

Child-Friendly *Pesantren* Concept: A Strategic Approach to Empowering Children's Rights

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Abstract

Pesantren has an important role in religious education and character-building for children. However, cases of uncovered violence in the Pesantren environment are still a concerning issue. This study aims to analyze the application of the Child-Friendly Pesantren concept as a model for protecting children from empowerment in the educational environment. This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method. Data sources include books, journal articles, research reports, and other relevant documents published between 2019 and 2023, which were accessed through Google Scholar. The results of the study show that although Pesantren contributes greatly to moral education, there are still challenges in ensuring a safe environment for children. The Child-Friendly Pesantren concept, which includes strict supervision, a safe complaint mechanism, children's rights education, psychological support, and periodic evaluations, has proven to be a solution that can reduce the risk of violence and harassment in Pesantren. The application of the Child-Friendly Pesantren framework not only supports child protection but can also be used as a role model for other educational environments to create a safe, inclusive, and child-friendly atmosphere. The implementation of the Child-Friendly Pesantren concept can effectively increase child protection in Pesantren and make Pesantren a role model in child protection in educational environments.

Keywords: child-friendly pesantren, children's rights, abuse prevention.

Introduction

Indonesia firmly upholds human rights, particularly children's rights, as demonstrated by the protection and fulfillment of these rights outlined in the 1945 Constitution and various national and international legal frameworks (Ibrahim, 2018). This commitment is further reinforced by the ratification of international conventions on children's rights, notably the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child through Presidential Decree (Keppres) No. 36 of 1990, which pertains to the ratification of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Pontoh dkk., 2023). This ratification represents a significant step toward ensuring that Indonesian children receive their rightful protections and serves as a moral cornerstone for educational institutions to promote child welfare.

To strengthen the ratification aimed at protecting children in Indonesia, Undang-Undang No. 23 Tahun 2002 on Child Protection was enacted. This law

delineates several rights for children, including the right to a name and nationality, the right to equality and protection, the right to education, the right to play and recreation, the right to adequate food, the right to health, and the right to participate in developmental activities (Wahyuni, 2021). It serves as a crucial foundation for safeguarding Indonesian children against various rights violations, including abuse, which has become a pressing issue in diverse educational settings such as pesantren.

In Indonesia, pesantren serve a vital role as institutions for education and moral development. Pesantren's contribution as an institution of Islamic education cannot be separated from the map of the historical process of education development in Indonesia as a whole, especially in moral education, which later crowded so-called "character education." In fact, the Pesantren also played a role in the history of Indonesian independence and became the main witness of the spread of Islam (Hakim & Aksa, 2021).

Many parents choose to entrust their children's education to pesantren for reasons such as fostering religious values, moral growth, or providing a supportive educational environment. According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, as reported in the Statistics of Ditpdpontren, there are 26,975 pesantren across the country, accommodating a total of 2,584,749 students. Among these students, 1,412,428 are boarding students, while 1,172,321 are non-boarding students (Sobirin, 2023). Given the substantial number of children who interact and spend the majority of their time in pesantren, these institutions hold a moral and legal responsibility to cultivate an environment that promotes the physical, mental, and spiritual development of children.

Extensive research has been conducted on children's rights and their protection within various educational settings. According to a study by Afandy and Desiandri (Afandy & Desiandri, 2023), numerous instances of violence against children, including physical abuse, sexual harassment, and psychological trauma, continue to persist in Indonesia, highlighting that children's rights are not fully upheld according to existing legal standards. Lubis et al. (Lubis dkk., 2023) further emphasize that violence has no place in educational institutions, which should strive to address issues through educational means rather than resorting to harm. Pesantren, as prominent Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, bear the crucial responsibility of fostering a safe environment for children. This is underscored by Sobirin's research (Sobirin, 2023) which notes

the significant number of both boarding and non-boarding students attending pesantren.

One notable study addresses solutions for violence against children in educational settings, emphasizing early intervention. It examines the successful implementation of Child-Friendly Schools (SRA) at Himawari Kindergarten as a method to prevent sexual violence against children. The primary aim of this study is to safeguard children from various forms of violence, including sexual harassment, through a range of initiatives such as educational simulations, collaboration with health centers for regular health checks, and the establishment of standard operating procedures (SOP) for child protection. Additionally, this study highlights the significance of age-appropriate sex education and the crucial role parents play in teaching children about self-protection and body awareness (Khoiriyah & Filasofa, 2024).

Other research on child-friendly *pesantren* also shows that child-friendly pesantren can be realized by implementing a positive discipline program for every Pesantren resident, starting from caregivers, coaches, teachers, and students. In the learning process, humanist teachers are the key to the success of child-friendly education in Pesantren by guiding, motivating, and appreciating the strengths and weaknesses of the students and developing various new ideas and insights about learning in line with the development of science and technology, as in the trial conducted in Al-Anwar-4 and Alhamdulillah by applying positive discipline to prevent violence in Pesantren. This trial had a significant positive impact (Zulfa, et.al. 2024).

Another study on the implementation of the "Pesantren Ramah Anak" program at the Pesantren Muthmainnatul Qulub Al Islami, which aims to prevent violence against students, especially bullying. The research underscores the prevalence of violence within the pesantren environment and highlights the necessity for protective measures aligned with guidelines set by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Employing qualitative descriptive methods, the study revealed that while the program has been executed with a success rate of approximately 50%, significant shortcomings remain, emphasizing the need for ongoing evaluation and enhancement. Moreover, the study stresses the importance of fostering a safe and supportive environment for students to effectively mitigate bullying and other forms of violence (Rahmanudin et.al. 2024).

Research highlighting child-friendly schools linked to pesantren can be found in the work of Latif et al. (Latif dkk., 2021). his study explores various dimensions of education within pesantren, concentrating on the

implementation of Child-Friendly Schools that uphold the principles of integrity. It also underscores the significance of fostering an educational environment that prioritizes not only religious knowledge but also the character development and skills of students, alongside the protection and fulfillment of children's rights.

Pesantren, as a religious-based educational institution, holds significant responsibility in shaping the morals and character of the younger generation. They must create a safe environment that supports child development. However, various reports indicate that incidents of violence and harmful ideologies still persist in some pesantren across Indonesia, posing serious challenges to child protection initiatives. What should be an educational space for learning and personal growth can, if not properly managed, transform into a hazardous environment.

Several recent cases of physical abuse, emotional violence, and bullying indicate that children's rights in Pesantren are not adequately protected. Contributing factors include a lack of awareness about children's rights, the absence of clear internal policies for child protection, and a disciplinary culture that often employs an authoritarian approach. This situation underscores the urgent need to identify solutions that foster a safe, supportive, and violence-free environment within Pesantren.

The concept of Child-Friendly Pesantren is present as a solution to answer this problem with a holistic pressure approach in ensuring child protection. By establishing a robust supervision system, implementing a safe complaint mechanism, providing education on children's rights, and conducting periodic evaluations, pesantren can serve as exemplary models for safeguarding children in educational settings. This study aims to analyze the implementation of these principles and offer recommendations to address various challenges in fostering a safe, welcoming, and inclusive pesantren environment for children. The research presented here distinguishes itself from prior studies by placing a particular emphasis on pesantren, which has its own unique characteristics, structure, and culture as an Islamic educational institution.

This research enhances the concept of a Child-Friendly Pesantren by identifying concrete mechanisms and steps necessary to establish a safe and educational environment within these institutions. It aims to demonstrate how Pesantren can serve as a safe haven for children and elevate their status as a model for other educational institutions in Indonesia. By addressing this issue, the research seeks to explore and propose policy recommendations and best

practices to help Pesantren safeguard children's rights and foster a safe, child-friendly educational atmosphere. Ultimately, this research aspires to make a significant contribution to promoting comprehensive child protection in religious-based educational settings, particularly in Pesantren, thereby positioning them as exemplary models for other educational institutions across Indonesia.

This study employs a literature review methodology with a qualitative approach. Often referred to as the naturalistic research method, this approach is conducted in natural conditions or unmanipulated environments. It is frequently utilized in social and humanities research to gain deeper insights into social, cultural, or moral issues, including children's rights within pesantren. The qualitative approach prioritizes the collection of descriptive and interpretative data, with an analytical focus on providing in-depth explanations of various relevant literature (Fujiarti dkk., 2024).

In this study, a literature review is employed to establish a robust theoretical foundation regarding children's rights and their implementation in pesantren, with a particular focus on fostering a child-friendly environment. The research draws on a diverse array of literature, including books, scientific articles, journals, research reports, and other pertinent documentation. Sources are accessed through Google Scholar, allowing the researcher to identify relevant materials using keywords such as "children's rights in pesantren," "child protection," "child-friendly pesantren," and "child abuse." The study places special emphasis on recent literature published between 2018 and 2024 to ensure alignment with contemporary conditions and issues.

The methodology employed for the data analysis is qualitative analysis, which entails a thorough examination of the content from various scholarly sources. This analytical process focuses on literature concerning child protection in pesantren, the implementation of Child-Friendly Pesantren, and strategies aimed at preventing child abuse within educational settings. The objective of this analysis is to compare different approaches and existing policies, ultimately drawing conclusions that can be applied to enhance child protection within pesantren. This examination provides a comprehensive overview of the significance of implementing the Child-Friendly Pesantren concept as a means of fostering a safe environment for children in these institutions.

Result and Discussion

Child abuse represents a profound violation of human rights, carrying significant long-term consequences for a child's mental, emotional, and physical development (Kurniasari, 2019). Consequently, institutions tasked with ensuring a safe environment must be equipped to both prevent and address the risks of abuse. One such institution that plays a vital role in nurturing children is the pesantren. Given its large student population and its mission to impart religious and moral values, pesantren must take proactive measures to safeguard children against abuse.

Two parties can implement strategies to prevent violence in Pesantren. The first party is the government, in this case, the Ministry of Religion, which can take strategic steps regarding prevention efforts by drafting regulations on violence in Pesantren. The second party is Pesantren, which can take strategic steps by strengthening the supervisory function at the layer closest to the students and continuing counseling on anti-violence in Pesantren (Rahmawati & Mubarak, 2023).

In certain instances, educational environments can become sites of abuse, including physical, emotional, and sexual violence. For example, there was a case involving 43 male students who reportedly suffered sexual violence at the hands of two teachers in a pesantren located in Kabupaten Agam, West Sumatera (BBC News, 2024). Additionally, a caretaker at a pesantren in Kecamatan Tempuran, Kabupaten Magelang, Central Java, was detained by police for sexual violence (Birru & Krisiandi, 2024). The abuse in these contexts can arise from various factors, such as a lack of awareness regarding children's rights and insufficient supervision. Consequently, it is essential for pesantren to establish a comprehensive child protection system and foster awareness of potential risks through the concept of Pesantren Ramah Anak (Child-Friendly Pesantren).

Child abuse is often more challenging to detect in pesantren, as students spend a significant amount of time in dormitories and engage intensively with their teachers and caretakers (Dasir & Munawiroh, 2020). his emphasizes the necessity of implementing the Pesantren Ramah Anak standard, which should prioritize supervision, education about children's rights, and preventive measures against abuse. Research has been conducted on developing a santrifriendly environment at Muhammadiyah Boarding School (MBS) in Yogyakarta, viewed through the lens of humanistic psychology. This study primarily aims to analyze how pesantren principles support the psychological and social needs of

students while identifying the humanistic psychology practices in place at MBS. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of fostering a safe environment that nurtures student development, as well as the challenges encountered in integrating the concept of child-friendly schools within pesantren (Hasanah, t.t.).

The concept of Pesantren Ramah Anak aims to create a safe, inclusive, and friendly educational environment for all children (Albert & Sesmiarni, 2022). This emphasizes that every pesantren must ensure the protection of children's rights, including the right to be free from violence, exploitation, and abuse. A Pesantren Ramah Anak requires the institution to provide facilities and policies that support the physical and mental well-being of its students. The facilities and policies that need to be implemented in the Pesantren Ramah Anak concept include the following:

1. Strict Supervision

Supervision is a key element in ensuring the safety and well-being of children in pesantren environments (Nurlaela dkk., 2023). All interactions among students, educators, caretakers, and other staff must be strictly monitored to prevent abuse. Pesantren must establish a comprehensive supervision system, which may include installing CCTV cameras in public areas and scheduling monitoring by trained caretakers. Additionally, the Directorate of Religious Education and Pesantren, as the body responsible for pesantren oversight, must provide specialized training to educators and caretakers on early signs of abuse, enabling them to take preventive measures promptly. This training should cover physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and how to handle such situations professionally.

2. Reporting System

To make students feel safe reporting suspicious behavior or abuse, pesantren must provide an easily accessible and confidential reporting mechanism. This system should be designed so that students do not fear retaliation or discrimination after reporting an incident. Research indicates that abuse victims often hesitate to report due to shame and threats (Dewi, 2021). Reporting can be facilitated through complaint boxes placed around the pesantren, especially if the pesantren prohibits the use of mobile phones, or through access to specific phone numbers or dedicated apps for reporting incidents.

The Directorate of Religious Education and Pesantren must ensure that staff handling these complaints are trained in listening to and responding empathetically and promptly. Follow-ups on these complaints must be systematic, from investigation to resolution, without causing further distress to the reporter.

3. Education on Children's Rights

The implementation of Pesantren Ramah Anak must include the integration of children's rights education into the pesantren curriculum. The goal is not to establish new pesantren but to manage existing pesantren to become child-friendly environments that ensure children's rights and protect them. Pesantren, akin to a home for students, must foster comfort and safety (Abidin dkk., 2022).

All students should be educated on their rights, including the right to protection from violence and abuse. Educators and caretakers should also receive training to understand their roles in safeguarding children's rights. By incorporating this education into classroom learning or integrated modules, pesantren can teach students how to recognize and report abuse and the importance of mutual respect for others' rights. Raising awareness of children's rights among all stakeholders will cultivate a culture that values and protects each individual, especially children.

4. Psychological Support

In addition to preventive measures, pesantren must have proper mechanisms to provide psychological support to students who are victims of abuse. Psychological support is crucial to help children recover from trauma and resume normal activities (Hakim & Trustisari, 2024). Pesantren can collaborate with psychologists, counselors, or professional social workers with expertise in handling child abuse cases. This support can be provided through individual or group counseling sessions, depending on each child's needs.

Furthermore, pesantren should create safe spaces where children can openly express their feelings without fear of judgment. This counseling process must be conducted consistently until the child fully recovers from the psychological impact they experienced.

5. Regular Evaluation and Monitoring

The final but equally important step is conducting regular evaluations and monitoring of the Pesantren Ramah Anak system. Internal evaluations can involve surveys or interviews with students regarding their safety and comfort while at the pesantren.

According to Scriven, evaluations serve two functions: formative and summative. Formative evaluation is used for ongoing improvement and development of activities, while summative evaluation is for accountability, explanation, selection, or continuation (Diana dkk., 2023). In essence, evaluations aim to support program development, meet needs, improve programs, provide accountability, motivate stakeholders, and gain insights and support.

Regular monitoring ensures that pesantren stay on track in creating a safe environment and protecting students from abuse risks. Based on evaluation results, pesantren can continuously refine their systems and innovate to foster an environment that fully supports children's rights. As in the study on the evaluation of the child-friendly pesantren program in West Sumatera, Indonesia, using the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) model. This study highlights the importance of holistic data collection, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the effectiveness of the program. Key findings indicate the existence of problems of violence, discrimination, and harassment in pesantren, lack of socialization of program guidelines, and inadequate monitoring of program implementation. Although there is awareness of the program, understanding and competence among staff and stakeholders are still low. Overall, the program has not achieved the desired results, and continuous improvement is needed to increase its effectiveness (Natsir & Zulmuqim, 2023).

One of the main challenges in implementing the Pesantren Ramah Anak concept is cultural and traditional resistance in some pesantren. Many pesantren still adhere to hierarchical and closed educational systems. Students are often expected to fully comply with caretakers and teachers without questioning their authority (Handayani dkk., 2024). In authoritarian environments, children's rights to voice concerns and report abuse are often overlooked or deemed inappropriate. This creates barriers to implementing Pesantren Ramah Anak, as it requires a paradigm shift towards greater openness to protecting children's rights, particularly regarding freedom of expression.

However, these challenges should not hinder efforts to protect children's rights in pesantren. The Directorate of Religious Education and Pesantren can play an active role in ensuring the implementation of Pesantren Ramah Anak in every pesantren. This can be achieved through intensive socialization about children's rights for caretakers, teachers, and students, as well as providing

specialized training focused on preventing abuse and protecting children. Moreover, the Directorate can offer continuous guidance to pesantren in implementing policies aligned with the Pesantren Ramah Anak concept and strengthening supervision and reporting systems to prevent and address abuse cases promptly and appropriately.

In a recent study, the significance of socializing child-friendly pesantren was highlighted. The research focused on community service initiatives designed to raise awareness among caregivers in pesantren about violence against women and children, as well as to prevent bullying. Conducted by the Faculty of Law at Universitas PGRI Madiun, this initiative included legal counseling and educational efforts to inform caregivers about the nature of violence, its repercussions, and prevention strategies. The initiative successfully enhanced the knowledge of pesantren caregivers regarding the concept of "Child-Friendly Pesantren," the underlying factors contributing to violence, and effective strategies for preventing violence against women and children. It is anticipated that this outreach will contribute to the establishment of a safer and more welcoming environment in pesantren for children while also nurturing empathy among students to discourage violent behavior (Eviningrum, 2023).

Analysis of the author's findings shows that implementing the Child-Friendly Pesantren concept is very important in creating a safe environment for children in pesantren. This research identifies that although Pesantren has great potential in shaping children's moral and religious values, there are still significant challenges faced, especially resistance to cultural and traditional changes that hinder the protection of children's rights.

To enhance this analysis, the Child Protection theory can be employed, highlighting the necessity of a safe and nurturing environment for children's development. This theory asserts that children have the right to be safeguarded from all forms of violence and abuse, as well as the right to participate in decisions that impact their lives (Sari dkk., 2023). In the context of Pesantren, the implementation of these principles through the framework of Child-Friendly Pesantren can foster a system that is more attuned to the needs and rights of children.

The concept of Rights-Based Education is also pertinent to this analysis. This approach emphasizes that education should prioritize the fulfillment of children's rights, including the right to receive safe and high-quality education (Arifin, 2017). By incorporating these principles into the curriculum and practices within Pesantren, it is anticipated that instances of abuse will decrease

and awareness of children's rights will increase among both students and Pesantren administrators. Consequently, Pesantren can evolve into institutions that not only foster moral and religious education but also ensure the physical, mental, and social well-being of their students.

The Child-Friendly Pesantren Initiative is underpinned by a robust regulatory framework established by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. Decree No. 1262 of 2024 provides comprehensive technical guidelines for child-friendly care within pesantren, highlighting the necessity of creating a nurturing environment that addresses children's fundamental needs and rights, including affection, safety, and well-being. This decree requires pesantren to adhere to these guidelines to retain government recognition and support. The effectiveness of the Child-Friendly Pesantren initiative relies heavily on collaboration among various stakeholders, including partnerships between pesantren management, government agencies, and civil society organizations. For instance, collaboration with entities such as UNICEF can enhance resources and expertise in child protection strategies. Additionally, the involvement of the surrounding community is crucial, as they are instrumental in monitoring and reporting instances of violence or neglect within the pesantren environment.

Conclusion

This study underscores the significance of implementing the "Child-Friendly Pesantren" concept within Pesantren in Indonesia as a strategic approach to prevent and combat violence against children. The key findings reveal that, despite the central role Pesantren plays in moral and religious education, many still encounter challenges in establishing a safe and supportive environment for children.

The adoption of the Child-Friendly Pesantren framework—which includes stringent supervision, safe reporting mechanisms, education on children's rights, psychological support, and regular evaluations—has proven to significantly enhance child protection. Furthermore, collaboration between government agencies and civil society is crucial to ensure the success of this initiative. By taking these measures, Pesantren can not only safeguard children from violence but also serve as a model for other educational institutions in Indonesia regarding child protection and education about their rights.

This study also advocates for further research to examine the implementation of the Child-Friendly Pesantren policy across different regions,

as well as the factors that contribute to its success. Through interviews with students, caregivers, and administrators of Pesantren, we can gain deeper insights into the challenges faced in executing this concept. In this way, Pesantren can play an active role in fostering an environment that is not only safe but also conducive to the physical, mental, and spiritual development of children. Additionally, regular evaluations of Pesantren that have embraced this concept should be carried out to assess progress and identify areas requiring improvement.

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