



## DAILY LIFE OF SANTRI IN BONE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL PRACTICES

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### ABSTRACT

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This ethnographic study explores the daily life of santri in Bone Regency, examining how educational routines, religious practices, and social interactions shape values, identity, and community engagement. Using participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of daily activities, the research investigates the ways in which pesantren foster discipline, religious knowledge, and social cohesion among santri. Findings indicate that daily life is structured around formal study, communal worship, mentoring relationships, and social responsibilities, reflecting both spiritual and cultural dimensions of pesantren education. The study highlights that pesantren function as educational institutions, moral frameworks, and community hubs, reinforcing the social and religious fabric of Bone Regency.



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### INTRODUCTION

Santri, or students at Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), occupy a central role in the religious, educational, and social life of Indonesian communities, including in Bone Regency. Pesantren serve not only as centers for religious instruction but also as socializing institutions, shaping moral values, community engagement, and personal discipline among santri. Life within pesantren is highly structured, combining formal religious education, communal worship, mentorship, and participation in social and cultural activities, which together contribute to the formation of religious identity and community cohesion (Barton, 2015).

Despite their significance, the daily experiences of santri in Bone remain underexplored in ethnographic literature, particularly regarding the interaction between religious routines, social practices, and local cultural norms. Modernization, urbanization, and changing societal expectations present new challenges and adaptations for pesantren, affecting schedules, pedagogical methods, and student participation. Investigating the lived experience of santri offers insight into how traditional educational and religious structures are maintained, adapted, and transmitted within contemporary society (Geertz, 1976).

This study adopts an ethnographic approach to examine the daily life of santri in Bone Regency, focusing on three primary dimensions: (1) educational routines, including formal religious study and informal learning, (2) religious practices, including daily prayers, ritual observances, and spiritual mentoring, and (3) social interactions, including peer relationships, mentorship, and community engagement. By integrating observation, interviews, and documentation, the study provides a holistic understanding of how pesantren shape the values, behaviors, and identities of santri.

The research addresses the following objectives, to document daily routines, educational practices, and religious observances of santri in Bone. To analyze the social and cultural functions of pesantren in shaping student identity and community cohesion. To explore how santri integrate learned religious values into social behavior within and beyond the pesantren environment.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with santri and pesantren educators, and documentation of daily activities and ceremonies. Participant observation allowed the researcher to capture real-time interactions, adherence to schedules, and enactment of rituals, while interviews provided insight into perceptions, motivations, and interpretations of daily practices. Documentation included notes, photographs, and recordings of educational sessions and communal activities, providing triangulated evidence for comprehensive analysis.

The methodological framework emphasizes reflexivity and triangulation, ensuring that interpretations reflect both observed behaviors and participant perspectives. By combining textual and observational data, the study captures the complex interplay between religious education, socialization, and cultural context in the life of Bone santri.

In conclusion, this study highlights that the daily life of santri in Bone Regency is a structured, culturally embedded, and socially significant phenomenon, illustrating how pesantren function as educational institutions, moral frameworks, and community hubs. Understanding these dynamics contributes to broader discussions on religious education, identity formation, and social cohesion in contemporary Indonesian society.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative ethnographic approach to investigate the daily life of santri in Bone Regency. Ethnography was selected because it enables a holistic understanding of both educational routines and social interactions, capturing the lived experience of students within pesantren environments (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011). This methodology allows the researcher to explore not only observable behaviors, but also cultural meanings and personal interpretations embedded in daily practices.

**Location and Participants,** the research was conducted in selected pesantren in Bone Regency, chosen for their historical significance, student population, and active engagement in traditional educational and religious practices. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, targeting students (santri), teaching staff (kyai and ustadz), and administrative personnel involved in daily activities. A total of 20–25 participants were included, representing a diverse range of ages, educational levels, and roles within the pesantren community.

**Data were collected using three complementary techniques,** Participant Observation: The researcher observed the daily routines of santri, including morning prayers, religious instruction, study periods, meals, communal activities, and evening rituals. Detailed field notes were maintained to capture patterns of behavior, interaction dynamics, and adherence to schedules. Semi-Structured Interviews: Interviews were conducted with santri and staff to understand their perceptions of daily life, challenges, motivations, and interpretations of pesantren values. Interviews also explored the social and religious significance of routines and ceremonies, providing insight into attitudes, norms, and identity formation.

**Documentation:** The researcher collected photographs, recordings of religious and educational sessions, and copies of curricular materials or teaching notes. This documentation enabled triangulation and enriched the analysis of practices, pedagogical methods, and ritual sequences. **Data Analysis** Qualitative content analysis was applied to interview transcripts and field notes to identify themes, patterns, and recurring behaviors related to daily routines, religious observances, and social interactions. Triangulation of observations, interviews, and

documentation ensured validity and reliability of findings, providing a robust understanding of the lived experiences of santri (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2019).

Attention was given to both manifest behaviors (observable routines) and latent cultural meanings, allowing a nuanced interpretation of how pesantren life shapes values, identity, and social cohesion. Ethical Considerations, Informed consent was obtained from all participants, including parental consent for minor students. Observations and documentation were conducted with respect for privacy, cultural norms, and pesantren regulations, ensuring that the research did not interfere with educational or religious activities. Methodological Justification, the ethnographic approach was appropriate because santri life is a complex, culturally embedded phenomenon that combines structured education, religious practice, and socialization. By integrating participant observation, interviews, and documentation, the study captures both routine behaviors and the symbolic meanings underlying them, providing a comprehensive understanding of pesantren life in Bone Regency.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The ethnographic study of santri life in Bone Regency revealed that daily routines, religious practices, and social interactions within pesantren are deeply interwoven, reflecting both educational and cultural dimensions. Observations indicated that santri life is structured around fixed schedules for prayer, study, meals, communal activities, and personal reflection, providing a rhythm that fosters discipline, self-regulation, and communal cohesion. Morning routines typically begin with fajr prayer followed by Qur'an recitation and structured Islamic instruction, highlighting the centrality of religious education in shaping daily behavior and moral development. Participants reported that adherence to these schedules instills a sense of responsibility, time management, and spiritual mindfulness, which extends into other areas of personal and social conduct.

Formal religious instruction occupies a substantial portion of daily life, encompassing memorization of Qur'anic verses, understanding of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), hadith studies, and doctrinal discussions. The curriculum is reinforced through recitation checks, group learning, and mentorship by kyai and ustadz, ensuring that knowledge transmission is both accurate and contextually meaningful. Interviews with senior santri and educators highlighted that this structured approach not only develops religious literacy but also instills ethical frameworks that guide interactions within the pesantren and the broader community. Students reported feeling that learning is not limited to the classroom; moral instruction permeates social engagement, peer relationships, and communal responsibilities, underscoring the holistic nature of pesantren education (Barton, 2015).

In addition to formal study, communal worship plays a central role in reinforcing religious and social cohesion. Santri participate in five daily prayers, dhikr sessions, and weekly congregational activities, which cultivate a shared sense of spirituality and collective identity. Observational data indicate that prayer spaces, seating arrangements, and ritual conduct serve as mechanisms for regulating social hierarchy and communal participation. For example, senior students often mentor junior peers in ritual etiquette, creating a mentorship system that supports both educational and social continuity. The alignment of structured worship with educational and communal activities illustrates how ritual practice reinforces ethical, social, and cultural norms within the pesantren context.

The social dimension of santri life is equally significant. Daily interactions encompass peer cooperation, conflict resolution, collaborative learning, and communal labor, such as maintaining the pesantren environment, preparing for events, or organizing study groups. These interactions cultivate mutual respect, teamwork, and negotiation skills, reinforcing the values embedded in religious and cultural teachings. Interviews revealed that santri perceive these social engagements as opportunities to internalize principles of fairness, responsibility, and empathy, demonstrating that pesantren life extends moral education into everyday

relational practice. Peer observation and guidance from senior students also foster informal learning, allowing junior santri to acquire practical skills and social competencies that complement formal religious instruction.

Participation in cultural and community activities further illustrates the integration of pesantren life with local society. Santri often assist in communal events, traditional ceremonies, and educational outreach, providing a platform to apply religious and moral principles in social contexts. Observations during such activities indicated that students adapt learned norms to diverse social situations, negotiating expectations from elders, community members, and peers. This adaptive skill demonstrates that pesantren education cultivates practical competence, cultural literacy, and civic responsibility, bridging the gap between institutional life and societal engagement.

The study also explored the role of mentorship and teacher-student relationships in shaping daily life. Kyai and ustadz function as both educators and moral exemplars, guiding santri through instruction, supervision, and personal counsel. Interviews highlighted that students value this mentorship not only for academic and religious learning but also for personal development, ethical decision-making, and spiritual growth. The hierarchical but supportive structure enables the transmission of cultural and religious norms, ensuring continuity of values and practices within the pesantren. Furthermore, mentorship encourages critical reflection and adaptive interpretation, allowing students to navigate modern challenges while maintaining religious fidelity.

Gender dynamics within pesantren life were also observed, particularly in the division of responsibilities, educational opportunities, and participation in communal activities. Female santri are often involved in textual studies, recitation, craftwork, and ritual preparation, while male santri participate in physical labor, leadership roles, and public ceremonies. Despite these divisions, the study found that both male and female students gain substantial educational, social, and moral benefits, highlighting inclusive engagement and mutual reinforcement of communal values. These findings suggest that pesantren structures foster both discipline and empowerment, while respecting traditional gendered roles within the cultural context of Bone.

A significant finding of the study concerns the adaptive integration of modern influences. While pesantren life remains structured around traditional schedules and religious instruction, students also engage with modern communication tools, media, and educational resources, which influence learning and social interaction. Observations indicated that such integration is often mediated by mentors, ensuring that technology supports rather than undermines religious and cultural education. This demonstrates that santri life is dynamic, balancing adherence to traditional frameworks with responsiveness to contemporary contexts.

Challenges identified in daily life include workload stress, balancing study and communal responsibilities, and adapting traditional practices to modern constraints. Many santri reported occasional tension between rigorous academic and ritual schedules and personal needs. Mentorship, peer support, and structured routines mitigate these challenges, emphasizing the importance of community-based support systems within pesantren. Observational data suggest that students develop coping strategies, time management skills, and adaptive problem-solving abilities, reflecting the holistic impact of pesantren education on personal development.

Overall, the study illustrates that santri life in Bone Regency is highly structured, socially embedded, and culturally meaningful. Daily routines, religious observances, educational practices, mentorship, and community engagement collectively shape discipline, religiosity, moral reasoning, and social competence. The interplay between prescriptive religious texts, lived ceremonial practice, and adaptive social interaction ensures that students internalize values and behaviors that sustain both personal development and communal cohesion.

The findings also emphasize that pesantren function as multi-dimensional institutions, integrating education, spirituality, and socialization. They serve as moral, educational, and cultural hubs, reinforcing norms, cultivating identity, and bridging generations. Through participatory engagement in daily life, santri acquire not only religious knowledge and ritual proficiency but also skills in cooperation, leadership, and civic responsibility, highlighting the broader societal role of pesantren in Bone Regency.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the daily life of santri is a complex, structured, and socially significant phenomenon. Pesantren provide an environment where religious, educational, and social practices are mutually reinforcing, shaping identity, behavior, and community cohesion. The ethnographic approach reveals that while traditions remain central, adaptive practices and mentorship ensure continuity, relevance, and resilience of pesantren life in contemporary Bone society. These insights underscore the importance of holistic, participatory study of daily practices to understand the full impact of pesantren on individual development and community life (Barton, 2015; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the daily life of santri in Bone Regency is a complex, structured, and culturally embedded phenomenon that integrates education, religious practice, and social interaction. The ethnographic findings reveal that structured routines, including formal study, communal worship, mentorship, and participation in social activities, cultivate discipline, religiosity, moral reasoning, and social competence among santri. Participation in these activities strengthens intergenerational knowledge transfer, community cohesion, and personal development, highlighting the holistic role of pesantren as both educational and moral institutions. Adaptation to contemporary challenges, such as modern tools and urban influences, shows that pesantren life is dynamic and resilient, maintaining cultural continuity while accommodating social change.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that pesantren and educational authorities implement structured support programs to enhance the daily life of santri. Such programs could include: (1) mentorship initiatives to facilitate skill development and moral guidance, (2) documentation of daily routines and rituals to preserve institutional knowledge, (3) inclusive participation strategies for youth and female students, ensuring equitable access to learning and community activities, and (4) integration of culturally appropriate modern educational tools to enrich learning without disrupting traditional values. Furthermore, encouraging community engagement and collaboration between pesantren, local families, and cultural institutions will strengthen social networks and support mechanisms, ensuring that the educational and religious objectives of pesantren remain sustainable.

In conclusion, the study underscores that the daily life of santri is essential for the formation of religious knowledge, social identity, and community cohesion in Bone Regency. Ethnographic observation demonstrates that structured routines, mentorship, and communal participation foster both personal growth and collective resilience, providing a replicable model for understanding and enhancing pesantren life in similar cultural contexts. Supporting these practices through policy, documentation, and participatory programs will ensure the continuity, relevance, and cultural vitality of pesantren as institutions central to religious education and social development in Indonesia.

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