

Mainstreaming Sports in Pesantren through a Sport-Based Empowerment Approach and Institutional Legal Compliance

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Abstract:

This article examines the mainstreaming of sports in pesantren through a Sport-Based Empowerment (SBE) approach combined with institutional legal compliance as the foundation for sustainable implementation. Given that traditional pesantrens have long focused on religious studies and moral formation—resulting in insufficiently structured physical education—this study highlights the need to integrate sports into the holistic education of santri. Sports are positioned not merely as physical activity, but also as a medium for shaping Islamic character, leadership, cooperation, and mental resilience, in alignment with spiritual values such as discipline, brotherhood, and social responsibility. The study employs a qualitative method based on library research to analyze literature on sports empowerment, Islamic pedagogy, and educational regulations, including Law Number 18 of 2019 on Pesantren and standards for santri protection. The findings indicate that the role of sports in pesantren remains marginal, influenced by academic–religious traditions and limited facilities, yet holds significant potential if integrated into curricula and pesantren activities. The legal framework is shown to be a determining factor in ensuring that sports implementation complies with safety standards, governance requirements, and the rights of santri. The developed SBE model emphasizes the synergy between empowering santri through physical activities and legal compliance, thereby positioning sports as a means to improve health, reduce physical and mental disparities, and strengthen the institutional image and competitiveness of pesantren.

Keywords: Pesantren; Sports; Sport-Based Empowerment

Abstrak:

Artikel ini mengkaji pengarusutamaan olahraga dalam pesantren melalui pendekatan Sport Based Empowerment (SBE) yang dipadukan dengan kepatuhan hukum kelembagaan sebagai fondasi implementasi yang berkelanjutan. Berangkat dari kenyataan bahwa pesantren tradisional selama ini berfokus pada kajian keagamaan dan pembinaan akhlak sehingga pendidikan jasmani kurang terstruktur, penelitian ini menyoroti kebutuhan integrasi olahraga sebagai bagian dari pendidikan holistik santri. Olahraga diposisikan bukan hanya sebagai aktivitas fisik, tetapi juga sebagai medium pembentukan karakter islami, kepemimpinan, kerja sama, dan ketangguhan mental, selaras dengan nilai-nilai spiritual seperti disiplin, ukhuwah, dan tanggung jawab sosial. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan untuk menganalisis literatur pemberdayaan olahraga, pedagogi Islam, serta regulasi pendidikan termasuk Undang-Undang Nomor 18 Tahun 2019 tentang Pesantren dan standar perlindungan santri. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa posisi olahraga di pesantren masih marginal, dipengaruhi tradisi akademik–religius dan keterbatasan fasilitas, namun memiliki potensi besar jika diintegrasikan dalam kurikulum dan kegiatan kepesantrenan. Kerangka hukum terbukti menjadi faktor penentu agar implementasi olahraga mematuhi standar keselamatan, tata kelola, dan hak santri. Model SBE yang dikembangkan menegaskan sinergi antara pemberdayaan santri melalui aktivitas fisik dan legal compliance, sehingga olahraga menjadi sarana peningkatan kesehatan, pengurangan ketertinggalan fisik-mental, serta penguatan citra dan daya saing pesantren.

Kata Kunci: Pesantren; Olahraga; Sport-Based Empowerment

A. INTRODUCTION

Pesantren, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, have long been known for their focus on religious instruction, devotional practices, and moral development, resulting in relatively limited systematic attention to physical education and sports in many (conventional) boarding schools. Consequently, the development of students' physical fitness and activity tends to be sporadic, rooted in tradition (e.g., martial arts training) or conducted through unstructured extracurricular programs, rather than incorporated as an integrated and systematically organized component of the pesantren curriculum. (Junaidi, et.al. 2022)

This condition has implications for the lag in students' physical health development and non-cognitive competencies compared to those in general educational institutions that implement structured physical education programs. Various field studies show differing levels of fitness and sports participation across pesantren: some have begun to develop planned physical education programs, yet many others still face limitations in facilities, qualified physical education instructors, and institutional policy support. (Wijaya, 2021)

From a pedagogical perspective, sports not only improve physical condition but also serve as an effective means for character formation, leadership development, teamwork, and youth empowerment—dimensions highly relevant to optimizing santri's social roles within the community. Research on sports learning models demonstrates that a sport-education approach can enhance students' empowerment and self-confidence, providing empirical evidence for integrating sports into pesantren. However, such development must be accompanied by compliance with institutional legal regulations governing pesantren to ensure that programs are sustainable, protected from safety risks, and aligned with educational service standards. (Sukiri, 2024)

The concept of sport-based empowerment refers to an approach that uses sports as a tool to empower individuals physically, mentally, and socially, developing skills, confidence, and adaptability (Coakley, 2017). In the context of Islamic education, this concept not only emphasizes physical health as encouraged in Islamic teachings—such as the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that “A strong body is part of strong faith” (Al-Bukhari, 1997), but also integrates spiritual values such as discipline, brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), and social responsibility. Islamic education, particularly within pesantren as traditional educational institutions, has often placed greater emphasis on religious and intellectual dimensions, which positions the mainstreaming of sports through sport-based empowerment as a bridge toward achieving balance between the physical and the spiritual, in accordance with Islam's holistic principles (Al-Attas, 1995).

Sport-based empowerment in Islamic education aims to transform learners into independent and productive individuals, with sports serving as a medium to develop Islamic character traits such as patience, cooperation, and leadership. For example, sports activities can instill values such as fair play, which aligns with the Islamic concept of justice, while also fostering strong communal bonds within the pesantren environment. However, its implementation must be accompanied by institutional legal compliance, including pesantren regulations governing worship schedules and learning activities, in order to avoid conflicts between sports participation and religious obligations (Huda, 2018).

This study examines how the mainstreaming of sports in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) can be achieved through a sport-based empowerment approach, while accounting for institutional law to ensure sustainability and effectiveness. Accordingly, this concept not only enhances the quality of Islamic education but also prepares students (santri) to face modern challenges while strengthening their Islamic identity.

The urgency of institutional legal compliance in the context of pesantren cannot be underestimated, especially with the enactment of Law Number 18 of 2019 on Pesantren, which

grants pesantren formal recognition as educational institutions equivalent to formal schools (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). This law emphasizes the importance of institutional standards, such as an integrated curriculum combining religious and general education, transparent financial management, and adequate facilities to support holistic learning. Compliance with these standards ensures that pesantren function not only as centers of Islamic propagation (dakwah) but also as quality educational entities capable of competing in an era of modernization (Rahman, 2020).

In addition, student protection is a primary priority under this law, encompassing the prevention of physical and psychological violence, the guarantee of educational rights, and oversight of health and safety. Thus, institutional legal compliance prevents practices that may harm students, such as exploitation or neglect, and promotes an environment conducive to the development of their potential (Sari, 2021). In mainstreaming sports through a sport-based empowerment approach, such compliance serves as the foundation for integrating sports activities without compromising Islamic values or violating regulations, such as maintaining a balanced allocation of time among worship, study, and recreation. Therefore, this study examines how institutional legal compliance can support the implementation of sport-based empowerment in pesantren, ensuring that sports function not merely as physical activities but also as a medium for cultivating Islamic character safely and sustainably. In this way, this urgency not only protects students but also strengthens the role of pesantren within the wider Islamic community.

The research gap in the field of Islamic education, particularly regarding the mainstreaming of sports in pesantren, indicates a lack of comprehensive studies that link sports as a tool for student empowerment with compliance to institutional regulations. Although there are several studies on the benefits of sports in Islamic education, such as improving students' physical and mental health (Ahmad, 2019), research integrating the concept of sport-based empowerment—namely, the use of sports to build skills, confidence, and social abilities—with pesantren regulations remains limited. Regulations such as Law Number 18 of 2019 on Pesantren, which emphasizes institutional standards and student protection, are often not deeply connected to sports practices, resulting in sports implementation in pesantren that tends to be ad hoc and insufficiently structured (Rahman, 2020).

This shortcoming is evident in the fact that most studies focus on religious aspects or the pesantren curriculum in general, without considering how sports can be used to shape Islamic character in line with institutional regulations. For example, research on student empowerment through sports does exist. However, few examine its implications for regulatory compliance, including the allocation of worship time, facility management, and injury-prevention measures (Sari, 2021). This creates a gap in which the mainstreaming of sports may potentially conflict with pesantren values or violate legal standards, thereby limiting its effectiveness in developing well-rounded students. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by examining the mainstreaming of sports in pesantren through a sport-based empowerment approach balanced with institutional legal compliance. Accordingly, this research is expected to offer practical contributions for pesantren administrators in integrating sports sustainably, ensuring that student empowerment not only improves quality of life but also adheres to applicable regulations.

Pesantren, as traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, play an important role in shaping students' character and skills. However, they often lack integration of sports as an integral part of the curriculum. The mainstreaming of sports in pesantren aims to enhance the quality of holistic education that not only focuses on religious and academic aspects but also on students' physical, mental, and social well-being. Through the Sport-Based Empowerment (SBE) approach, this study seeks to empower pesantren students by utilizing sports as a tool to develop life skills, leadership, and resilience, while ensuring compliance with

applicable institutional laws such as the National Education System Act and pesantren regulations.

The main objective of this study is to develop an effective model for mainstreaming sports in pesantren that integrates Sport-Based Empowerment (SBE) as a sports-based empowerment strategy. This model is expected to increase student participation in sports activities, reduce health risks such as obesity and stress, and strengthen the institutional identity of pesantren through legal compliance. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) identify the challenges and opportunities for mainstreaming sports in pesantren; (2) design an SBE program that aligns with Islamic values and pesantren culture; (3) evaluate the impact of the program on student empowerment and institutional legal compliance; and (4) provide policy recommendations for sustainable implementation.

With this approach, the study is expected to contribute to the literature on Islamic education and sports and to offer practical solutions for pesantrens to address the challenges of educational modernization. The findings may serve as a reference for the government and educational institutions to promote sports as a means of balanced human development, in accordance with the principles of national education that emphasize the holistic development of students' potential, as stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System.

This research is relevant to previous studies showing that sports can enhance psychological and social well-being within educational environments (Coakley, 2015). Moreover, empowerment approaches through sports have been proven effective in non-formal education settings (Siedentop et al., 2020), and can be adapted to pesantren to ensure compliance with institutional regulations (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Thus, this study is not only academic in nature but also practical in advancing education in Indonesia.

This study on mainstreaming sports in pesantren through the Sport-Based Empowerment (SBE) approach and institutional legal compliance provides significant theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of Islamic education and sports. Theoretically, it enriches the literature by integrating sport-based empowerment theory into the pesantren education context, which has traditionally emphasized religious and academic dimensions. By adopting SBE, derived from social empowerment theory through physical activity (Siedentop et al., 2020), this research develops a new model that aligns sports with Islamic values, such as discipline, solidarity, and physical well-being, as integral to worship (taqwa). This addresses gaps in previous studies that often-separated sports from religious education, thereby contributing to a more inclusive, holistic education theory (Coakley, 2015). In addition, the study strengthens understanding of institutional legal compliance by integrating regulations such as the National Education System Act (2003) into the framework of sports, offering an interdisciplinary perspective that connects law, education, and sport.

Practically, the contribution of this research lies in the development of a sports program that can be directly implemented in pesantren to improve student well-being. The resulting SBE model can help pesantren address challenges such as limited sports facilities and cultural stigma toward physical activity, by focusing on student empowerment through activities such as football or athletics adapted to the pesantren schedule. This not only enhances students' physical and mental health but also strengthens institutional legal compliance, such as adhering to health and safety standards (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). The outcomes can serve as guidelines for the government and pesantren administrators in designing more balanced educational policies, reducing health risks such as obesity among students, and promoting sports as a tool for national character development. Thus, this research contributes to educational practice by offering evidence-based solutions for pesantren modernization, while supporting sustainable development goals through inclusive education (UNESCO, 2020).

B. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive library research approach, enabling an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of mainstreaming sports in pesantren through Sport-Based Empowerment (SBE) and institutional legal compliance. This approach was selected because it focuses on the analysis of non-numerical data derived from literature and regulatory documents, without involving direct field data collection, making it suitable for theoretical and policy-oriented inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative method facilitates an understanding of the cultural and legal context of pesantren, while the library-study component utilizes secondary sources to construct evidence-based arguments. The primary data sources include state regulations such as the Pesantren Law, relevant Ministerial Regulations, and standards concerning student health and protection (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019); literature on empowerment and sports pedagogy (Siedentop et al., 2020); and studies on pesantren education (Coakley, 2015). Data collection was carried out through literature searches from journals, books, and official documents using databases such as Google Scholar and national legal portals. The analysis techniques involve doctrinal legal analysis to interpret regulations related to institutional compliance, as well as thematic analysis to identify themes of sports empowerment within the pesantren context (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Doctrinal analysis examines the consistency of legal frameworks with sports practices, while thematic analysis categorizes literature-based data into themes such as health benefits, cultural integration, and implementation challenges.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Position of Sports within the Pesantren Education System

The position of sports within the pesantren education system is revealed as a minimally integrated element, mainly due to pesantren's educational tradition, which emphasizes religious and academic aspects. Rooted in classical Islamic learning models such as sorogan and bandongan, pesantren traditions tend to prioritize the study of the kitab kuning and Qur'anic memorization, resulting in physical education being treated as a secondary activity or even neglected (Mujib & Mudzakkir, 2010). This lack of attention to physical education is reflected in pesantren curricula, which rarely allocate dedicated time for sports, instead maintaining a primary focus on worship and religious study. Consequently, pesantren students often experience insufficient physical activity, which affects their physical and mental health, including risks such as obesity and stress arising from monotonous routines (Coakley, 2015).

Discussions of perceptions of health, discipline, and physical activity within pesantren culture reveal a cultural stigma that views sports as worldly activities with limited relevance to spiritual values. Health perceptions are often associated with bodily purity for worship rather than with regular physical exercise, leading sports to be regarded as less important than practices such as fasting or prayer (Siedentop et al., 2020). Conversely, discipline in pesantren is understood through daily behavioral rules, such as worship schedules, yet physical activity is rarely used as a means of cultivating discipline. The conservative culture of many pesantren sometimes perceives sports as a potential source of moral deviation, although some modern pesantren have begun integrating it to foster solidarity and leadership (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This indicates the need for a Sport-Based Empowerment approach to transform such perceptions while ensuring institutional legal compliance, such as adherence to student health standards (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Although the current position of sports remains marginal, it holds significant potential to be strengthened through harmonious integration with pesantren values.

2. Legal Framework and Institutional Compliance

This study analyzes the legal framework and institutional compliance of pesantren as the foundation for the sustainable mainstreaming of sports. The principle of legal compliance in the administration of pesantren emphasizes adherence to Law Number 18 of 2019 on Pesantren, which regulates institutional standards such as integrated curricula, transparent financial management, and student protection (Rahman, 2020). This compliance ensures that pesantren function not only as centers of religious propagation but also as educational institutions equivalent to formal schools, with a focus on the holistic development of students. The regulation requires pesantren to uphold legal principles such as accountability, transparency, and community participation, which serve as the basis for integrating sports without violating Islamic values or national regulations (Sari, 2021).

The connection between sports and institutional legal aspects is reflected in several dimensions. First, student safety and health: the Pesantren Law requires the prevention of injury risks through safe sports facilities, such as well-maintained fields and medical supervision, to avoid violations of the right to health (Ahmad, 2019). Second, educational service standards: sports must be integrated into the curriculum to meet national education standards, enhance holistic learning, and reduce students' physical underdevelopment (Coakley, 2015). Third, child protection and human rights: the regulation protects students from exploitation, prevents sports from becoming an excessive burden, and promotes the right to inclusive education (Sari, 2021). Fourth, governance of extracurricular activities: sports as an extracurricular activity must be regulated through internal pesantren guidelines, such as balanced time allocation with religious practices, to ensure legal compliance and the effectiveness of empowerment (Huda, 2018). This discussion demonstrates that institutional legal compliance not only protects students but also facilitates the mainstreaming of sports through Sport-Based Empowerment, thereby strengthening the identity of pesantren as modern, law-abiding educational institutions.

3. Sport-Based Empowerment Model for Pesantren

This study finds that the Sport-Based Empowerment (SBE) model is a framework for integrating sports into pesantren, focusing on empowering students through physical activities aligned with Islamic values. The integration of sports into the curriculum and pesantren activities involves designing structured programs, such as scheduled physical education subjects within the daily curriculum, as well as extracurricular activities like football or athletics adjusted to prayer times (Siedentop et al., 2020). This model encourages pesantrens to allocate specific times for sports, for example, in the morning before the Subuh prayer or in the afternoon after religious study sessions—to ensure that sports become an integral part of the curriculum without disrupting religious routines (Coakley, 2015). The integration also includes collaboration with local sports communities to provide coaches and facilities, enabling pesantren activities such as maulid or pengajian to be combined with light sports sessions.

Sport as a medium of empowerment emphasizes character building, leadership, and discipline through game rules that require decisiveness and responsibility, such as fair play, which aligns with the Islamic principle of justice (Huda, 2018). In addition, sports cultivate social skills such as teamwork and empathy, helping students interact harmoniously within the heterogeneous pesantren community (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The representation of santri in society is strengthened through participation in inter-pesantren sports competitions, which enhances the positive image of pesantren as institutions that produce active and productive individuals (Ahmad, 2019).

The synergy between empowerment and legal compliance is achieved by ensuring that the SBE program adheres to the 2019 Pesantren Law, including health standards and student protection, so that sports activities are not only empowering but also safe and sustainable (Rahman, 2020). This discussion demonstrates that the SBE model can transform pesantren into

centers of holistic education, reduce students' physical disadvantages, and strengthen their roles within modern Islamic society.

4. Impact on Reducing Sports Development Gaps for Pesantren

The implementation of sports mainstreaming in pesantren through the Sport-Based Empowerment approach and institutional legal compliance has demonstrated a significant impact in reducing students' developmental gaps in physical, mental, and social domains. The findings reveal three interrelated components: improving students' physical and mental well-being, strengthening the image and competitiveness of pesantren, and enhancing students' readiness to participate in the public sphere.

First, improvements in students' physical and mental well-being are reflected in survey data showing a 25% increase in physical strength and a 30% reduction in mental stress following the implementation of integrated sports programs (Sutrisno et al., 2023). The Sport-Based Empowerment approach encourages students to participate in regular sports activities, such as football and athletics, which not only enhance physical strength but also foster mental discipline and psychological resilience. This helps reduce the physical disadvantages often experienced by students due to limited access to sports facilities, while also addressing mental health issues such as anxiety, which are commonly found in traditional pesantren environments.

Second, the strengthening of pesantren's image and competitiveness is evident from the increased participation of students in inter-pesantren sports competitions, which enhances the institution's visibility within the community. Data show that pesantrens implementing this program have experienced improved reputations as modern educational institutions, with greater competitiveness in attracting new students (Sutrisno et al., 2023). Institutional legal compliance ensures that sports programs operate in accordance with regulations, thereby preventing negative stigma and building a positive image of the pesantren as a center for holistic development.

Third, students' preparedness to participate in public life is reflected in their ability to engage in social and professional activities. This program equips them with leadership and teamwork skills through sports, thereby reducing their social disadvantages. Interview results indicate that 70% of students feel more confident interacting outside the pesantren, such as in community events or the workplace (Sutrisno et al., 2023). This marks a transition from isolation to active participation, narrowing the gap between pesantren education and the demands of modern society.

These impacts demonstrate that mainstreaming sports not only reduces disparities but also strengthens the role of pesantren as agents of social change. However, challenges such as limited facilities must be addressed to ensure the program's sustainability.

5. Strategic Solutions

Based on the research findings, the mainstreaming of sports in pesantren through the Sport-Based Empowerment approach and institutional legal compliance generates effective strategic solutions to address implementation challenges. Four key components were identified: collaboration among pesantren, government, and sports communities; adjustment of internal guidelines to comply with legal requirements; development of student cadres as sports facilitators; and implications for national pesantren policies.

First, collaboration between pesantren, the government, and sports communities has proven to be a fundamental pillar. Data show that 80% of pesantren involved in this program reported improved access to sports facilities through partnerships with local governments and community sports clubs (Sutrisno et al., 2023). This collaboration facilitates joint training activities, such as sports workshops, thereby enhancing program quality and reducing the isolation of pesantren from the national sports ecosystem.

Second, aligning internal guidelines with legal regulations ensures sustainability. Document analysis shows that pesantren that adjusted their internal rules to comply with the National Education System Law and sports regulations experienced a 40% reduction in internal conflicts (Sutrisno et al., 2023). This approach involves revising the daily curriculum to integrate sports without disrupting religious activities, ensuring the program complies with both legal standards and pesantren ethics.

Third, developing cohorts of student sports facilitators strengthens internal capacity. A survey of 200 students revealed that 65% of those trained as sports facilitators actively led regular activities, increasing peer participation (Sutrisno et al., 2023). This cadre development includes leadership training and sports technique instruction, enabling students to serve as agents of change and reducing dependence on external actors.

Fourth, the implications for national pesantren policy highlight the need to expand this model. The study recommends integrating sports into the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy framework, including the establishment of national standards for sports facilities in pesantren (Sutrisno et al., 2023). This approach can drive the transformation of pesantren into holistic educational institutions, reduce gaps with public schools, and enhance their contribution to national sports development.

These strategic solutions not only address practical challenges but also pave the way for sustained innovation in pesantren education.

D. CONCLUSION

The importance of mainstreaming sports in pesantren cannot be overstated, as sports are not merely physical activities but also tools for shaping students' holistic character. The findings show that integrating sports improves physical health, mental discipline, and social skills—elements often overlooked in traditional pesantren curricula (Sutrisno et al., 2023). This mainstreaming effort challenges the stigma that pesantren focus solely on religious matters by demonstrating that sports can strengthen students' identities as balanced individuals prepared to face modern challenges.

The synergy between sport-based empowerment and institutional legal compliance represents a practical pathway for transformation. This approach combines empowerment through sports—such as leadership training and teamwork—with adherence to national education regulations, ensuring that programs run without internal conflict (Sutrisno et al., 2023). This synergy encourages innovation, including collaboration with government and sports communities, transforming pesantren from isolated institutions into centers of sustainable development and opening avenues for more inclusive social and educational transformation.

The relevance to reducing educational disparities and optimizing student potential is evident. The program narrows the gap between pesantren and public schools by enhancing students' physical and mental quality, strengthening pesantren's public image, and preparing students for roles in the public sphere (Sutrisno et al., 2023). The optimization of students' potential is realized through the training of student sports facilitators, which builds confidence and skills, enabling them to contribute actively to society. This approach reaffirms that sports are key to overcoming developmental disparities, positioning pesantren as competitive national agents of change.

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