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## THE ROLE OF PESANTREN EDUCATION IN PREVENTING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: A CASE STUDY OF AN INDONESIAN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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**Abstract:** The issue of juvenile delinquency is becoming increasingly concerning for many parties because it can cause harm to adolescents, families, and society. Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) have a strategic role in providing educational and moral solutions to shape the character of the younger generation so they can uphold Islamic values amid changing times. The factors causing juvenile delinquency to come from both internal and external aspects, including family environment and peer interactions. A case study at Pondok Pesantren shows that pesantren education, which emphasizes religious guidance, discipline, and holistic character strengthening, can reduce the level of juvenile delinquency. Religious activities, extracurricular programs, and strict boarding regulations keep students (santri) engaged, thereby minimizing the possibility of deviant behaviour. The character-building system through rules, advice, and educational sanctions supports the formation of disciplined, responsible, and well-mannered individuals. Thus, pesantren plays an important role in neutralizing juvenile delinquency through integrated educational and spiritual development.

**Keywords:** Juvenile Delinquency, Islamic Boarding, Islamic Education. Role Of Pesantren



**Abstrak:** Isu kenakalan remaja menjadi semakin memprihatinkan bagi banyak pihak karena dapat merugikan remaja, keluarga, dan masyarakat. Pondok pesantren memiliki peran strategis dalam memberikan solusi pendidikan dan moral untuk membentuk karakter generasi muda sehingga dapat menjunjung tinggi nilai-nilai Islam di tengah perubahan zaman. Faktor-faktor penyebab kenakalan remaja berasal dari aspek internal dan eksternal, termasuk lingkungan keluarga dan interaksi teman sebaya. Pondok Pesantren menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan pesantren yang menekankan pada bimbingan agama, disiplin, dan penguatan karakter holistik mampu menurunkan tingkat kenakalan remaja. Kegiatan keagamaan, program ekstrakurikuler, dan peraturan asrama yang ketat membuat siswa (santri) tetap terlibat, sehingga meminimalisir kemungkinan perilaku menyimpang. Sistem pembentukan karakter melalui aturan, saran, dan sanksi pendidikan mendukung pembentukan individu yang disiplin, bertanggung jawab, dan sopan. Dengan demikian, pesantren berperan penting dalam menetralkan kenakalan remaja melalui pengembangan pendidikan dan spiritual yang terintegrasi.

**Kata kunci:** Asrama Sekolah, Kenakalan Remaja, Pendidikan Islam, Peran Pesantren

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, fostering the younger generation has become an urgent necessity, particularly as juvenile delinquency is increasingly observed within social life. Juvenile delinquency not only impacts the adolescents themselves but also carries serious implications for families, communities, and even national development stability. Deviant behaviors that emerge during adolescence often result in broad social and moral losses, requiring educational approaches that are not solely academic but also instill values and life principles. In this context, *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) serve as Islamic educational institutions striving to provide mental and moral guidance to young people so that they can face modernization without losing Islamic values as the foundation of their life behaviors<sup>1</sup>

The causes of juvenile delinquency can generally be classified into two main categories: internal and external factors. Internal factors relate to conditions within the adolescent, such as personality, intelligence level, age, and gender differences, which influence how individuals respond to their surrounding environment. According to Wirawati, internal factors arise through a process of misinternalization of values, whereby external influences are absorbed in unhealthy ways and subsequently expressed as deviant behaviors<sup>2</sup>. Thus, adolescent delinquency is not only caused by environmental pressures but also by weaknesses in self-control and character formation from an early age.

On the other hand, external factors are predominantly shaped by the family environment, which serves as the first educational space for children. Families play

<sup>1</sup> Sudarsono, *Kenakalan Remaja* (Rineka Cipta, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> S M Wirawati et al., "Ramadan as a Momentum for Character Development: A Values Education Approach in the Islamic School Curriculum," *Indonesian Journal of Studies on Humanities, Social Sciences and Education* 2, no. 1 (2025): 92-117, <https://doi.org/10.54783/m41z5324>.



a crucial role in shaping a child's personality and character before exposure to broader environments. When families fail to perform their educational and supervisory roles effectively, children become more susceptible to negative external influences. A harmonious family environment contributes to adolescents' emotional stability, whereas families that lack attention may become entry points for the emergence of deviant behaviors. Therefore, parental roles are pivotal in guiding adolescent development during this critical period<sup>3</sup>.

Beyond the family, peer and social environments also strongly influence the emergence of juvenile delinquency. During the identity-seeking phase, adolescents tend to be more influenced by their peers than by parental or teacher guidance. Unhealthy social interactions can trigger deviant behaviors as a form of social adjustment. In this scenario, *pesantren* function as an alternative environment capable of directing adolescent socialization toward positive behaviors. Through moral development and consistent religious practices, students are trained to live disciplined and responsible lives, ensuring their time and energy are channeled into beneficial and spiritually meaningful activities<sup>4</sup>.

Juvenile delinquency is relatively rare in Islamic educational institutions, especially *pesantren*, due to strong moral oversight and spiritual guidance. Nata notes that adolescents residing in *pesantren* tend to have a better understanding of religion, can read the Qur'an correctly, and demonstrate behaviors aligned with Islamic values<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, the consistent practice of religious life in *pesantren* contributes to the cultivation of noble character. As a result, the *pesantren* culture has been recognized as a relevant model for character education, even applicable in formal educational institutions, albeit not fully in a boarding format.

In practice, *pesantren* implement a structured daily schedule. During the day, students attend general academic classes, while afternoons and evenings are dedicated to religious studies and worship activities. This continuous educational pattern fosters nearly uninterrupted interaction between teachers and students, enhancing learning motivation, discipline, and independence. Such a system strengthens students' character development, equipping them to face social challenges outside the *pesantren* environment<sup>6</sup>.

This situation reinforces the view that *pesantren* serve as a strategic alternative for addressing juvenile delinquency. When formal education is considered insufficient in nurturing students' religious and moral dimensions, *pesantren* offer an educational approach that directly touches moral and spiritual development. Limited religious instruction in schools, minimal parental attention at home, and the overwhelming influence of global culture, which often exceeds adolescents'

<sup>3</sup> Sudarsono, *Kenakalan Remaja*.

<sup>4</sup> A Nata, *Manajemen Pendidikan: Mengatasi Kelemahan Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia* (Kencana, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Nata.

<sup>6</sup> Nata.



religious understanding, increase the risk of moral degradation. *Pesantren* offer a solution through intensive and continuous guidance<sup>7</sup>.

Public trust is a crucial element in determining the progress of educational institutions. When society believes in the quality of a *pesantren*, support emerges in various forms, including the willingness to enroll children and encourage others to do the same. According to Qomar, society is a strategic component in educational delivery, meaning that Islamic educational institutions must be able to understand social needs and expectations to remain relevant and competitive. Without community support, the sustainability of *pesantren* is difficult to maintain<sup>8</sup>.

Therefore, *pesantren* leaders must possess clear vision and adaptive management strategies. Institutional improvements should be carried out continuously so that *pesantren* can guarantee both academic knowledge and personal maturity, along with practical life skills for students. In this way, *pesantren* can maintain their existence as educational institutions that promise a bright future while also acting as moral fortresses for the younger generation amid changing times<sup>9</sup>.

The *pesantren* environment is also designed to minimize negative external influences from outside the family by implementing a boarding system. In this system, supervision previously provided by parents is partially delegated to the *pesantren*. Communal life in a religious environment creates a controlled and conducive educational atmosphere. Life in the *pesantren* not only nurtures religious behavior but also guides students toward meaningful social character transformation.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that *pesantren* play a strategic role in addressing juvenile delinquency through holistic education. Integrated learning, religious activities, and character building constitute the primary strengths of *pesantren* in shaping young people who are both religious and morally upright. Therefore, the role of *pesantren* extends beyond an educational institution; it functions as a social transformation agent that preserves adolescent morality amid the challenges of modernity.

## METHOD

In this study, the researcher employed a descriptive research method with a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach emphasizes understanding and meaning-making. It is understood as a research approach that reveals certain social situations by accurately describing reality, shaped through words based on relevant data collection and data analysis techniques obtained from natural settings<sup>10</sup>

The type of research used in this study is descriptive research. Descriptive research is aimed at describing phenomena, events, or occurrences as they exist in

<sup>7</sup> Q Bie et al., "Research Impact and Sustainability in Education: A Conceptual Literature Review," *Sustainability* 17, no. 1 (2025): 198–208, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14052759>.

<sup>8</sup> M Qomar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* (Erlangga, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Qomar.

<sup>10</sup> D Satori and A Komariah, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Alfabeta, 2011).



the present. This type of research focuses on actual problems as they appear during the research process. Through descriptive research, the researcher attempts to describe the events and occurrences of interest without providing special treatment or manipulation to these events. The variables studied can be singular (one variable) or multiple variables<sup>11</sup>.

The research was conducted at Al-Masyithoh Manba'il Futuh Islamic Boarding School, located in Beji Village, Jenu Subdistrict, Tuban Regency, East Java Province.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Al-Masyithoh Manba'il Futuh Islamic Boarding School is one of the branch units under the main Manba'il Futuh Islamic Boarding School. This pesantren was established by KH. Muslich Abd. Rahim (the son-in-law of KH. Fatchurrahman Abu Said, founder of PP. Manba'il Futuh) in 1989. The leadership of the pesantren was subsequently continued by Nyai Shofiyatun (wife of KH. Muslich Abd. Rahim) together with their fourth son, K. Nurul Fahmi, who also serves as the chairman of LTN PCNU Tuban Regency.

The name "Al-Masyithoh" was taken from the name of the mother of the main caretaker, Mbah Masyithoh, reflecting a hidden meaning to honor the ancestors in their da'wah efforts and to express the caretaker's love for his mother. Initially, the pesantren began when a community member wished to have his daughter studied under Mbah Muslich, although he did not yet have a formal boarding facility. Previously, Mbah Muslich would recommend sending students to KH. Hisyam Ismail (his brother-in-law) and would assist in teaching at KH. Hisyam's pesantren. However, in this case, the student's guardian insisted on placing the child directly under Mbah Muslich's care. As a result, the new female student stayed in a room near the kitchen, which today is located near the stairs leading to the male dormitory<sup>12</sup>

The issues of adolescent development are closely related to both their immediate environment and educational settings. Education is not merely about classrooms or textbooks; informal spaces such as communities, families, and the natural surroundings also serve as significant sources of learning. However, education in a pesantren is fundamentally different. In pesantren, learning encompasses not only academics but also moral cultivation, good habits, and closeness to spiritual values.

Compared to learning<sup>13</sup>, external educational environments tend to be more flexible and liberating but often lack strict control and structured guidance. In contrast, pesantren, despite having strict rules, instill discipline and habits of

<sup>11</sup> N Zuria, *Metodologi Penelitian Sosial Dan Pendidikan* (Bumi Aksara, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Pondok Pesantren Al-Masyithoh Manbail Futuh, "Profil Pondok Pesantren Al-Masyithoh Manbail Futuh Tahun 2025," 2025.

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Khoirul Huda and Betty Mauli Rosa Bustam, "Study of the Axiology Values of Pesantren," *Santri: Journal of Pesantren and Fiqh Sosial* 4, no. 1 (2023): 101-16, <https://doi.org/10.35878/santri.v4i1.700>.





orderly living. Both approaches have their merits. The key lies in the ability to adopt positive values from each system, enabling students to learn from diverse sources while maintaining a strong set of life principles.

In discussions of education, society often defines it narrowly, focusing on formal institutions such as schools, which include classrooms, teachers, curricula, and assessment systems like examinations. In reality, the essence of education is <sup>14</sup>and not confined to formal structures alone. Learning can occur dynamically through social interaction, engagement with communities, family, and the surrounding environment, all of which significantly shape an individual's mindset, attitudes, and character<sup>15</sup>. For instance, active participation in youth organizations, such as community service groups, provides opportunities to develop cooperation, responsibility, and leadership skills without necessarily attending higher formal education.

Education in pesantren, however, adopts a more holistic approach. Students are not only taught religious knowledge, such as classical texts (kitab kuning) and jurisprudence (fiqh), but are also trained in discipline, simplicity, and independent living. Daily activities, such as waking before dawn, performing congregational prayers, and attending regular study sessions, are integral to character formation<sup>16</sup>.

When comparing pesantren education with external learning environments, the latter often allows for more flexibility and creativity, enabling children to explore their interests, learn through the internet, attend workshops, or undertake internships. However, not all students have sufficient access or structured guidance. Conversely, the pesantren system, while strict, fosters disciplined lifestyles and instills guiding moral values. Both approaches offer advantages, but the essential aspect is the ability to internalize positive lessons from both, allowing for comprehensive learning in knowledge and character formation<sup>17</sup>.

As a traditional Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, pesantren play a crucial role in shaping the moral character of youth. The relevant grand theory in this context is Kohlberg's Moral Education Theory, emphasizing moral development through stages of ethical reasoning. Pesantren do not merely convey religious knowledge; they instill moral values, discipline, and social responsibility. Through a structured educational framework, pesantren function as social

<sup>14</sup> Muhammad Ikhsanudin, Sahiron Syamsuddin, and Sunarwoto Sunarwoto, "The Typology of Pesantren's Islamic Thoughts in Java: A Qualitative Study," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 2 (2022): 107-19, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2022.112.107-119>.

<sup>15</sup> Syahria Anggita Sakti, Suwardi Endraswara, and Arif Rohman, "Revitalizing Local Wisdom within Character Education through Ethnopedagogy Apporach: A Case Study on a Preschool in Yogyakarta," *Heliyon* 10, no. 10 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e31370>.

<sup>16</sup> Suryadi and M. Mansur, "The Role of Traditional Islamic Boarding School-Based Islamic Studies as Radicalism and Intolerance Flow's Blocking Agent," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 18, no. 2 (2018): 225-39, <https://doi.org/10.14421/esensia.v18i2.1483>.

<sup>17</sup> Akhmad Nurul Kawakip, "Globalization and Islamic Educational Challenges: Views from East Javanese Pesantren," *Ulumuna* 24, no. 1 (2020): 105-31, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v24i1.385>.



laboratories shaping adolescent behavior, helping them differentiate right from wrong and internalize social and religious norms<sup>18</sup>.

Beyond moral education, the role of pesantren can also be analyzed through Berger and Luckmann's Socialization Theory, which states that individuals learn norms, values, and behaviors through social interactions within their environment. In pesantren, students experience intensive socialization through daily activities, interactions with teachers, and habituation of religious values. This socialization helps neutralize negative behaviors or delinquency, as students learn to adapt to community rules, respect authority, and develop empathy for others<sup>19</sup>.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is also relevant for understanding the control of adolescent delinquency. The micro-environment of the pesantren, including dormitories, classrooms, and activity spaces, directly shapes behavior through the influence of teachers and peers. The macro-environment, such as the surrounding community, reinforces positive norms. Pesantren provide both a social and spiritual environment where adolescents are taught self-control, emotional management, and avoidance of deviant behaviors<sup>20</sup>.

From an integrative educational and developmental perspective, juvenile delinquency can be effectively addressed through the comprehensive learning environment provided by pesantren. Drawing on Skinner's behaviorism, adolescent behavior is shaped through consistent patterns of reinforcement; pesantren apply reward and corrective systems that encourage discipline and responsibility while discouraging rule violations, thereby creating a structured and supportive learning climate. This behavioral regulation is reinforced by character education theory, which emphasizes the integration of moral knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Through religious instruction, disciplined routines, and exemplary teacher conduct, pesantren cultivate self-control, integrity, and moral awareness among students<sup>21</sup>.

Beyond individual behavior, pesantren strengthen adolescents' social attachment in line with Hirschi's social control theory. Emotional closeness between students and teachers, collective religious practices, and communal activities foster strong social bonds that reduce the likelihood of deviant behavior. Social learning theory further explains how adolescents internalize positive norms by observing and imitating respected figures, such as disciplined teachers and senior students, who model appropriate emotional regulation and ethical conduct<sup>22</sup>. Psychosocially, pesantren provide a stable context for identity formation during Erikson's identity

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice; Essays on Moral Development, Volume I* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

<sup>19</sup> Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966).

<sup>20</sup> Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character, Terj* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Albert Bandura, *Self-Efficacy - The Exercise of Control* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1997).



versus role confusion stage, enabling adolescents to align their self-concept with religious and social values<sup>23</sup>.

Cognitively, pesantren engage adolescents' capacity for abstract and moral reasoning through Qur'anic interpretation, fiqh discussions, and reflective dialogue, supporting Piaget's formal operational development<sup>24</sup>. Simultaneously, self-efficacy is nurtured through leadership roles and social responsibilities, empowering students to respond constructively to challenges<sup>25</sup>. These processes reflect holistic education and positive youth development principles, in which intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions are integrated. Through supervision, moral internalization, and community engagement, pesantren thus function as an effective preventive framework that systematically reduces juvenile delinquency<sup>26</sup>.

The integration of educational, psychological, and sociological perspectives shows that pesantren play a strategic role in shaping positive adolescent behaviour. At Al-Masyithoh Manba'il Futuh, moral education, religious socialization, character guidance, and consistent supervision create a supportive environment that nurtures morally upright youth. Drawing on Kohlberg, Bandura, Erikson, Hirschi, and Piaget, pesantren function not only as religious learning centres but also as social institutions that reduce delinquency through moral reinforcement, identity formation, social bonding, and cognitive maturity<sup>27</sup>.

Ta'dib theory emphasizes early habituation of moral and religious values through discipline, respect, and social responsibility, which are practiced in daily routines such as congregational prayer, cleanliness, and rule observance<sup>28</sup>. Social psychology highlights that adolescent behaviour is shaped by peer dynamics and environmental pressures; pesantren respond by fostering constructive problem-solving, deliberation, and adherence to communal norms. Self-control and positive peer attachment are strengthened through group activities and shared responsibilities, while Islamic guidance and counseling provide personalized, faith-based support. Integrated with Islamic moral education, these practices cultivate

<sup>23</sup> Najib Aulia Rahman, "Competency-Based and Ethical Assessment Models in Contemporary Islamic Pedagogy," *Sinergi International Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2025): 57–69, <https://doi.org/10.61194/ijis.v3i1.710>.

<sup>24</sup> I.R.S Munif, "Penerapan Metode Experiential Learning Pada Pembelajaran Ipa Untuk Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Siswa Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Pendidikan Fisika Indonesia* 5, no. 2 (2012): 1–1.

<sup>25</sup> I Made Rustika, "Efikasi Diri Tinjauan Teori Albert Bandura," *Jurnal Bulletin Psikologi* 20, no. 1 (2012): 19–23.

<sup>26</sup> Bernard Lander, "Towards an Understanding of Juvenile Delinquency," in *Towards an Understanding of Juvenile Delinquency* (USA: Columbia University Press, 1954).

<sup>27</sup> Yan Jiang et al., "Echoing Parental Scaffolding Style in Co-Constructed Narratives: Its Impact on Executive Function Development in Diverse Early School-Age Children," *Early Education and Development* 35, no. 6 (2024): 1335–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2024.2360872>.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmad Muflihini, "Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Meningkatkan Literasi Digital Siswa Sebagai Kecakapan Abad 21," *TA'DIBUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 3, no. 1 (2020): 91, <https://doi.org/10.30659/jpai.3.1.91-103>.





responsibility, empathy, and ethical awareness, effectively preventing juvenile delinquency<sup>29</sup>.

In summary, external education offers flexibility and creativity, while pesantren education instills structured habits and moral guidance. Both systems are valuable, but pesantren's holistic environment including religious, social, and character-building activities occupies adolescents productively, preventing engagement in delinquent behaviors. Structured regulations, daily routines, and spiritual guidance foster disciplined, ethical, and responsible students, reinforcing pesantren's role in curbing juvenile delinquency through moral and character education.

## CONCLUSION

Al-Masyitoh Manbail Futuh Islamic Boarding School was established in 1989 by KH. Muslich Abd. Rohim, the son-in-law of KH. Fathurrahman Abu Said. The background of the establishment of Al-Masyitoh Boarding School was to serve as a means of developing Islamic education through both formal and non-formal education. Currently, the school is managed by his son, K. Nurul Fahmi, with guidance from Nyai Shofiyah, the lawful wife of KH. Muslich Abd. Rohim.

All activities at Al-Masyitoh Boarding School are intended to equip students to face life and the challenges in society. The types of activities are both mental and academic, serving as a foundation for future life. In addition to participating in activities outside the boarding school, students also engage in activities within their rooms that concern themselves and their roommates. These activities include taking turns cleaning the room, washing eating utensils in turns, and organizing clothing and personal bedding. Other personal tasks, such as washing and ironing clothes, are done independently by the students. Laundry services are not provided in the dormitory, with the aim of fostering independence, so that students can handle daily life tasks without relying on others.

At the boarding school, students are guided and trained to understand and carry out religious activities, both obligatory (wajib) and recommended (sunnah). Al-Masyitoh Boarding School plays a significant role in addressing adolescent delinquency. To tackle such behavior, students are given Islamic education to the fullest, enabling them to practice it in daily life, including performing religious duties and behaving in accordance with religious teachings.

Religious education is crucial for students because it regulates the relationship between humans and Allah, humans and the environment, as well as humans and other people. This ensures harmony, balance, and order in human life, both as individuals and as members of society, contributing to material progress and spiritual well-being. Islamic education aims to achieve three main aspects: faith (ima), knowledge (ilmu), and practice (amal). With the education obtained at the boarding school, students are able to think rationally and distinguish between right and wrong, tending to act positively and in accordance with Islamic teachings.

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<sup>29</sup> Bandura, *Self-Efficacy - The Exercise of Control*.



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