

# SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF MUHAMMADIYAH SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## 2 SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF MUHAMMADIYAH SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic requires the government to issue various strategic policies that impact all sectors, especially the education sector. This research attempts to determine the strategy of private schools in Indonesia, especially in school sustainability during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interpretive paradigm with a descriptive qualitative approach was used as a study method. The location of this research was Muhammadiyah schools in Sidoarjo Regency at the junior high school level, as many as 10 schools. Data analysis was carried out using data reduction, presentation, and conclusion-drawing procedures. The results of this study indicate that Muhammadiyah junior high schools in Sidoarjo Regency use online learning as a survival strategy by utilizing the various facilities they have. In addition, several creative and innovative new programs are implemented comprehensively to support the financial limitations of schools and students. Other results also show that each location's Muhammadiyah Branch Leaders (PCM) actively support all school needs from resources, finances, and health facilities.

**Keywords:** survival strategy, covid-19 pandemic, muhammadiyah junior high schools

**Abstrak:** Pandemi COVID-19 menuntut pemerintah untuk mengeluarkan berbagai kebijakan strategis yang berdampak pada semua sektor, terutama sektor pendidikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui strategi sekolah swasta di Indonesia khususnya dalam keberlanjutan sekolah di masa pandemi COVID-19. Paradigma interpretif dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif digunakan sebagai metode penelitian. Lokasi penelitian pada Sekolah Muhammadiyah di Kabupaten Sidoarjo pada level SMP berjumlah 10 sekolah. Teknik analisis data menggunakan reduksi data, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa SMP Muhammadiyah di Kabupaten Sidoarjo strategi yang digunakan dalam bertahan hidup dilakukan pembelajaran online dengan memanfaatkan berbagai fasilitas yang dimiliki. Selain itu, beberapa program baru yang kreatif dan inovatif dilaksanakan secara komprehensif untuk mendukung keterbatasan keuangan sekolah dan siswa. Hasil lain juga menunjukkan bahwa Pimpinan Cabang Muhammadiyah (PCM) masing-masing lokasi berperan aktif dalam mendukung segala kebutuhan sekolah mulai dari sumber daya, keuangan, dan fasilitas kesehatan.

**Kata kunci:** strategi bertahan, pandemi covid-19, smp muhammadiyah

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## INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is a non-natural disaster the world felt over the past two years without any solid predictions about when it will end. COVID-19 in Indonesia has had a significant effect on many sectors, especially health, economy, education and social (Susilo et al. 2020). Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that dominate the national economy are also affected by aspects of total production and trade value (Pakpahan, 2020). Many companies also suffered losses, especially private companies (Hanoatubun, 2020; Rohmah, 2020). As a result, many employees and workers have lost their jobs due to this pandemic (Fahri et al. 2020; Mardiyah & Nurwati, 2020).

Various national strategic policies are implemented by the Government of Indonesia with the aim of breaking the chain of spread of COVID-19, such as social distancing dan physical distancing, untuk pembatasan sosial berskala besar (PSBB) dan lockdown sebagai cara untuk menekan laju penyebaran COVID-19 (Yunus & Rezki, 2020). Kebijakan pemerintah tersebut dapat merubah pola kehidupan masyarakat di Indonesia, karena seluruh unsur masyarakat harus merespon dengan cepat dan menyesuaikan diri dengan perubahan yang terjadi akibat pandemi COVID-19. The impact in the education sector is one of the impacts most felt by most academics, both students, students, teachers, lecturers, and parents/ students.

Notice No. 4 of 2020 from the Ministry of Education and Culture, which addresses the application of rules for schools during the COVID-19 outbreak, students are required to complete their home studies (Hermawan et al. 2021; Junjuna et al. 2021). Educational institutions are further burdened by the Ministry of Education and Culture's policy, particularly those that are still unable to support distance learning. Government attention is still given to public schools, notwithstanding their limits in facilitating learning activities from home.

Meanwhile, in order to survive, private schools have to work on their own. Schools with a religious foundation that are private and have a chance of surviving are those that fall within the worldwide elite category (Prastowo, 2012). Schools with a religious foundation that are private and have a chance of surviving are those that fall within the worldwide elite category. More than

5,000 schools, ranging from PAUD to SMA or SMK are managed by Muhammadiyah through basic and secondary education councils (Dikdasmen). This is Muhammadiyah's strength in caring for Indonesia in the spirit of progress (Sentosa et al. 2015).

Nevertheless, Muhammadiyah schools are private institutions without budget guarantees from the national or local governments, with the exception of school operating aid dependent on the enrollment at each institution (Hidayat & Wulandari, 2020).

The Muhammadiyah Schools' superior category includes three requirements: inspiring, great, and outstanding (ME-Awards, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an impact on these institutions, which are among the best Muhammadiyah schools in East Java (Kamal, 2020). The reason is because as a result of government policies that encourage individuals carrying out all of their everyday activities from home, including working and studying, during the pandemic, the prices of living and obtaining an education are rising (Garad et al. 2021). In private schools and Muhammadiyah schools, there has been a significant decline in the acceptance of new students. In addition, parents' income is insufficient because of COVID-19-related layoffs.

The economy of most of the parents of students is in a weak condition, and it worsens with the uncertain education policies of the government. For Muhammadiyah schools, surviving the COVID-19 pandemic epidemic is difficult (Kholili & Fajaruddin, 2020). In comparison to Muhammadiyah schools in general or Muhammadiyah schools that are not classed as flagship, the cost of education felt by Muhammadiyah schools with the flagship category in East Java is lower. This is because the typical Muhammadiyah school student comes from a family with an income that ranges from middle-class to lower-class. Besides that, one of the missions of the Muhammadiyah organization in social and educational movements is to help the community so that they can experience education under any conditions (Latief & Nashir, 2020). Therefore, in order to ensure the continuation of the institution, Muhammadiyah schools should to think about and work hard to address the COVID-19 pandemic's impacts.

One of the reasons for the sustainability of educational institutions is the financial strength they have, because these aspects are resources that directly support the level of effectiveness and efficiency in the management of education. Additionally, the financial situation affects how smoothly the scheduled activities will go. In the implementation of education Education funding is a very important element (Faruq, 2020). Without funding, the educational process cannot be properly carried out (Yaqin, 2016). This study focuses on Muhammadiyah educational institutions, particularly those in Sidoarjo's junior high schools. The location nearest to the Muhammadiyah regional head office in East Java is Sidoarjo Regency, which is also one of the province's supporting cities for the capital, which has a significant population of Muhammadiyah members in Indonesia. Additionally, it has a variety of educational facilities, from primary schools through high schools and universities Muhammadiyah. The Sidoarjo district has ten Muhammadiyah Middle Schools, Outstanding Muhammadiyah middle schools make up four of them in East Java. There is also a Muhammadiyah residential school in East Java. The remaining eight are mostly Muhammadiyah schools that acts as a base for the rejuvenation of future Muhammadiyah scholars (Zarro, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to identify Indonesia's private schools' marketing plan, especially in school sustainability at the time of the COVID-19 epidemic. In chronological order for educational institutions to recover and continue to stand tall, it is intended that this research will serve as a resource instructing private schools in Indonesia, including those run by Muhammadiyah, on how to deal with unforeseen circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic (Falahuddin, 2020). Any issues will be adequately dealt with optimism, confidence, and a spirit of improvement (Junjuran, 2018). The development of the institution's leadership, Another contribution of this research is the head of the Muhammadiyah school, in order to maintain the sustainability of the organization by continuing to innovate and adapt in the face of negative environmental conditions.

## METHODS

The methodology used in this study is qualitative, in which the presentation of data is not done by expressing

it numerically as the presentation of data is quantitative. With qualitative data, data presentation tends to be flexible, monitoring the veracity of data collected on the ground (Basuki, 2016). Qualitative research findings prioritize relevance over generalization (Sugiyono, 2013). Case studies are also employed in this study. The employment of qualitative research methodologies is supported by a number of variables. If the researcher does the research on the field, they first carefully and in-depth analyze the school's efforts or response. Second, from the perspective of the researcher, the social phenomena that are present in the management of educational institutions can be fully comprehended. Third, scholars in qualitative research hold that understanding people via their interactions with their social environments is the only way to uncover the truth that exists in the COVID-19 domain of school finance. To persuade the author that the data gathered is reliable data, the triangulation approach is employed (Basuki, 2016; Creswell, 2013).

The research location was chosen by SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Tulangan, Sidoarjo. Data collection is carried out during regular meetings of the principal's work deliberations (MKKS) (Table 1). This research data was collected with observations, interviews, and group discussion forums involving informants who were Muhammadiyah Junior High School principals in Sidoarjo. The primary research data includes criteria and research documents. The application of field observations, interviews and direct group discussion forums can help researchers better understand how informants interpret information on Survival strategies used at Muhammadiyah Middle Schools in Sidoarjo during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The data were examined using Miles and Huberman's suggested methodology. The three primary parts of this approach, which is a data analysis technique, for gathering research findings are data reduction, data presentation and conclusion formulation, and testing or verification (Sugiyono, 2008). Researchers collect data or information about Muhammadiyah Middle School actions taken to stay alive during the COVID-19 epidemic, sort relevant data, then draw conclusions and present the results of a study on Sidoarjo's Muhammadiyah Middle School developed survival techniques for the COVID-19 epidemic.



Table 1. Informants Data

Principal	Name
SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Sidoarjo	Drs. Ainur Rofiq, M.Si
SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Taman	Gatot Krisdiyanto, M.Pd.
SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Waru	Agus Widiyanto, M.Pd.
SMP Muhammadiyah 4 Porong	Rozaq Akbar, S.Fil.I
SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Tulangan	Anik Mujiati, S.Pd. MM.
SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Krian	M. Taufiqurrahman, S.Pd.
MTs Muhammadiyah 1 Taman	Anang Wijayanto, S.Pd.I
SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin	Titin Yulaikah, SE., M.Pd
SMP Muhammadiyah 9 Boarding School	Widiyanti, S.Pd., MM.
SMP Muhammadiyah 10 Suko	Moch. Muqhir, S.Ag

## RESULTS

The Muhammadiyah Organization's Muhammadiyah Elementary and Secondary Education Council is one of the organizations in charge of monitoring the growth of primary and secondary education (Dikdasmen). Dikdasmen Council took on the role of overseeing all Muhammadiyah educational institutions, including primary, junior high, high, and vocational schools.

According to Article 1(3) of PP Muhammadiyah Regulation Number 03/PRN/1.0/B/2012, the Elementary and Secondary Education Council supports the primary and secondary educational leadership of the Muhammadiyah organization. The Elementary and Secondary Education Council's main duty is to organize business charity (AUM) and activities related to primary and secondary education, including the promotion of Muhammadiyah ideology in educational institutions; arrangement, regulation, direction, coordination, and oversight of the execution of business charity, programs, and activities; growth of the professional staff in terms of both quality and quantity; and development of the commercial sector.

In the context of education carried out online, Gatot Krisdiyanto, principal of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Taman, presented the condition of Muhammadiyah schools during the pandemic in the following quote.

“When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in mid-March 2020, what we did as the leaders of the Muhammadiyah junior high school in Sidoarjo was to accept with a chest because we already understood the condition of Indonesia at that time very strictly. Well, on March 14, 2020, the Muhammadiyah regional leadership issued a circular letter responded to by the

Muhammadiyah regional leadership on March 15, 2020. So, originally on March 16, 2020, all schools had made an exam agenda together by paper, and our school had already allocated costs for activities; approximately our school had spent approximately 9 million rupiahs for photocopies and other purposes; then, at that time, the school exams were changed to online” (Gatot Krisdiyanto)

Through Gatot's statement, it can be seen that Muhammadiyah schools are trying to accept the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic by continuing to follow and implement the applicable circular. However, there are concerns about the impact caused by the pandemic. Continuing the explanation revealed by Gatot Krisdiyanto, the following is an explanation from Agus Widiyanto, the principal of SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Waru.

“In the early days, I was not in shock, and adapting to the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic did not shock us. However, the factor that concerns us as leaders in schools is the uncertainty of when to enter school normally. Our children and teachers are already familiar with the distance learning method. Not to mention that we will reorganize the school's financial condition to adjust to the needs during the pandemic until now, which has not yet ended. Then, the next question is how to finance it? Well, that's it... how do our children survive to be able to go to school? What is the cost of education in the future? All of them become our homework, God willing, the same for all leaders in the school” (Agus Widiyanto)

Based on Agus' disclosures, it can be seen that the leaders of SMP Muhammadiyah and Madrasah Tsanawiyah Muhammadiyah in Sidoarjo are starting to feel uneasy about financial aspects and various other aspects due to

the COVID-19 pandemic in Sidoarjo. Here are some aspects that are of concern to school leaders. Impacts arising during the COVID-19 pandemic in Table 2.

### Survival efforts of Muhammadiyah Junior High School in Sidoarjo Regency during the COVID-19 pandemic

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching and learning activities are carried out online. This is based on the COVID-19 prevention circular letter No. 3 of 2020 and the remote employment and online learning circular letter No. 3696 / MPK. A/HK/2020 from the Minister of Education and Culture, respectively and policies from the Muhammadiyah east java regional leadership and the Sidoarjo Education Office.

Information technology is advancing at an accelerating rate to assist online learning, which can provide many conveniences for the world of education to plan and develop an education system, especially online learning models and concepts. SMP and madrasah tsanawiyah Muhammadiyah in Sidoarjo district are implementing online learning by striving for all students to take part in learning. The online learning method was revealed by Taufiqurrahman, the principal of SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Krian.

“My school uses google drive, and we also use school laboratory facilities. We also make optimal use of social media; so far, children who have a lot of it, yes, on Whatsapp, because that is the most economical quota, hehehe. It also depends on the school, even yesterday we had a questionnaire for children to choose what it is, and the collection of answers is done through uploading photos in the WhatsApp group where there are teachers of their respective subjects” (Taufiqurrahman)

Muhammadiyah Middle Schools in the Sidoarjo Regency serve children with limited internet access and inadequate home learning resources, increased internet quota costs and financial constraints by preparing savings provided by the school, these savings can be used by students to do assignments. The Ministry of Education and Culture is funding the student and teacher internet allowance in the meanwhile.

“Yes, indeed, from the beginning of last semester, if the quota subsidy for our children and our teachers. Thank God it can be from the one given by that government. But, the subsidy cannot be every month, so there is also a waiting time for the subsidy. This may also be felt by others” (Taufiqurrahman)

Table 2. Impacts arising during the COVID-19 pandemic

Aspect	Impact
Finance	The financial aspect is the most affected because the costs received cannot reach 100% as estimated. 20% of parents of students visit the school to request exemptions from payment deadlines or waivers. Additionally, the date and time of the PTS midterm assessment, there were several students who had not been able to take part in the PTS because the entrance fee had not been paid because the guardians were experiencing economic problems and a lack of interaction between parents and instructors. In the end, the school established a rule allowing pupils who had not taken PTS to do so. The teacher council hopes that the parents will establish communication with the school if their parents have economic constraints so that students can learn well.
Human Resources	Athe human resource aspect is also affected because before the pandemic occurred face-to-face learning, now learning has changed to virtual or online. With online learning, students find it difficult to accept learning material, as well as teachers need a lot of training to add skills to using virtual learning media and must collaborate with other educators to share knowledge and experiences in order to make the offered information understandable to students. Parents must also accompany and supervise children when they study at home
Curriculum	The school makes clusters of subjects. For example, in the cluster of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, there is also a thematic family. The consequences of forming each of these subject groups can reduce curriculum achievement, but another consideration is that the health of students is the main thing that must be considered, because the circular on the subject from the Minister of Education and Culture supports it: Teachers can carry out pertinent learning activities (not connected to the curriculum) that emphasize decreasing the rate of COVID-19 dissemination.
Facilities & Infrastructure	To make virtual face-to-face learning more convenient for both professors and students, assistance with internet data package quotas is needed. In this instance, the Minister of Education and Culture assists college, high school, and other students with their internet quota needs.

Information, technology and communication constraints are supported by research conducted by Purwanto, et al. (2020) Technology used in information and communication Lack of technological competency, growing internet quota expenses, and more work for parents and guardians who must accompany their children to school are all obstacles that students, teachers, and parents face when engaging in online learning activities, teachers' working hours are unrestricted because they must collaborate with other teachers, principals, and parents, it decreases interaction and dialogue between children, teachers, and parents.

### Survival strategies of Muhammadiyah Junior High Schools in Sidoarjo Regency during the COVID-19 pandemic

Strategy is the determination of decisions that must be taken in the face of competitors in a live environment with interdependence and the determination of the goals and objectives of a fundamental organization for the long term (Wiagustini, 2020). COVID-19 requires principals as institutional leaders to develop strategies to support teachers in conducting effective distance learning amid the affected education financing (Prawiro et al. 2020). This is important so that the ideal of educating the nation's next-generation can be achieved. In addition to the conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, private schools, especially Muhammadiyah schools, must think hard to survive and be able to continue by adjusting to all the uncertainties of current conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are several approaches used in ten Muhammadiyah Junior High Schools in Sidoarjo. First, to survive amid poor finances, namely funds originally allocated for certain activities such as teacher supervision. However, in pandemic conditions, the funds were relocated for other needs. The financial strategy was revealed by Anik Mujiati, principal of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Tulangan.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, finances in schools could not go 100% as we wished. There are several parents; more than 20% come to school asking for waivers or dispensation of delayed payments. Finally, we held a midterm assessment with a minimum of tuition fees until September, but some students still did not participate in the activity due to obstacles in repaying tuition. From this impact, our school made a book lightly called hehehe, which provides notes to our students who have

participated in the midterm assessment activity even though they have not paid off the tuition. We created this scheme in the hope that there will be lead from the parents, at least to communicate with the school” (Anik)

Based on the explanation above, it is clear that several schools continue to prioritize the guardians of students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. A large number of layoffs causes parents to have difficulty dealing with the burden of school. Therefore, the school communicates with the family to find solutions to the problems faced together. In addition, schools also have alternative strategies from mutual aid. This aspect is simple, but the school believes it positively impacts the difficulties felt by parents.

“Despite the pandemic, we remain active with MSG (morning spiritual gathering) activities. Well, in the morning, we reviewed during the briefing and influencing. If one teacher is only Rp. 2,000 multiplied by what comes (for example, 60 people), the funds collected are Rp. 120,000. If we multiply it by a minimum of 20 days, it has been found around Rp. 2,400,000, well that money is what we will use every month by looking at students who have tuition arrears (Gatot)

Based on the information above, another strategy is used, namely morning spiritual gathering (MSG). The activity aims to improve spirituality by studying and being carried out together. A perception equalization activity (briefing) is carried out and includes infaq activities from the teacher councils. These activities help the school's finances. Funds from infaq teachers and school employees are used to help deprived students. However, the offline MSG activity system was only followed by half of all teachers and school employees, of which half continued to participate in this activity online using the zoom application. Teachers continue to monitor student attendance in activities either in Learning From Home (LFH) or Learning From School (LFS).

Strategies to respond to students struggling with school fees are carried out by collaborating with various elements of society, including the leadership of the Muhammadiyah Branch. SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Taman, in recording school fees, does not include deductions, so the school must try for students who are experiencing financial deficiencies to get donations. Students use the donation to pay the base money



according to the set amount. However, suppose the financial assistance is still lacking to help the students financially. In that case, the school will discuss with the treasurer of the Muhammadiyah branch leadership to get discounts on some payments.

“God willing, no student has left our school during the pandemic, and it is not required to exist. Because Muhammadiyah has a social assembly, there should be no assumption that students are leaving because of the impact of the pandemic. So regarding students who are not capable, how? Yes, let’s just let them go first. In our place, there should be no tuition that sounds cut, so that the child is donated how much by the social assembly is the same amount as the others” (Gatot)

The statement shows assistance provided by the Muhammadiyah association in the local area. The head of the Muhammadiyah Sepanjang Branch, Sidoarjo, provided financial assistance to schools distributed through Muhammadiyah social institutions collected from schools, Siti Khodijah hospitals, and Muhammadiyah cash direct assistance. The following technique gives teachers incentive and stimulation so they can deliver instruction as effectively as possible given their technology knowledge. The media used is very diverse, ranging from WhatsApp, zoom, google meet, and other applications. On the other hand, SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Waru collaborates with film experts to make learning videos such as films that have begun to be developed in simple studios. In addition, the school also conducted home visits to several parents who could potentially not continue school due to the constraints of family economic factors affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Managerial Implication**

The implication of this research is that school leaders especially in Muhammadiyah institutions are expected to have a strategy to maintain and strive to maintain the sustainability of the organization in various ways including innovating and improvising in uncertain environmental conditions. In addition, school principals must have optimism, hope, confidence and a spirit of improvement so that problems that occur in educational institutions can be resolved properly and quickly.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusions**

The findings of this study indicate that SMP Muhammadiyah faces many obstacles during the pandemic, notably, money, people, education, and facilities and infrastructure. By utilizing online learning, Sidoarjo’s Muhammadiyah Middle School made it through COVID-19 unharmed. Eco-school has created up funds offered by the school so that students can use them to complete tasks in advance of students who lack the necessary resources for remote learning, have limited internet connection, and are financially constrained.

The strategies implemented by Muhammadiyah Junior High Schools in Sidoarjo are very diverse to survive. In the financial aspect, funds originally allocated for certain activities such as teacher supervision were relocated for other needs. In addition, the school motivates and provides stimulus so that teachers can convey learning material well. The media used in online learning uses WhatsApp, zoom, google meet, etc. Not only that, but the school also collaborates with film to make learning videos.

Another strategy implemented was msg (morning spiritual gathering) activities with implementation in reviewing, briefing, and infaq. This activity helps the school’s finances use funds from infaq teachers and school employees to help deprived students. In recording student base money, the school does not include deductions so that financially deficient students will get a donation where the donation is used to pay tuition fees as stipulated. Meanwhile, support was also obtained from the Muhammadiyah branch leadership money to provide financial assistance to schools distributed through Muhammadiyah social institutions collected from schools, hospitals, and Muhammadiyah cash direct assistance.

### **Recommendations**

In carrying out online teaching and learning activities, using zoom meeting media, Google meet, and similar applications. Apart from that, forming a digital learning culture for teachers, and teachers must make learning videos on the YouTube platform. The tutorial allows students to play youtube back if there is still



something not understood. The blended learning strategy must be applied consistently by teachers as well. The Muhammadiyah Elementary School Board, Muhammadiyah regional leaders, the government, and all other stakeholders will consult the study's findings to determine the best course of action so that Indonesia may quickly recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the field of education.

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