

## GUIDING THE NEW GENERATION: MUSYRIFAH PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS IN SUPPORT THE ADAPTATION OF SANTRI AT PESANTREN

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### Abstract

The adaptation process is an essential and inevitable phase that all new santri undergo. However, some santri experience significant challenges in navigating their first year. During this critical period, institutional support from pesantren administrators becomes vital. The *musyrifah*—female santri mentors assigned to accompany new santri—play a crucial role in facilitating a smooth adaptation process. This study aims to examine the psychological readiness of *musyrifah* in supporting new santri during their initial year. The participants consisted of 54 female *musyrifah* tasked with mentoring incoming santri. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews focusing on the *musyrifah*'s preparedness to fulfill their mentoring responsibilities. The findings indicate that the *musyrifah* possess a high level of psychological readiness, encompassing five key dimensions: cognitive readiness, emotional readiness, moral readiness, behavioral readiness, and exemplary conduct.

**Keywords:** adaptation, psychological readiness, *musyrifah*, pesantren, santri.

### Abstrak

Proses adaptasi pada dasarnya adalah masa yang selalu dilalui santri baru. Namun, terdapat beberapa santri baru yang kesulitan melalui tahun pertamanya. Para santri baru membutuhkan dampingan dari pengurus pesantren dalam proses adaptasi. *Musyrifah* sebagai pendamping santri baru merupakan harapan besar untuk mendukung proses adaptasi santri baru dengan baik. Fokus penelitian ini guna melihat gambaran kesiapan psikologis *musyrifah* mendampingi santri baru di tahun pertama. Partisipan merupakan *musyrifah* atau pendamping santri baru dengan total partisipan sebanyak 54 santri perempuan. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara tatap muka terkait kesiapan para *musyrifah* mendampingi santri baru. Hasilnya, terdapat gambaran bahwa pendamping santri atau *musyrifah* memiliki kesiapan

psikologis yang penuh, yang menggambarkan kesiapan kognitif, kesiapan emosi, kesiapan moral, kesiapan perilaku, dan kesiapan keteladanan.

**Kata kunci:** adaptasi, kesiapan psikologis, *musyrifah*, pesantren, santri.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Pesantren have gained increased appeal due to their holistic approach, which integrates both physical and spiritual development. Recognizing the multifaceted benefits offered by these institutions, a growing number of parents are opting for Pesantren as a strategic educational choice for their children. Furthermore, in the context of ongoing global challenges and rapid societal changes, these Pesantren are increasingly perceived as pivotal in nurturing not only academic competence but also moral and ethical values (Muhdi et al., 2023). This assertion is further supported by previous research, which indicates a growing parental inclination to enroll their children in pesantren, driven by the belief that such institutions are more effective in fostering positive character development (Firdaus et al., 2019).

While parental interest in Pesantren continues to rise, children's perspectives often diverge. Some children exhibit reluctance toward enrollment in these institutions, primarily due to the anticipated challenges associated with adapting to the distinctive cultural and disciplinary environment of the Pesantren (Kaltsas & Gkaintartzi, 2021). New santri inevitably encounter a range of challenges, as they must undergo a multifaceted adaptation process encompassing both physical and psychological preparation. This process is essential for enabling them to navigate and respond effectively to the significant transitions associated with entering a new educational and social environment (Bukhori & Cikusin, 2023). The transition to life in a pesantren entails a prolonged and often demanding adjustment process, which not all new santri are able to complete successfully. This process typically unfolds through several distinct psychological and emotional phases. Initially, santri may experience a

*honeymoon phase*, characterized by enthusiasm and curiosity. This is often followed by a *frustration phase*, marked by feelings of discomfort and homesickness. Subsequently, santri enter the *readjustment phase*, during which they begin to internalize institutional norms and adapt their behavior accordingly. The final stage, the *resolution phase*, signifies the successful integration of the student into the pesantren environment, where they are fully engaged both socially and academically (Bukhori & Cikusin, 2023).

Some pesantren have enhanced their quality across various dimensions. These institutions now uphold the principle of *al-muhāfazatu 'alā al-qadīmi aṣ-ṣāliḥ wa al-akhdhu bi al-jadīdi al-aṣlah*—preserving valuable traditions while embracing innovations that are deemed more beneficial (Supriyadi & Sholeha, 2023). One strategic effort to improve the quality of Pesantren is through strengthening the role of student companions, known as *musyrif* (male) or *musyrifah* (female). As frontline facilitators, *musyrifah* play a pivotal role in supporting the adjustment of new santri to the pesantren environment. The term *musyrifah* refers to a mentor or supervisor who guides santri not only academically but also in their personal and moral development. The mentoring relationship between a *musyrifah* and a student bears significant resemblance to the mentor-mentee dynamic in broader educational settings. Research suggests that the quality of interpersonal interactions between students and their mentors can substantially influence the degree of student adaptation. Positive and supportive relationships contribute to smoother transitions, with higher levels of interpersonal rapport correlating strongly with improved adaptive outcomes (Pennings et al., 2018). The presence of *musyrifah* is anticipated to enhance the overall performance of new santri by facilitating a smoother and more effective adaptation process within the pesantren environment.

At the Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung Banyuwangi, *musyrifah* are entrusted with overseeing and guiding santri in both academic and non-academic domains, including their social and religious development. The

challenges encountered by *musyrifah* in fulfilling these responsibilities are diverse and multifaceted.

According to an in-depth interview with a *musyrifah* who has accompanied new santri over three consecutive periods (2021–2023), one of the primary challenges lies in assisting santri who have not yet developed basic self-care skills. These include personal hygiene practices such as bathing, shampooing, and grooming. Additionally, new santri often struggle with adjusting to the institutional food environment, particularly in transitioning from familiar home-cooked meals to the standardized pesantren menu, which is frequently perceived as unpalatable (Jauharina, personal communication, August 3, 2024). Despite the multifaceted challenges inherent in their roles, *musyrifah* at the Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung Banyuwangi proactively prepare themselves both physically and psychologically upon receiving the mandate to mentor new santri. Their readiness is critical in ensuring that they can provide comprehensive support throughout the santri' transitional period.

This study seeks to explore and elucidate the psychological and functional preparedness of *musyrifah* in facilitating the adaptation process of newly enrolled santri. Specifically, it aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the extent to which *musyrifah* are equipped to address the emotional, social, and practical needs of first-year santri, thereby contributing to a more effective and supportive pesantren environment.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Adaptation Stages**

The process by which new santri adapt to the pesantren environment is multifaceted, encompassing cultural assimilation and social hurdles. These santri navigate through various phases of adjustment, beginning with initial enthusiasm and progressing towards full integration within the community. This

journey is shaped by the interplay of longstanding traditions and modern-day challenges.

The process of adapting to the boarding school (pesantren) environment goes through several stages (Bukhori & Cikusin, 2023), namely:

1. **Preparation for Change:** New students prepare themselves physically and psychologically before entering the boarding school environment.
2. **Honeymoon Phase:** Initial excitement about the new environment is common.
3. **Frustration Phase:** Feelings of homesickness and culture shock often arise.
4. **Re-adjustment:** Students learn to navigate their new environment and meet expectations.
5. **Resolution:** Successful adaptation leads to full integration into the student community

### **The concept of psychological readiness**

Readiness may be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing social attitudes, self-actualization, and the structured organization of personal dispositions. From a psychological perspective, readiness is intricately linked to the development of personal identity, as it reflects the maturation of core psychological attributes such as self-awareness, intrinsic motivation, reflective capacity, and goal orientation (Leonid & Irina, 2015).

Psychological readiness for a given activity can be understood as a complex, integrative system comprising beliefs, values, relational dynamics, motivational drivers, volitional and cognitive capacities, as well as acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This system evolves over time and collectively underpins and directs purposeful behavior (Boitzova & Simonova, 2019).

The structure of psychological readiness includes five components: 1) Intellectual and cognitive; 2) Emotional and volitional; 3) Reactive and behavioral; 4) Moral and ethical; 5) value-evaluation (Miloradova, 2023). These components are:

1. **Intellectual and Cognitive:** This aspect involves the analytical thinking capacity, the problem-solving skills, and the effective information processing ability. Understanding as well as interpreting complex situations, a thing that is important for informed decisions in professional settings, reflects a person's skill.
2. **Emotional and Volitional:** This component here pertains to the individual's emotional state of stability. It relates also to willpower. It includes the ability for managing emotions and maintaining motivation. To exhibit resilience is also a part of dealing with such challenges. It is important to regulate emotions and also will strongly to sustain performance under pressure.
3. **Reactive and Behavioral:** This aspect relates to how the individual reacts and behaves observably in diverse situations. It includes responsiveness for changing circumstances, adaptability, and the capacity to implement decisions effectively. This component reflects how someone behaves so as to align with professional expectations and demands.
4. **Moral and Ethical:** This element entails the individual's adherence with ethical standards. Moral standards are involved within its scope. Professional and social norms with commitment guide behavior reflecting integrity, fairness, and responsibility.
5. **Value-Evaluation:** This shows individual values and how the individual evaluates situations based on social and personal values. It influences what people prioritize, how they decide, also how they align actions with goals and ethics.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative methodology utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach to address the research objectives. According to Moleong (1989), the descriptive qualitative method seeks to holistically understand

phenomena as experienced by research participants, producing rich, narrative data in the form of verbal expressions. The participants in this study consisted of 54 *musyrifah*—individuals tasked with accompanying incoming students. Participants were selected based on specific inclusion criteria: they had to be officially designated as *musyrifah* and willing to participate in the research. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews to ensure depth and contextual understanding. The primary aim of this study was to construct a comprehensive depiction of the participants' psychological readiness to support new santri. The data analysis process followed four key stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Creswell, 2014).

## RESULTS

The admission of new santri is conducted on an annual basis, necessitating comprehensive preparation across multiple dimensions, ranging from the development of infrastructure to ensuring the psychological readiness of santri mentors. The adaptation process for new sntri requires targeted support to facilitate their successful adjustment to pesantren environment. This support encompasses structured guidance from *ustadz* and *ustadzah*, along with continuous mentoring and developmental programs. Effective and well-coordinated support mechanisms play a critical role in influencing the adaptation trajectory of new santri and establishing a solid foundation for their academic and personal development within the pesantren context.

Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung Banyuwangi is a prominent institution located in the East Java province of Indonesia. It accommodates approximately 9,000 active santri from various regions across the country. Each year, the school admits an average of 2,000 new santri. The commitment and preparedness of santri mentors are crucial, particularly during the first year, which serves as a critical period of adaptation for new santri. During this transitional phase, a significant number of santri may choose to return home—an occurrence referred

to within the pesantren context as “*boyong*”. This phenomenon serves as a key point of reflection and institutional evaluation, with efforts aimed at reducing the incidence of “*boyong*”. One such effort involves assessing the psychological readiness of santri mentors (*musyrif/musyrifah*) at Darussalam Blokagung. This study specifically focuses on the readiness of female mentors, or *musyrifah*.

The results of the study showed the psychological readiness of *musyrifah* at the Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung in Banyuwangi. There are five main things that the researchers found, namely:

a. Cognitive Readiness

*Musyrifah* shows a good understanding of the mandate given and related to pesantren regulations. On the other hand, *musyrifah* is able to recognize the needs of new santri, so that they have a plan and way to convey information to new students more easily.

Some of the things conveyed by the *musyrifah* are that they are ready with the mandate given and will try to be responsible, and ready to be a substitute for their parents. “*We will try to trust you, we will do the best we can. This is our responsibility. Here we are parents for them*”, was the expression of the participants.

b. Emotional Readiness

Most of the *musyrifah* shows good emotional stability. *Musyrifah* is able to manage emotions and respond to the emotions of new students with empathy without causing negative judgments, because they have understood the adaptation process when becoming new students.

Emotional readiness can be seen in the level of patience of *musyrifah*, will try to be a sensitive, loving person, and caring, and will provide motivation and reinforcement for new students. “*I will give affection, face with patience, attention, and not be stupid*”, said the participant.

c. Behavioral Readiness

The *Musyrifah* at the Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung Banyuwangi shows responsibility in carrying out their duties, and is consistent in carrying out their roles concretely. The researchers' conclusions regarding the readiness of *musyrifah* behavior are reflected in their making assistance plans, ranging from socialization of dormitory activities to body and environmental cleanliness. Next, accompanying and monitoring the activities of new santri, to provide reports to the guardians of students regarding the development of children in the pesantren. "We will teach about cleanliness... whether it's body hygiene or the environment, for example a dormitory, Bu.. We also teach about discipline, reminding of obligations. Well, at the end of the month or in a certain period we will convey to the parents the development of their children," said the participant.

d. Moral Readiness

*Musyrifah* shows commitment to Islamic values such as honesty, trust, patience, and compassion. They understand that the task of mentoring is not only administrative, but also part of worship and a form of service to religion. Therefore, they tend to maintain good manners and morals, as well as have integrity in morality in the cottage environment. Participant's explanation during the discussion, "I will not discriminate in treating new santri, try to be fair, polite, patient, and accompany in a good way".

e. Exemplary Readiness

Research found that there is a readiness for *musyrifah* to be a real example for new students, in behavior, worship, and in social interaction. *Musyrifah* also tries to maintain the way of speaking and behaving according to pesantren norms. Some of the participants' statements, "we strive to be *uswatun hasanah*", "ready to set a good example", "we will set a good example for new santri".

These five aspects show that the psychological readiness of *musyrifah* in the Pesantren Darussalam reflects the balance between knowledge, emotions, actions, values, and examples that they display in accompanying the adaptation process of new santri.

In addition to the readiness of the *musyrifah*, the adaptation process can be seen in the new students. **The first phase** for new santri is Preparation For Change, this can be seen when new santri are introduced to the pesantren environment. Physical and psychological preparations have been prepared both by the santri themselves and of course with the support of their parents, this can be seen when there are santri who really want to prepare themselves to feel somewhat at home living in the Pesantren. **The second phase**, the Honeymoon Phase, is a common phase experienced by new santri with a new environment and new friends. The second phase is an enthusiastic phase for new santri with new surroundings and new friends, this can be seen from new santri who are starting to find friends with the same frequency and can be invited to vent.

Frustration phase, is **the third phase** for santri who begin to feel longing for their families and situations at home. This can be seen when santri have started to want to contact their parents continuously, and some even want to go home. In this phase, *musyrifah* assistance is very necessary to accompany santri to face this phase. Being responsive to the situation of new santri who are experiencing the third phase is one aspect of psychological readiness.

One of the successes of *musyrifah* assistance is the emergence of the **fourth phase**, namely re-adjustment, santri have begun to get used to rearranging their intentions and learning goals at pesantren. The situation began to accept the situation as seen from the results of interviews with new students, namely the desire to make both parents happy by studying at the pesantren.

**The fifth phase** is resolution, a successful adaptation for new santri is when they can manage everything related to life in the pesantren. New santri

with the assistance provided by the *musyrifah* can finally manage and divide their time according to the schedule of activities at the pesantren.

## DISCUSSION

The new santri program at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung Banyuwangi is a year-long initiative that marks the beginning of the santri's educational journey. On average, Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung Banyuwangi receives about 2,000 new santri each year from various provinces across Indonesia. This reflects the public's trust in the quality of education provided by the pesantren.

However, the adaptation period for santri is a critical phase filled with challenges, as they transition from a family environment to a disciplined and independent communal life in the pesantren. New santri commonly face several challenges, with research identifying three predominant issues: (1) experiencing culture shock, (2) feelings of homesickness, and (3) difficulties in forming or maintaining social relationships with peers (Sa'diah et al., 2024). In this context, the *musyrifah* plays a vital role in providing social and psychological support to new santri.

Research on the adaptation of new santri has been extensively conducted in Indonesia; however, the psychological readiness of *musyrif/musyrifah* in pesantren has not received much attention. For instance, the study by Hafidhuddin et al. (2023) focuses solely on how students adapt to the Pesantren environment. Similarly, research by Pane & Lubis (2024), which explores the efforts of Pesantren to address student adaptation challenges, identifies two main strategies: preventive and repressive. Preventive efforts involve the role of teachers, while repressive efforts include dormitory activities, parental involvement, and counseling services.

While research on the adaptation of new santri at the Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung has been conducted by Hadiono and Imroah (2021), their

findings indicate that new santri are able to adapt due to several factors. These include external factors, such as the family, school, and community environment, as well as internal factors, including physical condition, personality, and the learning process.

However, the psychological readiness of student companions (*musyrif/musyrifah*) in Islamic boarding schools has not been widely explored in Indonesia, particularly at the Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective on the importance of psychological readiness among those who assist new santri. It also complements the research conducted by Hadiono & Imro'ah (2021) by emphasizing that external factors—such as the school environment and the presence of *musyrif/musyrifah*—play a significant role in the adaptation process of new santri at Pesantren Darussalam.

The psychological readiness of *musyrif/musyrifah*, has not been widely studied. This study highlights five aspects of the *musyrifah's* psychological readiness that serve as the foundation for mentoring new santri: cognitive, emotional, behavioral, moral, and exemplary readiness.

*Musyrifah* demonstrates a strong understanding of their responsibilities, the rules of the pesantren, and the unique needs of new santri. This knowledge is essential for providing accurate and effective guidance, as well as for supporting santri with an appropriate and empathetic approach. As individuals who serve as second parents, educators, leaders, mentors, and role models, *musyrifah* play a vital role in the successful mentoring and adaptation of santri worship (Rahma & Sutarman, 2023).

The findings of the study reveal that five dimensions of psychological readiness are evident in the *musyrifah*, suggesting that they exhibit a sufficiently robust capacity to facilitate the adaptation process of newly enrolled santri at the Pesantren Darussalam, Blokagung, Banyuwangi. The psychological readiness demonstrated by the *musyrifah* significantly influences the adjustment responses of new santri. When *musyrifah* display a high degree of psychological

preparedness, new santri report feeling supported, valued, and emotionally nurtured, thereby enabling a smoother transition into the pesantren environment. These outcomes underscore the critical role of psychologically competent *musyrif/musyrifah* in fostering a supportive and adaptive educational climate. Consequently, this study holds important implications for Pesantren across Indonesia, highlighting the necessity of systematically cultivating *musyrif/musyrifah* who are adequately equipped—both emotionally and cognitively—to guide santri through their early adjustment period within the institution.

## CONCLUSSION

This study explores the psychological readiness of *musyrifah* in supporting the adaptation process of new santri. The findings illustrate that the readiness of *musyrifah* encompasses a comprehensive range of psychological dimensions, including cognitive, emotional, moral, behavioral, and exemplary readiness. At Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung Banyuwangi, *musyrifah* are expected to accompany new santri with a high level of preparedness across these domains, thereby facilitating a smoother transition into the pesantren environment.

However, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the selection of participants was based on the researcher's accessibility, and the study was conducted at a single pesantren, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the duration of the research was relatively short, resulting in data that may lack depth and richness. Future research on this topic is encouraged to apply more rigorous participant selection criteria and allocate extended time for data collection in order to obtain more comprehensive insights.

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