

Religious Leadership and Political Triumph: A Case Study of *Kiai* and *Santri* Strategies in the 2018 Pamekasan Local Elections

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Abstract: This research examines the *Kiai Pondok Strategy* employed by an Islamic boarding school and its students (known as *Santri*) in successfully supporting a candidate for the position of Regent and Deputy Regent in the 2018 Regional Election in Pamekasan. Studying this subject is crucial due to the prevailing influence of terms such as "*Bhuppa 'Bhabhu,' Ghuru, Ratho*" in the public discourse of Madura. The figure of *Kiai*, particularly in the Regency of Pamekasan, Madura, plays a significant role in driving societal transformation, particularly in politics.

Purpose: This research seeks to determine the roles of *Kiai* and *Santri* in the electoral contestation in the Pamekasan Regency.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This research employs a qualitative methodology scientifically designed to uncover the meaning or understanding of a phenomenon and provide information about it. Information was acquired via comprehensive interviews. The data analysis encompassed data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions, and verifying the data. The study was conducted using detailed, comprehensive, and easily comprehensible phrases.

Findings: The research findings demonstrate that the mapping support for *Kiai* in each location of Regency Pamekasan varies. However, there is a higher level of support towards two prominent figures, notably Ra-Badrut and Raja'e. Subsequently, within the *Kiai's* strategic approach framework, Islamic boarding schools and their

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Santri actively seek societal support. They undertake initiatives to garner backing from the community, such as arranging for the transportation of students back to their homes and disseminating their teachings through lectures and social media platforms. Subsequently, the student method disseminates to society, garnering support from individuals eager to learn and endorse *Kiai*'s teachings, whether *Ustadz* or *Santri*. The partnership consisting of Ra-Badrut and Raja'e emerged as the winners in the 2018 Pamekasan district head election.

Originality/value: Indeed, research has been conducted on the role of *kiai* in political contestation. However, this research specifically targets the Pamekasan Regency area, which no one has investigated. Hence, this study is limited to the geographical scope of Pamekasan Regency. Additionally, the political sway of *Kiai* in Pamekasan Regency is remarkably potent, making it a compelling subject for further research.

Keywords: mapping; strategy; *kiai* and *santri*; regional head election

Paper Type: Research-Article

Introduction

The general election of regional heads in Indonesia is a manifestation of regional autonomy, which refers to the legal, authoritative, and obligatory power of autonomous regions to govern and administer government affairs and the welfare of local communities in accordance with statutory regulations (Fikri and Wibisono 2023; Ropii 2015). The implementation of regional autonomy is not solely reliant on legal references (Ibrahim 2022) but also serves as a manifestation of Indonesia as a democratic nation. Additionally, it responds to the demands of globalization and democracy by granting regions greater authority and responsibility in regulating, utilizing, and exploring their respective potential sources. This includes the conduct of regional general elections. The implementation of regional autonomy in Indonesia is grounded in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, specifically Article 18, paragraphs 1-7, Article 18A,

paragraphs 1 and 2, and Article 18B, paragraphs 1 and 2. Furthermore, the Decree of the People's Consultative Assembly Number Three and the Decree of the People's Consultative Assembly Number Four/MPR/2000 about Policy Recommendations for Implementing Regional Autonomy. Law No. 23/2014, often known as the Regional Government Law, is the fourth law enacted in 2014. According to Law No. 23/2014, regional governments are responsible for regulating and managing government matters in implementing regional government. They do so based on their autonomy and assistance duties.

Under this rule, there will consistently be competition in regional head elections. Indonesia conducted Regional Head Elections from 2018 to 2019, including Madura Island's election. Pamekasan Regency also held its Regional Head Elections on June 27, 2018. In the regional head election, two pairs of candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent were involved, namely Badrut Tamam-Raja'e (BERBAUR), who was endorsed by the Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB), the Partai Keadian Sejahtera (PKS), the Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN), and the Gerindra Party. The second pair consists of Kholilurrahman-Fathor Rahman (Kholifah) and is endorsed by the Democratic Party, Golkar Party, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP), Nasdem Party, and Hanura (Anonim 2018).

Among all the contenders, each has previously occupied a highly strategic position (Taufiqurrahman 2018), also known as Kiai Kholilur, held a seat as a member of Commission VI of the House of Representatives. Fathor Rahman is a Commission III member of the Regional People's Representative Council in Pamekasan Regency. Badrut Tamam is a member of the Regional People's Representative Council of East Java Province. Raja'e holds the office of village chief in West Bujur. According to the tally or summary of the 2018 concurrent regional head elections,

candidate pair number one for the position of Regent and Deputy Regent obtained 257,738 votes from the voters. Meanwhile, the second duo garnered a total of 228,596 votes. Hence, the first pair leads with a margin of 29,142 votes over Kholilur Rahman and Fathur Rahman (Mulyadi 2018). The Kiai played a significant role in this triumph, exerting strong influence in each region. Consequently, all the areas under the control of the Kiai would rally to support one of the candidates. In addition, the Kiai's influence on the community, youth organizations, and other Islamic organizations has a significant role in the success of candidates. In Javanese vocabulary, "*Kiai*" refers to something thought to bring good luck or possess highly potent prayers (Syafiqurrahman and Hosnan 2019) in the context of possessing distinctiveness or being regarded as sacred. In addition, the Javanese people bestow the title of "*Kiai*" upon highly revered items, including those found in palaces. Kiai has always been recognized as a renowned and esteemed scholar throughout history. Unsurprisingly, Javanese individuals regard Kiai greatly, as their status as religious icons significantly impacts societal transformation (Siswanto and Yulita 2019). Furthermore, throughout Madurese society, kiai hold prominent roles as informal leaders. In Madura, particularly in Pamekasan, there is an Islamic boarding school in practically every village, where students called *Santri* study religion under the guidance of Kiai. Upon completing elementary school, the typical Madurese community sends their children to Islamic boarding schools. This cultural practice has been transmitted over successive generations, wherein the assumption is made that the children who attend boarding schools serve as replacements for their parents who have previously completed their education in Islamic boarding schools. Due to its continuation, students or *Santri* exhibit greater obedience towards the *Kiai* than the government. In addition, Authority and *Kiai* interactions are established from this point.

Becoming a *Kiai* is challenging since it necessitates possessing social, intellectual, and spiritual capital and being born into a lineage of *Kiai* that has been passed down through generations. Attaining greatness as a *Kiai* and possessing charm cannot be achieved solely through a prestigious education. Without a lineage that includes a *Kiai* of higher authority, one's status as a *Kiai* is often not recognized. *Kiai*'s sole influence throughout society is his charismatic appeal (Hansen 2001).

The influence of *Kiai* in people's lives is significant, particularly given their elevated position that surpasses that of the government. From a theological perspective, the Muslim community regards the ulama as the successors of the Prophets (*waratsat al-anbiyâ*). They serve as mentors for the community and play a crucial role in sustaining the principles of *amar ma'ruf nahimunkar*, which aims to implement Islamic teachings in society. This also holds significant importance in the *Kiai*'s influence within society. Conversely, the typical *Kiai* possess complete control as they own and construct the Islamic boarding school. Consequently, the social status of this ulama is perceived as that of the *Santri* elite, who prioritize Islamic teachings in their lives. *Kiai* has a significant influence in rallying Islamic students, Islamic community organizations, and society to bring about significant societal transformations, particularly in political competition. It is well-established that Islam is the predominant religion in Indonesia, with various organizations operating under its auspices.

The bond between *Kiai* and the community is exceptionally robust, particularly among the Madurese population, specifically in Pamekasan Regency. The presence of *Kiai* in society is significant because of their religious knowledge lineage, which plays a crucial role in fostering civil society. Various variables contribute to the significant influence and authority of *Kiai*, particularly in Madura. One key element is *Kiai*'s exceptional

mobility, enabling them to establish extensive networks of contacts with the community. *Kiai* consistently disseminates Islamic religious teachings (preaching) by moving from one location to another, establishing broader connections. Furthermore, due to their pivotal role and influential status, the *Kiai* in the village and the Islamic boarding school serve as a reference point for individuals outside the village. Consequently, individuals outside Madura seek guidance or resolutions to their problems by approaching the *Kiai*, earning them the nickname "Nyabis" (meaning "facing the *Kiai*"). Furthermore, due to their status, *Kiai* typically has material benefits beyond those of the local population, which include enhanced and broader access to information. Furthermore, the *Kiai* possess significant influence and power at the Islamic boarding school, which they might utilize for political purposes (Tirmuti 2004). Regarding political interests, it is highly relevant to the recent 2018 and 2019 elections, during which religious figures actively engaged in political activities. Historically, the role of *Kiai* was limited to Islamic boarding schools and society. However, it is important to acknowledge that the influence of *Kiai* authority extends beyond Islamic boarding schools and is also utilized for personal or collective agendas in mobilizing society, particularly Islamic Community Organizations (ORMAS) during elections (Tirmuti 2004). Max Weber articulated his viewpoint on Authority, favoring 'Traditional Authority' as the more appropriate form.

Traditional authority is a type of authority that derives its power from the reverence and sanctity associated with a specific tradition. This leads individuals to comply with the rules established by the authority figure (Williams 2003). The legitimacy of authority is derived from historical inheritance and continues to be recognized as valid in the present era. Max Weber posited that the connection between individuals in positions of power and their subordinates might be characterized as a personal

relationship that resembles an extension of familial ties (Williams 2003; Epley 2015). As previously said, it is mandatory for all families to enroll their children in boarding schools. To maintain the established authority of the kiai and ensure that the community adheres to the kiai's policies or directives.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach, a scientific method aimed at uncovering the meaning of events or gaining a deeper understanding and insight into them (Harrison 2007). This study was conducted on several Islamic boarding school circle informants, including *Kiai* (Islamic scholars) and their staff, *Santri*, *Ustadz* (religious teachers), and alumni. The selection of informants was based on the specific positions defined by the researchers for the purpose of this research. Subsequently, all informants responded to the researcher's inquiries via comprehensive interviews, which are interviews done by researchers to obtain detailed information. Data analysis is reducing and presenting data, drawing conclusions, and verifying the data. The phrases used in this process are extensive, comprehensive, and easily comprehensible (Aminah and Roikan 2019).

Discussion and Findings

Mapping Kiai and Santri Support

The general election proceedings for the regional head of Pamekasan Madura district in 2018 proceeded without any issues, resulting in the victory of candidate number 2, Ra-Badrut Tamam, alongside his deputy Raja'e. This triumph is undeniably closely linked to the backing of the *Kiai*, given their formidable support, particularly from Islamic boarding schools. Pamekasan district is home to numerous expansive Islamic boarding schools, including the renowned Darul Ulum Banyuwanyar Islamic boarding school, Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata. The Banyuwanyar Islamic boarding school is under the leadership of Radem KH. Muhammad

Syamsul Arifin, who is also the Chairman of the Darul Ulum Banyuanyar Foundation directed by KH. Hasbullah Syamsul Arifin is the head of the College of Arabic Language. This Islamic boarding school attracts students from diverse places inside Madura and beyond, thereby expanding its network of relationships. Similarly, the Mambaul Ulum Bata-bata Islamic Boarding School is under the leadership of RKH. Muhammad Tohir Hamid has a diverse group of *Santri* from different regions, which will foster solid relationships. These two Islamic boarding schools hold the distinction of being the largest and oldest in Pamekasan Regency. As a result, many individuals, particularly those residing in Pamekasan Regency, choose to enroll their children in one of these institutions. Conversely, the two Islamic boarding schools have implemented a program where designated teachers are dispatched to different regions within and beyond Madura. This initiative significantly fosters connections between the assigned teachers and the local population. In addition to the aforementioned Islamic boarding schools, there are other sizable Islamic boarding schools in various locations within the Pamekasan district, such as the Miftahul Ulum Panyepen Islamic boarding school and Miftahul Ulum Kebun Baru. These Islamic boarding schools are in the central region, garnering community support. The Darul Ulum Banyuanyar Islamic boarding school is considered the top institution, although the families from *Dhalem* (*Kiai's* family) are generally ranked second.

The *Santri* and the community will adhere to the decisions made by the *Kiai* family at the Islamic boarding school (Pohl 2006). Hence, Islamic boarding schools significantly impact the Madurese community in all aspects of life. Whenever the Madurese encounter confusion, they seek guidance from the *Kiai*, particularly the elder ones. (Pribadi 2015). This phenomenon also occurred during political cycles. This demonstrates that boarding students will select based on their preference for the boarding

school. The Darul Ulum Banyuwang Islamic Boarding School endorses the top-ranked duo, Ra-Badrut and Raja'e. Although a few of the *Kiai*'s sons support option two, the majority favor option one, just like their *Santri*. In addition, the most prominent Islamic boarding schools in Pamekasan Regency, like the Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata Islamic boarding school, are highly regarded. In addition, Islamic boarding schools also prioritize familial connections with their *Santri*, which is one of the main reasons for their support. In addition, Islamic Boarding Schools also prioritize considering candidates' ideas and offer opportunities for young individuals to develop leadership skills. Islamic boarding schools provide significant support, as do the students who opt for the guidance of *Kiai* or Islamic boarding schools. However, Ra-Badrut and Raja'e are distinguished activists with commendable educational backgrounds and organizational experiences. For instance, Ra-Badrut has been associated with the prominent organization Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (PMII), while Raja'e has been affiliated with the Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (HMI). Through the establishment of these two groups, they have gained valuable expertise and developed effective leadership skills since their undergraduate years. Therefore, it is unsurprising that these individuals have contributed innovative ideas to the Pamekasan district. However, Ra-Badrut and Raja'e possess considerable political expertise and are highly regarded within the community. For instance, Ra-Badrut formerly held a position in the DPRD, while Raja'e served as a village head in the Pantura region for two consecutive terms.

Every Islamic boarding school often receives similar assistance, primarily from the duo of Ra-Badrut and Raja'e (BERBAUR). This initiative received backing from prominent Islamic boarding schools such as the Darul Ulum Banyuwang Islamic Boarding School, the Miftahul Ulum Panyepen Islamic Boarding School, the Mambaul Ulum Bata Bata Islamic Boarding

School, and the Miftahul Ulum Panyepen Islamic Boarding School. The Islamic boarding school in question is the most sizable educational institution in Pamekasan Regency, including the central and southern areas. There is varying support in the North Pamekasan Regency or Pantura regions, specifically in Batu Marmar, Pasean, and Waru, although it is primarily geared towards the top candidate. This can be attributed to various influential elements, such as the quantity of candidate connections and innovation. The level of support for *Kiai* in the Pantura region is comparable to that of other Islamic boarding schools. However, it is noteworthy that some prominent Islamic boarding schools also endorse their political adversaries. For instance, the Bustanul Ulum Tagangser Laok Waru Pamekasan Islamic boarding school supports the second candidate, K.H Kholilurrohman-Fathurrohman (KHOLIFAH). The Islamic boarding school, overseen by the old *Kiai* KH Ahmad Jufri and chaired by K.H Abd Gafur Jufri, has definite concerns. Additionally, the Al-Mardiyah Islamic boarding school family also supports the second candidate. These reasons include the age and extensive political experience of older *Kiai*. Therefore, while there is a greater inclination towards supporting the Ra-Badrut and Raja'e pair in certain regions, it does not imply a lack of support from the community, Islamic boarding schools, and their personnel for the second option. Recall that the second pair is represented by the initials K.H. Kholilurrohman, a revered and aged *kiai* figure in the community of Pamekasan Regency. As a result, he consistently receives support from Islamic boarding schools. However, when it comes to the larger Islamic boarding schools in the Pamekasan area, he has a prominent position.

Kiai and Santri Strategy

1. Kiai Strategy

According to the findings of a study conducted through interviews and observations using data from the 2018 Pamekasan

Regent election, which had two candidates, namely the Ra-Badrut and Raja'e pairs, it can be concluded that the participation of religious scholars in the election was satisfactory. Impact on community mobility and individual decision-making. Society will adhere to the desires of the *Kiai*. Moreover, in the specific context of the 2018 Pamekasan Regency Regional Head election, the involvement of *ulama* has been a longstanding practice, particularly following the period of political reform and the implementation of direct elections. A *Kiai*'s presence significantly influences societal and political affairs, including electoral processes. Society shall adhere to principles deemed correct by the *Kiai*, including politics. The *Santri*, as pupils of the *Kiai*, obediently adhere to the *Kiai*'s guidance in all situations, as the *Kiai*'s authority binds them, and the Pamekasan community also follows the *Kiai*'s directives. *Kiai* is regarded as an individual who commands respect, known as "*Baphak Ibhuh*", *Guruh*, *Ratoh*"; this perception remains relevant today. The Madurese people are steadfast in their adherence to their values. Suppose the *Kiai* possesses the determination for a certain action to be executed by the community without explicitly commanding them. This occurs due to the enduring presence of the principle "*athorok oca' ka keae*" inside Madurese society, which entails obediently following the *Kiai*'s directives. Regarding politics, it is not necessary for *Kiai* to engage in mobilization, but some may choose to do so. However, it is quite rare for a *Kiai* to endorse a certain politician publicly. The *Kiai*'s decision garners widespread support across all contexts, even political ones. In politics, the *Kiai*'s influence is significant (Fuad 2022), The community tends to obey the *Kiai*'s directives, as the *Kiai* holds a revered position. Even without explicit instructions, the community comprehends the *Kiai*'s intentions.

The Pamekasan Madurese community upholds longstanding customs transmitted over generations, specifically adhering to the desires of the esteemed *Kiai* figure, who has

rendered invaluable services to the community (Pribadi 2013). The *Kiai*'s involvement in people's lives exerts a significant influence, ensuring that the community complies with the *Kiai*'s directives (Madani and Marijan 2021). The *Kiai*'s influence on village communities is profound. Even those who were previously apathetic towards politics are compelled to follow the *Kiai*'s directives since their authority holds great sway over the villagers. According to the aforementioned data on the method employed by Islamic boarding school *Kiai* during the 2018 election, it significantly impacted society. This influence manifests in the form of increased enthusiasm and political engagement among individuals, particularly within democratic parties, as people tend to adhere to the directives of the *Kiai*. In the Pamekasan Regent election, the *Kiai*'s influence in campaigning for a candidate was evident through several campaign strategies aimed at swaying the community's preference towards a specific candidate. Pamekasan is home to numerous influential *Kiai* and Islamic boarding schools, which serve as important references for the community when selecting a candidate for the position of Regent of Pamekasan. These include prominent institutions such as the Big Boarding School, Darul Ulum Banyuwang Islamic Boarding School, Mambul Ulum Bata-Bata Islamic Boarding School, Miftahul Ulum Panyepen Islamic Boarding School, Miftahul Ulum Kebun Baru Islamic Boarding School, and several other sizable Islamic boarding schools. Nevertheless, the *Kiai*'s role in the execution of elections is primarily restricted to offering inspiration or guidance to the community (Rosi 2020). Conversely, certain *ulama* avoid disclosing their preferences to students and the general public. This practice would undoubtedly be highly unethical if these preferences were widely shared on social media or with the public, particularly among students. What is the reason for that? While the Islamic boarding school advocates for the confidentiality of one of the candidates, it is important to

recognize that selecting a candidate for the Regent of Pamekasan Regency position is an individual's prerogative. Nevertheless, several *Kiai* individuals openly endorse candidates they believe are suitable and competent to manage Pamekasan Regency. Additionally, *Kiai* personalities rely on word-of-mouth communication, starting from the *Santri* and spreading to the wider community. Subsequently, this information proliferated as other persons capitalized on it, disseminating it through social media platforms, producing DVD compilations, and employing various other means to ensure widespread awareness among the general public of the regent and deputy regent candidates. Certain clerics employ a tactic to secure victory in their election, specifically by instructing their students to return to their hometowns to cast their votes. To influence the *Santri* decision, it is important for the candidate to gain the support of the *Kiai*. This will also help persuade the *Santri* families and the wider community since *Kiai*'s endorsement significantly influences the Islamic boarding school. Conversely, students will employ tactics such as publicizing that the Islamic boarding school they reside in endorses the chosen candidate, making it a crucial factor in securing victory in the election competition. The strategy of the Islamic boarding school to send students home either during or before voting, known as "*Santri* returning home," is a strategic approach used by the Islamic boarding school's *Kiai* and the *Santri* themselves. The technique employed by the Islamic boarding school *Kiai* is to educate the students about the help they receive, with the intention that the students will subsequently inform the community about the support provided by the Islamic boarding school *Kiai*. Subsequently, the public will ascertain *Kiai*'s endorsement for the specific candidate pair for regent and deputy regent, together with their corresponding serial number, as the public will ultimately discover this information independently. Typically, the *Kiai* indicates the qualities and preferences of the

candidate to be chosen, enabling pupils to discern the *Kiai's* intended endorsement promptly. The *Santri's* approach involves alerting the community about the assistance of the *Kiai* and fulfilling their duties as *Santri* to assist the *Kiai* by imparting knowledge to the community.

2. *Santri* Strategy

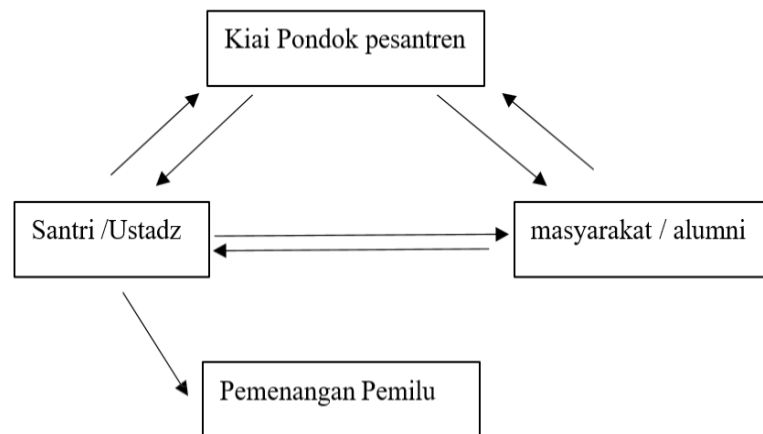
The *Santri* is an inadequate successor to the *Kiai* in effectively transmitting or spreading information from the *Kiai* to the community. Consequently, it is unsurprising that a *Santri* obediently adheres to the directives of the *Kiai*, even without explicit instructions, as the *Santri* will instinctively anticipate the *Kiai's* wishes. The concept of "can't" does not exist before attempting something, as *Kiai* emphasizes, which greatly impacts the students. Furthermore, the *Santri's* act of seeking the favor of the *Kiai* is based on the belief that even the little influence exerted by the *Santri* will result in obtaining blessings from the *Kiai* (Priyadi 2013). *Kiai* engages in various activities, employing several techniques, including *ulama*, which utilizes social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp) to campaign, spread information by word of mouth, and deliver public lectures. The Mambaul Ulum Bata-bata Islamic boarding school employs several techniques that effectively contribute to the success of the elite, particularly the political elite, in securing votes during elections. One of these events is Koran Week, an international event organized by the Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata Islamic boarding school.

A *Santri*, dedicated to a specific field, fulfills his daily responsibilities, including imparting religious knowledge to the community and children. However, during election time, the public will acquire information by directly inquiring the *Ustadz* or through *Ustadz's* communication during intervals between activities. This occurs when individuals presume *Kiai's* selection is optimal for the prospective political society. Consequently, the

community perceives a perpetual obligation of appreciation towards the *Kiai* due to their significant contributions to enhancing citizens' daily lives, particularly through educating their children to foster personal growth. The approach of the *Kiai* can be elucidated as follows: Islamic boarding schools in *Kiai* do not require active community mobilization to garner support since the community will naturally become aware and supportive on their own. The second Islamic boarding school employs *Kiai*'s strategic approach of disseminating information to students through lectures, demonstrating *Kiai*'s support. This occurs due to the significance of the *Kiai*'s discernment and the candidate's aptitude for leadership in a particular region, prompting the *Kiai* to notify the *Santri*. Furthermore, dismissing the *Santri* before and during the election is advisable, allowing them to inform their family members about the endorsement of the Islamic boarding school and the *Kiai*. Furthermore, numerous *Kiai* deliver lectures and openly endorse them via social media or public talks, intending to incite individuals to adopt *Kiai*'s preferences. Furthermore, it is important to discuss the endorsement through clandestine communication within the Islamic boarding school, where the *Kiai* discreetly supports the students, who relay this support to the wider community. Consequently, the endorsement from the *Kiai* not only reaches the current students but also extends to the alumni. *Kiai* and numerous village heads on the north coast implement this method by conducting door-to-door support campaigns or community visits to endorse a particular candidate. Multiple techniques are available to the *Santri* in the 2018 elections for Pamekasan Regency. One such strategy involves informing the community about the endorsement of the Islamic boarding school *Kiai* when they return home. Additionally, there are many approaches, such as the responsibility of the *Ustadz* or teacher to discreetly or overtly communicate the endorsement of the *Kiai* to the community. Moreover, Islamic boarding school

activities, particularly involving *Kiai* and political elites, significantly influence the latter. One notable result is their support for elections.

Diagram 1. *Kiai* strategy patterns in winning district elections Pamekasan 2018



According to diagram 1, the *Kiai* of the Islamic boarding school plays a crucial role in securing victory in the election. Each and every region inside Pamekasan Regency will be equipped with an Islamic boarding school. Subsequently, *Kiai* would apprise the students of his endorsement to ensure their comprehension of his backing. In addition, if the *Kiai* of the Islamic boarding school does not disclose this information, the pupils will discover it. The *Kiai*'s endorsement determines the pairing of the serial number. Subsequently, the students will openly communicate it to the community through direct conversation or other means. Conversely, the community will inquire with the *Santri* or *Ustadz* about the specific order in which the *Kiai*'s support will be provided, enabling the community to ascertain the endorsement of the *Kiai* from the *Santri* or *Ustadz*. Subsequently, the community will ascertain the information independently or be notified by the *Kiai* regarding his endorsement. Nevertheless, the

majority of individuals have consistently sought assistance from *Kiai*. Winning the election holds more significance than the influence of the *Kiai*, as the *Kiai* play a crucial part in the social and political dynamics of the people in the Pamekasan district (Pribadi 2013).

Conclusion

The support for *Kiai* in the 2018 Regency regional elections in Pamekasan was evenly distributed across each area. The support was mostly concentrated on two candidates, namely Rabadrut and Raja'e. In each zone, there is a *Kiai* who provides mapping help. The Islamic boarding school that Cottage attended was an average boarding school. Other Islamic boarding schools in the village followed the example set by Cottage's larger boarding school. Next, other huts belong to prominent Islamic boarding schools in the Pamekasan Regency. These huts are often used to accommodate students and are similar to the Mambaul Ulum Bricks boarding school cottages. The *Kiai* in the area, including villages and sub-districts, will align themselves with the prominent Islamic boarding school. This is due to the enduring relationships since smaller boarding schools often seek the guidance and authority of larger ones. The link will become intricately connected and endure for a significant duration. Regency Pamekasan has numerous cottages and large Islamic boarding schools with close and influential relationships. Some notable examples include the Darul Ulum Banyuanyar Cottage Boarding School, the Miftahul Ulum Panyepen Boarding School, the Miftahul Ulum New Garden Boarding School, and the Mambaul Ulum Bricks Cottage Boarding School. The cottage boarding school, which is both old and spacious, has a strong public presence. The father takes his son home from school, resulting in significant influence and close ties. Subsequently, the support figures are organized in ascending order in the southern and central areas. In the Pantura region, most individuals prefer

the first option regarding numerical sorting, mostly due to the strong association with Raja'e. In addition, politically engaged young individuals vote for candidate number one due to their strong platform and youthful perspective. Nevertheless, there are certain cottage boarding schools, such as Cottage Boarding School Bustanul Ulum Waru, where the institution is chaired by KH Kholilurrahman, a highly esteemed figure and elder in the Pamekasan community. He has been actively involved in politics for a considerable period and can be considered a senior in this field. The *Kiai's* plan cottage boarding school is established under the authority of *Kiai*, with every policy being adhered to by the *Santri*. According to *Kiai* data, individuals who should be respected include "*Baphak, bubbhu, Guruh, Ratoh*" (i.e., parents, teachers, and government). This principle remains applicable at present. The Madurese society is steadfast in upholding its principles. Suppose *Kiai* possesses something that can be executed by the community independently of *Kiai's* authority. In that case, this occurs since the Madura public still adheres to the principle of "*athorok oca' ka keae*," which entails obeying *Kiai's* commands. A similar occurrence occurred during the 2018 regional head elections in Pamekasan Regency. The *Kiai's* strategic approach involved carefully considering the options and informing the students about their involvement in activities such as reciting the Koran. However, it is unethical for some *Kiai* cottage Islamic boarding schools to withhold their choice from students and the community without publishing it. If shared publicly on social media, particularly among *Santri* circles. Nevertheless, there are multiple *Kiai* who openly select candidates. This is important because it is considered suitable and appropriate to govern the Regency of Pamekasan. *Kiai* statistics are disseminated orally, first from *Santri* and then spreading to the general people. *Kiai* occasionally offers code or support, such as da'wah or recitation, to certain candidates in their endeavors. Another approach is to

engage in repatriation efforts to get *Santri* (Islamic boarding school students) to participate in voting actively. By garnering the support of these students, who already have a strong allegiance to *Kiai* (Islamic scholars), it is possible to sway public opinion and encourage the wider community to support *Kiai's* Islamic boarding school. This targeted strategy is particularly effective in appealing to parents whose children are enrolled in the boarding school. In addition, *Santri* will implement tactics such as informing the public that the cottage boarding school serves as a residence for selected candidates. The matter becomes a crucial factor in determining the success of candidates in electoral contests. *Kiai* Cottage Boarding School implements the policy of sending *Santri* home before or during voting, known as the "return *Santri*" strategy, to influence the students' voting behavior.

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