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Islamic Values-Based Conflict Management in Pesantren: A Case Study at STITMA Yogyakarta

Muhammad Arrafi Muzhaffar Permadi[1]; Yusra Ulya Birrul Walidya [2]; Eko Ngabdul Shodikin[3]

[1,2,3]*Madani Islamic Education College, Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

[1]*Correspondence Email: arrafimp23@gmail.com*

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Abstract

This study examines conflict management practices in Pesantren STITMA Yogyakarta, a higher-education-based Islamic boarding school that integrates academic and religious systems. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews with four ustadz, and questionnaires administered to 20 santri. The findings show that the most common conflicts involve communication misunderstandings, task misalignment, and interpersonal tensions among santri. Conflict resolution is primarily conducted through musyawarah (deliberation), ustadz-mediated mediation, and moral guidance grounded in Islamic values such as sabr (patience), adl (justice), and ukhuwah Islamiyah (brotherhood). The results indicate that pesantren leadership tends to adopt collaborative and compromising conflict management styles consistent with the Thomas–Kilmann model, while integrating Islamic ethical principles. This study highlights the role of Islamic values as a moral framework for managing social conflict in pesantren communities.

Keywords: *Conflict Management; Islamic Education; Pesantren; Leadership; Qualitative Study.*

A. Introduction

Pesantren are Islamic educational institutions that have made a significant contribution to the moral, spiritual, and social formation of Indonesian society. As boarding-based educational institutions, pesantren are not only centers for religious teaching but also arenas for character formation, shared values, and social leadership for *santri* (students). In a global context, conflict in educational institutions is not a new phenomenon; it often arises from differences in values, perceptions, or interests between individuals and groups within an educational community (Rakhman and Fauzan 2025). In Indonesia, pesantren face similar challenges, especially due to their multicultural characteristics, where *santri* come from various regions, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds (Renaningtyas, Ramlan, and Ghony 2023). This diversity has the potential to create social conflicts, both between individuals and groups, which can impact the stability and effectiveness of the educational process in the pesantren (Alfari and Hidayat 2023). Therefore, a study of conflict management in the pesantren environment becomes crucial in order to create a harmonious, productive, and sustainable learning system (Anwar and Mulawarman 2025).

The reality shows that although pesantren are known to have a strong system of values and social norms, internal conflicts remain unavoidable, whether between *santri*, between *santri* and management, or between leadership elements and educators. Various previous studies highlight that the roots of conflict in pesantren can stem from differences in leadership styles, communication incompatibilities, and social role imbalances (Agustin, Gistituati, and Rusdinal 2021). Previous studies have examined conflict management in pesantren leadership (Agustin et al., 2021) and Islamic educational institutions more broadly (Bashori et al., 2022) While research on traditional pesantren has been quite extensive, the context of higher-education pesantren is still relatively untouched scientifically (Farhan and Hadisaputra 2021). Practically, this is also relevant for the development of Islamic education policies that emphasize the importance of a peaceful culture and dialogical communication in boarding-based education systems (Hayani, Sa'diyah, and Hadi 2020).

In theoretical studies, this research is based on the **Thomas–Kilmann conflict theory** framework, which identifies five main styles of conflict management: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. This model provides a framework for understanding

individual behavior in facing conflict and assessing the effectiveness of resolution strategies used in the context of educational organizations. In the pesantren context, this theory is combined with Islamic principles such as ***musyawarah*** (deliberation), ***ukhuwah Islamiyah*** (Islamic brotherhood), and ***tabayyun*** (clarification), which emphasize communicative and ethical approaches in resolving differences (Firmansyah, Anwar, and Khozin 2023). Other studies affirm that an approach based on religious values is not only effective in resolving conflicts but also strengthens institutional identity and solidarity among members (Soubagleh 2020). Furthermore, the integration of religious moderation values and multicultural education in conflict management has been proven to foster a tolerant and inclusive learning environmen (Sah and Fuad 2024).

Based on this context, this research is designed to answer two main questions: (1) what types of conflicts frequently occur in the Pesantren STITMA Yogyakarta environment; and (2) how are conflict management strategies implemented by the pesantren in addressing these conflicts. The purpose of this study is to identify the forms of conflict that arise in the social life of the pesantren and to explain the conflict management strategies implemented by the management in resolving internal differences and tensions. Using a qualitative approach and a case study design, this study seeks to uncover the social dynamics underlying the emergence of conflict and to evaluate the effectiveness of the conflict resolution strategies applied in the field (Rakhman and Fauzan 2025).

This article provides important scientific contributions in two dimensions. First, theoretically, this research enriches the conflict management literature within the context of modern Islamic educational institutions, especially higher-education-based pesantren, which have rarely been studied in-depth (Mansur, Fitriani, and Yusuf 2024). Second, practically, the results of this study are expected to become a basis for developing an Islamic values-based conflict management model that is adaptive to contemporary social complexities in religious educational environments. The **novelty** of this research lies in the in-depth exploration of the application of the Thomas–Kilmann theory in the context of a higher-education pesantren and the integration of Islamic values as an ethical foundation for conflict management in the modern era. Thus, this study endeavors to provide conceptual and empirical contributions to strengthening conflict

management practices that are just, humanistic, and oriented towards social harmony within Islamic educational institutions.

B. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study strategy, aiming to deeply understand the conflict dynamics and conflict management strategies at Pesantren STITMA Yogyakarta. This approach allows for a contextual exploration of social experiences, values, and managerial practices in conflict resolution. The qualitative method was chosen because it provides flexibility in interpreting social meanings through narrative data, direct observation, and in-depth interviews (Daulay 2024). Data collection techniques included participatory observation, semi-structured interviews with management and *santri*, and documentation of internal pesantren policies relevant to conflict resolution. The use of primary data (observation and interview results) and secondary data (institutional documents and supporting literature) strengthens validity through source triangulation (Darlan, S. Pettalongi, and Rustina 2021). Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on their direct involvement in conflict dynamics, while data validity was ensured through member checking and reflective field noting (Hidayat, Kultsum, and Wang 2020). Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and inductive conclusion drawing (Rosidi, Maulana, and Khotimah 2018). This approach aligns with modern Islamic education research standards that emphasize the relevance of social context and the integration of religious values in educational research practices (Chanifah et al. 2021).

C. Result and Discussion

1. Result

a) Perspective of Ustadz and Pesantren Management

Perspectives from Ustadz and Pesantren Management Based on questionnaire results, the conflicts that most frequently arise in the STITMA Yogyakarta pesantren environment stem from communication and perceptual differences between santri and management, as well as misalignment in the execution of individual responsibilities. Internal conflicts among management also occur in the context of activity coordination, task division, and differing views on disciplinary rules. Some *ustadz* (teachers)

highlighted that some *santri* still find it difficult to adjust to the typical pesantren discipline, leading to minor interpersonal frictions. Conflicts are not physical or structural but rather related to misunderstandings and communication oversights, such as delayed responses to directives, minor violations of activity schedules, and miscommunication in carrying out dormitory duties.

The conflict resolution methods applied by the pesantren management emphasize *musyawarah* (deliberation) and a persuasive approach based on Islamic values. Based on interviews, the *ustadz* affirmed that every problem is resolved by prioritizing dialogue between the conflicting parties, followed by moral guidance from the caregiver. In certain cases, if the conflict recurs, the management uses an approach of reprimands and personal advice, not physical punishment. Some management members also mentioned the practice of internal mediation facilitated by senior *ustadz* to maintain a balance between justice and social harmony. This procedure is in line with the principles of *islah* (peace-making) and *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), which serve as the institution's guidelines for maintaining community harmony.

The most dominant Islamic values in the conflict resolution process include patience (*sabr*), justice (*adl*), deliberation (*musyawarah*), and sincerity (*ikhlas*). Patience is considered important in controlling emotions and preventing impulsive reactions, while justice is understood as a balance between the rights and obligations of each pesantren member. Deliberation becomes the primary means of finding common ground, while sincerity becomes the moral value guiding each party to accept the joint decision without resentment or dissatisfaction.

In general, the *ustadz* and management assess that the conflict resolution system at the pesantren is already running well and fairly. However, they also suggested that the pesantren strengthen open communication mechanisms and hold routine deliberation forums to prevent the accumulation of small problems that could develop into major conflicts.

Table 1. Summary of Findings from Ustadz/Pesantren Management STITMA Yogyakarta

Aspect	Main Findings
Common Conflict Types	Communication conflicts between management and *santri*, and misunderstandings in the execution of tasks and responsibilities.
Resolution Methods	Resolution through deliberation (*musyawarah*), direct advice, and mediation by the pesantren caregiver with a persuasive approach.
Dominant Islamic Values	Patience (*sabr*), justice (*adl*), and deliberation (*musyawarah*) as fundamental values in maintaining harmony and resolving differences.

From the table above, it can be concluded that the pesantren management places Islamic spiritual values as the basis for conflict resolution. The resolution model based on ***musyawarah*** reflects the application of collaborative and compromising conflict management styles as described in the Thomas–Kilmann model, where conflicting parties are directed to find a mutual solution without disadvantaging either party.

b) Perspective of Students and Santri Pesantren

From the results involving 20 santri/student respondents, it was found that the most frequent conflicts are conflicts between santri in the form of communication misunderstandings, differences of opinion, and offensive behavior, such as mild bullying, debates, and minor disciplinary violations. Some *santri* also reported conflicts between *santri* and management related to daily orderliness, such as being late for routine activities, violations of dress code rules, or using pesantren facilities outside of regulations. Nonetheless, the majority of respondents rated these conflicts as situational and easily resolved, not causing long-term animosity, and generally ending in mutual forgiveness.

In terms of resolution, the majority of *santri* mentioned that joint deliberation (*musyawarah*) and direct advice from management are the most frequently used methods. Management usually invites the conflicting parties to sit together, listen to each other's opinions, and then provide moral advice emphasizing Islamic values such as patience, mutual respect, and honesty. Some *santri* also mentioned that direct reprimands or minor punishments such as additional tasks are used as a form of educational discipline, not as

harsh punishment. This mechanism is considered effective in maintaining a peaceful atmosphere without causing resentment among *santri*.

Islamic values that stand out in conflict resolution from the *santri*'s perspective include patience, justice, and open communication. Patience is considered important for restraining emotions, while justice becomes the standard for judging management's decisions. Open communication is deemed necessary so that conflicts are not hidden and can be resolved more quickly. The majority of *santri* stated that the management is fair in handling conflicts, although some felt the process still needs improvement in terms of procedural clarity and consistency in applying sanctions.

Furthermore, *santri* provided several suggestions to improve the effectiveness of conflict management, such as improving two-way communication between management and santri, holding regular dialogue or sharing sessions, and involving senior santri in mediation. According to them, this approach can help build a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for a harmonious atmosphere in the pesantren environment.
Based on the results above, it can be concluded that *santri* tend to experience conflicts within an interpersonal horizontal scope (among peers), whereas management more frequently faces vertical structural conflicts (between management and *santri* in the context of responsibility). Although the types of conflict differ, both groups show similarities in the value orientation of resolution based on Islam, especially in the principles of patience, deliberation, and justice. This indicates that the pesantren's value system has functioned as an internal mechanism for managing differences without causing social disintegration.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that Pesantren STITMA Yogyakarta has successfully built a culture of conflict resolution that is constructive and based on Islamic values, with the active role of management as mediators and moral guides, as well as the participation of *santri* in the process of deliberation and joint reflection. These findings confirm that social harmony in the pesantren is not the result of the absence of conflict, but rather from the ability of the institution and its community to manage conflict wisely, openly, and justly.

2. Discussion

From the results involving 20 santri/student respondents, it was found that the most frequent conflicts are conflicts between santri in the form of communication misunderstandings, differences of opinion, and offensive behavior, such as mild bullying, debates, and minor disciplinary violations. Some santri also reported conflicts between santri and management related to daily orderliness, such as being late for routine activities, violations of dress code rules, or using pesantren facilities outside of regulations. Nonetheless, the majority of respondents rated these conflicts as situational and easily resolved, not causing long-term animosity, and generally ending in mutual forgiveness.

In a theoretical context, these results reinforce the Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode model, which explains that conflict resolution can be achieved through five main styles: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. Based on the findings of this study, Pesantren STITMA Yogyakarta predominantly adopts collaborative and compromising styles, where the conflicting parties are directed to communicate openly and seek a mutual solution that benefits both sides (Amrina Rosada and . 2023). This approach is in line with the Islamic principle of ***islah*** (peace-making), which emphasizes resolution through advice, deliberation, and mutual forgiveness. In the context of Islamic education, this style is not just a conflict resolution method, but also a mechanism for moral formation and spiritual social control.

Conceptually, the practice of conflict management at Pesantren STITMA can be understood through the perspective of Islamic character education, where conflict resolution becomes part of the process of forming a faithful and noble personality. As stated by (Daulay 2024), the success of Islamic educational institutions in handling conflict is highly influenced by the leader's ability to build open communication, moral exemplarity, and a culture of mutual respect. In this regard, *ustadz* and management act as social mediators as well as spiritual guides who maintain internal harmony through moral and educational approaches. These findings confirm that the role of spiritual leadership in the pesantren is not only administrative but also transformative.

Other research by (Farhan and Hadisaputra 2021) identifies that the causes of conflict in Islamic educational institutions generally include differing views on management, communication problems, and hierarchical

organizational structures. However, unlike other formal institutions, pesantren develop a resolution system based on Islamic values that encourages the participation of all parties. The findings at STITMA Yogyakarta confirm this: the pesantren management prefers a dialogical approach over a coercive one, while the *santri* show moral readiness to accept direction and evaluation. Thus, spiritual values become a functional foundation that suppresses the potential for prolonged conflict.

The results of this study also show that the forms of conflict that arise between *ustadz* and *santri* have vertical structural characteristics, while those between *santri* are horizontal interpersonal. This pattern is consistent with the findings of (Aziz et al. 2021) which assert that social relations in pesantren are heavily influenced by hierarchical structures and the value of obedience to authoritative figures such as *kyai* and *ustadz*. Even so, the leadership at Pesantren STITMA appears to apply a participative leadership model, where *ustadz* act as facilitators who guide, rather than dominate. This pattern produces a conducive and harmonious learning atmosphere.

Practically, these findings enrich conflict management theory in Islamic education by showing that Islamic spiritual values can function as managerial instruments. If in the context of modern organizations conflict is managed through communication strategies and policies, in pesantren, conflict resolution is based on internalized moral values. The principles of patience and justice, for example, not only serve as ethical norms but also as social mechanisms that maintain the balance of power relations. This concept strengthens the argument of (Francoise 2017) who calls pesantren a source of peace education due to their ability to instill peaceful values through daily interactions based on Islamic ethics..

In the context of Islamic education policy, conflict management at Pesantren STITMA shows relevance to the religious moderation approach promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The values of openness, justice, and deliberation applied by the pesantren are in line with the concept of moderation as a balance between religious ideals and social realities. This result aligns with a study by (Rahman 2022) which found that modern pesantren in Aceh have evolved into multicultural institutions that promote tolerance and peaceful resolution in facing differences. This means that Pesantren STITMA not only acts as a religious education institution but also as an agent of social reconciliation.

The theoretical implication of this research is the need to develop an Islamic Values-Based Conflict Management Model that combines the Thomas–Kilmann theory with the principles of *akhlaqiyah* (morality) and *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood). This model can enrich conflict management approaches in the context of non-formal education and spiritual value-based institutions. Furthermore, this approach also opens opportunities for further research regarding the relationship between authority structures, religious values, and communication patterns in Islamic educational organizations.

The limitations of this study lie in the limited number of respondents (4 *ustadz* and 20 *santri*) and the research focus being on only one pesantren. Although the data has provided a representative picture of the social dynamics at STITMA Yogyakarta, generalization to other pesantren institutions requires comparative research with variations in size, culture, and leadership models. On the other hand, because this research is based on qualitative data, the results are more interpretative than generalistic. Nevertheless, the strength of this study lies in the depth of analysis and the authenticity of field data taken directly from pesantren actors, providing a real picture of the practice of Islamic values-based conflict management in a local context.

On a macro scale, these findings broaden the discourse on the social function of pesantren in maintaining the cohesion of Muslim society. Pesantren are not just centers of religious education, but also social laboratories where Islamic values are tested and implemented in interpersonal relationships. When conflict is resolved through deliberation and patience, it demonstrates a deep internalization of Islamic values, which simultaneously affirms that Islamic education has a strong social dimension. As stated by (Saputro and Sukiman 2024), the revitalization of Islamic education requires strategies that balance spiritual and managerial aspects to face modern social challenges.

Thus, the research results at Pesantren STITMA Yogyakarta affirm that conflict management based on Islamic values is not only effective in maintaining institutional stability but also plays a role as a mechanism for character education and social strengthening. Conflicts that arise in the pesantren environment do not need to be avoided, but rather can be managed as a collective learning tool to foster spiritual maturity, social empathy, and communication skills among members of the pesantren community.

D. Conclusion

This study shows that conflict management at Pesantren STITMA Yogyakarta is constructive and strongly influenced by Islamic values embedded in the pesantren culture. Conflicts that arise within the pesantren generally take two forms: horizontal conflicts among santri and vertical conflicts between santri and ustadz or management. Communication misunderstandings, disciplinary issues, and differences in perceptions regarding responsibilities commonly trigger these conflicts. The pesantren resolves these conflicts primarily through musyawarah (deliberation), ustadz mediation, and moral guidance grounded in Islamic principles such as sabr (patience), adl (justice), and ukhuwah Islamiyah (brotherhood). These practices reflect collaborative, compromising conflict management styles consistent with the Thomas–Kilmann framework, while also integrating Islamic ethical values. The findings highlight that Islamic values function not only as moral teachings but also as practical mechanisms for maintaining social harmony

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