

The Implementation of Child-Friendly Education in the Learning Environment of Elementary-Age Santri in Islamic Boarding Schools

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis implementasi pendidikan ramah anak bagi *santri* usia sekolah dasar di Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an, menjawab keterbatasan kajian mengenai praktik sehari-hari di lingkungan pesantren. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan wawancara mendalam dengan pengasuh, pendidik, dan santri. Analisis data mengikuti model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña. Temuan menunjukkan implementasi melalui tiga strategi utama: (1) penciptaan lingkungan belajar yang aman dan sesuai kebutuhan perkembangan anak; (2) pembinaan hubungan dialogis antara pendidik dan santri; serta (3) penerapan disiplin yang menekankan pembiasaan dan komunikasi konstruktif. Pendekatan terpadu ini menciptakan iklim belajar yang nyaman dan meningkatkan keterlibatan santri. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendidikan ramah anak dapat dibangun melalui praktik pedagogis sehari-hari di pesantren, yang potensial menjadi lingkungan belajar holistik bagi perkembangan anak

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the implementation of child-friendly education for elementary school-aged santri at Hidayatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School, addressing a gap in literature on daily practices within such settings. Using a qualitative case study, data were gathered via observation and interviews with administrators, educators, and students. Analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model. Findings indicate implementation through three primary strategies: (1) ensuring a safe, developmentally-appropriate learning environment; (2) building dialogical educator-student relationships; and (3) applying discipline focused on habit formation and constructive communication. This integrated approach fosters a positive learning climate and enhances student engagement. The study concludes that child-friendly education is viably cultivated through everyday pedagogical practices in Islamic boarding schools, demonstrating their potential as holistic learning environments for child development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social changes triggered by technological developments, globalization, and contemporary cultural dynamics have brought new challenges in the world of education, particularly in terms of character building and the protection of elementary school-aged children (Kurniawati et al., 2023). Children at this stage are in a vulnerable phase of development, where the learning environment has a significant influence on the formation of attitudes, behaviors, and values that will remain with them into adulthood (Tussubha & Hadiyanto, 2020). Therefore, education is not only required to transmit academic knowledge but also to ensure the creation of a safe, comfortable, and supportive learning environment that optimally fosters children's growth and development.

Various social phenomena indicate that issues of violence and child rights violations remain serious problems in education. Juvenile delinquency, aggressive behavior, and bullying do not arise suddenly but are rooted in experiences of education that is not child-friendly (Erdianti & Al-Fatih, 2020; Natsir & Zulmuqim, 2023). Exposure to diverse values without proper guidance, unequal relationships between

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educators and students, and a stressful learning environment have the potential to hinder children's psychological and social development. This condition emphasizes the importance of an educational approach that places children as the main subjects in the learning process (Albert et al., 2023).

Child-friendly education is an approach that emphasizes the fulfillment of children's rights, protection from violence, and active participation of children in the educational process. This concept requires a paradigm shift from education that is oriented towards obedience and punishment to education that respects the dignity, needs, and potential of children (Aziz et al., 2025; Hajaroh et al., 2020). In the view of basic education, child-friendly education is not only related to teaching methods in the classroom, but also includes the management of the learning environment, patterns of social interaction, and the culture of the educational institution as a whole (Jailani et al., 2025).

In Indonesia, education is a fundamental right of every citizen as guaranteed in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The state has also established various regulations to protect children from violence and discrimination, including the National Education System Law and the Child Protection Law (Nugraha, 2023). However, these regulations have not been fully implemented in the form of child-friendly educational practices in the field. Facts show that cases of violence against children still frequently occur in educational environments, whether physical, verbal, or psychological, including in educational units that should be safe spaces for children (Jaenal, 2024).

The learning environment plays a central role in shaping children's educational experiences. A positive learning environment is characterized by a sense of security, warm relationships between educators and students, and opportunities for children to express themselves without fear (Fadhil Nur Hidayat et al., 2023; Kholidah et al., 2025). Conversely, a learning environment fraught with pressure and violence can have long-term effects, such as decreased motivation to learn, anxiety, and a tendency for children to imitate the aggressive behavior they experience (Muzawir Munawarsyah, 2023). Therefore, efforts to create a child-friendly learning environment are an urgent need in primary education.

Violence against children in the context of education is often hidden behind disciplinary practices that are considered normal, such as yelling, humiliating, physical punishment, or allowing bullying among students, which are still found in various educational institutions (Doni Sastrawan et al., 2024; Juariah & Sobari, 2025). In fact, these actions not only violate the principles of child protection but also contradict the goals of education that are oriented towards character and humanity development. In the long term, experiences of violence in the learning environment have the potential to form unhealthy social relationship patterns in elementary school-aged children (Kholidah et al., 2025).

The issue of child-friendly learning environments is not only relevant in the context of formal schools, but also in boarding school-based educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools are Islamic educational institutions that have a historical and strategic role in shaping the character of students (Oktavian Putri Nurhamidah et al., 2025). With an educational system that integrates academic, spiritual, and moral aspects, Islamic boarding schools have great potential to create a learning environment that supports the development of positive character in children (Moh Mundzir et al., 2023). However, the intensity of interaction and hierarchical relationship patterns in Islamic boarding schools also require special attention so that the educational practices carried out remain in line with the principles of child-friendly education.

In practice, Islamic boarding schools that provide education for elementary school-aged students face unique challenges. Children not only study in classrooms but also live their daily lives in the boarding school environment (Sayyi et al., 2025). This makes the pesantren learning environment encompass all aspects of santri life, from the learning process and social interactions to parenting patterns (Al Rosid et al., 2025; Idris et al., 2023). Therefore, the implementation of child-friendly education in Islamic boarding schools needs to be understood comprehensively, not only as an institutional policy but as a real pedagogical practice in the daily lives of students (Natsir & Zulmuqim, 2023).

Child-friendly education is based on the view that every child has the right to grow and develop in a learning environment that is safe, comfortable, and respects their human dignity (Muhammad Abdul Latif et al., 2021). In the context of basic education, this approach emphasizes the importance of positive educational relationships between educators and students, the management of a conducive learning environment, and providing space for children to actively participate in the learning process (Li et al., 2022; Romanovska & Novak, 2024). A child-friendly learning environment not only prevents violence but also contributes to the character building, independence, and self-confidence of elementary school-aged children (Erdianti & Al-Fatih, 2020; Karengga & Marno, 2024).

Theoretically, child-friendly education is in line with the principles of child development, which place emotional security and comfort as the main prerequisites for effective learning (Kustiarini et al., 2024). Children will more easily absorb values, knowledge, and skills when they feel accepted and appreciated. Conversely, a learning environment filled with fear, pressure, and punishment actually hinders the learning

process and has the potential to cause long-term psychological effects (Hadiamsyah et al., 2025; Oktavian Putri Nurhamidah et al., 2025). Therefore, child-friendly education cannot be separated from efforts to create a learning environment that supports the balanced social, emotional, and moral development of children.

A number of previous studies have discussed character education in pesantren and the role of pesantren in shaping the religious and moral attitudes of students as researched (Abdullah, 2020; Albert et al., 2024; Anggun Setiawan et al., 2024; Farchan et al., 2025; Jaenullah et al., 2022; Jannah et al., 2023; Karim et al., 2025). These studies generally place pesantren as an effective institution in instilling the values of discipline, independence, and compliance with norms. Nevertheless, much of the literature still focuses on normative and institutional policy perspectives. **There is still a gap in empirical studies on how the concept of child-friendly education is adapted in dormitory-based educational institutions that have complex hierarchies**, as well as how the educational climate is felt directly by elementary school students in their daily lives.

Based on the analysis of the research gap, the *novelty* of this research lies in the shift in the focus of analysis from a mere review of institutional policies to an empirical pedagogical investigation that places the daily lives of elementary school-age students in pesantren as the center of analysis. This research seeks to bridge the principles of child-friendly education with real practices in Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, **the main problem raised is that there has not been a contextual picture of the implementation of child-friendly education for elementary school students in the pesantren environment**. Specifically, this study aims to identify the integration of child-friendly education values in the management of the learning environment and educator-student relations, as well as to analyze in depth the habituation practices and daily learning experiences of students through the perspective of child-friendly education. This research is positioned as an empirical study that seeks to bridge the concept of child-friendly education with educational practices in Islamic boarding schools. The findings of this research are expected to make a practical contribution to pesantren managers and educators in designing a more child-friendly learning environment, as well as a theoretical contribution to the development of basic education studies based on religious values. Thus, this research is not only academically relevant, but also has real implications in an effort to create a learning environment that is safe, comfortable, and supports the formation of the character of elementary school-age santri.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to comprehensively understand the implementation of child-friendly education within the learning environment of elementary school-aged *santri* (Islamic boarding school students) at Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Qur'an, East Lampung. The research was conducted from November to January 2026. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on the criteria of their direct involvement in the field. The participants consisted of the boarding school leader, four educators (two *ustadz* and two *ustadzah*) who specifically teach children's classes, and six elementary school-aged *santri* (three boys and three girls).

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation study. Interviews with the educators focused on pedagogical approaches and disciplinary practices, whereas interviews with the *santri* were conducted through child-friendly informal dialogues to naturally explore their daily experiences. The data analysis referred to the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which encompasses data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity and trustworthiness were rigorously maintained through two strategies: source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was performed by cross-checking the information provided by the educators against the direct experiences perceived by the *santri*. Meanwhile, technique triangulation was carried out by verifying the consistency across interview data, field observation notes, and supporting documents. Ethically, this research strictly maintained the confidentiality of the informants' identities, particularly the underage *santri*, to ensure their psychological comfort and well-being.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Child-Friendly Education in the Management of the Pesantren Learning Environment

In the pesantren education system, the learning environment not only functions as a place for learning activities to take place, but also as a living space for students 24 hours a day. For elementary school students, the condition of the environment has a direct influence on their sense of security, comfort, and readiness to participate in the educational process. Therefore, the implementation of child-friendly

education in Islamic boarding schools cannot be separated from how the institution manages the learning environment as a whole (Al Rosid et al., 2025).

The results of the observation show that the Hidayatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School consciously groups students based on age, with elementary school students placed in dormitories and study rooms separate from teenage and adult students. This arrangement is not merely technical in nature, but rather an effort to adapt the pesantren environment to the characteristics of child development. By being in an environment that is relatively homogeneous in terms of age, students find it easier to adjust to dormitory life without facing excessive social pressure. This is in line with the findings of Thalabi et al. 2023 that the adjustment process is influenced by individual experiences and strategies, where a relatively conducive social environment can reduce adjustment barriers, especially in terms of social interaction and compliance with rules, thereby facilitating emotional and behavioral adaptation (Thalabi et al., 2023). Additionally, other findings state that self-adjustment is influenced by individual experiences and strategies, with barriers in the aspects of rules, social interaction, language, and discipline that can be managed through *self-control* and *active coping*, especially in a social environment with minimal pressure (Haiffahningrum & Satiningsih, 2022).

Regarding the management of the boarding school environment, a consistent mentoring system is implemented, with administrators playing an important role in mentoring students in their studies, worship, and daily activities. Based on the interview results, mentoring is not understood solely as a form of supervision, but rather as part of the educational process. Administrators are present as adult figures who can be contacted directly by students when they encounter difficulties, whether academic or personal.

The presence of mentors who are directly involved with students can contribute to a sense of security, with students showing a calmer attitude in carrying out pesantren activities and not hesitating to interact with mentors. This sense of security is an important prerequisite for student involvement in the learning process at the pesantren. In line with this, Fitriani et al. 2023 and Abdurrohhim et al. 2024 state that the creation of a calm, comfortable, and safe environment needs to be realized in the learning process within the pesantren environment. This is because if children feel psychologically safe, they are more prepared to accept the rules and participate in the activities set by the boarding school (Abdurrohhim et al., 2024; Fitriani et al., 2023).

In addition to the mentoring aspect, the management of activity schedules also reflects efforts to implement child-friendly education. Observations also show that Islamic boarding schools do not impose overly busy schedules on elementary school-aged students. Learning activities, worship, and rest periods are arranged proportionally, helping students carry out their daily activities without experiencing excessive physical fatigue or emotional stress. The management of the rhythm of activities has an effect on the continuity of the students' learning process. Students can participate in activities with a relatively stable level of concentration. In addition, there are no indications that students feel burdened by the demands of pesantren activities, which shows that a learning environment that is organized realistically in accordance with children's abilities can support a sustainable educational process. Meanwhile, in terms of interaction, the learning environment at the pesantren shows a relatively controlled pattern of communication, with reprimands or instructions delivered directly but without intimidation. When students commit violations, the response given emphasizes reminders and guidance (advice). This approach shows that discipline at the pesantren is built through a process of habituation, not through repressive pressure or punishment. The orderly environment helps students understand rules as part of communal life; rules are not perceived as threats but as guidelines to be followed. This process allows students to gradually internalize the value of discipline. Thus, the learning environment functions not only as a space for formal education but also as a means of shaping attitudes and behavior.

When viewed from a theoretical perspective, the pesantren environment as the closest space to santri plays an important role in the child development process. A safe environment, consistent care or guidance, and age-appropriate activity rules are factors that support santri's learning engagement (Bongkang et al., 2024; Firdaus & Hermawan, 2024). In this framework, the learning environment is not understood as a passive backdrop, but rather as an active element that shapes children's educational experiences (Sayyi et al., 2025). In addition, the practice of managing the learning environment at the Hidayatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School is in line with the principles of child-friendly education, which emphasizes protection, comfort, and the fulfillment of children's rights in the educational process. These principles are not always explicitly stated in written policies, but are evident in the daily practices of the pesantren. This shows that child-friendly education can be implemented contextually in accordance with the character of the pesantren educational institution.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the management of the learning environment at the Hidayatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School has shown real efforts in implementing child-friendly education for elementary school-aged students. A safe environment, continuous guidance, and adaptive activity

arrangements are important foundations in supporting an educational process that pays attention to children's developmental needs. To clarify the relationship between the field findings and their analytical meaning, a summary of the analysis of the implementation of child-friendly education in the management of the pesantren learning environment is presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Analysis of Child-Friendly Education Implementation in Learning Environment Management at Hidayatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School in East Lampung

Aspect	Field Findings	Analysis
Grouping of students	Elementary school-aged students are placed separately from adult students	The environment is adapted to the developmental stage of the child
Supervision by administrators	Administrators supervise students' daily activities	Supervision that fosters a sense of security
Schedule management	Schedules are not too busy and are balanced	Reducing physical and emotional fatigue
Discipline patterns	Correction without intimidation	Discipline through habit formation (advice)

Educational Interaction Patterns and Child-Friendly Discipline Practices in Islamic Boarding Schools

The pattern of interaction between educators, administrators, and students is an important component in the implementation of child-friendly education in Islamic boarding schools. For elementary school-aged students, interaction with adult figures not only serves as a means of conveying rules, but also as a medium for social and emotional learning. Therefore, the quality of educational interactions and the way discipline is applied are important indicators in assessing the extent to which child-friendly education principles are implemented in Islamic boarding schools (Abdurrohman et al., 2024; Bongkang et al., 2024).

The results of the observation show that the interaction between educators, administrators, and students at the Hidayatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School is intense and continuous. Neither the educators nor the administrators limit interaction to classroom learning activities, but are also present in every daily activity of the students. This presence forms a relatively close relationship and enables two-way communication. In addition, students also appear to be comfortable expressing their questions, difficulties, and needs to administrators and educators. This is also reinforced by the results of interviews, in which administrators view elementary school-aged students as children who are still in the early stages of attitude and behavior formation. Therefore, the interaction approach used is guiding and directing, not strictly controlling. The administrators try to maintain a balance between emotional closeness and the boundaries of their role as educators. This pattern helps students understand that educators are figures who can be trusted and respected.

Consistent educational interactions influence how students respond to rules and instructions. Students tend to be more cooperative in participating in pesantren activities. They do not show a tendency to avoid educators or exhibit defensive behavior. These conditions indicate that relationships built through educational interactions can create a safer learning environment for children (Hastasari et al., 2022).

Disciplinary practices at the Hidayatul Qur'an Islamic boarding school also demonstrate child-friendly characteristics. based on observations showing that discipline is not enforced through physical punishment or verbal abuse. When students commit violations, the response is more in the form of verbal reprimands, reminders, and explanations of the rules that have been broken. This approach places discipline as part of the educational process, not as a form of punishment. As Ghafur et al. 2025 stated, discipline and child-friendliness in Islamic boarding schools are carried out by emphasizing habituation and exemplary behavior. Students are guided to understand the reasons behind the rules that are applied. This process does not always take place quickly, especially for students who have just entered the Islamic boarding school environment. However, through consistent repetition and guidance, students gradually adapt their behavior to the prevailing norms (Ghafur, 2025).

Such a disciplinary pattern helps students develop self-awareness of the rules. Students are not only obedient because they fear punishment (ta'dzir), but begin to understand the rules as part of their daily routine. This is very important for elementary school-aged students who are still in the early stages of character and moral development. Discipline built through understanding and habit formation contributes to the gradual development of a sense of responsibility (Kustiari et al., 2024).

Educational interactions and child-friendly disciplinary practices are interrelated and inseparable. A positive relationship between educators and students is an important factor in instilling discipline. Students are more receptive to reprimands and guidance when they come from educators they trust. Conversely, harsh disciplinary practices have the potential to damage relationships and cause fear in children (Saadatul Kholidiyah & Amala, 2024). In addition, non-violent disciplinary practices are in line with the principles of child-friendly education, which rejects all forms of treatment that demean children (Hajaroh et al., 2020).

Discipline is understood as an educational process that aims to help children learn self-control and responsibility, not as a means of instilling fear. This practice shows that Islamic boarding schools have room to develop a disciplinary approach that is in line with the principles of child protection (Natsir & Zulmuqim, 2023). However, the implementation of child-friendly discipline in Islamic boarding schools still faces its own challenges, such as students who come from diverse family backgrounds and habits, and some of whom need more time to adapt. In these circumstances, the consistency of educators and administrators is a key factor, while continuous guidance helps students go through the adaptation process without experiencing excessive psychological pressure.

Overall, the pattern of educational interaction and child-friendly disciplinary practices at the Hidayatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School shows that child-friendly education can be implemented through educational relationships and a humane approach to discipline. These findings confirm that the quality of social interaction and discipline applied are an important part of creating a boarding school environment that is friendly to elementary school-aged students.

The Impact of Child-Friendly Education on the Learning Experience and Development of Elementary School-Aged *Santri*

The implementation of child-friendly education in Islamic boarding schools has a direct impact on the learning experiences and development of elementary school-aged *santri*. This impact is not only seen in the students' involvement in learning activities, but also in the way they adapt to the rules, social environment, and demands of daily life in the boarding school (Albert et al., 2024). The results of the observation show that elementary school-aged students at the Hidayatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School are able to participate in learning and worship activities with relative stability. The students do not show a tendency to avoid boarding school activities. On the contrary, the children seem accustomed to the established activity patterns. This condition shows that an educational environment managed with a child-friendly approach helps students undergo the learning process without excessive pressure.

Meanwhile, the learning experience of *santri* is also influenced by a sense of security that is formed through mentoring (nurturing) and educational interaction patterns. Based on the interview results, *santri* feel more comfortable interacting with administrators and educators. This comfort makes it easier for *santri* to follow directions, accept reprimands, and ask questions when facing learning difficulties. This sense of security is an important factor in supporting *santri*'s readiness to actively participate in the educational process. Meanwhile, in terms of social and emotional development, child-friendly education contributes to the formation of students' self-confidence and independence. Students begin to show self-management skills such as following activity schedules, maintaining order, and adjusting their behavior to the rules of the *pesantren*. This process develops through consistent habituation, not through pressure or coercion. The application of discipline that is not too restrictive helps students understand boundaries without feeling threatened.

Another noticeable impact is the change in how students interpret *pesantren* rules. Rules are no longer perceived as a form of punishment, but rather as part of communal life. Students learn to understand the function of rules in maintaining order and comfort in the environment. This understanding contributes to the formation of a deeper and more sustainable attitude of discipline. Meanwhile, from a child development perspective, learning experiences that take place in a safe and supportive environment support the social, emotional, and moral development of students. The *pesantren* environment functions as the closest space that shapes children's daily experiences. When this environment is managed with consideration for children's needs, students have the space to develop in a more balanced way (Damayanti, 2024).

These findings are also in line with the principles of child-friendly education, which emphasizes the protection and fulfillment of children's rights in the educational process (Hastira & Maksum, 2025). The impact of child-friendly education in Islamic boarding schools is not always measured through short-term academic achievements, but through the quality of learning experiences of students and the gradual process of attitude development (Sayyi et al., 2025). Thus, child-friendly education at the Hidayatul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School makes a real contribution to the learning experiences and development of elementary school-aged students. A safe environment, educational interactions, and humane disciplinary practices

support students in undergoing the educational process more effectively. The findings in this subsection confirm that child-friendly education in Islamic boarding schools does not stop at the normative level but has a direct impact on students' daily learning lives.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that child-friendly education in Islamic boarding schools can be implemented through the management of the learning environment, the relationship between educators and students, and disciplinary practices tailored to the developmental needs of elementary school-aged santri. Islamic boarding schools, as both learning spaces and living spaces, play a strategic role in shaping students' sense of security and comfort, which directly impacts their attitudes and engagement in learning. The child-friendly approach applied does not conflict with the values and traditions of Islamic boarding schools, but rather goes hand in hand with Islamic values that emphasize compassion, exemplary behavior, and responsibility. These findings indicate that Islamic boarding schools have the potential to be a basic educational environment that supports the holistic development of children. Further research is recommended to involve more than one Islamic boarding school or use a comparative approach to obtain a broader picture of the variations in the implementation of child-friendly education in boarding school-based educational institutions

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