

# *Nurturing Students Mental Health through Islamic Counseling Guidance in Pesantren Musthafawiyah, North Sumatra*

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**Abstract**—This study discusses students’ mental health care through Islamic counseling guidance in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* (an Islamic boarding school in North Sumatra). Islamic counseling guidance in this study focuses on the treatments done by applying the Al-Qur’an and *Al-Hadith* approach. This research has three goals; (1) to analyze the mental health care technique used by the *Ustadz* (teacher) in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* ; (2) to analyze the aspects of the treatments given in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* ; and (3) to analyze the nurturing mental efforts made by the *Ustadz* in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* . The qualitative approach using three instruments of data collection, namely; observation, interview, and documentation was applied in this research. The findings of this research show that the Islamic counseling technique used by the *Ustadz* was done through group organization or group guidance approach, while Islamic approach was used as the aspect of the treatments given. The mental nurturing efforts are based on Islamic Pillars, the Six Articles of Faith, and *Ihsan* (perfection) with the major priority of *akhlakul karimah* (the practice of virtue, morality, and manners). This study suggests that mental health care as done in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* could be implemented in any other Islamic boarding schools by using the Islamic Counseling Guidance as its approach.

**Keywords**-Mental health care, Santri, Islamic Counseling Guidance, Pesantren.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Every human being faces problems in her life and those problems need to be solved, otherwise it will hinder the possibility of someone in achieving her goals. Psychological approaches in the form of psychotherapy, guidance, and counseling are some general alternatives used by experts to help people face their life problems [1]. The concept of counseling was proposed by Frank Parson in Boston, 1908 and it has been developed as a major service of guidance in education [2]. Today, counseling is growing rapidly in line with the problems of human life (physical, psychological, family matters, social life, and religious beliefs) which ask for solutions.

Islamic counseling is the development of the concept of counseling, and it aims to anticipate the trends for complex problems which relate to the unhealthy mental development in society. Islamic counseling emphasizes humans as unique creatures, not similar in which it is called as “*khalqan akhyar*” (the special creature) in Al-Qur’an [3]. Musnamar [4] defines Islamic guidance as a process of providing assistance to individuals so that they can live in harmony in accordance with the provisions and instructions from Allah SWT, and achieve happiness of living in this world and the hereafter.

Saiful Akhyar states that the Islamic counseling has actually been reflected in Indonesia since a long time, especially in *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). *Kyai* (Islamic teachers) become the problem solver or the questions and various problems faced by the community that lives in the surrounding of *Pesantren* [1]. The problems may be about economic, inner anxiety, family disputes, children’s education, and mental health disorders. This phenomenon shows that *Pesantren* doesn’t only play its role as an institution that provides Islamic education, but also becomes the traditional form of guidance and counseling institution. Based on this facts, the researchers are interested in conducting a research related to Mental Health Care technique used by the *Ustadz* (teacher) in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah*, the aspects of the treatments given in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* , and the mental nurturing efforts made by the *Ustadz* in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah*, North Sumatra Indonesia.

## II. THE RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a field study with a naturalistic qualitative approach. In this study, the researchers act as instruments, and gain the data. The primary data are the techniques, aspects, and the efforts used by *Kyai* (Islamic teachers) in nurturing students’ mental health in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* including the information from the students which were obtained through interviews. The secondary data

are taken from books related to Islamic counseling, Islamic boarding schools, and the development of Islam in Indonesia. The instruments for data collection are interviews, observations, and documentation. The data were analyzed by using the data analysis technique (Miles and Huberman) [5] which consists of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusion

### III. DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

#### A. Demographic Data

*Musthafawiyah* Islamic Boarding School is well-known as Purba Baru Islamic Boarding School. It was established in 1912 by Sheikh Musthafa bin Husein bin Umar Nasution Al-Mandaily. Sheikh Musthafa is an Islamic scholar, respected and well-known by people in North Sumatra and Indonesia. His father is a virtuous merchant. He has learned about Islamic teachings since he was a kid in his hometown, Tano Batu. He went to Makkah to carry out the fifth pillar of Islam, Hajj, and studied there for twelve years. Not long after his arrival in his hometown, he built *Musthafawiyah* Islamic Boarding School in Tano Batu, a place where he was born. However, the Islamic Boarding School was moved to Purba Baru after Tano Batu was hit by a great flood.

At the beginning of the establishment of *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* (1912), there were a many interesting events occurred in this world, such as; the establishment of Muhammadiyah by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, the Titanic, and the marriage of Sheikh Ilyas (the founder of *Tabligh* in India). The name "*Musthafawiyah*" was taken from the name of its founder "Sheikh Musthafa". This *Pesantren* is growing rapidly in Mandailing area in particular, and in Indonesia generally. At first, this *Pesantren* only accommodated male students, but in 1950s *Musthafawiyah* accepted female students. This is one of the most extraordinary movements to educate Indonesian women.

*Musthafawiyah* Islamic Boarding School is located on the Medan-Padang, Purba Baru, the District of Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra, Indonesia, and they have 10,080 students. This *Pesantren* is chosen as the research location because it is well-known and has lots of achievements in Indonesia. The *Santri* (the students) call their *Kyai* (Islamic teachers) as "Ayah" or "Dad" in English. The honorific functions to build family bound between *Kyai* and *Santri*. Moreover, the number of students who violate the regulation is lower than any other *Pesantren* (Islamic Boarding School). Following are several things related to the education system in this *Pesantren*:

- The *Santri* of this *Pesantren* occupy small Banjars (houses) which are arranged as simple place for living and studying about the Islamic teachings.
- The unique thing of *Musthafawiyah* is that the students stay in a simple house called Banjar (3x3 meters) which are lined up on the right and left of Padang-Sumatra road. The existence of this Banjars is the characteristic of this *Pesantren*.

- The system of living in a small hut makes the students form their own social systems and leadership.
- The small huts where the students occupy are divided into several groups called Banjar (houses). Each Banjar is led by a chairman with the staffs who are equipped with annual programs which aim to develop personality, character, and ability to communicate effectively. The programs support the organizational activities and the formal education (discussion, writing, and libraries) [6].

#### B. The Mental Health Care Techniques Used by the Ustadz (teacher) in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah*

Counseling is an activity which expects changes and improvements that are coveted by the counselors and counselees. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to have some adequate techniques. If the appropriate technique does not support it, the main purpose of counseling will not be achieved by both parties (the counselors and counselees). According to *Ustadz* Mukmin, the mental health care techniques carried out by the *Ustadz* (teacher) in Islamic Boarding School, *Musthafawiyah*, are as follows:

- Group guidance  
This technique is used by the senior students who are referred as "Students Council". When a problem arises, the council will help the students to deal with his problems. Some examples of the problem occurred are students who did not feel at home in *Pesantren*, and students who do not come to the class. To overcome these problems, the Students Council will motivate the problematic students, and if the problems can not be solved, the Students Council will let *Kyai* to handle the problem.
- Consult the problems with *Kyai*  
When Students Council cannot solve the problem, they will ask *Kyai* to handle the problem. This technique is usually done in the form of direct communication between *Kyai* (Islamic teachers) and the problematic student. The *Kyai* will provide some advices for the student, reminds the student that he can face this problem, motivates the student patiently and politely.
- Encourage the students to pray  
This technique is done through prayer and hopes after conducting the best effort. The *Ustadz* always use the power of prayer and affection that have long existed in *Musthafawiyah*.

#### C. The Aspects of the Treatments Given in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah*

The Islamic guidance and counseling treatments in this Islamic Boarding School focus on *At-Tawazun* (the art of balance). The focus of this counseling is on the counselee and the community, not the problems that the counselee are facing. The thing to be addressed is the human (his personality and his community), not the problem he is facing. This counseling treatment believes that if someone becomes a better person with better characters (*khaira ummah*), any

problem he encounters can be solved automatically. In other words, if the person improves to be a better personality, he will stop from gambling.

*Musthafawiyah* has been an Institution that carries out the Islamic teachings originating from the classical Islamic works. This boarding school is a centre for people who want to deepen their Islamic sciences (*tafaqquh fi al-din*), and it is still recognized by the public as an institution with a better Islamic education than any other educational institution. This assumption underlies that the aspects of the treatments given in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* are oriented to Islamic approach.

As an example, when a student gets into trouble, the aspect fostered is his morality. The student is accustomed to pray together with other students with the hope that congregation prayer will create a kind of impression in his heart and makes him aware that he can solve this problem and improve himself to be a person with a better personality. In addition, the student is also invited to do a lot of *zikir* (remembrance of Allah) with the hope that the problems that made him violate the regulations in the boarding school can be minimized and has pure hearth.

In giving the Mental Health Care treatments, *Ustadz* is responsible for the development of his *Santri* (students). This responsibility consists of two things; the spiritual and material aspects. For the spiritual aspects, the *Pesantren* usually gives some advices to the students who violate the rules of *Pesantren*. The advice is expected to encourage and motivate the students so that they will not do the same mistakes again. Meanwhile, the material aspect is in the form of punishment, such as; cleaning the bathroom and get a slap on the left foot. Some fatal mistakes the students have committed are drug use, stealing, homo, lesbian, and pedophiles. In the cases of stealing and drugs use, *Kyai* (Islamic teachers) will call the parents of the students and sent them home.

Thus, it can be clearly stated that the aspects of the treatments in the form of Islamic guidance and counseling given by *Ustadz* (Islamic teacher) in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* are related in two aspects; the spiritual and material aspects. The material aspect aims to clean the students' soul so that they can become a better human being who obey Allah, Rasulullah, and the rules of his life. Another aspect that is also fostered in this *Pesantren* is the improvement of students' character, from the disgraceful character to be the commendable characters. The material aspect aims to have a deterrent effect on the students so that they can think twice before committing something bad that will damage themselves and the people around them.

#### *D. The Mental Nurturing Efforts Made by the Ustadz in Pesantren Musthafawiyah*

In Islamic guidance and counseling, it is believed that the problem faced by someone in his life is a kind of trial and test from Allah to know the firmness of someone's faith and

patience, not a manifestation of Allah's hatred toward human. As counselee, someone should see himself as an individual who has the potentials to live mentally healthy. For this reason, he is given great potentials by Allah SWT so that he can deal and face the problems in his life, he should believe that he can be helped to successfully solve his problems, let alone the complexity of his problems is still within his limit.

The mental nurturing efforts made by the *Ustadz* in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* are based on Islamic Pillars, the Six Articles of Faith, and *Ihsan* (perfection) with the major priority of Akhlakul Karimah (the practice of virtue, morality, and manners) [7]

- **Iman.**  
There are several types of character patterns in Iman. First, *Rabbani*, it means to transform the asthma and the nature of God into someone, and then to be internalized with the real life. Second, *Malaki*, it is a personality obtained after transforming the good character and being internalized in the real life. Third, the *Qur'ani* character, it means to carry out the Islamic teachings in the Qur'an wholeheartedly in the aspect of *I'tiqadiyah*, *khuluqiyah*, *amaliyah*, *ibadah*, *muamalah*, *daruriyah*, and *tahsiniyah*. Fourth, *Rasuli* character, it leads to the characteristics of prophet Muhammad who are honest, trustworthy, communication of a message (*da'wah*), and intelligent. Fifth, *Yawn akhiri*, it is a personality obtained after believing, understanding, and preparing to go to the hereafter when human took responsibility of every actions he takes in this world. Sixth, *Taqdiri*, it means someone is acting according to the rules and law of God so that he is not as simple as indulging in lust, but building an optimist behavior in achieving goals, not being arrogant in success, and not being pessimistic, stressed or depressed when in failure.
- **Islam**  
In Islamic teachings, there are several types of personality patterns. First, *Syahadatain*, it is obtained after saying *Syahadat*, understanding the meaning behind it, and being aware of all consequences of his *Syahadat*. Second, *Mushalli*, it is obtained after praying well, consistently, and *Khusyu* so that he got wisdom from what he is doing. Third, *Shaim*, it is obtained after fasting with full faith and piety so that he can control himself well. Fourth, *Muzakki*, it is obtained when someone feels emphatic towards the suffering of others. Fifth, *Hajj*, it is obtained when someone's heart is always focused on the Almighty God.
- **Ihsan**  
The word "*Ihsan*" comes from "*Hasuna*" which means "good". All behaviors that bring benefits and avoid harm are called *Ihsan* behavior. The word "*Muhsin*" refers to someone who has good personality (*Ihsan*), and this personality can turn

someone to be a better person and bring kindness and happiness to himself, each other, the universe, and his good personality is only intended to seek the *Ridha* of Allah SWT.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

*Pesantren* doesn't only play its role as an institution that provides Islamic education, but also becomes the traditional form of guidance and counseling institution for the students and the people who live in the surrounding of the *Pesantren*. *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* is one example of well-known Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia which has less problematic students than any other *Pesantren*. This phenomenon appears as the impact of the techniques of nurturing students' mental health through group guidance and Islamic approach. The Islamic guidance and counseling treatments in this Islamic Boarding School focus on *At-Tawazun* (the art of balance).

The focus of this counseling is on the counselee and the community, not the problems that the counselee are facing. The mental nurturing efforts made by the *Ustadz* in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* are based on Islamic Pillars, the Six Articles of Faith, and *Ihsan* (perfection) with the major priority of *Akhlakul Karimah* (the practice of virtue, morality, and manners). This study suggests that Mental Health Care as done in *Pesantren Musthafawiyah* could be implemented in any other Islamic boarding schools by using the Islamic Counseling Guidance as its approach.

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