. There are various models and education systems in dealing with a dynamic era but in general they can be classified into two patterns. First, traditional patterns. It is still consistent in the system and learning programs with some general lessons, and modern patterns that incorporate Islamic characteristics in learning systems and programs and the characteristics of public schools that contain knowledge and technology. The collaboration of the two approaches has become a form of contemporary Islam *Pesantren*. They have shown their uniqueness and charm.

Developing students' critical thinking skills through the learning process can at least improve their basic literacy in writing and scientific thinking. The implementation of critical thinking must be carried out continuously and adapted to the development of students. Critical Thinking Skills is one of the HOTS thinking skills. It is the most powerful in addition to creative thinking and problem solving (Howard et al., 2015). A person's ability to evaluate a concept by using logical reasoning can be said to be critical thinking skills. The ability to think critically can also mean the ability to think in decision making. Based on the analysis of experts, it can be concluded that critical, reflective, systematic, and productive thinking skills are critical thinking skills that are applied in making good judgments and decisions (Ülger, 2016; Miri et al., 2007; Heong et al., 2012). One of the life skills that need to be built through the educational process is the importance of critical thinking skills. One's ability to think will affect the success of one's life because of the ability to think about what to do. Education in school-based thinking emphasizes not only the acquisition of subject matter knowledge but also the ability of students to acquire their own (self-regulated) knowledge (Deng & Gopinathan, 2016; Scott, 2018).

A person with critical thinking skills tends to identify relevant information more quickly, disclose irrelevant information and use it to find a solution or decide, and find, if necessary, relevant supporting information. Someone needs to learn critical thinking skills because these skills are useful and become provisions for life today and in the future. A person can rationally and logically reflect on receiving information and solving problems systematically with critical thinking. This means that critical thinking can improve analytical skills.

The learning process that can satisfy students' critical thinking skills cannot be carried out in a one-way learning process. One-way learning or teacher-centred learning will trigger criticism on the part of students in their approach to teaching. Students receive material from a source that tends to accept and cannot criticize it. The ability to think critically is built through extracting material from various ways at *pesantren* (Haningsih, 2008; Maharani et al., 2016). The ability to relate information to the real world is achieved by making students see real life. It is important to understand through teaching materials to inspire students' encouragement in life. The ability of teachers to connect each teaching material with real life will increase the mastery of the material by students especially in the world of elementary education level. Incorporating and using content will enhance students' development abilities.

*Pesantren* must be able to adapt and contribute to the modern developments. In addition, the Islamic educational institutions like *pesantren* must maintain their own character as the basis to build *santri* spiritual and moral morals. Building moral and spiritual help *santri* to function later in the society to maintain religious harmony in the community. *Pesantren* in the future urgently need to be reformulated. The reformulation can be in several forms and types. The form to reformulate should be ensured that it will guarantee the result to be productive in developing the graduate from *pesantren*. One system is the best choice in facing the era of

globalization. The reformulation of education at *pesantren* should take into consideration several things to ensure that the reformulation can achieve what it supposes to achieve. This change should be taken from various sources. The sources to take into consideration are: Islamic morals, traditions, and culture. The three aspects of education can be combined and integrated to achieve Islamic education concept that is able to provide and support the development of future muslim scholars (Ilyasir, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

The pattern of patron-client in *pesantren* refers to a pattern of relationship between kiai and *santri* can have both positive and negative impacts. The positive impact can be seen from the form of good relations and mutual respect between the kiai and students. Meanwhile, the negative impact is a fatalistic attitude towards life and an uncritical scientific view. Critical education at *pesantren* has practically been implemented, although not yet widely. *Pesantren* is currently required to build an integrative educational paradigm by involving all human potential in fostering a critical, creative and democratic culture in addition to upholding ethics.

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