

## MANAGEMENT OF THE SOROGAN IN UNDERSTANDING THE KITAB KUNING IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

<sup>\*1</sup>Achmad Yakhsyallah, <sup>2</sup>Deti Rostini, <sup>3</sup>Ifah Khadijah

<sup>\*1,2,3</sup>Universitas Islam Nusantara

Email: <sup>\*1</sup>achmadyakhsyallah@uninus.ac.id, <sup>2</sup>detirostini@uninus.ac.id,

<sup>3</sup>ifahkhadijah@uninus.ac.id

### Abstract

Pondok pesantren (Islamic Boarding School), as a traditional Islamic educational institution, plays an important role in the preservation and development of Islamic studies, particularly through the teaching of the yellow book (kitab kuning). However, the use of classical Arabic and the depth of the material present unique challenges for students (santri) in the understanding process. This study aims to examine the management of the sorogan method in enhancing the understanding of the yellow book at Pondok Pesantren Ar-Risalah (West Bandung Regency) and Pondok Pesantren MUS Sarang (Rembang Regency). This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The results indicate that structured sorogan management encompassing aspects of planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision—positively impacts the improvement of students' abilities to comprehend the content of the yellow book. This method facilitates the creation of a learning environment that is individual, interactive, and adaptive to each student's capabilities. Challenges faced include the limited number of supervising teachers and the varying levels of students' understanding; however, these can be minimized through effective time management strategies and the use of simple technology in the teaching and learning process. The conclusion of this study emphasizes that systematic and adaptive management of the sorogan method is a potential alternative solution for enhancing the quality of yellow book learning in the pesantren environment.

**Keywords:** Islamic Boarding School, Kitab Kuning, Learning Management, Santri, Sorogan

### Abstrak

*Pondok pesantren sebagai institusi pendidikan Islam tradisional memainkan peran penting dalam pelestarian dan pengembangan studi keislaman, terutama melalui pengajaran kitab kuning. Namun, penggunaan bahasa Arab klasik serta kedalaman materi menjadi tantangan tersendiri bagi santri dalam proses pemahaman. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengelolaan metode sorogan dalam meningkatkan pemahaman kitab kuning di Pondok Pesantren Ar-Risalah (Kabupaten Bandung Barat) dan Pondok Pesantren MUS Sarang (Kabupaten Rembang). Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi lapangan, dan analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa manajemen sorogan yang terstruktur meliputi aspek perencanaan, pengorganisasian, pelaksanaan, serta pengawasan berdampak positif terhadap peningkatan kemampuan santri dalam memahami isi kitab kuning. Metode ini memungkinkan terciptanya suasana belajar yang bersifat individual, interaktif, dan adaptif terhadap kemampuan masing-*

*masing santri. Kendala yang dihadapi di antaranya keterbatasan jumlah ustadz pengampu serta variasi tingkat pemahaman santri, namun dapat diminimalisasi melalui strategi pengelolaan waktu yang efektif dan pemanfaatan teknologi sederhana dalam proses belajar-mengajar. Simpulan dari penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pengelolaan metode sorogan yang sistematis dan adaptif merupakan solusi alternatif yang potensial untuk meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran kitab kuning di lingkungan pesantren.*

**Kata kunci:** Kitab kuning, Manajemen pembelajaran, Pesantren, Santri, Sorogan

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools are traditional Islamic educational institutions that have long been pillars in character building and the inheritance of Islamic scholarship in Indonesia. One of their distinctive features is the study of classical Arabic texts without vowel marks (harakat), covering various branches of knowledge, such as fiqh, tafsir, hadith, and tasawuf. However, the limited mastery of Arabic among students is often a serious obstacle to understanding the contents of these books, given their grammatical complexity and depth of meaning. This situation calls for intensive, personalized, and contextual learning methods.

The sorogan method is one of the classical learning models that still survives in various Islamic boarding schools, especially in the salafiyah tradition. In this method, students read and explain the contents of the book directly in front of the teacher, who then provides personal correction and guidance. Unlike the bandongan method, which is more collective in nature, sorogan offers more intensive interaction and flexibility in adjusting the material to the abilities of each student. Several previous studies, such as those conducted by Sari and Fikriyah (2022) and Arifin et al. (2022), revealed that the sorogan method is effective in improving the understanding of classical Islamic texts.

However, the success of this method is greatly influenced by the management applied. Various challenges, such as the limited number of teachers, time constraints, and the heterogeneity of students' abilities, require the application of systematic and adaptive managerial strategies. Hidayat (2021) emphasizes the importance of good management to maintain the effectiveness of traditional methods in the face of the demands of educational modernization. In addition, state recognition of the pesantren education system through regulations such as Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and PMA No. 31 of 2020 concerning Pesantren Education requires pesantren to develop a more structured and standardized learning system.

This study offers something new compared to previous studies by focusing on the managerial aspects of the sorogan method, including planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising, which have not been widely studied in previous studies. By taking two research locations with different geographical and cultural backgrounds, namely Ar-Risalah Islamic Boarding School (West Bandung Regency) and MUS Sarang Islamic Boarding School (Rembang Regency), this study aims to provide a more holistic and contextual description of sorogan management practices.

The main objective of this study is to describe and analyze how sorogan management is implemented to improve students' understanding of classical Islamic texts. It is hoped that the results of this study can contribute theoretically to the development of Islamic boarding school management, as well as serve as a practical reference for administrators in optimizing this traditional value-based learning method.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. This approach was chosen to explore in depth the social reality and managerial practices of the sorogan method in the learning of classical Islamic texts in Islamic boarding schools. This design is considered most relevant because it allows researchers to understand the context, experiences, and dynamics of learning management holistically and contextually. The research subjects included caregivers, teachers, and students at two Islamic boarding schools, namely Ar-Risalah Islamic Boarding School in West Bandung Regency and MUS Sarang Islamic Boarding School in Rembang Regency. The subjects were selected purposively, considering that these two Islamic boarding schools consistently and systematically apply the sorogan method in their learning activities. Informants were selected based on their direct involvement in sorogan practices and their in-depth knowledge of its implementation.

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with kyai, ustadz, and several santri to identify the implementation, obstacles, and solutions in sorogan management. Observations were conducted directly to observe the learning process, patterns of teacher-student interaction, and the dynamics that occurred in the classroom. Meanwhile, documentation was obtained from the sorogan implementation schedule, student attendance lists, evaluation notes, and pesantren curriculum documents. The research procedure began with a request for permission from the pesantren, followed by the selection of informants, the implementation of observations and interviews, and the collection of relevant documents. To strengthen the data, the researcher systematically recorded field findings and took reflective notes during the research process.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques, which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data were categorized based on the main themes in management, namely planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation techniques, member checking with informants, and peer debriefing with parties who understood the research context. Through this method, the study was expected to produce a comprehensive understanding of sorogan management practices and their contribution to improving santri's understanding of the yellow book.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Sorogan Planning**

The planning of the sorogan method in both pesantren studied showed a fairly structured process. The determination of learning objectives focused on developing the students' ability to read and understand classical Islamic texts independently and in depth. The appointment of ustadz as mentors was based on their academic qualifications, experience in mastering classical texts, and proficiency in individual mentoring. The selection of sorogan texts is tailored to the level of the santri's abilities, ranging from basic texts to advanced texts. The schedule is flexible but consistent, optimizing the santri's free time outside of the formal learning program. The selection of santri is open, but still takes into account each santri's ability to read texts and their commitment to learning.

### **Sorogan Organization**

The organization of sorogan involves a clear division of tasks among caregivers, ustadz, and students. Caregivers act as strategic directors, while ustadz serve as direct mentors. Students are required to maintain academic readiness and discipline in following the schedule. Some Islamic boarding schools form small groups based on the students' abilities, although in practice, sorogan is still individual-based. The placement of students with ustadz is determined based on the compatibility of the instructor's competence and capacity. Supporting facilities such as study rooms and books are provided in a simple but functional manner.

### **Sorogan Implementation**

The implementation of sorogan demonstrates the dynamics of intensive interaction between ustadz and santri. The method used combines talaqqi and interactive dialogue. Santri read the book text in front of the ustadz, then receive corrections related to language, meaning, and context of interpretation. Activities are carried out on a scheduled basis, generally in the morning or evening, depending on the routine of the pesantren. Student participation is high, especially among students who are highly motivated to understand the classical texts. The main obstacles in implementation are the limited time available to ustadz, the large number of students, and differences in the level of understanding among students.

### **Sorogan Supervision**

Supervision in the implementation of sorogan is carried out through two approaches: formal and informal. Formally, the pesantren provides a periodic evaluation mechanism through oral and memorization tests. Informally, the ustadz directly monitors the development of the santri's understanding from time to time. The performance of the ustadz in guiding is also supervised by the pesantren caretaker to ensure that the learning process runs as expected. Feedback is provided to both students and teachers to improve the quality of learning. This monitoring creates an adaptive and responsive learning cycle tailored to individual needs.

## **Obstacles in the Implementation of Sorogan**

The implementation of the sorogan method in Islamic boarding schools faces several complex challenges. The first obstacle is the limited number of teachers or mentors compared to the number of students. This results in a heavy teaching load and limited time for individual interaction. Second, the boarding school's busy schedule often makes the time for sorogan less than optimal, especially if it overlaps with other agendas such as public recitations or other boarding school activities.

In addition, the varying abilities of the students are also a challenge. Some students are able to understand the material quickly, while others require more time and a more intensive approach. This condition requires ustadz to take a different approach to each student, which of course requires additional energy and time. Finally, limited learning facilities, such as a lack of special rooms or a lack of books and learning aids, also affect the smooth running of the sorogan process.

## **Solutions Implemented**

To overcome these obstacles, Islamic boarding schools implement various managerial and pedagogical strategies. One of the main solutions is to conduct an initial assessment of the students' abilities so that they can be grouped more appropriately and the instructors can adjust their teaching methods to the needs of each student. In addition, the sorogan schedule is arranged to be more flexible but still disciplined so that it can run without disrupting other activities at the boarding school.

Several Islamic boarding schools also implement a rotation system for mentors and divide study time in turns to ensure that all students receive adequate guidance. Strengthening the competence of ustadz through regular discussions, training, or experience-sharing forums is also an important step in maintaining the quality of guidance. In terms of facilities, Islamic boarding schools optimize study spaces and encourage students to provide their own equipment as a form of responsibility in learning.

A spiritual approach and motivation to seek knowledge sincerely are also used as a foundation in overcoming various technical limitations. The values of sincerity, discipline, and responsibility are key to maintaining the enthusiasm of students and teachers in implementing the sorogan method consistently and meaningfully.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study proves that the management of the sorogan method plays a key role in improving students' understanding of classical Islamic texts at the Ar-Risalah Islamic Boarding School and the MUS Sarang Islamic Boarding School. In terms of planning, both boarding schools have established strategies that include text selection, schedule preparation, and the preparation of teachers and students involved. In terms of organization, there is a structured division of tasks between the kyai, ustadz, and senior santri to support the smooth and effective running of the sorogan process.

Sorogan is carried out individually with direct interaction between santri and teachers, allowing for personal correction and guidance. Meanwhile, supervision is carried out through both oral evaluation and direct monitoring of santri's progress on an ongoing basis. The main obstacles faced include the limited number of supervising ustadz, differences in student abilities, and time constraints due to the pesantren's busy schedule. To overcome this, the pesantren implements several strategies, such as encouraging independent study before sorogan sessions and involving senior students as assistant supervisors.

The findings of this study confirm that the success of the sorogan method is highly dependent on the quality of management at each stage of learning. In general, structured, adaptive, and context-based sorogan management has proven to be an effective approach in maintaining Islamic scholarly traditions in Islamic boarding schools, while also being relevant in responding to learning challenges in the modern era. This research provides practical contributions to the development of the pesantren education system and opens opportunities for further research on the integration of traditional learning methods with contemporary educational management principles.

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