

Revealing The Dynamics of Critique and Praise Among Santri Toward Kiai and His Family in Madurese Ethnic Pesantren Environment

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Abstract.

In the Madurese ethnic pesantren environment, expressions of critique and praise are frequently conveyed both directly and indirectly. This study aims to describe the types, forms, linguistic varieties, and delivery patterns of critique and praise expressed by santri toward the kiai and his family. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach within a sociopragmatic framework, this research applies the ethnography of communication method to understand the social and cultural context underlying the speech events. Data were collected through participant observation using recording and note-taking techniques to capture the santri's verbal interactions, supplemented by in-depth interviews with selected informants. The data were then analyzed through several stages: transcription, reduction, classification, tabulation, validation, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal three major points: (1) the forms of critique and praise expressed by santri toward the kiai and his family, (2) the linguistic varieties used, and (3) the patterns of delivery. Critique is generally expressed through pasemon, an indirect mode of expression representing rejection, concern, disagreement, incompatibility, or complaints about certain situations. Meanwhile, praise emphasizes expressions of admiration and encouragement directed toward the kiai and his family as a form of respect. The linguistic varieties used in both critique and praise predominantly consist of refined speech levels, particularly the Engghi-Bhunten pattern, which reflects politeness in Madurese culture. The delivery patterns include direct speech, indirect expressions, metaphors, insinuations, and rhetorical utterances, all of which demonstrate the santri's communicative sensitivity in maintaining ethical interaction and social hierarchy within the pesantren.

Keywords: Critique; praise; Madurese ethnic pesantren and keluarga dhelem.

I. INTRODUCTION

Pesantren, as Islamic educational institutions, play a crucial role in shaping religious character and understanding (Dhofier, 1984); (Junaedi et al., 2005); & (Zakiyah, 2018). Beyond serving as centers for religious learning, pesantren also function as cultural hubs rich in religious values and local traditions (Tiani, 2016); (Kuntowijoyo, 1988); (Akhmad Sofyan et al., 2022); & (Badrudin et al., 2023). They not only educate santri in religious knowledge but also cultivate distinctive patterns of social relations, particularly between santri and the kiai as well as the kiai's family. These relationships are influenced by a complex social structure in which santri are not merely students but integral members of a community that upholds prevailing norms and customs (Yusuf et al., 2023). In Madurese pesantren, an intriguing phenomenon emerges regarding the dynamics of critique and praise exchanged between santri and the kiai along with his family. Critique often relates to teaching practices, decision-making, leadership qualities, or the kiai's managerial roles in the pesantren, whereas praise tends to highlight admiration for the kiai's inspiration, exemplary conduct, piety, humility, and authority. This phenomenon reflects a distinctive relational pattern within pesantren traditions, where santri despite occupying a relatively lower social position still perceive themselves as having the right to express critique and appreciation toward the kiai and his family (Badrudin et al., 2023). Madurese society holds a particular view of the importance of balancing firmness and respect in social relations.

Respect toward the kiai is expressed not only through verbal acknowledgment but also through daily practices that shape the way santri interact with the kiai and his family. Conversely, although critique is often associated with dissatisfaction or disagreement, it is still conveyed within a framework of mutual respect and

with the intention of improving the kiai's teaching or leadership (Utsman, 2018). This study aims to investigate in greater depth the forms of critique and praise articulated by santri toward the kiai and his family in Madurese pesantren. It examines how these expressions reflect the social, cultural, and religious values of Madurese society as well as their implications for the social structure of the pesantren community. In general, pesantren located in Tapal Kuda region use Madurese language (ML) as their primary medium of daily communication (Nurcahyo et al., 2023). ML has even become a distinctive linguistic marker of pesantren in the area, functioning not only as a tool for communication but also as a symbol of politeness in speech, behavior, and social interaction. Consequently, pesantren in the Tapal Kuda region are widely recognized as Madurese ethnic pesantren (Nurcahyo et al., 2023). This study focuses on pesantren across the Tapal Kuda region, particularly those situated in Situbondo, Bondowoso, and Jember. Within pesantren settings, expressions of critique and praise are often directed by the kiai and his family toward the santri (Badrudin et al., 2023).

However, this study highlights a particularly intriguing phenomenon: the dynamics of critique and praise expressed by santri toward the kiai and his family. This phenomenon prompted the researcher to explore more deeply the dynamics of critique and praise conveyed by santri to the kiai and his family. The study aims to analyze the types, forms, contributing factors, functions, responses, and impacts of critique and praise articulated by santri within the pesantren environment in the Tapal Kuda region. To establish the urgency of this study, it is necessary to review previous research with similar themes to identify the scholarly contributions this project offers. Although a number of studies have examined critique and praise in literature and in broader social contexts, no research has specifically investigated these aspects within Madurese Ethnic Pesantren, particularly in relation to santri-kiai interactions. Moreover, previous studies have not thoroughly explored the linguistic dynamics in pesantren settings, especially those associated with the types, forms, factors, roles, responses, and influence of santri's critique and praise toward the kiai and his family. The following studies provide relevant foundations for this research. A study by (Muta'allim et al., 2022) explores the role of the kiai in shaping attitudes of religious moderation in pesantren. Meanwhile, research conducted by (Mahardhani et al., 2023) demonstrates that the kiai holds substantial influence over the community, particularly within the context of patronage politics. Both studies underscore the impact of kiai leadership in shaping tolerance and political patronage.

Additional research also contributes to this discourse. (Pathollah et al., 2022) reveal that the kiai's roles in the pesantren as a mentor, protector, guardian, role model, and teacher encourage santri and the community to adopt attitudes of humility (*tawadhu'*), obedience (*manut*), and reverence (*ngireng dhebu*). This is reflected in their attitudes and communicative behavior toward the kiai, including the use of particular linguistic forms. (Yudistira et al., 2022) argue that the use of local language and cultural wisdom can prevent conflict, promote humanistic communication, and foster harmonious relationships. Similarly, a study by (Muta'allim et al., 2022) emphasizes that language plays a central role in strengthening familial bonds, solidarity, and creating a safe and comfortable social environment. Furthermore, studies conducted by (Muta'allim et al., 2020) & (Muta'allim et al., 2021) explore the forms, functions, and everyday use of ML. The appropriate use of language and the application of linguistic politeness are consistently practiced within pesantren settings. Several studies have examined communication patterns and linguistic politeness in pesantren. Research conducted by (Ghaffar et al., 2021) found that santri consistently use refined language and demonstrate respectful behavior toward the kiai. Similarly, (Sofyan et al., 2022) reported that santri regularly employ polite speech levels when addressing their teachers in various situations. These studies illustrate that santri consistently embody *tawadhu'*, *ngireng dhebu Kyai*, and courteous conduct toward members of the pesantren community under any circumstance.

With regard to principles of linguistic politeness, several researchers have also explored this topic. Studies by (Sukarno, 2018) & (Haryono et al., 2023) examine the types and forms of politeness principles as well as the use of speech levels in ML by santri, depending on the communicative context. Additionally, research focusing on critique and praise has been conducted by various scholars. (Hasanah et al., 2017) identified the types, formation, and community interpretation of *pangalem* among Madurese speakers in Jember. (Alfani et al., 2021) found that praise functions as a communicative tool for calling, bargaining,

persuasion, and initiating casual conversation. Moreover, findings from (Sofyan et al., 2020a) & (Sofyan et al., 2020b) reveal that Madurese communities tend to use diverse patterns and models of critique. However, socially acceptable critique is typically delivered through refined linguistic codes and expressed in forms such as humor, metaphor, mild insinuation, and lyrical (poetic) patterns. Further research by (Sofyan et al., 2021) & (Sofyan et al., 2022) demonstrates that the forms and models of critique involve direct criticism, third-person remarks, sound markers, metaphorical expressions, familial contexts, and lexical choices. These studies highlight the forms of critique and praise used in everyday communication.

Meanwhile, research by (Badrudin et al., 2023) focuses on the forms of critique and praise in Tapal Kuda pesantren, emphasizing the forms, linguistic varieties, and delivery patterns of critique and praise expressed by kiai and their families toward santri. Based on the findings of previous research, the present study introduces several significant distinctions. First, no prior study has specifically investigated critique and praise directed by santri toward the kiai and his family within Madurese ethnic pesantren, particularly those located in Situbondo, Bondowoso, and Jember. Second, earlier research on critique and praise has not thoroughly explored the forms, patterns of delivery, and underlying factors shaping santri's critique and praise toward the kiai and his family. Third, no existing study provides a detailed elaboration of the strategies, contexts, linguistic varieties, influences, and impacts of critique and praise on the kiai, his family, and the surrounding community. Fourth, the literature has yet to offer an in-depth examination of the use, functions, and meanings of critique and praise expressions within this context. Fifth, there is no comprehensive explanation of how santri articulate critique and praise to the kiai and his family. In contrast, the present study seeks to draw scholarly attention and offer deeper insight into the dynamics of critique and praise expressed by santri toward the kiai and his family. Accordingly, this research is expected to contribute empirical findings to the understanding of linguistic phenomena occurring within Madurese ethnic pesantren.

II. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design within a sociopragmatic framework and employs the ethnography of communication to capture the social and cultural contexts shaping the observed speech events. Data were gathered through participant observation (simak libat cakap), using audio recordings and field notes to document santri's verbal interactions. These data were further supplemented with in-depth interviews involving selected informants who possess direct knowledge of the communicative practices within the pesantren. Data analysis proceeded through several systematic stages. The recorded utterances were first transcribed verbatim, followed by data reduction to isolate relevant linguistic features and to provide Indonesian translations where necessary. The refined data were then classified according to two primary categories critique and praise and tabulated by assigning analytical codes to each unit of data.

Subsequently, data validation was carried out through member checking with santri, pesantren administrators, teachers, and members of the pesantren family to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the findings. The validated data were then interpreted by examining the meanings of critique and praise within their sociocultural contexts, focusing on how these expressions reflect hierarchical relations and communicative norms in the Madurese pesantren setting. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the integrated results of the analysis. Therefore, this methodological procedure was designed to maintain analytical rigor and ensure that the findings accurately reflect the communicative practices characteristic of Madurese ethnic pesantren.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal three key components: (1) the forms of critique and praise expressed by santri toward the kiai and his family, (2) the linguistic varieties employed in delivering critique and praise, and (3) the patterns of expression and the contextual factors underlying these interactions. The critiques voiced by santri are generally conveyed through pasemon, an indirect communicative strategy that reflects subtle forms of rejection, concern, disagreement, or incompatibility. Conversely, praise tends to highlight expressions of admiration and respect toward the kiai as the central figure within the pesantren

community. The linguistic varieties used in these interactions predominantly consist of refined speech levels, particularly the Engghi-Bhunten register, which embodies the politeness norms intrinsic to Madurese culture. Patterns of expression vary across direct language, indirect statements, analogies, satire, and rhetorical utterances. The emergence of both critique and praise is shaped by situational contexts, social hierarchies, and cultural values that govern communication practices within the pesantren environment.

Forms of Criticism and Praise Expressed by Santri toward the Kyai and His Family

1. Critique

The critiques expressed by santri toward the *kyai* and his family are generally delivered through *pasemon*, an indirect form of expression that conveys subtle signals of rejection, concern, disagreement, or incompatibility.

a. Pasemon

Context: During the admission period for new santri, Muta'allim is a senior student as well as an instructor brought several prospective students from Kangean Island to study at Pesantren Al-Azhar. These prospective students were accompanied by several family members who escorted them to the pesantren. Upon arrival, the families appeared to need a place to rest but had not yet found an area that was comfortable and accessible. Recognizing the situation, Muta'allim immediately informed the *kyai*, who is also his uncle, hoping that an appropriate solution could be provided.

Muta'allim: *Nesser ka Wali santri se deri Kangean, Lek. Tak nemmu tempat istirahat sareng paseraman*
 (Poor the guardians of the new students from Kangean, Uncle. They haven't found a place to rest or to bathe yet)

Kyai: *Dhina engkok senyareaghina marena*
 (Let me find a place for them)

Muta'allim: *Oh engghi, enghi pon, Lek*
 (Oh yes, of course, Uncle)

The utterance represents a form of *pasemon* conveyed by Muta'allim to the *kyai*. Explicitly, the content of the utterance does not appear to be directly addressed to the *kyai*. However, within its situational context and the interpersonal relationship between the participants, the utterance can be interpreted as a subtle complaint directed at him. The guardians of the new students from Kangean were newcomers unfamiliar with the pesantren environment, which made it difficult for them to interact or negotiate their needs, particularly regarding a place to rest. Aware of this situation, Muta'allim delivered an utterance that pragmatically carries the meaning of a complaint and a request for assistance, yet is wrapped in polite and indirect language. Implicitly, he intended to convey that, given their status as outsiders with no social access, an alternative resting place should be provided for these guardians.

From a sociopragmatic perspective, this utterance demonstrates that meaning is shaped not only by linguistic structure but also by social context, power relations, and prevailing norms of politeness. The *pasemon* strategy employed by Muta'allim constitutes a face-saving act an effort to maintain the hearer's dignity (in this case, the *kyai*) while still expressing criticism in an implicit and respectful manner. This aligns with Brown and Levinson's politeness principles, especially in the use of indirect strategies. From the viewpoint of the ethnography of communication, this speech event reflects the cultural values and communicative system embedded in the Madurese pesantren community. Communication among individuals in this setting cannot be separated from considerations of social status, kinship relations, and cultural norms. In this context, Muta'allim positions himself as both a *santri* and the *kyai*'s nephew a dual role that demands caution in speech. Consequently, he opts for a *pasemon* strategy to express critique subtly and acceptably within a hierarchical social order. Thus, Muta'allim's utterance exemplifies a culturally grounded communicative strategy that integrates social sensitivity, pragmatic competence, and local wisdom, enabling him to articulate intentions politely without offending the other party.

b. Rejection

Context: One day, after the election of the HISAAZ (Himpunan Santri dan Alumni Al-Azhar) chairman was held in the pesantren courtyard and the elected chairman had been confirmed, the former

HISAAZ chairman, Dedeng, immediately went to see the Kyai to report the results and to request guidance regarding the inauguration date. The Kyai then decided that the inauguration would be held on Monday. After receiving the decision, Dedeng continued his visit to the Nyai's residence (dhelem Nyai) to inform her about the election results. However, during the meeting, the Nyai gave different instructions, saying:

Nyai: *Oh iya. Lantik neng are Rebhu sae ye?*

(Oh yes. Just hold the inauguration on Wednesday, okay?)

Dedeng: *Saporana, Nyai. Kak dinto ampon lastare etetapaghi sareng Kiai*"

(My apologies, Nyai. The inauguration date has already been set by the Kyai).

Nyai: *Oh iye lah, sae mon deri Keyae*

(Oh, all right then. That's good if it's from the Kyai)

The utterance above represents a form of criticism realized through a subtle act of rejection. This is evident when Dedeng visits the Nyai's residence to report the results of the HISAAZ chairman election. During the meeting, the Nyai directly instructs him to schedule and hold the inauguration on Wednesday. In response, Dedeng says, "*Saporana, Nyai. Kak dinto ampon lastare etetapaghi sareng Kiai*." This utterance indicates his refusal of the Nyai's request on the grounds that the inauguration date has already been determined by the Kyai, namely Monday. The phrase "*Saporana, Nyai*" serves as a marker that Dedeng feels compelled to decline the Nyai's instruction because he is bound to the prior decision made by the highest authority in the pesantren the Kyai.

In this context, Dedeng does not open space for further negotiation, for instance by saying "*Manabi dari Kiai epakon are Sennen*" ("If the Kyai instructed that it be held on Monday"), which could have served as a compromise. Thus, his utterance can be categorized as a refusal strategy delivered politely, subtly, and with strong justification, namely by grounding his reasoning in the Kyai's directive. This utterance also reflects an implicit form of criticism toward the discrepancy between the Nyai's and the Kyai's decisions, yet it is expressed within a framework of politeness that maintains social harmony within the pesantren environment. From the perspective of the ethnography of communication, this interaction demonstrates the complexity of social relations within the pesantren structure, where santri occupy a subordinate position in relation to authoritative figures such as the Kyai and the Nyai. Despite the differing instructions, Dedeng as the former chairman exhibits a diplomatic stance that balances obedience to the Kyai's decision with respect for the Nyai's authority. The Nyai's response, which ultimately accepts the Kyai's decision, further reflects the values of harmony, hierarchy, and mutual respect that form the foundation of communicative culture in Madurese pesantren communities.

c. *Concern*

Context: One day, Bhindere planned to arrange a marriage between a senior male santri named Hamzah and a female santri named Ida. In this situation, Hamzah chose to accept the decision without objection as a form of respect toward Bhindere, in accordance with santri ethics that emphasize obedience. However, a more senior santri who also served as the dorm leader, Hambali, felt concerned about Hamzah's situation. He knew that Hamzah did not dare refuse the decision even though he did not wish for it, due to the moral pressure inherent in the relationship between a santri and Bhindere. Out of empathy and a sense of fairness, Hambali expressed his objection in a polite and gentle manner while maintaining proper communicative etiquette. He said:

Hambali: *Abhulemman he Ina caepon abdhina, Bhin*

(In my opinion, Ina would be better, Bhin)

The utterance "*Abhulemman he Ina caepon abdhina, Bhin*" delivered by Hambali to the *Bhindere* represents a subtle form of criticism or advice rooted in his concern for Hamzah. This utterance emerges spontaneously when *Bhindere* expresses his intention to arrange a marriage between Hamzah and Ida. As a senior santri and dorm leader, Hambali understands that Hamzah is actually less enthusiastic about the plan. However, due to the norm of obedience in pesantren tradition, Hamzah does not dare refuse the *Bhindere*'s decision directly. In this context, Hambali's statement reflects his preference for Ina as a more suitable match for Hamzah. He considers Ina to be more compatible with Hamzah's character and personality, both in terms of piety and overall compatibility. Even so, Hambali expresses this opinion politely, gently, and indirectly,

without diminishing Ida's dignity. By highlighting Ina, he subtly inserts a suggestion that the arranged-marriage plan should be reconsidered. From a pragmatic perspective, the utterance represents a form of indirect communication that reflects care, empathy, and proper communicative ethics within the pesantren environment. Hambali does not explicitly reject the *Bhindere*'s plan; instead, he chooses a polite linguistic strategy to offer advice, allowing the decision to be revisited with more careful consideration.

d. Disagreement

Context: In the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, the HISAAZ Mojosari committee planned to hold several sports competitions such as tug of war, futsal, and the walking-tower competition as an effort to strengthen solidarity among members. At that time, HISAAZ Mojosari was under the supervision of Lora Fadol, who instructed that the competitions begin on the 8th of Dhu al-Hijjah. Responding to this instruction, the HISAAZ chairman, Nidam Ansari, expressed his objection through the following utterance:

Nidam: *Saporana, Ra. Manabi lagghuna takok bede nak-kanak se apoasa Tarwiyah*

(My apologies, Ra. If the event starts tomorrow, I'm concerned that some of the santri might be observing the Tarwiyah fast)

The utterance "*Saporana, Ra. Manabi lagghuna takok bede nak-kanak se apoasa Tarwiyah*" reflects a subtle form of disagreement expressed by Nidam toward *Lora Fadol*'s plan to hold the competition on the 8th of Dhu al-Hijjah. From a sociopragmatic perspective, this utterance demonstrates an effort to maintain social harmony through the simultaneous use of positive and negative politeness strategies. In terms of negative politeness, Nidam seeks to respect *Lora Fadol*'s authority and social position as supervisor by refraining from rejecting the idea directly. Instead, he opts for an indirect speech act, conveying disagreement without employing explicit expressions of refusal. The expression "*Saporana, Ra*" ("My apologies, Ra") serves as an opening discourse marker that signals politeness and establishes a safe social distance between the speaker and the hearer. Following this, in the segment "*Manabi lagghuna takok bede nak-kanak se apoasa Tarwiyah*" ("If it is held tomorrow, I'm concerned that some of the santri might be observing the Tarwiyah fast"), Nidam provides a rational reason for his disagreement. This constitutes a form of positive politeness, as he aims to preserve the hearer's positive face *Lora Fadol* by avoiding direct confrontation.

By presenting an argument grounded in religious values and the santris' practice, Nidam not only expresses disagreement indirectly but also shows concern for the smooth running of the event and the spiritual well-being of the santri. From a pragmatic standpoint, the utterance performs two primary functions: first, as a mitigated disagreement speech act; and second, as a reminder. This dual function demonstrates the speaker's pragmatic competence in adjusting linguistic choices to the social context and hierarchical relationship between the interactants. Within the pesantren environment, such communicative forms are part of a speech culture that upholds propriety and politeness, especially toward senior figures or those in positions of authority. Thus, Nidam's utterance illustrates how politeness strategies play a crucial role in preserving social harmony within the pesantren community. Disagreement is not conveyed frontally, but through a considerate, polite, and religiously oriented approach. This phenomenon aligns with Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle, particularly the tact maxim and the approbation maxim, which emphasize the importance of safeguarding the hearer's feelings in every social interaction.

e. Inappropriateness

Context: During Imtihan celebration at Al-Azhar Pesantren, Ustadz Hafid presented a pencak silat performance by male and female santri in front of the audience. Observing the event, Toha is a senior santri who also serves as a teacher and is already married expressed criticism because he felt that such a performance was not appropriate to showcase during Imtihan ceremony. However, the criticism was not conveyed directly to Ustadz Hafid; instead, it was expressed to Ning Titin, his colleague at MI Al-Azhar. Toha's utterance is presented as follows:

Toha: *Korang sae manabi pencak silat dipertontonkan ketika Imtihan, Ning*

(It doesn't seem proper to present a pencak silat performance during Imtihan, Ning)

Ning Titin: *Iye, He*

(Yes, Toha)

The utterance “*Korang sae manabi pencak silat dipertontonkan ketika Imtihan, Ning*” represents Toha’s criticism regarding the inappropriateness of presenting a pencak silat performance by male and female santri during the *Imtihan* celebration organized by Ustadz Hafid. According to Toha, *Imtihan* is a sacred moment in pesantren tradition an event meant to highlight the intellectual and spiritual achievements of the santri, such as Qur'an memorization, proficiency in reading classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), and exemplary moral and devotional conduct. This moment also serves as a platform for conveying messages, reflections, and moral values for the santri as they prepare to return to their communities, while simultaneously demonstrating the success of the institution’s educational process to the parents.

However, what occurred was the opposite. The pencak silat performance was seen as misaligned with the sacredness of the event. The appearance of male and female santri in martial-arts attire especially outfits resembling warrior costumes with pants was considered inconsistent with the expected modest dress code of santri, which ideally prioritizes forms of clothing such as skirts or long robes (*gamis*) that uphold decorum and cover the body properly. In addition, martial-arts movements involving jumps and high kicks performed in front of the *kiai*, preachers, parents, and the pesantren community were perceived as inappropriate, as they could create an impression of disrespect. Toha also believed that such performances did not align with the expectations of the parents, who generally wished to see their children embody religious values able to recite the Qur'an, master the *kitab kuning*, memorize the Qur'an, and demonstrate strong devotional practices. Therefore, through his statement, “*Korang sae manabi pencak silat dipertontonkan ketika Imtihan, Ning*,” Toha voiced a subtle yet sharp critique, expressing his objection to the performance because it was deemed inconsistent with the values and norms that characterize the *Imtihan* ceremony.

F. Complaint

Context: During the month of Maulid, Pesantren Al-Maliki annually commemorates the birth of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). After the celebration, santri are usually allowed to return home for a week. However, Abuya instructed that students who were currently working on their undergraduate thesis (*skripsi*) were not permitted to go home, even during Maulid leave. Hearing this, several santri who were university students gathered the courage to express their concern to Abuya, as shown in the following exchange:

Abuya: *Nak-kanak se skripsian tak olle mole bile Molotan*

(Those who are working on their thesis are not allowed to go home during the Maulid holiday)

Santri: *Tak adhil abuya. Kadiponapa matak epakon paleman?*

(That's not fair, Abuya. Why aren't we allowed to go home?)

Abuya: *Mak olle Skripsina ceppet mare*

(So that your thesis can be completed sooner)

Santri: *Malah manabi paleman bisa nganghungi bennyak bekto ngerjaaghi penelitian, Buya*

(Actually, going home would give us more freedom and time to conduct our field research, Buya).

Abuya: *Ooo iyadah. Kabele ka Pengurus. Tak apa-apa mole.*

(Oh, I see. Tell the administrators. It's alright; you may go home).

The utterance “*Tak adhil Abuya. Kadiponapa matak epakon paleman?*” in the exchange between the santri and Abuya represents a form of complaint and disagreement expressed directly after the Maulid celebration at Pesantren Al-Maliki. Although the statement carries a tone of protest, it remains within the boundaries of politeness that characterize communication in the pesantren environment. From a sociopragmatic perspective, the expression “*Tak adhil*” (That's not fair) and the question “*Kadiponapa matak epakon paleman?*” (“Why aren't we allowed to go home?) exemplify strategies of direct complaint and direct disagreement, explicitly questioning the basis of Abuya's policy prohibiting final-semester students from returning home. This response indicates that the santri had not yet understood the underlying rationale behind the decision. In reality, Abuya's restriction was motivated by a benevolent intention to help the students stay focused on completing their thesis without being distracted by activities at home. In this situation, the santri voiced their objection through a rational argument, as reflected in the statement “*Malah manabi paleman bisa nganghungi bennyak bekto ngerjaaghi penelitian, Buya*” (“Actually, going home

would give us more freedom and time to conduct our field research, Buya"). This logical and accountable reasoning led Abuya to reconsider his policy, eventually allowing the thesis-writing students to return home. The decision remained aligned with Abuya's original goal: ensuring that students complete their research and final assignments effectively.

The students' politeness strategy is evident through their appeal to reason a form of objection grounded in rational justification. This approach shows that their intention was not to challenge authority, but to present a logical consideration that could support the effective completion of their thesis. Such reasoning serves as an important mechanism for maintaining harmonious relations between speaker and hearer. Abuya's acceptance of the argument reflects a participatory communication pattern in which the pesantren authority remains open to student input and is willing to adjust policies when the reasons provided are sound. This interaction illustrates the flexible dynamics of power in Pesantren Al-Maliki, where formal hierarchy coexists with communicative openness. Abuya's warm, receptive, and accommodating attitude encourages students to express their opinions without fear. As a result, communication within the pesantren unfolds in a healthy, dialogic, and mutually respectful manner. Thus, the santri's utterance in this conversation can be categorized as a denotative form of complaint and rejection, conveyed directly, plainly, and without figurative language. Yet within the cultural context of the pesantren, such directness still aligns with politeness norms because it is supported by relational closeness, communicative sincerity, and rational argumentation recognized by the caregiver. This phenomenon highlights a distinctive feature of pragmatic communication in pesantren settings a blend of frankness and politeness grounded in values of respect, relational closeness, and linguistic discernment.

2. Praise

Forms of praise expressed by the students toward the *kiai* and his family primarily emphasize admiration and respect, positioning the *kiai* as the central figure within the pesantren community.

1. Context: One day, after the Maulid celebration concluded, Kyai sat down to meet the students who were preparing to return home. After several students had taken their leave, Kyai continued a conversation with Alim, a senior student who also served as a teacher at the MTs level. During their discussion, Kyai asked for feedback regarding the remarks he had delivered during the Maulid event, expressing concern that some of his statements might have offended the students. Responding to this concern, Alim offered the following reassuring utterance:

Alim: *Sobung se tersinggung. Malah Nak-kanak santri kasokan sadeje ka caramana ajunan.*

(No one was offended. In fact, all the students were pleased with both the content and the delivery of your sermon)

The utterance "*Sobung se tersinggung*" serves as Alim's explicit assertion that no part of the *kiai*'s speech was controversial or offensive to the students. Alim further reinforces this statement by offering praise through the utterance "*Malah nak-kanak santri kasokan sadeje ka caramana ajunan,*" indicating that the students genuinely appreciated both the content and the delivery of the *kiai*'s sermon. This statement aligns with the actual situation at the time: during the *kiai*'s address, the students appeared cheerful, and several even burst into laughter, entertained by his communicative, humorous, and engaging style of preaching. Thus, Alim's remarks not only affirm that no one felt offended but also highlight the positive reception of the *kiai*'s speech among the students. For these reasons, the utterance can be categorized as a form of denotative praise, expressed directly and without any underlying or implicit meaning.

2. Context: One day, a student from Sepudi named Wahyudi accompanied Kyai when he was invited to deliver a Maulid Nabi sermon in the Sepudi area. After the event, Kyai returned to Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Mojosari Asembagus, Situbondo. About a week later, a significant number of new students arrived to begin their studies at the pesantren. Noticing this increase, Kyai called his *khaddam*, Wahyudi, to inquire about the reason behind the growing number of new students. Wahyudi responded to Kyai's question with the following utterance:

Wahyudi: *Nak-kanak se mondruk ka kakdhinto nika polana ajunan lucu caepon papidatuna.*

(The children decided to enroll here because they were captivated by the engaging and humorous way you delivered your sermon)

The utterance “*Nak-kanak se mondruk ka kakdhinto nika polana ajunan lucu caepon papidatuna*” represents Wahyudi’s response to the *kiai*’s inquiry regarding the increase in the number of students from Sepudi enrolling at Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Mojosari. This utterance functions not only as an informative answer but also contains an element of denotative praise. Wahyudi emphasizes that the growing number of new students was influenced by the *kiai*’s sermon delivery, which was perceived as engaging, humorous, and enjoyable qualities that left a strong impression on the audience and encouraged them to pursue their studies at the pesantren. The praise expressed by Wahyudi is explicit and direct, without the use of figurative language, thereby categorizing it pragmatically as denotative praise. The *kiai*’s delighted and moved reaction demonstrates that the utterance was positively received and contributed to reinforcing the harmonious relationship between the *kiai* and his students. Thus, Wahyudi’s statement illustrates a direct form of appreciation for the *kiai*’s communicative competence in delivering sermons that not only attract listeners’ sympathy but also motivate prospective students to continue their religious education at Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Mojosari.

3. Context: One day, *Kyai* Nawawi asked several students to arrange a collection of books that had been sent to him by various publishers from different regions of Indonesia, to be organized in his private library. In addition to serving as the Deputy Caretaker of Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Mojosari, *Kyai* Nawawi is also a lecturer in the postgraduate program at Ibrahimy University, Sukorejo Situbondo. The books that arrived had publication intervals of approximately one month between each title, with lengths ranging from 200 to 300 pages. This situation left the students both amazed and motivated by *Kyai* Nawawi’s academic productivity. One of the students, Su’ud, expressed his admiration through the following utterance:

Su’ud: Huh... Ya Allah. Kyai cek hebatta. Sakejjek-sakejjek bukuna kaloar.

(*Wow... Ya Allah. You are truly remarkable, Kyai. Your books are published in such a short span only about a month apart.*)

The utterance “*Huh... Ya Allah. Kyai cek hebatta. Sakejjek-sakejjek bukuna kaloar*” reflects Su’ud’s expression of admiration for *Kyai* Nawawi’s intellectual capacity. This utterance functions not only as a spontaneous statement of amazement but also contains a clear element of denotative praise. Su’ud’s admiration arises from the *kiai*’s ability to consistently produce books on a monthly basis, despite each volume having a considerable page count. Thus, the utterance does not merely convey astonishment and appreciation; it also represents a form of respect expressed explicitly and without figurative language. From a pragmatic perspective, this praise falls into the category of denotative complimenting, which although not directed to the *kiai* in his immediate presence still demonstrates a sincere acknowledgment of his academic productivity and competence.

4. Context: During an evening session of *Fathul Qarib* study held in the courtyard of Al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Mojosari, *Kyai* discussed matters of family life, emphasizing that a husband and wife should complement rather than undermine one another. At that moment, Syarful Anam was listening attentively while smiling and occasionally laughing, which caught *Kyai*’s attention. *Kyai* then asked Syarful why he appeared amused.

Kyai: Apa Syarful mak aghellek malolo?

(*Why are you laughing continuously, Syarful?*)

Syarful: Lebur, Kyai

(*I am happy, Kyai*)

Kyai: Lebur dekremma?

(*Happy about what*)

Syarful: Lucu. Santri Cerme senneng ke ceramah ajunan polana lebur caepon.

(*It is humorous. The students from Cerme enjoy your sermon because it is cheerful and entertaining*)

The utterance “*Lucu. Santri Cerme senneng ke ceramah ajunan polana lebur caepon*” is Syarful’s response when the *kiai* asked why he was smiling and laughing during the *Fathul Qarib* study session held in the courtyard of the pesantren. This expression also serves as Syarful’s reaffirmation based on his firsthand experience of witnessing *Kyai*’s sermon when he was invited to deliver a lecture at Pesantren Nurut Taqwa

Cerme in Bondowoso. On that occasion, he observed many students laughing freely even bursting into hearty laughter while listening to *Kyai*'s delivery. Thus, Syarful articulated the utterance not only as an explanation addressing *Kyai*'s question, but also as an expression of admiration for *Kyai*'s humorous and communicative preaching style. The utterance further indicates that this experience occurred when Syarful was still a student at Pesantren Nurut Taqwa Cerme Bondowoso, prior to his transfer to the pesantren where he currently studies. Accordingly, his statement functions not merely as clarification but also as a form of appreciation for the *kiai*'s dakwah method, which successfully fosters an engaging learning atmosphere and prevents students from feeling bored or drowsy during religious lectures.

Language Varieties Used

The linguistic varieties employed in expressing both criticism and praise predominantly utilize polite forms of speech, particularly *Engghi-Bhunten* register, which reflects the refined etiquette characteristic of Madurese culture.

Patterns of Expression

The patterns through which criticism and praise are conveyed vary widely, encompassing the use of direct and indirect language, analogies, insinuations, and rhetorical expressions. The factors underlying the emergence of these forms of critique and compliment are strongly influenced by situational context, social relationships, and the cultural values upheld within the pesantren environment.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study aims to describe the types, forms, linguistic varieties, and patterns of delivering criticism and praise expressed by students toward *Kyai* and his family within the Madurese pesantren context. The findings reveal three major aspects: first, the forms of criticism and praise produced by the students; second, the linguistic varieties employed; and third, the patterns through which these expressions are conveyed. Criticism is generally articulated through *pasemon*, an indirect mode of expression that reflects rejection, concern, disagreement, incompatibility, or complaints toward certain situations. In contrast, praise tends to focus on expressions of admiration and motivation directed toward *Kyai* and his family as a form of respect. The linguistic varieties used are dominated by polite registers, particularly *Engghi-Bhunten* speech level, which embodies the norms of politeness inherent in Madurese communicative culture. The patterns of expression include direct and indirect speech, analogies, insinuations, and rhetorical expressions, illustrating the students' careful adherence to communicative etiquette and their respect for the hierarchical structure of the pesantren.

This study leaves considerable room for further research. One promising direction is an analysis of gender-based differences in communicative strategies within the pesantren community, which tends to be patriarchal. Comparative studies between Madurese pesantren and those rooted in other cultural traditions, such as Javanese or Sundanese, may also offer valuable insights into the role of cultural influence on students' communicative patterns. Future research could also explore character education by examining how forms of criticism and praise reflect the internalization of moral and religious values. In relation to technological development, it is also important to investigate how criticism and praise are expressed through social media and how this affects students' communicative ethics and politeness. An ecolinguistic approach could be applied to explore the role of local values in shaping students' speech patterns. Finally, criticism and praise may also be analyzed as instruments for negotiating power within the pesantren through a critical discourse approach. These potential research avenues are expected to enrich the body of knowledge in sociopragmatics, cultural linguistics, and pesantren communication studies in Indonesia.

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