



**TRANS7 EDITORIAL MISINTERPRETATION IN THE UNCENSORED  
XPOSE PROGRAM REGARDING THE TRADITIONS OF ISLAMIC  
BOARDING SCHOOL SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY STUDY**

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**Abstract**

*This study discusses the Trans7 editorial team's misinterpretation of Islamic boarding school traditions in the Xpose Uncensored program: A study of symbolic interaction theory. The research used a qualitative method with a case study approach. The results show that every place, group, institution, organization, and the like has traditions and symbols whose meanings cannot be generalized. Islamic boarding schools are one of the oldest educational institutions in Indonesia, possessing their own unique characteristics and diverse traditions in their learning process.*

**Keywords:** *Misinterpretation, Islamic boarding schools, symbolic interaction theory.*

**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini membahas tentang Misinterpretasi Redaksi Trans7 Pada Program Xpose Uncensored Terhadap Tradisi Pondok Pesantren : Kajian Teori Interaksi Simbolik. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Hasil penelitian bahwasanya Setiap tempat, kelompok, lembaga, organisasi dan sejenisnya memiliki tradisi dan simbol-simbol yang tidak dapat di generalisasikan maknanya. Pondok Pesantren adalah salah satu model lembaga pendidikan tertua di Indonesia yang memiliki kekhasan tersendiri dan memiliki beragam tradisi dalam proses pembelajarannya.

**Kata Kunci:** Misinterpretasi, Pondok Pesantren, Teori Interaksi Simbolik.

**I. INTRODUCTION**

On October 13, 2025, the public was shocked by a highly controversial broadcast on Trans7's Xpose Uncensored program, which showed the activities of students at the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School. The issue was not the broadcast of the video of the students' activities at the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School, but rather the narrative constructed in the Xpose Uncensored program, which alleged that the Islamic boarding school was exploiting children and practicing feudalism (1).

The impact of this broadcast caused an uproar among various parties, especially Islamic boarding schools, and specifically the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School featured in the broadcast. The consequences of the broadcast on Xpose Uncensored certainly seriously threatened the Islamic boarding school's reputation in the public eye. The Indonesian



Broadcasting Commission (KPI), as an independent institution that functions as a regulator of Indonesian broadcasting, has established a code of ethics for media when broadcasting as follows. Article 6 states that broadcasting institutions are obliged to respect differences in ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations, including cultural, age, gender, and/or socioeconomic diversity. Article 7 states that broadcasting institutions may not present programs that demean, contradict, and/or harass ethnicities, religions, races, and intergroups that include cultural diversity, age, gender, and/or socio-economic life. Article 8 also states that broadcasting institutions, in producing and/or broadcasting a program that contains the uniqueness of a particular culture and/or social life of a particular community, must consider the possibility of causing audience discomfort due to the broadcast program (2).

In this case, if we look at the rules for broadcasting information that have been set by the KPI in the previous paragraph, then Trans7 is considered to have committed a broadcasting violation because it does not comply with the broadcasting rules that have been set by the KPI. Moreover, Trans7 did not conduct in-depth observations at Islamic boarding schools to confirm the traditions that exist within the Islamic boarding schools to prevent misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the traditions that exist within the Islamic boarding schools.

## **II. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Case study research seeks to examine as much data as possible regarding the research subjects. Observations are conducted by systematically observing, scrutinizing, and recording behavior for a specific purpose. Observation is a data collection technique carried out through systematic, logical, objective, and rational observation and recording of various phenomena. Essentially, the purpose of observation is to describe the observed environment, the activities taking place, the individuals involved in that environment, the behaviors they display, and the meaning of the events from the perspectives of the individuals involved (3).

In this study, observations were conducted by observing and recording the Trans7 editorial team's misinterpretation of Islamic boarding school traditions in the program *Xpose Uncensored*. This broadcast caused an uproar from various parties. Furthermore, the reputation of Islamic boarding schools was threatened by the narrative portrayed in Trans7's program *Xpose Uncensored*. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, namely

summarizing, selecting the main points, focusing on important points, and discarding unnecessary ones. This aims to provide a clear picture, making it easier for researchers to conduct further data collection. Data presentation is done in the form of a short narrative description.

### **III. RESEARCH RESULTS**

The narrative echoed in Trans7's Xpose Uncensored program states that Islamic boarding schools exploit children. This cannot be generalized as implying that all activities within Islamic boarding schools constitute child exploitation. In the video broadcast on Trans7's Xpose Uncensored program, the students' mutual cooperation activities, such as cleaning the Islamic boarding school facilities and the cleric's house, are not merely acts of child exploitation, but rather social traditions that embody educational values based on togetherness, such as mutual cooperation, solidarity, hard work, and sincerity. This tradition is understood as a manifestation of shared ownership of the facilities within the Islamic boarding school.

In this regard, the author cites a statement by KH Yahya Cholil Staquf, chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board (PBNU), on the website [www.nu.or.id](http://www.nu.or.id), stating that the involvement of students in Islamic boarding school construction activities is not a form of exploitation. Because students only assist, the main construction work is still carried out by the builders. According to him, this tradition is part of the mutual cooperation educational process in Islamic boarding schools.

Islamic boarding schools have long been known as spaces for character building based on togetherness. However, in this case, the potential for mutual cooperation to shift into exploitation must be monitored. Students' participation in mutual cooperation should be purely voluntary and within their capacity. If involvement becomes an obligation, punishment, or disrupts learning activities, its value shifts in the wrong direction.

In the case of a video showing activities at the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School on the Xpose Uncensored program, it sparked public outcry. The public outcry arose because the narrative constructed in the video was deemed highly provocative and a one-sided interpretation of the traditions and symbols of the Islamic boarding school depicted in the video. Symbols vary from culture to culture, place to place, and context to context.

Humans are the only creatures that use symbols, and this is what distinguishes them from other creatures. Ernest Cassier, in Mulyana (2009), stated that humans' superiority over other creatures lies in their uniqueness as animal symbolicum (symbolic creatures), creatures that use symbols during social interactions.

George Herbert Mead, better known as the pioneer of symbolic interactionism theory, stated the position of symbols in the social circle. Symbolic meaning is the meaning or interpretation of the symbols used in social interactions. Symbols here can be language, gestures, objects, or actions that have specific meanings based on mutual agreement within a group or society. Symbolic meaning is not inherently inherent in the symbol itself, but rather is formed through the process of social interaction and mutual agreement.

The basic idea of the theory of symbolic interactionism is: a. Humans act or behave towards others based on the meaning they attach to others. The Ro'an tradition (Tabarukan or hoping for blessings) or community service activities have recently been accused of being a form of child exploitation carried out by Islamic boarding schools. In fact, this tradition is an expression of togetherness in maintaining and caring for shared facilities in Islamic boarding schools such as cleaning the Islamic boarding school environment. In this case, students have the awareness that the blessing of knowledge is not only obtained through the books or books they study but also from devotion based on sincerity in maintaining life in Islamic boarding schools. KH Yahya Cholil Staquf emphasized that the Ro'an tradition is one part of the mutual cooperation learning process. He analogized community service in Islamic boarding schools as the same as mutual cooperation in society (8). b. Meaning arises from social interactions exchanged between humans. In Islamic boarding school traditions, kissing the hand, bowing, and kneeling before the Kiyai are forms of respect and humility. Students do these things out of respect for the Kiyai who has imparted knowledge. Such behavior is not a form of feudalism or slavery, as narrated in Trans7's Xpose Unsensored program. In the view of students, Al-Ilm nurun (knowledge is light), and light will enter the hearts of those who are pure and respectful. The word "Science" comes from Arabic, from the verb "'Alima-Ya'lamu" which means "To Know" this root word forms the words "Alim (one who has knowledge), ta'lim (teaching), ta'allum (learning), and alam (universe). In fact, in Asmaul Husna (the 99 beautiful names of Allah SWT) one of them is Al-'Alimu (the all-knowing) is still the same root word as the word Science. So it is very natural if the Kiyai or Teacher who provides

knowledge or science receives respect through symbols or traditions in the form of being kissed on the hand, students or pupils bowing or even kneeling when meeting the Kiyai. Imam Ghazali in his book entitled *Ihya Ulumudin* emphasizes that knowledge will not be useful without proper manners. He states that students must have a humble attitude, respect teachers, and make the learning process a form of worship to Allah (9). c. Symbolic Interactionism describes the process of thinking as a conversation with oneself. The origin of the word "santri", in the view of Nurcholish Madjid can be seen from two perspectives. First, the opinion that "santri" comes from the word "sastri," a Sanskrit word meaning literate. Second, the opinion that the word santri actually comes from the Javanese word "cantrik," meaning someone who always follows a teacher wherever the teacher goes to stay (10). In this case, referring to the meaning of the word santri, when someone attends a boarding school or Islamic boarding school and holds the status of a santri, a concept develops within them about how they should behave towards the teacher or Kiyai who has guided and imparted knowledge.

Every place, region, group, organization, institution, and the like has traditions or symbols that cannot be interpreted generally. In this case, Trans7, through the program *Xpose Uncensored*, views and interprets the traditions of Islamic boarding schools from its own perspective without conducting in-depth observations and interviews about them. This is certainly a major mistake for Trans7 as a media outlet that should provide accurate, factual, and contextual information. The information provided by the Trans7 editors through the program *Xpose Uncensored* regarding traditions Islamic boarding school based on personal opinion.

According to Kiyai Agus Sunyoto in Nur Lodi Hady, a major mistake of Dutch scholars was interpreting Kiyai and Islamic boarding schools through Western eyes. They considered Kiyai as "religious figures" like priests or pastors in the Christian tradition. In fact, in the archipelago, Kiyai were not religious figures from the beginning, but rather from royal families, nobles, and even royal descendants. Sunan Ampel and Sunan Giri, for example, were royal descendants. Kiai Nur Iman, the founder of Mlangi Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta, was the eldest brother of Sultan Hamengkubuwono I. Likewise, Babakan Ciwaringin Islamic Boarding School. Even Krapyak Islamic Boarding School in Jogja had relations with the local palace. Many Islamic boarding schools in Java were

founded by royal relatives and patriotic followers of Prince Diponegoro who spread during the Dutch pursuit. Langitan Islamic Boarding School in Tuban, for example, was founded by Kiai Muhammad Nur, a follower of Diponegoro and a descendant of Prince Sambo, son of Prince Benowo, grandson of Jaka Tingkir, Sultan of Pajang. The founder of Tebuireng Jombang, Hadratussyaikh Hasyim Asy'ari, was also a descendant of Prince Benowo, Sunan Giri, and Brawijaya IV. It is therefore natural that Islamic boarding schools carry the royal cultural heritage of the palace in the form of etiquette, respect, and social hierarchy. However, this heritage was not accepted unceremoniously. Islamic boarding schools fundamentally transformed it. While in the palace the relationship between king and subjects was based on power and submission, in Islamic boarding schools the relationship between kiyai and students was built on compassion, love, scholarship, and spirituality. Despite their roots in feudal palace traditions, Islamic boarding schools have grown into the most "liberal" spaces in the Indonesian Islamic world. Here, differences of opinion are not avoided but celebrated. The *bahtsul masail* (discussion forum) is evidence of this openness. In this dialectical space, students exchange arguments based on evidence, seeking the truth together, without feeling they are always right. No opinion must be followed absolutely. Everyone is free to think and express their views as long as they are based on literature and still prioritize good manners.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Every group, organization, institution, and the like has traditions and symbols whose meanings cannot be generalized. Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are one of the oldest educational institutions in Indonesia, possessing unique characteristics in educating and guiding students, each with its own unique traditions. Therefore, Islamic boarding school traditions cannot be interpreted from a general perspective, let alone simply using personal interpretations or opinions without conducting in-depth observations of the traditions within Islamic boarding schools.

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