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Santri's Perception of Hermeneutic Principles in Teaching Al-Qur'an and Tafsir in Pesantren

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the santri's perception of the hermeneutic principle in teaching the Qur'an and tafsir at Pesantren Al-Hikmah. The main issue raised is how hermeneutics, as a modern interpretation approach, is accepted and understood by santri in a tradition-based pesantren education environment. This study aims to identify santri perceptions, explore the challenges of hermeneutics implementation, and analyse its relevance in the development of pesantren education. The research used a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The research subjects were senior santri, ustaz, and pesantren managers. The results show that the santri's perception of hermeneutics is divided into two: a group that accepts this approach as a relevant innovation to understand the Qur'an contextually, and a group that is sceptical because they are worried about deviations from classical interpretation. In teaching, hermeneutics is used to address contemporary issues such as social and environmental justice, but its implementation faces challenges in the form of ideological resistance, limited literature, and faculty capacity. The discussion shows that hermeneutics can be a bridge between tradition and modernity in Qur'anic interpretation, provided it is applied with a systematic approach and respect for tradition. In conclusion, the integration of hermeneutics in pesantren education has the potential to broaden students' horizons and answer the challenges of globalisation. This research contributes to the development of Islamic education theory, especially in the integration of classical and modern tafsir methods, and becomes the basis for further research on the application of hermeneutics in pesantren.
Keywords: Tafsir Al-Qur'an, Pesantren, Islamic Education, Santri Perception

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis persepsi santri terhadap prinsip hermeneutika dalam pengajaran Al-Qur'an dan tafsir di Pesantren Al-Wafa. Masalah utama yang diangkat adalah bagaimana hermeneutika, sebagai pendekatan tafsir modern, diterima dan dipahami oleh santri dalam lingkungan pendidikan pesantren yang berbasis tradisi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi persepsi santri, mengeksplorasi tantangan implementasi hermeneutika, serta menganalisis relevansinya dalam pengembangan pendidikan pesantren. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen. Subjek penelitian adalah santri senior, ustaz, dan pengelola pesantren. Hasil

penelitian menunjukkan bahwa persepsi santri terhadap hermeneutika terbagi menjadi dua: kelompok yang menerima pendekatan ini sebagai inovasi relevan untuk memahami Al-Qur'an secara kontekstual, dan kelompok yang skeptis karena khawatir akan penyimpangan dari tafsir klasik. Dalam pengajaran, hermeneutika digunakan untuk membahas isu-isu kontemporer seperti keadilan sosial dan lingkungan, namun implementasinya menghadapi tantangan berupa resistensi ideologis, keterbatasan literatur, dan kapasitas pengajar. Pembahasan menunjukkan bahwa hermeneutika dapat menjadi jembatan antara tradisi dan modernitas dalam tafsir Al-Qur'an, asalkan diterapkan dengan pendekatan yang sistematis dan menghormati tradisi. Kesimpulannya, integrasi hermeneutika dalam pendidikan pesantren berpotensi memperluas wawasan santri dan menjawab tantangan globalisasi. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi bagi pengembangan teori pendidikan Islam, khususnya dalam integrasi metode tafsir klasik dan modern, serta menjadi dasar bagi penelitian lebih lanjut tentang penerapan hermeneutika di pesantren.
Kata Kunci: *Tafsir Al-Qur'an, Pesantren, Pendidikan Islam, Persepsi Santri*

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren is one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia that functions as a centre of religious learning, character building, and preservation of the Islamic scientific tradition. One of the main components of the pesantren curriculum is the teaching of the Qur'an and tafsir, which is an important foothold in the formation of santri's Islamic understanding (Syah & Iswantir, 2023). However, along with the times, Qur'anic learning methods in pesantren face challenges in responding to the needs of modern society. Traditional approaches are often considered less responsive to contemporary social, cultural, and intellectual dynamics, giving rise to the need for more contextualised approaches, such as hermeneutics (Masdar, 2023).

Hermeneutics, as the science of interpretation, provides a theoretical framework for understanding texts in the dialogue between the text, the reader and its social context. In the Western tradition, hermeneutics developed through the thought of figures such as Hans-Georg Gadamer who emphasised the fusion of horizons between the reader's experience and the text as a dynamic intersubjective process (Gadamer, 1989). On the other hand, in the Islamic context, hermeneutics has been introduced by a number of thinkers such as Fazlur Rahman, who integrates a historical-contextual approach in understanding Qur'anic revelation. Rahman (1982) emphasised the importance of understanding Qur'anic verses in the context of asbabun nuzul as well as their relevance to modern reality. This concept supports the transformation of understanding from text to value-oriented action.

However, the adoption of hermeneutics in pesantren is not without challenges. Santri as the main subject of education have diverse perceptions of the principles of hermeneutics. The study of this perception is important because it reflects the interaction between modern and traditional approaches in Islamic education. Several studies have shown that although pesantren have begun to be open to new approaches, acceptance of hermeneutics is still selective and tends to

be limited to teachers who have a modern educational background (Muhammad Khoiril Anwar;Abdul Rasyid Ridho, 2020).

The urgency of this study lies in the urgent need to bridge tradition and modernity in pesantren education. This study is expected to strengthen hermeneutic theory in the Islamic context by providing empirical data-based analyses of how hermeneutic principles are accepted and implemented in pesantren. In addition, the results of this study can contribute to the development of Qur'anic teaching methods that are more inclusive, relevant, and adaptive to the challenges of globalisation and social transformation.

Academically, this research can enrich the literature that discusses the relationship between hermeneutics and Islamic educational traditions. For example, Esack (1997) highlights how hermeneutics can be used to address the issue of diversity of interpretation in the context of Islamic education, while national research by Kusroni (2023) emphasises the importance of contextualisation in the teaching of Qur'anic tafsir in Indonesia. This research not only contributes to the development of hermeneutical theory but also provides a practical foundation for pedagogical innovation in pesantren.

Therefore, this research has great potential to become a foothold in the development of Islamic education models that are not only rooted in traditional values, but also utilise the hermeneutic approach in depth. This approach allows for a constructive dialogue between the classical Islamic scientific heritage and the needs of modern times. Thus, the resulting educational model can provide relevant solutions to the various challenges of Muslims today, both in the social, cultural and technological fields. In addition, this model is also expected to be a strategic guide in designing inclusive and visionary educational policies. Ultimately, this effort aims to build an adaptive, dynamic, and civilisation-oriented Islamic education system in the future.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to provide an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon, namely the santri's perception of hermeneutic principles in teaching the Qur'an and tafsir. A qualitative approach is based on the perspective that reality is subjective and shaped by individual experiences and meanings within a social context (Creswell, 2019). This approach is particularly relevant to explore the dynamics of hermeneutic acceptance in both traditional and modern Islamic educational settings. The case study method, as explained by Yin (2018), is effective for answering complex "how" and "why" questions, allowing researchers to delve deeply into issues within a limited scope to produce meaningful findings. This research was conducted at Pesantren Al-Wafa in Bandung, West Java, chosen for its blend of classical educational traditions with modern approaches, which makes it an ideal context for examining the application of hermeneutic principles in teaching Qur'anic interpretation. The research involved senior santri who had studied tafsir for at least two years and two ustadz teaching tafsir, selected using a purposive

sampling technique to ensure relevance to the research objectives. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, using instruments such as interview guides, observation sheets, and teaching material analysis. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2013) framework, was used to analyze data, beginning with data reduction, categorization, and interpretation linked to hermeneutic theory and the socio-cultural context of pesantren. Triangulation ensured the validity of findings by comparing data from multiple sources. The research procedure included instrument preparation, data collection over one month, data analysis using qualitative software, and report writing. This study aims to shed light on how hermeneutics is understood in teaching tafsir and offers practical recommendations for enhancing Qur'anic education in pesantren, contributing to a more contextualized approach to tafsir in the modern era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed that Pesantren Al-Wafa in Bandung, West Java, is one of the Islamic educational institutions that successfully combines traditional and modern teaching methods. This pesantren adopts a yellowIslamic classic book-based teaching system with modern approaches, such as group discussions and contextual studies. In learning tafsir, Pesantren Al-Wafa uses classical books such as Tafsir Jalalain, but also begins to integrate hermeneutical principles to present perspectives that are more relevant to contemporary issues. This approach reflects the pesantren's response to the challenges of the times, as mentioned by Rahman (1982) that the interpretation of the Qur'an must have continuity between text and context to remain relevant in the modern era.

The santri's perceptions of the application of hermeneutical principles vary. Most senior santri consider hermeneutics as an innovative approach that opens new horizons in understanding the Qur'an. They consider that hermeneutics gives them a tool to connect the text with contemporary reality.

One of the santri, S (23 years old), commented:

"*Hermeneutics makes us not only memorise or interpret literally, but also think critically about how these verses relate to real-life issues, such as technology or social change.*"

In addition, AR (22) adds:

"*In my opinion, hermeneutics is important to understand the Qur'an according to today's era, because the world is constantly changing and the challenges are also different. Classical interpretation is important, but we also have to open up space to understand the modern context.*"

However, there is also a group of santri who are sceptical of this approach. They are concerned that hermeneutics may lead to interpretations that deviate from the original meaning of the text. RM (19 years old), expressed a more sceptical view:

"*I am worried that an approach like this could take us away from the original meaning of the Qur'an. We have to be careful not to sacrifice the authenticity of the interpretation.*"

This concern reflects the clash between classical educational traditions based on literal texts and modern interpretive approaches. In this context, Mamahit (2019) explains that the understanding of religious texts is often hampered by traditionalism that is reluctant to open itself to changes in methods of analysis.

The ustadz at Pesantren Al-Wafa play an important role in introducing and integrating hermeneutics into tafsir learning. Based on interviews, it was found that ustadz more often use a hermeneutical approach in discussing contemporary issues, such as gender equality and environmental ethics. One of the ustadz, MIT, mentioned:

"*We do not abandon the classical tafsir method, but we try to relate it to the current context to make it more relevant to the lives of santri in the future.*"

This is in line with Gadamer's hermeneutic theory (1989), which emphasises the importance of horizon fusion between the reader and the text to produce relevant and meaningful understanding.

Classroom observations show that ustadz often start by explaining the literal meaning of the verse using classical book references, then expand the discussion by asking critical questions about the relevance of the verse in a modern context. For example, in the discussion of verses related to the environment, the ustadz relates the Qur'anic message to the global challenges of climate change, so that students can understand Islamic values in a universal perspective.

The results show that the application of hermeneutics in pesantren faces several challenges:

1. Ideological Resistance

Some santri and ustadz feel that hermeneutics is a foreign approach that can threaten the integrity of classical tafsir. This concern is often based on a lack of deep understanding of the principles of hermeneutics in Islam, as revealed by Mamahit (2019) that one of the challenges in introducing hermeneutics is the negative stigma attached to this method. Ustadz ZF commented:

"*The biggest challenge is to convey the concept of hermeneutics in a way that does not disturb the traditional understanding of santri. Some feel that this approach is Western thinking and therefore does not fit with our Islamic tradition.*"

2. Limited Literature

Pesantren still lack teaching materials that specifically discuss Islamic hermeneutics. The available literature generally comes from Western works, which often do not fit the local context of pesantren. This becomes an obstacle in integrating hermeneutics thoroughly into the curriculum. According to FM (22 years old):

"Our learning resources about hermeneutics are very limited. Most of them only rely on explanations from ustadz, and there is no book that specifically discusses hermeneutics in the context of pesantren."

3. Teacher Capacity

Not all ustadz have an adequate understanding of hermeneutics. Most of them tend to be trained in traditional tafsir methods, so teaching hermeneutics is less than optimal. Ustadz AR said:

"We need intensive training on hermeneutics in order to teach this method effectively. Currently, we only deliver based on our personal understanding, which is sometimes not deep enough".

4. Time Limitations

The learning process in pesantren is often hectic, making it difficult to give more attention to teaching the hermeneutic method. Santri AN (22 years old) said:

"Our time to learn tafsir is already limited, especially if we add hermeneutics. If there is no clear division of time, it is difficult for us to understand everything in depth".

The interview results also show that the application of hermeneutics has helped some santri to understand the relevance of the Qur'an in the contemporary context. Santri NF (22 years old) said:

"I understand better how Islam actually has solutions to modern problems such as the environment. This kind of interpretation makes us understand that Islam is dynamic."

However, resistance also remains. RM (23) stated:

"I am still more comfortable with classical tafsir because it has clear references. Interpretations that use hermeneutics sometimes make me confused, especially if there are too many new interpretations."

From the thematic analysis, three main themes were found to be highlighted in this study:

1. The relevance of Hermeneutics in Pesantren Education: Hermeneutics helps santri understand the relationship between the Qur'anic text and modern issues, such as globalisation and social change. However, its application requires careful adjustment so as not to contradict Islamic principles.
2. Ideological and Structural Challenges: There is resistance that arises both in terms of ideology and structural limitations of pesantren, such as human resources and literature.
3. Curriculum Development Needs: The research results show the importance of integrating hermeneutical principles into the curriculum more systematically by adding special modules.

This research shows that hermeneutics has great potential to increase the relevance of tafsir teaching in pesantren, especially in responding to the challenges of the modern era. However, its application must be done carefully, paying attention to the tradition of classical tafsir-based pesantren.

This finding makes a significant contribution to curriculum development in pesantren. The integration of hermeneutics can be a solution in facing the changing times, but it requires efforts to strengthen the capacity of both santri and ustadz. Islamic hermeneutic literature also needs to be developed to enrich learning resources in pesantren. With this step, pesantren can continue to be an Islamic educational institution that is relevant and adaptive to global dynamics.

The results showed that the santri's perceptions of the application of hermeneutical principles in teaching tafsir were divided into two major groups: those who accepted enthusiastically and those who were sceptical. The first group considers hermeneutics as a relevant approach to understanding the Qur'an in the modern context. This view is in line with the ideas of Fazlur Rahman (1982), who emphasised the importance of exploring the substantive meaning of the text through a contextual approach so that the Qur'ān remains relevant to social dynamics.

However, the second group feels that the hermeneutic approach has the potential to obscure the original meaning of the Qur'ān, especially if it is not based on a deep understanding of classical tafsir. This scepticism reflects the paradigmatic difference between tradition-based interpretation and modern approaches. This is in line with the view of Mamahit (2019) who considers that the clash between literal and contextual understanding is one of the main challenges in modern Islamic studies.

The application of hermeneutics at Pesantren Al-Wafa shows a significant effort in bridging the classical tafsir tradition with contemporary reality. This can be seen from the use of hermeneutical principles to discuss issues such as gender equality, environmental ethics, and social justice. For example, in the discussion of verses related to the environment, the hermeneutic principle is used to link the Qur'anic message with the importance of preserving nature as a human mandate on earth (khalifah fil-ardh). This approach broadens the horizon of santri's understanding of the role of Islam in responding to global challenges.

This relevance is strengthened by Mahrani (2021) research findings, which emphasise that the Qur'anic text is not only intended to answer specific problems in the past, but also contains universal values that can be applied in various contexts of the times. In this case, pesantren that adopt hermeneutics as a tafsir approach can make an important contribution in producing critical and contextualised Muslim thinkers.

The research results reveal some significant challenges in the implementation of hermeneutics in pesantren. Ideological resistance from some santri and ustaz is one of the main obstacles. This concern reflects the stigma against hermeneutics as an approach that is considered 'foreign' and potentially deviates from Islamic principles. Uyuni (2020) in his study also highlights a similar

challenge, namely the distrust of the hermeneutic approach because it is considered to threaten the authority of classical interpretation.

In addition, limited resources, such as the lack of Islamic hermeneutical literature relevant to the pesantren context, exacerbate the understanding gap between traditional and modern tafsir. The absence of a special module on hermeneutics in the pesantren curriculum also makes this approach less deeply understood by santri and ustaz. In this context, steps such as those proposed by Esack (1997) that is, the integration of hermeneutical literature into the Islamic curriculum-can be an effective solution.

This research shows that the teaching of hermeneutics in pesantren has great potential to enrich the insight of santri, but its application requires a systematic and inclusive approach. The relevance of hermeneutics in teaching tafsir can help pesantren respond to the needs of young Muslims in the era of globalisation, but it must remain within a framework that respects the classical tafsir tradition.

Previous research by Abdullah (2022) on pesantren modernisation shows that the integration of new approaches, such as hermeneutics, can help pesantren remain relevant to the changing times. However, this integration must be accompanied by strengthening the capacity of ustadz and santri through specialised training, literature enrichment, and curriculum revision. These steps will ensure that pesantren can become adaptive centres of Islamic learning without losing their identity.

The results of this study are able to answer the main objectives, namely understanding santri perceptions of the principles of hermeneutics and exploring the challenges and opportunities for its application in teaching tafsir in pesantren. The application of hermeneutics has a positive impact in the form of expanding santri's insights about the relevance of the Qur'an in the modern context, although faced with ideological and structural challenges.

From a theoretical perspective, this research strengthens Rahman (1982) and Gadamer's (1989) ideas about the importance of a contextual approach in understanding religious texts. This research also provides an empirical contribution to the development of literature on the integration of hermeneutics in Islamic education, especially in Indonesia.

Based on the research findings, several alternative solutions can be proposed to overcome the challenges of applying hermeneutics in pesantren. First, there needs to be training for ustadz on the basic principles of hermeneutics and how to integrate it with classical tafsir methods. Second, pesantren need to collaborate with academic institutions to develop hermeneutical literature that is relevant to the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. Third, the pesantren curriculum needs to be updated to provide more space for interdisciplinary discussions, so that santri can understand tafsir in a broader perspective.

This research makes an important contribution to the development of pesantren education in the modern context. With a hermeneutic approach, pesantren can answer the challenges of globalisation and remain relevant as adaptive centres of Islamic education. This contribution is expected to provide a

foundation for further research that is more in-depth about the integration of classical and modern tafsir methods in pesantren.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that the application of hermeneutic principles in teaching the Qur'an and tafsir at Pesantren Al-Wafa has a significant impact on the learning process and understanding of santri. This approach succeeds in creating a more dynamic and contextualised learning experience, especially through the active role of the ustadz who combine classical tafsir methods with hermeneutical principles. Nevertheless, this implementation still faces various challenges, such as ideological resistance, limited literature, and the capacity of teachers that needs to be improved. Therefore, collaborative efforts between pesantren, academics, and educational practitioners are needed to overcome these obstacles and maximise the potential of hermeneutics as an innovative approach in Islamic education.

Theoretically, this research supports the idea that hermeneutics can bridge tradition and modernity, as suggested by Fazlur Rahman (1982) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989). The findings demonstrate the potential of the hermeneutic approach to enrich santri's understanding of the Qur'an when applied systematically and with respect for pesantren traditions. The study successfully addresses its main objectives: understanding santri's perceptions of hermeneutics, identifying challenges in its application, and assessing its relevance to pesantren education. The integration of hermeneutics offers an alternative for pesantren to remain relevant in the modern era while broadening santri's comprehension of contextualized Qur'anic values. Moreover, it provides practical recommendations for enhancing pesantren education, suggesting a pathway for reform that balances tradition with modern educational needs.

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