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Preventing Student Bullying through Spiritual Parenting: Islamic Educational Leadership of Kiyai and Ustadz in a Salafiyah Pesantren

Muslikhin[1]
[1,2,3,4]UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
Email: 123muslikhin@gmail.com
Sam'un[2]
Email: samun@uinsgd.ac.id
Mohammad Aqil Baihaqi[3]
Email: aqilbaihaqi.official@gmail.com
Nina Napisah[4]
Email: ninadila27@gmail.com
Rifki Dini[5]
[5]Kırklareli University, Kırklareli, Turkey
Email: rifkidini1909@gmail.com

Abstract: Bullying in boarding institutions harms student well-being and raises safety concerns regarding Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Although studies examine general risk factors, few address how the parent-like authority of the Kiyai and Ustadz functions in daily dormitory life. This study explores how the spiritual-authoritative parenting of the Kiyai and Ustadz prevents bullying among students (santri) in a West Java Salafiyah pesantren, identifies persisting forms of bullying, and examines limitations to this approach. A qualitative single-case study was conducted (September–November 2024). Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with the Mudir, four Ustadz, and fifteen santri, participant observation, and document analysis, using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive analysis model alongside source and technique triangulation. Spiritual parenting integrates emotional warmth, consistent discipline, moral modelling (uswah hasanah), and open communication. These function via kitab kuning study, 24-hour paternalistic social control, and educational sanctions (ta'zir). Physical bullying was rare, whereas verbal bullying disguised as jokes (guyonan) persisted. Relational and cyberbullying were harder to detect, and deep reverence (segan) toward the Kiyai restricted direct reporting. The study provides a context-specific model of spiritual parenting as Islamic educational leadership, extends authoritative parenting and social learning frameworks to pesantren, and proposes culturally grounded anti-bullying strategies for school management.

Keywords: Bullying Prevention; Islamic Educational Leadership; Spiritual Parenting
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INTRODUCTION

Bullying, understood as repeated aggressive behavior in which a more powerful student targets a less powerful one, remains a global educational problem. A survey of more than 317,000 adolescents in 83 countries found that about 30.5% had been bullied in the previous 30 days, and that peer and parental support were linked to a lower risk of victimisation (Biswas et al., 2020). The consequences are serious: victimisation is associated with depression, anxiety, and other mental-health problems in childhood and adolescence (Moore et al., 2017). School-based programmes reduce bullying perpetration by roughly 19–20% and victimisation by roughly 15–16% (Gaffney et al., 2019), and larger effects are associated with components such as a whole-school approach, anti-bullying policies, classroom rules, and information for parents (Gaffney et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, the 2022 National Assessment (*Asesmen Nasional*) indicated that 36.31% of students were potentially exposed to bullying (Republika, 2023). The problem is especially salient in *pesantren*, Islamic boarding schools in which students (*santri*) live in dormitories under the supervision of a Kiyai (the *pesantren* leader and spiritual teacher) and Ustadz (teachers who often serve as dormitory supervisors). Prevalence data specific to *pesantren* remain limited, but the available signals are consistent. In 2024, the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs noted that violence in *pesantren* recurs and often stems from bullying and power imbalances (Kemenko PMK, 2024). A systematic review of 21 studies concluded that bullying damages *santri*'s psychological well-being and that peers, teachers, parents, and digital media shape its occurrence (Khoir & Kurniawati, 2025). A descriptive survey of *santri* in Depok, West Java, found verbal bullying to be the most common form, followed by physical and sexual bullying (Hartini et al., 2026). Research on boarding schools elsewhere likewise shows that students' perceptions of bullying are related to lower physical and emotional safety (Fredrick et al., 2021).

Salafiyah pesantren, the traditional type built around the study of classical texts (*kitab kuning*), present a distinctive context. *Santri* live in the institution day and night, their relations are structured by seniority, and the Kiyai holds a central moral authority that is exercised through ritual, example, and personal relationship rather than formal procedure (Akrim & Umiarso, 2023; Apud et al., 2020). The kiai–*santri* relationship is grounded in respect and obedience, yet it is hierarchical and not always harmonious (Achmadin et al., 2024). In such a setting the Kiyai and Ustadz act as surrogate parents who care for, discipline, and morally guide *santri*, which makes parenting research a relevant lens.

Parenting research distinguishes authoritative parenting, which combines warmth with firm and consistent control, from authoritarian and permissive styles (Baumrind, 1971). Meta-analytic evidence links parenting dimensions with children's externalizing problems (Pinquart, 2017) and family and parenting characteristics with involvement in bullying (Nocentini et al., 2019). The same logic extends to schools: an authoritative school climate that combines structure and support is associated with fewer risk behaviors among students (Cornell & Huang, 2016), and closer teacher–student relationships are associated with less bullying perpetration and victimisation (ten Bokkel et al., 2023). Meta-analytic

research has also asked whether the associations of parenting styles with behavior problems vary by culture (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018), so findings from parent child studies outside Indonesia cannot simply be assumed to apply when the "parents" are religious leaders in a hierarchical institution.

Research in *pesantren* has begun to address bullying. Qualitative studies report that caregivers and teachers prevent bullying through role modelling, interpersonal communication, seminars, and character-education programmes (Arif & Noorhayati, 2024; Aunullah et al., 2024), and individual factors such as emotional intelligence and personality are associated with *santri* bullying behavior (Oktaviani et al., 2020). Other studies examine moral and spiritual formation (Milah et al., 2024; Suciati et al., 2025; Suhartini, 2016), character education (Baharun & Maryam, 2019), the assessment of *santri* attitudes (Taupikurrahman & Purnasari, 2024), and prevention programmes for *santri* (Sadiah, 2022).

Taken together, this literature establishes that bullying is widespread and harmful, that warm-but-firm adult authority and positive teacher–student relationships are protective, and that *pesantren* caregivers draw on modelling, communication, and character education. Three issues nevertheless remain unresolved, and the evidence on each is thinner than the volume of literature suggests. First, the evidence linking parenting to bullying comes largely from parent–child relations and variable-oriented designs outside *pesantren*, and therefore says little about how a parent-like authority exercised by Kiyai and Ustadz around the clock works in a *Salafiyah* setting. Second, *pesantren* studies tend to describe programmes or leadership in general terms; the systematic review by Khoir and Kurniawati (2025) notes that intervention strategies in *pesantren* mainly target internal, person-focused influences, and the survey evidence available (e.g., Hartini et al., 2026) is descriptive and based on a small sample. Few studies unpack how specific dimensions of caregiving relate to specific forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, and cyber). Third, the limits of hierarchical authority, for example whether reverence inhibits students from reporting, and its reach into digital interactions are rarely examined. These gaps call for an in-depth case study that can explain *how* and *why* rather than only *whether*.

This study responds through a qualitative single-case study of a *Salafiyah pesantren* in West Java. It uses four dimensions of parenting derived from the parenting literature, namely emotional warmth, disciplinary consistency, moral modelling (*uswah hasanah*), and communicative openness, as sensitizing concepts that guide the inquiry rather than as variables to be measured, so that mechanisms can emerge inductively from the data. Its novelty is threefold. It (1) relates the parenting of Kiyai and Ustadz to specific forms of bullying, (2) identifies the mechanisms through which this parenting operates, and (3) identifies the boundary conditions under which it loses reach. In doing so it contributes to scholarship on Islamic educational leadership by showing how spiritual authority is enacted as everyday parenting.

Accordingly, the study addresses three research questions: (1) How do Kiyai and Ustadz enact spiritual-authoritative parenting in everyday *pesantren*

life? (2) Which forms of bullying occur among *santri*, and how visible are they to the adults? (3) Through which mechanisms is bullying reduced, and what limits the reach of this parenting? The study aims to describe the parenting practices, identify the forms of bullying, and explain the mechanisms and boundary conditions, in order to propose a context-specific model for bullying prevention in *Salafiyah pesantren*.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative, single-case study design with a descriptive-analytical orientation. A case study suits the aim of explaining *how* a social process works within its real-life context, and the *Salafiyah pesantren* was treated as a bounded case in which the actions of the Kiyai and Ustadz, the daily life of the *santri*, and the institutional rules could be examined together (Miles et al., 2014). Because the study is qualitative, it does not test hypotheses or measure relationships between variables; its claims are interpretive and are supported by interview, observation, and document evidence.

The research was conducted between September and November 2024 at a traditional *Salafiyah* Islamic boarding school in West Java, Indonesia. The site was selected purposively because it displays the features that define the *Salafiyah* type and that are central to the research questions: *santri* reside in dormitories around the clock, the curriculum is organized around *kitab kuning* study, and the Kiyai, assisted by Ustadz who also serve as dormitory supervisors, holds central moral authority. To protect the institution and its members, the name and exact location of the *pesantren* are anonymized.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling in order to obtain information-rich perspectives from different levels of the institutional hierarchy. They comprised the *Mudir* (Lead Kiyai, code K1), four Ustadz serving as dormitory supervisors (U1–U4), and fifteen *santri* (S1–S15) who had witnessed or experienced bullying dynamics in the dormitory. Including adults and students, and *santri* with different positions in the seniority structure, allowed the study to capture how the same practices are understood from above and from below and to compare accounts across informants.

Data were collected through three techniques. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to capture the Kiyai's and Ustadz's underlying philosophies of care and discipline and the *santri*'s subjective experiences of bullying. Second, participant observation monitored daily interactions in the dormitories, mosque, and classrooms, with attention to non-verbal cues, social hierarchies, and "hidden" bullying that often escapes formal administrative reporting. Third, document study examined institutional regulations, student conduct records, and the curriculum of classical ethics (*akhlak*). Interview, observation, and document data are cited in the findings with the codes I (interview), OBS (observation), and DOC (document).

The primary instrument was the researcher as a "human instrument", supported by interview guides, an observation protocol and field notes, and digital recording devices. The interview guide was organized around the four sensitizing dimensions of parenting (emotional involvement, disciplinary

consistency, moral modelling, and communication quality) and around *santri*'s experiences and perceptions of bullying; open-ended probes allowed informants to introduce issues that the guide did not anticipate.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), which consists of three concurrent flows of activity. In data condensation, transcripts and field notes were read repeatedly and coded in two cycles: first-cycle descriptive and in vivo codes preserved informants' own terms (e.g., *guyonan*, *segan*), and second-cycle pattern coding grouped codes into categories and themes. The four parenting dimensions served as sensitizing concepts, whereas the mechanisms of bullying reduction and the boundary conditions emerged inductively. In data display, matrices cross-tabulating themes with data sources (Tables 1–4) were used to examine patterns. In conclusion drawing and verification, tentative interpretations were tested by comparing accounts across informants (Kiyai, Ustadz, *santri*) and across sources (interviews, observations, documents) and by searching for disconfirming evidence before the final themes were formulated.

Trustworthiness was supported through source triangulation across the three informant groups and technique triangulation across interviews, observation, and documents, together with an audit trail of field notes and coding decisions (Nowell et al., 2017). Thick description of the setting and practices is provided so that readers can judge the transferability of the findings to other settings.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, and *santri* were assured that their participation, or refusal to participate, would have no impact on their academic standing or their relationship with the boarding school authorities. To protect privacy and the institutional reputation of the *pesantren*, the names of individuals and the specific location were anonymized.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the interviews with twenty informants, participant observation in the dormitories, mosque, and classrooms, and institutional documents produced four themes: (1) spiritual-authoritative parenting as an *Abah–Anak* (Father–Child) configuration, (2) the forms and visibility of bullying among *santri*, (3) three mechanisms through which bullying is reduced, and (4) the limits of this parenting arising from reverence-based communication and digital interactions (Table 1). The findings are presented theme by theme and are then interpreted in light of relevant theory and previous studies; an integrated model closes the section.

Table 1. Themes, sub-themes, and main data sources

Theme	Sub-themes	Main data sources
1. Spiritual-authoritative parenting	Emotional warmth (*Abah–Anak* bond); disciplinary consistency; moral modelling (*uswah hasanah*); communicative openness	I (K1, U1–U4, S1–S15); OBS; DOC
2. Bullying among *santri*	Physical; verbal (*guyonan*); relational; cyber	I (U1–U4, S1–S15); OBS; DOC (conduct records)
3. Mechanisms of reduction	Internalization of *akhlakul karimah* through *kitab kuning*; 24-hour paternalistic social control; educational sanctions (*ta'zir*)	I (K1, U1–U4); OBS; DOC (regulations, curriculum)
4. Limits and boundary conditions	Reverence (*segan*) and under-reporting; indirect communication; clandestine digital use	I (U1–U4, S1–S15); OBS

Note. I = interview; OBS = observation; DOC = document; K1 = Mudir (Lead Kiyai); U = Ustadz; S = santri.

Theme 1: Spiritual-authoritative parenting

The parenting enacted by the Kiyai and Ustadz can be characterized as a "spiritual-authoritative" model that blends traditional religious values with structured disciplinary oversight. It was expressed through four dimensions (Table 2).

Table 2. Dimensions of spiritual-authoritative parenting, observed practices, and associated forms of bullying

Dimension	Observed practices	Illustrative evidence	Forms of bullying most associated
Emotional warmth	Kiyai as surrogate father (*Abah*); *mushofahah*; informal evening circles; belonging	[I-U#, I-S#, atau OBS-#]	Verbal and physical (also supports the brotherhood norm against relational bullying)
Disciplinary consistency	Fixed dormitory schedules; congregational worship (*jama'ah*); predictable *ta'zir*	[I-U#, OBS-#, atau DOC-#]	Physical and verbal
Moral modelling (*uswah hasanah*)	Kiyai and Ustadz embody *akhlakul karimah*; humility (*tawadhu*) toward juniors	OBS	Relational (and verbal)
Communicative openness	Informal *halaqah*; early detection of friction by adults	[I-U#]	Verbal and cyber, when detected early; limited by *segan* (Theme 4)

Note. Associations between dimensions and forms of bullying summarize informants' accounts and the researcher's observations; they are interpretive, not statistical.

Emotional warmth

The Kiyai was viewed not merely as a teacher but as a surrogate father (*Abah*), and the *santri* as his children (*anak*). This *Abah–Anak* relationship was expressed through everyday rituals such as *mushofahah* (shaking hands) and informal evening circles, which fostered a sense of belonging and safety that the adults regarded as a precondition for effective behavioral guidance.

Disciplinary consistency

Discipline was maintained through dormitory schedules, congregational worship (*jama'ah*), and the *ta'zir* system. In contrast with punitive measures as understood in secular institutions, discipline was framed as an educational ritual, and the predictability of routines and sanctions was seen as discouraging deviant impulses.

Moral modelling (uswah hasanah)

The Kiyai and Ustadz were expected to embody *akhlakul karimah* (noble character). Their patience and humility served as a living example that *santri* were socially conditioned to emulate, and informants regarded this exemplary conduct as a powerful deterrent against aggression

Communicative openness

Despite the strict hierarchy, informal spiritual circles (*halaqah*) served as channels through which the Kiyai and Ustadz could detect interpersonal friction early and address potential conflicts before they escalated into overt bullying. As Theme 4 shows, however, these channels relied largely on the adults' own observation rather than on direct reports from *santri*.

Theme 2: Forms and visibility of bullying among santri

The investigation categorized bullying behaviors observed in the communal living spaces into four manifestations that differ in frequency and in how visible they are to the adults (Table 3).

Physical bullying, such as hitting or forceful intimidation, was relatively infrequent and strictly suppressed by the institutional authorities. Most physical incidents were categorized as "rough play" that borders on intimidation and was mitigated immediately through traditional mediation. Verbal bullying was the most prevalent form: derogatory name-calling or mocking based on regional dialects or physical characteristics. Because it was often masked as "joking" (*guyonan*), it required the Ustadz to recalibrate constantly the boundary between fraternal humor and harmful harassment.

Relational bullying appeared as social exclusion or the "silent treatment", particularly during intensive group study or dormitory chores. It was difficult to detect through formal observation and was countered mainly by the *pesantren*'s pervasive emphasis on *ukhuwah* (Islamic brotherhood). Finally, cyber bullying emerged as isolated cases of online intimidation made possible by the clandestine use of digital devices despite strict regulations. These patterns resemble the predominance of verbal bullying reported in a survey of *pesantren* (Hartini et al., 2026) and the role of peers and digital media identified in the systematic review by Khoir and Kurniawati (2025).

Table 3. Forms of bullying among santri: manifestations, frequency, and visibility to adults

Form	Typical manifestations	Relative frequency	Visibility to adults
Physical	Hitting; forceful intimidation; "rough play" bordering on intimidation	Relatively infrequent	High: suppressed quickly and mediated
Verbal	Derogatory name-calling; mocking of regional dialect or physical traits, often framed as *guyonan*	Most prevalent	Medium: boundary between humor and harassment is blurred
Relational	Social exclusion; "silent treatment" during group study or chores	Present but subtle	Low: hard to detect through formal observation
Cyber	Online intimidation through clandestinely used devices	Isolated cases	Low: occurs outside physical presence

Theme 3: Three mechanisms of bullying reduction

The data point to three mechanisms through which the four parenting dimensions reduced bullying (Table 4).

Internalization of akhlakul karimah through kitab kuning study

The Kiyai and Ustadz were described as the living embodiment of the *kitab kuning* they teach, and the curriculum of classical ethics (*akhlak*) supplied the moral vocabulary, such as humility (*tawadhu*), patience (*sabar*), and brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), that adults used to name, correct, and discourage mocking and exclusion. This process can be read as a movement from external compliance to internal conviction, which in Islamic educational thought corresponds to the education of the heart (*tarbiyah al-qolb*).

24-hour social control based on paternalistic authority

Because the Ustadz are present throughout prayer, study, meals, and dormitory chores, little unsupervised time remains in which a "seniority vacuum" could allow bullying to take root. This presence was framed as paternalistic care rather than surveillance: the "disciplinary gaze" was pervasive but paternal, and it deterred physical and verbal intimidation.

Educational sanctions (ta'zir)

Sanctions were applied consistently and framed as a means of spiritual growth (*tazkiyatun nafs*) rather than as secular punishment. Students understood that aggression had immediate consequences that were both administrative and spiritually meaningful, and the cost of violating the institution's *manhaj* (methodology) of discipline was perceived as a barrier to obtaining *barakah* (blessing) from teachers.

Table 4. Mechanisms of bullying reduction, parenting dimensions involved, and forms of bullying most affected

Mechanism	Parenting dimensions involved	Forms most affected	Representative practices
Internalization of *akhlakul karimah* through *kitab kuning*	Moral modelling; emotional warmth	Verbal; relational	Classical ethics (*akhlak*) curriculum; Kiyai and Ustadz embodying the texts
24-hour paternalistic social control	Disciplinary consistency; communicative openness	Physical; verbal	Ustadz as dormitory supervisors; schedules and congregational worship; early detection in informal circles
Educational sanctions (*ta'zir*)	Disciplinary consistency	Physical; verbal	Predictable sanctions framed as moral training; mediation; concern for *barakah*

Theme 4: Limits of parenting authority

A recurring finding concerns the limits of communicative openness. Although the Kiyai offered an "open door", the relationship between *santri* and Kiyai was governed by the principle of *sami'na wa atho'na* (we hear and we obey) and a high level of reverence (*segan*). Direct reporting of bullying could be perceived as a breach of *adab* (etiquette) or as a sign of being an "unsuccessful" *santri* who lacks resilience (*sabar*). Communication therefore tended to flow through indirect, high-context signals that the adults had to read, rather than through explicit verbal reports.

A second limit concerns digital interaction. The clandestine use of devices created a space in which cyber bullying, although isolated, escaped the physical presence and spiritual authority on which the system relies.

Discussion: interpreting the findings

Emotional warmth as surrogate attachment

The *Abah–Anak* bond can be interpreted through attachment theory, which holds that secure relationships with caregivers support socioemotional development (Bowlby, 1982; Groh et al., 2017). When *santri* experience the Kiyai and Ustadz as emotionally available figures, the psychological drive to gain status through the domination of peers may weaken. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that closer teacher–student relationships go together with less bullying perpetration and victimisation (ten Bokkel et al., 2023) and that parenting characteristics shape involvement in bullying (Nocentini et al., 2019). The Islamic concept of mercy (*rahmah*; *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin*), expressed in the Kiyai's paternal affection and in rituals such as *mushofahah*, supplies a culturally specific route: by experiencing mercy, *santri* may come to internalize empathy as a value rather than as a rule. This matters because lower empathy characterizes students who bully (Zych et al., 2019). Because the data are qualitative and drawn from a single case, these links should be read as plausible mechanisms rather than tested causal paths.

Discipline and ta'zir as authoritative structure

Disciplinary consistency and *ta'zir* correspond to the demandingness side of Baumrind's (1971) authoritative pattern, in which firm control is combined with warmth. School-climate research shows that structure and support together, rather than either alone, are associated with fewer risk behaviors (Cornell & Huang, 2016), and meta-analytic evidence links warmth, behavioral control, and authoritative parenting to fewer externalizing problems, and psychological control and authoritarian parenting to more (Pinquart, 2017). The *pesantren* case suggests how structure can be experienced as supportive: *ta'zir* is framed as purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and spiritual training (*riyadhah* and *mujahadah*) rather than retribution, so that consistency conveys care. Intervention research also points to the value of clear and consistently applied rules: larger effects of anti-bullying programmes are associated with classroom rules, anti-bullying policies, and a whole-school approach (Gaffney et al., 2021), which resonates with the *pesantren*'s reliance on shared routines and predictable sanctions. This authoritative reading is, however, conditional on sanctions being perceived as educational rather than harsh, a condition that bears on the reporting problem discussed below.

Moral modelling and social learning

The prominence that informants gave to *uswah hasanah* is consistent with social cognitive theory, in which people acquire behavior and standards by observing influential models and the consequences that follow (Bandura, 2001). Unlike anti-bullying rules that remain abstract, the conduct of the Kiyai and Ustadz forms a visible curriculum: when a Kiyai shows humility (*tawadhu*) toward juniors, social exclusion or mockery becomes morally difficult to justify. In terms of moral psychology, such modelling may limit moral disengagement, the cognitive justification of harmful conduct, which is associated with bullying in youth (Killer et al., 2019). Modelling also extends to how adults respond to incidents, and teachers' responses to bullying depend on their characteristics and

contexts (Yoon et al., 2016), which suggests that training Ustadz to recognize *guyonan* that crosses into harassment is not a peripheral matter. These findings are consistent with Arif and Noorhayati (2024) and Aunullah et al. (2024), who also identified role modelling among the strategies of *pesantren* caregivers, and they extend those studies by showing how modelling is tied to *kitab kuning*-based ethics and sustained through 24-hour co-presence.

Reverence and the limits of communicative openness

The limits of communicative openness qualify the assumption that open dialogue is a primary route to reducing school violence. In the *pesantren*, communication was filtered by reverence (*segan*) and the *sami'na wa atho'na* ethos, in line with descriptions of the kiai–*santri* relationship as hierarchical and grounded in respect and obedience (Achmadin et al., 2024). Cross-cultural meta-analytic work asks whether the associations of parenting styles with youth outcomes vary by culture (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018), and the present case illustrates how authority that is experienced as caring can nonetheless make direct disclosure costly. The implication is not that dialogue is unimportant but that it needs culturally congruent forms. In one boarding school, perceived mental-health support buffered the association between bullying and emotional safety for male students (Fredrick et al., 2021), and *pesantren* caregivers have used interpersonal communication and seminars as strategies (Aunullah et al., 2024). Peer-based channels, such as senior–junior mentoring under the Kiyai's spiritual supervision, may serve as a cultural bridge between *santri* and the high authority of the Kiyai.

Digital interaction beyond physical presence

The cyber bullying identified here was isolated but analytically important because it lies outside a system that relies on physical presence. Reviews of the global situation of cyberbullying document its risk factors and preventive measures (Zhu et al., 2021), and work on the parental role in preventing adolescent cyberbullying shows that adult caregivers retain a part to play in digital environments (Elsaesser et al., 2017). Translated to *pesantren*, where device use is restricted but social media are not alien to *pesantren* life (Halim, 2018), this suggests that restriction alone is unlikely to suffice; a culturally congruent response is digital literacy framed within religious ethics (*adab*) and delivered by Ustadz who are themselves prepared to understand online interaction. This is consistent with the identification of digital media as one of the factors shaping bullying among *santri* (Khoir & Kurniawati, 2025).

An integrated model

Figure 1 integrates the findings. Four dimensions of spiritual-authoritative parenting operate through three mechanisms and are associated with a differentiated pattern of bullying: physical aggression is most readily suppressed; verbal and relational aggression are addressed through internalized moral norms but remain difficult to detect when framed as joking or silent exclusion; and cyber bullying lies at the margin of the system. Two boundary conditions, reverence-based under-reporting and clandestine digital use, limit communicative openness and the reach of the model. The model is analytical

rather than predictive; it is derived from one case and should be examined in other *pesantren*.

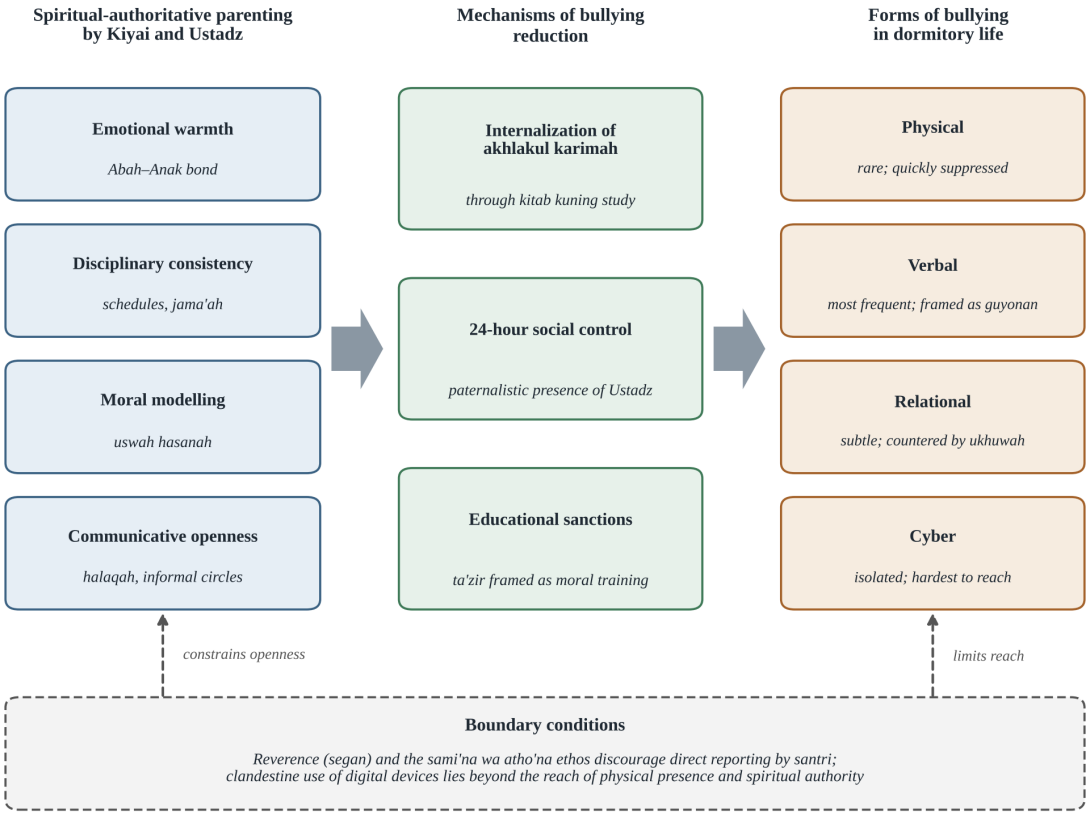


Figure 1. Spiritual parenting model for bullying prevention in a Salafiyah pesantren (authors' analysis)

Theoretical contribution and practical implications

The study makes three contributions. First, it extends authoritative-parenting and social-learning perspectives to a religious boarding institution by showing that moral modelling (*uswah hasanah*), often a background factor in parenting models, becomes a distinct and central dimension when the caregiver is also a spiritual exemplar. Second, it contributes to scholarship on Islamic educational leadership by showing how charismatic spiritual authority (Akrim & Umiarso, 2023) is enacted as everyday parenting that protects against bullying, and by specifying the mechanisms and limits of this protection. Third, it indicates that culturally grounded practices can complement, rather than replace, formal anti-bullying procedures. For *pesantren* management, the findings suggest training Ustadz as emotional mentors who can read indirect signals and distinguish *guyonan* from harassment, developing senior–junior mediation circles grounded in *islah* (reconciliation) and *ukhuwah* under the Kiyai's spiritual supervision, and integrating digital literacy into the teaching of *akhlak*.

Limitations

Several limitations should be noted. The study is a single case in one *Salafiyah pesantren*, so its findings are transferable by analytic and contextual similarity rather than statistically generalizable (Smith, 2018). Accounts of bullying rest on informants' reports and on observation by an outsider, and may be affected by social desirability, especially when *santri* speak about a Kiyai whom they revere. The study did not compare the *pesantren* with modern-style schools, so no claim can be made about the relative effectiveness of spiritual parenting. Future studies could examine several *pesantren*, include longitudinal or mixed-method designs, and give *santri*'s digital interactions closer attention.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

This study shows that, in the *Salafiyah pesantren* examined, bullying is reduced not by formal rules alone but by a spiritual-authoritative parenting in which Kiyai and Ustadz combine emotional warmth, consistent discipline, moral modelling, and informal communicative openness. In answer to the research questions, (1) this parenting is enacted through the *Abah–Anak* relationship, predictable *ta'zir*, exemplary conduct, and *halaqah*; (2) physical bullying is rare and quickly suppressed, whereas verbal bullying framed as *guyonan* is the most frequent form and relational and cyber bullying are the least visible; and (3) bullying is reduced through the internalization of *akhlakul karimah* via *kitab kuning* study, 24-hour paternalistic social control, and educational sanctions, with a reach limited by reverence-based under-reporting and clandestine digital use. The principal contribution is a context-specific model of spiritual parenting as Islamic educational leadership, which extends authoritative-parenting and social-learning perspectives to *pesantren* and indicates that bullying prevention in such institutions should strengthen the mentoring role of Ustadz, build culturally congruent reporting channels, and extend moral guidance to digital life.

Implication

Three recommendations follow from the findings. (1) For Kiyai and Ustadz (Themes 1 and 3): maintain paternalistic warmth and consistent, educationally framed *ta'zir*, and remain alert to *guyonan* that crosses into harassment. (2) For pesantren management (Theme 4): establish senior–junior mediation circles under the Kiyai's spiritual supervision as indirect reporting channels, and train Ustadz as mentors who can read indirect signals. (3) For policymakers and pesantren supervisors (Themes 2 and 4): provide training that integrates contemporary psychological insights with classical ethics and that addresses *santri*'s digital interactions. Future research should test the model in other *pesantren*, including modern style institutions, and examine digital interactions among *santri* in greater depth.

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