Transformation beyond Transgression; Resistance-based System Improvement in *Kitab Kuning* Reading Acceleration Program

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Abstract

This paper aims to discover how *santri*'s resistance within *kitab kuning (kutub at thurats)* reading acceleration program recently popular in Madurese *pesantren* turns out to improve the program itself. *Santri*s' resistance becomes a big deal considering its contradiction to ethical unwritten rules in *pesantren* while the fact shows how this phenomenon strikes. For that purpose, genealogy of such programs is firstly identified along with characteristics of each to figure out how, beyond the existing diversities, the programs share the same pattern, including the common root and impact of resistance. Involving 240 informants from *santri, ustad,* and program providers, this mixed research expanded its data compilation with in-depth interviews engaging some selected informants as well as comprehensive desk review. The result discloses *pesantren* networking in intellectual hub responding to nowadays challenges in the decrease of *kitab kuning* reading proficiency along with dynamics of resistance among *santri*, mainly in negotiation type through emotional, verbal, and physical expression. Despite the fact that resistance mutates along with punishment as a part of rule, it has less influence on the program accomplishment, implying how both program and its resistance based system improvement transform the way Islamic education takes place beyond the studens' sort of transgression.

Keywords: *Kitab kuning* reading acceleration program, resistance, Madurese *pesantren*, improvement system

Abstrak

Artikel ini ingin mengungkap bagaimana resistensi santri dalam program percepatan membaca kitab kuning yang belakangan populer di pesantren-pesantren Madura ternyata justru mampu memperbaiki manajemen program tersebut. Resistensi santri menjadi layak dikaji mengingat ketidaksejalannya dengan aturan tak tertulis di pesantren sementara fakta menunjukkan tingginya fenomena ini. Untuk itu, dipaparkan terlebih dahulu genealogi program beserta karakteristik masing-masing untuk menunjukkan bahwa di balik keragamannya, mereka memiliki kesamaan pola, termasuk akar dan dampak resistensi santri yang kurang lebih sama. Melibatkan 240 informan dari kalangan santri, ustad, maupun pengasuh pesantren sebagai penyedia program, penelitian campuran ini melakukan ekspansi pencarian data dengan wawancara mendalam terhadap beberapa informan terpilih serta penelusuran literatur. Penelitian ini menyingkap adanya jaringan intelektual pesantren dalam merespon menurunnya kemampuan membaca kita kuning di kalangan santri dewasa ini, sementara dinamika resistensi santri utamanya tampak dalam bentuk negosiasi melalui ekspresi emosional, verbal, hingga

fisik. Meski resistensi bersifat siklik karena berujung pangkal dari sanksi sebagai bagian tata tertib program, ia ternyata tidak banyak berpengaruh negative pada pencapaian program. Ini menunjukkan bagaimana program percepatan membaca kitab kuning maupun perbaikan manajemen berlandaskan resistensi santri di dalamnya memberikan sentuhan transformasi dalam pendidikan Islam di balik pelanggaran para santri.

Keywords: *Program percepatan membaca kitab kuning, resistensi, pesantren Madura, perbaikan sistem*

INTRODUCTION

Amid various criticism of its existence and impact (Suwendi et al., 2024, pp. 460–462), *kitab kuning* or traditional books still become an inseparable part of *pesantren* (Subahar, 2013). For a long time until today, it has become an instrument by which *santri* or *pesantren* students learn Islamic studies under a variety of subjects, such as *fiqh*, Al-Qur'an, hadith, *tasawwuf*, and so on (Fakhrurrazi & Sebgag, 2020). Lately, it is not only discussed in classes where both teacher and students play their respective old roles. Rather, it becomes a sort of paramount subject to master in reading the text, understanding its meaning, and explaining even memorizing the content (Iankovskaia, 2024) through a reading proficiency acceleration program. The program is seen as important, especially in preparing the future *ulama* in Indonesia (Asari & Abidin, 2020). Therefore, several courses are continuously formulated and improved to create *santri* with high ability in *kitab kuning* reading proficiency. The program takes different names and is largely used not only where it originates from, but also in other *pesantren*s affiliated with the makers.

The program attracts much attention because it promises long-term and flexible advantages. Once a *santri* is good at reading *kitab kuning*, understanding the content, and convincingly delivering it to the audience, he/she can actively explore the ability while enjoying much better opportunities either in academic and social recognition (Asari & Abidin, 2020). *Kitab Kuning* mastery becomes special because it is not only a gate to understanding Arabic text – which makes its translation less preferred – about Islamic teaching, but because the text itself is written without vowels so that prior to understanding what the text conveys, a reader must firstly, or simultaneously, master Arabic grammar and vocabularies (Asari & Abidin, 2020; Iankovskaia, 2024). This mastery signifies a big success of *santri* in studying in *pesantren* (Hefni, 2019, pp. 234–235) so that parents are enthusiastic about sending their children to follow the program.

On the other hand, the providers set a relatively tight target that students need to accomplish during the program. This reasonates with Thoha's argument that to enlarge success, such a program must be arranged systematically through various methods mainly an intensive mentoring program (Thoha, 2021). In a relatively short period of time, students are targeted to master a set of lessons so that they can pass the test and come to graduation. Within the ceremony, they will have such a public test so called *i'lan*. This promises pride and prestige among parents, let alone envisaging that no matter what major to choose for further education, students get the basic ability to understand Islamic literature written in Arabic.

However, beyond all the rule, there found dynamics in the process of learning due to several factors, ranging from different abilities of each *santri*, diverse acceptance and persistence to accomplish the target – no matter if they are all situated in one single place, to complex relationship between *ustad-santri* (Muhlis et al., 2025). A *santri* can reach the set of target in an easy way, but another can make it in a longer time with a more difficult process (Utama & Salim, 2024; Yamin, 2023; Yamin et al., 2023). This dynamic, unfortunately, has often been ignored in the discussion about the program. In fact, it does not only discover the facts to evaluate system management or discuss education issues at wider scopes but also reveal things that parents and students need to be aware of in choosing and joining the program (Azizah et al., 2024; Hussain, 2025).

One quite shocking dynamic is the resistance of *santri* during joining the program. This is considered normal and common to find everywhere in the education realm. However, when it comes to *pesantren* believed as a place to create not only intellectual learners but also of good behavior ones, some assume that it can reduce the value of *barakah* (Haryanto & Muslih, 2025, p. 692) which in turn influences how the learning process will put its learners in future life. On the other hand, this resistance is inevitable considering the domination relationship found within the program. Resistance is deemed to always closely related to domination as Scott mentioned on how the relation of domination is at the same time the relations of resistance (Scott, 1990, p. 45). The program provider and the *ustad* are the ones who dominate the situation by determining the rule, target, and learning milieu, while *santri* resists in their own ways and manners.

Several previous research have discussed the issue of *kitab kuning* in general or its learning dynamic, including the acceleration program to specific scopes covering particular materials or parts within. Nurtawab discusses the decline of *kitab kuning* learning as well as negotiation and effort to show off the capability of its learners in the modern era (Nurtawab, 2019). The acceleration program, in many ways, is clear as one of the ways and efforts to negotiate and transform the situation, namely the marginalization of *kitab kuning* learning by only putting it as non-formal education. Nevertheless, it is also noted that beyond all the newer packages, the old style of *kitab kuning* learning still exists, like what was written by Fatchan et all among peasants (Fatchan et al., 2015) and properly mapped by Arif et al (Muhamad Arif et al., 2023).

Researches focusing on the program, meanwhile, is limited in exploring the implementation technique like that of Husnaini about *Al-Iktisyaf* method (Husnaini & Fuady, 2023), Wildan et al about *Tamyiz* method (Wildan & Fuad, 2019), comparison of two or some, like the master thesis of Abdullah (Abdullah, 2018), and many others like that of Fahrurrazi (2020) about the method used in Dayah (Hasan et al., 2024; Ma`arif et al., 2025; Suyanta et al., 2024; Syamsuar et al., 2023), Sulanam & Iksan about the program's serving role to boost graduates' quality ((Iksan, 2025), and Thoha about reformed learning model of the program (Thoha, 2021). Even though the reformed learning model for the program has been explored, Thoha has not discussed the santri's resistance sides as the main causes (Thoha, 2021). Hence, as long as it can be mentioned, *santri's* resistance during the program still lacks attention. In fact, this particular factor matters not only in determining the success of the program but also for evaluation in many ways, ranging from material, target, learning method, and so on. Regarding this condition, this research wants to fill the missing gap.

Hence, this article aims to, *first,* portray the *kitab kuning* reading acceleration program from its history and characteristics. This becomes noteworthy to figure out how the program emerged for the first time and developed to date. *Secondly*, it tries to figure out the typology and roots of the resistance to portray how it takes place, why it appears, and what it represents beyond. We hypothesized that there is a simultaneous effect between resistance and its causes to the punishments as a part of the program. *Thirdly*, this research describes how resistance-based system improvement takes place naturally yet diversely in different research places. This research limits its subjects to Madurese *pesantren* which provides such a program under the main consideration that some of them not only adapted the program but also made their own manual books and thus become the founders.

METHOD

This study falls within the category of mixed method research namely quantitative-phenomenological which blends quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. Data was collected from 11 *pesantren* in Madura organizing the acceleration program across four regencies: Bangkalan, Pamekasan, Sumenep, and Sampang. In particular, there are six *pesantren* from Pamekasan, two from Sumenep, two from Sampang, and one from Bangkalan respectively. 230 residents of those *pesantrens* received and filled out questionnaires focusing on answering the questions based on respective roles. Those respondents consist of *ustad* (teachers) and *santri* (students) as participants of the program who are aged around 17 - 25 years and 6 - 16 years respectively. The details of these respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research respondents

Respondents categories	Gender	Number	Total number
Ustad/ustadah	Male	7	13
	Female	6	
Santri	Male	85	217
	Female	139	
Total number		230	230

All the respondents in Table 1 were used as research samples according to the total sampling technique. The questionnaire results from such respondents are analyzed by classical assumption tests, correlation, and regression. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS. In the meantime, we randomly selected some informants among 230 *pesantren* inhabitants for an interview in order to gain a thorough insight. To get deeper data about the phenomena, we further conducted observation and in-depth interviews, including adding informants not engaged in filling out questionnaires, such as authors of the books. After that, we implemented subject triangulation to make sure about data validity.

RESULTS

Kitab Kuning Proficiency Acceleration Program; History and Characteristic

Presumably, initiative to establish a *kitab kuning* reading proficiency acceleration program was much inspired by assumptions about the demise of *kitab kuning* reading proficiency (Iksan, 2025). Therefore, an initiative emerged to cope with that situation considering that *kitab kuning* proficiency is highly necessary. It began with a program called *Amtsilati,* coming from the Arabic language which means my examples. *Amsilati* originates from *Pondok Pesantren* Darul Falah, Jepara, and is written by its founder, Taufikul Hakim (Admin, n.d.), inspired by *Qira'ati*, Qur'anic reading acceleration method. As the book became best-selling, its popularity sparked the curiosity of prospective learners. After finishing the program, they back to their home *pesantren* and reteach *Amsilati*. One of those *pesantren*s was *Pesantren* Miftahul Ulum, located in Sidogiri, Pasuruan. Later, an ustad named Qusyairi wrote another guidebook called *Al-Miftah li al-Ulum* launched in 2011 (Admin, 2020b, 2020a). He admitted that *Amsilati* was used as the reference by modifying its model and materials though he himself has never followed the program (Interview through WA, 3 March 2025).

Before the launching of *Al-Miftah*, in 2005, a *pesantren* in Madura, called Manbaul Ulum, located at Bata-Bata, Palengaan, Pamekasan, established a special program so called *Maktab Nubdatul Bayan* (Thoha, 2015, pp. 160–168). One of the authors mentioned that they wrote it in fulfillment of a request from the *pesantren* supervisor, Abd Muin Bayan. He also mentioned that during the process, *Amsilati* became one of the used references, mainly through modifying methods and a part of writing systematics (WA interview, March 5, 2025). Another Madurese-

made guidebook for accelerating *kitab kuning* reading proficiency tends to show further different structure. A book called *Al-Iktisyaf* (2 volumes) and *Al-Kassyaf* (1 volume and still counting) written by Abd. Hamid Tibyan, a son of law of a *kiai* in *Pesantren* Darul Ulum, Banyuanyar, Pamekasan, has been formulated differently from the previous three. The difference is mainly because *Al-Iktisyaf* does not choose Arabic grammatical chapters as the structure like the other three. Rather, it displays explanations beginning from the Arabic sentences (originating from *Fathul Qarib* book) and explaining it later; a different account from the previous three which put the theory first and then continue with examples (interview to author, March 5, 2025).

Despite the differences, the four have many things in common, mainly the mention of *qa'idah* or *nadhaman* (Syafiih, 2022, p. 129) from Arabic grammatical books which *santri* needs to memorize. In this matter, the duology has distinctive characteristics in which the former is for beginners and therefore adapting *Imrithi nadham*, while the latter is for intermediate levels adapting *Alfiyah nadham*. This shows a clearer effort to design students-based curricula, the same tendency shown in the latest book of acceleration, *Al-Fatih*. Like its predecessors, *Al-Fatih* also has many volumes. The front cover of its right side displays fifteen volumes of the book with different topics divided into two, namely 9 *kitab kuning* reading proficiency volumes based on the title of some targeted *kitab*s, ranging from *Safinatun Najah* to *Al-Arba'in Al-Nawawiyyah*, and the other 6 are the quintessence of grammatical Arabic books ranging from grammar or *nahwu*, stylistic or *balaghah*, and *manthiq* (WA interview, February 22, 2025).

Among those five books, we tried to map their characteristics such that it can be drawn each basic information and distinguished styles respectively as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Kitab Kuning* Proficiency Acceleration Program

No	Name of Book	Author	Published Year	Structure/ Curricula
1	*Amsilati*	Taufikul Hakim	2002	Theory/rules followed by examples
2	*Nubdzatul Bayan*	Allamul Ulya, Abd Lathif, and Moh. Nor Kholis.	2005	Theory/rules/formulation followed by examples
3	*Al-Iktisyaf-Al-Kasysyaf*	Hannan Tibyan	2006	Sentences explained grammatically
4	*Al-Miftah li Al-Ulum*	Ahmad Qusyairi Ismail	2011	Theory/rules followed by examples
5	*Al-Fatih*	Mufti Khazin	2018	Sentences along with meaning and grammatical codes. Theories are put at the beginning in a concise manner, sometimes within tables.

Sources: researchers' data

Table 2 shows how the five have diverse similarities and differences. All come in sequential volumes, implying how the programs are designed in a way to make the learning process run more effectively. The sequencing model not only help both *santri* and *ustad* to adjust their phase in each of learning processes but also assists them in getting the learning result in the best possible measure. Additionally, they are divided into two in terms of targeted *kitab* or follow-up program as well as the curricula design. While three of them targeted specific *kitab*s as the follow-up and success measurement/evaluation tools, two others do not, although this does not mean that the two do not have specific evaluation procedures. Also, three of them prefer theories to practice, while the two others devote more to the practice while attaching a relatively little theory. While taking the Arabic language as the name of all books, only one was written in co-authorship, while the rest was by a solo-writer. The motivation or background

beyond the writing, although technically different, implies the same concern on the big need for *kitab kuning* reading proficiency.

This sort of program, along with the guidebooks and the whole design of its system, seems perfect for accelerating the gain of *kitab kuning* reading proficiency. However, dynamics are inevitable in its whole steps and process considering that the programs sometimes pose internal polemics both for *pesantren* as the provider and *santri* as the main actors. It is mainly about *santri*'s response to the determined targets and the tight curricula of the program. This does not only involve pedagogical aspects but also psychological, social, even political as the next subheading will explore.

The Resistance of *Santri* in the Program; Types and Caused Punishment

It might be shocking to find that *santri* as participants of the program are known to resist in a variety of ways and expression. This furthermore deserves attention because the fact that most of *santri* get punishment during joining the program likely indicates how prone the resistance is. To determine the resistance typology, we firstly used multiple linear regression tests to decide whether the variables listed in the hypothesis, namely resistance types, roots as the causes, and impact of it, in a form of punishment, were influenced by one another. It turns out that the classical assumption test had been satisfied with the data found to be normal with a Significance score from Kolmogorov-Smirnov test greater than 0.05. Additionally, the 0.327 point implies a linear relationship between one another. To show the correlation among them, we used a correlation test which is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The Pearson Correlation of resistance, its causes, and punishment

Variable		Resistance Type	Its Causes	Punishments on Resistance
Resistance Type	Pearson correlation	1,000	0,742	0,857
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0,000	0,000
Its causes	Pearson correlation	0,742	1,000	0,767
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	-	0,000
Punishments	Pearson correlation	0,857	0,767	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	-

It can be seen from Table 3 that the known significance value of Sig. (2-tailed), between resistance and punishments is 0.000 < 0.05, which means that there is a significant correlation between those variables. To double check and see whether it has influence or not, we used the ANOVA test. Statistically, the result of this test can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. The ANOVA table of multiple linear regression

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	21089,03	2	10544,51	372,74	0,000[b]
Residual	6195,27	227	28,29		
Total	27284,29	229			

a. *Dependent Variable*: punishments
b. *Predictors: (Constant),* causes, resistance

Table 4 makes it clear that when Sig. 0.000 is smaller than 0.005 and counted as significant, resistance type and causes simultaneously (together) have an effect on punishments. It means that statistically, the type of punishment is determined by the types of resistance as well as its causes. The punishment rate is furthermore shown in Figure 1 below:
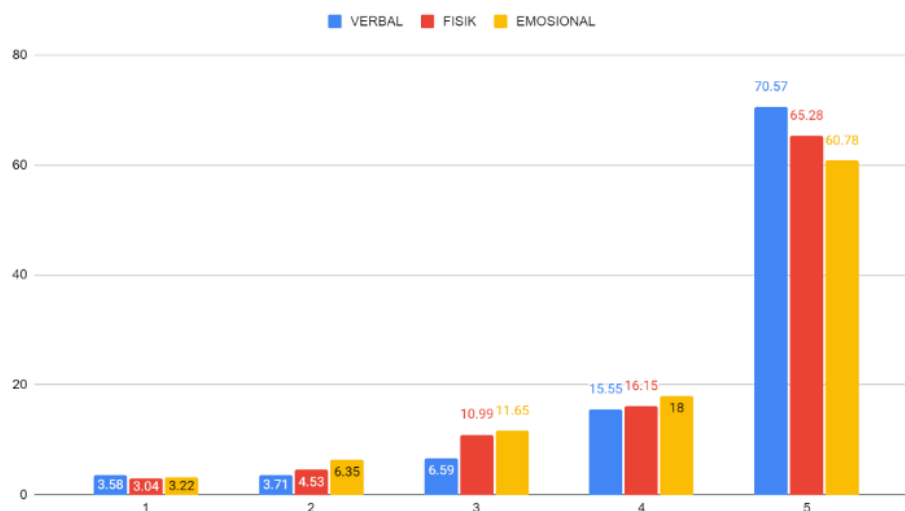

Figure 1. Number and Type of Punishment for *Santri*

Figure 1 shows the assessment scale of the number of *santri* who received punishment and the type of punishment during the program. Scores of 1 to 5 range from how often *santri* receives punishment, ranging from never to often receiving punishment. In general, the trend is increasing according to the rating scale, indicating that almost all *santri* get punishment experience. Among those 5-scored, 70,57% of *santri*s got verbal punishment as the most common type. Meanwhile, the second and third types are respectively physical and emotional forms. Following is detail about the punishment type that the *santri* likely get after being found to break the rule or failing to achieve the target

Table 5. The punishment types and actions posed by *santri* in *kitab kuning* proficiency acceleration program

Punishment Type	Action
Verbal	High tones followed by anger
	Cursing followed by high tones
	Mocking, sometimes in public
Emotional	Making *santri* feel unappreciated
	Making *santri* pessimistic and thinking about quit
Physic	Punching
	Twisting the ears,
	Crossing *santri*s' face by a whiteboard marker
	Slapping
	Hitting by using rattan
	Ordering to standing up while reciting *ruqyah*

Table 5 strongly suggests that the punishment is quite diverse and might likely become a subject of misuse in the wrong hand. Meaning to say, an *ustad* can directly punish *santri* without following any procedure that might lead to any mistreatment or such a thing. It therefore makes

sense to find that *santri* gets offended when getting the punishment. Nevertheless, in a wider context, *santri*'s resistance is actually a result of a cyclical process. The starting problem usually comes from *santri*s' protest or dissatisfaction with the way of *ustad* delivering learning material or giving them punishment due to any rule-breaking or unachieved targets. Once they express resistance, they likely get more punishment and they will resist much more. In fact, convincing students to stop resisting will be less productive than learning from their resisting action (Toshails, 2017, p. 193). All by all, punishment is known to eventually affect even lead *santri's* resistance which, according to Scott, takes three types namely dominant hegemonic, negotiation, as well as opposition (Scott, 1990). In the context of *santri* joining the program, those three types can be well described in Table 6.

Table 6. The Typology of Resistance among *Santri* Joining *Kitab Kuning* Proficiency Reading Acceleration Program

Resistance Type	*Santri*'s Actions	Category
Dominant-Hegemony	Crossing the *kitab* with a stylus, tearing up the *kitab* or even throwing it away	Physic
	Grumbling	Emotional
	Keeping the desire to revenge	Emotional
Negotiation	Sending anonymous letter *(sorat kaleng)* which contains an anger curse	Verbal
	Ignoring *ustad* when explaining the lesson	Physic
	Mimicking the *ustad*'s acts	Physic
	Calling the *ustad* by a randomly bad name	Verbal
	Sleeping during the class	Physic
	Saying impolite words to or about the *ustad*	Verbal
	Showing cynical gesture	Physic
	Taunting as if wanting to hit from behind	Physic
Opposition	*Apesowan* (cursing) or mocking to the *ustad,* sometimes publicly	Verbal
	Inviting for a fight	Physic

Table 6 shows how the negotiation type comes mostly rather than two others. This relates to *santri*s' status as participants or students who are expected to adhere to all program rules and designs with a variety of social and psychological requirements. Accordingly, most of them still show incorporation by accomplishing the program after going through those resistance and punishment series because as long as they are still there, it is teacher's chance (to fix the situation) (Toshails, 2017, p. 166). Conversely, *ustad*s assume that punishment as one thing they need to give to make the *santri* disciplined and accomplish the target like the following transcript from an *ustad* shows;

> *"... I ever heard any intimidating or bad sentences such* as *when the* santri*s got the punishment due to their unachieved target of the program. Meanwhile, for me, it is a simple punishment such as standing up while reciting* ruqyah*, or getting their face crossed by whiteboard marker. However, for them, this punishment shows an unethical, unprofessional, and uneducated attitude given by an* ustad... *"* MH (Translated from Madurese)

The transcript indicates how the punishment becomes the beginning cause of resistance, although it does not mean in a negative way. *Santri*s assist the punishment as exaggerating or something private from the *ustad* rather than a part of system. Instead of evaluating themselves,

they keep blaming the *ustad* for any law-breaking actions they made by claiming that what they do comes from *ustad's* treatment or so-called self-handicapping (Toshails, 2017, p. 124). The following transcripts make this assumption clear.

> *"…. Ustad who are unprofessional, undisciplined, not istiqamah, not on time is the most hated by santri because they will disrupt learning activities. Moreover, the ustad likes to get angry and is too harsh in giving punishments, namely by slapping or hitting by using rattan, like they are fond of hitting or bumbaste. I can only be patient or appear to accept such inappropriate actions. Actually, I personally have something in my mind about ustad, even though I don't have enough courage to do rude things to ustad, because my parents always taught me and gave me a good example to do when dealing with ustad like that…"* (Translated from Madurese)

The excerpt implies how *santri* feels about the punishment. Rather than claiming it as a consequence of what they did, they tend to blame the *ustad*. This furthermore poses a question about how close the relationship between resistance and punishment, a part of ambiguity on which comes first and later; whether they resist because of getting punished or do they get punished because they resist. Despite this, *santri's* resistance does have an impact in a wider aspect as the next part will discuss.

Overview of Resistance Based System Improvement.

Santri's resistance toward the program comes inevitably due to various factors, namely cyclical series on resistance and punishment as well as distinctive social interaction within *pesantren*, in addition to different background of each, both related to academic passion on the program and socioeconomic ones (Toshails, 2017, p. 185). Theoretically, resistance is not always put in negative place, whether its roots, action, as well as impact. It is even deemed positive in many ways that it can give good effects in carious possible ways, namely in education realm in general or organizational flows (AL Basami, 2022; Yılmaz & Kılıçoğlu, 2013) at specific, namely school or learning improvement. It is even deemed possible to create social change (Toshails, 2017, p. 46). This is quite well reflected in providers of *kitab kuning* acceleration program in which relatively high number of resistances, indicated by punishment that *santri* are assigned to, leads to evaluation in both teachers and program providers.

Interestingly, the evaluation doesn't only happen formally which clearly leads to resistance-based system improvement, but also culturally through individual actions. For instance, *ustad* are found to lower target of the lessons to master when it is known that *santri* in his/her class are hard to accomplish the target. Another case is a *pesantren* which organizes *istighasah* (mass prayer) aiming to nurture spirituality aspect of *santri* so that they can keep focus on the program. It is believed that the more stable spirituality aspect is, the easier it is for learners to master their lessons. Furthermore, evaluation also found that sometimes, students' passion is different from what their parents want them to be. For less motivated students, it results in so called avoidance, namely students' attempt to refuse a particular academic demand (Toshails, 2017, p. 129) when they find the curriculum fails to inspire their curiosity (Toshails, 2017, p. 190).

In organizational scope, there found at least three representative cases. Through different scale, it seems that program providers believing that resistance, however dysfunctional, is requesting increased attention (Toshails, 2017, p. 124). Therefore, they keep evaluating the program while solving the issues. For instance, *Iktisyaf* founder performs so-called positive discipline to ensure that any program design, rule, and punishment posed to students gives them positive effects more than negative ones. It is also very much open for any criticism and suggestion from *santri* as the program's participants, not only from *ustad* as the teachers and managers of the program. Another *pesantren* with *kitab kuning* reading proficiency program used

a different strategy in dealing with *santri's* resistance as partly resulted from presumably bullying around punishment circle. Using "zero bullying" slogan, it regulates that no punishment should be given to *santri,* including for those who don't seriously follow the program well and accomplish the target. Consequently, this type of *santri* is allowed to come home or quit the program when they think they need to without doing any usual procedure (for quitting). This sort of satire turns out to boost program accomplishment and there found no dropped out. Other than two, a *pesantren* takes 'students friendly' slogan as the tagline responding to the presumably bullying practice among *santri* along with each resistance, indicating the spirit of program accomplishment without accentuating the bad situation and instead emphasizing the solution.

Discussion

The genealogy of *kitab kuning* proficiency acceleration program and its diverse books show how various efforts are continuously made to keep *pesantren's* original advantages and characteristics while eliminating old barriers in the learning process. Traditionally, efforts to get *kitab kuning* proficiency skill was done in a relatively long time by giving theories first through *wetonan* method then practices come afterward in *bandongan* method, or currently in a simultaneous way. However, it is deemed ineffective as it can take quite long time while the success range can't be clearly determined (Fakhrurrazi & Sebgag, 2020). Therefore, it is much understandable if the innovation is continuously made to accelerate this program. Without spending too much time and learning many books, this program promises quite instant results without compensating quality competence.

Another thing obvious from this genealogy is a cultural affiliation of some *pesantren* to write, teach, and even innovate the method and learning materials. Beginning from Darul Falah in Jepara, some *pesantren*s learned the program, spread it wider, modified the old ones, and created newer programs while writing new guidebooks. It furthermore implies openness of *pesantren* in sharing insight and solutions to cope with common problems while fulfilling their common goals to create *santri* with reliable ability. They look to collaborate well without compromising their respective characteristics rather than competing in a negative way. Among the five networking types of *pesantren* as mapped by Kusdiana (Kusdiana et al., 2013), this fits mostly with the category of scientific relation-based networking.

Meanwhile, *santri's* resistance commonly found in such program implies that the tight target they need to accomplish is not always in line with each's persistence, capabilities, or passion. It furthermore shows that besides the target, learning milieu and surrounding environment might even trigger the resistance. However, interview results reveal that any resistance they show has nothing to do with *pesantren*s supervisor (*kiai* or *nyai*) or the program itself. Rather, it is all about how they build relationships and interact with *ustad* both inside and outside the class (Hasbunallah et al., 2023; Zainudin et al., 2025). Particularly, it is on how they think about hardly reachable target they are obliged to accomplish or too hard punishment they endure, while *ustad* is deemed not showing good manners nor teaching them professionally.

Although resistance is often deemed the same with terms like delinquency or deviance (Scott, 1990), Hall denied simple binary opposition between resistance and incorporation (Procter, 2004, p. 13), emphasizing that what appears to be a site of resistance at one moment is actually the site of incorporation at another. This aligns much with what occurs among *santri* of the program. Apart from the fact that most of them resist the programs' target or rules by showing disrespect to *ustad*, they finally fulfill the target and finish the program anyway. This confirms how the resistance and incorporation can merge even happen at one time. Accordingly, it is mentioned that relationship between dominant and subordinate culture is not fixed once and for all, but rather based on an ongoing process of resistance, incorporation, and

negotiation. This resonates with *santri's* resistance which reflects three types categorized by Hall, namely dominant hegemonic, negotiation, and opposition (Procter, 2004).

Dominant hegemonic is the lowest type of resistance in which the subordinate gets hegemonized by the dominant so that the former typically accepts what the latter delivers. Power or leadership typically works for this type, even though it is further mentioned that the dominant must constantly work to maintain the hegemony because the situation might change. The negotiation, meanwhile, is by accepting some and rejecting some or described with using while adapting. This second type is also called a war of maneuver implying how two contravene attitudes are made into one with a specific term called bricolage, a sort of obeying while playing along with the rule. It is also labeled as a ritual of resistance and symbolic opposition from those fated to fail, showing a level below the third as the hardest one, the opposition. Opposition is defined as a situation in which the subordinate knows meaning beyond the phenomenon and therefore resists what the dominant delivers (Procter, 2004).

Doing resistance among *santri* of *kitab kuning* reading proficiency program is mostly like spontaneous response mainly common among its newcomers. Resisting is a sort of expression they want to show so that *ustad* and others know that they get offended by any deemed bad treatment (J.-H. Kim, 2010). As soon as they tune in to the program, their focus will likely be to achieve the target instead of resisting. An exception occurs in a few cases, such as *santris'* resistance which indirectly leads fellow *santris* to do the same as they feel like having a friend to resist. However, as the data showed, when *santri* decide to resist, it comes mostly in negotiation type of resistance rather than the other two. Negotiation in this context means staying to join the program while resisting when necessary. In another word, they keep pursuing the target to achieve yet they do not keep silent when finding anything wrong, mainly from *ustad's* treatment and teaching performance. This clearly shows a symbolic opposition because their main objective to accomplish the program prevents them from choosing the opposition type of resistance. Therefore, instead of choosing the softest one by letting themselves hegemonized or taking the strong resistance by, for instance, rejecting the whole program design by quitting, they take the safe choice through negotiation as their maneuver. In short, *santri* can show resistance in certain aspects of the program and incorporation in others in the sense that they keep joining the program according to their initial intention in going to *pesantren*.

On why this somewhat paradox keeps happening, it is likely about imbalance of reward and punishment. *Santri* is almost all the time demanded to fulfill the target for the sake of avoiding punishment, yet they are not situated to study harder to hunt for any reward. The reward can be said to only be made available once, namely in the graduation ceremony series (Anzar Aquil et al., 2024). Meanwhile, punishment threats are always on their mind. This imbalance is particularly clear from the fact that they give themselves their own reward by organizing gatherings with fellow students for barbequing, implying how they appreciate themselves for achieving a specific target when nobody else does. The concept of reward and punishment in education actually fits to apply in Islamic education or and specifically *kitab kuning* proficiency acceleration program (Rahmawati, 2017; Rinjani, 2021) because it is designed in many levels that once a level (or a book volume) is accomplished, they can move on to the higher level. However, it seems that punishment still dominates more than reward.

The finding that resistance is found to have less influence on program accomplishment is likely due to the fact that once *santri* is known to resist, both *ustad* individually and provider in organization term will identify the situation to find both temporary and permanent solutions to cope with the problem (Duarte & Nogueira, 2019). As a result, evaluation of punishment is often conducted despite the fact that punishment posed by the *ustad* theoretically aims to minimize unnecessary acts posed by students during the class (de Vel-Palumbo et al., 2023; Rinjani, 2021). It turns out that that some punishments do not give any educational aspects and

instead trigger *santri*s to repeat and even enlarge their resistance as the previous research found (Hadiyansyah, 2022). Punishment is deemed effective in shaping students' discipline during the class (Arina Zulva et al., 2024; Calabrese et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the interviews reveal that this role has failed because punishment is known to be unfair for each *santri* so instead of making them disciplined, they resist much more due to that social jealousy. This furthermore strengthens assumption that reprimand or punishment giving type of student-teacher communication is not better than inquiries and acknowledgment one (Toshails, 2017, p. 191).

This sort of breakthrough is where resistance-based system improvement finds its place, putting resistance not solely as bad consequences of unhealthy situation. Rather, it triggers improvement from the very natural nature of distinctive characteristics of *pesantren* with its unwritten norms. Although the three *pesantren* might not represent the whole picture of how the improvement takes place from inside, it evidently shows that solution to overcoming *santri*s' resistance is mainly about making necessary changes in the supportive system within the program. In another word, openness to make improvements does not compromise program's main characteristics, let alone *pesantren*'s values. Accordingly, in a general context, *santri*'s resistance becomes a form of communication that program providers need to figure out (Bracha Alpert, 1991; J. H. Kim, 2010). When *santri* tries to express what they feel about the system through repetitive acts, it does not only indicate their response. Rather, it clearly shows how they wish for change in the system. Providers must therefore conduct an evaluation of how reaching their target can be done in a good way (Abowitz, 2000).

CONCLUSION

This article demonstrates how existing *kitab kuning* reading accerelation programs highlight *pesantren* networking in intellectual hubs. Instead of competing one another, they choose to collaborate for coping with the same problem. However, some *santri* as the program's participants tend to resist, particularly responding to the manner the *ustad*s conduct the learning process. Quantitatively, there is a relationship between the resistance they do and punishment they endure, making a subtle cycle of cause and effect besides the finding that the three types of resistance are all found, namely dominant-hegemonic, negotiation, and opposition, with the second as the dominant tendency. Interestingly, *santri*s' resistance—which manifests as verbal, physical, and emotional—leads to program improvement through ongoing assessment and readiness to make required adjustments. Finally, it is discovered that even if *santri*'s resistance probably changes program design and regulations, resistance has less of an impact on the program's success. This research contributes a new alternative which facilitates *santri*'s communication through resistance acts to systemic improvement for better education. Therefore, resistance-based systems improvement (RBSI) model can be developed to improve the output of *kitab kuning* reading proficiency program by considering resistance, negotiation, curriculum redesign, value frameworks, as well as cyclical of systems responses. The picture of how resistance to the *kitab kuning* proficiency acceleration program occurs and influences on relevant sectors are still limited to Madura region. Therefore, further research on how similar programs implemented outside Madura engaging diverse variables is needed in addition to designing its evaluation of program management.

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