Optimizing The Role Of Foster Guardians As Mediators In Handling Bullying In Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of foster parents as mediators in dealing with bullying in Islamic boarding schools, with a focus on Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School. Foster parents are not only tasked with meeting the daily needs of students but also play an essential role in creating a harmonious environment through effective communication, understanding the root of the problem, and a solution-based approach. The results of the study indicate that open and empathetic communication helps build trust between foster parents and students and supports the emotional development of students. Understanding the background and external factors that influence students' behaviour is the first step in designing the right solution. A solution-based approach that prioritizes moral training, mediation, and collaborative tasks between perpetrators and victims has proven effective in improving relationships and shaping students' character. This study also provides recommendations for optimizing the role of foster parents and increasing collaboration between various parties in Islamic boarding schools in creating an environment free from bullying.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Foster parents in Islamic boarding schools are not only responsible for the daily needs of students but also become protective figures who understand their social and psychological dynamics.(Fawaid & Hasanah, 2020) Bullying in Islamic boarding schools is a social phenomenon that is often hidden but has a profound impact on the mental and emotional development of students.(Abdullah et al., 2023) As an educational environment based on Islamic values, Islamic boarding schools are expected to be a safe place, but reality shows that complex social interactions in them can trigger aggressive behaviour . Factors such as differences in cultural background, age hierarchy, and ineffective communication patterns often trigger bullying. In this context, the existence of foster parents as protective figures is essential to bridging conflicts between students and creating a harmonious environment.(Rahmati & Mubarak, 2023)

Optimizing the role of foster guardians as mediators can be a strategic solution to dealing with bullying problems. Foster guardians have a crucial role as a liaison between students, caregivers, and other related parties so that they are able to detect potential conflicts early. With good communication skills, foster guardians can dig into the root of the problem and offer wise solutions. In addition, an approach based on religious values, such as moral development and empathy, can strengthen efforts to resolve conflicts constructively . Thus, optimizing the role of foster guardians not only contributes to the prevention of bullying but also builds a more inclusive and compassionate Islamic boarding school culture.

According to Fridameka Koswara, in her research, she explained that the involvement of Guidance and Counseling teachers has a positive impact on overcoming verbal bullying problems at SMP N 2 Rambatan. With the right preventive and intervention approaches, BK teachers can create a safer school environment and support student growth holistically.(Koswara, 2023) Fadhilah Ahmad Nur also explained that the role of teachers in handling bullying cases is that teachers are not just educators who only teach subjects but also advisors, guides, facilitators, and mediators.(Nor, 2023)In addition, Luthfi Fauzan stated that teachers act as educators, facilitators, demonstrators, advisors, and guides in preventing bullying.(Fauzan, 2023)

This study offers novelty by highlighting the strategic role of foster parents as mediators in handling bullying in Islamic boarding schools, which has not been studied in depth. Unlike previous studies that generally focus on teachers or counsellors, this study emphasizes how foster parents, with emotional closeness and intensive interaction with students, can be optimized in preventing and handling bullying. In addition, this study also integrates Islamic values as a unique approach that is relevant to Islamic boarding school culture while developing a holistic Islamic boarding school-based mediation model.(Sahrizal Fahlawi, Rizka Eliza Pertiwi, 2023) This approach includes conflict prevention and resolution, as well as character formation of students to create a more harmonious environment. In addition, this study provides policy recommendations that can strengthen the role of foster parents and open up opportunities for the use of technology to increase the effectiveness of bullying supervision and intervention in Islamic boarding schools.(Ahwadhi, 2024)

This study aims to analyze the role of foster parents as mediators in efforts to handle bullying in Islamic boarding schools and identify strategies to optimize this role. The main focus of the study is to understand how foster parents can bridge conflicts between students with an approach based on religious values, emotional management, and effective communication.(Agustina et al., 2022) In addition, this study also aims to reveal the challenges faced by foster parents in carrying out their roles and provide practical recommendations to increase the effectiveness of their interventions. Through this study, a comprehensive guide can be created for Islamic boarding schools to empower foster parents as agents of peace and creators of a harmonious environment free from bullying.(Farhan & Aziah, 2019)

The analysis in this study shows that the role of foster parents as mediators in handling bullying in Islamic boarding schools is greatly influenced by interpersonal skills, understanding of the social dynamics of students, and an approach based on religious values. Foster parents who have good communication skills tend to be more effective in detecting conflicts early and finding the right solutions. In addition, the application of Islamic values such as compassion, empathy, and justice are important foundations in the mediation process. However, this study also found challenges, such as the lack of special training for foster parents in handling bullying cases and the limited time they can spend accompanying students. Therefore, optimization efforts are needed in the form of emotional management training and strengthening collaboration between parties in Islamic boarding schools to support the effectiveness of the role of foster parents.

2.   METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of optimizing the role of foster parents as mediators in handling bullying in Islamic boarding schools, especially at the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School. This study focuses on collecting data through

in-depth interviews with three primary informants, namely the Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau, the Secretary of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau, and the Head of the BKWA Division of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau. Interviews were conducted with open-ended questions that allowed informants to provide detailed explanations regarding their experiences, perceptions, and strategies they implemented in dealing with bullying problems and the role of foster parents in the process.

This in-depth interview method allows researchers to obtain rich and diverse data regarding the perspectives of each informant. In addition to interviews, observations were conducted at the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School to get an overview of social dynamics, interactions between foster parents and students, and practices in dealing with bullying problems (Aziz et al., 2021). Data obtained from interviews and observations were then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify key patterns related to the role of foster parents, effective communication, and solution-based approaches in dealing with bullying. The analysis results are expected to provide a deeper understanding of how the role of foster parents can be optimized to create a safe, harmonious Islamic boarding school environment that supports the development of students.

The following is a table of interviews conducted by researchers:

No	Name	Position
1.	K. Ahmad Madarik S.E	Head of Islamic Boarding School Bureau
2.	Alif Hidayatullah M.E	Secretary of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau
3.	Rahmat Toyyib M.Pd	Head of BKWA Islamic Boarding School Bureau

Table 1: *Interview Respondents*

3.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Building Effective Communication

Effective communication is key to creating harmonious and productive relationships in the Islamic boarding school environment.(Najmi et al., 2022) As a mentor, the foster guardian must communicate in a way that not only conveys information but also listens and understands the emotional needs of the students.(Lingga & Nurjannah, 2023) Through proper communication, the foster guardian can foster trust, encourage openness, and create an atmosphere that supports the positive development of the student's character.

The Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau explained, "We prioritize an educational solution approach, such as giving collaborative tasks to perpetrators and victims to rebuild their relationships." This statement was confirmed by the Secretary of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau: "Our approach involves moral development through direct advice from ustaz and religious activities, so that students understand the importance of respecting each other". In addition, the Head of BKWA also explained, "We often use mediation methods with the principle of deliberation for consensus, involving perpetrators, victims, and guardians as facilitators." The results of the observation also showed that guardians were seen holding weekly meetings with small groups of students to discuss the problems they face. Students seemed more open to speaking in informal question-and-answer sessions facilitated by guardians.

The results of interviews with the Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau, the Secretary of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau, and the Head of the BKWA Division showed that effective communication is one of the important keys to building a harmonious relationship between guardians and students. The Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau emphasized the importance

of a deep understanding of student's character as the first step in building personal and meaningful communication. The Secretary of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau added that active listening technique training had been provided to guardians to improve their ability to respond to students empathetically so that students feel touched and comfortable sharing their problems. Meanwhile, the Head of the BKWA Division emphasized the need to strengthen emotional relationships through routine activities, such as story-sharing sessions, which can create a safe space for students to communicate. This third opinion reinforces the importance of effective communication as a foundation for creating a harmonious Islamic boarding school environment and supporting the emotional growth of students.

Effective communication is important in building a harmonious relationship between guardians and students in Islamic boarding schools (Muntazah et al., 2022). This communication not only focuses on conveying information but also on efforts to understand students' character and emotional needs. The Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau emphasized that guardians must deeply understand each student's character to create a personal and meaningful approach. In addition, active listening technique training organized by Islamic boarding schools is a strategic step in improving the skills of guardians to respond empathetically. Thus, students feel appreciated and dare to reveal their problems. The Head of BKWA added that strengthening emotional relationships can also be done through routine activities like story-sharing sessions or informal discussions. This approach creates a comfortable and safe atmosphere so that communication between guardians and students can run effectively in both directions (Jannah & Thamrin, 2023). Therefore, effective communication is not only a means of resolving conflicts but also a tool to build trust and a sense of togetherness in the Islamic boarding school environment.

3.2 Understanding the Root of the Role

Understanding the root of the problem is an important first step in resolving conflict in the Islamic boarding school environment. In this context, foster guardians have a central role in exploring the factors underlying the problems students face. Conflicts often do not arise suddenly but are influenced by various aspects within the students and external factors such as family background or social pressure. Therefore, foster guardians must understand each student deeply to create appropriate and practical solutions to overcome existing problems.(Ilmy et al., 2018)

The Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau said, "We always ask the foster parents to study the background of the students, because conflicts often come from factors outside the Islamic boarding school, such as family or social pressure." The Islamic Boarding School Bureau Secretary added, "The foster parents' approach to understanding the root of the problem must be planned, including utilizing daily reports from teachers or peers." The Head of BKWA also confirmed this: "Students who have problems usually show changes in behavior. Foster parents must be sensitive and able to dig up information from various sources, such as close friends of the students or the surrounding environment." The observations by researchers showed that foster parents checked records of the student's whereabouts and changes in behavior to identify signs of problems. The individual counseling process was carried out privately to maintain the privacy of students facing problems.

The results of interviews with the Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau, Secretary of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau, and Head of BKWA highlighted the importance of a deep understanding of the root of the students' problems as an initial step in handling conflicts in Islamic boarding schools. The Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau revealed that conflicts are often dismissed as external factors, such as family or social pressure, so guardians must explore each student's background to find the right solution. The Secretary of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau added that a planned approach through daily reports from teachers or peers can help guardians recognize problems early. The Head of BKWA emphasized that changes in student behavior are often an early indicator of the issues, so guardians must be sensitive and active in seeking information from

various sources, including the surrounding environment and close friends of the students. This third opinion reinforces the importance of the role of guardians in understanding the root of the problem as a strategic step to create effective and sustainable solutions.

Understanding the root of the problem is a crucial first step in dealing with conflicts in the Islamic boarding school environment, especially those involving students. This process requires the guardian's in-depth and comprehensive approach to explore factors influencing students' behavior (Laili et al., 2023). The Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau emphasized that conflicts often originate not only from interactions between students but are also influenced by external factors such as family background or social pressure experienced by students. Therefore, Guardians are expected to be able to introduce the background of each student better. In addition, the Secretary of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau added that a planned approach, including daily reports from teachers and peers, can help guardians recognize signs of problems early and respond appropriately. The Head of BKWA also highlighted the importance of changes in student behavior as an indicator of deeper issues. Guardians must be sensitive to these changes and seek information from various sources, such as students' close friends or the surrounding environment, to find practical solutions. Overall, a deeper understanding of the root causes allows the foster carer to design a more targeted approach and resolve conflicts more thoughtfully and constructively.

3.3 Presenting a Solution-oriented Approach

In dealing with problems that arise in Islamic boarding schools, especially related to bullying, a solution-based approach is the primary key to creating constructive and sustainable solutions. This approach does not only focus on punishment but also on coaching and education, which can build better relationships between perpetrators and victims. Through collaboration, moral development, and mediation involving all parties, this solution-based approach focuses on restoring and improving attitudes to create a more harmonious Islamic boarding school environment and support the development of the character of students. (Santoso & Mu'minin, 2021)

The Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau said, "We prioritize an educational solution approach, such as giving collaborative tasks to perpetrators and victims to rebuild their relationships." The Islamic Boarding School Bureau Secretary added, "Our approach involves moral development through direct advice from ustaz and religious activities, so that students understand the importance of mutual respect." The Head of BKWA also explained, "We often use the mediation method with the principle of deliberation for consensus, involving perpetrators, victims, and guardians as facilitators." The results of observations conducted by researchers showed that guardians facilitated the reconciliation session between perpetrators and victims of bullying by involving joint prayers before and after mediation.

The results of interviews with the Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau, the Secretary of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau, and the Head of the BKWA Division showed that a solution-oriented and educational approach was highly prioritized in dealing with problems in Islamic boarding schools, especially related to bullying. The Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau suggested using collaborative tasks between perpetrators and victims to rebuild their damaged relationships, representing a constructive approach based on relationship restoration. The Secretary of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau added that moral development through direct advice from Ustaz and religious activities could help students understand the values of mutual respect, an important basis for creating peace. Meanwhile, the Head of the BKWA Division emphasized the importance of mediation methods with the principle of deliberation for consensus, involving perpetrators, victims, and foster guardians as facilitators. This approach shows that problem-solving in Islamic boarding schools focuses on punishment and educational and reconciliation efforts based on the principle of deliberation and respect for religious values.

Providing a solution-oriented approach is an important step in resolving conflicts and bullying in Islamic boarding schools (Salau et al., 2023). This approach focuses on constructive and educational

solutions, not just punishment. The Head of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau emphasized collaborative tasks between perpetrators and victims to rebuild their relationships, aiming to change negative behavior into opportunities for mutual learning and growth. In addition, the Secretary of the Islamic Boarding School Bureau added that moral training is essential in this approach. Through direct advice from Ustaz and religious activities, students are expected to understand values such as mutual respect and maintaining harmony, which is the basis for creating a peaceful Islamic boarding school environment. The Head of BKWA revealed that the mediation method with the principle of deliberation for consensus is also used in problem-solving, where perpetrators and victims are invited to dialogue directly with the help of foster guardians as facilitators. This solution-oriented approach not only focuses on solving short-term problems but also seeks to change the mindset and behavior of students to create a more harmonious atmosphere and support their moral development. The findings of this study can be illustrated in the form of the image below:

Figure 1. Research findings
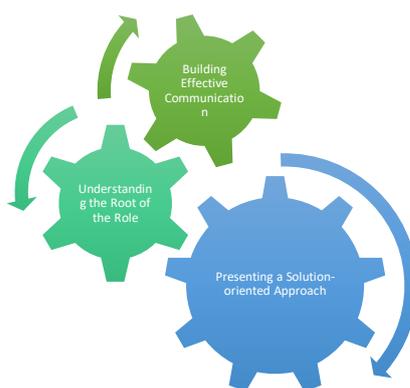
4.   CONCLUSION

Effective communication, understanding the root of the problem, and a solution-oriented approach are key to creating a harmonious permanent environment. Open and empathetic communication between guardians and students builds trust and supports the emotional development of students. Understanding the background and external factors influencing students' behavior is essential for designing appropriate solutions. A solution-oriented approach prioritizes coaching and reconciliation, rather than punishment, through collaborative and mediation tasks to improve relationships and shape students' character. These three pillars work together to create a peaceful, pesantren atmosphere, supporting the overall development of students.

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