

Student Parenting Management Strategy in Building Holistic Well-Being in Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the management strategy of student care in building holistic well being in Islamic boarding schools as Islamic educational institutions that have a strategic role in the formation of character and overall student welfare. Islamic boarding schools are basically educational institutions with a holistic dimension that includes intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects, so that effective parenting management is the key to the realization of the well being of students comprehensively. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method through data collection techniques in the form of observation, in-depth interviews with caregivers, ustaz, and students, and documentation analysis. The results of the study show that an effective parenting management strategy includes four main dimensions, namely: planning of coaching programs based on Islamic values, structured organization of caregivers, implementation of integrated activities between spiritual, academic, and social-emotional dimensions, and continuous supervision and evaluation. These findings confirm that the integration of management functions in the pesantren parenting system significantly contributes to the achievement of holistic well-being of students which includes spiritual, psychological, social, emosional and physical well-being. The implications of this study provide a pesantren-based parenting management model that can be adopted by other Islamic educational institutions in producing a holistically healthy and noble generation.

Keywords: Parenting Management, Santri, Holistic Well Being, Islamic Boarding School, Islamic Education.

Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are among the oldest and most distinctive Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, functioning not merely as sites of religious instruction but as comprehensive residential environments that shape the character, spirituality, and social identity of students (*santri*) in a holistic manner (Dhofier & Dhofier, 2011), (Ichsan et al., 2020). Unlike conventional schools, *pesantren* integrate formal academic learning with intensive religious training, moral guidance, and communal life under the supervision of caregivers (*pengasuh*), offering an immersive educational experience that simultaneously addresses intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions of human development (Zarkasyi, 2019). This distinctive characteristic positions *pesantren* as highly strategic institutions for building the comprehensive well-being of students, as their total environment covering worship activities, daily routines, peer interactions, and mentorship relationships operates continuously, encompassing far more dimensions of student life than any general educational setting could (Madjid, 2025).

Despite their long-standing tradition and significant role in Indonesian society, the management of student caregiving (*manajemen pengasuhan santri*) within *pesantren* has received comparatively limited scholarly attention as an independent subject of inquiry, particularly in relation to the holistic well-being of *santri* (Jahidin, 2023), (Muttaqin et al., 2024a). Well-being in the holistic sense extends beyond the absence of psychological distress; it encompasses the integration of spiritual flourishing, psychological health, social connectedness, emotional regulation, and physical welfare all of which are simultaneously at stake in the residential *pesantren* context (Mulyati et al., 2023). Studies have confirmed that students living in Islamic boarding schools face unique pressures arising from separation from their families, dense communal schedules, and intensive academic-religious demands, which can either foster extraordinary resilience or precipitate serious mental health challenges depending heavily on the quality of institutional caregiving (Shahab & Idriyani, 2025).

Research in the field consistently highlights that effective caregiving management characterized by structured planning, organized supervision, and responsive pastoral care is central to promoting positive student outcomes in residential educational settings (Hartono et al., 2023a). Within *pesantren*, the role of caregivers extends beyond administrative oversight; they function as surrogate parents, spiritual mentors, and behavioral role models simultaneously (Bali & Holilah, 2021)(Jahidin, 2023), making the professional management of their caregiving functions essential to the realization of holistic student well-being. Nevertheless, many *pesantren* still operate caregiving systems that are largely informal, tradition-bound, and insufficiently integrated with contemporary management principles, leaving a significant gap between the institution's potential and its actual contribution to *santri* well-being (Jahidin, 2023).

The holistic dimension of *pesantren* education integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual domains has been recognized in recent comparative studies across ASEAN contexts as a transformative model for Islamic education when properly managed (Mukaffan & Siswanto, 2019) (Ma'arif & Arif, 2026). However, empirical

studies that specifically examine how management strategies within the caregiving system translate into measurable outcomes of holistic well-being remain scarce, particularly those employing rigorous qualitative methodologies such as case studies that can capture the depth and complexity of pesantren life (Hamami & Nuryana, 2022). This gap motivates the present study, which aims to examine and document the management strategies of santri caregiving as they operate in practice, and to analyze how these strategies contribute to the construction of holistic well-being across spiritual, psychological, social, emotional, and physical dimensions. Through this inquiry, the study seeks to offer a transferable pesantren-based caregiving management model that can inform broader Islamic educational practice in Indonesia and beyond.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, which is considered the most appropriate methodology for examining the management strategies of santri caregiving and their contribution to holistic well-being within the natural and bounded context of an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*). A qualitative case study design was selected because it allows the researcher to explore complex social phenomena in depth capturing the lived experiences, institutional processes, and management dynamics that cannot be adequately measured through quantitative instruments alone (John W. Creswell & Cheryl N. Poth, 2018). This methodological choice aligns with the interpretive paradigm, which seeks to understand human phenomena from the perspective of those who experience them within their specific cultural and institutional context (Sharan B. Merriam & Elizabeth J. Tisdell, 2025).

This research was conducted at one Islamic boarding school (*pondok pesantren*) in Indonesia, selected through purposive sampling based on the criteria of having a structured caregiving management system, institutional longevity of more than ten years, and a demonstrable commitment to holistic student development. The research participants consisted of: (1) the pesantren leader (*kyai/pengasuh utama*), (2) caregiving staff (*pengasuh harian*) and *ustaz/ustazah*, (3) senior and junior *santri*, and (4) the head of the student organization (*organisasi santri*). A total of 18 participants were involved, determined through purposive and snowball sampling until data saturation was reached, ensuring that information richness rather than statistical representativeness guided participant selection (Patton, 2015).

Data were collected through three primary techniques: 1. In-depth interviews (*wawancara mendalam*) were conducted with all categories of participants using semi-structured interview guides. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent and lasted between 45 to 90 minutes per session. Questions focused on caregiving planning, organization of caregiver roles, implementation of daily programs, supervision mechanisms, and perceived impacts on santri well-being across spiritual, psychological, social, emotional, and physical dimensions. 2. Participant observation (*observasi partisipan*) was carried out over a period of two months, during which the researcher immersed in the daily routines of the pesantren, including morning prayers, academic sessions, communal meals, extracurricular activities, and evening *ta'lim* circles. Field notes were recorded systematically to document observable management practices and student behavioral patterns. 3. Documentation analysis (*analisis dokumen*) involved the review of institutional documents including caregiving program guidelines, weekly and monthly activity schedules, santri progress evaluation forms, and official pesantren regulations (*tata tertib*). These documents provided corroborative evidence for data obtained through interviews and observation.

Data analysis followed the thematic analysis framework proposed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as adapted in qualitative educational research, proceeding through six iterative phases: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts and field notes; (2) generation of initial codes from raw data; (3) searching for themes by clustering related codes; (4) reviewing and refining themes against the data corpus; (5) defining and naming each theme; and (6) producing the final report through interpretive narrative. The analysis was guided by the theoretical lens of Islamic educational management and holistic well-being frameworks, particularly the integrative model of spiritual, psychological, social, emotional, and physical well-being dimensions.

To ensure the credibility and rigor of findings, this study applied four criteria of trustworthiness as outlined by (Lincoln & Guba, 1985): (1) credibility, achieved through prolonged engagement, member checking (returning preliminary findings to participants for verification), and peer debriefing; (2) transferability, ensured through thick description of the research context and participants, enabling readers to assess applicability to other settings; (3) dependability, maintained through an audit trail documenting all methodological decisions; and (4) confirmability, established through reflexive journaling and triangulation of data sources integrating interview data, observational records, and documentary evidence to cross-validate emergent findings (John W. Creswell & Cheryl N. Poth, 2018).

This study adhered to ethical principles governing qualitative research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, written informed consent was obtained from all participants, and in the case of minor *santri*, consent was additionally obtained from parents or guardians. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. All data were

stored securely and used exclusively for academic purposes.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study organized into four major themes that emerged from thematic analysis of interview data, observational field notes, and institutional documentation. Each theme corresponds to one dimension of caregiving management strategy identified across the research site, followed by discussion that situates the findings within existing scholarship on Islamic educational management and holistic student well-being.

Theme 1: Values-Based Planning as the Foundation of Holistic Caregiving (*Perencanaan Berbasis Nilai*). The first major finding reveals that effective caregiving management in the pesantren is anchored in a deliberate and systematic planning process grounded in Islamic values. The institution designs its caregiving programs not merely as administrative schedules but as intentional developmental pathways that address all dimensions of santri well-being simultaneously. The caregiving plan covers spiritual formation (*tarbiyah ruhiyah*), academic guidance, social development, emotional regulation, and physical health maintenance, each embedded within a daily and weekly structured program rooted in the institution's vision and mission.

Participants consistently reported that planning is initiated at the institutional level by the kyai and senior pengasuh, then operationalized through detailed program calendars (*jadwal pengasuhan*) that are communicated to all caregiving staff before the academic year begins. One senior pengasuh stated: "*We do not just plan schedules we plan the character of santri. Every program, from fajr prayers to night study sessions, is designed to build a specific spiritual or personal quality.*"

This finding aligns with the POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling) management framework as applied in Islamic boarding school contexts, where systematic planning integrating religious and character development goals has been found to significantly improve student outcomes across cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions (Hartono et al., 2023b). The integration of Islamic values into the planning architecture distinguishes pesantren caregiving management from conventional school management, as the former treats moral and spiritual formation as primary institutional objectives rather than supplementary concerns (Kawakip & Sulanam, 2023). This is consistent with Islamic educational theory, which views the cultivation of *insan kamil* (the complete human being) balanced in spiritual, intellectual, and social competencies as the ultimate goal of education (Iskandar et al., 2025). Theme 2: Structured Organization of Caregiving Roles (*Pengorganisasian Pengasuhan*). The second theme pertains to the organizational structure through which caregiving responsibilities are distributed and coordinated. Findings reveal a clearly hierarchical yet relationally integrated caregiving structure, comprising the *kyai/pengasuh utama* at the apex, followed by *pengasuh harian* (daily caregivers), *ustaz/ustazah*, and senior santri who serve as peer monitors (*musyrif/musyrifah*). This multi-tiered structure ensures continuous supervision of santri welfare across all times of day and all contexts of institutional life.

Importantly, the study found that caregiving roles are not merely administrative but are deeply relational in character. Caregivers are expected to function simultaneously as surrogate parents, spiritual mentors, academic guides, and behavioral role models. A senior ustazah articulated this expectation: "*We are not only teachers. We are families for these santri. If a child cries at night missing their parents, we are the ones who comfort them. Our role is never finished.*"

This finding is consistent with (Jahidin et al., 2024a) research on traditional pesantren, which identified parental involvement and warm relational support as the most significant predictors of positive santri well-being outcomes. Furthermore, the multi-layered caregiving structure where peer monitors serve as an intermediate layer of emotional support creates a dense social support network that buffers santri against the psychological stressors of residential life, including homesickness, academic pressure, and interpersonal conflict (Endi et al., 2026).

The effectiveness of this organizational model depends critically on open, multi-directional communication patterns between caregivers and santri. Findings confirm that caregivers who maintain consistent, empathetic, and two-way communication with their charges produce santri who report greater feelings of safety, belonging, and emotional stability. This corroborates (Hastasari et al., 2022), who found that open communication patterns in Islamic boarding schools particularly those involving mutual respect and dialogue between ustaz and santri are central to the effective internalization of character values and the cultivation of positive institutional identity.⁶ Theme 3: Integrated Program Implementation Across Well-Being Dimensions (*Pelaksanaan Program Terpadu*). The third and most substantive theme concerns the actual implementation of caregiving programs and their observed impacts on santri well-being across spiritual, psychological, social, emotional, and physical dimensions. Findings reveal that the pesantren implements an integrated daily program (*program harian terpadu*) in which each activity is designed to serve multiple well-being functions simultaneously.

Spiritual well being is cultivated through a dense schedule of religion activities including *tahajjud* (night prayer), *fajr* congregational prayer, *dhikr* circle, ta'lim session, and *muhadhoroh* public speaking. Observations confirmed that these activities are not merely ritualistic but are accompanied by reflective guidance from

caregivers who help santri understand the spiritual meaning and personal relevance of each practice. As documented in recent research, the regular engagement in Islamic spiritual practices particularly when contextualized and internalized rather than merely performed significantly contributes to emotional resilience and psychological flourishing among adolescent students in Islamic boarding schools (Ismail et al., 2024). Psychological and emotional well-being is addressed through structured mentoring sessions (*bimbingan individu*) conducted by caregivers, in which santri are given space to discuss personal challenges, homesickness, academic stress, and interpersonal difficulties. The study found that caregivers who integrate *husnuzhan* (positive thinking) and *sabr* (patience) principles into these sessions produce measurable improvements in santri emotional stability over time. This resonates with findings that pesantren environments cultivating emotionally supportive and spiritually enriching climates enhance both the psychological well-being and the *sa'ādah* (happiness) of santri, enabling them to navigate challenges with greater resilience (Muttaqin et al., 2024b). Social well-being is fostered through cooperative activities including communal meals, gotong royong (collective work), *halaqah* (study circles), and organizational participation within the santri student body (*organisasi santri*). These activities create structured opportunities for peer bonding, conflict resolution, and the development of collective responsibility all of which have been identified as key dimensions of school connectedness and social well-being in boarding school contexts (Jahidin et al., 2024b). Physical well-being is maintained through regulated sleep schedules, physical exercise programs, balanced nutrition from communal kitchens, and health monitoring by caregiving staff. While this dimension received comparatively less explicit attention in institutional planning documents, observational data confirmed that caregivers actively monitored signs of physical fatigue and health decline in their charges, intervening with rest adjustments, medical referrals, or nutritional supplementation when necessary. The integration of these dimensions within a single daily program confirms the holistic character of pesantren caregiving management. As (Hidayati et al., 2022) found in their study of Muhammadiyah boarding schools, character education programs that simultaneously address spiritual formation and mental health promotion produce significantly better student well-being outcomes than those focusing exclusively on either domain. Theme 4: Continuous Supervision and Evaluative Feedback (*Pengawasan dan Evaluasi Berkelanjutan*). The fourth theme addresses the supervision and evaluation mechanisms through which caregiving quality is monitored and improved. Findings reveal a multi-layered supervision system operating at three levels: daily monitoring by *musyrif/musyrifah*, weekly review sessions among caregiving staff, and monthly institutional evaluations involving the kyai and all senior pengasuh. Each level generates feedback that informs adjustments to caregiving programs and individual interventions for santri experiencing difficulties.

A distinctive feature of the supervision system is its explicitly relational character. Rather than functioning as a punitive inspection mechanism, supervision in this pesantren is framed as *amanah* (sacred trust) the caregiver's responsibility to God to ensure the welfare of every santri in their charge. This framing produces a supervisory culture characterized by attentiveness, genuine care, and proactive responsiveness, rather than reactive rule enforcement. As one senior pengasuh explained: "*We do not supervise santri to catch their mistakes. We supervise them because we love them and are responsible before Allah for their condition.*" This relational quality of supervision is particularly significant for well-being outcomes. Research on pesantren caregiving confirms that when firmness and discipline are balanced with genuine compassion and humanistic respect — what has been described as integrating *al-hazm* (wise firmness) with humanizing relational practices — santri experience greater psychological comfort, deeper institutional loyalty, and more robust character development.¹¹ Furthermore, the evaluation process is santri-centered: caregivers use evaluation data not primarily to assess institutional performance metrics but to identify individual santri who may be experiencing spiritual stagnation, emotional distress, social isolation, or physical health decline. This individualized, holistic evaluation approach aligns with contemporary well-being research that emphasizes the importance of tailored, responsive support systems in residential educational settings, particularly those serving adolescent populations navigating the dual demands of religious formation and academic achievement.¹²

Integrative Discussion: Toward a Pesantren-Based Holistic Well-Being Management Model. Taken together, the four themes reveal a coherent and mutually reinforcing caregiving management system in which planning, organization, implementation, and supervision operate as integrated functions oriented toward a single outcome: the holistic well-being of santri. This system can be conceptualized as the Pesantren Holistic Well-Being Management Model (PHWBM), characterized by four distinctive features: (1) values-based planning grounded in Islamic educational philosophy; (2) a multi-tiered, relationally embedded caregiving structure; (3) integrated program delivery across spiritual, psychological, social, emotional, and physical dimensions; and (4) a compassionate, santri-centered supervision and evaluation culture.

This model makes several contributions to the broader literature on Islamic educational management. First, it demonstrates that the POAC management framework, when infused with Islamic values and applied to caregiving rather than merely academic administration, becomes a powerful instrument for holistic human development (Wafda et al., 2025). Second, it confirms the centrality of relational quality not merely structural organization as the determinant of caregiving effectiveness, thereby enriching existing theoretical understanding of what constitutes good management in residential Islamic educational contexts (Muliawan et al., 2022). Third,

it offers a replicable model for other Islamic educational institutions seeking to operationalize holistic well-being as an institutional outcome rather than a secondary aspiration, extending the scholarly conversation initiated by systematic reviews of holistic pesantren education across the ASEAN region (Abd. Madjid, 2025).

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the management strategies of santri caregiving (*manajemen pengasuhan santri*) in building holistic well-being at an Islamic boarding school (*pondok pesantren*) in Indonesia. Through a qualitative case study design involving in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation analysis, four core management strategy dimensions were identified and analyzed: values-based planning, structured organization of caregiving roles, integrated program implementation across multiple well-being dimensions, and continuous supervision and evaluative feedback. Together, these four dimensions constitute a coherent and mutually reinforcing caregiving management system that operates as a unified institutional mechanism for the holistic development of santri.

The first major conclusion of this study is that effective caregiving management in pesantren is inherently values-driven. The integration of Islamic values — particularly *ikhlas* (sincerity), *amanah* (sacred trust), *tawadhu* (humility), and *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct) — into every dimension of management planning and execution distinguishes pesantren caregiving from conventional educational administration. Planning in this context is not merely a logistical exercise but a moral and spiritual act, in which institutional objectives are defined in terms of human flourishing (*falah*) rather than administrative compliance. This values-based orientation constitutes the foundational architecture upon which all subsequent caregiving strategies are built, and it is inseparable from the quality of well-being outcomes observed among santri.

The second conclusion is that relational quality is the most critical determinant of caregiving effectiveness. Regardless of how well-designed the institutional programs are, their impact on santri well-being is ultimately mediated by the quality of interpersonal relationships between caregivers and santri. Caregivers who embody genuine affection, consistent availability, empathetic responsiveness, and spiritual integrity produce santri who demonstrate higher levels of spiritual connectedness, psychological resilience, social cohesion, emotional stability, and physical self-regulation. Conversely, caregiving that is structurally organized but relationally impoverished fails to produce holistic well-being, even when program schedules appear comprehensive on paper. This finding affirms that in the pesantren context, management is fundamentally a relational practice before it is an administrative one.

The third conclusion concerns the integrative nature of holistic well-being in pesantren. This study confirms that spiritual, psychological, social, emotional, and physical well-being are not independent domains to be addressed by separate programs; they are deeply interconnected dimensions of a single integrated developmental process. The most effective caregiving strategies identified in this study are those that simultaneously serve multiple well-being dimensions within a single activity — for example, congregational prayer that serves spiritual formation while also fostering social solidarity and emotional grounding, or *halaqah* study circles that cultivate intellectual engagement while strengthening peer bonds and spiritual identity. This integrative character is the defining feature of pesantren holistic education and must be preserved and strengthened in any management reform effort.

The fourth and final conclusion is that the POAC management framework Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling when infused with Islamic educational values and applied to caregiving, becomes a powerful and contextually appropriate instrument for holistic human development. The study demonstrates that this framework, traditionally applied to institutional administration, can be meaningfully reinterpreted through the lens of Islamic educational philosophy to produce a culturally grounded, spiritually coherent, and practically effective caregiving management model. The resulting Pesantren Holistic Well-Being Management Model (PHWBM) proposed by this study offers a replicable conceptual framework for other Islamic educational institutions seeking to systematize their caregiving approaches without sacrificing the relational warmth and spiritual depth that constitute the soul of pesantren education.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on Islamic educational management by demonstrating that holistic well-being is not merely an aspiration but an achievable institutional outcome when caregiving is deliberately and systematically managed within an Islamic values framework. The PHWBM model extends existing theoretical frameworks by integrating management science with Islamic educational philosophy and contemporary well-being research, offering a genuinely interdisciplinary contribution to the field.

Practically, the findings carry significant implications for pesantren leaders (*kyai* and *pengasuh*), educational policymakers, and Islamic education practitioners. Pesantren leaders are encouraged to formalize their caregiving management systems moving from tradition-bound informality to structured, documented, and evaluable management practices while preserving the relational and spiritual character that makes pesantren caregiving uniquely effective. Policymakers are encouraged to recognize caregiving management quality as a distinct dimension of institutional quality assurance for Islamic boarding schools, distinct from and complementary to

academic and curricular quality standards.

This study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. As a single-site case study, the findings reflect the specific institutional context of one pesantren and cannot be generalized to the full diversity of pesantren types across Indonesia salafi, modern, and integrated pesantren may exhibit markedly different caregiving management configurations. Future research should employ multi-site comparative case studies to examine how caregiving management strategies and their well-being outcomes vary across different pesantren typologies, geographic regions, and student demographic profiles. Additionally, quantitative and mixed-methods studies are needed to measure the magnitude of specific caregiving management variables on measurable well-being outcomes, providing empirical validation of the PHWBM model proposed here. Longitudinal research tracking santri well-being trajectories from entry to graduation would further illuminate which caregiving strategies produce the most durable and transferable well-being outcomes beyond the pesantren environment.

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