RESPONSES OF PESANTRENS IN MADURA TOWARDS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: This study focuses on evaluating the socio-religious response of pesantren in Madura towards Covid-19 pandemic. Using qualitative research and analysis based on sociology of religion theory, this study found that pesantren in Madura present anticipatory response to curb the spread of Covid-19 by prioritizing aspects of personal safety and risk-avoiding, be it material or non-material. This responsive move is carried out by pesantren through a series of actions oriented towards protection and preservation principles. At the practical level, these principles are implemented in two approaches at once, structural and cultural. The structural approach refers to pesantren policies implementing health protocols in its vicinity, such as social and physical distancing, using hand sanitizer, temporarily stopping congregational worship activities, and postponing ceremonial religious activities that attract crowds. On the other hand, cultural approach refers to the involvement of pesantren in sounding religious calls to the general public to always abide by the health protocols and procedures for carrying out activities of worship amidst the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, Madura, pesantren, structural and cultural approach.

Introduction

The Coronavirus Disease-2019 pandemic, also known as Covid-19, has now spread to many countries across all continents.¹ This virus

Responsible for the pandemic was first discovered in China as it slowly but surely hit no less than 216 countries. In Indonesia, since the first patient was announced on March 2, 2020 until July 2, 2020, the total cases of Covid-19 had reached the count of 60,695, with mortality rate reaching 3,036, while 27,568 people declared as having recovered. The total numbers are scattered throughout 34 provinces and 418 cities in Indonesia. The spread of Covid-19 throughout all provinces in Indonesia has directly and significantly influenced many social aspects such as education, religion, government politics, and even socio-economics which is related to daily life necessities.

At this juncture, whether it is acknowledged or not, the spread of Covid-19 throughout Indonesia poses a serious threat and challenge. Indonesia’s topography as a maritime nation becomes a sociological problem that will not only escalate the spread of Covid-19, but also complicate mitigation process. Moreover, as we all understand, not every region in Indonesia has the same capability to perform mitigation, especially regions that have strong traditional cultural roots. In the context of tackling Covid-19, the cultural factor in question is the low awareness and collective commitment of the community to
adhere to health protocols.\(^9\) Whereas in regards to religious factors, challenges and problems in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic comes from stringency in religious practices.\(^{10}\) In this context, the existence of groups of people who have a habit of pitting religion against science, disregarding the role of medical knowledge or experts, technology, and the likes,\(^{11}\) in turn, becomes a major hindrance to the Covid-19 countermeasure agenda.\(^{12}\)

Sociologically, the importance of conducting a study on Covid-19 countermeasures, from a religious perspective, is based on the fact that religion enjoys a significant role and influence in building social perception, attitude, and behavior,\(^{13}\) especially among communities that fanatically uphold religious values and teachings.\(^{14}\) In Indonesia, there are many areas with such typology, one of which is the island of Madura and its surrounding islands.\(^{15}\) In this regard, it is found that the religious dimension and its symbolisms plays a significant role and function in building the religious character and identity of Madurese society, including forming their obedience in general. One of the most influential out of the myriad of entities in the religious dimension is pesantren (religious boarding school). Such is the influence of pesantren in

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\(^{13}\) Haryatmoko, Dominasi Penyb Muslihat. (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2010).


forming the system and culture of Madura that many likened pesantren to a lesser kingdom miniature that always incites total respect and recognition of the local community.\textsuperscript{16}

Based on a study conducted by Azizah, the existence of pesantren in response to Covid-19 shows two different attitudes.\textsuperscript{17} The first is closed attitude, which means that the pesantren tends not to support Covid-19 countermeasure programs, ignore health protocols issued by the government, and in some situations even pit religion and medical explanation against each other. Hilmy and Niam in their work categorize this closed attitude as a problem of anachronism, which is a cultural and religious perspectives that do not conform with the current reality as they disregard scientific and rational perspectives.\textsuperscript{18}

The second attitude is open; in the sense that they (pesantren) have similar perspective as the government in terms of the Covid-19 countermeasure agenda. In general, this group is represented by non-conservative pesantren, which are those that adhere to dynamic and moderate Islamic traditions. Included in this group are Madurese pesantren that are affiliated with the Islamic organizations NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) and SI (Sarekat Islam).

This article views the social role of pesantren in Madura through two approaches at once, i.e. structural-institutional approach and cultural-religious. Vastly differing from previous studies that examined pesantren and the Covid-19 pandemic from a broader perspective,\textsuperscript{19} this study focuses on the existence and role of pesantren, which are known to be local influential religious institutions and symbol in Madura. Apart from that, the fact that pesantren that actively support Covid-19 countermeasure agenda in Madura are dominated by pesantren based on NU and SI organization is the intriguing facet in this study that has

\textsuperscript{16} Zamakhsari Dhofier, Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982), p. 32.
never been discovered in previous studies. Moreover, there has been no research focused on the efforts of depicting the socio-religious role of pesantren in relation to the Covid-19 mitigation process in Madura thus far. Through the perspective of religious sociology, this study delves and displays various sociological elements related to the existence, role, and social behavior of pesantren community in tackling Covid-19 in Madura.

This is a field research study on the response of the socio-religious role of pesantren in the Covid-19 countermeasure process. This study is qualitative in nature. This is based on the main purpose of the research, which is to profoundly, thoroughly, and completely comprehend and explain the main research question. The research questions under discussion are regarding the existence of pesantren, their role, and their response to the Covid-19 pandemic in Madura.

This research was conducted in four major pesantren in Pamekasan Regency. They are Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Masaran, Pesantren Darul Ulum Banyuanyar, Pesantren al-Ishlah Bringin, and Pesantren as-Salafi Misdat. The selection of the four pesantren was based on the consideration of their typology as they represent three major groups of pesantrens in Madura. The first group is pesantren that are based on the Islamic organization NU which includes Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Masaran. The second group is Sarekat Islam-based pesantren represented by Pesantren Darul Ulum Banyuanyar. Last is the third group which consists conservatism-based pesantren among which is Pesantren Misdat and Pesantren al-Islah Bringin. By accommodating the three styles of the pesantren, the resultant findings will be more comprehensive, as contained therein are the complete conclusions summarized from the diverse characteristics of pesantren in Madura.

The data used in this study came from two types of data, primary data and secondary data. Primary data source include data that are obtained by the researchers through activities in the field such as observations and interviews. Observation activities were conducted by visiting the pesantren which had been designated as the research sites. To maximize the observation process in the field, the process of collecting data is not done only by visiting the research site, but also by engaging in participatory activities. In such situation, the researcher

stayed at the location of the research, performed an in-depth observation on every social symptoms and dynamics that occur there, and conducted in-depth interview with informants. Regarding interview, the process was conducted through unstructured method, while the determination of informants was based on purposive method. The purposive method was carried out through the researchers’ subjective consideration on the expertise and capability of the informants in answering the research questions. In this research, the purposive method is used to determine key informants. There are three key informants in this study, who are Rahbini, the caretaker of Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Masaran and the head of MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Ulema Council of Indonesia) Pamekasan Regency; Khalilurrahman, the First Chair of Pesantren Darul Ulum Banyuanyar; Umar Shinhaji Ali Karrar, the caretaker of Pesantren Misdat; and Ali, caretaker of Pesantren Al-Islah Bringin.

In addition to primary data, this study is also augmented by secondary data in the form of quantitative statistics. According to Moleong, quantitative data in a qualitative research supplements the primary data obtained through interviews and observations in the field. In this study, quantitative data were obtained from a number of regional governmental bodies or institutions such as regional Badan Pusat Statistik (Central Agency of Statistics) and Kementerian Agama (Ministry of Religious Affairs). Additionally, quantitative data were also obtained through the distribution of questionnaires starting from 22 to 25 March 2020 to 150 respondents who are spread across three major pesantren in Pamekasan, namely Pesantren Miftahul Ulum, Pesantren Darul Ulum, and Pesantren as-Salafi Misdat. In each pesantren, as many as 50 santri (students) were chosen whose age ranges from 16 to 34 years old with 69.8% of the population being male and 30.2% female. The respondents consist of people from communities within pesantren who are known to have a strong emotional bond with the pesantren, namely active administrators of the pesantren; santri who are active in the pesantren, both santri who stay at the dorm or those who don’t (santri kalong); alumnus santri, people who have a track record of having previously studied in the pesantren; and people within the vicinity of the pesantren.

Madura and Covid-19

Madura is an archipelago divided into four administrative regions: Bangkalan, Sampang, Pamekasan, and Sumenep. Madura, as an archipelago, has a plethora of small islands, with at least 156 in total, 48 of which are recorded to be inhabited, while the rest are not. However, just because Madura is an archipelago does not imply that its socio-geographic structure is homogeneous. This is clearly demonstrated by the diversity of the locals' social systems and structures, whether in terms of socio-religion, ecological pattern, socio-economics, or culture. This is also one of the reasons why de Jonge divided Madura into two poles in his study: west pole Madura, which included the districts of Bangkalan and Sampang, and east pole Madura, which included the districts of Pamekasan and Sumenep.\(^23\)

Apropos of Covid-19, like most regions in Indonesia in general, Madura has quite a severe Covid-19 situation. This is clearly reflected in the number of Covid-19 cases in the area which number in the thousands. The high count of Covid-19 cases in Madura has attracted the attention of many groups, it is quite regrettable considering the fact that Madura is an archipelago. With such geographic conditions, Covid-19 should be easier to control in the Madura Islands by, for example, tightening access to enter and or exit Madura, be it by land, sea, or air. Not only that, the unmaximized effort by the government in taking an early Covid-19 mitigation process in Madura, in the end, caused uncontrolled spread of Covid-19 which in turn resulted in the high number of Covid-19 cases in the area.\(^24\)

The first patient who tested positive for Covid-19 (patient zero) in Madura was not from either Bangkalan or Sampang, the two regions that are in close proximity to Surabaya even being known as the terraces of Madura that are adjacent to the island of Java. The patient actually came from Pamekasan Regency, a region on the east pole that is known as the region with higher Human Development Index (HDI) than the other three regencies.\(^25\) From the result of investigation, the


\(^{24}\) See Hannan, Azizah, and Atiya, ‘Dinamika Pesantren dalam Merespons Pandemi Covid-19 di Madura’.

patient zero was an 11-year-old child who was still in elementary school. Since the discovery of the first case in March 20, 2020 in Pamekasan, the number of patients who tested positive for Covid-19 underwent a drastic rise and spread.\(^{26}\) One by one the status of green zone in the regions of Madura faded. Based on the count, as of February 7, 2021, there were 5,004 cases with the death toll reaching 306, and recovery rate totaling 3,722 people, while the rest were still active. From the cases count, Sumenep Regency was recorded as having the highest count positive cases, with the total of cases reaching 1,551 (see Table 1).\(^ {27}\)

### Table 1. Number and Spread of Covid-19 Cases in Madura Based on Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regency</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>PUS</th>
<th>PUI</th>
<th>Recovered</th>
<th>Dead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangkalan</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1,061</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamekasan</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampang</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumenep</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>465</strong></td>
<td><strong>216</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,553</strong></td>
<td><strong>123</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The rapid spread of Covid-19 in Madura is driven by many factors, but in general it can be categorized into two major groups, namely structural factors and cultural factors. In terms of structural factors, the high number of Covid-19 cases is caused by the ineffective role and function of the government that is slow to respond and enforce early prevention efforts such as limiting population mobility, curbing of large crowds, having sufficient medical equipment supplies.\(^ {28}\) While in terms of cultural factors, the rapid spread of Covid-19 in Madura is caused by the mentality and social behavior of the locals. Apropos of this, it must be acknowledged that the high level of mobility and interregional and interprovincial movement of the people, coupled

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with the lack of awareness in adhering to health protocols, becomes a cultural factor responsible for the rapid spread of Covid-19 in Madura. In accordance with the results of field data based on a survey conducted on 150 respondents in Pamekasan, it was found that more than 60 percent of Madurese did not adhere to health protocols such as the use of masks and handsanitizers (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Compliance Level of the Population in Madura with the Health Protocols

Aside from that, a factor that is no less crucial in Covid-19 countermeasure in Madura is the active involvement of all groups who have so far held a strategic position and role in the socio-religious system of the Madurese society. In this regard, the existence and socio-religious role of *pesantren*, as one of the sources of local wisdom in Madura, actually has a strong correlation with the Covid-19 mitigation agenda, be it in the aspect of prevention or countermeasure. The connection between the existence and socio-religious role of *pesantren* in response to Covid-19 in Madura will all be explained in detail and in depth in the following description.

**Pesantrens’ Responses**

In many social science studies, Madura is known as an area that is characterized by religiousness. This is represented by the socio-cultural construct of the local community which holds a considerable

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veneration towards religious symbols. Various religious symbols such as pesantren and kyai (religious teacher) are a local elite structure that has a strategic role, function, and influence on the life of the people of Madura in every aspects, including education, culture, politics, and especially religion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regency</th>
<th>Number of pesantren</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangkalan</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampang</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamekasan</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumenep</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>927</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from the local religious department in Madura

According to Dhofier, the position of kyai and pesantren in the culture of Madurese society is akin to a lesser king and his miniature kingdom. As a kingdom, pesantren occupies the position as a traditional religious institution that performs multiple functions, including educational, social control, and da’wah functions. Whereas likening kyai to a small king means that kyai is the highest social class in Madura. In this position, the status of a lesser king not only holds the meaning of his social status as the supreme authority in the pesantren, but also of his role and function as an influential local elite in Madura. Statistically, the significance of pesantren’ influence in Madura can be seen in the large number of pesantren throughout many regions in Madura (See Table 2).

An intriguing fact about the existence of pesantren in Madura lies on their Islamic characteristics and typology. Based on the data collected

32 Yanwar Pribadi, Islam, State and Society in Indonesia; Local Politics in Madura (New York: Routledge, 2018).
33 Moh. Ishaq Abd Salam, "Reproduksi Kekuasaan Kyai; Penggunaan Sarana Ideologi Dan Kekuasaan Dalam Pemilukada Bangkalan" (Surabaya: Universitas Airlangga Surabaya, 2015).
34 Dhofier, Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai, p. 32.
35 Siddiq, "Madurese Christian In Search of Christian Identity within Muslim Society".
from the field study, although the religious traditions of the people of Madura have so far been heavily influenced by NU, in reality not all pesantren in Madurais affiliated with this organization.\textsuperscript{38} Moreover, the two largest pesantrens in Pamekasan Madura, Pesantren Banyuanyar and Pesantren Bata-bata, are known to be leaning towards the organization Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union).\textsuperscript{39} In addition to the grouping based on organizational affiliation, the characteristics of pesantren in Madura can also be grouped based on the religious understandings to which they adhere. In this regard, generally pesantren in Madura adhere to Aswaja (\textit{Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jam'ah 'ala Manhaj as-Salaf as-Salih}).\textsuperscript{40} However, if observed more closely, this grouping can still be further specified, that is by differentiating pesantren who adhere to conservative Aswaja and pesantren who adhere to modern Aswaja that emphasize moderation.\textsuperscript{41}

The division of religious understandings among pesantren in Madura practically impacts their religious perspective,\textsuperscript{42} including also their perspective in responding to the prevention and countermeasure of Covid-19 pandemic.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that Madura is populated by many Islamic mass organizations such as NU, Muhammadiyah, Sarekat Islam, and al-Isyad, in terms of tackling Covid-19, all of them formally display similar attitude and views, primarily in terms of adherence to health protocols, from the recommendation to eliminate, avoid, and steer clear of crowds to the enforcement of physical-social distancing. Based on field data investigation, the uniformity of their attitude and views in response to the dynamics of Covid-19 in Madura was clearly


\textsuperscript{40}Zainuddin Syarif, "Pergeseran Perilaku Politik Kiai dan Santri di Pamekasan Madura", \textit{Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam} 16, 2 (2016), p. 293.


\textsuperscript{42}Abd A’la et al., "Islamism in Madura: From Religious Symbolism to Authoritarianism", \textit{Journal of Indonesian Islam} 12, 2 (2018), p. 159.
recorded in the *Maklumat Bersama* (joint edict). This edict was signed by the leader of every mass organization, from NU, SI, al-Irsyad, MUI, and a representative of the regional government which is the Department of Health. In terms of the content, the joint edict consists of the following points: 1) Prohibition on attending places of worship, including mosques, for people who tested positive for Covid-19, PDP (patient under supervision), ODP (people under observation), and ODR (people at risk); 2) Prohibition on attending congregational prayers, be it in mosque or prayer rooms, and encouragement on praying at home; 3) Counsel for those who are ill to perform Zuhr prayer at home in lieu of *jumatan* (Friday prayer); 4) Encouragement on offering up prayers (other than Friday prayer) at home; 5) Discouragement from attending religious activities involving many people; 6) Limitation on the number of people to a maximum of 40 people for various religious activities that attracts crowds or temporary postponement thereof.

If Islamic organizations in Madura have relatively uniformed response towards Covid-19, then it contrasts with *pesantren* groups in Madura. There is a difference in the response of conservative *pesantren* and non-conservative *pesantren*. Pesantren that harbor conservative paradigm exhibit attitude and social behavior that tend to be negligent or even apathetic in response to Covid-19. They are unwilling to take heed of the government’s counsel, especially if it involves activities that are directly related to religious rituals. In contrast, pesantren group that adheres to non-conservative beliefs, such as most pesantren affiliated with NU and SI, tend to display open-minded response or stance. Open-minded stance, in this regard, refers to the social behavior that is always adaptable to existing social realities. Their understanding of religion and the practice of religious rituals in the midst of the Covid-

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44 The Maklumat was signed by the leader of several Islamic organizations. They are Syarikat Islam, Nahdlatul Ulama Pamekasan, Majlis Ulama Indonesia, Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB), Hidayatullah, Dewan Masjid Indonesia, al-Irsyad, Persis, and Muhammadiyah.


19 pandemic is elastic and dynamic. Included in this category are Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Panyepen, Mfithaul Ulum Masaran, and, Pesantren Darul Ulum Banyuanyar. According to this group, religion is always in sync with the spirit of changing time, so that in any situation it must not be ignored, let alone disputed.\textsuperscript{47} Similarly, during the Covid-19 pandemic, every effort in preventing and tackling Covid-19 has a strong theological foundation, both textually or in historical context such as the time of the companion Umar bin Khattab’s leadership. Therefore, adherence to health protocols issued by the government is a form of \textit{ikhtiyar} (effort) that needs to be followed and carried out to the fullest extent, so that the risk of the spread and transmission of the pandemic can be curbed.\textsuperscript{48} Apropos of the topic, Rahbini, as the caretaker of Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Masaran and the head of MUI Pamekasan Regency, said:

“Yes, in the language of the book it is known as tha’un. So \textit{tha’un} is a plague. It is just at the time it was limited in terms of equipment, so there was no such thing as virus, there was just \textit{tha’un}. In the past, when there was a disease like this, the move that the ulemas took was getting closer to Allah SWT. In Syria, there was a \textit{tha’un} outbreak during Umar’s reign to be exact. In Sham, at that time, there were tens of thousands of victims, therefore the local government ordered its people to evacuate and disperse into the mountain, separately breaking away, they were prohibited to flock together, which in current terminology is keeping their distance from each other.”\textsuperscript{49}

“A record narrated that there was a companion of the Prophet who went to the mosque to pray, then he got down from his camel and simply threw the rein without tying it. The Prophet then asked him, “Why don’t you tie down your camel?” The man replied, “I submit, just like the Messenger’s \textit{tawakkal} (reliance)}
upon Allah.” The Messenger immediately rebuked him, “No, tawakkal is not like that. Tie your camel down first then put your trust in Allah.” So, the effort (on Covid-19 counter measure) is justified by religion, ikhtiyar (make an effort) first then tawakkal. In the Qur’an there are Allah’s words that read, faizaa ‘azamta fatawakkal ‘ala Allah. So. there’s ‘azam (decision) first then tawakkal on Allah.”

Religion and the Covid-19 response do not conflict at all for non-conservative pesantren, as evidenced by the two interview quotes above. Because implementing health protocols is part of ikhtiyar in opposing a plague, Islam has a solid foundation or evidence to back it up. Obeying government regulations related to Covid-19 mitigation, such as keeping a safe distance, washing hands, and wearing masks, has been practiced by this group since the Companions’ time. The approach and terminology are the only differences. The infectious disease, which is now known as the Covid-19 pandemic, is akin to the tha’un plague, that affected the people of Syria (Sham) during the reign of the companion Umar, in the sense that they are both plagues. Similarly, in terms of the countermeasure strategy, the recommendation or regulation to maintain distance that is enforced by the government in order to break the chain of Covid-19 transmission has the same function as the order to the people of Syria to evacuate and disperse to the mountains. The plan and approach are indeed different, but they contain the same essence, which is maintaining distance and refraining from forming a crowd.

The Role of Pesantren: from Formal-Structural to Cultural-Religious

Apart from the two categories above, pesantrens in Madura are generally quite responsive to the Covid-19 countermeasure agenda. This is influenced by the reality of the typology of pesantrens in Madura, the majority of which are affiliated with NU and SI, and reinforced by

the Islamic paradigm of those who adhere to non-conservative beliefs.\textsuperscript{51} Included in this circle are a number of pesantrens such as Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Panyepen, Pesantren Miftahul Ulum Masaran, and Pesantren Darul Ulum Banyuanyar. Based on field data investigation, the active role of the three pesantrens can be classified into two parts, structural role and cultural role. Structural approach indicates direct involvement of the pesantren in carrying out various formal regulations and guidelines to combat Covid-19, one of which is the implementation of health standard in the form of social and physical distancing.

Apropos of this research, based on the result of field data investigation, physical and social distancing in a number of pesantrens in Madura is implemented in the form of reducing activities or commotions. Various pesantren programs that may attract crowds are postponed or even cancelled. One of such activities is the annual baflatul imtihan (exam completion celebration) which is usually held in the last two months of the Hijriyyah calendar. Meanwhile, for daily activities related to the rituals of worship, such as congregation prayers, salawat recitations, et cetera, pesantren imposes physical and social distancing policy.\textsuperscript{52} In order to maximize health protocols, pesantren builds synergy with government authorities such as Dandim (District Military Commander), Polsek (Sub-district Police) and Polres (District Police), and regional Health Department. Pesantren even cooperates with a number of hospital and Puskesmas (Community Health Center), in which they come to the pesantren on a weekly basis to directly check the condition of the santri. Regarding this, Muhammad Khalilurrrahman, the chief executive of Pesantren Banyuanyar, said:

“So, regarding the response of Pesantren Banyuanyar to this pandemic, ever since the Coronavirus entered Indonesia and there was an announcement by the government, pesantren has always been active in building coordination with several authorities such


\textsuperscript{52} In many Madurese pesantrens, baflatul imtihan is an exhibition event and competition for santris which always attract the attention of many people. This event is jam-packed with activities, from school-level competitions, art and entertainment exhibition, and grand tabligh as the summit. In the grand tabligh, pesantrens usually invite popular preacher (read: Da‘ī). Therefore, it is common that on a baflatul imtihan event, people will flock to attend it so that they can watch their children’s performance and establish rapport with the pesantren family.
as Polsek and Polres, Dandim, and the Health Department. Here we also work together with medical institutions such as hospitals and Puskesmas. In Puskesmas’ case, they even come to the pesantren once a week in order to directly monitor and check the students who are experiencing health problems.”

“Yes, speaking of diseases, we always believe the existence of disease, including virus, that we also believe. But there are other things that we don’t fully follow and that is every issue spread by irresponsible people. So, generally, all these health protocols we apply it in the area of the pesantren to the maximum extent.”

In addition to the structural approach, the socio-religious role of pesantren in the Covid-19 countermeasure process is carried out through the cultural approach. The term cultural, conceptually, has a cultural articulation that is identical to local wisdom values. Furthermore, it can be interpreted as a type of regional creativity based on collective traditional values and norms. Cultural approaches are frequently used as a development strategy due to their local nature, particularly in traditional regions with strong local wisdom values.

One of the advantages of cultural approach lies in its closeness to people’s lives. It is even in direct contact with their daily activities, be it economic, social, or religious.

53 The original version in Indonesian says: *Jadi begini, terkait dengan respon pesantren Banyuanyar terhadap pandemi ini, semenjak virus corona masuk ke Indonesia dan ada pemberitahuan dari pihak pemerintah, pesantren selalu aktif membangun kordinasi dengan beberapa pihak berwajib seperti Polres, Polsek, Dandim, dan Dinas kesehatan. Kita di sini juga menjalin kerja sama dengan institusi medis seperti rumah sakit dan puskesmas. Babakan untuk puskesmas ini mereka setiap sekali dalam satu minggu datang ke pesantren, untuk memantau dan mengcek langsung keberadaan santri yang mengalami gangguan kesehatan*

54 The original version in Indonesian says: *Iya, jadi kalo namanya penyakit itu kami selalu percaya terhadap keberadaan penyakit, termasuk juga virus itu kami percaya. Tapi ada hal-hal lain yang kami tidak mengikuti semuanya setiap isu-isu yang dimunculkan oleh orang tidak bertanggung jawab. Jadi secara umum semua protokol kesehatan terkait pandemi ini, kami trapkan di langkah-langkah pesantren semaksimal mungkin*


local wisdom tend to have a higher level of obedience, even exceeding their obedience to government policy.\textsuperscript{58} In regions based on customs and tradition, cultural approach is a strategic solution to resolve various situations that can’t be handled through structural policy.\textsuperscript{59}

In relation to this study, the term “cultural” refers to the charisma of kyai and pesantren, two of the many embodiments of local wisdoms that have so far been the most influential in the social system and structure of the Madurese society.\textsuperscript{60} In the context of Covid-19 control in Madura, the cultural role of kyai is clearly shown in their active involvement in alerting the dangers of Covid-19 as well as its handling, prevention, and countermeasure. In practice, the cultural role of kyai is carried out by raising awareness of the people and providing theological explanation of the necessity to adhere to the guidelines and health protocol regulations issued by the government. To maximize their role, kyai utilize the pesantrens’ network, such as alumni, santri, and the community near the vicinity of the pesantren. Kyai provide explanation and counsel to them in the form of education such as teaching, tausiyah (informal da’wah), and then circulate it to the public as a whole, starting from tausiyah about the dangers of Covid-19 to the counsel to avoid forming crowds. Aside from that, they also form community movements to strengthen the handling and countermeasure of Covid-19 in Madura. The movement is called Gerakan Kyai dan Santri Memakai Masker (Mask-wearing Kyai and Santri Movement).\textsuperscript{61} In relation to this, Rabbini stated:

“In tackling Covid-19, we, kyai, take several steps. The first step is in the of education, admonition, et cetera. Ulemas agree that in tackling Covid-19, we need to adhere to health protocols including always wearing a mask, refraining from flocking, maintaining


\textsuperscript{60} Martin van Bruinessen, “Tarekat and Tarekat Teachers in Madurese Society”. In \textit{Across Madura Strait: The Dynamics of an Insular Society}, Edited by Koos van Dijk, Huub de Jonge, and Elly Touwen-Bouwsma (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1995).

\textsuperscript{61} Interview with KH. Zainal Abidin, June 2, 2020.
distance, and then washing hands. Yes, that’s our counsel.”

Then, Rahbini continued, “Yes, we are with the government, like yesterday we had a joint movement with the East Java regional police department, along with our government, and the movement is about the countermeasure of this disease, it’s called Gerakan Kyai dan Santri Memakai Masker (Mask-wearing Kyai and Santri Movement). We held it a few days ago. There will be masks that we distribute throughout the pesantren. It’s because we believe that this disease actually exists, and diseases must be combatted together. Not only the government, but kyai and ulemas’ role is a must, so that the effort of the government is also striven for by kyai, even though it might not be as intense as the government because of several things here.”

Pesantren also strengthen their cultural-religious role through a religious edict, in addition to forming a community movement in the form of Gerakan Kyai dan Santri Memakai Masker. Referring to a Circular No. 0/PC/A.II/L34/IV/2020, one of the edicts issued by Madurese kyai and pesantren which regards the procedures of performing Friday prayer and congregational prayers amidst the pandemic. The contents of the edict include: 1) In regions not considered a red zone, Friday prayer can still be performed, while keeping in mind adherence to health protocols. However, lest there is a greater mafsadah (damage), then Friday prayer can be substituted with Zuhr prayer at home; 2) People belonging in the category of PDP (patient under surveillance), ODP (people under investigation), and ODR (at risk individuals), or those who have just arrived from outside or crossed a red one, are advised to not perform Friday prayer and congregational prayers in mosques; 3) People who tested positive for

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Corona or belongs in the PDP category are not allowed to perform Friday prayer and must substitute it with Zuhr prayer at home; 4) The takmir (board) of mosques must provide health protocol equipment; 5) The takmir of mosques is advised to always coordinate with religious leaders, community leaders, and Covid-19 task force; 6) Distance must be maintained and masks must be worn during Friday prayer; 7) The khatib (preacher) are expected to shorten the sermon, and the imam (prayer's leader) are to shorten the verses, wirid (litany), and prayers recited. 8) After the prayers, all attendees must immediately go back home, and increase good doings and prayers in order to keep the plague away at home.

In terms of Covid-19 countermeasure in Madura, the various edicts issued by several pesantren above, from the relocation of religious activities from mosques to homes, the postponement or cancellation of religious rituals that attract crowds such as communal Qur'an studies or marriages to sending santri home earlier than normal are all formed upon a clear and solid theological foundation. The relocation of ritual activities from places of worships to homes will not reduce the essence of worship nor will it lower the degree of obedience and adherence as religious individuals. In an emergency, especially if it is mentally or physically threatening, the law of performing certain worships may change. In fact, all forms of rituals which is initially mandatory can be excused, particularly when the situation is directly related with physical rights that include greater risks such as life or physical safety.64

Observed from a religious perspective, the theological basis of Covid-19 countermeasure can be found in many sources, one of which is the source of law in fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence).65 Referring to the explanation by Muhammad at-Tahir bin Ashur in his monumental work, Maqasid al-Shariah al-Islamiyyah, there are several tings that need to be noted when implementing religious law. One of the things is the aspect of safety (maslahah) and malevolence (madarat) that may arise

when the law is implemented. From the sociology of religion perspective, the concept of putting safety first, in relation to the Covid-19 mitigation process, has the same spirit with the Covid-19 countermeasure process currently implemented. The spirit collectively emphasizes the effort on protection and preservation. The concept of protection is defined as sheltering something making it invisible or imperceptible, the goal of which is to keep it away from anything unwanted for its safety. The concept of preservation has the meaning of supervising or attending to something so as to not cause harm, obtain safety and security, and avoid hardship and losses. At a glance, the definitions of protection and preservation differ, but in practice they have similarities, because essentially, both protection and preservation compel the implementation of social-physical distancing.

Based on this explanation, it can be understood that the various socio-religious roles of pesantrens who have been actively involved in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic in Madura, be it through cultural involvement of the role of kyai and pesantren or through structural means in the form of health protocol implementation, can be seen as an embodiment of the concept of protection and preservation. The goal of all these is to attain safety, both mentally and physically, from threats and harm. These two steps to prioritize physical and mental safety is a form of humane Covid-19 mitigation that reflects in optima forma prevention not only in handling, overcoming, and preventing Covid-19, but also in the implementation of safety principles in Islamic theology. Therefore, limiting movement space in places of worship, relocating worship activities from mosques and other places of worship to home, and cancelling religious activities such as communal Quran readings and grand tabligh (preaching) are not only quite rational, but are also legitimizied as correct from Islamic perspective.

Conclusion

Pesantren is one of the Islamic social institutions that hold a great influence in the dynamics of the lives of Madurese people, so that its existence can be utilized as a strategy to respond to the pandemic,
Covid-19. In the case of Covid-19 handling, pesantren in Madura responds in line with the health protocols that become the government’s policy. The majority of pesantrens in Madura choose to implement collective anticipatory move by prioritizing safety principles, both physically and mentally. This anticipatory response is implemented by pesantren through a series of actions oriented in protection and preservation of humans’ physical and mental state.

In practical level, the two forms of mitigation are performed by pesantren through two approaches, structural and cultural. The structural approach refers to the active efforts of pesantren in being involved in the enforcement of health standards such as social and physical distancing, cancelling religious activities prone to the forming of crowds, limiting movement space for prayers in places of worship, and providing health facilities such as water reservoirs for hand washing in the vicinity of the pesantren. On the other hand, the cultural role is carried out by pesantren through the involvement of its community, kyai, teacher, and santri in promoting religious edicts, wherein the importance of adhering to health protocols and the procedures of performing prayers amid the pandemic are contained. These two approaches in maintaining physical and mental health are mitigation instruments that are not only compliance with legality and rationality, but are also legitimized by the Islam teachings.

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