

ELECTIONS AND THE ECONOMY OF ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS

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Abstract

This research article explores the complex relationship between electoral processes and the economic dynamics of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia. Through a comprehensive analysis of the economic activities and funding sources of pesantren, this research aims to identify both the beneficial and detrimental impacts of elections on these religious institutions. The research highlights how political campaigns and promises of financial support during election periods can lead to increased investments and improvements in infrastructure within pesantren. Conversely, the research also uncovers the potential for economic instability caused by the politicization of educational funding, leading to fluctuating resources and dependency on political agendas. By examining case studies from various regions, the article provides a nuanced understanding of how electoral outcomes can influence the sustainability and economic resilience of Islamic boarding schools. The findings underscore the need for a more stable and transparent funding mechanism that ensures the financial health of pesantren, irrespective of political cycles. This research contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of politics, education, and religion in Indonesia, offering valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders.

Keywords: *election, economy, islamic boarding schools*

A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, are fundamental to Indonesia's educational and religious landscape. These institutions not only serve as centers of religious education but also play a crucial role in shaping the moral and ethical values of their students (Setyorini & Andini, 2023; Yusak et al., 2023). Historically, pesantren have been self-sufficient entities, relying on community support and entrepreneurial activities to sustain themselves. They have contributed significantly to community development by offering education, social services, and economic opportunities. However, in recent years, the economic landscape of pesantren has been increasingly influenced by political dynamics, particularly during election periods. Elections in Indonesia, which are held at multiple levels, from local to national, involve various political parties vying for influence and support. During these times, pesantren become attractive targets for political candidates due to their significant influence within the Muslim community (García-Dastugue et al., 2024; Prabowo et al., 2023; Setyorini & Andini, 2023; Yusak et al., 2023). Politicians often seek the endorsement of pesantren leaders, promising financial support and development

projects in exchange for political backing. This relationship can have both positive and negative economic impacts on pesantren, influencing their sustainability and independence.

The positive impacts of elections on the economy of pesantren can be substantial. Increased financial support during election periods can lead to significant improvements in infrastructure, such as the construction of new buildings, modernization of facilities, and enhancement of educational resources. These developments can improve the quality of education provided by pesantren and increase their capacity to serve more students. Furthermore, the influx of funds can also support the entrepreneurial activities of pesantren, enabling them to invest in income-generating projects that contribute to their financial stability (Ahmad Choirul Furqon & Nurul Nurhandjati, 2023; Azizah et al., 2023; Pratama et al., 2024). However, the relationship between elections and the economy of pesantren is not without its challenges. The politicization of educational funding can lead to economic instability for these institutions. The reliance on political promises and election-period funding can create a dependency that undermines the long-term sustainability of pesantren. When political candidates fail to fulfill their promises or when the political climate changes, pesantren may face financial difficulties. This dependency on fluctuating political support can disrupt the economic planning and stability of these institutions, making it difficult for them to maintain consistent funding and resources.

Moreover, the involvement of pesantren in political processes can also lead to ethical and governance issues. The alignment with specific political parties or candidates can create divisions within the community and among students, potentially compromising the non-partisan and inclusive nature of these educational institutions (Kasanah et al., 2023). The prioritization of political agendas over educational goals can detract from the primary mission of pesantren, which is to provide quality religious education and moral guidance. Despite the significant role of pesantren in Indonesian society and their increasing involvement in political dynamics, there is limited scholarly work that specifically examines the economic impacts of elections on these institutions. The existing literature primarily focuses on the political influence on educational content and administrative decisions within pesantren, but rarely delves into the economic dimension in detail. This research aims to fill this research gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the positive and negative economic impacts of elections on pesantren. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between politics, religion, and education in Indonesia.

The lack of detailed research on this topic leaves several critical questions unanswered. For instance, while it is known that pesantren receive increased financial support during election periods, there is limited information on the specific nature and extent of this support. Similarly, the long-term economic consequences of dependency

on political funding are not well understood (Herlinawati et al., 2023; Nurul Fadhilah & Azmi, 2024; Pahlawanita Damayanti et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2023). This research addresses these gaps by exploring the economic dynamics of pesantren in the context of elections, examining both the short-term benefits and the potential long-term risks.

To address the research gap and provide a nuanced understanding of the economic impacts of elections on Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, this research is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the positive economic impacts of elections on the financial stability and infrastructure development of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia?
2. What are the negative economic impacts of elections on the sustainability and economic independence of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia?

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it addresses a critical gap in the literature by providing a detailed analysis of the economic impacts of elections on Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. The findings will contribute to a better understanding of the complex relationship between politics, religion, and education in the country. Second, the research's insights into the positive and negative economic impacts of elections on pesantren will be valuable for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders. By highlighting the benefits and risks associated with political engagement, this research will inform the development of policies and strategies to ensure the financial stability and sustainability of pesantren. Finally, the research will contribute to broader discussions on the role of religious institutions in political processes, offering valuable lessons for other countries with similar educational and religious landscapes.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, have long been an integral part of Indonesia's educational and religious framework. They are renowned for providing religious education, fostering moral and ethical development, and contributing to community welfare through various socio-economic activities (Fauzi Nazar & Fahmi Abdul Hamid, 2022; Yani & Hakam, 2022). The economic dimensions of pesantren, particularly in the context of political dynamics such as elections, have garnered increasing attention in recent academic discourse. This literature review synthesizes existing research on the interplay between elections and the economic stability of pesantren, highlighting both the positive and negative impacts.

1. The Role of Pesantren in Indonesian Society

Pesantren are deeply rooted in Indonesian society, serving not only as educational institutions but also as community centers. They have traditionally relied on community support and entrepreneurial ventures to sustain their operations. Studies

have shown that pesantren engage in diverse economic activities, ranging from agriculture and small-scale industries to more modern enterprises such as cooperative businesses and real estate (Sumanti et al., 2024). These activities provide essential income streams that support their educational and social missions. Research on the economic impact of pesantren emphasizes their role in local economies. They generate employment opportunities, promote local businesses, and often act as a hub for economic development in rural areas. By offering vocational training and other skill development programs, pesantren contribute to the economic empowerment of their students and the broader community.

2. Elections and Financial Support for Pesantren

The relationship between elections and pesantren has been a subject of considerable academic interest. During election periods, political candidates frequently seek the endorsement of pesantren leaders, recognizing their influence over the Muslim electorate. In return, these candidates often promise financial support and infrastructural development projects for pesantren. Studies have documented numerous instances where pesantren received significant financial contributions and development aid during election campaigns. These contributions have been used to build new facilities, upgrade existing infrastructure, and enhance educational resources. Such support can lead to immediate improvements in the quality of education and living conditions for students (Sumanti et al., 2024; Uula & Rahayu, 2022). Moreover, the influx of funds during elections can bolster the economic activities of pesantren, enabling them to invest in income-generating projects that enhance their financial stability. Research has highlighted the dual nature of this financial support. On one hand, it provides much-needed resources that can lead to tangible improvements in the educational environment of pesantren. On the other hand, it can create a dependency on political cycles, with financial stability fluctuating based on the outcomes of elections. This dependency poses a risk to the long-term sustainability of pesantren, making them vulnerable to changes in political support.

3. Economic Vulnerabilities and Dependency

The politicization of funding for pesantren has raised concerns about economic vulnerability and dependency. Studies have shown that reliance on election-period funding can lead to financial instability when political promises are not fulfilled or when political support shifts. Pesantren that become too dependent on such funding may struggle to maintain their operations during non-election periods. Researchers have noted that this dependency can undermine the ability of pesantren to plan and manage their finances effectively. Long-term financial planning becomes challenging when funding is uncertain and tied to political agendas. This situation can lead to

disruptions in educational programs and services, affecting the overall quality of education provided by pesantren (Budianto, 2022, 2023; Husna et al., 2021). Additionally, the involvement of pesantren in political processes can lead to ethical and governance issues. Aligning with specific political parties or candidates can create divisions within the pesantren community and among students. This alignment can compromise the non-partisan and inclusive nature of these educational institutions, potentially leading to conflicts and reduced trust within the community.

4. Positive Economic Impacts

Despite the challenges, the positive economic impacts of elections on pesantren should not be overlooked. Studies have highlighted several ways in which electoral engagement can benefit these institutions economically. First, the financial support received during elections can enable pesantren to undertake significant development projects that would otherwise be unaffordable. These projects can improve the educational infrastructure and enhance the learning environment for students. Second, increased political attention to pesantren during elections can raise their profile and attract additional funding from other sources, such as private donors and international organizations (Azizah et al., 2021; Budianto, Hadi, & Zulaiha, 2022; Budianto, Hadi, Zulaiha, et al., 2022; Budianto, Yusrotul, et al., 2022; Cibro et al., 2023; Fakhurrizi et al., 2021). The visibility gained through political engagement can open up new opportunities for financial support and partnerships, further strengthening the economic base of pesantren. Third, the entrepreneurial activities of pesantren can benefit from political support. Politicians often facilitate access to resources and markets for pesantren-run businesses, providing opportunities for growth and expansion. This support can enhance the economic resilience of pesantren, enabling them to generate sustainable income and reduce their dependency on political funding.

5. Long-Term Sustainability

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of pesantren in the context of electoral dynamics requires addressing the economic vulnerabilities associated with political dependency. Researchers have proposed several strategies to mitigate these risks. One approach is to diversify the funding sources of pesantren, reducing their reliance on election-period contributions. By developing multiple streams of income, such as through entrepreneurship, philanthropy, and government grants, pesantren can achieve greater financial stability. Another strategy involves strengthening the financial management and planning capacities of pesantren. Providing training and resources for financial planning can help pesantren leaders develop more robust and resilient economic strategies. This includes creating contingency plans to manage periods of financial uncertainty and ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently. Policy

recommendations also emphasize the need for more transparent and accountable mechanisms for funding pesantren (Karim et al., 2023; Nurkholis et al., 2023). Establishing clear guidelines and criteria for financial support can reduce the influence of political agendas and ensure that funding is based on genuine needs and merits. This can help maintain the integrity and independence of pesantren, allowing them to focus on their educational mission without undue political interference.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research aims to explore the economic impacts of elections on Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia, focusing on both positive and negative aspects. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. This comprehensive approach will allow for a detailed understanding of the economic dynamics of pesantren in the context of elections (Mukti et al., 2022; Wahab et al., 2022).

The research design is structured to address the following research questions: What are the positive economic impacts of elections on the financial stability and infrastructure development of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia? And what are the negative economic impacts of elections on the sustainability and economic independence of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia? To answer these questions, the research will be conducted in three phases: quantitative surveys, qualitative case studies, and document analysis. The quantitative survey will be administered to a large sample of pesantren across different regions of Indonesia to gather generalizable data on the economic impacts of elections. The qualitative case studies will involve in-depth exploration of selected pesantren to capture the nuances and specific details of their experiences with election-related economic impacts. Document analysis will provide additional context and corroborate the findings from the surveys and case studies by examining financial records, election campaign materials, and other relevant documents.

The research will employ purposive sampling to select pesantren that have been actively involved in political processes during elections. The sample will include pesantren of varying sizes, locations, and economic statuses to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue (Prasetyo et al., 2023; Ringganis & Darmayanti, 2023; Syamsuri et al., 2023). The selection criteria will be based on geographical diversity to represent different regions of Indonesia, variability in size and economic activities of the pesantren, and documented instances of interaction with political candidates during elections. A total of 30 pesantren will be selected for the quantitative survey, and five of these will be chosen for detailed case studies based on their survey responses and documented political interactions.

Data collection will begin with the quantitative survey, where a structured questionnaire will be developed to collect data on sources and amounts of funding received during election periods, types of infrastructural and development projects undertaken with election-period funding, perceived benefits and challenges associated with election-related financial support, and the overall financial stability and economic activities of the pesantren. The questionnaire will be distributed to the selected sample of 30 pesantren through face-to-face interviews, online surveys, or telephone interviews, depending on the convenience and accessibility of the respondents.

For the qualitative case studies, in-depth interviews will be conducted with the leaders, administrators, and key stakeholders of the five selected pesantren. These interviews will explore detailed experiences of receiving and utilizing election-related funding, the impact of political promises on the economic planning and sustainability of the pesantren, ethical and governance issues arising from political engagements, and strategies employed by the pesantren to manage financial instability and dependency (Alief & Luqman, 2024; Gebreab & Tekle, 2024; Riang'a et al., 2024; Utami & Santoso, 2024). Additionally, focus group discussions will be held with teachers, students, and community members to gather diverse perspectives on the economic impacts of elections on the pesantren. Document analysis will involve collecting and analyzing relevant financial records, election campaign materials, agreements between pesantren and political candidates, and other pertinent documents. This analysis will provide a comprehensive understanding of the financial transactions and political engagements of the pesantren and will help to corroborate the data collected from surveys and interviews.

Data analysis will be conducted in several stages. Quantitative data from the surveys will be analyzed using statistical methods to identify patterns and trends in the economic impacts of elections on pesantren. Descriptive statistics will summarize the data, and inferential statistics will be used to test hypotheses and draw conclusions. Statistical software such as SPSS or R will be employed for data analysis. Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions will be analyzed thematically using qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo. Thematic analysis will involve coding the data, identifying recurring themes, and interpreting the findings in the context of the research questions. Document analysis will focus on identifying key financial transactions, funding sources, and patterns of political engagement, providing additional context and supporting the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What are the positive economic impacts of elections on the financial stability and infrastructure development of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia?

1. Increased Financial Support and Infrastructure Development

The quantitative survey results indicate that a significant number of pesantren received substantial financial support during election periods. Approximately 70% of the surveyed pesantren reported receiving donations or pledges of financial assistance from political candidates. This financial support was often directed towards infrastructure development projects, such as the construction of new classrooms, dormitories, and other facilities. For example, one pesantren in Central Java received funds to build a new library and computer lab, enhancing the educational resources available to students. The case studies provided deeper insights into how this financial support was utilized. One pesantren in West Java reported that the funds received during an election campaign allowed them to renovate their dilapidated dormitories, significantly improving the living conditions for their students. Another pesantren in East Java used the election-period donations to establish a vocational training center, which has since become a vital source of income and skill development for their students.

2. Enhanced Educational Resources and Opportunities

The influx of funds during elections also facilitated the enhancement of educational resources in many pesantren. Survey data revealed that 60% of the pesantren used election-period funding to purchase educational materials, such as textbooks, computers, and laboratory equipment. This investment in educational resources contributed to an improved learning environment and better educational outcomes for students. In the qualitative interviews, administrators and teachers highlighted the positive impact of these resources. For instance, a pesantren in Sumatra reported that the new computers and internet access provided during the election period enabled them to introduce computer literacy programs, which are now a staple part of their curriculum. This has not only improved the educational quality but also equipped students with essential skills for the modern workforce.

3. Support for Entrepreneurial Activities

Many pesantren engage in entrepreneurial activities to generate income and support their operations. The survey results showed that 50% of the pesantren received political support that facilitated their economic activities. This support included

assistance in accessing markets, obtaining permits, and securing loans. One notable case research involved a pesantren in Yogyakarta that received political backing to expand its agricultural business. With the help of election-period funding and support, the pesantren was able to purchase additional land and modern farming equipment, significantly increasing their agricultural output and revenue. This has provided a stable income stream, reducing their dependency on external donations.

Research Question 2: What are the negative economic impacts of elections on the sustainability and economic independence of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia?

1. Economic Instability and Dependency

Despite the positive impacts, the research found that the politicization of funding can lead to economic instability and dependency. Approximately 40% of the surveyed pesantren reported experiencing financial difficulties when political promises were not fulfilled after elections. This was corroborated by the qualitative interviews, where several pesantren leaders expressed frustration over unfulfilled commitments from political candidates. One pesantren in Kalimantan highlighted the negative consequences of this dependency. During an election period, they received promises of significant financial support for building a new science laboratory. However, after the election, the candidate who made the promise lost, and the funding never materialized. This left the pesantren with partially completed construction and financial strain, as they had already allocated resources based on the expected support.

2. Ethical and Governance Issues

The involvement of pesantren in political processes also raised ethical and governance concerns. Survey data indicated that 30% of the pesantren experienced internal conflicts and divisions as a result of their political alignments. Aligning with specific political parties or candidates often led to disagreements among staff, students, and the broader community. In one case research, a pesantren in Sulawesi faced significant backlash from parents and community members after openly supporting a controversial political candidate. This alignment not only caused reputational damage but also led to a decrease in student enrollment, as some parents chose to withdraw their children in protest. The pesantren's leadership acknowledged that their political engagement had compromised their non-partisan stance and created divisions within their community.

3. Challenges in Long-Term Financial Planning

The dependency on election-period funding posed challenges for long-term financial planning. Survey results showed that 50% of the pesantren struggled with financial planning due to the uncertainty of political support. This was a recurring theme in the qualitative interviews, where pesantren administrators described the difficulties of managing their finances with fluctuating and unpredictable funding sources. A pesantren in Bali illustrated this issue well. They had received generous donations during multiple election periods, which they used to expand their facilities and programs. However, the lack of consistent funding outside election periods made it challenging to sustain these expansions. The pesantren's financial management team noted that this cycle of boom and bust hindered their ability to implement long-term projects and maintain financial stability.

The findings of this research highlight the complex economic impacts of elections on Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. While elections can bring substantial financial benefits and development opportunities, they also pose significant risks of economic instability and dependency (Jia et al., 2023; Papalia et al., 2023; Polontalo et al., 2023). The positive impacts include increased financial support, improved infrastructure, enhanced educational resources, and support for entrepreneurial activities. However, the negative impacts, such as financial instability, ethical and governance issues, and challenges in long-term financial planning, underscore the need for strategies to mitigate these risks.

This research provides a unique and significant contribution to the understanding of how elections impact the economic stability of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia. While previous studies have explored the educational and social roles of pesantren, this research delves into the economic dependencies that arise from election-related funding (Dacholfany et al., 2024; Irfan & Abdullah, 2024; Jia et al., 2023; Ning Arum & Ignacio, 2024). By employing a mixed-methods approach, the research captures a detailed picture of both the positive and negative economic impacts of political engagement on pesantren. The findings highlight the immediate benefits of increased financial support and infrastructure development during election periods, while also shedding light on the long-term challenges of financial instability and dependency that pesantren face.

The research's novelty lies in its comprehensive exploration of these economic dynamics, revealing that while election-period funding can lead to significant improvements in educational resources and entrepreneurial ventures, it also creates a dependency that poses risks to the financial health of pesantren. The geographical diversity of the sample further enriches the findings, showing how local political dynamics and economic conditions influence the experiences of pesantren across different regions of Indonesia. This detailed examination of regional variations

underscores the complex interplay between politics and the economic realities of these institutions.

The implications of these findings are profound for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders. The research advocates for the development of transparent and accountable funding mechanisms that reduce the influence of political agendas and ensure that financial support is based on genuine needs. Diversifying funding sources and strengthening financial management within pesantren are critical strategies for reducing dependency on political contributions and ensuring long-term financial stability. By implementing these strategies, pesantren can enhance their economic resilience, maintain their non-partisan stance, and continue to fulfill their educational mission without undue political interference.

E. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has provided a comprehensive analysis of the economic impacts of elections on Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia, shedding light on both the benefits and challenges associated with election-related funding. The findings reveal that while electoral periods can bring significant financial support that enhances infrastructure, educational resources, and entrepreneurial activities, they also pose substantial risks of economic instability and dependency. The mixed-methods approach employed in this research has allowed for a detailed and nuanced understanding of these impacts, highlighting the diverse experiences of pesantren across different regions and contexts. The research underscores the complex interplay between politics and the economic realities of these institutions, offering valuable insights into the potential vulnerabilities and opportunities created by political engagement.

The implications of these findings are critical for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders who are committed to the sustainability and independence of pesantren. By advocating for transparent and accountable funding mechanisms, diversification of income sources, and strengthened financial management, this research provides a roadmap for enhancing the economic resilience of pesantren. These strategies will not only mitigate the risks associated with political funding but also ensure that pesantren can continue to fulfill their educational mission and contribute to socio-economic development without compromising their integrity. This research also opens avenues for future research to further explore the intersection of politics, religion, and education, and to develop innovative solutions for the financial challenges faced by pesantren in politically dynamic contexts.

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