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Strengthening Student Care Management via 'Wali Asuh' for Child-Friendly Pesantrens: A PAR Study at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta

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Abstract: *The Wali Asuh program plays a vital role in fostering a child-friendly environment in pesantren through structured and consistent student mentoring. This community service research focuses on maximizing the program's potential at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta by conducting upgrading activities for Wali Asuh. Employing a qualitative approach through Participatory Action Research (PAR) and grounded in Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory of Child Development, the study identifies key challenges faced by Wali Asuh, including limited understanding of child psychology, underdeveloped communication skills, behavioral difficulties among certain students, and institutional structural constraints. The upgrading activities proved effective in enhancing Wali Asuh competencies in child psychology, communication, and nurturing practices. The study further recommends institutional reforms in the management and governance of the program, enabling Wali Asuh to concentrate on their core caregiving responsibilities. This study recommends institutional reform in the management and governance of the Foster Guardian program so that mentors can focus more on their core responsibilities in caring for students. Theoretically and practically, this study provides input through an understanding of the integrated Ecological Theory of Child Development, the development of an applicable and replicable model for foster guardian competency improvement, and a compilation of recommended strategies for improving the governance of Islamic boarding school-based foster care programs. These findings are expected to strengthen the child-friendly mentoring system more broadly, with potential implementation in various Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.*
Keywords: *Wali Asuh, Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta, Child-Friendly, Pesantren, Participatory Action Research*

Abstrak: Program *Wali Asuh* memainkan peran penting dalam menciptakan lingkungan pesantren yang ramah anak melalui pendampingan santri yang terstruktur dan konsisten. Penelitian pengabdian masyarakat ini berfokus pada memaksimalkan potensi program tersebut di Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta melalui pelaksanaan kegiatan upgrading bagi para *Wali Asuh*.

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Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui metode Participatory Action Research (PAR) dan berlandaskan Teori Ekologi Perkembangan Anak milik Urie Bronfenbrenner, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi berbagai tantangan yang dihadapi oleh *Wali Asuh*, meliputi keterbatasan pemahaman tentang psikologi anak, keterampilan komunikasi yang belum optimal, kesulitan perilaku pada sebagian santri, serta kendala struktural kelembagaan. Kegiatan upgrading yang dilaksanakan terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan kompetensi *Wali Asuh* di bidang psikologi anak, komunikasi, dan praktik pengasuhan. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan adanya reformasi kelembagaan dalam manajemen dan tata kelola program Wali Asuh agar para pendamping dapat lebih fokus pada tanggung jawab inti dalam pengasuhan santri. Secara teoretis dan praktis, studi ini berkontribusi melalui penguatan kajian berbasis integrasi Teori Ekologi Perkembangan Anak, pengembangan model upgrading kompetensi Wali Asuh yang aplikatif dan replikatif, serta penyusunan rekomendasi strategis bagi perbaikan tata kelola program pengasuhan berbasis pesantren. Temuan ini diharapkan mampu memperkuat sistem pendampingan ramah anak secara lebih luas, dengan potensi implementasi pada berbagai pesantren di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Wali Asuh, Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta, Ramah Anak, Pesantren, Participatory Action Research

Introduction

This community-based research aims to create a child-friendly environment at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta through a caregiver (wali asuh) upgrading program. This initiative is considered crucial and is expected to have a significant impact on improving the quality of caregiving within the pesantren environment. Based on the results of previous mentoring activities, it was found that there is still a lack of attention to sensitive caregiving needs for students (santri), which may negatively affect their psychological development and overall well-being. Caregivers at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah already function as companions for santri; however, the skills and insights required to perform this role optimally remain limited. As key figures in caregiving, caregivers are expected to carry out their roles by paying attention to important aspects such as psychosocial conditions, effective communication, student health, understanding children's rights, and preventive measures against issues such as bullying. Therefore, it is essential to provide more intensive training and mentoring for caregivers to enhance their capacity in supporting santri. According to the Decree of the Director

General of Islamic Education (SK Dirjen Pendis Kemenag) Number 1262 of 2024, caregivers are categorized as supporting human resources in the field of caregiving. This means that as human resources, the capacity and caregiving skills of caregivers are essential prerequisites for realizing a child-friendly pesantren.[1]

Caregivers act as substitutes for the santri's closest family members; therefore, they must possess basic skills in providing Psychological First Aid (PFA) or "Dukungan Psikologis Awal (DPA)". PFA is a fundamental skill needed to help santri cope with emotional crises and stress, which are often invisible but can affect their mental health in the long term.[2] However, to date, training related to PFA for caregivers at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah has not been conducted optimally. Without adequate training, caregivers may be unable to detect mental health problems among santri at an early stage, potentially worsening their condition.

In addition to psychological aspects, communication skills are also a crucial element that caregivers must possess. Santri interact not only with caregivers but also with their parents, teachers, and other parties involved in their lives at the pesantren. Caregivers serve as a communication bridge between santri and these various stakeholders. Good communication skills enable caregivers to better understand the needs of santri, convey messages clearly to parents, and coordinate effectively with other relevant parties. This requires strong interpersonal skills, which can be developed through specialized training. Communication is a key factor in supporting the creation of child-friendly caregiving practices.[3]

The issue of bullying in educational environments, including pesantren, has become increasingly concerning. According to data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, cases of bullying in schools, including pesantren, remain relatively high. Bullying can have serious negative impacts on the mental and physical health of victims and disrupt the teaching and learning process.[4] Caregivers in pesantren must therefore have the skills to prevent, detect, and handle bullying cases effectively.

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[1] Dirjen Pendidikan Islam, "SK Dirjen Pendidikan Islam Nomor 1262 tentang Petunjuk Teknis Pengasuhan Ramah Anak di Pesantren," Jakarta, Kemenag RI, (2024), p. 1-43.

[2] Mahmuddah Dewi Edmawati, "Panduan Psychological First Aid Training (PFAT)," Universitas Veteran Bangun Nusantara, Sukoharjo, 2024, 1-18.

[3] Hindina Maulida and R. Yogie Prawira, "Perilaku komunikasi di Sekolah Ramah Anak Kota Magelang," *Kesejahteraan Sosial*, vol. 6, no. 3, (2020), p. 239–251.

[4] Direktorat Sekolah Dasar. "Stop perundungan/bullying yuk!," Jakarta, Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, (2021), p. 1-15.

Previous studies on the *Wali Asuh* program in Indonesian pesantren have primarily focused on its role in improving specific student outcomes, such as self-control,[5] reducing homesickness,[6] and preventing violence within educational environments.[7] While Ilmy et al. emphasized the urgency of caregiver involvement in pesantren educational dynamics, these studies largely examined the program's outcomes from the perspective of santri welfare, without adequately addressing the systemic and institutional factors that shape caregiver performance.[8] Furthermore, existing literature has not sufficiently explored the structural constraints faced by caregivers—such as the overlapping of their roles with teaching and administrative responsibilities, the absence of standardized operating procedures, and the limited access to formal training—all of which significantly undermine the effectiveness of caregiving practices in pesantren settings.

Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah has a long history of educating santri; however, challenges related to providing greater attention to child-friendly caregiving have only recently begun to be recognized. As an educational and caregiving institution, this pesantren has tremendous potential if it can optimize the role of caregivers through a Participatory Action Research (PAR)-based approach. This program is expected not only to improve the quality of caregiving but also to serve as a model for other pesantren facing similar issues. Caregivers at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah are generally recruited from pesantren administrators who have educational backgrounds solely in pesantren education. Without adequate training, their caregiving skills are insufficient to address the increasingly complex challenges of the modern era. Therefore, upgrading caregivers has become an urgent necessity to enhance their capacity to better support santri.

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[5]Fitriyah, Lailatul and Wahibatul Mas'ula, "Program wali asuh dalam meningkatkan kualitas kontrol diri santri di pondok pesantren," *Jurnal Islam Nusantara*, vol. 5, no. 2, (2021), p. 1-12. [Online]. Available: https://doi.org/10.33852/jurnalnu.v5i2.286

[6] Salsabila Aulia Rahma, "Efektivitas pelatihan remaja tangguh untuk menurunkan tingkat homesickness pada santri di pondok pesantren," *Skripsi*, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, (2022), p. 1-68. Maulida Lestari, "Hubungan antara Sense of Belonging dengan Homesickness pada Siswa Baru di Pondok Pesantren," *Al-Qalb: Jurnal Psikologi Islam*, vol. 12, no. 1, (2021), p. 39–50.

[7] Prihandono Wibowo and Muhammad Chasif Ascha, "Upaya pencegahan kekerasan di lingkungan pendidikan: Sosialisasi di Pondok Pesantren Ibnu Sholeh Bangkalan Madura," *Journal of Community Service*, 5(2), (2023), p. 357-364. https://doi.org/10.56670/jcs.v5i2.148.

[8] Alfi Najmatil Ilmy, et al. "Urgensi keterlibatan wali asuh dalam dinamika pendidikan di pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam UIN Sunan Ampel*, vol. 6, no. 1, (2018), p. 44–66, [Online]. Available: https://doi.org/10.15642/jpai.2018.6.1.44-66.

Initial identification indicates that caregivers at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah have not been equipped with adequate psychological skills and educational knowledge to support santri, particularly in aspects of protection and character development. This condition has resulted in suboptimal caregiving patterns within the pesantren environment, where caregivers—typically recruited from pesantren administrators—possess only a pesantren-based educational background and lack specific knowledge of child-friendly caregiving. This lack of preparedness among caregivers has the potential to negatively affect santri development. Psychological skills, medical and health-related knowledge of santri, as well as strong communication skills, are essential to maximize the effectiveness of caregivers in supporting santri.

The caregiver upgrading program serves as an important solution to bridge the gap in knowledge and caregiving practices within the pesantren. This program should include training based on Participatory Action Research (PAR), enabling caregivers to be directly involved in understanding and applying child-friendly caregiving techniques. Through this participatory approach, training focuses not only on theory but also on practical application relevant to the daily needs of caregivers in accompanying santri. The outcomes of this training are expected to create a better caregiving system that not only protects santri physically but also supports their mental and character development.

Currently, Asshiddiqiyah has established 13 institutional branches across various regions in Indonesia, and each branch implements a caregiver program. However, the implementation has not yet been optimal in meeting child-friendly caregiving standards. In this study, the researchers selected Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta as the central pesantren. The expectation is that if the caregiver upgrading program can be successfully implemented and function optimally, the caregiving model can be applied and replicated across all Asshiddiqiyah branches, as well as more broadly in other pesantren. There are 56 caregivers at Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta, each responsible for assisting between 15 and 30 children. In practice, caregivers face significant challenges, as not all santri have the same psychological needs, health conditions, or understanding of children's rights.[9]

Previous studies on the Foster Guardian program in Islamic boarding schools have generally focused on improving student outcomes, such as self-control, reducing homesickness, and preventing violence. However, they have been limited in examining the systemic and institutional aspects that

[9] Abdul Aziz. wawancara pribadi, Lurah Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta, 26 Sep. 2024.

influence the performance of Foster Guardians, such as overlapping roles, the absence of standard operating procedures, and the lack of competency-based training. Furthermore, studies developing intervention models for foster guardian capacity building based on participatory approaches are also very limited, particularly in the context of strengthening child-friendly Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by developing and implementing a Participatory Action Research (PAR)-based foster guardian upgrading model that integrates psychological, communication, and child protection competencies, while also offering a framework for strengthening the institutional governance of the foster care program. Thus, this study provides theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a child-friendly Islamic boarding school foster care system and provides an applicable model that has the potential to be replicated in various Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.

Method

This study employs a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which enables caregivers (wali asuh) to be directly involved in understanding and applying child-friendly caregiving techniques (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).[10] In addition, this research draws on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Child Development. This theory views child development as the result of dynamic interactions between the child and multiple environmental systems that influence one another. It proposes that children grow and develop through complex relationships with their environments, which consist of several interconnected system layers. Within the context of the caregiver program, this theory is highly relevant, as it demonstrates that child caregiving in pesantren is influenced not only by caregivers but also by broader environmental and contextual factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

This study uses a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which was chosen appropriately because it allows for the active involvement of Foster Parents as subjects and agents of change in the process of increasing parenting capacity, thus producing not only findings but also direct transformation of practices. This approach is combined with the Ecological Theory of Child Development framework to ensure that the analysis is carried out comprehensively by considering various environmental factors that influence the care of students. Data collection procedures were carried out systematically through in-depth interviews, participatory observation during training and mentoring activities, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and

[10] Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart, "The Action Research Planner." Melbourne, Deakin University Press, (1988), p. 1-154.

program documentation at each stage (preparation, FGDs, workshops, mentoring, and evaluation). Meanwhile, data analysis was carried out qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and thematic conclusion drawing, which was strengthened by a process of triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the validity of the findings. Thus, this research design is not only methodologically relevant, but also able to produce in-depth and contextual data related to strengthening the capacity of Foster Parents in realizing child-friendly care in the Islamic boarding school environment.

Result and discussion

A. A Brief Profile of Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta

Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah, located in Kedoya, Kebon Jeruk, West Jakarta, is an Islamic educational institution that has made a significant contribution to social, cultural, and spiritual development in Indonesia. The pesantren was founded by KH. Noer Muhammad Iskandar, SQ, after land originally owned by the family of H. Abdul Ghoni Dja'ani was transferred to H. Rosyadi and later entrusted to him. Beginning with a small *musholla*, Asshiddiqiyah grew into an influential pesantren in Indonesia due to the strong conviction and hard work of its founders. The pesantren aims to produce santri who master Islamic sciences while firmly adhering to the teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah. Education at Asshiddiqiyah emphasizes mastery of subject matter, discipline, orderliness, and responsibility. Many of its alumni have gone on to play important roles as scholars, educators, and community leaders.

Asshiddiqiyah operates 13 branches across various regions in Indonesia. The vision of this pesantren is to develop cadres of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah scholars with global perspectives and noble character (*akhlak karimah*). Its mission is to provide education grounded in Islamic values, modern technology, and community-based economics, from early childhood education to higher education. Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah manages a number of institutions and flagship programs.[11]

Ma'had Aly Sa'idusshiddiqiyah

Ma'had Aly Sa'idusshiddiqiyah Jakarta, established in 2006, is a pesantren-based higher education institution located in West Jakarta.

[11] Profil MA Manba'ul Ulum Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta Tahun Ajaran 2023/2024, diperoleh 10 Des. 2024. Ma'had Aly Sa'idusshiddiqiyah, "Profil Ma'had Aly Sa'idusshiddiqiyah," [Online]. (2024). Available: https://www.mahadalyjakarta.com/profile/

Founded by DR. KH. Noer Muhammad Iskandar and Drs. KH. Surya Dharma Ali, Ma'had Aly was designed to address the need for *fuqaha* within pesantren communities. Initially focusing on *fiqh*, in 2015 the institution shifted its emphasis to Islamic Civilization History (*at-Tarikh al-Islami*). This shift aimed to promote Islamic moderation in Indonesia, particularly in response to terrorism and extremism.

The curriculum combines traditional *salafi* pesantren traditions with modern academic approaches, allocating 60% to Indonesian Islamic history and 40% to global Islamic history. Ma'had Aly obtained its operational license in 2016 and achieved A accreditation in 2020. The institution emphasizes producing graduates who not only possess strong intellectual capabilities but also demonstrate noble character, moderation, and nationalism. By integrating traditional values with contemporary academic needs, Ma'had Aly actively contributes to Islamic historical research and community development. Graduates are expected to have deep understanding of Islamic and Nusantara history and to produce relevant scholarly works.

The Ma'had Aly campus is designed to foster a clean, orderly, and harmonious environment. Strong institutional governance, professional teaching staff, and visionary management are key factors in achieving its strategic goals. Through this comprehensive approach, Ma'had Aly is committed to becoming a leading educational institution that upholds moderate Islamic values and responds effectively to contemporary challenges.[12]

Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Manba'ul Ulum

Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Manba'ul Ulum, accredited A, was established on June 19, 1989, and is located at Jl. Panjang No. 6c, West Jakarta. Operating under the Asshiddiqiyah Pesantren Foundation, MA Manba'ul Ulum Asshiddiqiyah remains committed to contributing to the educational sector by providing a conducive learning environment. The vision of the madrasah is to deliver excellent education that integrates Science and Technology (IPTEK) with Faith and Piety (IMTAQ) and noble character.

Its mission includes implementing innovative education, developing the 2013 Curriculum, improving human resource quality, and strengthening management with internal and external support. Supported by competent educators, the madrasah is committed to producing high-quality graduates.

The objectives of this madrasah include creating active, creative, innovative, and enjoyable learning experiences, as well as forming students

[12] Ma'had Aly Sa'idusshiddiqiyah, "Profil Ma'had Aly Sa'idusshiddiqiyah," [Online]. (2024). Available: https://www.mahadalyjakarta.com/profile/

with noble character applicable in daily life. MA Manba'ul Ulum Asshiddiqiyah also focuses on developing students' spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social intelligence, fostering discipline, honesty, and responsibility, and enhancing reading, writing, research interests, and foreign language skills.

The organizational structure consists of the Head of Madrasah, Hasanudin, S.Ag., assisted by vice principals responsible for academic planning and operational management, along with staff managing facilities and infrastructure to support institutional operations.

SMP Manba'ul Ulum

SMP Manba'ul Ulum is a registered educational institution with administrative identification, including School Statistics Number (NSS) 202016202020, and received A accreditation on December 19, 2017. Located in West Jakarta, the school envisions exemplifying the noble character of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and achieving excellence in academic and non-academic achievements.

Its mission includes instilling *akhlakul karimah*, teaching English and Arabic, and strengthening pesantren-based communication within the school community. The school provides effective academic mentoring and various extracurricular activities. The aim is to produce students who are morally upright, observant in worship, competitive, technologically adept, capable of communicating in Arabic and English, and environmentally conscious.

The school focuses on improving courteous behavior, teacher quality, and facility adequacy. Its work programs include internal activities such as flag ceremonies, hygiene supervision, curriculum management, student affairs, administration, and teacher duty schedules. External programs include collaboration with relevant institutions, parents, government agencies, and other schools, all designed to support the school's vision and professional teacher development.

Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah (MDT)

Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta continues to innovate in preserving Islamic educational traditions, one of which is through the Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah (MDT) program. This program serves as a complement to pesantren religious education, focusing on the study of *kitab kuning*. According to KH. Ahmad Mahrus Iskandar, Madrasah Diniyah is the core of pesantren education, while formal schools such as SMP and MA serve as complements.

Launched in 2008, MDT Manbaul Ulum emphasizes mastery of classical Islamic texts (*kitab salaf*) to prevent religious misunderstanding in society. The curriculum focuses on unvowelled classical texts using staged memorization of *nadham nahwu* and *sharaf*. Learning activities take place from afternoon to evening, including language learning, Qur'anic revision, memorization submission, prayers, *bandongan*, and *sorogan*. This program strengthens Islamic understanding and prepares santri for intellectual contribution to society.[13]

Flagship Programs

Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta implements various programs across formal institutions—Ma'had Aly, Madrasah Aliyah, SMP—and non-formal institutions such as Madrasah Diniyah. Flagship activities include extracurricular programs and foreign language enrichment.

Extracurricular activities play a vital role in character formation, covering sports (basketball, futsal, volleyball, Pagar Nusa), arts and culture (hadhroh, traditional dance, calligraphy), and skills development (scouting, flag-raising squads, Red Cross youth). The IKAMSAS da'wah program enhances students' preaching skills. Activities are scheduled mostly in the afternoons and weekends to avoid interference with formal learning.

Foreign language enrichment programs include drilling, morning conversation, compulsory language days, and Arabic and English courses. These programs aim to strengthen daily communication skills and language proficiency.[14]

B. The Caregiver (Wali Asuh) Program in Supporting a Child-Friendly Pesantren

Indonesia has demonstrated a strong commitment to creating child-friendly environments through regulations from 2002 to 2024. Key legal foundations include Law No. 23 of 2002 on Child Protection, strengthened by Law No. 35 of 2014, ensuring protection from violence, discrimination, and exploitation. Other supporting regulations include Government Regulation No. 60 of 2013, Presidential Regulation No. 25 of 2021, Ministerial Regulation No. 8 of 2014, Ministerial Regulation No. 12 of 2022, Ministerial Regulation

[13] Muhammad Rizki, "Implementasi Program Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Manbaul Ulum dalam Menumbuhkan Kemampuan Membaca Kitab Kuning Santri di Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta," *Skripsi*, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, (2024), p. 1-64.

[14] Claudio, D. wawancara pribadi, Tim Pengayaan Bahasa Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta, 12 Des. 2024. Gustoni, M. wawancara pribadi, Kabag Bahasa Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta, 12 Des. 2024. Zamzami, A. J. wawancara pribadi, Kabag Ekstrakurikuler Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta, 9 Des. 2024.

No. 4 of 2024, and Director General of Islamic Education Decree No. 1262 of 2024, collectively advocating for safe, supportive environments for children.

Pesantren play a key role in shaping knowledgeable and morally upright generations, yet face challenges in creating child-friendly environments. The Wali Asuh Program serves as a strategic initiative to provide special attention and mentoring, with *ustaz* and *ustazah* acting as surrogate parental figures. This program reflects modern pesantren governance, where caregiving responsibilities are distributed rather than centralized.[15]

Caregivers are selected selectively based on academic, emotional, and psychological readiness. Their mature approach helps prevent seniority-based monitoring systems and provides meaningful psychological support, moral guidance, and social value education (Ascha, 2023; Rahma, 2022; Lesatri, 2021).[16]

However, challenges remain, including limited qualified human resources and the need for sustained institutional commitment and policy support.[17]

According to Decree No. 1262/2024, caregivers are essential caregiving human resources and must possess competencies in child development, violence detection, constructive supervision, communication, integrity, and holistic support for santri.[18]

C. Challenges Faced by Caregivers

Based on the results of in-depth interviews conducted through the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) program, several obstacles experienced by a number of caregivers (*wali asuh*) at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta were identified. These obstacles are classified into four main categories.

First, psychological and adaptation-related challenges among santri. It is natural, particularly for new santri, to require time to adapt to the pesantren environment. During this adjustment process, many santri experience

[15] Hasan Baharun, "Manajemen strategi peningkatan mutu pendidikan pondok pesantren (Studi di Pondok Pesantren Nurul Jadid Paiton Probolinggo)," *Tesis,* Universitas Islam Negeri. (2006), p. 1-126

[16] Prihandono Wibowo and Muhammad Chasif Ascha, "Upaya pencegahan kekerasan di lingkungan pendidikan: Sosialisasi di Pondok Pesantren Ibnu Sholeh Bangkalan Madura." Salsabila Aulia Rahma, "Efektivitas pelatihan remaja tangguh untuk menurunkan tingkat homesickness pada santri di pondok pesantren." Maulida Lestari, "Hubungan antara Sense of Belonging dengan Homesickness pada Siswa Baru di Pondok Pesantren."

[17] Alfi Najmatil Ilmy, et al. "Urgensi keterlibatan wali asuh dalam dinamika pendidikan di pesantren." Lailatul Fitriyah and Wahibatul Mas'ula, "Program wali asuh dalam meningkatkan kualitas kontrol diri santri di pondok pesantren,"

[18] Dirjen Pendidikan Islam, "SK Dirjen Pendidikan Islam Nomor 1262."

homesickness, which prevents them from immediately feeling comfortable and settled in the pesantren. In addition, santri at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah exhibit diverse personalities; some are easily guided, while others require more specialized approaches. Consequently, caregivers are required to exert greater effort and provide more intensive attention when accompanying and supporting them.

Second, challenges involving the parents of santri pose a distinct difficulty for pesantren caregivers. As surrogate parental figures, caregivers are responsible for nurturing, guiding, and educating santri in accordance with the rules and values upheld by the pesantren. However, not all parents fully understand or support these policies. Some parents tend to excessively indulge their children or express levels of concern that are perceived as hindering the learning process. For example, when a santri suffers from a minor illness that can actually be managed by the caregiver, some parents hastily take the child home for an extended period, thereby disrupting the educational process at the pesantren. Furthermore, there are parents who, without considering pesantren regulations, allow their children to bring electronic devices that are prohibited for santri, under the assumption of improving learning effectiveness. Such actions not only violate pesantren rules but also create the impression that parents endorse behaviors that are inconsistent with the regulations of Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah. This situation further complicates the efforts of caregivers in instilling discipline and independence among santri.



Figure 1. Focus Group Discussion Atmosphere

Third, behavioral challenges among santri. Santri in any pesantren come from diverse family backgrounds and possess varying characters and habits. This diversity often influences their level of compliance with pesantren

regulations. This phenomenon is also evident at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta, where various behavioral challenges among santri are encountered, including violations of pesantren rules carried out discreetly, ranging from minor to serious infractions. These challenges require caregivers to place greater emphasis on supervision, guidance, and character development among santri.

Fourth, structural and operational challenges. At Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah, almost all caregivers hold additional responsibilities in other areas, such as teaching in classrooms, serving as mosque administrators (*takmir masjid*), and managing various pesantren activities. These multiple responsibilities often limit the amount of time and energy caregivers can devote to optimally guiding and attending to santri. As a result, certain aspects of mentoring, discipline development, and emotional support for santri may not be fully maximized. Furthermore, the absence of comprehensive standard operating procedures for caregivers highlights the ongoing need for continuous training and professional development.

D. Caregiver Upgrading Program

The caregiver (*wali asuh*) upgrading program has two main objectives. First, it aims to ensure that all caregivers have a thorough understanding of the concept of a child-friendly environment within the pesantren. Second, after acquiring this understanding, each caregiver is expected to be able to apply the principles of a child-friendly environment in supporting and caring for santri at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah.

This child-friendly environment strengthening program consists of two main activities: a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and a Child-Friendly Pesantren Workshop, both conducted offline at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta. The FGD involved 19 caregivers along with their coordinator. Meanwhile, the workshop was attended by 80 caregivers, the principal of SMP Asshiddiqiyah, the principal of Madrasah Aliyah Asshiddiqiyah, several senior teachers, as well as the coordinators of male and female caregivers.

During the workshop, participants received guidance on the importance of creating a child-friendly environment in pesantren. Topics covered included the concept of pesantren caregivers, the legal foundations and principles of child-friendly environments, the roles and challenges of caregivers, and the positive impact of a child-friendly environment on the growth and character development of santri, among others.



Figure 2. Child-Friendly Pesantren Workshop

As an outcome of these activities, the majority of workshop participants demonstrated an improved understanding of the importance of a child-friendly pesantren environment in supporting both the comfort and character development of santri. Participants also agreed on the principle of non-discrimination, emphasizing equal treatment of all santri without distinction. The proposed strategies included personal approaches, the cultivation of positive habits, and the implementation of policies that create a safe environment. Caregivers were viewed as surrogate parental figures who hold significant responsibility in shaping santri character and providing guidance in accordance with pesantren values. Several supporting initiatives, such as seminars and caregiver training programs, have been implemented; however, challenges remain, including managing diverse child personalities and addressing persistent seniority practices.

The workshop was considered beneficial for participants as it provided new insights and strengthened the role of caregivers (*wali asuh*). Following the workshop, caregivers planned to implement concrete actions, such as strengthening their relationships with santri and organizing regular meetings. Nevertheless, the workshop also received constructive criticism and suggestions from participants, including the need to shorten the workshop duration and to allocate more time for question-and-answer sessions in order to improve its effectiveness. Participants also recommended that future training programs or workshops address topics more specifically by

accommodating the context of pesantren located in metropolitan areas, provide practical guidebooks, and enhance the proportion of interactive discussion and question-and-answer sessions.

The findings of this study indicate that the Foster Parent program at the Asshiddiqiyah Islamic Boarding School in Jakarta has a strategic position in supporting the realization of child-friendly Islamic boarding schools, but its implementation still faces various multidimensional challenges. When analyzed using Ecological Systems Theory, the problems that arise are not only at the individual student level, but also in the interactions between systems, such as the relationship between students and foster parents (microsystem), the relationship between foster parents with parents and institutions (mesosystem), and the policies and governance of the Islamic boarding school (exosystem).

This is evident in the psychological challenges faced by students (homesickness and adaptation), limited communication with parents, and the structural burden of foster parents who hold multiple roles. This condition reinforces that the effectiveness of parenting cannot be separated from integrated systemic support.

Furthermore, the results of the focus group discussions (FGDs) and workshops indicated that the competence of foster carers before the intervention was still suboptimal, particularly in child psychology, interpersonal communication, and handling student behavior. This aligns with previous findings, which stated that the success of foster care programs in Islamic boarding schools is largely determined by the capacity of the human resources involved. However, this study expands on these findings by demonstrating that weaknesses lie not only with individual foster carers, but also with the lack of clear standard operating procedures (SOPs) and limited ongoing training programs.

The implementation of a Participatory Action Research (PAR)-based upgrading program has been shown to have a positive impact on increasing foster carers' understanding and awareness of the importance of child-friendly parenting. The participatory approach allows foster carers not only to receive theoretical material but also to actively engage in reflection and direct practice in the field. As a result, changes occurred in cognitive aspects (increased understanding), affective aspects (awareness and attitudes), and behavioral aspects (concrete implementation plans such as personal approaches and regular meetings with students). This demonstrates the effectiveness of the PAR approach in the context of human resource empowerment in Islamic boarding schools.

However, the program's effectiveness still faces several limitations, such as the training duration, which is considered less than optimal, the need

for more contextualized materials, and the need for practical guidance that can be used sustainably. Furthermore, structural challenges such as the dual workload of foster carers and a lack of institutional support have the potential to hinder the optimal implementation of training outcomes. Therefore, strengthening policy and governance aspects is necessary, including the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs), a more proportional division of tasks, and the provision of ongoing training.

Overall, this analysis indicates that strengthening the Foster Carer program is not sufficient through individual capacity building alone; it must also be accompanied by institutional reform and comprehensive system support. Therefore, the PAR-based upgrading model developed in this study is not only contextually relevant but also has the potential to serve as a model for developing child-friendly parenting that can be replicated in other Islamic boarding schools.

Conclusion

Caregivers at the Asshiddiqiyah Islamic Boarding School play a crucial role as the frontline in the care, character development, and welfare of students, so the quality of their support significantly determines the overall development of students. The complexity of the challenges faced indicates that capacity building through training and support is an urgent need. Community service programs through focus group discussions (FGDs) and workshops have proven effective in increasing the knowledge, skills, and collective awareness of foster parents regarding the importance of child-friendly care. Theoretically, these findings emphasize the importance of a systemic approach to Islamic boarding school-based care, where individual competencies must be understood in relation to environmental and institutional factors. Practically, the results of this study demonstrate the need to develop sustainable training programs, develop standard operating procedures (SOPs), and strengthen institutional support so that foster parents can optimally carry out their roles. However, the limitations of the programs implemented indicate that capacity building efforts cannot be a one-time effort but require a more systematic, sustainable, and adaptive training design to address the dynamics of caregiving needs in Islamic boarding schools.

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