



A Cultural Management Model for Building an Anti-Bullying Environment in Islamic Boarding Schools: A Case Study of Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Paciran Lamongan

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines how pesantren culture management can be developed as a strategic model to build an anti-bullying environment for santri, using Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Paciran, Lamongan, as the case. Bullying among santri is often rooted not merely in individual behavior but in the organizational culture of the boarding school, including seniority patterns, weak supervision, and unwritten norms that normalize harsh treatment among peers. This research employs a qualitative case study approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews with the kiai, pengasuh, and santri, participant observation of daily boarding life, and documentation of pesantren regulations. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings show that Pondok Pesantren Darussalam develops an anti-bullying culture through four interrelated components: internalization of Islamic values, exemplary leadership from the kiai, structured and participatory supervision, and an educative sanction system supported by a santri reporting mechanism. These components form an integrated cultural management model that shifts bullying prevention from reactive punishment toward proactive value-based culture building. The study concludes that deliberate pesantren culture management can significantly reduce bullying risk and strengthen a safe, brotherly, and educative santri environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) remains an issue that often receives insufficient attention, despite the fact that pesantren are recognized as educational institutions that uphold the values of *ukhuwah* (Islamic brotherhood) and noble character (*akhlaq*). Previous studies have shown that bullying in pesantren exhibits distinctive patterns shaped by the boarding school

culture, seniority, and collective caregiving system (Hamidah, 2020; Hatta, 2018). This phenomenon is frequently perceived as part of the student development process, resulting in responses that are largely reactive and personal rather than addressing the root causes embedded in the institutional cultural management system.

Most previous studies have focused on the psychological impacts of bullying on victims and individual counseling approaches (Firdaus & Aisyah, 2020; Syukur et al., 2022), or on the enforcement of rules and disciplinary sanctions (Arfah & Wantini, 2023). However, studies specifically examining how the organizational culture of pesantren – including Islamic values, the leadership of the *kiai*, supervisory structures, and student participation systems – can be intentionally designed to foster an anti-bullying environment remain limited. From a management perspective, organizational culture is a strategic instrument that can be developed and directed to support institutional goals, including the creation of a safe and supportive environment for all members (Schein, 2010).

Within the context of Islamic education, the *kiai* plays a pivotal role not only as a religious leader but also as the primary architect of institutional culture. Through exemplary conduct, moral guidance, and continuous interaction with students, the *kiai* shapes attitudes, behaviors, and social norms that become deeply embedded in everyday life within the pesantren. Consequently, the effectiveness of bullying prevention depends not only on formal regulations but also on the successful internalization of Islamic values through exemplary leadership.

Furthermore, the communal life practiced in pesantren provides a unique social environment for character formation. Daily interactions among students, caregivers, and religious teachers create continuous opportunities for reinforcing values such as mutual respect, empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. When these values are consistently integrated into institutional management, they function as an internal social control mechanism that discourages aggressive behavior and strengthens harmonious relationships among students.

From the perspective of organizational management, creating an anti-bullying environment requires a comprehensive cultural approach rather than isolated interventions. Effective prevention should involve the alignment of institutional values, leadership practices, supervisory mechanisms, and active student participation within a coherent management framework. Such an approach enables pesantren to cultivate a sustainable organizational culture that promotes psychological safety, mutual trust, and collective responsibility while minimizing the occurrence of bullying.

Based on this research gap, the present study aims to develop a *pesantren cultural management model* for fostering an anti-bullying environment, using a case study of Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, Paciran, Lamongan. The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive examination of how Islamic values, the leadership of the *kiai*, supervisory structures, and participatory

mechanisms among students are integrated into a unified cultural management model, rather than being treated merely as isolated anti-bullying programs.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the internalization of Islamic values in preventing bullying at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School (Pondok Pesantren Darussalam), Paciran, Lamongan. A case study approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore a phenomenon comprehensively within its real-life context by drawing on multiple complementary sources of evidence (Yin, 2018). The research participants consisted of the *kiai* (Islamic boarding school leader), boarding school administrators, dormitory caregivers, and students, who were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in student guidance, supervision, and daily caregiving activities.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation of students' daily activities, and document analysis, including boarding school regulations, student supervision records, and disciplinary reports. The credibility of the findings was ensured through both source triangulation and methodological triangulation (Sugiyono, 2023). The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three iterative stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. These processes were conducted continuously throughout the study to ensure the validity and consistency of the research findings (Miles et al., 2014).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings reveal that Darussalam Islamic Boarding School (Pondok Pesantren Darussalam) in Paciran, Lamongan, has consciously developed an organizational cultural management model to prevent and minimize bullying among students. This model consists of several interconnected cultural components that are implemented consistently in the daily life of the boarding school. The key components of this cultural management model are summarized in the following table.

Table 1.
Components of the Anti-Bullying Cultural Management Model in the Islamic Boarding School

Cultural Component	Implementation	Contribution to Bullying Prevention
Internalization of Islamic Values	Character habituation, daily <i>halaqah</i> (Islamic study circles), and exemplary leadership of the <i>kiai</i> and teachers	Fosters empathy and reduces the culture of seniority among students.
Structural and Participatory Supervision	Multi-level dormitory supervision, dormitory caregivers, and student reporting mechanisms	Facilitates early detection and prompt intervention in bullying cases.

The interrelationship among these components is illustrated in the proposed model, beginning with Islamic Values (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*), followed by Exemplary Leadership (the *kiai*), Value-Based Rules of Conduct (*adab*), Dormitory Caregivers (multi-level supervisory structure), Student Reporting Mechanisms, and Educational Sanctions, ultimately leading to the creation of a Safe and Bullying-Free Boarding School Environment.



Figure 1. Anti-Bullying Cultural Management Model of the Islamic Boarding School

The findings indicate that bullying prevention at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School is not implemented as a stand-alone program but is integrated into the institution's daily organizational culture. This integration encompasses the internalization of Islamic values, the exemplary leadership of the *kiai* and caregivers, as well as the supervisory structure and mechanisms for handling disciplinary violations, thereby fostering a safe, supportive, and bullying-free educational environment.

Internalization of Islamic Values and the Exemplary Leadership of the *Kiai*

The first focus of this study examines how Islamic values are internalized as the foundation of an anti-bullying culture at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, Paciran, Lamongan. The findings from interviews and observations indicate that the value of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood) is consistently instilled as the fundamental principle governing relationships among students. Brotherhood is emphasized above differences in regional origin, socioeconomic background, and seniority. These values are repeatedly reinforced through regular religious lectures, Friday sermons, and student development programs.

The exemplary leadership of the *kiai* and teachers serves as the primary mechanism for transmitting these values. Student participants consistently

reported that the *kiai* not only teaches moral values through religious instruction but also demonstrates them in daily interactions, such as greeting students personally, correcting inappropriate behavior respectfully, and directly mediating conflicts among students rather than delegating the responsibility entirely to boarding school administrators. This pattern of exemplary leadership encourages students to emulate the social behaviors demonstrated by the institution's highest authority figures.

Daily *halaqah* (Islamic study circles) and character-building activities further reinforce students' empathy and self-control. Beyond learning religious knowledge, students are encouraged to reflect critically on their attitudes and behaviors toward their peers, including recognizing that excessive joking and verbal harassment—often perceived as harmless—may constitute forms of bullying.

Observational and documentary evidence further indicates that the internalization of Islamic values has contributed to reducing the culture of seniority, which has traditionally been one of the major factors contributing to bullying in boarding school settings. Senior students who have internalized the values of *ukhuwah* tend to adopt protective rather than intimidating attitudes toward junior students. Nevertheless, the findings also reveal that the effectiveness of value internalization varies across student groups and largely depends on the direct involvement of the *kiai* and senior teachers in students' daily lives.

Supervisory Structure and Student Participation

This study also highlights how supervisory structures and student participation are designed to support an anti-bullying culture. The findings demonstrate that Darussalam Islamic Boarding School implements a multi-level dormitory supervision system, whereby each dormitory unit is supervised by a designated caregiver responsible for monitoring interpersonal relationships and identifying early signs of hidden bullying among students.

In addition to formal supervision, the boarding school has established multiple reporting mechanisms that allow both victims and witnesses to report bullying incidents without fear of retaliation. These mechanisms include complaint boxes, direct reporting to dormitory caregivers or administrators, and weekly evaluation meetings where students are encouraged to express concerns regarding peer relationships. According to school administrators, these accessible reporting channels enable minor incidents to be identified and addressed before escalating into repeated or more severe forms of bullying.

The findings further reveal that senior students are not merely positioned as authority figures within the dormitory system but are actively empowered as agents of the anti-bullying culture through positive leadership development. Selected senior students serve as dormitory leaders or peer mentors after receiving guidance on supervising younger students without intimidation or

violence. This approach transforms the role of senior students from potential perpetrators into collaborative partners in maintaining a safe boarding school environment.

According to both the *kiai* and boarding school administrators, the integration of hierarchical supervision and active student participation enables faster responses to bullying cases than conventional supervision models that rely solely on central leadership. Nevertheless, the study also identifies challenges arising from the limited number of dormitory caregivers relative to the student population in several dormitories, which may reduce the effectiveness of supervision during certain periods, particularly before bedtime.

Educational Sanctions and Reporting Mechanisms

The study further examines the educational sanction system and reporting mechanisms, as well as their contribution to creating a safe environment for students. The findings indicate that sanctions imposed on students involved in bullying are educational rather than punitive, aiming to cultivate moral awareness and personal responsibility instead of relying solely on physical punishment or administrative penalties. Educational sanctions include memorizing selected Qur'anic verses accompanied by reflection on their moral meanings, making public apologies before the *kiai* and the victim, and participating in community service activities such as assisting with dormitory cleaning as a form of social responsibility.

The sanctioning process is conducted through a fair clarification procedure involving dormitory caregivers, administrators, victims, witnesses, and the accused students. Each case is documented in disciplinary records, which serve as the basis for periodic evaluations of recurring violations involving either individual students or specific dormitory groups.

Documentary evidence further demonstrates that following the implementation of educational sanctions integrated with an accessible reporting system, the number of reported severe bullying incidents has gradually declined. At the same time, reports of minor incidents have increased because they are detected and addressed at earlier stages. Boarding school leaders interpret this trend not as an increase in bullying but as evidence of growing student trust in the reporting system. These findings suggest that transparent reporting mechanisms are an essential prerequisite for ensuring that educational sanctions effectively prevent the escalation of bullying within the Islamic boarding school environment.

Discussion

Islamic Values and Kiai Leadership from the Perspective of Organizational Culture Theory

The internalization of Islamic values and the exemplary leadership of the *kiai* is consistent with the concept of organizational culture proposed by Edgar H. Schein which argues that organizational culture is formed through three interconnected levels: visible artifacts, espoused values, and underlying basic assumptions that unconsciously shape the behavior of organizational members (Schein, 2010). In the context of Pondok Pesantren Darussalam, the value of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood) is not merely promoted as a normative slogan but is continuously internalized through the repeated exemplary conduct of the *kiai* and *ustadz*. Over time, these values evolve into deeply rooted basic assumptions that influence how students perceive and interact with one another. This process supports Schein's argument that values consistently demonstrated by organizational leaders—in this case, the *kiai* as the central authority figure of the pesantren—play a decisive role in establishing a strong and enduring organizational culture.

These findings also reinforce the results of (Hamida, 2020), who identified a positive correlation between religiosity and the reduction of bullying behavior among Islamic boarding school students, as well as (Hatta, 2018), who emphasized that strengthening Islamic awareness functions as an internal mechanism for controlling violent behavior. Nevertheless, this study offers a distinct contribution to the broader discourse on religiosity by demonstrating that Islamic values become effective in preventing bullying only when they are consistently embodied by leaders in their daily practices, rather than being conveyed solely through cognitive instruction, religious lectures, or formal religious education. Furthermore, the finding that the effectiveness of value internalization varies across different groups of students and depends significantly on the intensity of the *kiai*'s direct involvement supports Mansir's (Mansir, 2020) argument that the success of modern pesantren management is largely determined by the extent to which the *kiai* actively participates in the daily life and guidance of students, rather than relying exclusively on structural delegation to administrative staff.

From the perspective of Islamic educational leadership, these findings further enrich the understanding that the *kiai*'s exemplary role serves a dual function: as a source of religious authority and as a model of social behavior emulated by students in their everyday interactions. This dual role distinguishes *kiai* leadership significantly from leadership in formal non-boarding educational institutions, where interactions between leaders and students are generally more limited. In the pesantren environment, the intensity and continuity of interaction between the *kiai* and the students facilitate a more profound and sustained process of value modeling, thereby strengthening the internalization of Islamic values and contributing to the development of a harmonious, disciplined, and anti-bullying organizational culture.

Table. Islamic Values and Kiai Leadership in the Perspective of Organizational Culture Theory

Research Findings	Organizational Culture Theory Perspective (Schein, 2010)	Implications
Internalization of Islamic values through the exemplary leadership of the <i>kiai</i>	Values consistently practiced by leaders shape organizational culture.	A religious organizational culture is established, contributing to the prevention of bullying.
The <i>kiai</i>'s exemplary conduct in daily life	Leaders serve as the primary architects of organizational culture.	Students emulate the <i>kiai</i> 's positive attitudes and behaviors.
Habituation of the values of <i>ukhuwah</i> (Islamic brotherhood), <i>ta'zim</i> (respect), and <i>tawadhu'</i> (humility)	Repeatedly practiced values evolve into the organization's underlying basic assumptions.	These values become embedded as students' character traits and daily habits.
The <i>kiai</i>'s direct involvement in mentoring and guiding students	Organizational culture is most effectively socialized through intensive interaction.	The internalization of values becomes stronger, deeper, and more sustainable.

The table above demonstrates that the internalization of Islamic values at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam is carried out through the exemplary conduct and active involvement of the *kiai* in the daily lives of the students. From the perspective of Organizational Culture Theory proposed by Edgar H. Schein organizational culture is formed when the values upheld by leaders are consistently practiced until they become habitual behaviors and underlying assumptions shared by all members of the organization (Schein, 2010). Values such as *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), *ta'zim* (respect), and *tawadhu'* (humility) are not merely taught conceptually but are embodied in the *kiai*'s daily behavior, making them readily observable and easily emulated by students. This process cultivates a religious organizational culture within the pesantren, strengthens students' moral character, and serves as an effective internal control mechanism for preventing bullying and fostering harmonious social relationships among students.

Tiered Supervision and Student Participation from the Perspective of Peer Group Bullying Theory

Tiered supervision and student participation are closely aligned with the Peer Group Bullying Theory developed by Salmivalli, which argues that bullying should not be understood merely as a two-way interaction between the perpetrator and the victim but rather as a group phenomenon involving multiple social roles, including bystanders, assistants or reinforcers of the bully, and defenders of the victim (Salmivalli 2010). In this context, the involvement of senior students as agents of the anti-bullying culture at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam represents a strategic effort to transform students from passive

bystanders or potential supporters of bullying into active defenders who contribute to maintaining a safe and supportive community.

The systematic review conducted by Mohan and further confirms that the active involvement of the school community, particularly peer participation in supervision and reporting, constitutes one of the most effective strategies for reducing bullying compared with approaches that rely solely on adult authority. The findings from Pondok Pesantren Darussalam reinforce this argument while extending it to the boarding school context, where the hierarchical dormitory system supervised by *wali asuh* (student guardians) functions as a formal layer of supervision, whereas senior students serving as mentors for smaller student groups provide an informal layer of supervision characterized by closer emotional relationships with junior students Bakar (Mohan and Bakar, 2021).

The existence of a clear and easily accessible reporting mechanism is also consistent with the principle of open communication emphasized in studies on value dynamics and behavioral change among students in the digital era (Mundiri & Nawiro, 2019), which argue that the effectiveness of value and norm management in Islamic boarding schools depends significantly on transparent communication channels between students and caregivers. Nevertheless, the challenge posed by the limited ratio of guardians to students, as identified in this study, indicates that even a well-designed supervisory structure has practical human limitations. Consequently, strengthening the role of students as collaborative partners in supervision, particularly through the involvement of senior students, becomes an essential strategy for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of the anti-bullying system.

Educational Sanctions from the Perspective of Restorative and Moral Education Approaches

The implementation of educational sanctions reflects the principles of Islamic education, which prioritize moral development (*akhlaq*) rather than punishment alone. This perspective is supported by (Arfah and Wantini, 2023) as well as Syukur, Suud, and Azis, who emphasize healing oriented and moral guidance approaches in addressing both perpetrators and victims of bullying within Islamic boarding schools. The educational sanctions implemented at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam including joint clarification sessions, public apologies, and participation in community service activities can therefore be understood as a restorative approach that focuses on repairing relationships rather than merely retaliating against misconduct. (Syukur, Suud, and Azis, 2022)

This approach is also consistent with Ernawati's findings concerning the importance of protecting students' mental health in bullying interventions, as excessively punitive sanctions may generate additional psychological trauma for both perpetrators and the surrounding social environment (Ernawati, 2022). The increasing number of minor bullying cases reported and addressed at an early stage, as identified in this study, may be interpreted as an indicator of the

system's success in building students' trust in the reporting mechanism. This finding aligns with the principle that openness in reporting constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for effective long-term bullying prevention (Salmivalli, 2010; Mohan & Bakar, 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the literature on organizational culture management in Islamic educational institutions by demonstrating that a model integrating Islamic values, exemplary leadership, participatory supervision, and educational sanctions can be effectively adapted to the unique context of Islamic boarding schools. Such institutions are characterized by long-term residential life and the personal as well as charismatic authority of the *kiai*, distinguishing them from the bureaucratic structures typically found in formal educational institutions. From a practical perspective, the three principal components identified in this study namely, value internalization and exemplary leadership, participatory supervisory structures, and educational sanctions may serve as valuable references for other Islamic boarding schools in designing anti-bullying policies that extend beyond administrative regulations and are deeply rooted in the Islamic values and organizational culture embedded in students' everyday lives. Nevertheless, this research is limited by its single-case study design; therefore, the generalizability of its findings should be approached with caution. Future research employing quantitative, mixed-methods, or multi-site designs across Islamic boarding schools with diverse characteristics is recommended to strengthen the external validity of the proposed model.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that bullying prevention at Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Paciran Lamongan is effectively implemented through an integrated cultural management model that combines the internalization of Islamic values, the exemplary leadership of the *kiai*, structural and participatory supervision, and an educational sanction system supported by accessible student reporting mechanisms. The findings demonstrate that a bullying-free environment cannot be established solely through formal rules and disciplinary policies but requires a living organizational culture in which values such as *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), *ta'zim* (respect), and *tawadhu'* (humility) are consistently practiced in everyday life. The *kiai* plays a central role not only as a religious authority but also as a cultural leader whose exemplary behavior shapes students' character, strengthens social cohesion, and fosters a safe, respectful, and harmonious boarding school environment.

This study contributes to the literature on organizational culture and Islamic educational leadership by demonstrating that the integration of religious values, exemplary leadership, participatory supervision, and restorative educational sanctions constitutes an effective model for preventing bullying in Islamic boarding schools. Practically, the proposed model may serve as a

reference for other pesantren in developing culturally grounded anti-bullying policies that are embedded in Islamic values and daily institutional practices rather than relying solely on administrative regulations. Nevertheless, this research is limited to a single-case qualitative study; therefore, future research is recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of this model using quantitative, mixed-methods, or multi-site approaches across Islamic boarding schools with diverse organizational characteristics, while further exploring the role of senior students as key agents in promoting and sustaining an anti-bullying culture.

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