Management Conflict of Pesantren: Political Policy Practices of Pesantren Organizations in Aceh Indonesia

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Abstract

Organizational conflicts are intrinsically linked to leadership and political dynamics. This study aims to describe an empirical experience and develop a model of the efficacy of political policy practices in resolving organizational conflicts within pesantren (Islamic boarding schools). The study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing the diary method based on empirical data gathered from fourteen years (2010-2024) of active and consultative management of a pesantren. The research informants include the most senior leader of the pesantren and several teachers involved in the conflict. Informants were identified using the snowball sampling technique. The findings of this study reveal that the political practices of leadership in managing conflicts within pesantren consist of three strategic steps: the central role of leadership and political acumen, the reinforcement of cultural values within the pesantren through collective commitment, and the effectiveness of the employed conflict resolution strategies. Resolving individual conflicts, particularly those involving teachers and leadership, is essential to prevent the escalation of disputes into open conflicts. Conversely, individual conflicts between teachers and staff often lead to collaboration and compromise. Moreover, institutional conflicts between the pesantren and external parties create a competitive environment in which the pesantren's position must be fortified to ensure legitimacy while minimizing external interference.This research carries significant social implications. If pesantren successfully navigate conflicts, they are likely to benefit the broader community. As religious institutions, pesantren require support, protection, and advocacy.

1.   Introduction

Aceh has been granted political autonomy in its government operations (Faisal, Murdiana, et al., 2018). As a result, the Dayah Education Office was established in Aceh to enhance the quality and infrastructure of pesantren in the educational context (Dayah Provinsi Aceh, n.d.;Ayumiati et al., 2024). The enhancement of Dayah (pesantren) education is also regulated by the Qanun (Autonomy Law) in Aceh (Mujiburrahman et al., 2024;Yusnaini, 2020). Dayah represents the local wisdom of the Acehnese people and is classified into three categories: integrated Dayah, Salafi Dayah, and Tahfidz Dayah (Abubakar et al., 2022). According to Law Number 18 of 2019, pesantren are educational institutions that conduct Islamic science-based learning, as defined in the Pesantren Constitution (Kosim, 2015; Mustofa, 2020). Pesantren are classified into three categories: modern pesantren, Salafi pesantren, and muadalah pesantren (Khoirurrijal et al., 2023).

The research was conducted at Dayah Darul Amin. This Dayah was selected due to the fact that Darul Amin is classified as a government-assisted Dayah, which is bureaucratically burdened with political interests. The initial observations revealed that Darul Amin was the site of a series of political disputes that jeopardized the stability of the pesantren.

Table 1. Dayah Darul Amin Internal conflict escalation

Type of Conflict	Number
Intrapersonal	7 Conflict
Intrapersonal	7 Conflict
Institutional (Pesantren-Community)	12 Conflict

The stability of the pesantren was potentially threatened by the number of conflicts that occurred between 2010 and 2022, as illustrated in Table 1. This research is significant because it considers empirical data to analyze conflict resolution techniques and political motivations for conflicts. Each educational system may formulate distinct criteria for evaluating quality, enrollment, and other pertinent metrics (Simola et al., 2017). This approach diverges from the practice of monitoring advancements toward an inherently contrived array of objectives. Pesantren is carried out using the concept of boarding school, creating intense interactions prone to organizational conflict (Alwi, Iqbal, and Manas, 2023; Zarkasyi et al., 2020). This phenomenon is unavoidable; therefore, a leader capable of conflict resolution is needed to be constructive (Dewi et al., 2022; Wahyudin, 2018). In addition, synergies between the roles of components in the pesantren system (leader-teacher-santri) are needed to turn conflict into a functional one (Buanaputra, Astuti, and Sugiri, 2022; Nurkhin, Rohman, and Prabowo, 2024).

Political processes and practices strongly influence the paths and outcomes of education policy (Kanalan and Celep, 2011; Podder, 2015). In education management, educators and their institutions are unrestrained in determining their policies and strategies; thus, they often create ideological conflicts at the technical management level (Briggs and Wohlstetter, 2003; Gunawan et al., 2023; Ruiz-Hernández et al., 2022). In an ideological

sense, political interference and excessive leadership control over the educational system of institutions are bad and affect the quality of graduates. On a micro-scale, Kurnia, Murdayanti and Permana's research explained that the management of pesantren/dayah education in Aceh itself leads to political practices related to the monopoly of the dayah budget and the nepotism of the dayah contract workers (Kurnia and Prasetyo, 2024; Murdayanti and Puruwita, 2017; Permana, 2021).

Conflict resolution requires specific strategies and approaches (Contu, 2019; Killian, 2019). This research is noteworthy because it specifically identifies a conflict resolution model through the practice of political policies of the pesantren organizations. Research on educational politics has been widely studied. However, this research has special credit for examining the practice of educational politics in pesantren organizations and their relationship with organizational conflict.

The intersections of leadership and pesantren culture have dominated the numerous studies on pesantren management. In reality, the intensity of education implementation constitutes pesantren vulnerable to conflict. This research is significant in that it identifies the sources of conflict, visualize the conflicts, and develops a conflict resolution model.

The research deeply analyzes and records the schematic structure of the problems encountered, which are related to problems of conflict and political policies of the pesantren leaders. As a problem limitation, the politics in question is related to the leadership's policy in maintaining its legitimacy to maintain the norms and values of the pesantren organization it believes in.

The objective of this research is to examine the dynamics of conflicts that transpire in Dayah under the authority of the Aceh government, which are structurally burdened with political interests. The research also seeks to identify a conflict management model that is essential for the survival and stability of Dayah.

2.   Methods

The research design employs a qualitative methodology, specifically utilizing a case study approach. The investigation addressed the dynamics of conflict that transpired in the Aceh government-assisted pesantren, specifically Dayah Darul Amin. The research locus was chosen based on a variety of factors, including the following, Darul Amin is a representative sample for dayah in Aceh due to its status as a dayah under the supervision of the Aceh province; as a provincial dayah, it is overflowing with interests related to power ambitions and other material motives; and Dayah Darul Amin is one of the leading dayah models and serves as a reference for the implementation of governance and dayah systems. The data were collected from a number of informants, including dayah leaders, deputy leaders, heads of secretariats, curriculum coordinators, alumni, and the santri monitors. The selection of informants is predicated on the representation of data related to conflicts that occur in dayah. Furthermore, a number of informants were directly involved in the conflict. Data reduction techniques, including categorization, keyword selection, coding, and interview transcripts, are employed to analyze research data. The data that has been analyzed is subsequently validated through peer discussions with fellow lecturers in order to facilitate the implementation of discussion group forums (FGDs). The research analysis is based on Miles and Huberman's notion, specifically data reduction

techniques and data triangulation. The data reduction process involved three stages: transcription, coding, and categorization. Meanwhile, the data triangulation stage involved comparing research findings from interviews, observations, and documentation.

3.   Results and Discussion

3.1.   Dynamics of Pesantren Organizational Conflict

Pesantren management is developing and dynamic, meaning managers begin to carry out managerial functions effectively (Abidin, 2020; Nurkhin, Rohman, and Prabowo, 2024). Unfortunately, goals and work orientation differences lead to individual conflicts and potentially become group conflicts (Budiharso and Suharto, 2022). In addition, the intensity of teacher interaction in the concept of Pesantren makes the potential for conflict even more open (Mukhtar, Risnita, and Prasetyo, 2020; Suswanta, 2018). A similar thing happened at the Dayah Perbatasan Darul Amin. Since the transformation of the management system from conventional to modern, various conflicts of interest, both individual and institutional, have emerged.

Table 2. Map of Internal Individual Conflict of Pesantrens

Individual Conflict	Form of Involvement
1. Leader's policy authority in determining policies; 2. Sectoral policies regarding financial planning; 3. Employee recruitment is family-friendly; 4. The recruitment of cadres is executed without a formal selection process and lacks alignment with established competencies, relying instead on familial affiliations.	Leader with teachers
1. Role conflict between external teachers (not domiciled in Pesantren) teachers; 2. The gap in payment of honorarium between external teachers and Pesantren teachers; 3. The gap in performance of duties between senior teachers (married teachers) and unmarried teachers; 4. Certain educators intentionally neglect their instructional duties without appropriate follow-up measures, which may contribute to disparities in the execution of educational tasks.	Teacher with teacher
1. Leader's response to teacher discipline violations with employees; 2. The gap in treatment between employees who are relatives of the leader and overseas teachers; 3. Local employees frequently take unauthorized leave, resulting in inequities in the fulfillment of their professional responsibilities. 4. Some employees engage in online gambling practices, which are incongruent with the ethical standards of the pesantren environment.	Teacher with employee
1. Incidents of violence among students have led to criminal charges being filed by their guardians.; 2. Interventions by guardians regarding student permissions compromise the stability of disciplinary measures and the overall educational framework. 3. Criticism from unidentified individuals on social media concerning re-enrollment fees has incited public unrest and raised concerns among the management of the pesantren.	Teacher with parents
1. Threatening actions by employees against Pesantren teachers;	

2. Community intimidation actions towards Pesantren teachers;	Teacher with the community

Table 1 reveals a conflict map that occurred in the pesantren. Conflicts were identified through field observations and interviews referring to the analysis of organizational behavior divided into three; individual, group and institutional organizational conflicts. This objective condition demands that pesantren managers implement conflict management that can turn conflict to be constructive, not deconstructive.

Table 3. Map of Internal Institutional Conflict of Pesantrens

Group Conflict	Form of Involvement
1. The phenomenon of bullying between students;	
2. Phenomena of seniority and juniority;	
3. The phenomenon of thuggery to junior students;	
4. The practice of violence between the management of the santri organization and its members;	Students with students
1. Local teachers with out-of-the-area teachers;	
2. Ideological differences between teachers with a modern pesantren background and teachers from a Salafi;	
3. Teachers with tribal backgrounds;	Teachers with teachers
Social jealousy between employees that are relatives of teachers and employees who come from the surrounding community;	Employees with employees

Table 2 describes the research analysis results depict the internal institutional conflict within Pesantrens, focusing on student involvement: bullying between students, dynamics of seniority and juniority among students, aggressive behavior towards junior students, and violence between the institution's management and its members.

These findings highlight the presence of various forms of student-related conflicts, including bullying, hierarchical dynamics, mistreatment of junior students, and conflicts between the institution's management and its members. These results underscore the need for further investigation and potential interventions to address these issues and promote a safer and more conducive educational environment within Pesantrens.

Table 4. Map of Pesantren External Conflicts

Type of Conflict	Analysis Aspect	Details
Conflict of Darul Amin with other pesantren	System Implementation	Darul Amin implemented the KMI system referring to the Gontor Modern Pesantren System. Sistem berasal dari Jawa dan memicu kontradiksi tokoh agama setempat karena dianggap tidak kearifan local.
	Institutional Status	Darul Amin is a pesantren belonging to Aceh Province under the auspices of the Dayah Education Office.
	Curriculum Integration	Darul Amin implemented the KMI curriculum (wawasan keIslaman oriented). Pelaksanaan kurikulum tersebut dianggap tidak sesuai dengan nilai pesantren yang identic dengan kitab turats.

Table 3 presents data on the individual and organizational conflicts of the Darul Amin pesantren. Broadly speaking, the policies carried out by the leadership consist of transformation in the local context consisting of three strategic steps; (1) central role and

political competence; (2) strengthening the value of struggle through collective commitment; (3) institutional conflict resolution effectiveness. The systematic presentation of the politics of policy is as follows:

3.2.   The Central Role and Political Competence of Pesantren Leaders

The primary findings of this study are categorized into three types of conflicts that occur in dayah. Organizational conflict, group conflict, and individual conflict comprise the initial category. Further clarification of conflict scenarios that occurred in dayah.

"There are often cases (conflicts) between teachers and outsiders. Almost all pesantren teachers were criminalized last year because they were accused of committing violence. The cause was usually negative information conveyed by students to their parents. If the family wants to come to pesantren with good communication, a solution will emerge for the problem." Informant 5.

Similar to organizations in general, Pesantren have structures and hierarchies that give rise to conflicts of interest. The politics of education is a relevant introduction to fulfilling this ambition. As a result, conflicts occur due to individual behavior and internal clashes in the management system of the institution itself.

In this case, the leader's age is more senior than the teachers and employees. Thus he has political skills to other people - teachers and employees - to have high integrity and are authentic, sincere and original. The leader's central role in conflict resolution is a form of the leader's commitment to protecting his subordinates.

"Most of you are newcomers. However, I must intervene if there is a problem in the community. Before there was an incident, a teacher was beaten by residents. Because the teacher hit students, he had to deal with the police. However, I was still responsible because I consider you my children." Informant 1

Summary of cases that occur within the community outside the pesantren requires the role of leadership. The analysis of this role is because the leader is a native of the region and a community figure; thus, he has broad and strong relationships. In conflicts that involve the community, one solution is to take an external approach to local figures who influence resolving the conflict. The central role of leadership emerges through environmental considerations by setting aside confounding factors such as uncertainty, risk tolerance and linked decisions.

Almost every year, major conflicts involve teachers and external pesantren, ranging from students, guardians of students, and the community to irresponsible journalists. From the incident, the leader takes an important role in conflict resolution.

Table 5. Open Coding of Interview Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Conflict Resolution

Aspect	
Uncertainty Factor	*"Teachers have problems with students because of the interests of Pesantren; therefore, Pesantren are obliged to defend teachers in matters of truth. It feels challenging to find the right teacher that is competent and loyal. So we need to retain teachers who have these qualifications."*
Tolerance on Risk	*"Teachers who have problems with society, both residents and guardians of students, need to be defended as long as Pesantren cause them. Many students' guardians do not understand the concept of pesantren. They think it is easy to educate their children for 24hrs. So if there are problems, they can be discussed properly; that is the risk of being a pesantren teacher."*
Related Decision	*"This pesantren teacher was brought in from outside of the area. What I want is if there is a problem with them, consult with me first because I am responsible. Decisions regarding conflicts that arise are my responsibility."*

Several factors greatly influence the effectiveness of policy-making by the leader of Dayah Perbatasan Darul Amin; intuition; experience; facts; authority; rationale. Political influence on the pesantren system institutionally depends on the type of political regime each leader supports. In the research context, the leadership builds trust through modern pesantren alumni teachers and family members working there. The stability of the pesantren has also been realized thanks to the existence of the leadership of Rais Aam Buya Muchlisin Desky, who has never experienced a change after changing his status to being assisted by the Dayah Office in 2010. This condition has resulted in the system implementation process being able to run continuously. In a general sense, the influence of the leadership is actualized in the policies implemented.

3.3. The Reinforcement of Pesantren Cultural Values Through Collective Commitment

One of Darul Amin's reasons for implementing a modern Gontor-style system is because of the pesantren's strong five-soul doctrine towards its alumni. Data for 2023 shows that educator data at Dayah Darul Amin is dominated by alumni of both male and female alumni, or as much as 80%. The rest also came from Gontor alumni boarding schools in Aceh and North Sumatra. This objective condition provides an advantage: the existence of a common vision and mission in managing Pesantren.

"From the beginning (2008), Darul Amin applied the concept in Gontor. At Gontor, we are taught the five souls and thoughts of being ready to lead and ready to be led. So, whoever we are, from teachers to leaders, we must be ready. It is the same, whoever is the leader, what matters is that we achieve the goals of the pesantren." Informant 6

Darul Amin always rotates leadership for senior teachers. The policy considers that teachers have different experiences in managing Pesantren. Even though several teachers were not replaced for technical reasons, this condition did not necessarily trigger a prolonged conflict. The conditions and feelings of having been in the same alma mater created a harmonious and mutually supportive work situation as a form of the collective commitment of teachers.

The assumption developed in the Darul Amin community is a miniature of Gontor in Southeast Aceh. Therefore, there was a perception that if someone wanted to become a teacher at Darul Amin, that individual had to be an alumnus of Gontor. Even though this assumption was not verified, it was recorded that Darul Amin put the trust of the public/the surrounding community by accepting teachers and employees from four villages surrounding the pesantren.

*"The perception of Darul Amin is identical with Gontor; that is true because the majority of teachers are alumni of Gontor and several alumni of boarding schools such as Ar Raudhah Hasanah Medan, Manahijussahadat Banten, Tazakka Islamic Boarding School, Batang, Central Java. But that does not mean that if they disobey, they will not be penalized. Once, a Gontor teacher was expelled. On the contrary, if there are people who meet the criteria to teach at our Pesantren, we appreciate it. Likewise, our employees from the surrounding community are also many."*Informant 2

The leadership policy favors certain groups; thus, it is political. The leadership policy, even though it has political nuances, goes through the procedures that have been carried out, i.e., deliberations with the teacher council; thus, upcoming risks in the future will be handled together.

The policies implemented are political because they lead to group interests, i.e., the group of teachers who graduated from modern Pesantren. Policies also point to an interest in implementing a stable modern pesantren system, i.e., the KMI system. This can be identified through a sectoral recruitment system and integration of the KMI curriculum with the official curriculum to the modern concept of developing Pesantren. This actualization impacted the minority group -non- pesantren teachers- whose influence gradually diminished.

One source of conflict is the educational background of teachers who come from modern and traditional dayah. The Dayah leadership policy was directed at a group of teachers who were alumni of modern pesantren and possessed political nuances in a particular situation. The decision focuses on the stability of the Islamic teacher recruitment system that has been implemented and the similarity of vision. Numerous studies demonstrate the significance of a common understanding within an organization (Harrison, 2018; Prasetyo and Salabi, 2023; Thoyib, 2018)

In other instances, dayah that possess a stable system are the most appropriate recipients of politically charged policy authority. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the leader's political decisions is also influenced by the homogeneity factor, which is demonstrated by the similarity of educational backgrounds and factors related to familial connections.

3.4.   Effectiveness of Conflict Resolution Practices

The research analysis of internal institutional conflict within Pesantrens reveals multifaceted dynamics involving teachers, employees, and external agencies. Firstly, the study highlights teacher-related conflicts, including tensions between local and out-of-the-area teachers, ideological disparities between educators with modern system backgrounds and those from Salafi system, and potential conflicts based on teachers' tribal backgrounds. These findings underscore the influence of geographic, ideological, and

cultural factors on teacher interactions within Pesantrens, emphasizing the need for strategies to address and mitigate these sources of conflict. Secondly, the analysis delves into employee-related conflicts, particularly noting social jealousy between employees who are relatives of Pesantren teachers and those from the surrounding community. This illuminates the impact of social dynamics on the work environment, emphasizing the significance of interpersonal relationships and their potential influence on organizational harmony. Understanding and addressing these social dynamics are crucial for fostering a supportive and productive work environment within Pesantrens.

Organizational conflict management is conceptually associated with the conflict theory of Afzalur Rahim and Wibowo (Mohiuddin, 2018; Afzalur Rahim, 2002; Wibowo, 2022). The research results can be analyzed from three perspectives. The first perspective is philosophical, which implies that conflict resolution in this instance takes into account the priorities of the pesantren. The attachment decisions will be made for parties that are in disagreement and do not align with the pesantren's vision. Secondly, the pesantren in this instance reinforces the formal aspects of the institution by revising the Articles of Association and Bylaws, which are deliberated and approved by the pesantren community, from a formalization perspective. Third, pesantren establish a sequence of conflict prevention and mitigation mechanisms from an operational standpoint. Conversely, the supporting factors of conflict resolution pertain to the significant role of leadership in the constructive resolution of conflicts.

The stability of the dayah system determines the effectiveness of dayah conflict management. Darul Amin's conflict management factors include charismatic leadership and dayah culture. The development of robust dayah cultural values is evident in the familial situation that is constructed. Since Darul Amin's conflicts are mostly hidden, the issue of conflict is resolved during a discussion between teachers, without excessive confrontations. These hidden conflicts, if not resolved, have the potential to escalate conflict. These will also result in the retention of competent teachers among the dayah. As a preliminary step, the dayah undertake educational and leadership regeneration.

Teacher loyalty and respect for Gontor seniority further assist to improve conflict resolution effectiveness. While technically, Darul Amin teachers, as the driving force behind the dayah education system, prefer to avoid conflict with the leadership. Conflicts between external dayah or teachers and santri monitors are resolved using a competitive setting conduct (win-lose).

The research implications are divided into two categories. The academic implications of this study provide additional insight into the development of dayah conflict management theory. This conceptualization can be improved to increase the effectiveness of dayah management by addressing organizational conflict. Dayah leaders and management might put forward efforts to improve the effectiveness of policies that affect dayah's existence. The social implications of the research are evident in the strengthening of dayah's position, duties, roles, and functions as agents of renewal, service, and improving human quality as an integral part of society as a whole.

4. Conclusions

The stability of the pesantren education system, which was preserved, demonstrated that Dayah leaders were capable of effectively managing conflict. The conflict

resolution strategies implemented by pesantren can be disclosed in accordance with the nature of the conflict. A form of prevention is the result of the identification of individual conflict resolution between teachers and leaders. The seniority factor of the Gontor graduates and the loyalty of teachers to the leadership are also factors in the resolution of conflicts. In the interim, collaboration and compromise emerge as a result of individual conflicts between teachers and employees. In some instances, the compromise technique involves negotiations between conflicting parties, and a lose-lose solution is sought, while collaboration involves satisfying the conflicting parties. In the context of pesantren conflict with external parties, a competition setting approach (win-lose) is employed to overcome the conflict. The pesantren reinforced its stance against external intervention. Pesantren, the more powerful party, is constructively inclined to preserve the communicator's reputation and interests, while it is destructively driven to escalate the conflict. The conflict resolution model employed by pesantren is integrative, incorporating competitive resolution techniques for organizational conflict types and contingent leadership styles, as well as compromise for individual conflict patterns. In the research case, the contingent leadership style is believed to result in a blend of transformative and charismatic styles.

5. Author Contributions

Conceptualization: M.A.M.P.; Data curation: M.A.M.P.; Formal analysis: M.A.M.P., F.A. & F.R.; Funding acquisition: M.A.M.P. & A.K.U.; Investigation: M.A.M.P. & F.R.; Methodology: M.A.M.P. & F.A.; Project administration: M.H & F.R.; Resources: M.A.M.P. & F.R.; Supervision: M.A.M.P. & A.K.U; Validation: M.A.M.P. & A.K.U.; Visualization: M.A.M.P.; Writing – original draft: M.A.M.P.; Writing – review & editing: M.A.M.P. & F.R.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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