Conflict Management of Santri in Dormitory Life at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah

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Abstract

Conflict in dormitory life is a natural social phenomenon in pesantren because santri live in a collective space with different family backgrounds, cultures, characters, ages, habits, and adaptive capacities. This study aims to analyze the forms of santri conflict, the factors causing conflict, conflict management strategies, and their implications for character formation among santri at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving dormitory supervisors, musyrif, student organization administrators, homeroom teachers, and santri. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that santri conflicts appear in the forms of interpersonal conflict, adaptation conflict, disciplinary violation conflict, communication conflict, and seniority-based conflict. The main causal factors include differences in character, pressure from dormitory routines, limited privacy, immature communication patterns, and gaps in understanding pesantren rules. Conflict management strategies are carried out through preventive approaches, dormitory guidance, mediation, deliberation, advice-giving, discipline strengthening, and the internalization of ukhuwah Islamiyah values. Conflict management in pesantren does not only function to solve problems. It also serves as an instrument for character education, emotional control, social responsibility, and santri independence. This study recommends strengthening the conflict documentation system, providing mediation training for dormitory administrators, and integrating conflict resolution education into santri development programs.

Keywords: *Conflict Management, Santri, Dormitory Life, Pesantren, Character Education*

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Introduction

Pesantren is an Islamic educational institution with a distinctive character because it integrates formal learning, religious guidance, dormitory life, disciplinary habituation, and character formation within a unified educational system. The educational process in pesantren does not only take place in the classroom (Hasmiza, 2022). It also occurs through the daily lived experiences of santri in the dormitory environment. Santri learn through worship routines, pesantren activities, disciplinary rules, social interaction, and the habituation of Islamic values.

In this context, the dormitory becomes a strategic educational space because santri are trained to live independently, act responsibly, respect differences, and adapt to collective life. However, dormitory life also contains the potential for conflict because santri come from diverse family, cultural, character, and habitual backgrounds (Nashihin et al., 2025). These differences may create friction in communication, task distribution, facility use, friendship relations, and senior-junior relations. Therefore, santri conflict management becomes an important aspect of pesantren governance because properly managed conflict can become a medium for character formation, social maturity, and the strengthening of ukhuwah Islamiyah. In the context of Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan, the Kulliyatul Muallimin alIslamiyyah, or KMI system, serves as the basis of formal education in the pesantren by integrating lower and upper secondary education within the pesantren environment (Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah, 2026). This model makes santri life take place almost throughout the day within the structure of education, worship, organization, discipline, and social interaction among santri.

Dormitory life provides broad opportunities for santri character formation. Santri learn to be independent, manage their time, respect peers, obey rules, and manage social relationships. However, communal life also produces the potential for conflict. Conflict arises because santri come from diverse social, economic, cultural, linguistic, parenting, and family habit backgrounds. In the dormitory space, small differences can turn into tension if they are not managed properly. Differences in speaking style, hygiene habits, use of personal belongings, division of room duties, queuing for facilities, and senior-junior relations can become sources of conflict.

Santri conflict does not always have a negative meaning. From the perspective of educational management, conflict can become a medium for social learning if it is managed properly (Muhakamurrohman, 2022). Conflict helps santri understand personal boundaries, respect the rights of others, learn to apologize, accept differences, and solve problems through healthy communication. Conversely, unmanaged conflict can lead to verbal violence, bullying, hidden hostility, disciplinary violations, declining learning motivation, and even psychological disturbances. Studies on pesantren show that pesantren life, which brings together santri from different social and cultural backgrounds, often produces conflict dynamics that require effective governance based on Islamic values and dormitory culture (Fadlilah et al., 2026; Rakhman & Fauzan, 2025).

Studies on conflict management in pesantren have become increasingly important because pesantren functions not only as an institution for the transfer of religious knowledge but also as a space for social character formation. Pesantren culture has been proven to contribute to character education through value habituation, role modeling, rules, guidance, and supervision (Shiddiq et al., 2024). In the context of adolescence, the ability to manage conflict is also related to socio-emotional skills, such as self-awareness, self-control, empathy, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Salsabila et al., 2024). Therefore, santri conflict management should be viewed as part of the character education system, not merely as a mechanism for handling violations.

Previous studies have discussed conflict management in Islamic boarding schools, adaptation strategies for new santri, pesantren culture, and Islamic value-based conflict resolution. However, studies that specifically examine santri conflict management in dormitory

life still need to be strengthened, especially in modern pesantren with student organization systems, daily guidance, and multilayered supervision. Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan is a relevant context because it has a pesantren-based educational system, dormitory life, a santri guidance structure, and a modern educational tradition that emphasizes discipline and personality formation.

Based on this background, this study focuses on four main questions. First, what forms of conflict occur in the dormitory life of santri at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan? Second, what factors cause santri conflict in dormitory life? Third, how are conflict management strategies implemented by the pesantren? Fourth, what are the implications of conflict management for santri character formation?

This study aims to analyze the forms of conflict, the factors causing conflict, conflict management strategies, and the implications of conflict management for santri character formation. Theoretically, this study enriches the field of Islamic educational management, especially on the issue of conflict management in pesantren. Practically, this study provides input for dormitory supervisors, musyrif, dormitory administrators, and pesantren managers in building an educational, fair, documented, and Islamic value-based conflict resolution system.

Literature Review 1. The Concept of Conflict Management

Conflict is a clash of interests, perceptions, needs, values, or actions between individuals or groups. In an educational environment, conflict can arise due to differences in goals, ineffective communication, unequal relations, psychological pressure, misunderstood rules, or limited resources. Conflict is not always destructive. It can become constructive if it is managed through communication, negotiation, mediation, and value-based learning.

Conflict management is the process of identifying, understanding, controlling, and resolving conflict so that it does not develop into destructive action. Thomas and Kilmann explain five basic styles of handling conflict, namely competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating (Sugiyanta et al., 2023). In the pesantren context, these styles need to be interpreted contextually. Supervisors cannot rely only on punishment. They need to choose strategies according to the level of conflict, the age of the santri, the impact of the problem, the relational pattern of the parties involved, and the educational purpose.

Collaborative and compromising approaches are more appropriate for mild and moderate interpersonal conflicts. A firm approach is needed for conflicts involving violence, serious violations, or threats to santri safety. An accommodative approach can be used to restore relationships. Avoidance is only appropriate when the conflict is not yet ready to be discussed or when the emotions of the parties involved are still high. Therefore, conflict management must be situational, proportional, and educational.

2. Santri Conflict in Dormitory Life

Dormitory life forms an intensive pattern of interaction. Santri live together, study together, worship together, eat together, and carry out daily activities over a long period of time. This intensity creates social closeness, but it also opens space for friction. Santri conflict can occur in the form of disputes among roommates, competition for facilities, violations of queues, use of belongings without permission, communication misunderstandings, excessive joking, differences in habits, academic competition, and senior-junior relations. New santri are more vulnerable to conflict because they are still in the adaptation process. They face changes in environment, rules, eating patterns, sleeping schedules, learning rhythms, and demands for independence. (Salsabila et al., 2024) shows that the adaptation process of new santri can produce homesickness, interpersonal conflict, pressure from routines, and unpleasant experiences involving more senior santri. This condition confirms that santri conflict is often related to the transition from family life to collective pesantren life.

In addition, adolescent santri are in a phase of emotional development and identity formation. They are learning to control impulses, manage feelings, build relationships, and

understand social boundaries. If the pesantren does not provide a clear guidance mechanism, small conflicts can develop into repeated tensions. Therefore, santri conflict management needs to combine discipline, psychosocial guidance, persuasive communication, role modeling, and religious values.

3. Pesantren as a Character Education System

Pesantren has strength in value habituation. Education does not only take place through the written curriculum but also through daily culture. The values of discipline, independence, simplicity, responsibility, leadership, ukhuwah, and proper manners in communal life are instilled through worship activities, supervision, dormitory rules, santri organizations, and teacher role modeling. Pesantren culture functions as a medium for character internalization because santri experience values directly in everyday life (Firmansyah & Abidin, 2024). In the context of conflict management, pesantren can turn conflict into a medium for character education. When santri are involved in disputes, supervisors can direct them to admit mistakes, listen to the other party, apologize, improve behavior, and make commitments. This process strengthens the character of responsibility, honesty, empathy, patience, and justice (Lubis & Rahman, 2025). Thus, conflict is not only resolved at a surface level, but is directed to become a moral learning experience.

Conflict management in pesantren has a strong value basis in Islamic teachings. The main relevant values include ukhuwah Islamiyah, shura or deliberation, ishlah or reconciliation, adl or justice, rahmah or compassion, and hifz al-nafs or protection of life. These values place conflict resolution as a process of restoring relationships, protecting dignity, and preventing injustice. (Naura Diny Chalishah & Wahyuni, 2025) emphasizes that Islamic value-based conflict management in pesantren is related to strengthening dormitory culture and forming multicultural character. This means that conflict resolution cannot rely only on administrative logic. Pesantren needs to build spaces for dialogue, empathy habituation, respect for differences, and fairness in applying sanctions. If Islamic values are used only as normative advice without a clear system, conflict will easily recur. However, if Islamic values are translated into procedures for guidance, mediation, documentation, evaluation, and supervision, pesantren can build a more effective conflict management system.

This study uses a conceptual framework that views santri conflict in dormitory life as emerging from the interaction of individual, social, structural, and cultural factors. Individual factors include emotion, personality, age, and adaptive capacity. Social factors include peer relations, seniority, communication, and group solidarity. Structural factors include dormitory rules, activity schedules, supervision, facilities, and sanction systems. Cultural factors include pesantren values, dormitory traditions, manners, and role modeling patterns.

Effective conflict management works through three stages. First, conflict prevention through guidance, rule socialization, strengthening manners, and supervision. Second, conflict handling through clarification, mediation, deliberation, advice, educational sanctions, and reconciliation. Third, post-conflict recovery through monitoring, follow-up guidance, and strengthening social relationships. These three stages have implications for santri character formation, especially discipline, responsibility, empathy, self-control, and independence.

Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was selected because this study aims to understand in depth the experiences, interaction patterns, forms of conflict, resolution strategies, and educational meanings that emerge in the dormitory life of santri. The case study design was selected because the study focuses on one institutional context, namely Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan.

The research location was Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan. The research subjects were selected purposively by considering their involvement in dormitory life and in handling santri conflict. The research informants included dormitory supervisors, musyrif,

student organization administrators, homeroom teachers, guidance teachers, senior santri, and junior santri. Informant selection continued until the data reached sufficient meaning. The research data consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through indepth interviews and observation. Interviews were conducted to explore the experiences of supervisors and santri regarding forms of conflict, causes of conflict, resolution mechanisms, and their impacts on santri character. Observation was conducted on dormitory activities, santri interactions, guidance activities, and supervision patterns. Secondary data were obtained from pesantren documents, santri regulations, guidance records, student organization structures, activity schedules, and documentation of dormitory activities.

Data were collected through three techniques. First, non-participant observation was used to observe dormitory life and santri social interaction. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants. Third, documentation was used to examine rules, guidance programs, and activity records. The main research instrument was the researcher, supported by interview guidelines, observation guidelines, and document review sheets. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data condensation was conducted by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing data according to the research themes. Data display was presented in thematic narratives and finding matrices. Conclusion drawing was conducted by interpreting patterns, relationships among themes, and meanings within the pesantren context.

Results 1. Forms of Santri Conflict in Dormitory Life

The findings show that santri conflicts in the dormitory appear in several forms. First, interpersonal conflict. This conflict occurs between santri and roommates, classmates, or members of the same activity group. Interpersonal conflict is usually triggered by misunderstandings, excessive joking, differences in habits, the use of belongings without permission, the division of room duties, and impolite communication. This type of conflict occurs most frequently because santri interact with one another almost throughout the day.

Second, adaptation conflict. This conflict is commonly experienced by new santri who are not yet accustomed to the rhythm of pesantren life. New santri must adjust to dense schedules, disciplinary rules, language use, queuing patterns, dress codes, independence in managing personal belongings, and life away from family. Failure to adapt can trigger emotions, withdrawal, irritability, or rule violations. This finding is in line with (Salsabila et al., 2024), who shows that new santri are vulnerable to conflict due to homesickness, pressure from routines, and social adaptation.

Third, disciplinary conflict. This conflict is related to violations of pesantren rules, such as arriving late to activities, failing to perform cleaning duties, neglecting cleanliness, bringing prohibited items, or not obeying the instructions of administrators. Disciplinary conflict does not only occur between santri and dormitory administrators. It also occurs among santri who feel burdened by violations committed by their roommates. For example, diligent santri may feel disadvantaged by peers who fail to perform their assigned duties.

Fourth, communication conflict. This conflict arises from differences in speaking style, intonation, word choice, or joking style. In dormitory life, uncontrolled communication can create misunderstandings. Santri from different regions bring different language styles and expressions. An expression considered normal by one santri may be perceived as rude by another. Communication conflict often does not appear serious at first, but it can accumulate if it is not discussed immediately.

Fifth, seniority-based conflict. This conflict occurs when senior santri use informal authority excessively toward junior santri. Seniority may take the form of instruction, reprimand, pressure, or treatment perceived as unfair. Not all seniority is negative because pesantren needs tiered guidance. However, seniority becomes a problem when it turns into domination, intimidation, or abuse of position. Therefore, pesantren needs to distinguish

between educational senior guidance and harmful seniority practices. These forms of conflict show that santri conflict is multidimensional. Conflict is not caused only by individual misconduct. It is also caused by the intensive structure of dormitory life, dense social relations, limited private space, and the adolescent developmental process. Therefore, resolution cannot rely only on punishment. Pesantren needs to read the root causes of conflict comprehensively.

2. Factors Causing Santri Conflict

The first factor causing conflict is the difference in character and background among santri. Santri come from different families, regions, cultures, and parenting patterns. Some santri are accustomed to independence. Others are highly dependent on their families. Some are sociable. Others are reserved. Some are expressive. Others are sensitive. When these differences meet in the dormitory space, conflict becomes possible. The second factor is pressure from routines. Pesantren life has a dense schedule, starting from waking up, worship, study, language activities, organizational activities, cleaning duties, and rest. A dense schedule forms discipline, but it can also cause fatigue. Tired santri are more easily offended, less patient, and find it more difficult to control emotions. At this point, conflict often arises not because of a major problem, but because of accumulated fatigue.

The third factor is limited privacy. Dormitory life requires santri to share sleeping spaces, bathrooms, study areas, wardrobes, and public facilities. Limited private space requires a high level of tolerance. If santri do not yet have awareness of personal boundaries and the common good, conflict easily emerges. The use of belongings without permission is a common example. For some santri, this action is considered trivial. For the owner, it violates trust. The fourth factor is immature communication. Some santri are not yet able to express objections appropriately. They choose silence, sarcasm, anger, or complaints to peers. Such communication patterns leave conflict unresolved. Conflict can even expand because it involves friendship groups. Studies on conflict mediation in schools show that open communication, mediator training, and a culture of peace play an important role in improving the relational climate of students (Rakhman & Fauzan, 2025).

The fifth factor is different levels of understanding of rules. Not all santri understand that dormitory rules are designed for the common good. Some santri see rules as a burden rather than as a tool for self-formation. This difference in understanding makes some santri obey out of awareness, while others obey only because they fear sanctions. If obedience is built only on fear, conflict will arise when supervision weakens. The sixth factor is peer group influence. In dormitory life, friendship groups strongly influence santri behavior. Groups can become a source of social support, but they can also reinforce negative behavior. If a group justifies violations, santri tend to follow. If a group normalizes mutual reminders, santri become easier to guide. Therefore, conflict management must consider group dynamics, not only the individuals involved.

3. Conflict Management Strategies in Pesantren

The first strategy is prevention through rule socialization and manners guidance. Pesantren introduces regulations, daily schedules, cleanliness rules, permission mechanisms, and ethics of interaction. Rule socialization is important because many conflicts arise from ignorance or different interpretations of rules. However, socialization cannot be conducted only once. Supervisors need to repeat it through routine briefings, room guidance, and activity evaluations. The second strategy is multilayered supervision. Supervision is carried out by dormitory supervisors, musyrif, homeroom teachers, and santri administrators. A multilayered system allows small problems to be detected more quickly before they develop into larger conflicts. Santri administrators play an important role because they are closest to the daily lives of santri. However, santri administrators also need guidance so that they do not misuse authority. If administrators lack communication skills, reprimands can become a new source of conflict.

The third strategy is mediation. Mediation is conducted by bringing together the parties in conflict, listening to each party's explanation, identifying the root of the problem, and encouraging a settlement agreement. Mediation is effective for interpersonal conflicts, room conflicts, misunderstandings, and conflicts over the use of belongings. In the mediation process, supervisors need to ensure that santri do not merely stop arguing, but also understand their mistakes, repair relationships, and make behavioral commitments. The fourth strategy is deliberation. Deliberation is used for conflicts involving groups, rooms, classes, or santri organizations. Deliberation provides space for santri to express opinions, listen to others, and accept collective decisions. The value of shura in Islam is relevant for building fair and participatory conflict resolution. However, deliberation must remain guided so that it does not become a forum for blaming one another.

The fifth strategy is advice and personal guidance. Some conflicts cannot be resolved adequately through a collective forum. Certain santri need a personal approach because the problem relates to emotions, family, homesickness, anxiety, or difficulty adapting. In such conditions, supervisors need to become good listeners. Personal guidance helps santri feel cared for, not merely supervised. The sixth strategy is educational sanctions. Pesantren still needs sanctions to maintain order. However, sanctions must be educational, proportional, and must not degrade the dignity of santri. Educational sanctions may take the form of cleaning duties, memorization, written reflection, guided apologies, or social service within the dormitory environment. Physical punishment, humiliation, and negative labeling must be avoided because they risk creating resentment and trauma.

The seventh strategy is reconciliation. Conflict is not resolved simply because the parties have been separated or sanctioned. Pesantren needs to ensure that social relationships are restored. Reconciliation can be carried out through mutual apology, eating together, joint assignments, or monitoring by supervisors. The value of ishlah is important at this stage because the ultimate purpose of conflict management is to repair relationships, not merely to stop violations. The eighth strategy is the internalization of ukhuwah Islamiyah values. Pesantren instills the understanding that fellow santri are brothers in the process of seeking knowledge. The value of ukhuwah helps santri see friends not as opponents, but as part of the larger pesantren family. This value needs to be instilled through sermons, teacher role modeling, a culture of mutual help, and habituation to living together. (Fadlilah et al., 2026) emphasizes that Islamic value-based conflict management can strengthen dormitory culture and the multicultural character of santri.

4. Implications of Conflict Management for Santri Character Formation

Conflict management has direct implications for santri character formation. First, conflict trains self-control. Santri learn to restrain emotions, choose words carefully, and not immediately retaliate against unpleasant treatment. Self-control is an important foundation for social maturity. Second, conflict trains responsibility. When santri are asked to explain their actions, admit mistakes, and repair relationships, they learn to take responsibility for their own behavior. Responsibility does not grow through lectures alone. It grows when santri experience the consequences of their actions.

Third, conflict trains empathy. The mediation process allows santri to hear the feelings and perspectives of others. Santri who initially feel that they are completely right can understand that their actions have harmed others. Empathy is important for preventing repeated conflict. Fourth, conflict trains social independence. Santri do not always depend on their parents to solve problems. They learn to speak, negotiate, apologize, and build agreements. This social independence is one of the strengths of pesantren education.

Fifth, conflict strengthens discipline. When conflict is connected to dormitory rules, santri learn that rules are not merely restrictions, but instruments for maintaining common order. Discipline becomes more meaningful when santri understand the moral and social reasons

behind the rules. Sixth, conflict strengthens santri leadership. Dormitory administrators and santri organization members learn to lead, reprimand, listen to complaints, and solve problems. However, this leadership must be guided so that it does not turn into negative seniority. Pesantren needs to provide communication, mediation, and ethical leadership training for santri administrators.

The findings show that santri conflict in dormitory life is not a single phenomenon. Conflict emerges from the relationship among individuals, the dormitory system, pesantren culture, and the psychological development of adolescents. Therefore, conflict resolution approaches must address the root causes. If conflict is viewed only as a disciplinary violation, pesantren tends to use a punitive approach. This approach may stop behavior temporarily, but it does not necessarily improve santri understanding, relationships, and character (Alhadi Putra, 2025). Effective conflict management needs to combine firmness and guidance. Firmness is needed so that rules remain respected. Guidance is needed so that santri understand the meaning of rules. This combination is important because pesantren is not a punitive institution, but an educational institution (Mujiono, 2025). Every conflict intervention must be directed toward behavioral change and character maturation.

The findings are in line with (Rakhman & Fauzan, 2025), who emphasizes that conflict in pesantren needs to be managed through strategies that fit the context of Islamic educational institutions. The findings also support the view that pesantren culture plays an important role in character education (Shiddiq et al., 2024). In the context of Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah, dormitory life becomes a space for value actualization. The values of discipline, ukhuwah, adab, and responsibility are not only taught. They are also tested through everyday conflict.

The findings are also relevant to the study of social emotional learning. Santri conflict is related to the ability to manage emotions, build relationships, make decisions, and understand others. (Muhammad Yunan Harahap et al., 2023) show that students' socio-emotional skills occupy an important domain in adolescent development. Therefore, pesantren needs to integrate conflict resolution education into santri development programs. The material may include assertive communication, empathy, anger management, manners in disagreement, peer mediation, and ethical leadership.

At the institutional level, pesantren needs to strengthen conflict documentation. Many pesantren resolve conflicts informally. Informal methods have advantages because they are quick, close, and flexible. However, without documentation, pesantren finds it difficult to map conflict patterns, identify santri who need assistance, and evaluate the effectiveness of guidance. Documentation should not be understood as an instrument of punishment, but as guidance data.

This study also shows the need for training for dormitory administrators. Santri administrators are often the first parties to know about conflict. They hold a strategic position, but they are also prone to mistakes if they are not trained. Harsh reprimands, disproportionate sanctions, or favoritism can create new conflicts. Therefore, administrator training needs to include leadership ethics, persuasive communication, reporting procedures, basic mediation, and protection of santri from violence.

Theoretically, this study broadens the understanding that pesantren conflict management cannot be separated from character education and dormitory culture. Practically, this study emphasizes that conflict needs to be managed through a clear system, strong values, and competent guidance actors. A pesantren that is able to manage conflict educationally will make the dormitory not only a place to live, but also a laboratory for santri social character formation.

Conclusion

Santri conflict in dormitory life at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah Medan appears in the forms of interpersonal conflict, adaptation conflict, disciplinary conflict, communication conflict, and seniority-based conflict. These conflicts are influenced by differences in santri

character, pressure from routines, limited privacy, immature communication, different levels of understanding of rules, and peer group influence.

Conflict management strategies are carried out through prevention, rule socialization, manners guidance, multilayered supervision, mediation, deliberation, personal advice, educational sanctions, reconciliation, and internalization of ukhuwah Islamiyah values. These strategies show that pesantren does not only resolve conflict at the administrative level, but also directs it as a process of character education.

Conflict management has implications for the formation of self-control, responsibility, empathy, social independence, discipline, and santri leadership. Properly managed conflict can become a meaningful learning experience. Conversely, conflict that is ignored or handled repressively can disrupt the dormitory climate and the psychosocial development of santri. This study recommends three points. First, pesantren needs to strengthen a guidance-based conflict documentation system. Second, dormitory administrators need training in mediation, communication, and ethical leadership. Third, conflict resolution education needs to be integrated into santri development programs so that santri have adequate socio-emotional skills in dormitory life.

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