

## ANALYSING THE POTENTIAL OF PESANTREN AS AN AGENT OF INTER-RELIGIOUS HARMONY

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**Abstract:** This article attempts to look at great potential of pesantren as the oldest Islamic religious institution in Indonesia. This research analyzes the three primary assets owned by pesantren (human capital, social capital, and intellectual capital) to become agents of inter-religious harmony. It is based on field research conducted in two Islamic boarding schools with great attention to issues of inter-religious harmony, namely the Aswaja Nusantara Islamic Boarding School, Mlangi, Yogyakarta, managed by Kiai Muhammad Mustafid and the Roudhatus Sholihin Islamic Boarding School, Demak, managed by KH. Abdul Qodir, Lc. The primary data sources of this study were taken from interviews with the leaders and notes from Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with representatives of students. Based on the SWOT analysis of the collected data, this study concludes that Pesantren has excellent potential to become an agent of inter-religious harmony because of its social and intellectual capital and the diverse backgrounds of its students. However, this still requires pesantrens to conduct collaborative-comprehensive efforts to maximize their potential.

**Keywords:** Capital; inter-religious harmony; pesantren; SWOT analysis.

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## Introduction

The plurality of religious backgrounds and the plurality of society is a socio-historical fact of Indonesia<sup>1</sup> which is a double-edged sword. It can manifest as an essential asset in realizing national unity in the frame of diversity. But on the other hand, this plurality will likely become the main factor in Indonesia’s division. In this case, the management of pluralism is a necessity that must be sought by various elements of the Nation for a better future for Indonesia.<sup>2</sup> This study argues that *pesantren*, with their human, social, and intellectual resources, can be the principal agent in realizing inter-religious harmony.

From academic perspective, the problem of inter-religious harmony worldwide, especially in Indonesia, has become a concern of various groups.<sup>3</sup> Various legal and social formulations were proposed; either through inter-religious dialogue initiatives,<sup>4</sup> dialogue between religious texts and contexts,<sup>5</sup> empowerment of community organizations,<sup>6</sup> strengthening the role of religious figures and leaders,<sup>7</sup> and others.<sup>8</sup> All of those are to be able to find the best formula to

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<sup>1</sup> Toto Suryana, “Konsep Dan Aktualisasi Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam-Ta’lim* 9, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Nazmudin, “Kerukunan Dan Toleransi Antar Umat Beragama Dalam Membangun Keutuhan Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI),” *Journal of Government and Civil Society* 1, no. 1 (February 22, 2018): 23.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Pye et al., eds., *Religious Harmony: Problems, Practice, and Education* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Khotimah Khotimah, “Religious Harmony and Government in Indonesia,” *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 23, no. 1 (2015); Faisal Ismail, “Paving the Way for Interreligious Dialogue, Tolerance, and Harmony: Following Mukti Ali’s Path,” *Al-Jami’ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 50, no. 1 (June 26, 2012): 147–178.

<sup>5</sup> Wira Hadi Kusuma, “Agama dan Resolusi Konflik (Analisis Terhadap Konflik Kegamaan di Indonesia),” *Jurnal Ilmiah Syi’ar* 15, no. 1 (2015).

<sup>6</sup> Roger Campdepadrós-Cullell et al., “Interreligious Dialogue Groups Enabling Human Agency,” *Religions* 12, no. 3 (March 12, 2021): 189.

<sup>7</sup> Joko Tri Haryanto, “Interaksi dan Harmoni Umat Beragama,” *Walisongo* 20, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>8</sup> Zainal Abidin Bagir, *Kerukunan Dan Penodaan Agama: Alternatif Penanganan Masalah* (Yogyakarta: CRCS (Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies) Program Studi Agama dan Lintas Budaya Sekolah Pascasarjana Lintas Disiplin, UGM, 2017).

minimize division and create harmony, according to this research, all of which boils down to two main problems: the practice of religious teachings and the experience of religious adherents themselves.

It is a common consensus that no religious teachings instruct its adherents to do evil to others regardless of their religion. However, it turns out that these dogmas about tolerance are not enough to prevent acts of violence against different religions. Sometimes religious teachings are forcibly withdrawn to legitimize violent behavior towards those with different faiths. At this point, this study sees the urgency of an experiential-based religious learning model, which aims to understand learning materials and reflect and actively practice them.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to learning to respect others and share social responsibility, in the context of religious harmony, it is also necessary to promote the principle of harmony without uniformity, which is actually following one of the principles of the Indonesian identity, namely *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).<sup>10</sup> In such a pluralistic Indonesian society, experience and adapting to a pluralistic environment are essential prerequisites for realizing inter-religious harmony.

My previous research on religious-other hospitality among students of *Pesantren* found that although the students had long been educated in the *pesantren* environment and were intensively provided with various kinds of habituation and learning of Islamic scholarship over the years, there are still concerns from the *pesantren* managers about their ability to adapt and respond to various religious problems in a more heterogeneous society. According to one of the caregivers, this is because the students have been living in a homogeneous environment, the *pesantren* environment. They have never experienced life directly in a society with a different faith background, let alone being a minority.

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<sup>9</sup> David A Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, 2015; Ronald E Hansen, "The Role and Experience in Learning: Giving Meaning and Authenticity to the Learning Process in Schools," *Journal of Technology Education* 11, no. 2 (May 1, 2000), accessed December 26, 2020, <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JTE/v11n2/hansen.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Parsudi Suparlan, "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika: Keanekaragaman Sukubangsa Atau Kebudayaan?," *Antropologi Indonesia* 0, no. 72 (July 24, 2014), accessed March 23, 2022, <http://journal.ui.ac.id/index.php/jai/article/view/3472>.

The problem of inter-religious harmony becomes more complicated in an era full of media attacks, or Deuz calls “media life”. Deuz said that in this very fluid life, we must continue to adapt to the constant changes that occur in society. Consequently, as a media scholar, Deuze sees that the media will increasingly enter the sides of people’s lives so that people no longer live *with* the media but *in* media life.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the various conceptions of society that have been firmly established so far will change and adapt to the logic of the media. Including the many conceptions of religion, precisely the conception of inter-religious harmony.

Based on data released by the Islamic Boarding School Database of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, there are at least 27,722 Islamic boarding schools with a total of 4,175,623 students in Indonesia. This study sees that this number shows Indonesia’s great potential in realizing religious communities by making Islamic boarding schools centers of education and the practice of inter-religious harmony. Unfortunately, only a small number of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have exceptional attention to developing a tolerant religious education model that is tolerant and leads to the realization of inter-religious harmony. This study aims to examine the problem of inter-religious harmony more deeply, primarily related to the potential of *pesantren* as an agent to realize such harmony and all its contestations.

Based on the above background, this research raises the problem: how to measure the potential of *pesantren* resources (human, social, and intellectual) to be able to act as agents of inter-religious harmony?

## Method

At least two themes will be explored in this literature study: first, literature on inter-religious harmony (definition and standards of inter-religious harmony, factors triggering inter-religious conflict in the world and particularly in Indonesia, and various inter-religious conflict resolution formulas that have been there is). Second, literature on education and conflict resolution between religions (the role and methods of education in supporting conflict resolution, as well as the challenges of education in realizing inter-religious

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<sup>11</sup> Mark Deuze, “Media Life,” *Media, Culture & Society* 33, no. 1 (January 2011): 137–148.

harmony). It is important to conduct a study on the above themes first in this research series before the researcher goes into the field. This literature study obtained a more comprehensive and applicable theoretical basis to be used as an initial perspective before going into the area.

As stated previously, this research raises the problem of the potential of *pesantren* in realizing inter-religious harmony; therefore, this research then goes to several *pesantren* which are known to have attention to the issue of tolerance between religious communities. There are at least two *pesantren* that fall into this category: Pondok *Pesantren* Roudhatus Sholihin, Demak and Pondok *Pesantren* Aswaja Nusantara, Mlangi, Yogyakarta.

The field research activities include interviewing the leader and the *asatidz* board of the Islamic boarding school. Second, conducting Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with representatives of male and female students. Interviews and FGDs will be focused on exploring the perceptions of caregivers and *pesantren* residents regarding the reality and challenges of inter-religious harmony in the *pesantren* world, as well as the potential of *pesantren* to be able to realize this. Third, this research will also observe *pesantren*'s activities, which are oriented towards realizing inter-religious harmony.

## Result

The data in this sub-discussion are collected from interviews with *pesantren* leaders regarding the potential of *pesantren* to become agents of inter-religious harmony. They are compiled based on the SWOT Analysis method, which focuses on elaborating on the points of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Related to *pesantrens*'s strengths which are the internal factors of the *pesantren* to become agents of inter-religious harmony, as stated by Kiai Mustafid, the strength or capital of *pesantren* to become agents of harmony is the existence of *pesantren* as not only a place for *tafaqqub fiddin*, but also a *da'wah* institution that provides religious information from "first hand". Pesantren is an authoritative institution that delivers authoritative religious messages,<sup>12</sup> an essential strength of *pesantren* to

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<sup>12</sup> Kamaruzzaman Bustamam Ahmad, "Pesantren Sebagai Pusat Peradaban Muslim: Pengalaman Indonesia Untuk Asia Tenggara," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan* 8, no. 2 (August 1, 2010), accessed November 24, 2022, <https://jurnaledukasikemenag.org/index.php/edukasi/article/view/104>.

become agents of harmony. Because harmony between religions can only occur if there is a correct understanding of religion, and this proper understanding can only happen if it is delivered from authoritative sources.<sup>13</sup>

The second strength of the *pesantren* is the diverse cultural background of its students. As is well known, Islamic boarding schools are institutions open to anyone to study, regardless of their varied backgrounds. The life of the plural santri certainly has positive implications for many things, and the main thing is the high level of ability of the santri to maintain their existence amid diversity. In the context of efforts to realize inter-religious harmony, the life factor of santri in a culturally heterogeneous environment is essential. The santri have indeed been conditioned to understand and experience these differences directly. This habituation will eventually shape the mindset and attitude of students who can not only accept cultural and religious diversity<sup>14</sup> but can take advantage of this diversity for concrete things that have a positive value to society in the wider community when they leave the *pesantren*

The third strength of the *pesantren* is its intellectual strength built in the spirit of *tafaqqub fiddin*, open-mindedness, inclusion, and not a blind fanatic.<sup>15</sup> Like it is in the two Islamic boarding schools that were the object of this research and in most Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Islamic teachings are delivered from various perspectives and different schools of thought, making the theme of religious moderation a hidden curriculum that *asatidz* always insert during their

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<sup>13</sup> M. Nur Ghufron, Rini Risnawita Suminta, and Jamaludin Hadi Kusuma, "Knowledge and Learning of Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding in an Indonesian Islamic College Sample: An Epistemological Belief Approach," *Religions* 11, no. 8 (August 10, 2020): 411.

<sup>14</sup> Marpuah Marpuah, "Toleransi dan Interaksi Sosial Antar Pemeluk Agama di Cigugur, Kuningan," *Harmoni* 18, no. 2 (December 31, 2019): 51–72; Imam Syaifudin, "Interaksi Sosial dalam Membangun Toleransi Antar Umat Beragama di Dusun Dodol Desa Wonoagung Kecamatan Kasembon Kabupaten Malang," *J-PIPS (Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial)* 4, no. 1 (December 30, 2017): 21; Tafrikhuddin Tafrikhuddin, Abdul Gafur, and Ajat Sudrajat, "Sumber Belajar dan Dampaknya Terhadap Pola Pikir Keagamaan Santri," *Jurnal Pembangunan Pendidikan: Fondasi dan Aplikasi* 2, no. 2 (December 1, 2014), accessed November 24, 2022, <https://journal.uny.ac.id/index.php/jppfa/article/view/2657>.

<sup>15</sup> M. Falikul Isbah, "Pesantren in the Changing Indonesian Context: History and Current Developments," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 8, no. 1 (June 22, 2020): 65.

teaching (*pengajian*). Another example is the *bahtsul masail* tradition preserved in the Nahdhatul Ulama Islamic boarding schools, which is a form of *pesantren* effort to intellectually respond to contemporary problems by comprehensively referring to various thoughts.<sup>16</sup> This strength becomes essential in preparing the students to become agents of inter-religious harmony. When faced with complex problems related to inter-religious conflicts, with the provision of a comprehensive intellectual building, the *pesantren* community is expected to have a broad outlook to see the problem comprehensively and formulate integrative solutive steps.

The last strength of the *pesantren* is its social capital among the community. Historically, the presence of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesian society has had many positive impacts (M. Syaifudin et al. 2021; Assa'idi 2021). Moreover, the *pesantren* has made a real contribution to the struggle of the Indonesians against colonialism.<sup>17</sup> The same thing happened at the Pesantren Mlangi Islamic, where the founder is a figure who promotes learning and memorizing the Qur'an in society. So it is not surprising that the Mlangi community grew many memorizers of the Quran at that time. Pesantren's real contribution to society socially fostered the trust and closeness of the surrounding community towards the *pesantren*. This social capital factor is crucial for realizing inter-religious harmony in Indonesia. With the strong influence that *pesantren* have in the broader community, it significantly can contribute to provide the understanding and invite the community to accept and care for inter-religious harmony.

After understanding the strengths of *pesantren* to become agents of inter-religious harmony, on the other hand, this research also looks at the weaknesses of *pesantren*. Among them are most *pesantren* that do not have a particular movement that is concerned with the issue of

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<sup>16</sup> Ahmad Munjin Nasih, "Bahtsul Masail Dan Problematikanya Di Kalangan Masyarakat Muslim Tradisional," *Al-Qanun* 12, no. 1 (2009); Kudrat Abdillah, Maylissabet Maylissabet, and M. Taufiq, "Kontribusi Bahtsul Masail Pesantren di Madura dalam Menghadapi Perkembangan Hukum Islam Kontemporer," *PERADA* 2, no. 1 (June 28, 2019): 67–80; Ali Mutakin, "Kitab Kuning dan Tradisi Intelektual Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) dalam Penentuan Hukum (Menelisis Tradisi Riset Kitab Kuning)," *Syariah Jurnal Hukum dan Pemikiran* 18, no. 2 (November 29, 2018): 192.

<sup>17</sup> Ahmad Royani, "Pesantren dalam Bingkai Sejarah Perjuangan Kemerdekaan Indonesia," *Jurnal Islam Nusantara* 2, no. 1 (June 30, 2018): 121.

inter-religious harmony. Although many *pesantren* have initiatives and exceptional attention to this matter, unfortunately, it is only within the scope of one or two *pesantren*. There is no one particular joint movement from various Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia to create inter-religious harmony. This weakness, unfortunately, made the *pesantren*-based tolerance movement only partial and sectoral.

Another weakness of the *pesantren* is the weak management of human resources, especially in preparing cadres engaged in interfaith tolerance activities. as conveyed by Kiai Mustafid, the *pesantren* have human resources in quantity and quality are very good. But unfortunately, there is no specific management that is professionally organized and measurable to process these human resources into those ready to become agents of inter-religious tolerance.

In addition to the internal strengths and weaknesses of the *pesantren*, as described above, this research also highlights some of the opportunities and threats from outside factors of *pesantren* to maximize their potential to become agents of inter-religious tolerance. Among the external threats faced by *pesantren* is that Islamic boarding schools are prone to become hotbeds of radicals. Indonesian history saw radical ideology succeed in sneaking into Islamic boarding schools.<sup>18</sup> With the various influences possessed by *pesantren*, there is no doubt that jihadists are targeting *pesantren* as a basis for spreading their ideas. Related to the context of inter-religious harmony, it is clear that this is a real threat that must be seriously anticipated and addressed.

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<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Akmansyah and Nurnazli, "Prevention of Radicalism Infiltration in Pesantren;" (Presented at the 1st Raden Intan International Conference on Muslim Societies and Social Sciences (RIICMuSSS 2019), Bandar Lampung, Indonesia, 2020), accessed November 24, 2022, <https://www.atlantispress.com/article/125946271>; Nurrohman Syarif, Tajul Arifin, and F. Fridayanti, "The Construction of Jihad and the Level of Radicalism among Pesantren Leaders in Indonesia:," in *2nd International Conference on Sociology Education* (Presented at the The 2nd International Conference on Sociology Education, Bandung, Indonesia: SCITEPRESS - Science and Technology Publications, 2017), 686–691, accessed November 24, 2022, <http://www.scitepress.org/DigitalLibrary/Link.aspx?doi=10.5220/0007104206860691>; Ajat Sudrajat et al., "Why Radicalism In Pesantren?A Case Study of One Pesantren In Indonesia," *PONTE International Scientific Researchs Journal* 74, no. 1 (2018), accessed November 24, 2022, <http://www.pontejournal.net/mainpanel/abstract.php?TOKEN=gRkgF5411G&P ID=PJ-V9ZPG>.



In addition to the threat of transnational ideas, in its development, *pesantren* must also face the negative stigma of society which does not like the existence of *pesantren*. Various negative issues were intentionally blown up by elements who wanted to thwart the progress of the *pesantren* and even bring down the dignity of the *pesantren* to distance the *pesantren* from society and reduce its influence in society. The controversial issue of the Pondok Roudhotus Sholihin's santri who perform *rebana* in the church, for example, is a clear example of how a particular group of society that does not understand and take advantage of the moment deliberately undermines the authority of the *pesantren* in the eyes of the community.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from the two threats above, another threat that needs to seriously unpacked is that Islamic boarding schools are prone to becoming political commodities that can insert radical ideas. In the political context, the existence of *pesantren* in society has its bargaining value. It is not surprising, then, that many Kiai are tempted to enter politics and cause a shift in the function of the *pesantren*, which initially focused on religious education, to become a political commodity that is used to gain power. Regardless of the pros and cons of the *pesantren* leaders' involvement in politics,<sup>20</sup> in this context, the author sees the threat of using *pesantren* as a political vehicle with radical nuances. Of course, the role of *pesantren* in politics is a positive thing. However, *pesantren* must still be aware of the interests of radical groups who use *pesantren* for their political interests.

After revealing the strengths, weaknesses, and threats that *pesantren* must face, the last factor that is important to show is the opportunity factor from outside the *pesantren* which can maximize the potential of *pesantren* to become agents of inter-religious harmony. The first opportunity is the openness of the public sphere in the real world and the digisphere. The *pesantren* community should take this critical opportunity to contribute to providing valid information about Islamic teachings and spreading peaceful religious ideas. This

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<sup>19</sup> Nashih Nashrullah, "Tabuhan Rebana Santri Demak Iringi Prosesi Natal Di Semarang," <https://Www.Republika.Co.Id/>, last modified December 25, 2019, accessed November 24, 2022, <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/q3259j320/tabuhan-rebana-santri-demak-iringi-prosesi-natal-di-semarang>.

<sup>20</sup> Merlia Indah Prastiwi, "Politisasi Pesantren dan Pergeseran Fungsi Pesantren di Madura," *Karsa: Jurnal Sosial dan Budaya Keislaman* 23, no. 2 (February 2, 2016): 208.

opportunity is essential in rampant messages of hatred in the name of religion that spread freely in public spaces.

The second opportunity that Islamic boarding schools can utilize is the existence of information and communication technology (ICT) which is widely available and affordable. As we know, technology products' accessibility and affordability are currently growing. Islamic boarding schools should also take advantage of these products to develop the *pesantren* and develop educational facilities for a wider audience. In the context of inter-religious harmony, the availability and affordability of ICT facilities can at least contribute to connecting Islamic boarding schools with the outside world. With the availability of adequate ICT facilities, Islamic boarding schools can do many things, such as spreading messages of peace through live-streaming recitations or interactive and exciting video clips uploaded to the Internet. With adequate technological support, Islamic boarding schools can also interact with other religious communities in various parts of the world to build collaborations. Islamic boarding schools can also create special online courses to develop soft skills to interact with people and many other important initiatives.

## Discussion

In the previous sub-discussion, this article has presented several points from the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Islamic Boarding School to be an Agent of Inter-religious Harmony. The next step in a SWOT analysis is to discuss those key points based on the following question prompts; How can the (S) take advantage of the existing (O)?; How to overcome the (W) to get the (O)? How can the (S) deal with the (T)? How to deal with the (W) to prevent external (T)?

The first question, What are the strengths possessed by *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools have several strengths to be agents of inter-religious harmony, namely: *pesantren* are authoritative institutions in terms of conveying information about religion, the diversity of backgrounds of *pesantren* residents, studies that are not fanatical about one school of thought, and strong social capital) can take advantages of the current opportunities (openness of public space and availability and affordability of access to technology)? In the context of the first question, this article proposes two things that *pesantren* can do; inviting as many *pesantren* leaders as possible to fill online and offline public

spheres with harmonious religious discourses. The religious public space in Indonesia is filled with hateful narratives from various individuals who want to destroy the unity and peace of Indonesia.<sup>21</sup> Not only in the real public sphere, but the war of hate narratives against peace is also even more prolific in the digital public sphere. In this hate narrative war, this research sees the importance of inviting as many *pesantren* leaders as possible who have qualified Islamic scientific capacity and the ability to convey religious messages flexibly and peacefully to participate or be given a place to contribute to sharing messages of peace. The phenomenon of the emergence of experts from Islamic boarding school leaders (like KH. Baha'uddin Nur Salim, commonly known as Gus Baha,<sup>22</sup> KH. Mustofa Bisri,<sup>23</sup> KH. Anwar Zahid,<sup>24</sup> and KH. Ahmad Muwafiq<sup>25</sup>) in the Indonesian public sphere is a real example of how to maximize the potential of Islamic boarding schools by utilizing the openness of the public sphere.

Apart from inviting as many potential *pesantren* cadres as possible into the public space, pesantren can take advantage of the opportunities available by promoting digital media literacy and skills among students and *asatidz* of *pesantren*. As previously stated, IT products are now very easy to obtain at affordable prices. This certainly requires increasing Islamic boarding schools' ability to utilize these IT products, both hard and soft skills. Consequently, digital media literacy and skills must be introduced and encouraged among

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<sup>21</sup> Dita Kusumasari and S. Arifianto, "Makna Teks Ujaran Kebencian Pada Media Sosial," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 12, no. 1 (January 26, 2020): 1; Saiful Mustofa, "Berebut Wacana: Hilangnya Etika Komunikasi Di Ruang Publik Dunia Maya," *Jurnal Studi Agama dan Masyarakat* 15, no. 1 (June 26, 2019): 58–74; Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf and Suhadi, "Isu-Isu Kunci Ujaran Kebencian (Hate Speech): Implikasinya Terhadap Gerakan Sosial Membangun Toleransi," *Jurnal Multikultural & Multireligius* 13 (2014).

<sup>22</sup> Muhammad Qori Qordofa and Muhamad As'ad, "Metode Dakwah KH. Ahmad Baha'uddin Nursalim (Gus Baha) Melalui Channel Santri Gayeng Di Media Youtube," *Syar | Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 2, no. 1 (June 5, 2022): 1–10.

<sup>23</sup> Laili Humam Miftahuddin, "Ulama dan Media Sosial: Analisis Pesan Dakwah KH Mustofa Bisri di Twitter" (December 11, 2018), accessed November 24, 2022, <https://zenodo.org/record/3545537>.

<sup>24</sup> Intihaul Khiiyaroh, "Dakwah Ala Anwar Zahid: Menjinakkan Islam Normatif Menjadi Islam Lokal Yang Mengglobal: Pandangan Kritis Terhadap Pola Dakwah Yang Disampaikan Anwar Zahid Di Beberapa Video Youtube-Nya," *Alamara: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 2, no. 2 (2018).

<sup>25</sup> Syaifuddin and Moh. Ali Aziz, "Dakwah Moderat Pendakwah Nadlatul Ulama (Analisis Konten Moderasi Beragama Berbasis Sejarah)," *Hikmah* 15, no. 1 (2020).

*pesantren* residents. Literacy and skills are the ability to technically utilize various kinds of technological products and use them wisely. Admittedly or not, radical groups have taken the lead in utilizing these IT products. They have used a lot of technology in their actions.<sup>26</sup>

Related to the second question, how to overcome the weaknesses of the Islamic Boarding School (the absence of a massive and collaborative movement to ward off radicalism and weak human resource management) to get the opportunity? This article proposes two opinions; firstly, to raise *pesantren's* awareness towards the importance of collaborative programs to counter radicalism and their essential role in public spaces. This can be done by establishing cooperation between *pesantren* leaders and state institutions that deal with issues of radicalism, such as the National Counter Terrorism Agency (*Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme*), the police, and some NGOs working in the same field as *ruangobrol.id*, Yayasan DeBintal, etc. In addition, the government, represented by the Ministry of Religion, can initiate inter-religious activity programs specifically for Islamic boarding schools. Such as summer schools, inter-religious camps, inter-religious tours, etc. From these various initiatives, the Islamic boarding school community, from the leaders to the students, might understand the dangers of radicalism and the importance of collaboration in dealing with it.

The third question that must be answered in practice SWOT analysis is how the (S) is able to deal with the (T)? in the context of this research, this means answering how the various strengths possessed by *pesantren* can face external challenges in maximizing their potential to become agents of inter-religious harmony. As previously stated, there are at least three external threats; the entry of radical ideas into the world of Islamic boarding schools, the negative stigma of Indonesian society towards Islamic boarding schools, and the use of Islamic boarding schools as political commodities. In dealing with those, this article argues the importance of strengthening the identity of the *pesantren* society as an open-minded, firmly attached to Islamic

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<sup>26</sup> Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, Audrey Alexander, and Nick Kaderbhai, "The Impact of Digital Communications Technology on Radicalization and Recruitment," *International Affairs* 93, no. 5 (September 1, 2017): 1233–1249; Indra Martian Permana and Fadzli Adam, "The Role of the Internet and Social Media in the Spread of ISIS in Indonesia," *Halaqa: Islamic Education Journal* 5, no. 1 (January 7, 2021): 13–19; Paul Wilkinson, "Editor's Introduction: Technology and Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 5, no. 2 (June 1993): 1–11.

tradition, politically neutral, and baraka-oriented society. This can be done through various activities, such as initiating forums of *silaturahmi* and '*silatul afkar*' between Islamic boarding school alumni. Apart from that, it is also important to inniate *sowan* to the elderly *Kiai* who understand the problems and the history of the struggles of the *pesantren* community in ancient times and to visit the deceased elders.

Another thing that can be done is to gather political actors from the *pesantren* circles. In this way, the cadres can introspect and remind each other that they are *santri* who must uphold the values of the *pesantren* not only when they are still studying at the *pesantren* but also when they carry out their mandate in society.

The last question in the SWOT analysis series is how to deal with the weaknesses of the Islamic Boarding School (the absence of a massive and collaborative movement to ward off radicalism and weak human resource management) to prevent external threats. As previously known, the challenges that *pesantren* must face are the introduction of radical ideas into *pesantren*, the negative stigma of the society towards *pesantren*, and the use of *pesantren* as political commodities. *Pesantren*, at this point, should have a systematic regeneration program concerning religious moderation. Islamic boarding schools must start having a cadre program for students who care about moderation with clear stages and targets. With good human resource management, Islamic boarding schools can anticipate and respond to ideas that enter and have the potential to ruin the *pesantren's* tradition. The cadres can also contribute to educating people outside the *pesantren* regarding the dangers of radical ideas. Moreover, they can also contribute to bonding Muslims and non-Muslims in society to collaborate and avoid potential conflicts. In practical politics, they can also enter into the government system to make politics a vehicle for creating religious harmony in society, not only for personal and group interests.

## Conclusion

The diversity of cultural and religious life of the Indonesian people is God's grace for which the entire community should be grateful by taking a role in protecting it. In this article, we discussed the potential of Islamic boarding schools to help maintain this diversity by becoming agents of inter-religious tolerance. Based on the SWOT analysis conducted previously, this article finds that Islamic

boarding schools as Islamic religious learning institutions with unique characteristics have great potential to become agents of inter-religious harmony due to their human, social and intellectual capital. However, this still requires Islamic boarding schools to make collaborative-comprehensive efforts to maximize their potential. At this point, at least four things need to be done by the pesantren: first, in terms of human resources, Islamic boarding schools conduct a cadre program for students concerned with religious harmony that is managed professionally with clear and measurable goals and targets. Second, related to pesantren's intellectual capital, this study sees that pesantren should deliver Islamic studies and teachings (*pengajian*) according to Indonesia's social context of religious and cultural diversity. Third, with its social capital, pesantren have to collaborate with state institutions and non-governmental organizations that are concerned about creating interfaith harmony.

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