

## Pesantren Counselors' Competence in Addressing Students' Problems

Muhammad Jamaluddin<sup>1</sup>, Ayu Raudatul Jannah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Program Studi Bimbingan dan Konseling Pendidikan Islam, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan, Universitas Islam Negeri Madura

e-mail: [jamal\\_aldien@iainmadura.ac.id](mailto:jamal_aldien@iainmadura.ac.id) , [ayuraudatuljannah@gmail.com](mailto:ayuraudatuljannah@gmail.com)

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**Abstract.** Guidance and Counseling services in *pesantren* play a strategic role in supporting students' academic, psychosocial, moral, and spiritual development. This study explored students' problems, counselor competencies, service constraints, and institutional case-handling mechanisms at Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan. A qualitative case study design was employed using interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data were analyzed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis supported by NVivo 14. The findings identified four interconnected themes: (1) multidimensional *santri* problems, (2) an integrative counselor competency configuration, (3) structural and relational constraints, and (4) a tiered psycho-spiritual case-handling mechanism. The study proposes an integrative competency model in which spiritual competence functions as the ethical foundation linking pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies within the *pesantren* counseling system. The model contributes a conceptual framework for strengthening counselor competence and institutional counseling services in Islamic boarding schools.

**Keywords:** counselor competence, Guidance and Counseling, Islamic boarding school

**Abstrak.** Layanan Bimbingan dan Konseling di *pesantren* berperan penting dalam mendukung perkembangan akademik, psikososial, moral, dan spiritual santri. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis problematika santri, kompetensi konselor, kendala layanan, serta mekanisme penanganan kasus di Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan *Reflexive Thematic Analysis* berbantuan NVivo 14. Hasil penelitian menghasilkan empat tema utama, yaitu: (1) spektrum multidimensional problematika santri, (2) konfigurasi kompetensi konselor yang integratif, (3) kendala struktural dan relasional, serta (4) mekanisme penanganan kasus bertingkat berbasis psiko-spiritual. Penelitian ini menghasilkan model

konseptual kompetensi konselor pesantren yang menempatkan kompetensi spiritual sebagai landasan integratif bagi kompetensi pedagogik, profesional, kepribadian, dan sosial dalam penyelenggaraan layanan Bimbingan dan Konseling di pesantren.

*Kata kunci:* kompetensi konselor, Bimbingan dan Konseling, pesantren

## A. PENDAHULUAN

*Pesantren* (Islamic Boarding Schools), are educational institutions that integrate religious instruction, moral formation, discipline, and spiritual development. Their mission is not only to transmit Islamic knowledge but also to shape students into holistic persons (*insan kamil*). However, the residential system, characterized by intensive routines, strict rules, seniority, and continuous social interaction, may also create psychosocial pressure and adjustment difficulties among students.

Field realities show that *santri* often experience homesickness, emotional discomfort, interpersonal conflict, culture shock, and psychological pressure related to memorizing the Qur'an and studying classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) (Enjjelina & Rosada, 2024). These problems may appear through behavioral changes, declining motivation, withdrawal, emotional instability, disciplinary violations, or inner restlessness. Therefore, students' problems should not be viewed merely as rule-breaking or maladjustment, but also as signs of psychological fatigue, inner conflict, and difficulty in finding meaning within *pesantren* life.

Guidance and Counseling services are essential to support students' holistic development through corrective, preventive, and developmental functions. Kamaruddin & Ardiansyah, (2024), state that counseling in *pesantren* provides a safe space for students to express problems, receive emotional support, and strengthen resilience. From a spiritual-transpersonal perspective, counseling should not rely only on advice, discipline, or moral instruction, but must also address students' psychological and spiritual dimensions through empathic and meaning-oriented assistance.

The effectiveness of counseling services depends on counselors' pedagogical, professional, personal, social, and spiritual competencies. Ideally, counselors should identify early signs of distress, understand students' problems comprehensively, build trust, communicate empathically, and integrate counseling techniques with Islamic values. In practice, however, many *pesantren* still rely on *ustadz*, caregivers, or dormitory supervisors who have religious authority but often lack formal counseling training. As noted by Al Musafiri et al., (2023), this condition may cause counselors to feel overwhelmed and less able to detect students' early problems, leading to interventions that are more instructional, moralistic, or disciplinary than therapeutic and developmental.

Previous studies have extensively examined various aspects of *pesantren* life, including students' adjustment, religious-based counseling, counselor competence, and character education. However, these studies have predominantly focused on isolated dimensions, such as students' psychosocial adjustment, the implementation of Islamic counseling, or the professional competencies of counselors, without sufficiently examining how these dimensions interact within the institutional counseling system of *pesantren*. Consequently, current literature provides only a fragmented understanding of counseling services and offers limited explanation of how counselors' competencies are shaped by the characteristics of students' problems, the sociocultural context of *pesantren*, institutional support structures, and the mechanisms used to manage cases.

This gap is significant because counseling services in *pesantren* operate within a distinctive educational environment that differs substantially from those of formal schools. Counselors are expected not only to respond to students' psychological concerns but also to navigate religious values, communal living, hierarchical relationships, and institutional regulations simultaneously. Without understanding these interconnected dimensions, it is difficult to explain how counselor competencies are enacted in practice or to develop a comprehensive framework that reflects the unique characteristics of counseling services in *pesantren*.

The novelty of this study lies not merely in integrating several aspects of counseling practice, but in conceptualizing Guidance and Counseling services in pesantren as an interconnected institutional ecosystem. Rather than examining students' problems, counselor competencies, service constraints, or referral mechanisms independently, this study analyzes the dynamic relationships among these dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how counseling services are implemented within a pesantren setting. Through this integrated perspective, the study contributes to the development of a conceptual understanding of counselor competence that is grounded in the institutional, sociocultural, and spiritual characteristics of pesantren and provides a foundation for identifying competencies that are distinctive to Islamic boarding school counseling.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the implementation of Guidance and Counseling services at Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan Sumenep by examining students' problems, counselors' competency readiness, service challenges, and institutional case-handling mechanisms as an integrated counseling system, thereby contributing to the development of a more comprehensive conceptual framework for pesantren counseling.

## **B. LANDASAN TEORI**

### **1. Conceptual Foundations of Guidance and Counseling in Pesantren**

Guidance and Counseling in pesantren is rooted in the philosophy of Islamic education, which aims to develop students' intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual capacities. Within this perspective, counseling is not merely a technical response to psychological or behavioral problems but an integral component of *tarbiyah*, assisting santri in understanding themselves, developing their potential, internalizing Islamic values, and resolving personal and social problems throughout their educational journey (Hasanah, 2020).

Contemporary Islamic counseling further emphasizes that counseling for Muslim students should be grounded in an Islamic psycho-spiritual worldview, as conventional approaches alone may not adequately address their spiritual and

existential needs (Rassool, 2021). Empirical evidence shows that integrating Islamic values and spiritual reflection into counseling enhances mindfulness, reduces anxiety, and strengthens students' spiritual well-being (Kadafi et al., 2021). Likewise, Santosa & Prabowo, (2022) argue that Islamic prophetic Guidance and Counseling should systematically support students' developmental needs through preventive, developmental, and therapeutic functions that foster *akhlāq al-karīmah*. Accordingly, Guidance and Counseling in pesantren promotes not only problem solving but also emotional regulation, character formation, value internalization, and meaningful life development grounded in Islamic teachings.

The distinctive character of pesantren counseling is closely associated with its residential educational environment, where students continuously study, worship, and interact within a structured communal setting. While this environment cultivates discipline, responsibility, and a sense of belonging, it also presents psychosocial challenges, including homesickness, adjustment difficulties, peer pressure, and emotional exhaustion, particularly during the initial period of residence (Yasmin & Langerya, 2022;Endi et al., 2026). These conditions require counselors to understand students' concerns within the broader ecological context of pesantren life and to demonstrate strong social competence in building communication, understanding group dynamics, and fostering supportive relationships (Juliawan et al., 2020).

Furthermore, pesantren culture emphasizes obedience, humility, and respect for religious authority, values that may simultaneously discourage some santri from openly expressing emotional difficulties. Therefore, counselors must establish trust, empathy, and psychological safety to encourage students' willingness to seek help, as supported by Nuraini & Fitriani, (2023). In practice, pesantren counseling integrates professional counseling techniques with spiritual practices such as *muhasabah*, *dhikr*, *tilawah*, repentance, and *sunnah* prayer. According to Fachrurrazi et al., (2023), this integration of psychological and spiritual dimensions constitutes a distinctive characteristic of Guidance and Counseling in pesantren, enabling

students to achieve emotional well-being while interpreting life experiences through an Islamic spiritual perspective.

## **2. Characteristics of Guidance and Counseling Service in Pesantren**

### **a. Community-Based Residential Orientation**

A distinctive characteristic of Guidance and Counseling in pesantren is its implementation within a fully residential educational community where santri continuously live, study, worship, and interact. This environment promotes discipline, solidarity, collective responsibility, and the internalization of religious values, while simultaneously creating psychosocial challenges such as interpersonal conflict, emotional fatigue, social exclusion, bullying, and unhealthy seniority dynamics (Waliyanti & Swesty, 2021).

Accordingly, counselors should understand the boarding environment as a dynamic social context that shapes students' emotional, behavioral, and interpersonal development. Emotional distress is often expressed indirectly through behavioral changes, social withdrawal, reduced participation, or declining engagement rather than explicit help-seeking. Recent evidence indicates that bullying significantly undermines students' mental health, whereas school belonging and psychological resilience serve as important protective factors (Liu et al., 2025). Therefore, counselors require strong social competence to recognize these warning signs, establish trusting relationships, and provide timely psychosocial support within the communal culture of pesantren (Juliawan et al., 2020).

### **b. Orientation Toward the Formation of Akhlak**

Guidance and Counseling in pesantren is fundamentally oriented toward the formation of *akhlāq*, reflecting the broader mission of Islamic education to develop students' noble character, spiritual awareness, and social responsibility alongside academic knowledge. Accordingly, counseling functions not only to address behavioral or emotional problems but also to facilitate students' moral and spiritual development. This process is nurtured through the cultivation of values such as honesty (*ṣidq*), patience (*ṣabr*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), humility (*tawāḍu'*), self-

control, and courtesy by means of habituation, exemplary role modeling, reflective practice, and guided self-understanding within the daily life of the pesantren community (Mahmud et al., 2022; Ma`arif et al., 2024). Hasanah, (2020) emphasizes that counselors should embody these *akhlāq* values in every counseling interaction so that counseling contributes to students' personal maturity, responsibility, and character development. Similarly, Santosa & Prabowo, (2022) argue that Islamic prophetic Guidance and Counseling should systematically foster noble character through preventive, developmental, and therapeutic functions. Therefore, counseling in pesantren is most effective when delivered through a humanistic and spiritually grounded approach that promotes moral transformation as an internalized developmental process rather than merely through external discipline.

#### **c. Integration with the Pesantren Care Structure**

Guidance and Counselin in pesantren is integrated into the institution's broader caregiving system through collaboration among homeroom teachers, dormitory mentors, *ustadz*, administrators, and, where available, internal psychological support units. This collaborative approach enables counselors to address students' multidimensional needs, as academic, emotional, social, and religious issues are often interconnected. Through coordinated support, counselors can gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' conditions and provide appropriate interventions. Kamaruddin & Ardiansyah, (2024), emphasize that such institutional synergy is essential in residential education because complex student problems require coordinated responses, positioning counseling as a continuous accompaniment process rather than a crisis-oriented service within the pesantren educational culture.

#### **d. Spiritual-Transcendental Approach**

The most distinctive feature of counseling in *pesantren* is its spiritual-transcendental orientation, which views psychological and spiritual dimensions as

inseparable. Emotional suffering, anxiety, moral conflict, and inner distress are understood not only as psychological problems but also as experiences related to meaning, faith, conscience, and one's relationship with Allah. Therefore, practices such as *dhikr*, *tilawah*, *muhasabah*, and *sunnah* prayer become central therapeutic resources for emotional regulation, inner purification, self-awareness, and spiritual reorientation. Wahidin, (2022), emphasizes that Islamic education counselors must possess religious competence so that Qur'anic and Islamic values are applied proportionally and responsibly in counseling. Thus, this approach moves beyond short-term problem solving by guiding *santri* toward emotional healing, moral reflection, renewed life purpose, closeness to Allah, and ethical responsibility.

### C. METODE PENELITIAN

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore counselor competency readiness and the implementation of Guidance and Counseling services at Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because it facilitates an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions within the socio-religious context of pesantren while supporting the development of a conceptual competency model that reflects the distinctive characteristics of counseling practice in Islamic boarding schools.

The primary participants were Guidance and Counseling counselors selected purposively based on their direct involvement in planning, implementing, and evaluating counseling services. The study examined their educational background, professional experience, pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies, as well as the integration of Islamic values into counseling practice. To strengthen data triangulation, *santri* from different educational levels were also involved to provide perspectives on their academic, personal, social, and emotional concerns and their experiences with counseling services.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews explored counselors' experiences, competencies, and challenges in delivering counseling services. Observations focused

on counselor–student interactions, counseling activities, and the socio-cultural dynamics of pesantren life, while document analysis examined counseling programs, service reports, institutional regulations, and related documents to enrich contextual understanding and support triangulation.

The data were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) developed by Braun and Clarke (Kabir, 2024). The analysis followed six recursive phases: familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition and naming, and the development of the final analytical narrative. To enhance analytical rigor and transparency, all data were managed and coded using NVivo 14, which facilitated systematic coding, comparison across participants, visualization of thematic relationships, and maintenance of an audit trail throughout the analytical process.

Finally, the identified themes were synthesized into a conceptual competency model illustrating the interrelationships among pedagogical, professional, personal, social, and spiritual competencies within the educational, religious, and communal context of pesantren. This model represents the study's principal analytical contribution by providing a conceptual framework for understanding counselor competence in Islamic boarding schools.

#### **D. HASIL PENELITIAN**

##### **1. Thematic Structure of the Findings**

Reflexive thematic analysis of interview data, non-participant observations, and institutional documents generated four interrelated themes describing the implementation of Guidance and Counseling services at Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan: (1) the multidimensional spectrum of *santri* problems; (2) the integrative counselor competency configuration; (3) structural and relational constraints in counseling implementation; and (4) a tiered, spiritually grounded case-handling mechanism.

Rather than representing independent findings, these themes constitute an integrated framework in which the complexity of students' problems shapes the

competencies required of counselors, while institutional conditions influence service implementation and referral mechanisms. The thematic structure is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Thematic structure of Guidance and Counseling services at Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan**

| Main theme                                     | Subthemes                                                                                                           | Indicative findings                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Multidimensional spectrum of santri problems   | Adjustment difficulties; socio-emotional problems; disciplinary violations; complex maladaptive behavior            | Homesickness, discomfort with boarding life, interpersonal conflict, bullying, violence, theft, withdrawal, and behaviors requiring individualized intervention |
| Integrative counselor competency configuration | Pedagogical; professional; personal; social; spiritual competencies                                                 | Educational guidance, counseling skills, patience, persuasive communication, institutional collaboration, and integration of worship and spiritual reflection   |
| Structural and relational constraints          | Limited personnel; multiple institutional roles; high caseload; limited student disclosure                          | Restricted service intensity, difficulties in follow-up, and challenges in developing trust, particularly with male <i>santri</i>                               |
| Tiered and spiritually grounded case handling  | Initial identification; referral; psycho-spiritual intervention; institutional regulation; inter-unit collaboration | Handling by homeroom teachers, the Guidance and Counseling unit, and eL-PsikA Pusat according to the severity and complexity of cases                           |

## 2. Theme One: The Multidimensional Spectrum of Santri Problems

The first theme revealed that *santri* experienced a wide range of problems, from adjustment difficulties to serious behavioral and psychosocial issues. These problems extended beyond violations of pesantren regulations, encompassing emotional, social, developmental, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions.

### a. Adjustment and socio-emotional difficulties

The most common problems involved adjustment to residential pesantren life, locally known as *tidak kerasan*, characterized by discomfort, homesickness, difficulty

adapting to communal routines, institutional regulations, and intensive academic and religious activities. These difficulties were reflected in social withdrawal, reduced participation, emotional instability, interpersonal conflict, and repeated requests to return home. Because students rarely disclosed these concerns directly, counselors, homeroom teachers, and dormitory staff identified them through behavioral and participation changes. The findings indicate that adjustment in pesantren requires simultaneous adaptation to communal living, religious discipline, academic demands, peer relationships, and institutional authority.

#### **b. Disciplinary violations and interpersonal harm**

The findings identified repeated disciplinary violations, including violence, bullying, theft, and other misconduct affecting the safety and order of the pesantren community. These cases required both therapeutic and institutional responses. Victims received psychological support and protection, whereas perpetrators underwent counseling, behavioral evaluation, and appropriate sanctions. Counselors also considered emotional distress, peer pressure, seniority, maladaptive coping, and limited self-control as contributing factors while maintaining firm institutional action when necessary.

#### **c. Complex and individualized behavioral concerns**

Another subtheme involved recurrent maladaptive behaviors requiring intensive and individualized intervention. Service records identified cases of intense same-sex emotional attachment and other disruptive repetitive behaviors influenced by emotional dependency, developmental needs, environmental factors, personal history, behavioral habits, and spiritual concerns. Accordingly, counselors conducted individualized assessments rather than standardized interventions. Overall, Theme One demonstrates a continuum of *santri* problems, from adjustment difficulties requiring early guidance to complex cases requiring referral, coordinated intervention, and intensive psycho-spiritual support.

### **3. Theme Two: The Integrative Competency Configuration of Pesantren Counselors**

The second theme identified five interrelated competency dimensions required for Guidance and Counseling in the pesantren context: pedagogical, professional, personal, social, and spiritual competencies. Rather than functioning independently, these competencies operate as an integrated system in which spiritual competence provides the ethical and religious foundation that guides the implementation of the other four competencies.

**a. Pedagogical competence**

Pedagogical competence was reflected in counselors' ability to facilitate students' learning and personal development rather than merely responding to behavioral problems. Through discussion, guided reflection, worship guidance, and educational reinforcement, counselors encouraged *santri* to understand their behavior, develop learning awareness, and make responsible decisions. Counselors also adapted their communication and interventions according to students' developmental needs and case severity.

**b. Professional competence**

Professional competence involved identifying problems, assessing case severity, selecting appropriate interventions, maintaining confidentiality, documenting cases, and coordinating referrals within the pesantren system. Counselors combined professional counseling practices with Islamic values and referred complex disciplinary, psychological, or behavioral cases to eL-PsikA Pusat as part of responsible and ethical practice.

**c. Personal competence**

Personal competence was demonstrated through patience, emotional stability, integrity, persuasive communication, and non-judgmental attitudes. These qualities were particularly important when working with students who were reluctant to disclose personal problems, requiring counselors to build trust gradually through consistent and supportive relationships.

**d. Social competence**

Social competence was reflected in collaboration with homeroom teachers, dormitory staff, *ustadz*, the Majelis Pembimbing Ustadz, eL-PsikA Pusat, and the Alumni Bureau. Such collaboration enabled counselors to obtain comprehensive information, coordinate interventions, and integrate counseling within the pesantren caregiving system while respecting institutional hierarchy and confidentiality.

#### e. Spiritual competence as the integrative foundation

Spiritual competence emerged as the distinctive characteristic of counselor competence in Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan. Counselors integrated Islamic practices, including *dhikr*, Qur'an recitation, *shalawat*, prayer, repentance, and *muhasabah*, with counseling interventions to promote emotional well-being, self-control, and spiritual growth. Rather than replacing psychological interventions, these practices complemented assessment, trust-building, confidentiality, and behavioral guidance. Collectively, the findings indicate that spiritual competence functions as the integrative foundation linking pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies within the educational mission of the pesantren.

**Table 2. Configuration of the pesantren counselor competency model**

| Competency dimension | Empirical manifestations                                                                                            | Function within pesantren counseling                                         |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pedagogical          | Discussion, learning awareness, worship guidance, developmental explanation, guided reflection                      | Facilitates understanding, learning, maturity, and behavioral transformation |
| Professional         | Case assessment, intervention selection, confidentiality, documentation, referral, service management               | Ensures systematic, ethical, and accountable counseling practice             |
| Personal             | Patience, emotional stability, integrity, persuasive communication, consistency                                     | Establishes trust and emotional safety in the counselor-santri relationship  |
| Social               | Collaboration with homeroom teachers, dormitory staff, <i>ustadz</i> , MPU, eL-PsikA, and Alumni Bureau             | Integrates counseling into the wider institutional caregiving system         |
| Spiritual            | <i>Dhikr</i> , prayer, Qur'an recitation, <i>shalawat</i> , repentance, <i>muhasabah</i> , spiritual meaning-making | Provides the ethical and transcendental orientation                          |

#### **4. Theme Three: Structural and Relational Constraints in Counseling Implementation**

The third theme revealed that the effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling services was shaped by the interaction between structural limitations and relational barriers within the pesantren.

##### **a. Limited counselor personnel and high service demands**

The primary structural constraint was the limited number of counselors relative to the size of the *santri* population and the diversity of cases. Three core counselors managed approximately fifty formally recorded cases annually, excluding those handled by homeroom teachers and other caregiving staff. Their workload was further increased by multiple institutional responsibilities, reducing the time available for assessment, intervention, documentation, follow-up, and professional development. Consequently, counselors prioritized urgent and complex cases, limiting the continuity of preventive and developmental services.

##### **b. Limited openness and indirect help-seeking**

A major relational challenge was *santri*'s reluctance to disclose personal problems, particularly among male students who tended to suppress emotional difficulties or communicate them indirectly. Consequently, counselors often relied on behavioral changes, participation, discipline, and interpersonal interactions to identify underlying concerns. Effective assessment therefore required sustained communication, trust-building, and collaboration with other institutional personnel. The findings indicate that counseling accessibility depends not only on service availability but also on students' trust, perceived confidentiality, emotional safety, and the counselor's supportive approach.

##### **c. Interaction between structural and relational constraints**

Structural and relational constraints reinforced one another. Limited counselor availability reduced opportunities to build rapport, while students' reluctance to seek

help prolonged assessment and intervention. These conditions made it difficult to provide sustained support, particularly for reserved or complex cases. The findings suggest that improving counseling services requires not only competent counselors but also adequate staffing, clear role distribution, protected counseling time, and institutional mechanisms that promote accessible and trustworthy services.

#### **5. Theme Four: A Tiered and Spiritually Grounded Case-Handling Mechanism**

The fourth theme described the institutional mechanism through which *santri* problems were identified, referred, and managed. The findings revealed a tiered system involving homeroom teachers, the Guidance and Counseling unit, eL-PsikA Pusat, and other institutional actors.

##### **a. Initial identification and intervention**

Homeroom teachers and dormitory staff served as the first point of identification by monitoring students' attendance, participation, discipline, peer relationships, worship, and behavioral changes. Minor concerns and adjustment difficulties were addressed through guidance, supervision, and persuasive support before progressing to more serious cases.

##### **b. Referral to the Guidance and Counseling unit**

Cases that persisted or could not be resolved at the initial level were referred to the Guidance and Counseling unit. Counselors conducted further assessment and provided interventions such as individual counseling, learning guidance, emotional support, reflective counseling, and worship guidance while coordinating with the *Majelis Pembimbing Ustadz* and other institutional units when necessary.

##### **c. Referral to eL-PsikA Pusat**

Moderate, severe, recurrent, or institutionally sensitive cases, including violence, bullying, theft, serious disciplinary violations, and complex maladaptive behaviors, were referred to eL-PsikA Pusat. Interventions combined psychological, behavioral, spiritual, and institutional approaches tailored to each student's needs. Although guided by the principle that "*the solution is divine guidance*," interventions

integrated structured psycho-spiritual assistance rather than relying solely on religious advice.

**d. Differentiated responses to victims and perpetrators**

Cases involving interpersonal harm were managed through differentiated interventions. Victims received psychological support and protection, whereas perpetrators underwent counseling, evaluation, and institutional sanctions proportional to the severity of the misconduct. This approach integrated therapeutic recovery with institutional accountability and prevention.

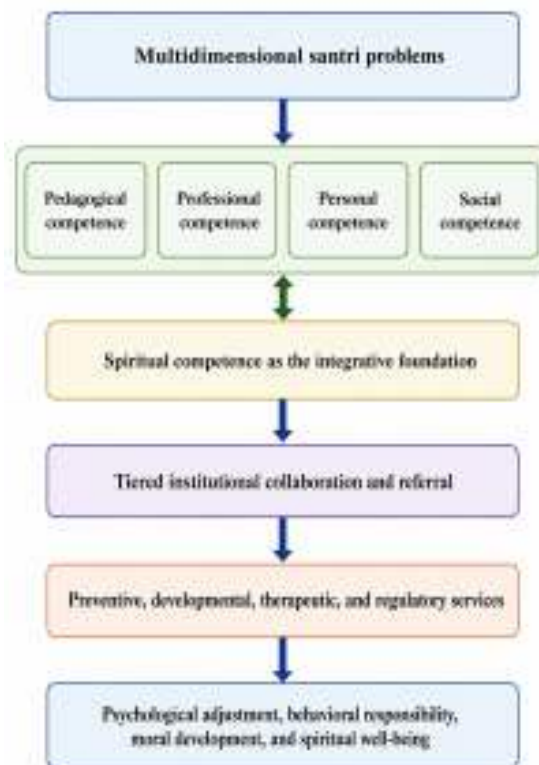
**e. Inter-unit and post-service collaboration**

Case management also involved collaboration with the *Majelis Pembimbing Ustadz* for residential supervision and the Alumni Bureau for post-graduation support, demonstrating that counseling was embedded within the pesantren's broader caregiving system. Overall, the mechanism followed a progressive process comprising early identification, initial guidance, referral, psycho-spiritual intervention, and ongoing coordination and monitoring across institutional units.

**6. The Pesantren Counselor Competency Model**

The thematic synthesis generated an integrative competency model for Guidance and Counseling in pesantren, comprising five competency dimensions, pedagogical, professional, personal, social, and spiritual and three contextual components: the multidimensional nature of *santri* problems, the tiered referral system, and the structural-relational conditions influencing service implementation. Within this framework, spiritual competence functions as the integrative foundation that provides ethical and Islamic orientation for the other competency dimensions.

The model can be represented as follows:



The model suggests that effective counseling in pesantren results from the interaction of counselor competencies, spiritual values, institutional collaboration, referral mechanisms, and organizational support. Accordingly, it proposes that: (1) spiritual competence integrates rather than replaces other counselor competencies; (2) counselor competence is enacted through a collaborative institutional ecosystem; and (3) effective case management requires interventions tailored to case severity through the integration of counseling, psychological, spiritual, developmental, and regulatory approaches.

## E. PEMBAHASAN

### Multidimensional Nature of Santri Problems

The findings demonstrate that the problems experienced by santri at Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan are multidimensional, encompassing adjustment, emotional, social, academic, behavioral, and disciplinary concerns. Difficulties such as homesickness, discomfort with communal living, interpersonal conflict, and reluctance to participate in pesantren activities indicate that adaptation involves more

than becoming accustomed to a new educational setting. Santri must simultaneously adjust to separation from their families, intensive academic and religious schedules, collective living arrangements, institutional regulations, and continuous interaction with peers. Consequently, adjustment problems may affect emotional well-being, social participation, and academic functioning when they are not identified and addressed at an early stage. This interpretation is consistent with Nuraini & Fitriani, (2023), who found that self-adjustment and social support significantly influenced academic stress among new santri. Their findings reinforce the importance of viewing adaptation difficulties as psychosocial concerns requiring supportive counseling rather than merely as an inability to comply with pesantren routines.

The emergence of violence, bullying, theft, and repeated disciplinary violations further indicates that a religious residential environment does not automatically eliminate adolescent behavioral and interpersonal problems. In particular, bullying must be understood as an abuse of interpersonal power that can appear in physical, verbal, and social forms and adversely affect victims' psychological, social, and academic development. Emilda, (2022) similarly identifies individual and environmental factors in the occurrence of bullying in pesantren and emphasizes the need for preventive efforts involving education, supervision, and institutional intervention. Therefore, the handling of serious misconduct should not rely exclusively on punishment or religious advice. It requires differentiated responses that combine psychological assistance and protection for victims, counseling and behavioral evaluation for perpetrators, preventive supervision, and proportionate institutional sanctions. This combination reflects the multidimensional nature of santri problems and confirms the need for counselors who can integrate developmental, therapeutic, spiritual, and regulatory approaches within the pesantren environment.

### **Integrative Configuration of Pesantren Counselor Competencies**

The second theme indicates that counselor competence at Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan is not limited to the four standard competencies commonly recognized in Guidance and Counseling practice, pedagogical, professional, personal,

and social, but is enacted through an integrated spiritual orientation that reflects the educational philosophy of the pesantren. The findings suggest that these competencies function as an interconnected system rather than as separate domains, enabling counselors to respond to the multidimensional academic, psychosocial, behavioral, and spiritual needs of santri. This finding reinforces the view that Guidance and Counseling in Islamic educational institutions should be integrated with educational objectives and character formation, rather than functioning solely as a remedial service for students experiencing problems (Herlinda et al., 2025).

Pedagogical competence emerged as the ability to facilitate students' cognitive, emotional, moral, and spiritual development through dialogue, reflective learning, worship guidance, and educational reinforcement. Rather than focusing exclusively on correcting inappropriate behaviour, counselors encouraged santri to understand the meaning and consequences of their actions before behavioural change was expected to occur. This finding supports Tambak, (2024), who argues that pedagogy in Islamic education should promote holistic learner development by integrating intellectual, affective, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. Such an approach also reflects the integration of Guidance and Counseling into the broader educational process, where counseling becomes an essential component of students' holistic development rather than an isolated intervention (Herlinda et al., 2025).

Professional competence was reflected in counselors' ability to assess students' problems, determine appropriate interventions, maintain confidentiality, coordinate referrals, and provide systematic counseling services. However, the findings reveal that professional competence in the pesantren context extends beyond technical counseling skills. Counselors integrate psychological principles with Islamic teachings by employing *dhikr*, *muhasabah*, worship guidance, and spiritual reflection as complementary strategies for facilitating behavioural and emotional change. This finding is consistent with Wahidin, (2022), who emphasizes that Islamic counseling integrates psychological and spiritual dimensions to foster holistic well-being. Accordingly, professional counseling in pesantren represents the integration of

scientific counseling principles with Islamic educational values, enabling counselors to address students' psychological needs while strengthening their spiritual resilience.

The findings further demonstrate that personal and social competencies play a pivotal role in establishing effective counseling relationships within the communal culture of pesantren. Personal competence is reflected in counselors' patience, emotional stability, integrity, empathy, and persuasive communication, particularly when assisting santri who are reluctant to disclose personal concerns. This finding corroborates Kamaruddin & Ardiansyah, (2024), who argue that counselor personality significantly influences students' trust and the overall effectiveness of counseling relationships. Meanwhile, social competence is manifested through structured collaboration among counselors, homeroom teachers, dormitory supervisors, *ustadz*, the Majelis Pembimbing Ustadz (MPU), eL-PsikA Pusat, and the Alumni Bureau. This institutional collaboration confirms that counseling in pesantren operates within a collective educational ecosystem rather than through the counselor's individual efforts alone, as also highlighted by Juliawan et al., (2020).

A distinctive contribution of this study lies in identifying spiritual competence as the integrative foundation that connects the pedagogical, professional, personal, and social dimensions of counselor competence. Rather than functioning as an additional competency, spirituality provides the ethical orientation through which counselors interpret students' problems, select appropriate interventions, and facilitate behavioural transformation. Consequently, counseling in pesantren is directed not only toward resolving psychosocial problems but also toward nurturing moral responsibility, self-awareness, and closeness to Allah. This integrative configuration extends existing perspectives on counselor competence by demonstrating that, within the pesantren context, spiritual competence functions as the organizing principle that unifies all other competency dimensions into a coherent model of Guidance and Counseling practice.

### **Structural and Relational Constraints in Counseling Services**

The third theme reveals that the effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling services in Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan is influenced by the interaction between structural and relational constraints. Structurally, the limited number of counselors, combined with multiple institutional responsibilities, reduces the time available for comprehensive assessment, intervention, follow-up, and preventive services. As a result, counselors are required to prioritize cases according to their urgency and severity. This finding supports Zuhail et al., (2024), who reported that the quality of counseling services in pesantren is frequently constrained by limited human resources and heavy workloads, thereby affecting the continuity and effectiveness of counseling interventions. These findings suggest that strengthening counseling services requires not only competent counselors but also adequate institutional support through appropriate staffing, workload distribution, and organizational commitment.

In addition to structural limitations, the findings indicate that relational barriers, particularly students' reluctance to disclose personal concerns, present significant challenges to effective counseling. Many santri, especially male students, tend to conceal emotional difficulties, making rapport-building and problem identification more time-consuming. Consequently, counselors rely on patience, empathy, persuasive communication, and sustained interpersonal engagement to establish trust before therapeutic intervention can occur. Similar observations were reported by Zuhail et al., (2024), who found that students' limited openness is closely associated with adaptation difficulties and insufficient trust in counseling services. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that effective counseling in pesantren depends not only on professional competence but also on the institution's capacity to create a supportive environment in which students feel psychologically safe to seek help.

### **Institutional Ecosystem of Tiered Case Handling**

The fourth theme demonstrates that effective Guidance and Counseling services in Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan are sustained through a structured

institutional ecosystem of tiered case handling. Rather than relying solely on individual counselors, student problems are managed collaboratively through the involvement of homeroom teachers, dormitory supervisors, the Guidance and Counseling unit, eL-PsikA Pusat, the Majelis Pembimbing Ustadz (MPU), and other institutional stakeholders according to the complexity of each case. This collaborative referral mechanism enables preventive, developmental, and therapeutic interventions to be implemented systematically while ensuring continuity of student support. Such findings reinforce Rahadi et al., (2025), who emphasize that collaborative case management enhances the effectiveness of student guidance through coordinated institutional responsibilities. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with Herlinda et al., (2025), who argue that Guidance and Counseling in Islamic educational institutions should be integrated into the overall educational system rather than functioning as an isolated support service.

Another distinctive finding is that psycho-spiritual intervention is embedded throughout the referral process rather than being implemented only after counseling sessions. Practices such as *dhikr*, *muhasabah*, worship guidance, and individualized spiritual mentoring complement psychological assessment and counseling, enabling students to develop behavioural responsibility alongside spiritual awareness. This finding supports Wahidin, (2022), who explains that Islamic counseling achieves greater effectiveness when psychological interventions are integrated with spiritual values. Therefore, the tiered case-handling model identified in this study represents not merely an administrative referral system but an integrated counseling framework in which institutional collaboration, professional counseling, and psycho-spiritual guidance operate simultaneously to promote students' holistic development.

### **Theoretical Contribution: An Integrative Model of Pesantren Counselor Competence**

The four themes identified in this study collectively contribute to the development of an integrative model of counselor competence within the context of Islamic boarding schools. Unlike conventional competency frameworks that primarily

emphasize pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies as separate domains, the present findings demonstrate that these competencies are interconnected through a spiritual orientation and are enacted within a collaborative institutional system. This finding reinforces the perspective that Guidance and Counseling in Islamic educational institutions should be integrated with the educational mission of fostering students' intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual development rather than functioning solely as a remedial service (Herlinda et al., 2025).

The proposed model positions spiritual competence as the integrative foundation that guides counselors' ethical judgment, intervention strategies, and educational orientation. Pedagogical competence facilitates holistic student development through educational guidance Tambak, (2024), professional competence integrates psychological principles with Islamic values Wahidin, (2022), personal competence strengthens counseling relationships through integrity and empathy Kamaruddin & Ardiansyah, (2024), and social competence enables effective collaboration among teachers, dormitory supervisors, counselors, and institutional stakeholders (Juliawan et al., 2020). Rather than operating independently, these competencies interact dynamically within a tiered institutional referral system that combines preventive, developmental, therapeutic, and psycho-spiritual interventions according to the complexity of students' needs.

The conceptual model proposed in this study contributes theoretically by extending existing counselor competency frameworks into the distinctive context of pesantren education, where individual competence, institutional collaboration, and Islamic educational values operate as an integrated system. Practically, the model provides a conceptual reference for counselor preparation, professional development, and institutional policy in strengthening Guidance and Counseling services within Islamic boarding schools. Future studies may examine the applicability of this model across different pesantren contexts to further validate and refine its conceptual framework.

## F. PENUTUP

The study demonstrates that Guidance and Counseling services at Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan operate within an integrated institutional ecosystem characterized by multidimensional *santri* problems, five interrelated counselor competencies, structural and relational challenges, and a tiered psycho-spiritual case-handling mechanism. The findings identify spiritual competence as the integrative foundation that guides pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies while strengthening collaboration among institutional stakeholders. The study contributes an integrative competency model for pesantren counselors that extends existing competency frameworks by incorporating spiritual orientation and institutional collaboration into counselor practice. The model provides a conceptual reference for counselor development and the improvement of Guidance and Counseling services in Islamic boarding schools, while future research is encouraged to examine its applicability across different pesantren contexts.

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