THE ROLE OF DORM GUARDIANS IN OVERCOMING BULLYING BEHAVIOR THROUGH STRENGTHENING INFORMATION LITERACY AT THE MODERN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

Jasni Maha
Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
E-mail: jasni0859@gmail.com*

Azizah Hanum
Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
E-mail: azizahhanum@uinsu.ac.id

Yusnaili Budianti
Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
E-mail: yusnailibudianti@uinsu.ac.id

Abstract
This study aims to 1. Analyze the forms of bullying behavior of students at the Raudhatul Jannah modern Islamic boarding school in Subulussalam city. 2. The efforts of the dormitory guardian in overcoming bullying behavior at the Raudhatul Jannah modern Islamic boarding school in Subulussalam city. 3. Obstacles of the dormitory guardian in overcoming bullying behavior of students at the Raudhatul Jannah modern Islamic boarding school in Subulussalam city. The type of qualitative research with a case study approach was used in this study. The data sources taken were from the Head of the Raudhatul Jannah Modern Islamic Boarding School, Care, dormitory guardian and students. The data collection techniques were through observation, interviews, and document studies. The results of the study showed that: (1) there was bullying behavior in Islamic boarding schools in the form of verification and non-verification before the presence of the dormitory guardian after the presence of the dormitory guardian bullying behavior had decreased significantly (2) The efforts made by the dormitory guardian to avoid bullying behavior were by facilitating students with sports facilities, creating activities, providing advice and supervising students' activities. (3) The obstacles faced by the dormitory guardian were the lack of tolerance among students, parental factors, communication, motivation and advice, and independence.

Keywords: *Role of the dormitory guardian, Information Literacy Bullying behavior, Islamic boarding school*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is renowned for its rich cultural and social diversity, which is reflected not only in its ethnic and linguistic composition but also in the variety of educational environments that exist across the country. Among these are Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which have long served as foundational institutions for religious learning and character development. As boarding-based educational settings, pesantren offer both academic and moral formation, providing a structured environment where students live, learn, and interact under the guidance

of religious and educational mentors. However, as in many residential settings with high levels of peer interaction, these schools are not immune to social challenges such as bullying behavior.

Bullying has emerged as a persistent issue in various educational settings, including Islamic boarding schools, and poses a serious threat to students' psychological well-being, academic performance, and character development. In many cases, bullying in dormitory contexts occurs subtly and is perpetuated by hierarchical structures, peer dominance, and limited adult supervision during off-class hours (Dalimunthe et al., 2024). According to recent studies, bullying in boarding schools often goes unreported, especially when it is normalized or perceived as a form of discipline or social bonding 9Ohorella et al., 2024). Addressing this problem requires comprehensive strategies that go beyond punitive measures and instead focus on preventive education, moral reinforcement, and literacy-based interventions 9S Fauziah et al., 2024).

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, dorm guardians (musyrif or musyrifah) play a crucial role in shaping students' behavior outside the classroom. As immediate supervisors within the dormitories, they are uniquely positioned to observe, intervene, and educate students in their daily interpersonal interactions. Beyond enforcing discipline, dorm guardians have the potential to function as mentors, role models, and agents of character education. However, to effectively combat bullying, their role must be strengthened through structured frameworks such as information literacy—which can empower students to critically analyze harmful behaviors, understand ethical communication, and navigate peer relationships with empathy and respect (Indainanto et al., 2023).

Information literacy, in this regard, is not limited to digital competencies but includes the ability to access, evaluate, and ethically use information to make responsible decisions. When integrated into character education, information literacy becomes a strategic tool for fostering critical thinking, moral reasoning, and digital civility among students. In Islamic boarding schools, where religious values form the core of education, strengthening information literacy can help students discern between normative Islamic teachings and negative social behaviors such as intimidation, verbal abuse, or social exclusion. This aligns with Islamic principles that promote justice ('adl), compassion (rahmah), and mutual respect (ta'awun) in all human interactions (A Kamal et al., 2024).

The city of Subulussalam in Aceh Province presents a compelling case for such initiatives. As a region with a strong Islamic educational tradition, Subulussalam is home to various pesantren including the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Raudhatul Jannah. Like many other pesantren, this institution is not only tasked with producing academically capable graduates but also morally upright individuals. However, recent observations and informal interviews have revealed growing concerns regarding peer-based conflicts and bullying among dormitory residents. These concerns underscore the need for proactive and culturally relevant strategies to address bullying through educational and literacy-based approaches, with dorm guardians as key facilitators (Syam et al., 2024).

This study therefore seeks to examine the role of dorm guardians in addressing bullying behavior through the strengthening of information literacy at the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Raudhatul Jannah in Subulussalam City. Specifically, the research aims to identify the forms and patterns of bullying within the boarding environment, assess the current capacities of dorm guardians in handling such cases, and explore how information literacy can be integrated into their mentoring roles. By focusing on the intersection between character education, literacy, and behavioral intervention, this study intends to contribute to the

development of holistic, ethical, and sustainable anti-bullying practices in Islamic educational contexts (Kholil et al., 2024).

Ultimately, the findings of this research are expected to offer practical insights for pesantren management, educational policymakers, and dorm supervisors on how to effectively prevent and respond to bullying. Moreover, it seeks to position information literacy not just as a technical skill, but as a moral compass that guides students toward becoming thoughtful, respectful, and socially responsible individuals—embodying the true spirit of Islamic education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design. Descriptive qualitative research is used to describe, explain, or summarize various conditions, situations, phenomena, or research variables as they naturally occur, without manipulation or experimental intervention. This method allows researchers to explore social realities by capturing data through observations, interviews, photographs, field notes, and documentary analysis. The qualitative approach was chosen in order to understand the context and meaning of social behavior from the perspectives of those involved.

The research was conducted at SMP 3 Rundeng, located on JL. Syeh Hamzah Fansuri, Kampung Model Baru, Subulussalam City, Aceh Province. This location was selected based on preliminary observations which indicated that many students at the school had not yet adopted proper sharia-compliant clothing in accordance with the Islamic values upheld by the school community. The researcher chose this setting with the intention of exploring the underlying factors and social dynamics that influence students' behavior and school compliance, with the broader hope of contributing to positive behavioral change through educational insights. The research subjects consisted of key stakeholders who were directly involved in student character development and religious values enforcement. These included the Principal, the Vice Principal for Student Affairs, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher, and five selected students. Participants were chosen using purposive sampling, a technique that allows for the selection of individuals who possess specific knowledge or experience relevant to the research objectives. The five students selected represented different grade levels and were identified as individuals whose behavior and perspectives could provide meaningful insight into the study's focus.

Data collection techniques in this study included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured question guides to allow flexibility in exploring relevant themes, while observation enabled the researcher to directly witness the clothing practices and interactions among students within the school environment. Documentary data, including school regulations, photographs, and program reports, were also analyzed to triangulate findings and support the validity of the study.

All collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which involves three concurrent activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Through this iterative process, patterns, themes, and categories related to clothing behavior, school values, and the effectiveness of supervision were identified and interpreted within the broader cultural and educational context. This methodological approach enables a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under study and allows for the formulation of practical recommendations grounded in the lived experiences of the school community.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that bullying within the dormitory setting of the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Raudhatul Jannah manifests in various forms, ranging from verbal ridicule and peer isolation to coercion and psychological intimidation. Based on in-depth interviews with students and educators, it was evident that hierarchical peer relationships, particularly between senior and junior students, significantly contributed to the perpetuation of bullying. These behaviors were often normalized under the pretense of discipline or group bonding, making them difficult to identify and address effectively.

Observation data also supported these findings, showing that students who did not conform to expected norms—including dress codes or behavioral conduct—were more vulnerable to mockery or exclusion. This aligns with previous studies noting that Islamic boarding schools, despite their moral foundations, are still susceptible to internal social conflicts due to communal living and limited adult supervision during non-academic hours (Azra, 2019).

Dorm Guardians' Roles in Monitoring and Responding to Bullying

Dorm guardians (musyrif/musyrifah) were found to play a central but underutilized role in mitigating bullying. Interviews with school management and the dorm supervisors indicated that although guardians are positioned close to the students, their role has been largely limited to routine supervision and disciplinary enforcement. Many expressed a lack of capacity in identifying and responding to more covert or psychological forms of bullying, such as social exclusion or subtle verbal abuse.

Furthermore, dorm guardians often lacked formal training in educational counseling or character education strategies, making it challenging for them to engage in proactive interventions. This limitation echoes findings by Efendi (2021), who emphasized that the effectiveness of dorm guardians in Indonesian pesantren heavily depends on their pedagogical competence and emotional intelligence.

Dorm guardians (musyrif/musyrifah) were found to play a central but underutilized role in mitigating bullying. Interviews with school management and dorm supervisors indicated that although these guardians are in close proximity to students and are best positioned to monitor daily interpersonal interactions, their role has remained largely limited to enforcing dorm rules, managing schedules, and maintaining order. As a result, many bullying incidents, particularly those that are covert or psychological in nature such as social exclusion, sarcasm, and passive-aggressive behaviors often go unnoticed or unaddressed.

Many dorm guardians admitted that they lacked the specific capacity and tools to properly identify, confront, and mediate such subtle forms of bullying. Their actions often remain reactive rather than preventive, primarily because their initial training and job descriptions focus more on logistical and administrative responsibilities rather than educational or psychosocial development. This limitation echoes the findings of Efendi (2021), who emphasized that the effectiveness of dorm guardians in Indonesian pesantren heavily depends on their pedagogical competence, empathy, and emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, most dorm guardians have not received formal training in educational counseling, conflict resolution, or character education frameworks, making it challenging for them to apply proactive and constructive approaches in handling interpersonal conflicts. This results in a missed opportunity to position dorm guardians not only as disciplinarians but also

as mentors, facilitators of reflection, and agents of moral development within the dormitory ecosystem (Salsabila et al., 2024).

Additionally, a lack of institutional support and structured intervention models has further restricted their impact. There are no clear guidelines, monitoring tools, or literacy-based programs integrated into their roles, which leaves them navigating complex social issues with minimal direction. Some guardians also expressed concern about crossing boundaries or being perceived as intrusive, highlighting the need for formal protocols and communication ethics in addressing bullying without escalating tensions (Sikumbang et al., 2024).

This gap points to an urgent need for capacity-building programs that equip dorm guardians with relevant skills in character education, psychological first aid, and information literacy. Such efforts would not only strengthen their ability to handle bullying effectively but also redefine their roles as key stakeholders in creating a safe and nurturing school environment.

Information Literacy as a Preventive and Educational Tool

When integrated into dormitory mentoring, information literacy demonstrated significant potential as a preventive strategy against bullying (Ritonga et al., 2024). Rather than treating bullying solely as a disciplinary issue, dorm guardians who adopted literacy-based approaches were able to foster a reflective, value-driven dorm environment. Students engaged in structured activities such as guided discussions on digital and verbal ethics, reflective journaling, Quran-based discussions, and small-group storytelling began to show notable improvements in their interpersonal awareness and empathy (Dalimunthe, 2022).

This participatory approach allowed students to internalize ethical behavior through meaningful dialogue rather than abstract moral instruction. Dorm guardians who facilitated informal literacy sessions on topics such as respectful speech, emotional boundaries, and the consequences of harmful communication reported a noticeable decline in verbal bullying and social exclusion. These sessions often included references to Qur'anic teachings, especially QS. Al-Hujurat:11, which strongly discourages mockery and insulting behavior among believers. The religious context reinforced the moral authority of the discussions and encouraged students to re-evaluate their daily interactions not just through a disciplinary lens, but as a form of religious and ethical accountability (Harianto et al., 2023).

This finding supports the argument made by Bawden and Robinson (2012) that information literacy, when extended beyond technical competencies, becomes a vehicle for critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and social awareness. It enables learners to recognize bias, evaluate the consequences of their behavior, and construct positive narratives about themselves and others. In the boarding school context where peer interaction is constant and intense such skills are particularly vital (Simatupang et al., 2021)

Furthermore, this practice aligns with UNESCO's (2022) perspective that literacy is not merely a cognitive skill for decoding texts, but a transformative force that contributes to character building, emotional maturity, and civic responsibility. In Islamic educational settings, where moral education is a foundational pillar, the integration of information literacy provides a bridge between traditional religious instruction and contemporary youth challenges, such as online communication ethics, digital bullying, and social judgment (Humaizi et al., 2024).

By reframing literacy as a moral compass and self-regulation tool, the dormitory becomes more than a space for sleeping it evolves into a learning laboratory for building empathy, dialogue, and ethical discernment. In this context, dorm guardians shift from passive

supervisors to active facilitators of moral and cognitive growth, empowered not just by authority but by relational trust and educational strategies.

These outcomes suggest that information literacy must be repositioned within pesantren curricula not as an auxiliary skill, but as a core component of student development, especially in addressing behavioral issues such as bullying in a more holistic and faith-aligned manner.

This transformative shift underscores the pedagogical significance of the dormitory as a co-curricular space, where character formation occurs not through formal instruction alone but through lived experiences, meaningful conversations, and guided reflection. It implies that literacy, when rooted in moral and religious values, becomes a strategic intervention for behavioral reform, especially in environments where students' social interactions are intensive and prolonged. Therefore, equipping dorm guardians with literacy-based mentoring skills is not merely a support mechanism, but a strategic investment in shaping a more inclusive, respectful, and spiritually grounded student community.

Such a reconceptualization also aligns with the broader objectives of Islamic education, which emphasizes the integration of 'ilm (knowledge), 'amal (action), and akhlaq (morality). Literacy, therefore, is not merely about decoding texts but about internalizing values, cultivating ethical consciousness, and guiding behavior in accordance with Islamic teachings. When dorm guardians are empowered as literacy facilitators, they become agents of spiritual refinement, fostering a culture of mutual respect, critical reflection, and self-restraint among students (Dalimunthe et al., 2024).

Moreover, this approach promotes the idea that combating bullying is not limited to enforcement or punishment, but involves a continuous process of education, empowerment, and spiritual nurturing. It restores the dormitory as a value-laden ecosystem where faith-based reasoning, emotional literacy, and social responsibility are woven into everyday interactions. In this way, information literacy becomes both a preventive and developmental tool—helping students navigate not only digital environments, but also interpersonal complexities, with wisdom, empathy, and ethical clarity.

Consequently, embedding information literacy into the Islamic boarding school curriculum must be seen as a systemic reform, requiring collaboration between dorm guardians, religious educators, and school leaders. This integration will ensure that interventions against bullying are not fragmented or incidental, but rather sustained, theologically grounded, and contextually relevant to the students' lived experiences within the Islamic boarding school tradition.

Behavioral Shifts and Community Response

A notable shift was observed among students who participated in information literacy activities facilitated by dorm guardians. Through semi-structured interviews, students shared that they felt more "heard" and "respected" during these literacy sessions compared to formal religious lectures. This participatory and reflective format allowed for deeper discussions about peer relationships, ethics, and responsibility.

Moreover, students began expressing greater awareness about how words and behavior can affect others, indicating early development of emotional literacy. Some even took initiative to mediate conflicts among peers or report bullying to dorm guardians. This behavioral change reflects the success of merging Islamic ethical values with modern pedagogical tools in addressing social issues such as bullying.

Despite these positive developments, several challenges remain. The primary limitation was the lack of institutional support for literacy-based interventions in the dormitory context. While the school administration endorsed the general idea, there was no formal policy or program structure supporting dorm-based literacy education. Additionally, dorm guardians themselves requested further training on facilitation methods, information literacy frameworks, and adolescent psychology.

The Sikambang Dance is a traditional art form originating from the coastal communities of Sibolga, North Sumatra. This dance has been passed down through generations and plays a vital role in various traditional ceremonies, particularly weddings. In the context of weddings, the Sikambang Dance serves not only as entertainment but also as a rich symbolic meaning reflecting the cultural values of the local community.

These findings illustrate that information literacy-based interventions when contextualized through interactive, student-centered methods can serve as powerful tools for cultivating empathy, moral reasoning, and proactive behavior among adolescents in boarding school environments. The contrast between the more dialogic literacy sessions and conventional religious lectures also suggests the importance of shifting from didactic to participatory learning approaches, where students are not mere recipients of knowledge but co-constructors of ethical understanding.

The emergence of student-initiated actions such as conflict mediation and peer accountability signals a positive shift toward communal responsibility and emotional intelligence, which are often overlooked in rigid academic structures. These outcomes validate the integration of information literacy not only as a cognitive skillset but as a means of character development grounded in Islamic moral values.

However, the absence of a formal policy framework for implementing dorm-based literacy programs poses a risk of inconsistency, dependency on individual initiative, and limited scalability. Without clear institutional backing, such programs may remain fragmented or fail to reach their full potential. Additionally, dorm guardians' expressed need for structured training in facilitation techniques, adolescent developmental psychology, and literacy pedagogy highlights a critical gap in human resource development.

These institutional and structural limitations must be addressed to ensure that the gains achieved through information literacy do not remain isolated success stories, but evolve into sustainable, system-wide practices. Schools and pesantren administrations are therefore urged to institutionalize literacy programs, develop standardized modules rooted in Islamic educational values, and continuously build the capacity of dorm guardians as key facilitators in the formation of student behavior and ethical awareness.

In the absence of systemic integration, even the most impactful literacy-based interventions risk becoming sporadic and personality-driven, relying too heavily on the motivation of individual dorm guardians rather than institutional vision. This fragmentation not only hampers long-term impact but also prevents replication across different pesantren environments. Institutionalization is therefore essential to ensure consistency, alignment with national character education goals, and equitable access to literacy programs for all students regardless of their pesantren's resource capacity.

Furthermore, without adequate support structures including formal training, mentoring, and ongoing professional development dorm guardians may struggle to sustain their role as change agents. Building a coherent ecosystem of literacy education within the pesantren framework requires more than ad hoc initiatives; it demands a deliberate strategy that embeds

literacy into policy, allocates resources for capacity-building, and monitors outcomes as part of school improvement plans. Only through such comprehensive approaches can literacy evolve into a resilient pillar of behavioral reform and moral cultivation in Islamic boarding school communities.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that bullying within the dormitory environment of the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Raudhatul Jannah in Subulussalam manifests in various forms ranging from verbal insults and social exclusion to psychological intimidation. These behaviors are often reinforced by hierarchical peer structures and normalized through informal social practices, making them difficult to detect and address through conventional disciplinary approaches.

Dorm guardians (musyrif/musyrifah), while ideally positioned to intervene, are currently underutilized due to their limited training in counseling, character education, and information literacy. Their role has largely been confined to maintaining discipline, rather than fostering reflective and value-based student development. This highlights a critical institutional gap that hinders effective intervention and the promotion of ethical dormitory culture. However, when dorm guardians adopted information literacy-based approaches such as facilitated discussions on respectful communication, reflective journaling, and the integration of Qur'anic ethics students began to exhibit greater empathy, emotional awareness, and peer accountability. These interventions transformed the dormitory into a co-curricular learning environment, where moral values were not only taught but lived and internalized through everyday interactions. Literacy, in this context, became more than a functional skill it emerged as a moral compass and a tool for self-regulation. The research further demonstrates that integrating information literacy into the pesantren ecosystem requires more than isolated activities. It calls for a systemic shift: one that repositions dorm guardians as facilitators of ethical reasoning, supports them with structured training, and embeds literacy into institutional policies and curricula. Without such structural integration, even successful interventions risk becoming fragmented and dependent on individual initiative, thus limiting their long-term impact and replicability. Therefore, this study strongly recommends that pesantren administrators and educational policymakers institutionalize information literacy as a core element of character education. This includes developing standardized literacy modules grounded in Islamic values, investing in guardian capacity-building, and establishing monitoring mechanisms to assess program effectiveness. By doing so, pesantren can evolve into inclusive, value-driven educational communities capable of nurturing students who are not only academically competent but also ethically resilient and socially responsible.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed for stakeholders in Islamic boarding schools to enhance the role of dorm guardians in preventing and addressing bullying through information literacy.

First, pesantren administrators should institutionalize structured training programs for dorm guardians focusing on counseling skills, conflict resolution, adolescent psychology, and literacy-based mentoring techniques. Such training will empower guardians to act not only as disciplinarians but as mentors and facilitators of moral development.

Second, information literacy should be formally integrated into the pesantren curriculum, linking it to Islamic values and character education. Standardized modules, guided by Qur'anic ethics, can help students develop critical thinking, empathy, and ethical communication skills.

Third, pesantren should establish clear policies, monitoring tools, and reporting mechanisms to ensure consistency in anti-bullying interventions, while also encouraging student participation in peer mediation and ethical reflection activities.

Fourth, collaborations between pesantren, educational authorities, and literacy-based organizations should be fostered to share best practices, develop innovative resources, and scale successful programs.

Finally, future research should examine the long-term impact of literacy-based interventions on student behavior and dormitory culture across various pesantren settings to ensure broader applicability and sustainability.

THANK YOU-NOTE

The authors extend their deepest gratitude to the leadership, teachers, and dorm guardians of the Raudhatul Jannah Modern Islamic Boarding School in Subulussalam City for their openness, cooperation, and invaluable contributions throughout the research process. Special appreciation is conveyed to the students who participated in interviews and observations, sharing their perspectives and experiences with honesty and courage. The authors also thank colleagues at Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara for their academic guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous encouragement in completing this study. Finally, heartfelt thanks go to our families and friends for their unwavering support and prayers. May the insights from this research contribute meaningfully to creating safer, more respectful, and literacy-enriched boarding school environments.

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