

Islamic Boarding Schools as Safe Spaces: Kiai's Perspectives on Preventing Sexual Violence and Bullying Against Santri

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Abstract

This study analyzes the role of *kiai* leadership in preventing sexual violence and bullying by conceptualizing *pesantren* as moral-institutional safe spaces. The study employs a qualitative approach based on purposive sampling and in-depth interviews with *kiai* at *Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Dukuwaluh*, Banyumas (Central Java), and *Pondok Pesantren Riyadlul 'Ulum Wadda'wah Condong*, Tasikmalaya (West Java), analyzed using a thematic-reflective method and contextualized with recent literature from reputable journals. Primary data were obtained from interviews with *kiai*, complemented by secondary data from institutional documents and relevant scholarly literature collected through document analysis. Findings indicate that *pesantren* as safe spaces are not primarily constructed through compliance with formal regulations, but rather through the integration of the *kiai's* moral authority, layered caregiving systems, ethical management of power relations, and the transformation of seniority culture toward a culture of *adab* (ethical conduct) and *santri* protection. The novelty of this study lies in its formulation of the concept of a safe *pesantren* that emphasizes internal moral logic as a mechanism for violence prevention, while also revealing the limitations of approaches that rely excessively on personal authority figures. This article contributes to the development of *pesantren* education theory and enriches the discourse on violence prevention within religious-based institutions in Indonesia.

Keywords

Bullying; *Kiai* Leadership; *Pesantren*; Safe Space; Sexual Violence

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pesantren are Islamic educational institutions that have historically played a crucial role in shaping scholarly authority, moral values, and the social structure of Muslim communities in Indonesia (Nicky Estu Putu Muchtar, 2022). As residential-based educational institutions, *pesantren* function not only as spaces for the transmission of Islamic knowledge but also as arenas for the production of power relations and the formation of *santri* habitus through intensive interactions among *kiai*, *ustadz*, administrators, and *santri* (Harnadi et al., 2021), (Jamil et al., 2025).

Over the past decade, increasing public attention to cases of sexual violence and bullying in



residential educational institutions has challenged the normative assumption that value-based educational institutions are inherently safe spaces (Palupi et al., 2025), (Tua et al., 2022), (Ilham et al., 2024). A growing body of research indicates that violence in educational settings cannot be understood merely as individual deviance, but is closely related to power structures, institutional culture, and the normalization of symbolic violence within disciplinary practices (Serkan et al., 2023), (Bujorean, 2016), (Sulistiyawan et al., 2026), (Hermawan & Rinaldi, 2024).

In the context of *pesantren*, power relations possess distinctive characteristics because they are grounded in the *kiai*'s scholarly authority and religious charisma (Rahayuningsih et al., 2023), (Siregar, 2013). On the one hand, this authority serves as a source of moral legitimacy and protection for *santri*; on the other hand, it may create vulnerabilities if it is not managed within a reflective, accountable caregiving framework. This condition suggests that violence prevention in *pesantren* cannot be adequately understood solely as an issue of compliance with formal regulations, but is deeply connected to how moral authority is exercised and institutionally constrained.

Previous studies published in reputable national journals have generally positioned *pesantren* within the frameworks of child-friendly policies, psychological approaches to victims, or evaluations of Islamic education regulations (Hasibuan, 2026), (Sayyi et al., 2025). While these studies make significant contributions, a few still explicitly explore *kiai*'s perspective as a key actor in shaping the internal logic of violence prevention in *pesantren*. In fact, within the *pesantren* structure, the *kiai* serves not only as a policy maker but also as an epistemic subject who shapes values, norms, and everyday caregiving practices (Ahmad & Alam, 2018), (History, 2023), (Siregar, 2013), (Rahayuningsih et al., 2023).

Based on this gap, this article analyzes how *pesantren* are understood and practiced as moral-institutional safe spaces from the *kiai*'s perspective. The research focuses on strategies for preventing sexual violence and bullying through moral leadership, caregiving systems, and the management of power relations within *pesantren*. Accordingly, the novelty of this article lies in its formulation of *pesantren* as safe spaces that operate through internal moral logic, while simultaneously examining the limitations of approaches that rely excessively on personal authority figures in preventing violence in Islamic education in Indonesia.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

State of the Art of Research on Pesantren and Violence Prevention

Studies on *pesantren* and issues of violence in Islamic education in Indonesia have developed along several major strands. First, historical and sociological research on *pesantren* positions these institutions as value-based educational systems that play a significant role in shaping moral authority, scholarly traditions, and the social structure of Indonesian Muslim communities (Hakim, 2023), (Yulista, 2025). This classical literature emphasizes the central role of the *kiai* as an authoritative figure within the *pesantren*. However, it does not explicitly connect this role to the prevention of sexual violence and bullying in contemporary residential education contexts.

Second, several studies focus on violence, bullying, and power relations within Islamic educational institutions, including *pesantren*. These studies reveal the presence of symbolic violence, seniority culture, and the normalization of disciplinary practices that potentially perpetuate unequal power relations. The primary contribution of this strand lies in uncovering the structural vulnerabilities of *pesantren*; however, its approach tends to position *pesantren* as objects of external critique, with limited exploration of the perspectives of internal actors who possess moral and pedagogical authority.

Third, research focusing on child protection policies and psychological approaches within the *pesantren* context emphasizes the importance of formal regulations, monitoring systems, and victim support mechanisms (Stiawati & Sulisman, 2025), (Nuryazidi, n.d.). While this approach makes important contributions to normative frameworks and public policy, it does not fully explain how internal *pesantren* values and *kiai* leadership practices function as culturally and institutionally

grounded preventive mechanisms.

Based on this mapping, the present study occupies an intersection between *pesantren* studies, power relations, and violence prevention, with a focus on the *kiai*'s moral leadership as the foundation for constructing *pesantren* as safe spaces. Unlike previous studies that predominantly employ regulatory, psychological, or external structural critique approaches, this article positions the *kiai* as an epistemic subject who actively shapes values, norms, and everyday caregiving practices. Accordingly, this study offers a theoretical contribution by shifting the analysis of violence prevention from external frameworks toward a moral–institutional approach rooted in the internal dynamics of *pesantren*.

Theoretical Framework: Moral Leadership and Safe Space

Theoretically, this study is grounded in two main frameworks: moral leadership in Islamic education and safe space in educational studies. Moral leadership is understood as a form of leadership that views authority not merely as a source of formal power, but as an ethical responsibility to shape value orientations, pedagogical relations, and a civil institutional climate. In the context of Indonesian Islamic education, *kiai* leadership is rooted in scholarly authority and moral legitimacy built through exemplary conduct, ethical consistency, and responsibility for the educational trust (*amanah*) entrusted to them in educating *santri* (Arifin et al., 2024), (Muslimah & Hayati, 2023). Recent literature suggests that such moral authority significantly shapes the culture of educational institutions. However, it also carries potential vulnerabilities if mechanisms for reflection and institutional constraints on power are absent.

Meanwhile, the concept of safe space in educational studies refers to learning environments that protect learners from physical, psychological, and social violence while fostering a sense of security, dignity, and meaningful participation. In policy and educational literature, safe space is understood not merely as the absence of violence, but as the outcome of interactions among policies, institutional culture, and social relations that protect the most vulnerable groups (UNESCO, 2024), (Embassy of Finland Nairobi, UKaid, SWEDEN, n.d.), (Mardiani et al., 2025). Several studies also emphasize that safe spaces in residential educational institutions cannot be realized solely through formal regulations, but require the internalization of values and consistent caregiving practices in everyday institutional life (Suradi, 2021), (Muzaki et al., 2026).

The integration of these two frameworks produces an analytical perspective that positions *pesantren* as moral–institutional safe spaces. Within this framework, violence prevention is understood as a social process operating through the interaction of *kiai* moral leadership, caregiving culture, and *pesantren* institutional structures. This framework enables empirical findings to be interpreted not merely as individual practices or regulatory compliance, but as dynamics of values, power relations, and internal mechanisms that shape the level of safety and protection for *santri* in everyday *pesantren* life.

In contemporary educational studies, the concept of safe space refers not only to the absence of physical violence but also to the presence of pedagogical relations that are just, accountable, and protective of vulnerable groups within hierarchical institutional structures. International research indicates that residential educational institutions face higher risks of violence when moral and pedagogical authority is personalized without clear mechanisms for constraining power (Council of Europe, 2017), (Osegbue et al., 2025). In this context, moral leadership functions as a protective mechanism only to the extent that it is institutionalized through the distribution of caregiving responsibilities, internal supervision systems, and corrective channels that enable institutional reflection. This perspective reinforces the framework of *pesantren* as moral–institutional safe spaces, in which *kiai* authority should be understood not as a normative guarantee, but as an ethical resource that must be accompanied by structural accountability.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how *pesantren* are understood and practiced as safe spaces from the perspectives of key internal actors. This approach is chosen because the issue of violence prevention in *pesantren* cannot be reduced to measurable variables; rather, it must be examined as a social process shaped by values, power relations, and caregiving practices within specific institutional contexts.

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with two *kiai* who serve as caretakers (*pengasuh*) of *pesantren*: the caretaker of *Pondok Pesantren Riyadlul ‘Ulum Wadda’wah Condong*, Tasikmalaya, West Java (KH. Diding Darul Falah), and the caretaker of *Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Dukuwaluh*, Purwokerto, Central Java (Dr. KH. Enjang Burhanudin Yusuf, M.Pd.). Informants were selected purposively based on the *kiai*'s structural position as holders of moral and institutional authority within the *pesantren*, as well as their direct involvement in decision-making processes and *santri* caregiving practices. The focus of the study is not on generalizing *pesantren* experiences, but on the depth of reflection and the practice of moral leadership exercised by *kiai* as central actors.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore the *kiai*'s perspectives on the prevention of sexual violence and bullying, the management of power relations, caregiving systems, and the cultural challenges encountered in *pesantren* life. This approach allows the researcher to maintain an analytical framework while providing space for the informants' reflective narratives to develop contextually.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic–reflective analysis, which involved the following stages: initial coding, category development, and the identification of substantive themes relevant to the study's theoretical framework. The analytical process was iterative, involving repeated readings of the interview data and ongoing dialogue with key literature on moral leadership, power relations, and safe spaces in education. Data validity was ensured through member checking to confirm the alignment between the researcher's interpretations and the informants' intended meanings, as well as through conceptual triangulation with relevant prior studies to strengthen analytical consistency and the credibility of the findings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Pesantren as Amanah and Moral Space

Both *kiai* interpret *pesantren* as an educational *amanah* (trust) derived from the confidence of parents and the wider community, as well as a religious responsibility before God. Within this framework, the prevention of sexual violence and bullying is not reduced to mere compliance with formal rules. However, it is understood as an effort to safeguard the honor, safety, and dignity of *santri* as subjects of education. This understanding positions *pesantren* as a moral space constructed through caregiving relationships, rather than as a disciplinary institution that relies on coercive control.

This understanding is reflected in the statement of Dr. KH. Enjang Burhanudin Yusuf, M.Pd., Caretaker of *Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Dukuwaluh*, Purwokerto, in an interview conducted on 15 December 2025: “Preventing violence in *pesantren* means safeguarding the honor, safety, and dignity of *santri* as an educational trust. *Pesantren* must not become a frightening place, but a *tarbiyah* space that is safe and fosters maturity.”

KH conveyed a similar emphasis. Diding Darul Falah, Caretaker of *Pondok Pesantren Riyadlul ‘Ulum Wadda’wah Condong*, Tasikmalaya, in an interview on 18 December 2025. He stressed that caregiving relations in *pesantren* are grounded in a moral responsibility to protect *santri*: “*Santri* are entrusted by their parents, by the community, and ultimately entrusted by God. Therefore, *pesantren*

must not be a space that causes harm, but one that provides reassurance.”

These narratives indicate that the concept of *amanah* functions as an internal moral logic that frames caregiving practices and violence prevention in *pesantren*. This finding aligns with classical perspectives that position *pesantren* as educational institutions grounded in the *kiai's* moral authority, where leadership legitimacy is derived not only from formal structures but also from socially recognized ethical integrity (Nu'man, 2025), (Lailatur Rohanita, Kemal Husen, Mochamad Rizqy Romadhon, Alfatun Nisak, Lailatul Mufarrohah, 2025), (Kunti Wildana Anjuma, 2025). In this context, educational *amanah* serves as a preventive internal control mechanism, as moral values are institutionalized in everyday practices rather than merely taught as norms.

Nevertheless, interpreting *pesantren* as *amanah*-based safe spaces cannot be treated as an automatic normative guarantee applicable in all situations. When the value of *amanah* is overly personalized in the figure of the *kiai* without accompanying institutional mechanisms for evaluation and correction, its protective capacity may weaken. Therefore, educational *amanah* must be understood as an ethical principle that demands continuous translation into reflective, accountable caregiving practices that remain open to internal critique.

Layered Caregiving Systems as Preventive Strategies

The findings indicate that violence prevention in *pesantren* is implemented through a layered caregiving system involving the caretaker (*pengasuh*), *ustadz*, dormitory guardians (*wali kamar*), and the Santri Counseling and Security Body (*Badan Konseling dan Keamanan Santri*—BKKS). This system functions as a mechanism of social protection and early detection of potential bullying and sexual violence, particularly among new *santri* and those in vulnerable positions. By distributing caregiving roles, *pesantren* establish continuous supervision while also providing internal channels through which *santri* can convey experiences of discomfort in a relatively safe manner.

The role of BKKS as part of this layered caregiving system was explained by Dr. KH. Enjang Burhanudin Yusuf, M.Pd., in an interview on 15 December 2025: “*The pesantren implements a guidance system through BKKS (Badan Konseling dan Keamanan Santri), which allows santri to receive personal attention. Newly admitted santri or those showing signs of vulnerability receive more intensive accompaniment.*”

At the dormitory level, caregiving is reinforced through the roles of dormitory guardians and daily caregivers who interact directly with *santri* in their everyday lives. These intensive interactions enable early identification of behavioral changes that may indicate bullying or violence, while also fostering closer caregiving relationships. KH. Diding Darul Falah emphasized that certain *santri* are deliberately placed in more intensive mentoring schemes as part of their caregiving responsibilities.

Analytically, this layered caregiving system—integrating personal relationships with institutional mechanisms through BKKS demonstrates a shift from discipline-based control toward relationship-based protection. Violence prevention in this framework operates not merely through sanctions or formal regulations, but through the sustained presence of distributed caregiving figures embedded within the *pesantren's* organizational structure. Such an arrangement underscores the importance of formal accompaniment mechanisms that are reinforced by a supportive institutional culture in preventing bullying and other forms of violence in residential educational institutions (Gunawan & Pakendek, 2024), (Febrianti et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of layered caregiving systems is highly dependent on trust relations, accessibility of counseling bodies, and the management of power relations within them. Without guarantees of confidentiality and a sense of safety for *santri*, such mechanisms risk remaining merely symbolic. Therefore, layered caregiving systems should be understood as practices that require continuous negotiation and reflective oversight, rather than as ideal models entirely free from structural limitations.

Ethical and Humanistic Power Relations

Relations between *kiai*, *ustadz*, and *santri* within the *pesantren* context are enacted within a framework that seeks both to educate and to protect. Authority is understood not as a personal privilege, but as a moral responsibility inherent in the caregiving role. In practice, disciplinary enforcement is carried out gradually and dialogically, allowing authority to be maintained without relying on violence as an instrument of control.

Cross-national empirical research shows that sexual violence and bullying in educational environments often occur within culturally normalized relationships and are difficult to detect through formal monitoring systems (Tonja R. Nansel, PhD, Wendy Craig, PhD, Mary D. Overpeck, DrPH, Gitanjali Saluja, PhD, W. June Ruan, 2004), (Hendriks & Carter, 2025). In residential education contexts, hierarchical discipline approaches without safe reporting channels contribute to low levels of violence reporting. Conversely, distributed and relationship-based caregiving systems have been shown to reduce violence risks and enhance learners' sense of safety. These findings underscore the importance of ethically managing power relations in *pesantren* as a prerequisite for the effective functioning of safe spaces.

At the same time, the findings of this study indicate that power relations in *pesantren* do not always operate as unilateral domination, as is often assumed in critical studies of residential educational institutions. Rather, these relations are negotiated through caregiving practices that emphasize role modeling, communication, and ethical responsibility. Within this framework, power functions not only as a tool of discipline but also as a protective mechanism that prevents violence against *santri*.

Theoretically, this ethical management of power relations aligns with the concept of moral leadership in Islamic education, which positions authority as an *amanah* to safeguard the dignity and safety of learners (Nabila, 2026). However, these findings also challenge the normative assumption that morally grounded power relations are always protective. Power relations are never neutral or given; their effectiveness depends heavily on the capacity of educational actors to consciously reflect on the boundary between pedagogical authority and the potential misuse of power.

Thus, power relations in *pesantren* should be understood as dynamic social practices inherently vulnerable to ethical tensions. Without mechanisms for institutional reflection and clear constraints on authority, moral authority risks transforming into unrecognized symbolic violence. Therefore, ethical and humanistic power relations can function as protective mechanisms only insofar as they are continuously negotiated, monitored, and institutionally accountable.

Transformation of Seniority Culture

The findings indicate that seniority culture and practices of excessive joking remain cultural challenges in *pesantren* life. Such practices are often interpreted as part of traditions of togetherness and character formation, yet in certain situations, they can reproduce dominant relations that disadvantage junior *santri*. This ambivalence positions seniority as a cultural field that is neither entirely problematic nor neutral with respect to violence prevention.

Awareness of this ambiguity has encouraged efforts to transform cultural relations toward more ethical, dialogical, and mutually respectful interactions. This transformation is not pursued through coercive approaches or formal prohibitions of long-standing traditions, but through *kiai* role modeling and the reinforcement of moral values (*akhlak*) in the everyday practices of *santri*. Within this framework, cultural change is understood as a process of value internalization operating through moral authority, rather than through repressive disciplinary intervention.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the argument that cultural transformation in *pesantren* is more effective when it occurs through internal moral mechanisms rather than through external control alone (Fauzi, n.d.). In the context of violence prevention, the transformation of seniority culture

functions as an important prerequisite for the formation of safe spaces, as emphasized in UNESCO's report on the importance of supportive institutional cultures in residential educational institutions (UNESCO, 2023).

Nevertheless, the transformation of seniority culture cannot be understood as a linear or final process. Older cultural practices are likely to be reproduced in everyday interactions, particularly in senior–junior relations that occur beyond caregivers' direct supervision. Therefore, the transformation of seniority culture should be understood as an ongoing process of cultural negotiation that requires institutional reflection to ensure that value change genuinely functions as a mechanism for violence prevention, rather than merely as a normative narrative.

Discussion

Pesantren as Moral–Institutional Safe Spaces

The findings of this study indicate that *pesantren* as safe spaces cannot be reduced merely to compliance with formal regulations or administrative procedures for violence prevention. Rather, violence prevention operates through a value-based educational logic, in which the *kiai's* moral authority functions as a source of ethical and pedagogical legitimacy in shaping caregiving culture. Within this framework, safe space is understood as the outcome of an integration between moral authority and institutional practices embedded in everyday *pesantren* life.

Studies on contemporary Islamic education demonstrate that religious authority is ambivalent within faith-based educational institutions. On the one hand, such authority serves as a source of moral legitimacy and stability of values; on the other hand, it can create vulnerabilities when power relations are not accompanied by mechanisms of institutional reflection and correction (Maryam, 2025). Comparative research on Islamic schools in Indonesia further affirms that learner protection is more effective when moral leadership is balanced by institutional governance structures that enable accountability and participation (Lina Herlina, Ika Sofia, Achmad Munib, Noer Rohmah, 2025). These insights reinforce the theoretical position that *pesantren* as safe spaces cannot be reduced to the figure of the *kiai* alone, but must be understood as moral–institutional constructions.

Although the *kiai's* perspective emphasizes the central role of moral leadership in violence prevention, this study also reveals the limitations of approaches that rely excessively on individual authority figures. When moral authority is overly personalized, mechanisms of institutional oversight and correction may weaken, particularly in situations of neglect or deviation that escape the attention of primary caregivers.

Moreover, narratives of safe space constructed from the *kiai's* perspective tend to represent the normative ideals of *pesantren*, rather than fully capturing the lived experiences of *santri* in the most vulnerable positions. This condition opens the possibility of gaps between caregivers' moral intentions and the everyday realities of *santri*, especially in senior–junior relations that occur beyond the direct supervision of *pesantren* authorities.

Accordingly, *kiai* moral leadership should not be understood as a singular solution, but rather as an ethical foundation that participatory mechanisms, safe reporting channels, and a culture of institutional reflection must complement. The scholarly contribution of this article lies in shifting the analysis of violence prevention in *pesantren* from an external–regulatory approach toward a moral–institutional perspective, while also demonstrating that the effectiveness of moral leadership is highly dependent on power constraints and structural accountability if *pesantren* are to function as sustainable safe spaces.

Conceptual Model of Violence Prevention in Pesantren

The conceptual model developed in this study positions *pesantren* as moral–institutional safe spaces that operate through the interaction between moral authority and caregiving structures. Violence

prevention is understood as a social process functioning through internal *pesantren* mechanisms, rather than merely as the outcome of compliance with external regulations or administrative procedures.

This model consists of four main elements. First, *kiai* moral leadership, which serves as a source of ethical legitimacy and value orientation in caregiving practices. Second, layered caregiving systems that distribute responsibility for *santri* protection and enable early detection of potential violence. Third, the pedagogical and humanistic management of power relations, which maintains authority without violence in everyday interactions among *kiai*, *ustadz*, and *santri*. Fourth, mechanisms of institutional reflection that function to limit the personalization of power, strengthen accountability, and ensure the structural sustainability of *pesantren* as safe spaces.

Contributions to Academic Discourse

Theoretical Contributions of the Study

In contrast to regulatory and psychological approaches that position *pesantren* as objects of external supervision, this article demonstrates that violence prevention in *pesantren* operates through internal moral logic, embodied in *kiai* leadership and institutionalized within caregiving structures. At the same time, these findings challenge romanticized assumptions in parts of the *pesantren* literature that tend to equate moral authority with automatic protection. *Kiai* leadership functions protectively only insofar as it is accompanied by critical reflection and institutional constraints on power relations.

Theoretically, this article contributes by shifting the analysis of violence prevention in *pesantren* from an external regulatory framework toward a moral institutional approach. This perspective positions values, power relations, and caregiving structures as key analytical variables in understanding how safe spaces are produced and negotiated within religious educational institutions. In doing so, the study expands the field of Islamic education by offering a conceptual framework that explains violence prevention as a culturally and leadership-based social process, rather than merely as a matter of policy or psychological intervention.

Empirically, this article enriches *pesantren* studies by positioning the *kiai* as an epistemic subject who actively shapes caregiving practices and violence prevention, rather than merely as an object of policy evaluation. At the same time, the study affirms that *pesantren* are not entirely free from the risk of violence. Accordingly, the central contribution of this article lies in emphasizing the necessity of internal mechanisms of reflection and evaluation to ensure that moral authority continues to function as a source of protection, rather than as a medium for reproducing problematic power relations.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *pesantren* as safe spaces do not emerge automatically but are produced through the interaction of the *kiai*'s moral leadership, layered caregiving systems, ethical management of power relations, and the transformation of internal *pesantren* culture. The prevention of sexual violence and bullying is understood by *kiai* not as an additional agenda, but as an integral part of the *pesantren*'s educational mission oriented toward safeguarding the dignity of *santri*.

This study affirms that the ethical management of power relations is a fundamental prerequisite for the effective functioning of *pesantren* as safe spaces. Violence in residential educational settings tends to emerge when hierarchical relations are closed and unaccountable. In contrast, *pesantren* are more likely to function as safe spaces when caregiving systems are distributed, transparent, and ethically governed.

Theoretically, this article emphasizes that violence prevention in *pesantren* operates through moral-institutional mechanisms rooted in the internal logic of *pesantren* education, rather than solely through external regulations or individual psychological approaches. By positioning the *kiai* as an epistemic

subject, this study broadens the understanding of how safe spaces are produced, negotiated, and constrained within religious educational institutions characterized by personal power relations and hierarchical cultures.

Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that the moral leadership of the *kiai* is not a singular guarantee for the creation of safe spaces. Its effectiveness depends heavily on the presence of institutional reflective mechanisms, limitations on power relations, and participatory channels that allow *santri* voices to be heard safely. Accordingly, the primary contribution of this article lies in affirming that *pesantren* as safe spaces should be understood as an ongoing social process of negotiation, rather than as a completed normative condition.

The theoretical implications of this study open avenues for further research on violence prevention in religious educational institutions by positioning values, power relations, and caregiving structures as key analytical variables. In practice, these findings provide a conceptual foundation for the development of *santri*-friendly *pesantren* policies that are not only regulation-based but also grounded in strengthening moral and institutional accountability within *pesantren*.

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