

Implementation of the Bandongan Learning Method at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School, Surakarta

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ABSTRACT

Islamic boarding school education in Indonesia plays a crucial role in shaping the religious values and character of students. One of the traditional teaching methods still in use today is the bandongan method, which relies on the oral teaching of yellow books (kitab kuning) by kiai to santri (students). Although it has been practiced for centuries, the relevance of this method in the context of modern education, which demands interactive and technology-based learning, remains a topic that warrants further study. This research aims to analyze the implementation of the bandongan method at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School, Surakarta, by exploring its implementation, identifying factors that influence it, and providing a comprehensive overview of the learning conditions at the boarding school. This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing field research methods and a case study design. Research subjects include ustadz (teachers) and santri, with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research results show that the bandongan method remains effective in conveying religious teachings authoritatively and preserving the scholarly tradition of pesantren, despite limited interaction between teachers and santri. To address 21st-century educational challenges, pesantren are advised to conduct learning innovations by integrating technology and more participatory approaches. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of traditional learning methods that remain adaptable and relevant to contemporary needs.

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INTRODUCTION

Learning methods play a significant role in the education system as they serve as tools to implement learning plans in real activities to achieve learning objectives most effectively. Sanjaya (Ilyas & Armizi, 2020) states that a method is a way used to implement plans so that objectives can be achieved effectively. Therefore, choosing the right learning approach is crucial for educational success. In this situation, implementing methods that match student characteristics and the material being taught is essential for achieving optimal learning outcomes.

Besides functioning as religious propagation institutions, pesantren have been drivers of education in Indonesia since their establishment, starting from surau or langgar. Although initially focused on Islamic aspects and religious knowledge, the educational goal implicitly is to educate students' spirituality, which over time has become the primary educational objective (Shafwan &

Zakariya, 2021). The continued use of the bandongan method reflects the historical journey of Islamic boarding schools, which initially only functioned as simple religious learning places but have evolved into more systematic and multifunctional Islamic educational institutions (Faisal Kamal, 2018)

The selection of learning methods in the educational process is one of the important factors determining the success of achieving learning objectives. The correct method will enable teachers to deliver material effectively and meet students' needs. Ginting (Ilyas & Armizi, 2020) states that learning methods are specific ways or styles that utilize basic educational principles, techniques, and various other resources to create active and meaningful learning experiences for students. It shows that learning methods are not only about delivering lessons but also about efforts to build active student engagement through structured and contextually relevant approaches.

The bandongan learning method is still used today in Salafi pesantren. This method illustrates the classic relationship between teacher (also known as kiai) and student (also known as santri), where the learning process takes place in one direction. In practice, a kiai reads parts of the yellow books in Arabic, then translates them, and discusses the content with santri to understand its meaning. Without engaging in direct discussion or question-and-answer sessions, santri listen carefully to explanations and note important points. Although there is minimal interaction, it is considered effective in maintaining scholarly authority and knowledge transmission from one generation to the next. The bandongan method is considered traditional yet still used because it is deemed capable of disseminating classical knowledge in an authoritative and comprehensive manner (Anwar & Dimyathi, 2024). Bandongan is more than just a technique; it exemplifies the relationship between teacher and student in the pesantren tradition, characterized by spirituality and exemplary behavior. Studies have found that this method creates an intense collective learning atmosphere and fosters santri respect for teachers' scholarly authority, both of which are important components of traditional Islamic education (Inwan, 2024).

Bandongan has similarities with the halaqoh model, which is also a conventional learning model in Islamic tradition. In the halaqoh model, students sit in a circle surrounding the teacher and listen carefully to what the teacher says. Both this method and others focus on the teacher and involve students as active listeners. They do not engage in direct interaction, such as speaking or question-and-answer sessions. This method is similar to conventional educational systems, which prioritize teacher authority, respect for knowledge, and listening as primary means of knowledge absorption (Faisal Kamal, 2020).

Conversely, the bandongan method has limitations. This method is considered to be outdated, as it does not utilize modern pedagogical approaches that are more dialogical and technology-based, and does not provide teachers with opportunities to participate actively. A study by Fatah & Hidayatullah (2021) reveals that santri from contemporary academic backgrounds frequently encounter difficulties in understanding basic books without support from visual media or individual practical exercises (Fatah & Hidayatullah, 2021).

Research results (Faisal Kamal, 2020) indicate that the bandongan learning approach can encourage students to learn independently and maintain their focus and attention on the oral content conveyed by the instructor. At Pondok Pesantren Islam Nyai Zainab Shiddiq in Jember, (Wahyuni, 2022) investigated the use of bandongan to aid santri in understanding the Fathul Qarib book. Research results show that despite limited direct interaction between teacher and student, this method, through systematic explanation, is effective in helping students understand the book's content. However, despite many studies conducted, to date, there has been no research focusing on the use of the bandongan method at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School, Surakarta. This limitation suggests that further research is necessary to comprehend how the bandongan technique is employed at that pesantren and to assess its effectiveness in the context of modern education.

Along with rapid educational modernization and technology integration in learning processes, pesantren face challenges not only to maintain tradition but also to innovate and align with the times. The bandongan learning method, as one of the distinctive inheritances in the

pesantren education system, needs to be re-examined in terms of effectiveness and relevance in the modern education era.

This research is important because it can provide a comprehensive picture of educational conditions at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School, including how the bandongan method is modified or maintained to address contemporary challenges. As shown by Zidan et al. (2024), pesantren that conduct methodological innovations can maintain the essence of tradition while still allowing adaptation to technological advances and contemporary needs (Zidan et al., 2024).

Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School in Surakarta, Central Java, has a rich history and has played a significant role in the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. This pesantren has maintained unique learning methods and yellow book-based teaching since its establishment in the 19th century. Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School not only educates people about religion but also helps shape the character, ethics, and social skills of santri. This pesantren is unique because it employs the bandongan method, an integral part of the educational process, where a kiai reads, translates, and orally explains the yellow books. Although this method has been tested for years, the pesantren also strives to balance academic tradition with 21st-century educational demands, especially in light of increasingly rapid technological developments.

Based on this background, the purpose of this research is to study the implementation of the bandongan method at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School, with an emphasis on how the method is implemented, the factors that support and hinder its implementation, and to provide a comprehensive overview of the educational conditions at the pesantren.

This research is also expected to contribute to the development of traditional learning models that are suitable for contemporary educational demands. Pesantren needs to continue studying and evaluating methods used to remain suitable for contemporary needs amid rapid technological and learning method developments.

METHODS

There are several ways to conduct research, including the use of various research types, approaches, informants, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques (Fitriyani et al., 2020). This research employs qualitative methods with a field research approach, which involves conducting direct research at the site through observation and surveys to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon. The collected data is descriptive and not in numerical form, but rather in the form of text, images, and other visual representations. (Saldaña, 2020) states that qualitative data can be interview results, field notes, photos, personal documents, and various other notes that help explain the studied phenomenon comprehensively.

The research location is at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School, located at Jalan Veteran No. 263, Serengan, Surakarta City, involving ustadz and santri as research subjects. The data collection techniques employed include interviews, direct observation, and documentation. The data analysis process was conducted in several stages: data collection, data simplification (reduction), data presentation, and conclusion drawing, to comprehensively examine the implementation of learning methods in the Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School environment.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Bandongan Method at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School

One of the classical Islamic learning methods in pesantren is bandongan. This method has long been used to disseminate Islamic knowledge, particularly through the study of yellow books, from one generation to the next. According to Zamakhsyari Dhofier, terminologically, the bandongan method is a learning system where a group of students, numbering from five to five hundred people, listen to explanations from a teacher who reads, translates, and elaborates on the contents of Arabic Islamic books. Each student follows the reading through their respective books, noting complex word meanings and additional explanations provided (Arief Armai, 2002). The bandongan method focuses on a kiai as the sole teacher or source of knowledge. The

kiai's role is very dominant in this method, as the entire teaching-learning process relies on the kiai's ability, understanding, and material delivery to santri (Afifullah, 2021).

The bandongan method at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School is still in use today and remains an integral part of the religious education system, focusing on spiritual, moral, and adab aspects. The principal value of this method lies in knowledge inheritance through sanad channels—chains of scholarship that connect teacher to student directly—and in strengthening the teacher's scholarly authority, which is considered an important figure in the learning process.

At Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School, bandongan is very interesting because there are many materials taught daily. On Mondays, santri deepen their understanding of daily worship practices based on the Prophet's Sunnah by reading and explaining Fiqh Sunnah. On Tuesdays, tahfidz or Quran memorization activities are conducted, enhancing memorization aspects and bringing santri closer to the holy book. Wednesday is the time for muhadhoroh, speech practice aimed at improving santri's confidence and speaking abilities so they can speak well in front of others about Islamic topics. Thursday is dedicated to studying pesantren history, specifically the history of Jamsaren Boarding School, which holds high historical value as one of the oldest pesantrens in Surakarta. Meanwhile, on Friday, classical books such as Fiqh Safinatun Najah, a basic fiqh book used as a foundation for understanding Islamic law, or Ta'lim Muta'alim, which discusses the adab and ethics of knowledge seekers, are discussed.

The bandongan method at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School also has a significant influence on social and cultural interactions at the pesantren. Bandongan activities serve not only as a means of knowledge transfer but also as a medium for strengthening social relationships between teachers and santri. Santri are taught to listen carefully to every explanation from a kiai or ustadz in a solemn and disciplined atmosphere. This process strengthens scholarly bonds based on mutual respect between teacher and student, which is a characteristic of pesantren education.

Bandongan also enhances solidarity among students because they learn in groups, sit in circles, and support one another while studying the material. This interaction shapes santri character by instilling educational values such as patience, perseverance, and respect for teachers. Ultimately, this process produces santri who have deep religious knowledge and shapes them into strong and civilized people in their social lives.

Furthermore, in practice, the bandongan method is not limited only to passive listening; santri often continue activities with informal group discussions to deepen their understanding of the book contents. Thus, the bandongan method can also be interpreted as a form of learning that involves collective activities under teacher guidance, especially when studying classical texts (Effendi Chairi, 2019).

From a theoretical perspective, the bandongan method falls under teacher-centered learning approaches, where the learning process focuses more on the teacher's delivery and the student's reception. It aligns with Nana Sudjana's (2009) opinion that the success of lecture or one-way explanation methods depends on the teacher's ability to deliver and the students' ability to receive. This method has advantages in enhancing the understanding of classical literature (turats) in Islamic boarding schools, primarily because santri are educated to listen and copy explanations directly from teachers who have scholarly authority.

The bandongan method, a classic teaching method centered on yellow book studies, has proven effective in enhancing students' understanding and their ability to read and interpret religious texts. The clear learning structure, sourced directly from teachers, makes it easier for students to understand the contextual meaning, especially in religious texts that require an understanding of classical Arabic, fiqh, and moral thinking frameworks (Islamiyah, 2025).

At Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School, the evaluation of the bandongan method of learning is conducted in two main complementary ways. The first is through direct practice in muhadhoroh and tahfidz activities, and the second is through oral or written examinations at the end of specific periods. Direct practice, for example, where santri are expected to deliver speeches or lectures orally, functions as the leading indicator for evaluating santri's abilities in

the bandongan method. Both components assess students' understanding of material and their ability to apply that knowledge in daily life.

Besides practice, oral or written examinations are also held at the end of each period to test the santri's theoretical understanding of the studied material. In terms of both theory and practice, these examinations serve as comprehensive tests of knowledge mastery. This evaluation is critical because it provides feedback about students' strengths and weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding, and offers opportunities for students to modify or improve their learning. This evaluation is then used as a basis for subsequent learning plans to ensure that the educational process at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School remains dynamic and develops according to santri needs and ability development.

B. Supporting and Hindering Factors

The bandongan method remains a highly valuable approach in pesantren education because it offers numerous benefits to the learning process. Bandongan, on the other hand, is taught in groups. In bandongan, teachers read books and provide explanations about the book's contents to several students. Santri notes and actively listens to these explanations. Because many teachers can follow one learning session, this method saves more time. Bandongan also provides santri with a collective experience when learning together, creating an intimate learning atmosphere (Surya Eka Priyatna, Ali Muammar, 2024).

The advantage of the bandongan method is the freedom given to Ustadz to explain material extensively without being bound by specific curricula. It allows Ustadz to adjust material delivery to santri needs and context, making the learning process more flexible and adaptive. Learning activities end with a conclusion process, where Ustadz summarizes the delivered material, helping santri reflect on what they have learned (Anwar & Dimyathi, 2024).

This method enables a teacher (ustadz) to teach yellow books to many santri effectively. One of its main advantages is that santri can hear direct explanations from teachers and have opportunities to note and understand material in their own way. It enables santri to develop independent learning abilities, aligning with pesantren education principles that prioritize discipline and a continuous pursuit of knowledge. "The bandongan method provides opportunities for santri to understand texts directly, which strengthens the learning process more comprehensively" (Asep Rahmatullah, 2022). Therefore, this method remains an important foundation in pesantren education.

However, amid rapid advances in digital technology, santri living in a world heavily influenced by technology face their own challenges in following the learning method with the bandongan. Many santri are already accustomed to using technology such as smartphones, tablets, and computers. Santri who also undergo formal education outside Islamic boarding schools often struggle to balance time between school learning and learning obligations at pesantren. Differences in learning patterns between formal schools and Islamic boarding schools make them less motivated to focus on pesantren lessons fully. It aligns with the opinions expressed by Rizqi Amelia, Laily Masruroh, and Burhanuddin Ridlwan, who revealed that "high santri activities who also pursue formal education outside pesantren often cause them fatigue, which in turn reduces their motivation to follow pesantren learning" (Amelia et al., 2020).

Additionally, the bandongan method also receives support from direct teaching methods that are easily understood by santri, although there is sometimes limited interaction between santri and teachers. When this method is combined with technology, such as digital applications or video-based learning materials, santri can access materials more flexibly, thereby enhancing their understanding without compromising traditional learning values at pesantren.

Although the bandongan method has many advantages, several factors hinder its application at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School. The biggest obstacle is that some teachers lack the desire to learn. It is greatly influenced by the limited time available to study material comprehensively, as well as a lack of interest in educational approaches considered monotonous and lacking interaction. Many teachers are not interested in the bandongan method because they

are more accustomed to technology-based or interactive learning. The Bashirotul Hidayah journal found that "santri learning motivation greatly depends on how teachers deliver material, and if the method used is considered monotonous, their motivation will decrease." Consequently, to become more attractive to santri, teaching approaches at pesantren must be updated, especially in this digital era (Bashirotul Hidayah, 2019)

Besides motivation problems, vape use by student peers also becomes an obstacle that cannot be ignored. Many teenage students are exposed to bad habits such as smoking or vaping. These habits affect their concentration when learning, which threatens the internalization of knowledge. This social problem remains an obstacle to maintaining santri discipline and focus, although it is not directly related to the bandongan technique. "Problems with bad habits such as smoking or using vapes among teenage santri often negatively impact their academic performance and discipline," (Amelia et al., 2020).

Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School is located on the edge of a major highway, making it more difficult. Vehicle noise that disturbs students during lessons can be a distraction. It disrupts the tranquility that should be created during the bandongan process. "Sounds coming from outside the pesantren, such as from passing vehicles, can affect learning quality, especially in activities requiring high concentration, such as yellow book learning" (Amelia et al., 2020).

Furthermore, time management problems become a significant challenge for the bandongan method. Sometimes, it is impossible to discuss all topics within a limited time. Some books taught require a long time to be understood comprehensively. It causes students not to understand the taught material truly. "Limited time becomes one of the obstacles in learning books that require more time and deeper understanding, especially in fiqh and tasawuf studies" (Asep Rahmatullah, 2022). Therefore, learning time must be adjusted to the difficulty level of the material being delivered so that students can obtain optimal understanding. At this pesantren, all santri learn books using the bandongan method, although they have different educational levels, so imbalances often occur in their understanding of what is being studied (Rizqi Fauziyah, Dewi Alvianti, 2024).

Finally, one obstacle to implementing the bandongan method is the santri's belief in their instructors. Student understanding can be hindered when educators are absent or cannot explain material comprehensively. "Santri who only rely on teacher explanations in the bandongan method may experience difficulties understanding material if teachers are not active in providing explanations or if teaching is only done through (Bashirotul Hidayah, 2019) It demonstrates the importance of teachers actively participating in organizing and guiding learning.

CONCLUSION

Research results show that the bandongan method at Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School remains effective in transferring classical religious knowledge. This method maintains pesantren scholarly traditions through text reading and explanation by kiai, as well as active santri participation in noting and understanding material. Additionally, this method instills values such as perseverance, adab in seeking knowledge, and learning independence. Its persistence amid modernization indicates the pesantren's ability to maintain traditional educational authenticity.

However, several obstacles were also identified, including low learning motivation, a lack of innovation in material delivery, and disturbances from social and technological environments. It shows that the bandongan method needs to be developed to remain relevant and attractive to current generations. This research contributes to efforts to preserve while renewing traditional learning methods. Further research is recommended to explore the integration of the bandongan method with interactive and digital approaches in a proportionate manner, to enhance learning effectiveness without compromising distinctive pesantren values.

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