

A Guidance and Counseling-Based Care System In Boarding School Care In Developing Intellectual Independence (Research at Riyadul Ulum Wadda'wah Condong Islamic Boarding School and Al Amin Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya City)

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 2026-04-27

Revised 2026-05-21

Accepted 2026-05-30

Keywords:

Caregiving System

Counseling

Guidance-Based

Intellectual Independence

Islamic Boarding School

ABSTRACT

Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) play an important role in shaping students' character, spirituality, and intellectual development. In addition to providing religious education, pesantren also support the development of students' intellectual independence through higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). This study aims to analyze the integration of caregiving systems, guidance and counseling services, HOTS development, and intellectual independence at Riyadul Ulum Wadda'wah Islamic Boarding School and Al Amin Islamic Boarding School. The novelty of this study lies in examining how caregiving practices in pesantren are integrated with guidance and counseling approaches to foster students' intellectual independence and critical thinking abilities. This study employed a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation involving caregivers, teachers, counselors, and students. The findings show that guidance and counseling-based caregiving systems support the development of students' intellectual independence by encouraging analytical, evaluative, and creative thinking in both academic and daily life contexts. Counseling activities, mentoring, and disciplined caregiving practices also help students develop problem-solving skills, self-confidence, and independent decision-making. The study concludes that integrating caregiving, counseling, and HOTS-oriented learning can strengthen students' intellectual independence within the pesantren educational environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) are informal Islamic educational institutions that typically teach the Qur'an and are recognized as among the oldest forms of

Islamic education in Indonesia. Indonesian history, and even world history, has clearly and accurately documented the early establishment of pesantren. Essentially, pesantren are Islamic educational institutions that have undergone significant development in Indonesia while retaining traditional characteristics. This institution represents the concept of *al-tarbiyah al-Islamiyah* integrated with Indonesian local values, which ultimately gave rise to a distinctive community known as “pesantren” [1].

Over time, Islamic boarding schools have continually implemented innovations to maintain their existence amid the increasingly powerful currents of globalization. In daily life, the pesantren community is grounded in religious teachings, with particular emphasis on moral aspects in social interactions. This ensures that the attitudes and behavior of pesantren members remain within the framework of ethical values. As they have developed, pesantrens have made significant contributions to national development, particularly in spirituality, mentality, and morality.

The transformation of pesantren in Indonesia has demonstrated significant progress, as reflected in the increasingly active involvement of pesantren and madrasahs in advancing Islamic education in the country. As traditional Islamic educational institutions, pesantren have consistently demonstrated their commitment to educating students through exemplary conduct, the creation of conducive learning environments, habituation of positive behavior, and the implementation of structured activities aimed at fostering students' independence in daily life.

According to H.A. Timur Djaelani [2], pesantren are the oldest educational institutions in Indonesia and are also considered one of the nation's indigenous cultural forms. This is based on the existence of an educational system built on the relationships among the kyai, santri, and dormitories, which has long been recognized in folklore, particularly in Java. Hadisi et al. [3] add that pesantren emerged as a religious response by society to the acculturation of local culture and Islamic values. Pesantren education aims to form individuals who possess a deep understanding of religious knowledge as a guide for life, with a strong emphasis on ethical and moral dimensions in social life.

According to [4], Islamic boarding schools are the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia with unique and distinctive characteristics. In addition to functioning as educational institutions, pesantren also serve as socio-religious institutions that facilitate interaction among individuals and act as centers of community empowerment in social, cultural, and economic fields. Meanwhile, Dhofier [5] states that in the era of globalization, pesantren are viewed as dominant institutions in the formation of ideal character. Their strong, distinctive characteristics make pesantren Islamic educational institutions that not only aim to educate the nation but also to shape morally upright young generations. As part of Indonesian subculture, pesantren education is not only intended to enrich students' intellectual aspects but also to enhance morality, enthusiasm, and appreciation for spiritual and humanitarian values. Pesantren also teaches honesty, simplicity, and a pure heart in daily life.

According to [6], Islamic boarding schools are non-formal Islamic educational institutions where students reside within the pesantren environment to study Islamic teachings and develop noble character under the leadership of a *kyai*. Pesantren serve as

centers for moral development, where the *kyai* play a crucial role in shaping students' character. Furthermore, Irawan [7] explains that the *kyai*, as the primary educator, is required to possess high competence in guiding students toward achieving educational goals, particularly in forming noble character in accordance with national education objectives.

In Indonesia, Islamic boarding schools are known not only as institutions for religious instruction but also as institutions that shape students' character and morality. The educational system implemented is holistic, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. In this context, student caregiving is an important aspect for ensuring balanced emotional, social, and intellectual development [8].

However, in pesantren life, students often face various challenges, both internal, such as personal and family problems, and external, such as difficulties adapting to the pesantren environment or social problems with peers. If left unaddressed, these problems may hinder students' overall development [9].

Therefore, providing guidance and counseling services in Islamic boarding schools is highly important. These services play a strategic role in helping students overcome personal, academic, and social problems. Guidance and counseling programs aim to provide psychological support, facilitate self-development, and help students achieve optimal mental and spiritual balance [10].

According to [11], guidance and counseling services play an important role in improving students' social and emotional development by providing space for them to express their feelings and discuss the problems they face. In practice, counselors can provide interventions tailored to students' individual needs and characteristics, thereby improving psychological well-being and enhancing the quality of interpersonal relationships within the pesantren environment. This is particularly crucial given that pesantren life is governed by strict norms and regulations that often limit students' freedom of expression.

Although the importance of guidance and counseling in pesantren environments is increasingly recognized, its implementation continues to face various challenges. These challenges may include managerial difficulties, limited human resources, and resistance from students and pesantren administrators toward such programs. Therefore, in-depth studies are needed to examine the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services in pesantren environments, including the identification of factors influencing their success [12].

In the context of Islamic education, there are three main complementary objectives. First, the individual objective emphasizes the comprehensive development of students' personalities in moral, intellectual, and spiritual aspects to achieve their fullest potential. Second, the social objective aims to make education a means of creating a harmonious, just, and prosperous society, positioning education as an agent of social transformation. Third, the instructional objective focuses on the process of delivering and developing knowledge, skills, and values among students, thereby forming competent and morally upright generations [13].

The primary goal of education is to develop students' personalities optimally. Therefore, the educational process must not be merely instructional but must include activities that ensure individualized services, enabling students to develop to their full potential. Within this framework, guidance and counseling services play a strategic role as an integral part of education in helping students achieve comprehensive and balanced personal development [14].

Guidance is viewed as a field within education that aims to optimize students' potential. According to Tolbert, as cited in [15], guidance encompasses all programs and services within educational institutions designed to help individuals organize, plan, and adjust to various aspects of daily life.

On the other hand, counseling is the core method within guidance services. Counseling has flexible, comprehensive characteristics and is considered a key technique due to its ability to bring about fundamental changes in individuals, particularly in attitudes and behavior [14]. Counseling is generally conducted through face-to-face meetings, either individually or in groups, and is primarily intended for students who have experienced specific problems and require professional assistance [16].

From an Islamic perspective, the recommendation to provide mutual guidance and counseling is reflected in teachings that emphasize the importance of patience and trust in God (*tawakkal*) in life. These values are aligned with the words of Allah in Surah Al-'Asr (103): 1–3, which state:

“By time. Indeed, mankind is in loss. Except those who believe and do righteous deeds and advise each other to the truth and advise each other to patience.”

This Qur'anic verse in Surah Al-'Asr (103:1–3) conveys an important message that humans must continuously guide and educate themselves and others toward goodness. In this context, the educational process can be understood as a form of guidance in directing one's life. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also encouraged Muslims to convey Islamic teachings that they know and understand, even if only one verse. This call to provide religious advice can be interpreted as a form of guidance from an educational psychology perspective [14]. One hadith that reinforces the importance of guidance in character formation is the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), narrated by Ibn Majah, which states: “Honor your children and improve their character.” This hadith shows that guidance in Islam is not limited to conveying knowledge but also involves efforts to improve morals and develop character deeply.

The implementation of guidance and counseling in education also has a strong legal foundation. Law Number 20 of 2003 of the Republic of Indonesia concerning the National Education System, Chapter I, Article 1, Paragraph 1, states that education is a conscious and planned effort to create learning conditions and processes that enable students to develop their potential actively. This development includes spiritual development, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed by individuals, society, and the nation. Meanwhile, Paragraph 6 emphasizes that educators include various personnel, such as teachers, lecturers, counselors, and others, who play roles in implementing education in line with their respective expertise.

The Law of the Republic of Indonesia reinforces this legal foundation, Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which states that teachers are professional educators whose main duties include educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students, particularly at the early childhood, primary, and secondary education levels.

Based on this constitutional framework, it can be concluded that guidance and counseling services are an integral part of the national education system. Their implementation in formal educational institutions such as schools and madrasahs aims to provide services that help students develop their potential optimally and in a balanced manner, in accordance with the national education goal of educating the nation.

The importance of guidance and counseling services in education stems from several fundamental reasons. First, education is essentially a conscious process aimed at developing students' personalities, which requires approaches beyond instructional processes, namely personal approaches. Second, the dynamic and evolving nature of education requires adequate adaptation, and students need assistance in adjusting through guidance and counseling services. Third, the role of teachers is not limited to teaching but also includes educating. In this capacity, teachers must adopt various approaches, including personal approaches through guidance and counseling services, to help students grow and develop holistically [17].

Riyadlul Ulum Wadda'wah Condong Islamic Boarding School and Al Amin Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya City not only teach classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) as the main curriculum but also develop learning systems that emphasize mastery of foreign languages, namely Arabic and English, as well as Tahfidz Al-Qur'an programs. These activities are supported by adequate facilities and infrastructure that enhance effective learning processes, both in intracurricular and extracurricular activities. However, in their management, pesantren caregivers, including the *kyai* and administrators, face various challenges and obstacles. These include educational managerial issues, economic constraints, social challenges, and students' spiritual development. This presents a significant challenge for pesantren administrators in producing high-quality students capable of competing in the era of globalization.

Both pesantrens are committed to forming an ideal student profile: individuals capable of achieving a bright future through mastery of religious knowledge, strengthening of faith, and increased sincerity in worship. Students are expected to become intelligent, skilled, and independent individuals. However, in practice, various academic and non-academic problems often arise, hindering the achievement of these quality standards. The expected student quality includes maturity in emotional, intellectual, economic independence, social, and spiritual aspects. These aspects should become the primary focus of student caregiving and development in pesantren environments. In response to these complex challenges, both pesantren have implemented Guidance and Counseling (BK) services. These services are expected to support students in resolving various academic and non-academic problems and serve as an important component in comprehensive personality development.

Based on field findings, students reside in the pesantren environment for 24 hours, which naturally encourages various social interactions, both constructive and destructive. Several identified phenomena include students who still struggle to control their emotions, are easily offended, and tend to display aggressive behavior, resulting in conflicts among students, including bullying. Additionally, some students are unable to accept criticism effectively, perceiving it as an insult. Other issues include difficulties adapting to dormitory life, resulting in intolerance and egoistic attitudes. These problems highlight the urgency of guidance and counseling services in creating a psychologically and socially healthy pesantren environment.

The intellectual maturity of *santri* is closely related to their critical thinking skills and their ability to solve problems logically and practically, particularly in relation to scientific knowledge and religious teachings. At Pondok Pesantren Riyadlul Ulum Wadda'wah Condong and Pondok Pesantren Al Amin Kota Tasikmalaya, some *santri* still struggle to understand and apply religious principles in their daily lives. For example, they are not yet able to apply the principles of *ushul fiqh* in addressing jurisprudential issues related to worship (*ibadah*) and social transactions (*muamalah*). In addition, limitations in mastering *nahwu* and *sharaf* have caused many *santri* to make errors in reading and understanding sentence structures in the *kitab kuning*. This condition indicates the need to enhance learning through deeper and more applicable approaches so that *santri* can achieve the expected level of intellectual maturity.

The issue of economic independence also poses a significant challenge for both *santri* who are still studying and alumni or resident graduates (*mukimin*). *Santri* in both Islamic boarding schools generally have not yet demonstrated strong motivation in entrepreneurship, and therefore lack the skills needed to build economic independence. In fact, developing an entrepreneurial spirit among *santri* is essential as preparation for independent living in the future, whether to fulfill personal and family needs or to contribute economically to the pesantren. Traditionally, independence has been a distinctive characteristic of pesantren education, differentiating it from other educational institutions. However, in the context of changing times, the growing tendency among alums to become job seekers has gradually shifted this entrepreneurial spirit. This transformation requires pesantren to be adaptive to contemporary socio-economic dynamics [18].

The social maturity of *santri* can be measured by their ability to establish social relationships, adapt, and interact harmoniously with fellow *santri*. In reality, many *santri* still experience difficulties in social interaction, which can lead to conflicts such as prejudice, disputes, and even bullying. Conflicts among *santri* may develop into group conflicts that disrupt the harmony of the pesantren environment. This situation indicates an urgent need for intensive social development, particularly through habituation, role modeling, and counseling services [19].

Nevertheless, the pesantren system of life, which upholds family values through relationships such as brotherhood and sisterhood among *santri*, has great potential to foster strong social character and loyalty. Living together in the same environment requires *santri* to respect, understand, and take responsibility for one another. The educational process and

daily activities in pesantren also emphasize the importance of independence in both personal and communal aspects [20]. Social maturity is closely related to spiritual depth. The higher the level of understanding and practice of religious values among *santri*, the stronger their social awareness and their ability to build harmonious relationships. Therefore, spiritual and social education in pesantren must be implemented in an integrated manner as part of a comprehensive character development process.

Parents' decisions to enroll their children in pesantren are generally based on considerations such as fostering independence, building self-confidence, deepening comprehensive religious knowledge, and strengthening mental and physical resilience. In addition, pesantren are considered ideal environments for expanding social networks, exploring personal potential, protecting children from negative environmental influences, and applying religious values in daily life. However, in practice, parents often face various challenges in supporting their children's educational process, both while at the pesantren and at home. Common concerns include children being difficult to direct, reluctant to study, argumentative, and lacking time awareness, particularly in the use of technology and online games. These problems are often rooted in parenting patterns that are not aligned with children's developmental needs and contemporary challenges, thus requiring synergy between parents and educational institutions to achieve optimal educational outcomes [21].

The caregiving system for *santri* through Guidance and Counseling services in pesantren serves as an important indicator of the institution's commitment and seriousness in carrying out its educational functions. A system refers to a set of interconnected elements that work together to achieve specific goals. A well-developed system facilitates pesantren in implementing strategies and achieving their objectives effectively. Currently, many pesantren graduates encounter difficulties in applying their knowledge within society or lack sensitivity in addressing social problems. Without a proper strategy, an institution cannot effectively utilize emerging opportunities [22]. Therefore, implementing Guidance and Counseling services is expected to serve as an effective strategy for producing significant personal development among *santri*, enabling pesantren to improve the quality and global competitiveness of their graduates. As stated in [23], pesantren represent one of the educational institutions capable of facilitating individual transformation.

As Islamic educational institutions, pesantren play a crucial role in shaping the character and personality of *santri*. In addition to providing in-depth religious education, pesantren function as centers for mental, spiritual, and social development. In this process, one essential aspect is the development of intellectual independence through higher-order thinking skills. Intellectual independence refers to an individual's ability to think critically, independently, and responsibly in the learning process. This competence is essential for facing increasingly complex life challenges [24].

Intellectual independence through higher-order thinking skills refers to an individual's ability to think independently, critically, and logically without excessive reliance on others. In the pesantren context, developing intellectual independence is essential so that *santri* not only master religious knowledge but are also able to apply it creatively and wisely in daily life across emotional, social, economic, and spiritual dimensions. However, achieving this requires holistic support that extends beyond the

formal curriculum, including psychological approaches such as Guidance and Counseling services [24].

In practice, the development of intellectual independence and higher-order thinking skills in pesantren often faces various obstacles. Many *santri* encounter difficulties in developing critical and independent thinking due to environmental factors, less supportive teaching methods, and insufficient attention to their psychological development. Therefore, an appropriate approach is needed to address these challenges, including Guidance and Counseling services [25].

2. METHOD

According to Rahardjo, as cited in [26], research methods are one way to obtain tentative rather than absolute truth. The results produce scientific truth, which remains open to continuous testing, criticism, and even revision. Therefore, there is no single best method for seeking the truth; rather, there is an appropriate method suited to specific objectives and phenomena. Budiharto, as cited in [27], also states that the selection of research methods must be aligned with the research being conducted in order to achieve optimal results.

This study examined the boarding school caregiving system, focusing on guidance and counseling in developing students' intellectual independence. The research method used in this study is a case study. According to Nursalam, as cited in [28], a case study is a research approach that involves an in-depth examination aimed at providing a detailed description of the background, nature, and characteristics of a particular case. In other words, case study research focuses in depth on a single case. This research method is conducted systematically in depth on a particular condition or situation, starting with observation, data collection, information analysis, and the reporting of findings.

The approach used in this research is qualitative. According to Iskandar, as cited in [29], qualitative research is a scientific method commonly used by researchers in the social sciences, including educational sciences. Furthermore, Iskandar in [30] explains that qualitative research is a process of inquiry and understanding based on methods that investigate social phenomena and human problems.

This study employs qualitative research using a field research method. According to [31], this approach aligns with the study's main objective: to describe and analyze the boarding school caregiving system, grounded in guidance and counseling, to develop students' intellectual independence. Thus, this method enables the researcher to explain the research problems comprehensively [32].

According to Yin, as cited in [33], the purpose of case study research is not merely to explain what the object is like, but also to explain how the situation occurs and why the case happens. Meanwhile, Waluya in [34] states that the purpose of a case study is to develop in-depth knowledge about the object being studied, meaning that case studies are exploratory in nature.

Bogdan and Taylor, as cited in [35], explain that qualitative research methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observable behavior. In this study, the researcher develops a

complex description, examines words, provides detailed reports from respondents' perspectives, and studies situations in their natural settings, particularly those related to the boarding school caregiving system, guided by counseling in develop intellectual independence.

Techniques can be viewed as means of performing technical tasks carefully, using rational thinking to achieve objectives. Although research is an effort within the scope of scientific inquiry, it is conducted to collect realistic data in order to establish truth systematically. Research methodology serves as a means to solve research problems. In this study, the researcher collected information on the boarding school caregiving system, focusing on guidance and counseling in developing intellectual independence, among other relevant aspects [36].

Since this study also requires supporting materials from library sources, library research was utilized. The researcher used books, scientific articles, and other relevant literature related to the research topic and problem, both printed and online [37].

Collecting information from data sources requires appropriate data collection techniques. Amir Hamzah, as cited in [38], states that data collection is the process an gathering information related to the research topic. The researcher used library research methods to collect supporting data, including books, dictionaries, journals, encyclopedias, papers, periodicals, and other relevant sources on the boarding school caregiving system, with a focus on guidance and counseling in developing intellectual independence.

Furthermore, Amir Hamzah in [39] explains that data collection refers to various efforts to gather facts related to the research topic or issue under investigation. These details can be found in scientific literature, research reports, dissertations, theses, and other written sources. According to [40], data collection can be conducted in various situations, using different sources and techniques.

Observation is part of the research process conducted directly on the phenomena being studied [41]. Through this method, the researcher can directly observe and experience the atmosphere and conditions of the research subjects [42]. The observations in this study focus on the boarding school caregiving system, guided by counseling in develop intellectual independence.

The interview technique used in this study is structured interviews, conducted using standardized guidelines. The questions were arranged according to the information needed, and each was designed to collect empirical data relevant to the research objectives [43].

Documentation is a data collection technique through written records or documents [44]. Documentation refers to written materials such as books, magazines, meeting minutes, and daily records. According to Moleong, as cited in [45], documentation is a method of collecting information through examining archives and documents. Furthermore, according to [46], documentation is also a data collection technique directed toward research subjects. This method was used to obtain data on the condition of the institution (research object), specifically the boarding school caregiving system, based on guidance and counseling in developing intellectual independence.

Moleong in [47] explains that the collected data were analyzed using an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Syarifah

et al., as cited in [48], explain that data reduction involves selecting relevant information, data presentation is conducted in a systematic narrative form, and conclusions are drawn based on research findings. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation by comparing information obtained from different informants. According to Moleong in [49], source triangulation enhances the validity of research findings by comparing different perspectives on the studied phenomenon.

According to Muhadjir, as cited in [50], data analysis is the systematic organization and interpretation of research findings obtained through observation and interviews, enabling the researcher to focus on the research subject. The findings are then edited, classified, and presented for broader understanding. The data validity technique used triangulation of techniques and sources. Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman model as cited in [51], consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Guidance and Counseling-Based Boarding School Caregiving System in Developing Intellectual Independence

The results of this study indicate that the boarding school's caregiving system, grounded in guidance and counseling, not only serves as an instrument for students' moral and spiritual development but also plays a strategic role in fostering students' intellectual independence in a structured, reflective, and sustainable manner. These findings are consistent with and expand the caregiving objectives proposed by Hurlock, as cited in [52], who emphasizes that caregiving aims to educate individuals to adapt to their social environment independently and responsibly. In the boarding school context, this adaptive ability is not merely normative compliance with rules but also the ability to understand, internalize, and respond to boarding school values rationally and consciously.

The findings further demonstrate that when the caregiving system is integrated with guidance and counseling services, the caregiving process does not end at habituation and role modeling but develops into an educational process that stimulates students' intellectual awareness. This is consistent with Tolbert's definition of guidance, as cited in [53], which views guidance as a comprehensive educational program designed to help individuals develop plans, make decisions, and adjust to various aspects of life. This integration positions guidance and counseling not merely as a curative service but as an inherent component of the caregiving system oriented toward developing students' intellectual capacity.

In contrast to previous studies such as [54] and [55], which primarily positioned caregiving and counseling services as tools for character formation, discipline, and moral development (*akhlaqul karimah*), this study shows that students are not merely positioned as objects of moral development but as intellectual subjects trained to think critically, reflectively, and independently. The guidance-and-counseling-based caregiving approach encourages students to understand the rationale behind boarding school regulations, reflect on their learning experiences, and develop analytical skills in address academic and social challenges.

From the perspective of Havighurst's intellectual independence theory, as cited in [56], intellectual independence is an individual's ability to solve problems encountered in life. The findings of this study indicate that boarding school caregiving integrated with guidance and counseling significantly contributes to fostering this ability. Students are trained not only to accept decisions or directions passively but also to develop problem-solving skills, make independent decisions, and take responsibility for their choices. Thus, students' intellectual independence is formed through continuous processes of reflective thinking, intellectual habituation, and educational dialogue.

Furthermore, these findings are consistent with Bloom's Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) theory, as cited in [57], which emphasizes that higher-order cognitive abilities include analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The guidance and counseling-based caregiving system implemented in this study empirically encourages students to engage in complex thinking processes, such as reflecting on experiences, participating in problem-solving discussions, and making decisions based on logical and value-based considerations. This demonstrates that Islamic boarding schools have significant potential as pedagogical environments for developing students' HOTS when caregiving is consciously and systematically designed.

These findings also critically extend previous studies such as [58] and [59], which developed guidance and counseling models in Islamic education but still positioned counseling as a separate service focused primarily on resolving personal or social problems. This study emphasizes that guidance and counseling services have a greater impact when structurally and culturally integrated into the boarding school caregiving system, functioning as a pedagogical strategy to develop higher-order thinking skills and intellectual independence.

From the perspective of Islamic education, these findings align with Al-Ghazali's concept of intellectual development stages: takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli. The takhalli stage is reflected in caregiving processes, emphasizing self-purification and behavioral discipline. The tahalli stage is evident in the internalization of knowledge, moral values, and reflective awareness through guidance and counseling. The tajalli stage manifests in students' intellectual independence, wisdom in decision-making, and intellectual responsibility in real-life situations. Thus, guidance and counseling-based caregiving revitalizes Islamic educational traditions in addressing contemporary educational challenges.

Based on these findings, this study fills an important research gap in boarding school caregiving and guidance and counseling studies, particularly the absence of an integrative model explicitly and systematically designed to develop students' intellectual independence. The findings affirm that boarding school caregiving should no longer be viewed merely as a disciplinary and value-internalization process but as an educational process that develops students' intellectual agency.

Factors Influencing the Success of Guidance and Counseling-Based Caregiving Systems in Developing Intellectual Independence

The findings of this study indicate that the guidance-and-counseling-based caregiving system in Islamic boarding schools not only serves as a mechanism for students'

moral and spiritual development but also has strategic potential in fostering students' intellectual independence in a structured and sustainable manner. These findings are consistent with the caregiving theory proposed by Hurlock, as cited in [60], which emphasizes that the primary goal of caregiving is to educate individuals so they can maturely and responsibly adjust to their social environment. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, this ability to adjust is not merely compliance with norms and rules, but also students' capacity to understand social realities, consider the consequences of their actions, and make independent and rational decisions.

This alignment indicates that the Islamic boarding school's caregiving system, integrated with guidance and counseling, has moved beyond its traditional function as a disciplinary tool and has developed into an educational process that facilitates students' personal and intellectual maturity. This finding strengthens the view that effective caregiving is not merely aimed at shaping socially acceptable behavior, but also at fostering individuals' intellectual capacity and responsibility.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are relevant to Tolbert's theory of guidance as cited in [61], which defines guidance as a comprehensive program of services within educational institutions aimed at helping individuals plan and implement their life goals and adjust to all aspects of daily life. The integration of guidance and counseling into the Islamic boarding school caregiving system, as identified in this study, demonstrates that counseling services are not merely incidental or remedial but rather an integral part of the educational process. Thus, guidance and counseling serve as pedagogical instruments that foster reflective awareness, analytical ability, and intellectual independence in addressing various life challenges.

In contrast to previous studies [62] and [63], which tended to emphasize caregiving and counseling as tools for normative character formation and the internalization of *akhlakul karimah* (noble character), this study's results position students not merely as objects of moral development but as active intellectual subjects. Earlier research primarily focused on moral compliance, namely, students' adherence to boarding school rules and values, while the dimension of strengthening critical, reflective, and independent thinking capacity had not yet become a primary orientation of caregiving.

From the perspective of the intellectual independence theory proposed by Robert Havighurst, as cited in [64], intellectual independence is understood as an individual's ability to solve problems independently. The findings of this study demonstrate that students nurtured through a guidance and counseling-based caregiving system are not only able to comply with boarding school regulations but also able to identify problems, analyze alternative solutions, and make responsible decisions. Therefore, the caregiving system in Islamic boarding schools functions as a training environment for problem-solving and decision-making, which are essential components of intellectual independence.

These findings are also closely related to Bloom's theory of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) as cited in [65]. Bloom emphasizes that higher-order thinking involves complex cognitive processes such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The integration of caregiving, guidance, and counseling identified in this study has been shown to encourage students to reflect on their learning experiences, understand the rationale behind rules, and

develop analytical and evaluative abilities in dealing with various life situations. This confirms that the Islamic boarding school caregiving system can serve as a strategic medium for developing HOTS when designed consciously, systematically, and sustainably.

Within the framework of Islamic education, these findings are highly relevant to Al-Ghazali's perspective on the development of human intellectual potential through the stages of *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli*. The *takhalli* stage is reflected in the caregiving and counseling process that helps students cleanse themselves from negative attitudes such as blind imitation (*taqlid*), intellectual dependency, and lack of intellectual discipline. The *tahalli* stage is evident in the process of instilling knowledge, virtue, and reflective awareness in students through counseling dialogue, the habituation of critical thinking, and educational mentoring. Meanwhile, the *tajalli* stage is realized when students manifest intellectual wisdom and independence in real actions, such as making decisions, solving problems, and demonstrating intellectual responsibility within the boarding school environment and the broader community.

In contrast to studies [66] and [67], which still positioned guidance and counseling services as separate and independent service units, this study emphasizes the importance of systemic integration between caregiving and guidance and counseling. This integration ensures that counseling not only functions as a tool for resolving personal and social problems but also serves as an educational strategy deliberately designed to foster higher-order thinking skills and intellectual independence among students. These findings also provide a critical perspective on the cognitive-behavioral approach developed by [68], which, although effective in general school contexts, may not fully align with the Islamic boarding school culture, grounded in Islamic values and distinctive caregiving relationships.

Therefore, this study fills an important research gap in the study of Islamic boarding school caregiving and guidance and counseling: the absence of an integrative caregiving model that explicitly and systematically guides student development toward intellectual independence. The contribution of this study is not only empirical but also conceptual, as it offers a new paradigm for understanding Islamic boarding school caregiving as a transformative educational process that holistically integrates moral, spiritual, and intellectual development.

Contribution of Guidance and Counseling-Based Caregiving Systems in Developing Intellectual Independence

The findings of this study indicate that the guidance and counseling (GC)-based caregiving system in Islamic boarding schools makes a substantive and strategic contribution to developing students' intellectual independence at both Riyadlul Ulum Wadda'wah Condong Islamic Boarding School and Al Amin Islamic Boarding School. This contribution is not partial or incidental, but rather built through an integrated, reflective, and collaborative caregiving system consciously directed toward fostering students' critical, analytical, creative, and reflective thinking skills. These findings confirm a paradigm shift in Islamic boarding school caregiving from a normative-disciplinary to an

educative-transformative approach, oriented toward the development of intellectual independence.

Theoretically, these findings are consistent with the caregiving theory proposed by Hurlock, as cited in [69], which states that the primary objective of caregiving is to educate individuals so they can adjust to their social environment and be accepted maturely and responsibly. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, this ability to adjust is not merely interpreted as compliance with norms and regulations, but also as students' competence in understanding situations, considering consequences, and making independent decisions. Therefore, the GC-based caregiving system functions as a process for developing both social and intellectual maturity among students.

From the perspective of guidance theory, these findings are relevant to Tolbert's view as cited in [70], which defines guidance as the entire program and services within educational institutions aimed at helping individuals plan and implement their life goals and adjust to various aspects of life. In this study, GC services are not positioned merely as remedial services but as an integral part of the Islamic boarding school caregiving system. Individual, group, and classical counseling services are designed to guide students in analyzing problems, considering alternative solutions, and evaluating decisions rationally and responsibly. This indicates that GC functions as a pedagogical instrument that fosters reflective awareness and intellectual independence among students.

These findings can also be explained through the theory of intellectual independence proposed by Robert Havighurst, as cited in [71], which defines intellectual independence as an individual's ability to solve problems independently. The GC-based caregiving system in both boarding schools has proven effective in training students not to depend entirely on authority, but to understand problems, analyze alternative solutions, and make independent decisions. Thus, the Islamic boarding school caregiving system functions as a training environment for problem-solving and decision-making, which constitute the core of students' intellectual independence.

Furthermore, the contribution of GC-based caregiving to the development in students' intellectual independence is closely related to Bloom's theory of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) [72]. Bloom emphasizes that higher-order thinking involves complex cognitive processes such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The findings of this study show that reflective and dialogical GC services encourage students to understand the rationale behind rules, reflect on learning experiences, and develop analytical and evaluative abilities in addressing real-life problems. Activities such as discussions, debates, scientific forums, and programs like the Pesantren Student Science Club (PSSC) and the Forum Discussion Club (FDC) serve as intellectual laboratories that train students' HOTS.

Within the framework of Islamic education, these findings demonstrate strong conceptual alignment with Al-Ghazali's perspective on the development of human intellectual potential through the stages of *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli*. The *takhalli* stage is reflected in caregiving and counseling processes that help students cleanse themselves from negative attitudes such as blind imitation (*taqlid*), intellectual dependency, and lack of intellectual discipline. The *tahalli* stage is evident in the process of instilling knowledge, virtue, and reflective awareness through counseling dialogue, habituation of critical

thinking, and educational mentoring. Meanwhile, the *tajalli* stage is realized when students manifest intellectual wisdom and independence in real actions, such as making decisions, solving problems, and defending arguments rationally and ethically within both the boarding school environment and society.

These findings also provide a critical perspective on previous studies [73] and Dwi Listiani and Sukari (2024), which, although demonstrating the effectiveness of caregiving and GC in shaping students' moral character and discipline, still positioned GC services primarily within the framework of normative behavioral development. In contrast, this study positions GC as a pedagogical strategy for systematically developing students' intellectual capacity. Similarly, this study expands upon the findings of [66] and [74] by demonstrating that GC collaboration is not merely coordinative, but structurally and pedagogically integrated into the Islamic boarding school caregiving system.

In addition, this study extends the findings of [75] and [76], which emphasized character development and students' mental health. This study highlights that such development can be further strengthened by positioning intellectual independence as a strategic objective of the caregiving system. The intellectual independence developed is not separate from Islamic values but is embedded within a framework of moral and spiritual responsibility, ensuring that students' critical thinking remains grounded in ethical and religious principles.

Therefore, this study fills an important research gap in the study of Islamic boarding school caregiving and guidance and counseling, namely the absence of an integrative caregiving model explicitly designed to develop students' intellectual independence. The contribution of this study is conceptual, methodological, and practical, as it offers a new paradigm of Islamic boarding school caregiving as an educative-transformative process integrating caregiving, guidance and counseling, HOTS development, and Islamic educational values. In the context of 21st-century education, these findings affirm that Islamic boarding schools have significant potential to produce students who are not only spiritually and morally grounded but also critical, creative, independent, and adaptive in facing global challenges.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this study concludes that an integrated caregiving system, coupled with guidance and counseling services, plays an important role in fostering students' intellectual independence in Islamic boarding schools. The main finding is that this integration encourages students to develop higher-order thinking skills, including analytical, evaluative, and creative thinking, which are applied in solving academic and daily-life problems. At Riyadul Ulum Wadda'wah Islamic Boarding School, this integration is reflected in structured guidance practices embedded within caregiving activities that promote rational and independent thinking. Meanwhile, at Al Amin Islamic Boarding School, students' improved ability to express ideas, engage in structured argumentation, and make responsible decisions is evident.

In practical terms, pesantren administrators are encouraged to strengthen institutional policies that integrate caregiving systems with structured counseling

programs. Caregivers are expected to consistently embed reflective dialogue, mentoring, and problem-solving activities into daily student routines, while counselors should design programs that explicitly target the development of intellectual independence and HOTS-based learning habits.

However, this study has limitations, including its qualitative design, reliance on a limited number of informants, and restricted generalizability due to the case study approach. Future research is recommended to use mixed-method designs or quantitative approaches with larger samples to test the generalizability of findings. In addition, the development of standardized instruments to measure students' intellectual independence is needed to provide more objective, measurable evidence of the impact of integrating caregiving and counseling in pesantren contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher expresses sincere gratitude to all parties who have contributed to the implementation of this research, enabling it to proceed smoothly. Appreciation is also extended to everyone who shared their experiences and provided valuable inspiration to the researcher throughout the research process.

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