



STRATEGY OF BAHTSUL MASA'IL IN INCREASING THE CRITICAL REASONING OF SANTRI IN ASSUNIYAH KENCONG JEMBER ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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Info Artikel

Diajukan: 5-25-2024

Diterima: 5-28-2024

Diterbitkan: 6-8-2024

Keywords:

Bahtsul Masa'il

Management, Critical

Reasoning, Islamic Boarding School

Kata kunci:

Manajemen Bahtsul Masa'il,

Nalar Kritis, Pondok

Pesantren



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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of Bahtsul Masail management in improving the critical reasoning of santri at the Assuniyah Islamic Boarding School in Kencong, Jember. Bahtsul Masail is a discussion forum that emphasizes in-depth analysis of fiqh issues, expected to develop critical thinking of santri. As a traditional Islamic educational institution, pesantren has a significant role in shaping the character and intellectual abilities of santri. This research uses a qualitative approach with an in-depth case study method, examining the implementation and effectiveness of Bahtsul Masail in santri education. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with pesantren managers, teachers, and santri, as well as participatory observation and documentation analysis related to Bahtsul Masail practices. The results showed that effective Bahtsul Masail management can facilitate the development of santri's critical thinking skills through debate and discussion, allowing them to question, criticize, and evaluate various perspectives of Islamic law. The findings highlight the importance of structural and pedagogical arrangements in the implementation of Bahtsul Masail, as well as how good management can integrate the development of intellectual skills in the pesantren curriculum. This research provides insights for pesantren managers in designing educational strategies that support the development of critical thinking skills, which are relevant in today's global era.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh manajemen Bahtsul Masail dalam meningkatkan nalar kritis santri di Pondok Pesantren Assuniyah Kencong, Jember. Bahtsul Masail merupakan forum diskusi yang menekankan analisis mendalam terhadap masalah-masalah fiqh, diharapkan dapat mengembangkan pemikiran kritis santri. Sebagai lembaga pendidikan Islam tradisional, pesantren memiliki peran signifikan dalam membentuk karakter dan kemampuan intelektual santri. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus mendalam, mengkaji implementasi dan efektivitas Bahtsul Masail dalam pendidikan santri. Data primer dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pengelola pesantren, guru, dan santri, serta observasi partisipatif dan analisis dokumentasi terkait praktik Bahtsul Masail. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa manajemen Bahtsul Masail yang efektif dapat memfasilitasi pengembangan kemampuan berpikir kritis santri melalui debat dan diskusi, memungkinkan mereka mempertanyakan, mengkritisi, dan mengevaluasi berbagai perspektif hukum Islam. Temuan ini menyoroti pentingnya pengaturan struktural dan pedagogis dalam pelaksanaan Bahtsul Masail, serta bagaimana manajemen yang baik dapat mengintegrasikan pengembangan keterampilan intelektual dalam kurikulum pesantren. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan bagi pengelola pesantren dalam merancang strategi pendidikan yang mendukung pengembangan keterampilan berpikir kritis, yang relevan di era global saat ini.



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Introduction

Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have an important role in shaping the character and intellectual abilities of students through comprehensive religious education (Pramuja, Ishari, Arifin, et al., 2024). Islamic boarding schools are traditional Islamic educational institutions that combine the development of religious education as well as moral and ethical development (Pramuja, Ishari, & Arifudin, 2024). One learning method that has a significant influence in this process is Bahtsul Masail, a discussion forum traditionally used to discuss and seek solutions to various fiqh issues (Hadi, 2022). Bahtsul Masail is designed to encourage santri to think critically and analytically in evaluating various perspectives of Islamic law (Masykuri, 2023). However, the effectiveness of Bahtsul Masail largely depends on how the forum is managed. Although many studies have examined the role of pesantren in education, studies that specifically examine the effect of Bahtsul Masail management on the development of santri's critical reasoning are limited.

Nevertheless, this study aims to analyze the effect of Bahtsul Masail management in improving the critical reasoning of students at the Assuniyah Islamic Boarding School in Kencong, Jember. Bahtsul Masail is a discussion forum that prioritizes in-depth analysis of fiqh issues, with the aim of developing students' critical thinking skills (Arifin & Muttaqin, 2020). This research uses a qualitative approach with an in-depth case study method, exploring the implementation and effectiveness of Bahtsul Masail in santri education. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with pesantren managers, teachers, and santri, as well as through participatory observation and analysis of documentation related to Bahtsul Masail practices.

In the context of research on bahtsul masa'il management in improving students' critical reasoning, comparisons with previous research, such as those conducted by M. Yacub et al. on Bahtsul Masa'il-Based Learning Management in Fiqh Ibadah Subjects at Fathul Ulum Jombang Islamic Boarding School (Ya'cub et al., 2020), according to Nisak who examined the management of the halaqah program in improving the critical thinking skills of students at Darul Falah Besongo Islamic Boarding School in Semarang (NISAK, n.d.), research was also conducted by Alizza et al. who explained the use of the Bahtsul masail Fiqhiyyah method in the learning process at Darul Mukhlisin Islamic Boarding School in Magelang (Alizza et al., 2022), M. Afidtin also examined the implementation of Shawir activities in improving the critical thinking skills of santri at Darussalam Bangunsari Ponorogo Islamic Boarding School (Afidtin, 2023). Research was also conducted by Wahyudi on a Comparative Study of the Decisions of the East Java Nahdlatul Ulama Bahtsul Masail Institute and the Yogyakarta Nahdlatul Ulama Bahtsul Masail Institute on Cryptocurrency Law (Wahyudi, 2022), research conducted by Maghfiroh which explains the Application of the Fikir Principle: Theory, Action, Contemplation at Pondok Pesantren Mambaul Hikmah Babadan Ponorogo to Improve the Thinking Ability of Santri (Maghfiroh, 2022), and the last is research conducted by Alvin et al. which explains the importance of boarding schools in improving the quality of students and creating effective programs in developing students' life skills (Pramuja, Ishari, & Arifudin, 2024).

Departing from several previous studies, previous research generally focused on general aspects of education in pesantren and the benefits of Bahtsul Masail in deepening students' religious understanding. However, in-depth research on how Bahtsul Masail management can effectively improve santri's critical thinking skills is still rare. Most studies do not pay special attention to managerial factors that influence the success of Bahtsul Masail, such as timing, selection of discussion topics, and debate facilitation

methods. Therefore, there is a need to further explore how good management of Bahtsul Masail can contribute to the development of santri's critical reasoning.

Departing from several previous studies, previous research generally focused on general aspects of education in pesantren and the benefits of Bahtsul Masail in deepening students' religious understanding. However, in-depth research on how Bahtsul Masail management can effectively improve santri's critical thinking skills is still rare. Most studies do not pay special attention to managerial factors that influence the success of Bahtsul Masail, such as timing, selection of discussion topics, and debate facilitation methods. Therefore, there is a need to further explore how good management of Bahtsul Masail can contribute to the development of santri's critical reasoning.

Through this approach, this study not only fills the void in the literature regarding the management of Bahtsul Masail, but also offers practical recommendations that can be implemented by pesantren managers to improve the quality of education. Thus, this research makes a significant contribution both theoretically and practically in efforts to improve the quality of education in pesantren through better management of Bahtsul Masail. In addition, this study also provides an overview of how traditional methods such as Bahtsul Masail remain relevant and can be adapted to the challenges of modern education, especially in developing critical thinking skills that are needed in the era of globalization.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to analyze the effect of Bahtsul Masail management in improving the critical reasoning of students at the Assuniyah Kencong Islamic Boarding School, Jember. According to Creswell 2018, qualitative methodology explores in depth processes, activities, and events, by conducting a thorough investigation of the cultural behavior of individuals or groups. (Pramuja, Ishari, & Arifudin, 2024). The research subjects consisted of pesantren managers, teachers, and students involved in Bahtsul Masail. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth views of the informants. Participatory observation allowed researchers to observe the dynamics of the discussion and facilitation methods. Documentation analysis was conducted on the discussion minutes and materials discussed. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and main themes related to the effectiveness of Bahtsul Masail management in developing santri critical reasoning.

Result and Discussion

In the discussion chapter, researchers explore the findings of their research. This includes an analysis of the categories and dimensions that have been examined and their relationship to each other. The position of the new findings with previous findings will also be discussed to show the contribution and increased understanding provided by the research.

1. Increasing the Critical Thinking Power of Santri Through Bahtsul Masail Program at Assunniyah Jember Islamic Boarding School

a. ability to identify problems

Research on the ability to identify problems in batsul masail activities at the Assunniyah Jember Islamic Boarding School has proven its success. This can be seen from the preparation process before the implementation of batsul masail activities. Each group of participants conducted an in-depth introduction and understanding of the issues that would be studied in the activity. This process is

accompanied by ustadz and ustadzah to ensure that participants are able to recognize the types and topics of problems that they will study and solve.

Thus, this research indicates that the approach used in training at Pondok Pesantren Assunniah Jember is effective in improving problem identification skills in batsul masail activities. This provides evidence that the teaching methods applied are able to provide real benefits for participants in understanding and solving problems faced in religious contexts and daily life.

The theory proposed by Ahmad Zaeni and Ealine's theory are very relevant in the context of developing critical thinking skills (Handayani, 2017). Let's review the key points of the two theories: according to Ahmad Zaeni's Theory:

- 1) The ability to ask questions: Critical thinking involves the ability to ask questions about information, dig deeper, and question assumptions.
- 2) Identifying problems: This involves the ability to recognize existing problems and determine their root causes.
- 3) Testing the facts: Critical thinking requires careful evaluation of the facts at hand to ascertain the truth and accuracy of the information.

Meanwhile, according to Ealine Theory (Bayin, 2022): Analyzing the problem: Students should strive to carefully understand the source of information and use reliable sources to convey information. These two theories complement each other in providing a framework for developing critical thinking skills. By using this approach, individuals can better parse information, identify problems, test facts, analyze assumptions, and convey information effectively.

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, these findings support the theory that in identifying a problem in problem assistance activities (batsul masail), the first step is to know and identify the existing problems. In this way, it will be easier to take references, sources of information, and find solutions to these problems. The purpose of this approach is so that santri or students can practice to think more critically in solving the problems faced. Thus, this approach not only helps in finding solutions, but also strengthens their critical thinking skills.

b. Ability to Express Opinions.

The results showed that the ability to express opinions in Pondok Pesantren Assunniah Jember in the process of implementing Bahtsul Masa'il requires santri to be active in responding, arguing, and refuting arguments from other groups. In this context, santri are required to dare to speak in public in accordance with the purpose of holding Bahtsul Masa'il, which is to train them to dare to argue and increase their critical thinking power.

The theory of Purwati, Hobri, and Arif Fatahillah, discusses the steps that can be used by students to think critically in solving problems (Istiyani & Rakhmawati, 2022). This is also used by the Assunniah Islamic boarding school in improving the critical reasoning of its students. Here are the steps:

- 1) Problem Clarification: The students are given a clear explanation of the given problem. The aim is for students to understand the problem and have a clear picture of the expected solution.
- 2) Expressing Ideas: Santris are given the freedom to express and record their ideas or notions about different strategies to solve problems. This aims to stimulate Santri's creativity and bring out various possible approaches to solving the problem.

- 3) **Evaluation and Selection:** The students evaluate the various strategies that have been proposed and select the strategy that they consider most suitable for solving the problem. After selecting the strategy, they then apply it until they find the solution to the given problem.

Based on the theory described above, it can be concluded that in the context of expressing opinions, santri are expected to be able and brave to convey arguments and the results of deliberations together with their respective groups. However, it is important for them to express their opinions using a strong basis and foundation. It is intended that the arguments conveyed can be supported by a valid foundation or source.

c. Problem Solving Ability.

The method used in training santri to think critically through *batsul masail* activities sounds very effective. By giving problems or themes beforehand and encouraging santri to look for references and the basis for finding answers, they are not only taught to solve problems but also to develop research, analysis, and argumentation skills.

Through this process, students learn not to just take information for granted, but also to understand its context, evaluate its sources, and formulate their own opinions. The ability to argue and express opinions in a clear and organized manner is an invaluable skill in the development of critical thinking. By habitually participating in *batsul masail* activities that require critical thinking, santri can hone their ability to analyze situations, weigh various arguments, and find the most appropriate solution. This will help them not only in religious contexts, but also in everyday life where critical thinking is essential to deal with various challenges and complex problems.

The findings above are in line with Desmita's theory, which according to Seifert and Hoffnung cited by Desmita identifies a number of critical thinking components (Mar'at, 2009), including:

- 1) **Basic Operation of Reasoning:** Critical thinking involves one's ability to explain, generalize, draw deductive conclusions, and formulate other logical steps manually.
- 2) **Domain-specific Knowledge:** In addition to basic critical thinking skills, one must also have knowledge of the topic or content of the problem at hand. For example, to resolve a personal conflict, it is important to have knowledge of the people involved as well as the issues at hand.
- 3) **Metacognitive Knowledge:** Effectiveness in critical thinking requires the ability to monitor understanding of ideas, realize the need for new information, and plan ways to gather and learn that information.
- 4) **Values, Beliefs, and Dispositions:** Critical thinking also involves fair and objective judgment, as well as the belief that such thinking leads to solutions. It reflects an individual's values, beliefs, and dispositions towards the critical thinking process.
- 5) **Indicators in Critical Thinking Ability:** Elaine's theory emphasizes that there are indicators that can be used to evaluate critical thinking skills, and these indicators are applied in *Bathsul Masa'il* learning which is related to human practice activities in daily life.

Thus, understanding and applying these concepts can help individuals develop better critical thinking skills.

2. Strategy in Improving the Critical Thinking Power of Female Santri through the Bahtsul Masail Program at Assunniah Islamic Boarding School

The efforts made by ustadz or ustadzah in improving the critical thinking skills of santri, especially through the bahtsul masail program, are very important steps in the development of education in Islamic boarding schools. Here are some points that can be identified from these efforts:

- a. Providing Problems:** Ustadz gives problems to students to analyze. This stimulates the critical thinking process of students because they have to find solutions and analyze the problem carefully.
- b. Studying the Books:** Ustadz facilitates the learning process by studying adequate books. This provides the necessary knowledge base for santri in understanding the context of the problems they face and finding appropriate solutions.
- c. Discussion:** Ustadz encourages discussion among students. Discussions allow them to exchange opinions, test each other's ideas, and broaden their understanding of a problem.
- d. Personal Guidance:** Ustadz provides personal guidance when santri experience difficulties. This provides additional encouragement and direct assistance to students in need.
- e. Continuous Support:** Through a library that provides books as a reference source, santri have easy access to deepen their understanding of a problem. This shows the continuous support from the boarding school in developing the critical thinking skills of the santri.

Thus, through these various steps, ustadz or ustadzah play an active role in helping students to develop critical thinking skills, which are important skills in facing various challenges in everyday life and in understanding religious teachings more deeply.

Robert J. Sternberg is a psychologist known for his concepts of intelligence and thinking. One of his theories relevant to critical thinking is the theory of practical intelligence (Sternberg, 1985). According to this theory, intelligence is not only limited to cognitive abilities measured by IQ tests, but also includes the ability to solve problems and adapt to the daily environment (Kurniawan et al., n.d.).

- a. Teaching children to use correct thinking processes: This can be linked to Sternberg's concept of practical intelligence, where the child is taught to use effective and relevant thinking in solving everyday problems.
- b. Developing problem-solving strategies: This is also in line with the concept of practical intelligence, where it is important to develop effective strategies for solving problems at hand.
- c. Improving their mental picture: A good mental picture can help children understand and solve problems better, so this is also relevant to the concept of practical intelligence.
- d. Expanding their knowledge base: While Sternberg's theory of practical intelligence emphasizes problem-solving skills over knowledge, having a broad knowledge base can help in understanding the context of problems and finding better solutions.
- e. Motivate the child to use the thinking skills that have just been learned: This can also be linked to the concept of practical intelligence, where it is important to encourage the use of newly learned skills in solving everyday problems.

So, overall, these points can be seen as a strategy to develop children's critical thinking in accordance with the concept of practical intelligence proposed by Sternberg. The efforts made by ustadz or ustadzah at Pondok Pesantren Assunniah Jember are very relevant to the development of critical thinking. The following are some points that can be taken from the strategies they apply:

- a. **Encouraging Discussion and Exchange of Opinions:** Through this method, santri are invited to actively participate in discussions with friends, ustadz, or ustadzah. This discussion allows them to question, understand, and evaluate various points of view.
- b. **Inviting Broader Thinking:** By expanding the scope of thought, students are expected to be able to see problems from a variety of different perspectives. This helps them to develop more complex analytical thinking skills.
- c. **Providing Space for Independence:** An independent attitude is essential in the development of critical thinking. By providing opportunities for students to solve problems independently, they can learn to take initiative, explore new ideas, and find innovative solutions.
- d. **Using Bathsul Masa'il:** This activity helps santri to understand and solve complex problems, both theoretically and practically. This process allows them to hone their analysis, synthesis, and evaluation skills.
- e. **Building the Courage of Opinion:** With the space to discuss and express opinions in front of many people, students are invited to be more confident in conveying their ideas and arguments. This is important to overcome the fear of criticism and build courage in expressing ideas.

Thus, through these various strategies, Pondok Pesantren Assunniah Jember makes a significant contribution to the development of critical thinking skills and a positive mental attitude for its students. In the context of the findings described above, there are two theories that are referred to, namely Hamdan's theory and Nur Azzah's theory.

1. Hamdan Theory: This theory emphasizes that Bathsul Masa'il can be considered as a form of problem solving dialogue. Bathsul Masa'il is an activity that becomes the main foundation and the first step in solving various problems in pesantren circles. In this activity, participants, especially santri, will face difficulties or obstacles. Santri have various cognitive levels, so in facilitating Bathsul Masa'il, ustadz or ustadzah need to make efforts to improve the critical thinking ability of santri (Farchan, 2005).
2. Nur Azzah's theory: This theory highlights the importance of selecting learning strategies to improve students' critical thinking skills. One of the suggested learning strategies is the inquiry learning strategy. This strategy emphasizes the critical thinking process and analysis of learners in searching, finding, and investigating answers to problems that are questioned systematically and logically (Rosyid, n.d.).

By combining these two theories, it can be concluded that in the context of Bathsul Masa'il, ustadz or ustadzah can implement inquiry learning strategies to improve students' critical thinking skills. Thus, through these activities, students will be encouraged to actively seek solutions to the problems faced in a systematic, logical, and analytical way, so that they can formulate findings with confidence.

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, it can be concluded that the efforts made by ustadz or ustadzah at Pondok Pesantren Assunniah Jember to improve the critical thinking skills of students not only involve

discussion and exchange of ideas between fellow students, but also involve the important role of educators.

The ustadz or ustadzah here play a role in directing their students, including in instructing students to engage in discussions and exchange ideas with peers. However, more importantly, they also use inquiry learning strategies as a way to improve students' critical thinking skills.

By using the inquiry strategy, Bahtsul Masa'il activities at the Assunniah Jember Islamic Boarding School are based on a problem-based approach, where students are encouraged to actively seek problem solving. Through the inquiry process, santri are invited to analyze problems systematically, logically, and analytically, and seek solutions independently. This will help improve students' critical thinking skills by strengthening their problem-solving skills.

Thus, the inquiry strategy is one of the effective tools in supporting the development of students' critical thinking skills at the Assunniah Jember Islamic Boarding School, because it emphasizes the active and analytical thinking process in finding solutions to problems faced.

Conclusion

This study identifies and discusses the effectiveness of the Bahtsul Masail program at Pondok Pesantren Assunniah Jember in improving the critical thinking skills of santri. The main findings of this study include three key abilities: identifying problems, expressing opinions, and solving problems. Santri showed improvement in recognizing and understanding fiqh problems through the preparation process accompanied by ustadz and ustadzah. This process helps santri identify and understand the problems that will be discussed in Bahtsul Masail activities. The teaching methods applied in pesantren have proven to be effective, in accordance with the theories of Ahmad Zaeni and Ealine. Ahmad Zaeni's theory emphasizes the importance of the ability to ask questions, identify problems, and test facts, while Ealine's theory emphasizes problem analysis and the use of reliable sources.

This program also encourages santri to actively participate, argue, and refute the arguments of other groups. Santris are trained to speak in public, increasing their courage in expressing their opinions. The steps used, such as problem clarification, expressing ideas, and selection evaluation, help santri develop their critical thinking skills. Purwati, Hobri, and Arif Fatahillah's theory supports the development of critical thinking through a systematic structure, ensuring that santri have a strong foundation in presenting their arguments.

Through Bahtsul Masail, santri are trained to analyze situations, weigh arguments, and find appropriate solutions. They also develop research, analysis, and argumentation skills. This process teaches santri not to just take information for granted, but also to understand its context, evaluate its sources, and formulate their own opinions. Desmita's theory supports these findings by identifying important components of critical thinking such as basic operations of reasoning, domain-specific knowledge, and metacognitive knowledge.

The strategies implemented by ustadz and ustadzah involve several important steps, including providing problems for santri to analyze, reviewing relevant books, encouraging discussion, providing personal guidance, and providing ongoing support through libraries and reference sources. These strategies are in accordance with Robert J. Sternberg's theory which includes the correct thinking process, development of problem-solving strategies, and motivation to use new thinking skills.

In conclusion, the Bahtsul Masail program at Pondok Pesantren Assunniah Jember effectively improves the critical thinking skills of santri. Through a structured approach and supported by critical education theory, santri are trained to identify problems, express opinions, and solve problems systematically. The strategies applied by ustadz and ustadzah, including the inquiry method, are very relevant and useful in developing critical thinking skills that are important for facing the challenges of daily life and understanding religious teachings more deeply.

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