Nyantri Jaman Now :
Manifestation of Indonesian Santri Identity in the Digital Era

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Abstract

This article examines the phenomenon of nyantri (studying at pesantren) in the digital era as a manifestation of cultural and religious identity in the context of rapid social change. The purpose of this research is to understand the function of nyantri as a means of preserving and shaping personal and social identity amidst the currents of globalization and the development of digital technology. This research also aims to identify and analyze the personal and social identities of students in the digital era. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative with in-depth interview techniques and participatory observation at Pondok Pesantren Al Ikhsan Beji, Banyumas, Central Java. The research results show that although the pesantren have adapted to technological developments, traditional values remain the main foundation in the process of education and character formation of the students. Students utilize social media and technology to broaden their religious horizons, while still maintaining conventional religious practices. The digital era brings challenges for students in managing change, but it also opens up space for innovation in showcasing their identity. In the digital era, being a student remains relevant as a means of forming a strong identity, despite shifts in the methods and practices used.

Keywords *Social Identity; Santri; and Digital Era.*

Introduction

Santri in the Big Indonesian Dictionary refers to people who study Islam or worship seriously. Nurdin (2019) stated that santri refers to members of Javanese society who adhere to Islamic teachings, such as prayer, fasting during Ramadan, pilgrimage to Mecca, studying Arabic religious texts and other practices that demonstrate normative piety. Normative piety is a set of behaviors that have been described by Allah through His messenger the Prophet Muhammad SAW for Muslims (Woodward, 2004). Santri preserves Islamic culture and traditions through

learning and activities in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Islamic boarding school education believes that every human action in life can be of worship value if driven by good and sincere intentions (Muhakamurrohman, 2014). The traditions and culture of Islamic boarding schools make every aspect of a santri's life oriented towards worship to gain rewards. Naim (2009) stated that the values that frame the life of Islamic boarding schools are the values of worship to produce pious graduates. The word "pious" becomes the core of the life of the Islamic boarding school, because all Islamic boarding school programs are directed at this (Abdurrahman, 1997). This value of worship does not only have implications for the aspect of worship alone, but also enters the social, cultural, and even political realms.

In the millennial era, the lives of students are inseparable from the influence of modernization. The combination of Islamic boarding school traditions and modern life is a manifestation of the existence of millennial students. Nurdin (2019) said that millennial students are students who are now between 20 and 40 years old because they were born between the early 1980s and early 2000s. Margianto (2020) stated that millennial students are a generation that studies Islamic teachings and masters information technology and digitalization, likes freedom and doing personnel, relies on instant information speed, likes to learn and work in an innovative environment, thinks critically, likes to use social media and is very dependent on the internet. Afifah (2020) stated that millennial students are students who perpetuate Islamic boarding school traditions, obey the orders of the kiai, and at the same time are part of the gadget generation in the millennial era. In this era, traditional Islamic boarding school culture blends with modern life which is colored by sophisticated technology. Technological advances have brought changes to various aspects of society, including the behavior of students in Islamic boarding schools.

Muzakki (2017) states that santri behavior is prone to change. Changes in santri behavior can be seen in their daily activities in pesantren while using technology. The use of the internet, *gadgets*, and social media provides convenience for santri in various activities, ranging from communicating, shopping, ordering food, studying, reading the Quran, and even participating in *online* studies. Hasanah (2019) stated that the lifestyle of santri has shifted from a simple lifestyle to a consumptive one. This is one of the

impacts of the emergence of *e-commerce* services on *smartphones*. What happens is that the santri's goal in consuming something is not only to fulfill needs but also desires and prestige and to follow existing trends.

Purnomo (2021) states that millennial santri show hyperreality in consumption patterns. The santri's consumption of *gadgets* or *cellphones* creates a 'sign' that distinguishes themselves. Although the essence of the *cell phone* functions as a communication tool, the 'sign' carried by the *cell phone* affects the social life of santri. *Mobile phones have become* a tool to express the identity and lifestyle of santri. The expression of santri identity can also be seen from their social media accounts, such as Instagram, Facebook, and Tik Tok. The norms and rules inherent in santri do not prevent them from existing on social media. Like the general public, santri also use social media to interact with friends, friends, and family, santri also present themselves on social media (Herdiana, 2020) . This is a form of change in santri behavior in displaying their social identity.

Lifestyle changes in pesantren do not only occur in santri, but also in kiai families. Mubaroka (2024) explained that the behavior of *nawaning* (kiai's daughter)

in salaf pesantren often contradicts the value of simplicity applied by pesantren. For example, *nawaning*'s lifestyle in dressing shows the impression of luxury. *Nawaning* tends to wear clothes that are excessive, branded, and with prices that are not cheap. This cannot be separated from the development of technology. *Nawaning* can use *gadgets* and access social media freely, so they can easily access information including in terms of appearance and how to dress. This *nawaning* behavior offers new values that are followed by santri in pesantren. The lifestyle of santri, especially in terms of dressing, began to change. Female santri who previously looked simple using sarongs and long hem, began to look fashionable by wearing gamis of various models. The value of clothing among santri is no longer only as a cover for the aurat, but also a manifestation of santri social identity. At this point, it is interesting to examine the identity of santri in the digital era.

So far, studies on santri social identity tend to look at the process of identity formation and the representation of santri identity on social media. Fatansyah (2019) in his research explains that santri identity can be formed through giving advice and learning activities in pesantren. Hidayat and Khadavi (2024) explain the

role of social media in shaping religious identity in Madrasah Diniyah Salafiyah. Other studies pay attention to the representation of santri identity on social media that emphasizes traditional characters. Salas and Kartika (2020) explain the representation of santri identity in films which is portrayed as a dominant figure in religious life and the afterlife orientation. Nayiroh (2021) discusses the symbols of santri simplicity displayed in social media. The symbols of simplicity displayed by santri community in everyday life characterize their consistency in practicing religious teachings. Sera (2023) examines the representation of cultural identity through the fashion style and language style of female santri at the Raudlotul Qur'an Islamic boarding school in Kauman Village, Semarang City.

Another study examines pesantren and the role of santri in the digital era. Safitri (2020) examines the potential of santri in *digital literacy* transformation entering the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 in Modern Islamic Boarding Schools. According to her, santri must have the ability to analyze and evaluate media content, especially those from digital media, even though it is not yet comprehensive. Saini (2024) discussed digitalization as an opportunity for

pesantren to develop and remain relevant in the modern era. Proper management of technology can strengthen traditional values and expand the benefits of Islamic religious education. Mat Rokim (2025) in his study explained that technology can be a challenge in the character education of santri, especially if it is not accompanied by proper regulations in the pesantren environment. Uncontrolled information flow can have an impact on the mindset and behavior of santri. Mariska (2025) stated that santri self-regulation in managing technology in the digital era is important to build santri character. However, optimizing santri self-regulation requires a comprehensive strategy, including institutional policies, digital skills training, and integration of religious values. Thus, the santri's Islamic identity can adapt in the midst of the challenges of the digital era.

Some of the studies mentioned above have not revealed changes in santri identity in the digital era. This research complements the shortcomings of existing studies by looking at the social identity of santri that emerges as a response to modernization, technological sophistication, and millennial culture. Identity issues are directly related to cultural developments that contain symbols, actions, and ways of life.

Specifically, this study explains the lifestyle and behavior of santri at Pondok Pesantren Al Ikhsan Beji which reflects their identity as millennial santri. Based on pesantren statistical data, in 2024 Pondok Pesantren Al Ikhsan Beji has 600 santri with an age range of 13-36 years. They include groups of MTs, MA, college students, and senior santri who double as ustadz (teacher) or pesantren administrators. The presence of student santri causes the use of gadgets and the internet to be more intensive in the pesantren environment. In addition, in the midst of the traditional pesantren education system, santri are directed to think critically and creatively through various events or activities carried out, such as *Sunday morning* activities and art performances which are routine pesantren agendas. Some of these things are the considerations for choosing the pesantren as a research location in this study.

This research is based on the phenomenon of modern cultural penetration in the digital era in the pesantren environment. This is indicated to change the lifestyle that surrounds the lives of santri. The identity and traditionality of santri are on the same stage as Western ideology. Modern culture mingles with traditional pesantren culture. Millennial santri who are close to technological sophistication and critical thinking patterns face a conservative pesantren culture. This can lead to the emergence of a new identity of santri as millennial santri. Therefore, this research intends to explain and analyze the manifestation of millennial santri's social identity in the digital era.

A. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods with the aim of analyzing santri behavior patterns that reflect the social identity of millennial santri. The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al Ikhsan in Beji Village, Kedungbanteng District, Banyumas Regency. Based on data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs Banyumas Regency, Al Ikhsan Islamic Boarding School is the only Islamic boarding school in Banyumas Regency that organizes a formal education system (MTS and MA) as well as being a university partner, namely UIN KH. Syaifudin Zuhri Purwokerto in the pesantren education program for new students. Pesantren statistics show that in 2024, the number of students at Al Ikhsan Islamic Boarding School was 600 students consisting of 285 students at the MTs level, 165 students at the MA level, and 150 students at the lecture level. The presence

of student groups causes the use of gadgets and the internet to become more massive in the pesantren environment. In addition, in the midst of the traditional pesantren education system, Al Ikhsan students are directed to think critically and creatively through various events or activities carried out. Some of these things are the considerations for the pesantren to be chosen as a research location in this study.

This study involved 11 informants consisting of 6 santri, 3 ustaz (religious teacher), and 2 community members who were *purposively* selected based on certain criteria. First, the informants are ustaz and santri of Al Ikhsan who were born between 1980-2002 and have lived in the pesantren for at least two years. This is because santri with these criteria are included in the millennial generation category as the research aims and objectives. In addition, santri who have lived in pesantren for at least two years have enough experience to provide in-depth insight into life in pesantren. Second, informants are santri who have access to information and communication technology. This is because this research focuses on the lives of santri in the modern era, which cannot be separated from the influence of technology. Third, informants are community members who live around the boarding school and

have a good understanding of the life of santri in pesantren.

Data collection was using observation, interview, and documentation study techniques. The analysis technique used is the Miles and Huberman interactive data analysis technique which includes three streams of activities, namely data condensation, data presentation, and verification or conclusion drawing (Martono, 2016) . In the data condensation stage, data obtained through interviews were analyzed by simplifying and classifying data to select necessary and unnecessary data, and organizing data so that the collected data could be verified. In the next stage, all data or information collected was organized and presented in a simpler form, namely in the form of narrative text and matrix. In the verification stage, the data that has been presented is then concluded and verified, both in terms of meaning and the truth of the conclusions agreed upon by the research informants. At this stage, various foreign terms said by informants are also verified so that there are no errors in their meaning and interpretation.

B. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Results

Modernization also affects the lives of santri in pesantren. The identity of santri acculturates with modern culture and displays the new face of santri as millennial santri. The following is data on the manifestation of the social identity of millennial santri at Pondok Pesantren Al Ikhsan Beji:

Table 1 shows the lifestyle of santri who are in line with the times and technological advances, ranging from using social media, increasing self-capacity through foreign language skills, utilizing the internet as a learning medium, to actively following trends in clothing styles. Table 1 also shows the complexity of millennial santri identity. There are three basic things that interpret the social identity of millennial santri based on the table, namely conservatism through the routine of reciting the Quran, adaptive by following trends, and liberal personalities who think critically and rationally. The table shows that as a consequence of the status of santri, one must perform the role of santri, such as obeying the rules and maintaining the good name of the pesantren, including participating in ngaji (recitation) activities. The identity of millennial santri as santri who are adaptive to the times and open to change can be seen in the books used by santri for recitation. The following is visual documentation related to the books used by santri in recitation activities:

Table 1. Manifestation of Millennial Santri Social Identity

No.	Form of Santri behavior	Social Identity Code
1.	Active on social media, such as *whatsapp*, instagram, *facebook* dan *youtube*.	*Technology literacy*
2.	Demonstrate Arabic and English language skills through "pentas seni dwi bahasa"	Multi talented
3.	*Update* modern culture through gadgets and the internet.	*Gaul/open minded*
4.	Watch online recitations/lectures	Multiple references
5.	Using a parroted book with Indonesian translation *Quran recitation* activities.	Adaptive
6.	Sports, playing, traveling, surfing social media, and watching movies to fill their free time in the pesantren.	Creative
7.	The santri's style of dress follows the Muslim fashion trend.	*Fashionable*
8.	Have a broad outlook and have a clear vision of progress.	Visioner
9.	Think rationally, critically and creatively.	Liberal personalities
10.	Good at communicating and having a wide network which is due to the influence of friends on social media.	*Socializer*
11.	Inspiring and embracing various groups.	*Leadership*

Source: Primary data compiled by the author, 2023.
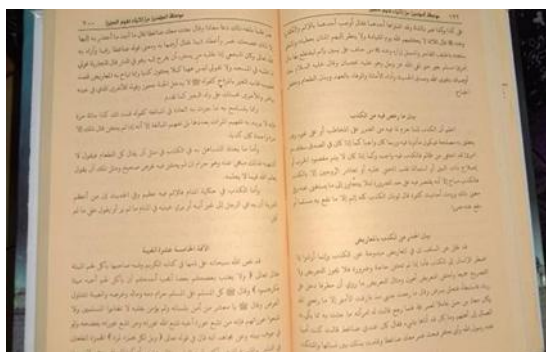
Picture. Holy book of Millennial Santri
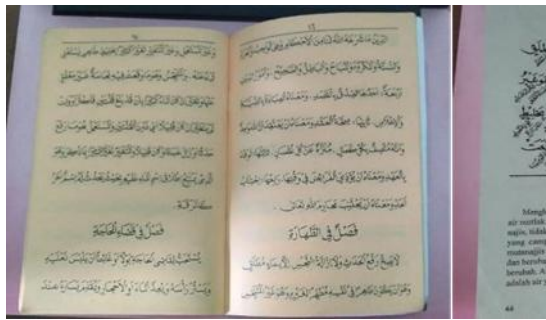
Source: Author's documentation.

Picture 2. Traditional Santri's holy book

Source: Author's documentation.

Picture 1 shows two forms of holy book used by millennial students, while figure 2 shows the holy book used by traditional students. Both are the same book, namely the Durorul Bahiyah book. However, both have different writing methods. In picture 1, the writing in the book uses arabic letters with arrows and in the other picture is accompanied by a translation in Javanese Pegon letters and an explanation in Indonesian. In picture 2, the book is written in bare Arabic letters (without harakat), without translation, and without explanation. The translation and explanation of the book are written by the santri while reciting the Quran to the ustaz/kiai. The difference in the two forms of the book interprets the identity of millennial santri who are adaptive to the times. Translations and explanations in the book make it easier for santri to learn. This creates santri independence in studying the books.

The social identity of millennial santri is also seen in the style of dress, speech, and social behavior of santri. Santri who are identical to sarongs now look more fashionable with a variety of sarong motifs that are not monotonous. Female santri look more elegant with gamis or various tunic models and hijab motifs used. The santri's current style of dress follows the trends displayed by Islamic figures on social media. For example, the clothing of female santri is currently oriented towards the clothing style of ning Sheila Hasina from Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School, and ning Wirda Mansyur, the daughter of ustaz Yusuf Mansyur, while male santri are trending with the dressing style of gus Azmi. The following is a portrait of the dressing style of gus and

ning, which has become a reference and fashion trend for santri:

Picture 3. Dress styles of Ning Sheila, Ning Wirda Mansyur, and Gus Azmi

Source: Instagram of Ning Sheila, Ning Wirda, and gus Azmi.

The picture displays the dressing style of the gus and ning followed by the santri. Ning Sheila is elegant with a gamis, Ning Wirda with a *stylish* outfit and pasmina headscarf, and Gus Azmi who looks relaxed and casual displays a *fashionable* impression on their appearance. This has become a fashion trend followed by santri in general.

The traditional santri clothing style of sarungan and pecian is displayed by santri when participating in religious activities in pesantren, such as *recitation, maulidan*, grave pilgrimage, and *sowan. Fashion trends*

sarungan and pecian are traditional santri clothing styles written in pesantren regulations. However, outside of religious activities, millennial santri are not required to wear sarongs and caps. In non-religious activities or santri activities outside the pesantren, for example during lectures, outbound activities, or pesantren art performances, santri wear *casual* and *stylish* clothes following the times.

Nyantri in the Big Indonesian Dictionary means to hunt or learn. The term *nyantri* usually refers to the process of learning someone in a boarding school. The learning model in pesantren directs students not only to learn to gain knowledge, but also to serve the teacher or kiai. The process of learning and serving is what is called *nyantri. Nyantri* with various cultures and traditions form different meanings for each santri. The following is the meaning of *nyantri* for millennial students at Ponpes Al Ikhsan Beji:

Table 2: The meaning of *Nyantri* for Millennial Santri

No.	The meaning of *Nyantri*	
1.	Cultural Adaptation	Students' self-adjus

2.	Shaping Character and Morality	Pesantren teaches moral values.
3.	Train Discipline and Independence	Santri obey the pesantren rules and participate in every pesantren activity.
4.	Financial management	Managing pocket money from parents.
5.	Building Tolerance	Pesantren is a miniature society where students learn about differences and tolerance.
6.	Seeking Kiai's Blessing	Hoping for more goodness through the help of the kiai.
7.	Learning Religious Knowledge	Deepen religious knowledge.

Source: Primary data compiled by the author, 2023.

The table shows the meaning of *nyantri* that appears in the behavior of santri in various activities, activities, and daily life in pesantren. Pesantren traditions and regulations are one of the things that influence the meaning of *nyantri*. The meanings of *nyantri* stated in the table include learning religious knowledge, learning to socialize and adapt to the Islamic culture of pesantren, and expecting blessings from kiai. In addition to some of these meanings, *nyantri* also means self-devotion to the kiai. It means obeying and following everything the kiai commands.

The santri's obedience and respect for the kiai is different from the student's obedience to the teacher. Students' obedience to teachers is usually limited to the scope of professional work. Students carry out orders from teachers related to teaching and learning activities, such as doing homework, maintaining class cleanliness and order, and dressing neatly. This is different from santri obedience which covers all aspects of life. Santri often help the kiai in his personal affairs, such as washing the kiai's car, cleaning the kiai's house, preparing the kiai's food, and taking care of the kiai's son/daughter. Santri refer to this as taciturn behavior towards the kiai. The following is a form of taciturn behavior of santri at Al Ikhsan Beji Islamic Boarding School:

Table 3. Forms of Taciturn Behavior

No.	Form of Allegiance	
1.	Becoming a kiai servant	Obey all orders of the kia...
2.	Following kiai worship practices	Practicing the kiai's teach... kiai does.
3.	Selective on kiai orders	Implement kiai orders th... teachings and carry out k... time). other activities)
4.	Politeness towards kiai	Speak softly and behave...
5.	Praying for kiai	Praying for the kiai's hea... personally and in the trad...
6.	Virtual *Sowan*	Communicate with kiai t... *whatsapp.*
7.	Comply with boarding school rules	Santri obey the rules of t... punishment is believed t... the kiai happy is a form o...

| 8. | Maintain boarding school facilities | Maintaining the pesantren facilities means maintaining the kiai's mandate. |
| 9. | Receive advice and reprimands with sincerity | Receive advice... kiai and strive to improve themselves. |

Source: Primary data compiled by the author, 2023.

Table 3 presents data on the forms of santri's pious behavior. The table shows that pious behavior is expressed in the form of courtesy and manners. The santri's courtesy to the kiai is the basis for the manifestation of pious behavior. Taciturn behavior is also displayed in the daily behavior of santri, including: obeying pesantren regulations, maintaining pesantren facilities, and receiving kiai advice accompanied by efforts to improve themselves. The santri expected by kiai are good santri who obey the rules of the pesantren, as well as santri who gracefully accept the kiai's advice.

Table 3 also shows a new form of santri's *pious* behavior towards kiai, namely virtual *sowan*. Santri utilize social media such as WhatsApp to establish communication with kiai. Santri send text messages or make calls with kiai. Although communicating through social media, manners and etiquette are still considered. Santri use Kromo Inggil Javanese when sending messages with kiai. Santri who are limited in their ability to speak Javanese Kromo Inggil can easily search for the vocabulary first on the internet. This shows the adaptive behavior of santri and kiai towards modernization and technological advances.

2. Discussion

Ngaji (Qur'an recitation): Identity in Routine

Berger (1990) states that identity is a key element of subjective reality that is dialectically related to society. According to him, society is a sui generis reality that includes several elements such as institutions, roles, and identities. Institutions provide roles, for example, pesantren divide roles between kiai and santri. Roles in society provide capital for individual behavior, as the role of santri is a guideline for santri behavior. This behavioral system then forms individual identity. In other words, it is society that provides identity for individuals. Identity is formed by social processes and is obtained based on understanding human behavior in their social context.

Santris act in accordance with their understanding of the pesantren in relation to the culture, traditions, and social system of the pesantren. Identity is given by society to individuals for the manner of behavior displayed. Therefore, a person does not only play his role, but he must become someone as demanded by society. A santri is not only about studying at the pesantren, but he must display good santri behavior as in the view of society, for example, speaking softly, polite, and good at reciting the Koran.

Tajfel (1982) in social identity theory believes that what individuals feel, think, and do are manifestations of collective values that are usually preserved in certain social organizations that individuals are part of. This is in line with (Castell, 2001)'s statement about self-identity which reveals that in society there are several forms of identity which he calls my, their, and other identities. For example, I am a santri, and they are not santri. I am not a santri because I am different from Ahmad who diligently prays and recites the Koran, I am a Muslim like Ahmad but I am abangan. This identity then leads the individual to behave as

expected by society for the identity they have.

Santri in the traditional concept refers to someone who is gloved and has a cap and is good at reciting and studying classical Arabic books. Dhofier (2011) states that the term santri can mean a recitation teacher, or a person who has knowledge of the holy book, or a person who is good at writing, a student at a boarding school, or a person who adheres to Islam seriously. Chamidi (2017) states that the identity of santri is an identity that rests on Islamic ethics (akhlaqu alIslamiyah), namely good behavior based on Islamic teachings, such as honesty, tolerance, helping, sincerity, and trustworthiness. This understanding of Islamic ethics then underlies how the figure of a santri must be istikamah in studying and reciting the Koran.

Holis (2022) states that there are seven methods in shaping character as the identity of santri, namely: *uswah hasanah* (exemplary), practice and habituation, *ibrah* (taking lessons), *mau'idah*, discipline, *targhib wa tahzib* (rewards and punishments), and independence. This study complements the by presenting the

routine of *ngaji* activities as the formation of character and identity of santri. *Koranic* activities contain elements of exemplary, because they feature intelligent and authoritative ustaz/ustazah figures as *Koranic* teachers who can be used as examples or role models for santri. In addition, *ngaji* activities are social practices that train discipline and can shape the character and identity of santri.

Giddens (1984) states that social practices take place in space and time called the arena or stage of action. Space and time are constitutive elements of community action and organization. Therefore, space and time are integral in social practice. The santri activity schedule is a space and time boundary that serves as a guideline for santri in carrying out their routines. Student activities become directed and have a clear time allocation. This allows for consistent repetition, which strengthens the social practices of santri into a tradition that is cultured in pesantren. *Ngaji* is an element that distinguishes santri from other community groups. In other words, *ngaji* is the identity of the santri. The statement "santri must recite the *Koran*" shows the santri's

awareness of their social identity. This means that someone who has an identity as a santri, then he must recite the Koran as a mirror of his identity. In addition to reciting the Koran, santri also need to apply the knowledge learned in everyday life. Santri are also expected to be able to channel the knowledge learned to others. This is a form of reproduction of *ngaji* activities as a social practice. Thus, the continuity of the Koranic culture in pesantren can be preserved.

In relation to the perspective of Giddens′ structuration theory, *ngaji* is a social practice that involves a duality relationship between actors (actions) and structures. Kiai and santri are concrete actors who perform *ngaji* (read Qur'an) continuously. Meanwhile, the schedule of activities for santri and pesantren administrators is a structure that is formed while forming the repetition of ngaji as a social practice. The schedule of activities for santri and pesantren administrators is a means for the social practice of *ngaji to* occur. The existence of the santri activity schedule allows santri to perform *ngaji* continuously. Likewise, the existence of pesantren administrators who

compile the curriculum and pesantren rules and implement them, so that the continuity of the recitation can be maintained.

Giddens (1984) states that social practices that are repeated and patterned across time and space form a duality relationship between actors (actions) and structures. This duality lies in the fact that there is a rule-like schemata that becomes the principle for practices in various places and times. Piaget (2002) states that schemata are cognitive structures with which a person adapts and continues to experience mental development in his interaction with the environment. Schemata also serve as categories for identifying incoming stimuli, and continue to develop.

In the social practice of *ngaji*, the schemata that emerge in the form of santri's knowledge and understanding that *ngaji* is a necessity with which santri get religious knowledge as a guide to life and without which santri can lose their direction and identity. This understanding arises as a result of the systematized repetition of *ngaji* activities in the santri activity schedule. The schedule is an empowering structure and it is this structure that allows the social practice of ngaji. The schedule requires santri to be disciplined and make proper time management. As a result, this can shape the character and personality of santri who are *istiqomah* (consistent) in relation to the social practice of *ngaji*.

Giddens (1984) states that in social practice there is something called consciousness. According to Giddens (1984), actors 'know' what they are doing, but 'knowing' does not mean 'being aware' let alone the capacity to explain all processes explicitly. Giddens (1984) reveals three types of consciousness in the internal dimension of actors in a social practice. First, *unconscious motives* are desires or needs that have the potential to lead to action but not the action itself. Forms of unconscious motivation in the social practice of *ngaji,* for example, the desire or need of santri to be able to memorize the yellow books well. Second, *discursive consciousness*, which refers to the capacity to reflect or provide explicit explanations for actions taken (Giddens, 1984). For example, students recite the *Quran* to avoid reprimand or punishment from the administrator. This is a form of discursive awareness,

because in this dimension, santri are able to explain the reasons for their *ngaji* actions, namely to avoid punishment (for example). This shows that the rules of the pesantren are one of the reasons why students participate in the Quranic activities. Students *recite the Quran* so that they do not get punished.

The third type of consciousness is practical consciousness, which refers to the cluster of practical knowledge that cannot always be decomposed. Practical awareness makes daily life take place without continuous questioning of what is happening or should be done. At this stage, the santri recite *the Koran* no longer merely to gain knowledge or to avoid being reprimanded by the administrator, but the *Koran* has become part of themselves. Whether or not there is a reprimand from the administrator, practical awareness encourages students to recite the *Koran* as an unquestionable routine. In the practical awareness dimension, students know that when it is time to recite *the Koran*, they must *recite* the *Koran*, when other students are depositing, they must queue behind them. The way students sit when reciting the Quran also shows

a form of practical awareness, because students no longer question the actions taken.

In phenomenological studies, this is the level that contains clusters of presupposed knowledge and is a source of security (Ritzer, 2014) . At this level, daily life takes place without continuous questioning of what is happening or should be done. Santri carry out their routines or activities without questioning why and how they do these activities. It is at this stage that the santri routine becomes a mirror of the santri's social identity. The santri routine in the Koranic activities emphasizes the social identity of the santri which distinguishes the santri from other society groups.

The social practice of *ngaji* undergoes a process of derutinization. The renewal of the book model used by santri shows this derutinization. In traditional santri, the books used are classical books written in Arabic letters (without harakat), while millennial santri currently use books written in Arabic letters with arrows equipped with Indonesian translations and explanations. Initially, this change was not accepted in pesantren, but the use of translated books among santri

became more widespread. Therefore, pesantren use the book as one of the santri's learning resources. This forms a new identity of millennial santri, namely santri who *study* using semi-modern classical books.

Huntington states that modernization is a process of change that cannot be avoided (Alamsyah, 2022). Modern life cannot be eliminated from every human being, including groups of santri in pesantren. The times require santri to expand their 'capacity' so as not to drown in civilization. Santri, who tend to perpetuate a conservative culture, also need to have the ability to think critically and be open to various social problems. In an all-digital era, the use of the internet is unavoidable even in a pesantren environment. In line with Putri's research (2023), the internet makes it easier for santri to find references, for example, related to things they do not understand the explanation in the books studied. This confirms the adaptive character of santri with cultural developments, which directly displays the social identity of millennial santri. The activeness of santri in social media, the use of the internet as a source of

references including religious references, and the *fashionable* way of dressing santri show the social identity of santri as millennial santri.

1. **The Existence of Tradition and the Meaning of *Nyantri***

The social identity of millennial santri is also seen in their ability to speak foreign languages (Arabic and English). Various forms of art performances (monologue dramas, poetry musicals, and musical dramas) performed by santri in pesantren art performances show the innovation and creativity of santri. This is one of the elements that distinguish millennial santri from traditional santri who are monotonous with their conservativeness.

The social identity of millennial santri is also seen in the activities of santri in utilizing technology. the character of santri who are adaptive to technological developments through the use of the internet and social media. Social media is utilized by santri as a source of reference and a means of publishing their activities in pesantren. The existence of santri on social media illustrates the santri's response to technological developments. The

response to the progress of the times has also become the basis for the creation of new social practices in pesantren. The internet that has entered every aspect of people's lives and the modern culture that is widely prevalent are the basis for the creation of a new face of santri. However, the new face of santri as millennial santri does not mean completely eliminating the old identity and personality of santri. Some santri characters and culture are still preserved as pesantren traditions.

Nyantri is a process of cultural adaptation. New santri must adapt to the traditions and culture of the pesantren that did not previously exist in their family environment. The pesantren culture, which is full of religious moral values, is different from the culture in the santri's family environment. Moreover, the pesantren has a fairly busy schedule of activities from morning to night. This requires santri to adjust to pesantren activities. In addition, there are habits and traditions that are only found in pesantren, such as sharing a bed with dozens of students, eating together using a tray, drinking from the same glass, and sharing personal equipment. There are also habits that are

considered extreme, such as 'fighting over' the kiai's used drinking water or the behavior of submitting to the kiai's words and orders.

Santri who study at boarding schools come from different socio-cultural backgrounds. There are students who come from an Islamic family environment. There are also students who come from abangan Islamic families. There are students who have previously boarded at other pesantren before boarding at Al Ikhsan pesantren. There are also those who are boarding at the pesantren for the first time. There are students who are used to the pesantren culture. There are also students who are completely unfamiliar and are exploring the pesantren culture for the first time. This affects the learning and adaptation process of the students. Muhsin (2023) revealed that the background and life experiences of santri provide an understanding of how they can survive in a place with a different cultural environment. Santri need to have the ability to seek information to avoid anxiety in interacting with fellow students who have different cultural backgrounds. This anxiety and uncertainty are factors that explain the

santri's efforts to improve themselves to be accepted in their new environment (Muhsin, 2023) . This also affects the santri's meaning of various pesantren activities including the meaning of *nyantri* itself.

Santri who come from 'santri' families interpret *nyantri* as a form of worship and hope in the prayers and blessings of kiai. Santri who come from abangan Islamic families interpret *nyantri* as a process of learning religious knowledge. Santri who have been boarding school before consider the various problems that arise as natural things to face in the adaptation process. However, for santri who are boarding for the first time, adaptation to pesantren traditions and culture is a long process and not easy to do. Sansurya (2022) stated that not all new students can adjust to the schedule set by the boarding school. This is due to the difference in habits between when they are at home and at the boarding school. The pattern of adaptation of new students at Pondok Pesantren also varies, due to differences in the area of origin of the students, which ultimately affects their character in undergoing the adaptation process.

The process of adapting santri to pesantren values and traditions takes place throughout the santri's stay in the pesantren. The cultivation of values and traditions is implement through habituation and learning. The character and behavior of santri are formed through the habits and rules applied by pesantren. The behavior of students is also formed and shaped through the learning process. The main moral value taught in pesantren is manners towards kiai as a figure who provides knowledge. Santri must be tawadlu (humble) before the kiai, and speak politely and gently to the kiai. The meaning of *nyantri* also means expecting blessings from the kiai.

Kiai are believed to have privileges so that santri must be submissive by obeying all kiai orders. Rahman (2022) states that the kiai is a sacred figure for santri. Obeying kiai is something that must be done by santri, because every word contains blessings (Anugrah, 2019). Santri believe that behaving respectfully towards kiai can provide happiness and blessings in life. Closeness to the kiai fosters a trandential relationship with God, which provides peace in life, even though it lives in the midst of

deprivation (Maba, 2021). The basic essence of *nyantri*, apart from gaining an understanding of religious knowledge, is to expect the blessing of the kiai. The blessing of the kiai obtained by the santri is believed to provide benefits to the santri throughout their lives. Therefore, various things are done by santri to get blessings from kiai.

Anugrah (2019) states that santri behavior has become a tradition passed down from generation to generation. For example, when santri see kiai passing by, they will stop all their activities. In addition, all santri will bow their heads as a form of respect for their kiai. This action is a sign of respect for the kiai as well as showing the obedience of the santri. In addition, there is also the habit of santri who *sowan* or visit the kiai's house, and when entering the kiai's house, they must walk on their knees. These activities are not listed in written regulations, but have become a habit that has been passed on by previous generations and is still carried out by santri today (Anugrah, 2019)

Bowing and kissing the kiai's hand interprets the santri's humble attitude in front of the kiai. Santri

believe that one way to get blessings from the kiai is to kiss the kiai's hand. Even for santri, when a kiai dies, he does not really leave the world. The kiai remains around them but in a different realm of life. Therefore, respect for the kiai is not only when the kiai is alive but also after death. One form of santri's respect for the deceased kiai is carried out by visiting the grave and praying for the kiai. This implies a form of santris pious behavior towards kiai that is eternal and lasts for all time

Rahman (2022) states that the basis of santri action is kitab*'adabul ta'lim wa muta'alim,* in which the concept of blessing is symbolized by the tradition of kissing the kiai's hand, drinking the remaining water used by the kiai, grave pilgrimage and devotion as described in pesantren life. Actions that symbolize these blessings become something common among pesantren, especially for a santri.

Takzim behavior can be seen from two dimensions, namely takzim in the sense of following or obeying kiai orders and takzim in the concept of following the worship deeds performed by kiai. The behavior of santri in following kiai is often considered to have no limits. Kiai orders of any kind

must be carried out by santri. This is based on the stories of great scholars who are said to have gained success in studying because of their taciturnity by obeying kiai orders, such as the story of KH Hasyim Asyari who looked for his teacher's ring (KH Kholil Bangkalan) in a *septic tank*. This implies that the behavior of the santri's taciturnity has no limits.

The second dimension of taciturn behavior is following the kiai's deeds of worship. Kiai in pesantren usually provide special practices for their students outside of the obligatory acts of worship of a Muslim. The deeds are in the form of worship rituals such as reading salawat 100,000 times, performing certain fasts, or other acts of worship. Santri perform them with the belief that they bring goodness to their lives and are still carried out even though they no longer live in the pesantren.

Takzim (respectful/tacit) behavior arises from the interpretation of the hadith about respect for knowledge. Az-Zarnuji (2019) states that the main manners in demanding knowledge are respect for knowledge, glorifying knowledge, respecting knowledge. This respect is the highest value of manners. A person will not get the blessing of knowledge, and cannot benefit from it, unless he is submissive and respectful to knowledge itself, including glorifying and respecting scholars / teachers (Az-Zarnuji, 2019) . Kiai as a person who has and provides knowledge is also respected so that the knowledge gained can benefit students.

Taciturn behavior is not only an obligation but also a right and need of santri because basically santri have the authority over their taciturn behavior towards kiai. Santri must be able to be rational. Takzim does not mean fully following the kiai's orders. Millennial santri have critical and open thinking. This is as stated by Lancaster & Stillman that the millennial generation is a realistic generation and prefers to work together rather than taking orders (Maba, Anugrah Intan Cahyani, & Mispani, 2021) . Thus, millennial santri have the ability to provide input and control pesantren activities that are considered to violate religious rules, for example, removing the seniority system in pesantren. Takzim to kiai is carried out in all forms that are recommended but still holding on to good or bad, right or wrong and halal or haram, so that the behavior of

takzim will not be carried out on something that is prohibited by religion (Afifah, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This research reveals the dynamics of millennial santri's social identity that harmonizes traditional pesantren values with the demands of modernity. Santri is no longer just a figure confined to tradition, but has been transformed into a dynamic and adaptive individual to changing times. The current identity of santri is a unique blend of traditional pesantren values with the spirit of modernity. This phenomenon shows the duality between the maintenance of tradition and the response to modernization, which forms santri as individuals who think critically but still maintain the noble values of pesantren.

Santris in now eras are a manifestation of a young generation that is religious, modern, and concerned about the surrounding environment. They have proven that being a santri does not prevent someone from being part of positive changes in society. The role of kiai as a spiritual leader and teacher in pesantren is

very significant in shaping the behavior and identity of santri, with the concept of takzim applied by santri. This tradition of takzim still takes place even though millennial santri have a more critical approach to teachings and social life.

This paper has limitations in data sources that only rely on millennial santri in one traditional pesantren so that it cannot be used as a basis for describing millennial santri in modern pesantren. Traditional pesantren and modern pesantren have different traditions and cultures. Thus, the way to respond to technological developments is also different. In addition, the source of comparative data to distinguish the social identity of millennial santri from traditional santri only relies on previous research on traditional santri.

Research on a number of pesantren, observation of santri activities in utilizing technology, and interviews with informants from traditional and modern santri groups can be a strong basis for explaining the differences in social identity of the two groups of santri. In addition, further research can examine in more depth the impact of the use of technology and social media on the identity and behavior of santri, as well as how technology is used in their learning and social interactions in pesantren. Future research can also

examine further how the identity of santri in pesantren develops in the face of greater social and political changes, as well as how santri adapt to their roles in society outside pesantren.

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