

Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Campaign as an Implementation of Child Abuse and Exploitation Prevention in Islamic Boarding Schools

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ABSTRACT

Incidents of violence and exploitation in several Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia highlight the urgent need for safer and more child-friendly educational environments. In response, the Ministry of Religious Affairs issued the 2024 Guidelines for Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding Schools in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, caregivers, and child practitioners. However, the implementation of these guidelines remains uneven, revealing a research gap in understanding their practical application. This study aims to examine how the Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Campaign serves as a preventive measure against child abuse and exploitation. Using a library research method, the paper analyzes relevant literature, regulations, and academic discussions, supported by a child-friendly counseling approach to develop constructive implementation arguments. The findings indicate that successful program realization depends on the integrity of school leaders, the active involvement of parents and caregivers, and the creation of a supportive environment based on five core principles: non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, survival and development, participation, and protection. The study contributes to strengthening the theoretical foundation and practical understanding of child protection in Islamic educational settings, offering insights for policymakers and educators to foster safe, inclusive, and nurturing pesantren communities.

Keywords: Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding Schools; Child Protection; Sexual Violence Prevention; Ministry of Religious Affairs; Educational Environment

Introduction

In 2024, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, through the Directorate General of Islamic Education, introduced the Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program under Decree No. 1262 concerning Technical Guidelines for Child-Friendly Care in Islamic Boarding Schools. This

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initiative marked a transformative step in Indonesia's educational policy, emphasizing the creation of a safe, inclusive, and child-centered learning ecosystem within Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The decree was developed through collaboration among the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, *pesantren* caregivers, academics, and child protection practitioners. It reflects the government's proactive response to the growing cases of child abuse and exploitation that have shaken the credibility of religious education institutions across the country.

Public attention to the issue intensified following the tragic 2021 case in Bandung Regency, where thirteen female students became victims of sexual violence committed by a *pesantren* leader. This incident not only revealed systemic weaknesses in child protection but also undermined public confidence in *pesantren* as institutions meant to nurture character, morality, and spiritual integrity. Reports by Komnas Perempuan and other civil organizations in 2024 indicated that such violations were not isolated events but part of broader institutional challenges. These cases called for a reexamination of *pesantren* governance and an urgent need to integrate child protection mechanisms into their educational systems.

Traditionally, *pesantren* have played a vital role in shaping Indonesia's moral and spiritual identity. They are not merely centers of knowledge but also communities that cultivate discipline, humility, and faith. Yet, the hierarchical structure that places the *Kyai* as the ultimate authority often creates asymmetrical power relations. This dynamic, while fostering obedience and respect, can also hinder open communication and make students vulnerable to exploitation or neglect. The Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program addresses these challenges by encouraging *pesantren* leaders to embody ethical integrity, empathy, and accountability, transforming traditional authority into moral guardianship.

The program is closely aligned with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which emphasizes survival, protection, development, and participation. Indonesia's commitment to these principles is reflected in national regulations such as Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection and Government Regulation No. 44 of 2017 concerning the Implementation of Child Care. Within the *pesantren* context, these legal instruments are contextualized through Islamic moral teachings that emphasize mercy, justice, and protection of human dignity. The convergence of these frameworks forms the philosophical foundation for developing a sustainable model of child-friendly *pesantren* that harmonizes religious values with modern human rights standards.

Academic studies have increasingly explored the relationship between child protection and Islamic education. Farhani (2021) examined the potential of *pesantren* as safe and nurturing environments when managed with ethical leadership and emotional sensitivity. Prasetiawan (2016) emphasized the importance of counseling and psychosocial support in child-friendly educational settings, while Risminawati and Rofi'ah (2015) discussed the 3P framework Provision, Protection, and Participation as the foundation of humane and participatory pedagogy. Although these works provide essential theoretical insights, most remain limited to general school contexts and do not deeply

examine the socio-cultural complexities of pesantren. The absence of empirical and conceptual analyses focusing specifically on pesantren-based implementation reveals a significant gap in current research.

This gap highlights the need to understand the Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program not only as a policy framework but also as a social and moral campaign that promotes transformative educational practices. The program operates at both structural and cultural levels, seeking to influence institutional behavior, parental involvement, and student empowerment. However, the success of such a campaign depends heavily on communication strategies, leadership integrity, and active collaboration among stakeholders. Understanding how these dimensions interact is essential for translating the policy into effective action at the grassroots level.

This study therefore aims to examine the Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Campaign as a preventive and transformative effort to address violence and exploitation in pesantren. Using a qualitative library research approach, this study synthesizes relevant documents, academic studies, and government regulations while adopting a child-friendly counseling perspective. This interpretive approach emphasizes empathy, compassion, and reflective understanding as key values in shaping effective child protection frameworks.

The discussion positions the program as both a moral and structural reform, offering a multidimensional understanding of how Islamic education can contribute to national child protection agendas. Theoretically, the study bridges Islamic educational philosophy with contemporary child rights discourse, showing how concepts such as *rahmah* (compassion), *adl* (justice), and *amanah* (trust) can guide institutional reforms in the pesantren system. Practically, the research provides insights for policymakers and educators on designing training programs, monitoring mechanisms, and participatory governance models that align with the principles of safety, dignity, and inclusivity.

The central argument of this research is that the success of the Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program depends on the convergence of moral leadership, institutional reform, and community engagement. When pesantren leaders act as empathetic educators rather than authoritarian figures, when institutional policies embed care and participation as norms, and when communities actively collaborate to protect children, pesantren can truly become environments where knowledge, faith, and humanity coexist in harmony. By strengthening this synergy, the vision of creating Islamic boarding schools that are not only centers of worship and knowledge but also sanctuaries of protection and love for every child can become a lasting reality for Indonesian education.

Method

This study employs a qualitative library research design, focusing on the exploration and interpretation of documents, scholarly works, and policy frameworks related to the Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program. The approach emphasizes conceptual analysis and the synthesis of existing literature to construct an integrative understanding of how the program contributes to the prevention of child abuse and exploitation in Islamic boarding schools.

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical design, allowing the researcher to systematically examine academic publications, government decrees, reports, and relevant documentation from 2015 to 2024. The design was chosen to reveal patterns, principles, and implementation gaps in the child-friendly pesantren movement. This approach aligns with the nature of library research, which relies on secondary data and interpretative reasoning rather than field-based data collection.

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included official documents such as:

1. Director General of Islamic Education Decree No. 1262 of 2024
2. Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Handbook published by the Directorate General of Diniyah Education and Islamic Boarding Schools
3. Government Regulation No. 44 of 2017 on Child Care Implementation

Secondary sources consisted of relevant journal articles, theses, and credible online publications discussing the implementation of child-friendly principles in Islamic education. Notable references include studies by Farhani (2021), Risminawati & Rofi'ah (2015), Hikmawati (2016), and Hafil (2022). All materials were collected using targeted keyword searches in academic databases, digital libraries, and verified institutional repositories.

Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis through three main stages:

1. *Reduction*
Selecting and organizing key materials that address child protection and pesantren reform.
2. *Interpretation*
Interpreting findings through a child-friendly counseling framework, emphasizing empathy, safety, and participatory values.
3. *Synthesis*
Integrating results into a coherent conceptual model that explains how child-friendly pesantren principles such as Provision, Protection, and Participation (3P) function as preventive mechanisms against violence and exploitation.

This analytical process ensures that the study's arguments remain evidence-based, grounded in both Islamic education perspectives and child protection frameworks. The integration of the child-friendly counseling approach enriches the theoretical interpretation, highlighting how emotional and moral awareness among educators, caregivers, and policymakers reinforces the successful implementation of the program.

Results

This section presents the findings derived from the analysis of relevant literature, official documents, and theoretical frameworks concerning the Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program. The results are structured around three key areas reflecting integrity, implementation principles, and transformative paradigms within pesantren contexts.

Integrity of Islamic Boarding Schools through Kyai or Caregivers

The study reveals that the integrity and exemplary conduct of pesantren leaders commonly referred to as Kyai or caregivers are foundational to the success of the Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program. According to the Technical Guidelines for Child-Friendly Care in Islamic Boarding Schools (Decree No. 1262 of 2024), pesantren leaders bear direct responsibility for ensuring that students' rights to safety, education, and emotional development are fulfilled.

The Kyai's role extends beyond administrative leadership; they embody moral guidance and serve as role models of compassion, humility, and discipline. Farhani (2021) emphasizes that the moral integrity of pesantren caregivers influences the emotional security of students and strengthens trust between educators and parents. The exemplary behavior of leaders such as gentle communication, empathetic guidance, and consistent moral instruction creates a nurturing environment conducive to learning and character formation.

Furthermore, the guidelines stipulate that caregivers must:

1. Provide proper care equivalent to parental responsibility;
2. Establish close and secure relationships with students;
3. Ensure the fulfillment of children's basic rights;
4. Report student development to parents regularly; and
5. Immediately inform guardians of any incidents involving violence, neglect, or exploitation.

These responsibilities reinforce the five core principles of child-friendly education non-discrimination, best interests of the child, survival and development, participation, and protection (Directorate General of Diniyah Education and Islamic Boarding Schools, 2024).

Principles of Implementing Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding Schools

The implementation of child-friendly principles in pesantren is guided by the 3P framework Provision, Protection, and Participation as articulated by Senowarsito and Ulumudin (2015).

Provision

Provision refers to the availability of children's basic needs, including affection, health, education, and recreation. Love and warmth between caregivers and students foster psychological security and eliminate fear, thereby enabling active participation in learning. The findings underscore that when pesantren provide emotional safety, students display greater confidence, curiosity, and moral responsibility.

Protection

Protection involves safeguarding children from threats, discrimination, and mistreatment. Despite legal frameworks such as Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, physical punishment, verbal harassment, and gender-based discrimination still occur in some educational settings. Therefore, pesantren must internalize protection values as a non-negotiable cultural norm. In this respect, the Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program acts as both an educational and ethical safeguard.

Participation

Participation empowers children to express opinions, ask questions, and engage in decision-making processes. However, as Prasetiawan (2016) noted, traditional pedagogical styles in Indonesia often limit children's self-expression. Child-friendly pesantren practices encourage dialogic learning teachers listening to students, valuing their voices, and treating them as active contributors to the educational community.

The implementation of the 3P principles thus ensures that pesantren evolve from authority-centered systems into inclusive, participatory learning communities supported by adequate infrastructure, trained educators, and engaged parents.

Transformative Boarding School Paradigm and SWOT Analysis

The third major finding identifies the *Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program* as a transformative paradigm one that shifts pesantren from conservative educational traditions to proactive, rights-based institutions. This paradigm transformation involves several practical strategies:

1. Awareness Education: Training pesantren stakeholders on children's rights and protection mechanisms.
2. Policy Development: Establishing institutional policies and standard operating procedures for handling violence or exploitation.
3. Administrator Training: Enhancing teachers' and caregivers' capacity to implement child-friendly approaches.
4. Safe Environment Creation: Designing physical and emotional safety zones for students' activities.
5. Child Participation Mechanisms: Involving students in communal decision-making to enhance accountability.
6. Collaborative Networks: Partnering with child protection agencies and NGOs for advocacy and resource sharing.

Table 1. Title of the table

No.	Category	Description
1	Strengths	1. Strong commitment to Islamic moral and ethical values that align with child protection principles. 2. The pesantren environment promotes character building and discipline through religious-based education. 3. Governmental and institutional policy support toward developing child-friendly education systems.

No.	Category	Description
2	Weaknesses	1. Limited training and technical capacity among pesantren administrators and caregivers to apply child-friendly approaches. 2. Inadequate infrastructure and facilities to ensure a safe and comfortable learning environment. 3. Absence of standardized written policies on child protection in several pesantren.
3	Opportunities	1. Increasing awareness and advocacy for child rights and safety in Islamic educational settings. 2. Strong potential for collaboration between pesantren, government, and civil society organizations. 3. Growing public trust and support for religious institutions engaged in social reform.
4	Threats	1. Persistence of traditional mindsets resistant to changes in educational and disciplinary approaches. 2. Continued risk of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation due to systemic challenges. 3. Limited funding and uneven implementation of national child-friendly initiatives.

(Source: Adapted from Ngalifatul Hikmah, 2022 and Directorate General of Islamic Education, 2024)

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight that the success of the Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program depends on three interconnected dimensions: leadership integrity, institutional adherence to the 3P principles (Provision, Protection, and Participation), and the transformative paradigm of pesantren reform. Together, these elements shape how pesantren can move from traditional authority-based education toward inclusive, rights-based institutions that prioritize children's safety and holistic development.

Leadership Integrity as the Foundation of Child-Friendly Implementation

The study underscores the central role of Kyai or caregivers in establishing ethical leadership within pesantren. Their moral integrity determines whether child-friendly principles can be effectively realized. This aligns with Farhani (2021), who found that the ethical orientation of pesantren leaders is essential in fostering emotional security among students. The presence of compassionate and transparent leaders helps bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that child protection guidelines are internalized as moral duties rather than administrative obligations.

Furthermore, the Director General of Islamic Education Decree No. 1262 of 2024 mandates that pesantren leaders report regularly on students' welfare and immediately respond to incidents of neglect or abuse. When compared with general school-based child protection frameworks (Hikmawati, 2016), pesantren settings offer unique moral and spiritual dimensions that reinforce care ethics grounded in *akhlaq karimah* (noble character). Thus, the integration of leadership morality and regulatory enforcement forms a dual mechanism for sustaining safety in pesantren environments.

Integration of the 3P Principles: From Policy to Practice

The implementation of the 3P framework Provision, Protection, and Participation constitutes the operational core of the child-friendly pesantren model. The principle of Provision ensures the fulfillment of basic needs and emotional safety, reflecting the Maslowian hierarchy adapted to Islamic education, where love and trust become prerequisites for intellectual growth. The Protection principle, anchored in Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, operationalizes Islamic moral teachings such as *hifz al-nafs* (protection of life) and *hifz al-'irdh* (protection of dignity). These correspondences between Islamic values and legal frameworks signify a culturally embedded approach to child protection. However, as Prasetiawan (2016) noted, disciplinary practices within some pesantren remain hierarchical, which can hinder the internalization of protective behaviors. Therefore, protection must evolve from reactive sanctions to proactive prevention through education, awareness, and empathy-building. Lastly, Participation transforms students from passive recipients of education into active contributors. Encouraging students to express opinions, ask questions, and participate in institutional governance redefines the teacher–student relationship into a partnership based on mutual respect. This participatory model echoes the work of Risminawati & Rofi'ah (2015), who found that open communication and collaborative decision-making significantly enhance the sense of belonging and moral accountability among learners.

The Transformative Paradigm of Pesantren Reform

The Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program serves not merely as a policy intervention but as an ideological transformation of pesantren education. Historically, pesantren have been perceived as closed, paternalistic systems; however, this program repositions them as dynamic, community-based institutions responsive to contemporary social challenges. The SWOT Analysis reveals that pesantren possess inherent strengths religious credibility, moral authority, and community trust that can be leveraged to promote child-friendly reforms. Yet, weaknesses such as limited training and inadequate facilities must be addressed through government-supported capacity-building programs. The Ministry of Religious Affairs (2022) and Hafil (2022) both emphasize gradual and sustainable implementation as a realistic pathway for systemic change.

From a theoretical standpoint, this transformation can be understood through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that a child's development is influenced by the interaction between micro-level (family, caregivers) and macro-level (institutional, policy) factors. The Child-Friendly Pesantren framework operationalizes this ecological interaction by bridging household-level affection with institutional-level governance.

Novelty and Contribution

The novelty of this study lies in conceptualizing the Child-Friendly Pesantren Campaign not only as a policy dissemination tool but as a preventive ecosystem that integrates religious ethics, child rights, and participatory pedagogy. Unlike previous studies that focused solely on policy or protection

mechanisms, this research articulates a holistic paradigm that positions pesantren leaders as agents of transformation.

Practically, the study contributes to policy refinement by identifying specific leadership competencies, training mechanisms, and inter-agency collaborations required for sustainable implementation. Theoretically, it bridges Islamic educational philosophy with child protection studies, offering a culturally rooted yet universally applicable model of child-friendly education.

Implications

The findings suggest that policymakers and educators should prioritize:

1. Integrating child-friendly values into pesantren curricula.
2. Establishing clear standard operating procedures for violence prevention.
3. Conducting continuous training for pesantren caregivers.
4. Encouraging collaboration with government and civil society to monitor implementation.

Such integrated strategies can help pesantren evolve into safe sanctuaries that uphold the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth of every child.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Child-Friendly Islamic Boarding School Program represents a strategic initiative by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs to prevent violence, abuse, and exploitation within pesantren environments. The findings confirm that the effectiveness of the program relies on three interrelated components: the integrity and ethical leadership of pesantren caregivers (Kyai), the consistent application of the 3P principles Provision, Protection, and Participation and the transformation of pesantren into inclusive and participatory educational institutions.

The integration of these dimensions establishes a preventive ecosystem that not only protects children from harm but also promotes their holistic development in accordance with Islamic moral teachings. The leadership integrity of pesantren figures functions as a moral compass that reinforces policy implementation through compassion, transparency, and accountability. Simultaneously, the institutionalization of child-friendly principles ensures that pesantren evolve from traditional authority-based systems into dynamic learning communities grounded in respect, empathy, and collaboration.

The study contributes theoretically by offering a conceptual framework that bridges Islamic education philosophy with contemporary child protection discourse. Practically, it provides strategic insights for policymakers, educators, and child protection advocates to design training programs, regulatory mechanisms, and awareness campaigns that sustain child-friendly practices within pesantren.

Future research may explore empirical assessments of child-friendly pesantren implementation, examining its long-term impact on student welfare, behavioral transformation, and institutional culture. Strengthening data-driven monitoring and intersectoral collaboration between government, pesantren

networks, and civil society will be crucial to ensuring that every Islamic boarding school becomes a safe, nurturing, and empowering environment for children.

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