



The Role of the Management of the Al-Rahmah Walantaka Islamic Boarding School in Facilitating the Mental Well-being of Students Through the Management Discipline Policy

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ABSTRACT

The pesantren environment functions as a comprehensive educational institution whose management significantly influences students' mental well-being. This study examines the role of management at Al Rahmah Islamic Boarding School in supporting students' mental health, particularly through disciplinary policies and administrators' communication capacity. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and policy document analysis, then analyzed thematically. The findings indicate that disciplinary policies are designed as part of character building rather than purely repressive measures. However, discrepancies between policy ideals and practical implementation may create psychological pressure for students. Administrators' communication skills, especially interpersonal and transcultural communication, are crucial in translating disciplinary norms into constructive understanding. Effective communication fosters motivation, reduces conflict, and supports students' mental well-being. The study concludes that pesantren management plays a strategic role in facilitating mental well-being, emphasizing that supportive communication and dialogical relationships are more influential than strict rules alone. Continuous communication training and regular evaluation of disciplinary policies based on rahmatan lil 'alamin principles are recommended.

1. Introduction

Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) as residential educational institutions play a role that goes beyond merely transferring cognitive and religious knowledge (Rozi & Jannah, 2021). With a 24-hour education system, pesantren create an intensive and complex social and psychological environment, as students live, learn, and interact continuously within the same social space. From an educational

management perspective, a well-managed learning environment has a significant influence on the quality of social interaction and the psychological development of students (Aziziyah & Ahmad, 2024). A conducive classroom environment and supportive institutional atmosphere are also proven to positively influence students' learning motivation and engagement in structured educational settings (Syahrudin & Raharja, 2025). Furthermore, effective educational management systems contribute to strengthening institutional supervision, communication, and administrative coordination that support the overall quality of the learning environment (Nikmah et al., 2025). Students come from diverse cultural backgrounds, personalities, and levels of emotional maturity, making the adaptation process a distinct challenge. This collective living environment requires a high level of adjustment ability, both in social relationships, compliance with institutional regulations, and daily emotional regulation.

In this context, students are required to adjust their individual identities to the norms and culture of the pesantren environment. Failure to adapt may result in social isolation, interpersonal conflict, and even bullying. Dense residential conditions, such as shared facilities, further reduce students' personal privacy and potentially trigger emotional tension (Hidayah et al., 2020). In addition, the strong hierarchical structure between senior administrators, teachers (*ustaz/ustazah*), and junior students may become a source of psychological pressure, particularly when these relationships are formed in rigid and authoritarian ways. Interactions lacking dialogue and empathy risk increasing social anxiety and feelings of psychological distress among students. Research shows that the low quality of interaction and limited student engagement in the learning environment can reduce psychological well-being and active participation in educational activities (Arifin & Mustofa, 2025).

Strict discipline and tightly structured daily schedules are distinctive characteristics of pesantren education aimed at shaping students' character and moral development (Syamsudin et al., 2019). However, compliance with detailed and non-negotiable rules may also create psychological burdens for students. Fear of sanctions or disciplinary punishment (*ta'zir*) often suppresses students' initiative and autonomy. Combined with daily routines that provide limited rest time, students are at risk of experiencing mental fatigue or burnout. Within the context of classroom and institutional management, inappropriate management strategies may reduce learning independence and increase students' psychological pressure (Rifalda et al., 2025).

With these dynamics, pesantren function not only as religious educational institutions but also as spaces for developing students' emotional intelligence and mental well-being. The educational environment plays an essential role in maintaining balance between students' academic, social, and emotional demands. Educational leadership that emphasizes mindfulness and empathy has been shown to create a more supportive learning climate and improve individuals' mental well-being within educational environments (Barus et al., 2026). Therefore, strict disciplinary enforcement needs to be balanced with a humanistic approach so that

values such as honesty, responsibility, and independence can be internalized without compromising students' mental health.

Various studies indicate that disciplinary enforcement in pesantren often faces serious challenges, such as declining effectiveness of discipline due to students' fatigue toward rules and inconsistent implementation of sanctions (Askuri & Kuipers, 2018). The lack of role modeling from administrators is a major factor weakening disciplinary authority. From an educational management perspective, the effectiveness of institutional policies and management systems greatly influences performance and the overall quality of the educational environment (Nikmah et al., 2025). Disciplinary policies that are rigid, authoritarian, and excessively punishment-oriented have the potential to increase stress, anxiety, and perceptions of injustice among students (Alhabsi, 2022). Conversely, positive interaction, symbolic role modeling, and humanistic communication are far more effective in fostering discipline and moral character among students (Murdianto, 2024; Rahmat et al., 2019; Syahri, 2022).

Based on the discussion above, there is a gap between the ideal objective of disciplinary policies namely character formation and the reality of implementation, which often emphasizes external compliance and punishment (Tohidi, 2017). This gap is strongly influenced by administrators' communication capacity and emotional intelligence. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of management at Al Rahmah Walantaka Islamic Boarding School in Serang City in balancing disciplinary enforcement and students' mental well-being through two main variables, namely disciplinary policy implementation and administrators' communication training. Specifically, this study seeks to explore how disciplinary policies are designed and implemented within the institutional management system, examine how communication training strengthens administrators' interpersonal approaches toward students, and identify how these two components contribute to creating a supportive psychosocial environment that promotes students' mental well-being. This research is significant because it integrates disciplinary policy, administrators' soft skills, and students' mental health within a single comprehensive analytical framework (Arifin & Mustofa, 2025; Barus et al., 2026).

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach aimed at understanding social phenomena from participants' perspectives by emphasizing the depth of meaning, processes, and interpretation rather than numerical generalization. The research adopted a case study design focusing on a single institutional unit, namely Al Rahmah Walantaka Islamic Boarding School, Serang City. The case study approach was selected to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the role of Islamic boarding school management, the implementation of disciplinary policies, and the effectiveness of administrators' communication practices in supporting students' mental well-being within a specific institutional context. Through this approach,

the study explored how disciplinary management strategies and communication practices interact with students' psychological adaptation processes in a natural residential education environment.

Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at Al Rahmah Walantaka Islamic Boarding School in Serang City. Primary data were obtained directly from participants through in-depth interviews and participatory observation, while secondary data were collected from supporting institutional documents such as organizational structures, student development programs, and disciplinary regulations implemented within the boarding school environment. Participants were selected using purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques to ensure relevance to the research focus. The participants consisted of the boarding school leader, administrators responsible for student development programs, dormitory supervisors implementing disciplinary regulations, representative students who experienced daily institutional routines, and counseling or health personnel responsible for handling students' mental well-being issues. This selection ensured rich and contextually relevant data regarding management roles, disciplinary implementation, and communication practices.

Instruments

In qualitative case study research, the researcher functioned as the primary research instrument responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data. To support systematic data collection, several complementary instruments were utilized, including semi-structured interview guidelines, participatory observation protocols, and document analysis matrices. The interview guidelines were designed to explore participants' experiences and perceptions regarding disciplinary policy implementation, administrators' communication practices, and institutional strategies supporting students' mental well-being. Participatory observation focused on daily dormitory supervision activities, mentoring sessions, rule enforcement practices, and interaction patterns between administrators and students. Document analysis examined institutional regulations, mentoring program guidelines, organizational structures, and activity schedules reflecting the structural framework of disciplinary implementation.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through a structured fieldwork process consisting of three stages: preparation, implementation, and verification. In the preparation stage, the researcher obtained institutional permission and prepared research instruments, including interview guidelines, observation protocols, and documentation matrices aligned with the research objectives. In the implementation stage, data were collected through in-depth interviews with selected participants, participatory observation of daily supervision and mentoring activities, and analysis of institutional documents related to disciplinary policies and student development programs. In the verification stage, the collected data were reviewed repeatedly and

compared across multiple sources using triangulation techniques to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study followed the interactive model proposed by Miles & Huberman (2014), which consists of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with continuous verification. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and document analysis were organized and classified into themes related to management roles, disciplinary policy implementation, communication practices, and students' mental well-being. The reduced data were then presented in the form of narrative descriptions and analytical matrices to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn through iterative comparison between empirical findings and relevant theoretical perspectives while maintaining analytical consistency through continuous verification.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied several validation strategies, including source triangulation, method triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement. Source triangulation involved collecting data from administrators, supervisors, students, and institutional documents. Method triangulation integrated interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Member checking was conducted by confirming preliminary findings with selected participants to ensure accuracy of interpretation. Prolonged engagement in the research setting enabled deeper contextual understanding of disciplinary practices and communication patterns affecting students' mental well-being.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the leadership of Al Rahmah Walantaka Islamic Boarding School. All participants were informed about the research objectives, procedures, and scope, ensuring transparency. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained without coercion. Participants had the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Confidentiality was strictly maintained through the use of coded identifiers, and all data were handled securely and used solely for academic purposes. These measures ensured the protection of participants' rights, dignity, and privacy throughout the research process.

3. Results and Discussion

Students' Mental Well-being in the Context of Boarding School Discipline

Empirical findings derived from participatory observation indicate that students at Al-Rahmah Islamic Boarding School follow a highly structured daily routine,

beginning at approximately 04:00 a.m. and continuing until 10:00 p.m., encompassing religious activities, formal academic learning, and dormitory-based character development programs. In several observed instances, evening activities extended beyond the scheduled time, thereby reducing students' rest opportunities. This condition is reflected in students' statements, such as participant S-03, who stated that *"when the night program is extended, I feel very tired the next day and sometimes sleepy in class."* Similarly, participant S-07 noted that although the activities are beneficial, *"sometimes there is no time for personal rest."* Observational data further reveal that after intensive evening sessions, most students tend to immediately rest rather than engage in informal peer interaction. From the institutional perspective, a dormitory supervisor (SP-02) emphasized that discipline is intended to foster responsibility and independence, while an administrator (AD-01) acknowledged the difficulty of balancing disciplinary enforcement with students' psychological conditions. These empirical findings indicate that students' mental well-being is manifested through several observable dimensions, particularly emotional condition, social interaction, and personal adjustment. The categorization of these dimensions is grounded directly in field data derived from interviews, observations, and institutional perspectives. To clarify the relationship between empirical evidence and these dimensions, the findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Empirical Dimensions of Students' Mental Well-being Based on Field Data

Dimension	Empirical Findings	Evidence (Informant Code)	Management Implication
Emotional Condition	Students experience fatigue due to extended activities	"very tired... sleepy in class" (S-03)	Adjust activity duration
Social Interaction	Reduced peer interaction after intensive schedules	Observation findings	Provide social interaction space
Personal Adjustment	Students comply but feel pressure	"no time for personal rest" (S-07)	Balance discipline and rest

From a theoretical perspective, these findings suggest that the disciplinary system reflects a behavioristic orientation emphasizing compliance through structured routines. However, the empirical data demonstrate that such an approach does not fully accommodate students' internal psychological needs, particularly in relation to rest, emotional regulation, and social interaction. This indicates a gap between externally imposed discipline and students' internal well-being. Therefore, the implication is that pesantren management needs to adopt a more balanced approach by integrating structured discipline with psychological considerations, including schedule adjustment, provision of rest opportunities, and facilitation of social interaction.

Psychological Implications of Disciplinary Policy Implementation

Empirical interview findings reveal that students generally understand the importance of disciplinary rules; however, unclear communication regarding sanctions often generates anxiety and uncertainty. This is evident from participant

S-05, who stated, “sometimes I am afraid of making mistakes because I don’t know what the punishment will be.” In contrast, participant S-02 explained that clarity in rules reduces fear, stating that “when rules are explained properly, we understand and don’t feel afraid.” Observational data further indicate variations in supervisors’ communication styles, where some apply dialogical approaches with explanation and guidance, while others rely on direct instruction without sufficient clarification. These differences significantly influence students’ emotional responses, as communicative approaches tend to produce more cooperative behavior, while non-communicative approaches generate anxiety and hesitation. To demonstrate how these variations emerge in practice, the empirical patterns of disciplinary implementation are presented in Table 2, which is derived directly from field observations and interview data.

Table 2. Empirical Comparison of Disciplinary Practices Based on Field Findings

Aspect	Observed Punitive Practice	Observed Positive Practice	Impact on Students
Rule Enforcement	Direct reprimand without explanation	Explanation and guidance	Students feel calmer
Student Response	Fear and anxiety	Cooperation and openness	Better adjustment
Communication Style	One-way instruction	Dialogical interaction	Reduced pressure

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings indicate that discipline should not be understood merely as a control mechanism but as a social interaction process shaped by communication dynamics. The empirical data confirm that communication acts as a mediating variable influencing students’ psychological responses. Therefore, the implication is that pesantren institutions need to standardize communication practices in disciplinary implementation by emphasizing clarity, consistency, and empathy to minimize negative psychological impacts.

Supervisors’ Communication Capacity as a Supporting Factor

Empirical evidence from interviews shows that supervisors’ interpersonal communication capacity plays a significant role in shaping students’ emotional comfort and willingness to follow institutional rules. Participant S-08 stated that “when the supervisor is easy to talk to, we are not afraid,” indicating that approachable communication fosters trust. Conversely, participant S-04 explained that “if we are scolded directly, we become reluctant to talk,” demonstrating that harsh communication discourages openness. Observational findings support these statements, showing that students supervised by empathetic and communicative staff tend to be more active, engaged, and confident in their interactions. Additionally, a supervisor (SP-03) stated that their role is not only to enforce rules but also to provide emotional support and act as a space for students to share concerns. Based on these field findings, key communication competencies can be

identified. To ensure clarity regarding their empirical basis, these competencies are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Communication Competencies Based on Field Evidence

Skill Domain	Empirical Practice	Evidence	Impact on Mental Well-being
Emotional Support	Supervisors	as “not afraid to talk” (S-listeners 08)	Reduces anxiety
Conflict Handling	Dialogue in violations	Observation findings	Constructive solution
Mentoring Role	Informal guidance	Daily interaction	Builds trust
Spiritual Guidance	Religious advice	Routine sessions	Emotional stability

From a theoretical perspective, communication functions as a relational mechanism that fosters trust, emotional security, and value internalization. The empirical evidence reinforces that communication is not merely instrumental but transformative in shaping students’ experiences of discipline. Thus, the implication is that pesantren management should prioritize the development of supervisors’ communication competencies through structured training and institutional support, ensuring that communication becomes a strategic element in promoting students’ mental well-being.

4. Conclusion

Islamic boarding school management, particularly through the formulation of constructive disciplinary policies and the strengthening of administrators’ communication capacity, plays a central role in shaping an environment that supports students’ mental well-being and requires holistic and balanced implementation. A case study conducted at Al Rahmah Walantaka Islamic Boarding School in Serang indicates that rigid disciplinary policies that rely primarily on punishment without adequate emotional support have the potential to increase students’ stress levels. In contrast, educational, transparent, and restorative-oriented disciplinary approaches contribute to the development of a sense of security, order, and fairness as foundational elements of students’ mental health. Therefore, it is important to conduct an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of disciplinary policies implemented within the boarding school as well as students’ perceptions of those policies.

On the other hand, boarding school administrators who possess empathetic and assertive communication skills can function as primary sources of social support, detect mental health concerns at an early stage, and prevent the escalation of conflicts. For this reason, evaluation and communication training for administrators become highly crucial institutional priorities. Overall, students’ mental well-being represents the outcome of a boarding school ecosystem that includes regulatory clarity, social support, access to mentoring services, and engagement in positive activities, with institutional management acting as the main driving force. Thus, the

role of management becomes optimal when disciplinary policies are designed as educational instruments and reinforced by administrators who demonstrate both technical competence and emotional capacity, as reflected in the emerging practices observed at Al Rahmah Islamic Boarding School.

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