



Cognitive Dissonance and the Image *Pesantren* in Pekalongan: A Study Using Mixed Methods Approach

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Abstract. News coverage of violence in pesantren has increased. The news coverage should have made the image of pesantren hostile, and the number of students decreased. However, pesantren and Santri in Pekalongan Regency have experienced a significant increase. This study aimed to analyze the community in overcoming cognitive dissonance when sending their children to pesantren and to analyze the exposure to negative news on parents' interest in sending their children to pesantren through the intervening variable of the image of pesantren. The theory used is cognitive dissonance. The research methodology uses a post-positivistic paradigm with a mixed methods approach. The population was 976,504 people, and a sample of 475 respondents with a simple random technique. The data collection method used surveys and in-depth interviews. The study's results showed that the community could reduce cognitive dissonance; they considered pesantren the safest places to deepen religious knowledge, train independence, and make many friends. Parents assume that not all pesantren experience physical violence and sexual violence. The second research result is that the influence of mass media exposure on parents' request to send their children to pesantren is minimal, only 7.29%. In comparison, the image of pesantren influences parents' interest in sending their children to pesantren by 26.21%. Together, mass media exposure and the image of pesantren influence parents' interest in sending their children to pesantren by 34.8%. Meanwhile, mass media exposure does not affect parents' interest in sending their children to pesantren through the intervening variable of pesantren image.

Keywords: cognitive dissonance; image; pesantren

Abstrak. Pemberitaan kekerasan di pesantren meningkat. Pemberitaan membuat citra pesantren harusnya menjadi negatif dan jumlah Santri berkurang. Akan tetapi, pesantren dan Santri di Kabupaten Pekalongan mengalami peningkatan signifikan. Tujuan penelitian ini menganalisis masyarakat dalam mengatasi disonansi kognitif saat memondokkan anaknya di pesantren dan menganalisis terpaan pemberitaan negatif terhadap minat orang tua memondokkan anaknya di pesantren melalui variabel intervening citra pesantren. Teori yang digunakan adalah disonansi kognitif. Metodologi penelitian menggunakan paradigma post-positivistik dengan pendekatan mixed methods. Populasi sejumlah 976.504 masyarakat dan sampel 475 responden dengan

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teknik random sederhana. Metode pengambilan data menggunakan survei dan wawancara mendalam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan masyarakat dapat mengurangi disonansi kognitif, mereka menganggap bahwa pondok pesantren adalah tempat yang paling aman untuk memperdalam ilmu agama, melatih kemandirian dan memperoleh banyak teman. Orang tua beranggapan tidak semua pesantren terjadi kekerasan fisik dan kekerasan seksual. Hasil penelitian yang kedua yaitu pengaruh terpaan media massa terhadap minat orang tua memondokkan anak di pesantren sangat kecil hanya 7,29% sedangkan citra pesantren memberikan pengaruh terhadap minat orang tua memondokkan anak di pesantren sebesar 26,21%. Secara bersama-sama terpaan media massa dan citra pondok memberikan pengaruh sebesar 34,8% terhadap minat orang tua memondokkan anak di pesantren. Sedangkan terpaan media massa tidak memberikan pengaruh terhadap minat orang tua memondokkan anak di pesantren melalui variabel intervening citra pesantren.

Kata kunci: Disonansi Kognitif; Citra; Pesantren

INTRODUCTION

The image of *pesantren* is being tested. There is a lot of negative news related to *pesantren*. Negative news related to *pesantren* includes news about *pesantren* in the Lumajang area, East Java. A Kyai at the *pesantren* is suspected of molesting three female students. Next is negative news at the *pesantren* in East Beji, Depok. It is suspected that the *pesantren* caretaker and seniors raped 11 female students. Furthermore, there was negative news about Pondok Tahfiz and the boarding school in Bandung, West Java. Where it is suspected that the owner of the boarding school raped and impregnated his female students. The following negative news was the child of a Kyai in Jombang who was suspected of sexually harassing female students (TvOne, 2022). Lastly, there is news about the violence that resulted in death at a well-known *pesantren* in Indonesia, which upper-level students carried out because it was suspected that the victim had lost items at the *pesantren*.

Massive negative news about *pesantren* both through electronic media, internet media and social media can undoubtedly worsen the negative image of *pesantren*. Unfortunately, the number of students in *pesantren* has decreased, resulting in many *pesantren* closing because they need students. However, the opposite is true; the number of *pesantren* has increased. Based on data from the Pekalongan Regency Central Statistics Agency shows a significant increase. In 2021, the number of *pesantren* in Pekalongan Regency will be 89, while in 2022, there will be an increase to 110, likewise with the number of Santri. In 2021, the number of Santri in Pekalongan district will be 9034 Santri (BPS, 2022a).

Meanwhile, in 2022, there will be an increase of 12,746 Santri. Through this research, researchers want to know whether the frequent negative news about *pesantren* in the mass media and new media can change the image and interest of parents in sending their children to *pesantren* or not. Or are there other factors that make parents feel calmer and more confident in sending their children to *pesantren* despite the massive negative news regarding them at the moment?

Research that is relevant to this research includes research conducted by Maisaroh. The research discusses the cognitive dissonance of Muslim women not wearing the hijab. In this research, researchers took the case study of Rina Nose because she was considered a public figure. The analysis used in this research is Sara Mils's discourse analysis. Meanwhile, the theory used in this research is cognitive dissonance theory. This research shows that there are still many Muslim women who are not aware of the commandment to wear the hijab (Maisaroh, 2019). Research conducted by Hanum et al. This research discusses how the people of West Kalimantan experience cognitive dissonance due to the massive amount of information about Covid 19. The method used in this research is exploratory. The study used a qualitative approach, collecting data from in-depth interviews. The research results show that the people of West Kalimantan need clarification about the COVID-19 information they receive. They finally make rationalizations according to the knowledge they have (Hanum et al., 2022).

Research conducted by Dewanti and Irwansyah. This research discusses people who experience cognitive dissonance when buying products that do not have a halal logo. The results of this research show that there are still many Indonesian people who are hesitant and worried when making product transactions that do not have a halal logo (Dewanti & Irwansyah, 2021). Research conducted by Fadholi et al. This research discusses the cognitive dissonance of people who smoke actively in Indonesia. The results of this research show that smokers reduce their cognitive dissonance by adding new information that cigarettes do not have a direct impact on their health and that cigarettes can contribute to the country through excise taxes (Fadholi et al., 2020). Research conducted by Pratama and Nugroho related to the cognitive dissonance of Sharia Bank customers. The study explains that people want to leave conventional banks because they think they are usurious and want to switch to Sharia banks. However, there are still many

features that traditional and Sharia banks don't have, which results in many people still using conventional banks even though they know the dangers of usury (Pratama & Nugroho, 2017).

This research is new because no one has researched the cognitive dissonance of prospective or *pesantren* parents regarding negative news about *Pesantren* in the mass media. Of course, each candidate or student guardian will give a different opinion depending on the background of the candidate or student guardian. This will be an exciting research finding, whether the recent negative news related to *pesantren* in the mass media will drastically reduce prospective students' and guardians' image and interest in sending their children to *pesantren*. The theory used in this research is cognitive dissonance theory. This theory globally explains that a person will experience dissonance or confusion when they receive information that does not match their thoughts. The message's recipient will try to find information to strengthen the information received so that the dissonance within him can be reduced or even eliminated. This theory is included in the cybernetic tradition (Griffin et al., 2018).

Theories in the cybernetic tradition fall into the post positivistic research paradigm. This cybernetic tradition is one of the seven traditions in communication theory. Theories in the cybernetic tradition explain that a person's behaviour is closely related to the systems around that person. Someone does something because there is a system that makes that person do it (Morissan, 2013). Cognitive dissonance causes a person to experience confusion in making choices (Barta et al., 2023). Attitudes and behaviour are closely related, especially in decision-making (De Vos & Singleton, 2020). Other research states that attitudes, emotions and behaviour are correlated (Marikyan et al., 2020). Cognitive dissonance can reduce the quality of a person's professionalism (Adikaram & Higgs, 2024). Besides, bias or stereotypes influence attitudes (Miao et al., 2023). Research on cognitive dissonance also states that pretending to others ultimately lies to oneself (Merckelbach & Merten, 2012). Cognitive dissonance is often a barrier because it can lead to accepting a distorted view of "reality" and thus making less effective decisions (Merckelbach & Merten, 2012). There are substantial differences in people's responses to events that have occurred and those that have not (Xu & Choi, 2024).

Cognitive dissonance theory explains that someone uncomfortable with the information they have received will try to find reinforcement to reduce the discomfort they experience due to the information they have received. A person will minimize this discomfort by including other components that can strengthen his beliefs (Morissan, 2013). Cognitive dissonance theory is a theory that helps explain how people process conflicting information (Kim & Bay, 2017). Cognitive dissonance is a state of tension that occurs when a person has two psychologically inconsistent cognitions (Burke et al., 2017). This theory can also be used to analyze a person's compliance (Pearce & Cooper, 2021).

Researchers use a post-positivistic paradigm. This paradigm requires that the relationship between the observer and the object be interactive, noting that the observer must be as neutral as possible so that the level of subjectivity can be reduced to a minimum (Kriyantono, 2010). This research uses a mixed method approach. Mixed methods use the Sequential Explanatory Strategy. This strategy has the characteristic of quantitative data being more important than qualitative data. The function of qualitative data is to provide supporting data. Qualitative data serves to justify imperfect quantitative data. When using this strategy, researchers must know which part of the quantitative research results must be followed up (Creswell, 2010). This type of research is explanatory and descriptive. Mixed methods is a methodology that combines and combines methods as a means to achieve various research objectives that are desired (Cameron, 2024). Mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative data and is recognized as a third research paradigm (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Mixed methods research has become increasingly popular recently, especially in the social and behavioural sciences (Timans et al., 2019). Mixed methods encourage understanding complex issues important for solving real-world problems (Molina-Azorin & Fetters, 2019).

The population in this study consisted of guardians of *Pesantren* students in the district. Pekalongan has 12746 Wali Santri (BPS, 2022b). The sample in this study was 475 respondents using random sampling with a standard error of 4.5%. This research has three variables: one independent variable, one intermediate variable and one dependent variable. The first variable is exposure to negative news about *pesantren* as an independent variable (X1), the intermediate variable is the image of *pesantren* (Y), and the dependent variable is the interest of parents of students in *pesantren* (Z). Instrument validity is carried out using product moment correlation. Questions are considered valid if the R-value is higher than the R in the R table. Research data was collected using questionnaires directly sent to respondents via Google Forms and interviews with respondents. The validity of the

research instrument was tested on 475 respondents. The research instrument is said to be valid if the calculated r value $>$ r table, where the value of the r table for 475 respondents or with a df value $= 475-2$, namely 473, is 0.090.

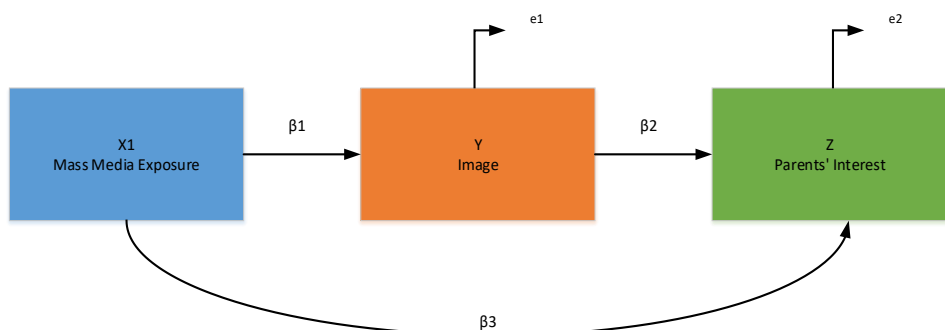
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Path Analysis

Their validity and reliability were tested before the research instruments were distributed to respondents. The results show that the instrument validity test is valid. A total of 26 questions were declared valid. The research instrument was also declared reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.829. Researchers also carried out classical assumption tests in normality, multicollinearity and heterocyclicity tests before entering path analysis. The analysis used in this research uses path analysis, often called path analysis. Researchers will prove the hypothesis in this research, namely:

- H1 : There is an influence of media exposure on the image of *pesantren*
- H2 : There is a direct influence of media exposure on parents' interest in sending their children home
- H3 : There is a direct influence of the image of *pesantren* on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren*
- H4 : There is a joint influence of media exposure and the image of *pesantren* on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren*.
- H5 : Media exposure through the intervening variable image of *pesantren* influences parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren*.

Picture 1: Path Analysis



Model 1 Path Analysis Equation: $Y = \beta_1 X_1 + e_1$

Model 2 Path Analysis Equation: $Z = \beta_3 X_1 + \beta_2 Y + e_2$

1. Path Model 1

In Model 1, the researcher will analyze the direct influence of variables.

Table 1 Model Summary Path Model 1

Model Summary

		Adjusted R Square	R
R	R Square		
.047 ^a	.002	.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mass Media Exposure

Table 2 Anova Path Model 1

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.625	1	4.625	1.062	.303 ^a
	Residual	2060.272	473	4.356		
	Total	2064.897	474			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mass Media Exposure

b. Dependent Variable: Image

Table 3 Coefficients Path Model 1

Coefficients^a

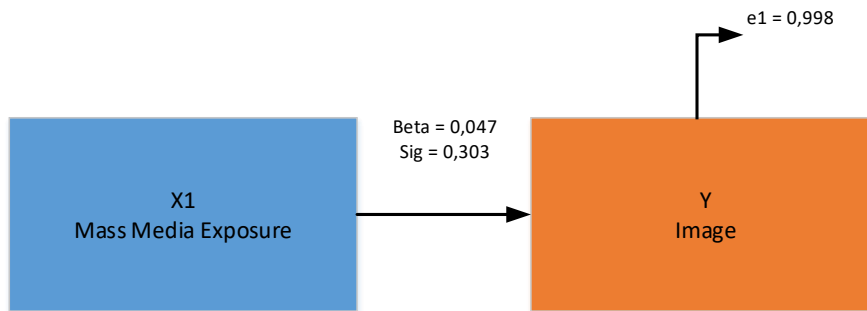
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	6.498	.482		13.477	.000
	Mass Media Exposure	.019	.018	.047	1.030	.303

a. Dependent Variable: Image

The table above shows that the beta value in the Model Path Coefficients Table 1 is 0.047. Meanwhile, the significance value is 0.303. The significance value in the Model 1 Path ANOVA table and Model 1 Path Coefficients is the same, namely 0.303, where the value is more than

0.05. This means that variable X1 (exposure to mass media) on Y (image of *pesantren*) is insignificant, or in other words, the variable has no influence. The R square value in the Summery Path Model 1 table shows 0.002. Then the value of $e1 = \sqrt{(1 - R \text{ square})}$ yaitu $e1 = \sqrt{(1 - 0,002)} = \sqrt{(0,998)} = 0,998$.

Picture 2: Path Model 1



The results of the analysis above show that mass media exposure to the image of *pesantren* does not have a significant influence. This means that the first hypothesis is rejected, namely the influence of mass media exposure (X1) on the image of *pesantren* (Y). The path analysis equation for model 1 is $Y = \beta_1 X_1 + e_1$, then $Y = 0.047 X_1 + 0.998$.

2. Path Model 2

In this path two analysis, researchers examined the influence of media exposure (X1) directly on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* (Z). Next, the researcher will also analyze the influence of the image of the *pesantren* (Y) on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* (Z). Researchers will also analyze the influence of media exposure (X1) and the image of *pesantren* (Y) together on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* (Z). Lastly, the researcher will analyze the influence of media exposure (X1) through the intervening variable image of *pesantren* (Y) on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* (Z).

Table 4 Model Summary Path Model 2

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.590 ^a	.348	.345	2.720

a. Predictors: (Constant), Image, Mass Media Exposure

Table 5 Anova Path Model 2

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1864.623	2	932.312	126.011	.000 ^a
	Residual	3492.164	472	7.399		
	Total	5356.787	474			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Image, Mass Media exposure

b. Dependent Variable: Parents Interest

Table 6 Coefficients Path Model 2

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.811	.739		11.918	.000
	Terpaan Media Massa	.172	.024	.270	7.270	.000
	Citra Pondok Pesantren	.824	.060	.512	13.753	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Parents Interest

Mass media exposure (X1) directly influences parents' interest in sending their children to pesantren (Z).

Table 5 and Table 6 above show that the significance value is 0.000. This means that the significance value is <0.05 , which means that exposure to mass media (X1) has a significant influence on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* (Z). The magnitude of the impact can be seen in the beta

value in Table 4.7 Coefficients of Model Path 2. The magnitude of the beta value is 0.270. The analysis results show that the hypothesis that mass media exposure (X1) influences parents' interest in sending their children to *Pesantren* (Z) is accepted with a beta value of 0.270. So the magnitude of the effect is $(0.270)^2$ or 0.0729 or 7.29%. 92.71% of other variables still influence parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren*.

The influence of the image of pesantren (Y) on parents' interest in sending their children to pesantren (Z).

Table 5 and Table 6 above show that the significance value is 0.000. This means that the significance value is <0.05 ; this means that the image of the *pesantren* (Y) has a significant influence on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* (Z). The beta value of the influence of the image of *pesantren* (Y) on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* (Z) is 0.512, which can be seen in the beta value in Table 4.7 Coefficients of Model Path 2. The results of the analysis show that the hypothesis is that there is an influence on the image of *pesantren*. (Y) Regarding parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* (Z), it was received with a beta value of 0.512. So the magnitude of the effect is $(0.512)^2$ or 0.2621 or 26.21%. 73.79% of other variables still influence parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren*.

The influence of media exposure (X1) and the image of pesantren (Y) together on parents' interest in sending their children to pesantren (Z).

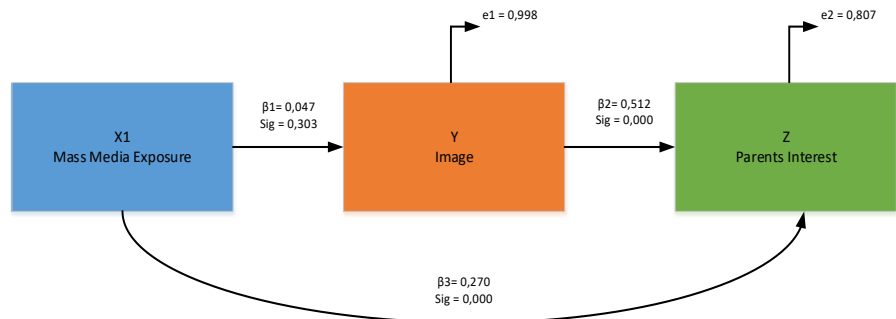
Tables 5 and 6 above show that the significance value from the above table is 0.000. This means <0.05 , so it can be interpreted that media exposure (X1), together with the image of the *pesantren* (Y), has quite a significant influence on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* (Z). The magnitude of the influence can be seen in the R square value in Table 4, which is 0.348. This means that the influence of media exposure (X1), together with the image of the *pesantren* (Y), has a significant influence on parents' interest in sending their children to *Pesantren* (Z) at 34.8%. The remaining 65.2% of parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* is influenced by other variables not in this study. The results of the analysis show that the hypothesis that there is an influence of Media Exposure (X1) together with the image of *pesantren* (Y) on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* (Z) is accepted with a significant influence of 34.8%.

The influence of media exposure (X1) through the intervening variable image of pesantren (Y) on parents' interest in sending their children to pesantren (Z).

In Table 3, it can be seen that the beta value of variables X1 to Y is 0.047. Meanwhile, in Table 9, it can be seen that the beta value of variables X1 to Z is 0.270. Meanwhile, the beta value of the Y to Z variable is 0.512. The R square value in the Summery Path Model 2 table shows the number 0.348. Then the value of $e2 = \sqrt{(1 - R \text{ square})}$ yaitu $e2 = \sqrt{(1 - 0,348)} = \sqrt{(0,652)} = 0,807$.

Next, the researcher will analyze whether there is an influence of X1 (exposure to mass media) on Z (parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren*) through the intervening variable Y (image of *pesantren*). It is known that the direct influence of Meanwhile, the indirect effect of So the total influence that X1 (exposure to mass media) has on Z (parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren*) is $0.0729 + 0.024$, equal to 0.0969.

Picture 3: Path analysis model 2



Based on the calculation results, it shows that the value of the indirect influence is 0.024, while the value of the direct influence is 0.0729, meaning that the indirect influence is smaller than the direct influence, it can be concluded that X1 (exposure to mass media) does not have a significant influence on Z (parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren*) through the intervening variable Y (Image of *pesantren*). The equation for model 2 is as follows:

$$Z = \beta_3 X_1 + \beta_2 Y + e_2$$

$$Z = 0,270 X_1 + 0,512 Y + 0,807$$

The influence caused by mass media exposure related to negative news on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* is minimal, namely only 7.29%. The results of the questionnaire also show that even though they know, see and hear negative news about *Pesantren* through the mass media. They

believe and understand what is shown in the mass media regarding physical violence and sexual violence that occurs in several *pesantren*, which does not discourage parents from continuing to send their children to *pesantren*.

They consider *pesantren* the right place to send their children to school. They think that violence in *pesantren* cannot be generalized. They also believe that violence outside *pesantren* is scarier and occurs more often than inside *pesantren*. That is one reason why they continue sending their children to *Pesantren* compared to other public schools.

So, negative news regarding *pesantren* is only used as knowledge for the public to be more selective in choosing *pesantren*. Massive negative news regarding *pesantren* does not make them turn away from continuing to send their children to *pesantren*. Furthermore, the influence that the image of *pesantren* has on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren*. The impact is significant, with the magnitude of the influence being 26.21%. The community views *pesantren* as a better place to learn than public schools in deepening religious knowledge. Placing children in *pesantren* improves children's religious knowledge. They further deepen their spiritual knowledge by studying at *pesantren*. Apart from that, *pesantren* are imaged as places of learning that will later be able to help their children and guide their children to be safe both in this world and in the afterlife. *Pesantren* have a positive image because if children go to a *pesantren*, they will become more independent and have more relationships when they finish studying at the *pesantren*. Apart from that, they also believe that not all *pesantren* experience physical violence and sexual violence. *Pesantren* still have a positive image in the community. The community also views *pesantren* as having better quality than public schools.

The influence that exposure to mass media and the image of *pesantren* has on parents' interest in sending their children to boarding is very significant. The magnitude of the influence is 34.8%. This considerable influence is obtained because the public considers negative news in the mass media only for information. Hence, parents are more careful in choosing a *pesantren*. Exposure to the mass media does not make parents afraid to send their children to *pesantren*. This high influence cannot be separated from the image of *pesantren*, which is still considered very positive by the majority of the people of Pekalongan Regency. This

makes the influence caused by media exposure and the image of *pesantren* very significant and high on parents' interest in sending their children to them.

Lastly, there is no influence of media exposure on parents' interest in sending their children to boarding schools through the intervening variable image of *pesantren*. This is because the harmful exposure of the mass media regarding physical violence and sexual violence that occurs in *pesantren* is contrary to the image of *pesantren*, which is portrayed by the community as very good and very positive. Even in the model 1 path analysis, it was explained that there was no significant influence between harmful exposure to mass media and the image of *pesantren*. This happens because the massive adverse reporting in the mass media does not create a negative image of *pesantren*. The image of *pesantren* in the eyes of the people of Pekalongan Regency is still very positive. That is why media exposure does not influence parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* through the intervening variable of *pesantren* image.

Analysis of Community Cognitive Dissonance

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with respondents, namely the people of Pekalongan Regency, they can overcome cognitive dissonance due to massive exposure from the mass media regarding negative news about *pesantren*. People watch and hear negative news on television and other mass media. People also believe what appears on television and other mass media. However, *pesantren* solid beliefs and positive image make it seem that negative news has no significant influence.

Several interview results show that attending a *pesantren* is not just the parents' desire. Schools at *pesantren* for some people in Pekalongan Regency have emerged from the child himself. This is because *pesantren* mostly attend the community environment in Pekalongan Regency, so like it or not, children also follow what is in their environment. In cognitive dissonance theory, it is often called selective retention. Selective retention reduces dissonance by remembering information consonant with current beliefs and actions (West & Turner, 2017). They believe *pesantren* are the best place to seek knowledge, especially religious knowledge. This belief makes a person comfortable in decision-making (Majeed et al., 2022). Plus, many local people also attend *pesantren*. That is one of the factors that makes children have

confidence and a strong desire to go to *pesantren*. Cognitive dissonance is a causal mechanism, an alternative to empathy and collective relative deprivation, that can explain how individuals with collective identities can be motivated (Nilsson, 2022).

The belief held by parents is that by sending their children to *pesantren*, their children will learn more and deepen their knowledge of religion. Studying at a *pesantren* enables children to be safe in the world and the hereafter because what is studied at a *pesantren* prioritizes religious knowledge over other general knowledge. Emotional cognitive dissonance was significantly reduced compared to cognitive dissonance between need and reliability (Xu & Choi, 2024). The needs of parents make children master more religious knowledge and reduce their feelings of doubt. Also, going to a *pesantren* makes children more independent. This is because when children go to *pesantren*, all the activities the children do are done by themselves. They are starting with eating, bathing, and washing clothes. This will make the child's attitude more independent. A person navigates between aspects they like and aspects they do not like when making decisions (Mathur, 2023). According to cognitive dissonance theory, it falls under selective exposure. Selective exposure reduces dissonance by looking for information consonant with current beliefs and actions (West & Turner, 2017).

Furthermore, residents of Pekalongan Regency assume that only a small percentage of physical or sexual violence occurs in *pesantren*. This means that not all *pesantren* experience physical violence or sexual violence. They are also more selective when choosing *pesantren*. They will first find out the background of the *pesantren* where their child will study. This means they will conduct a survey before sending their children to *pesantren*. The community also thinks that physical violence and sexual violence outside *pesantren* are more numerous and more dangerous. They think *pesantren* are still better and safer than other public schools. They will more often advise their children by approaching them and communicating what incidents have occurred during school at the *pesantren* to reassure them and ensure that their children are acceptable and safe. This is one of the indicators in cognitive dissonance theory, namely selective attention and selective interpretation. Selective attention reduces dissonance by paying attention to information consonant with current beliefs and actions (West & Turner, 2017). The community demonstrates this by believing that the violence that occurs

outside the *pesantren* is more dangerous and more terrifying. More incidents of physical violence and sexual violence occur outside *pesantren*. Apart from that, there is something called selective attention, which is a method of reducing dissonance by interpreting ambiguous information so that this information becomes consistent with current beliefs and actions (West & Turner, 2017). They assume that not all *pesantren* students experience physical violence or sexual violence. In overcoming this, they will be more selective in choosing *pesantren* to study for their children by surveying *pesantren* that will be used as places for their children to study religion.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that people can reduce cognitive dissonance by considering that *pesantren* are the safest place to deepen knowledge, especially religious knowledge, train independence and gain many relationships. They also think that outside the *pesantren*, it is more scary because there is a lot of physical violence and sexual violence. Apart from that, they believe that not all *pesantren* experience physical violence and sexual violence, so parents need to be selective in choosing *pesantren*. The second research result is that the influence of exposure to mass media on asking parents to board their children in *pesantren* is minimal, only 7.29%. In comparison, the image of *pesantren* influences parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* by 26.21%. Together, exposure to mass media and the image of *pesantren* have an influence of 34.8% on parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren*. Meanwhile, exposure to mass media does not influence parents' interest in sending their children to *pesantren* through the intervening variable image of *Pesantren*.

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