The Role of Empathetic Teaching in Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract: *Some parents are still hesitant to enroll their children in Islamic boarding schools. Parents are concerned about incidents like bullying in the pediatric community. Researchers say this problem stems from a lack of empathy in classrooms. Empathy is the ability to imagine another person's emotions, pain, or pleasure. This study employs a literature review method by carrying the theme of the role of empathic teaching in Islamic boarding schools; thus, the literature sources are sources such as books, journals, and articles related to the theme. This research has concluded that empathetic teaching has positive impacts, which are formulated into three findings: The first discovery concerns the significance of empathic values in the classroom; the second finding is that the value of empathy is very beneficial for teachers because empathy can positively impact the learning and learning process; The following result relates to the impact of empathy values on students' understanding of themselves and others. It is suggested that teaching empathy should exist in Islamic boarding schools.*

Keywords: *Empathetic teaching, Islamic boarding school.*

1. Introduction

Children who desire to attend boarding schools are a unique gift from Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَ تَعَالَى to their parents. How many parents want their children to attend a *Pesantren* but refuse, and how many families do not have the financial means to send their children to a *Pesantren*? Other concerns have arisen due to recent incidents of violence and rape in Islamic boarding schools. Problems can arise anywhere and anytime, both in Islamic boarding schools and national superior boarding schools. However, we are focused on the solution rather than the problem. According to Mastuhu (1994:55) in Anto (2017), *Pesantren* is a traditional Islamic school where people can learn about, understand, explore, appreciate, and follow Islamic teachings. They do this by emphasizing the importance of religious morals as rules for how to act every day. Then, it is hoped that Islamic boarding schools will produce trustworthy leaders and businesspeople. We share responsibility for its long-term viability.

In Surah Muhammad verse 7, Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَ تَعَالَى promises the best reward to those of us who care about Islamic boarding schools:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِن تَنصُرُواْ ٱللَّهَ يَنصُرۡكُمۡ وَيُثَبِّتۡ أَقۡدَامَكُمۡ

"O believers! If you stand up for Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَ تَعَالَى, He will help you and make your steps firm". (quran.com)

Parents should be grateful if their child wishes to attend a boarding school and feel at ease because sending a child to a boarding school is not always easy. It takes sincerity and determination. Indeed, if we want to profit or succeed, we must overcome challenges and obstacles. However, the challenge will not be over if parents have strong determination and intention. First and foremost, the child is not yet at home. It is natural, not just for boarding students but for everyone, because all humans require adaptation. Parents do not give in to the wishes of their children who are not present. It is preferable to investigate why children are unimpressed. Many children complain about not feeling at home because of problems with uncomfortable facilities, bad food, many activities, and different habits such as queuing, getting up before dawn, crowds, and so on. Enrolling a child in a boarding school is an unsettling goal. In the struggle, discomfort is a risk. He should be able to receive encouragement and support from his parents.

The second problem is bullying. Almost all activities are carried out together, especially for students who live in Islamic boarding schools with a reasonably intense pattern of communication and collective relations in the same space and time. Conflicts are likely if supervision and guidance are not integrated. Most Islamic boarding schools do not separate students by age or level of education. Thus, in one area of the *pesantren*, there are students with a significant age and education level gap. A situation like this can potentially increase seniority attitudes within the *pesantren* environment.

Third, the child is incapable of managing money. The problem of losing money, borrowing from friends, running out of money, and other similar issues is almost universal in the *Pesantren* world. The child will once again become firm and strict with the existing problems. Children will become accustomed to dealing with problems and understand how to solve them. They will understand how not to lose money, how not to borrow or make money from a friend, and how to save money. On a related note, parents are reluctant to assist in resolving the problems of children in boarding schools. Allow the child to figure it out on their own.

Fourth, children have struggled to adjust and socialize. Both are a function of time. They will learn to understand the environment, express their opinions, and so on at this boarding school. Because of the intensity of the lengthy meeting, doing activities together for 24 hours brings friends closer together. These are the issues in *Pesantren* and some of their solutions.

However, the underlying issue is a failure to instil the value of empathy in all aspects of Islamic boarding schools. *Pesantren* serves as their second home after their parent's homes, and teachers serve as their second parents after those at home. As a result, for children to be comfortable while studying at Islamic boarding schools, they must be treated well and warmly. According to Brown (1994), empathy is "the projection of one's personality into the personality of another in order to better understand him or her." Brown believes that the development and exercise of empathy require two components: first, awareness and knowledge of one's feelings; second, identification with another person. According to him, empathy is most likely the most crucial factor in individuals coexisting harmoniously in society. It facilitates communication because social communication requires people to "permeate" their ego boundaries to send and receive messages. Then, Kameen's (2012) research on "the effect of empathetic teaching in elementary education" revealed that teaching empathy has powerful effects, such as promoting a positive classroom culture, aiding in the instruction of multicultural students, increasing achievement test scores, and reducing or eliminating bullying within schools. Furthermore, through this research, the researcher studies the effect of empathy on students, which can solve existing problems in Islamic boarding schools.

2. Literature Review

Eissenberg and Fabes (in Baron and Byrne, 2005) define empathy as a person's reaction to the emotions of others as if they had experienced a similar emotional state. According to De Vito (2000), empathy is the ability to understand how other people feel and think from their point of view. Empathy can be demonstrated by actively engaging with others through facial expressions and hand gestures. This concentration focuses on eye contact, attention to body movements, physical closure, and touch.

According to Koestner and Frasz (1990) in Septiani (2017), empathy is the ability to identify with another person without becoming involved in that person's feelings or assumptions. Eissenberg and Mussen (in Eissenberg and Stayer, 2002) argue that empathy is an affective state that appears to be experienced by oneself and stems from another person's emotional state or condition that that person is currently feeling. According to Seagal (in Malin, 2005), empathy knows the feelings of others, and empathy is considered an essential factor in developing positive behaviour toward others; it will make a person wise in feelings.

According to Stein and Book (in Baron and Byrne, 2005), empathy is the ability to recognize, understand, and appreciate the feelings and thoughts of others as that person feels and thinks about them. Being empathetic entails being able to read other people's emotions. Empathic people have shown concern for others and an interest in and concern for others. According to Wiggins (in Septiani, 2017), empathy is the ability to feel the perceptions of others, i.e., to see and feel things the way other people see and feel. According to Hurlock (1994), empathy is a person's ability to understand the feelings and emotions of others and to imagine themselves in another place.

Based on some of the definitions above, it is possible to conclude that empathy is feeling and thinking about the condition's others are experiencing without involving yourself in their feelings or responses. Individuals do not experience an event that is currently being experienced and felt by others, but they can understand events when viewed through the eyes of others.

Furthermore, *Pesantren* is a dormitory where students study the Koran. *Pesantren* is also known as "*Pondok Pesantren*," which derives from the word "*santri*." According to the Indonesian dictionary, this word has two meanings: 1) people who worship sincerely are pious; and 2) people who study their Islamic teachings by studying far away (Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa Indonesia, 1990). *Pondok Pesantren* is also a combination of the words *Pondok* and *Pesantren*. The word "*Pondok*" (room, hut, small house) is used in Indonesian to emphasize the building's simplicity. It is also possible that the word "*Pondok*" derives from the Arabic "*funduk*," which means a bedroom, a guesthouse, or a simple hotel. In general, the cottage serves as a simple shelter for students who are away from their homes. Meanwhile, the term "*pesantren*" is derived from the primary word "*santri*," which is prefixed with the prefix "pe" and the suffix "an" and refers to a student residence (Manfred, 1986).

According to several experts, as quoted by Zamakhsyari (1994), the term *santri* comes from the Tamil language and means "teacher of the Qur'an." While CC. Berg claims that this term originated from the term "Shastri," which in Indian means a person who knows the sacred books of Hinduism or a scholar of Hindu scriptures. Shastri is derived from the word shastra, which means sacred books, religious books, or science books.

A *pesantren*, as Nurchalish Madjid in Amir 2004, once stated, is an artefact of Indonesian civilization built as a traditional, unique, indigenous religious and educational institution. Mastuhu provides an understanding of terminology as a traditional Islamic educational institution that studies appreciate, and practices Islamic teachings by emphasizing the importance of religious morals as a guide to daily behaviour (Hasby, 2004).

According to the description, Islamic boarding schools are ancient institutions that teach various religious sciences. There are linguistic similarities between the existing *pesantren* in Hindu history and the *Pesantren*, who were born later. Both follow the same principle of teaching religious knowledge in the form of a dormitory. KH. Imam Zarkasih in Amir 1996 says that a *pesantren*, or Islamic educational institution, has a dormitory or boarding system. The kyai is the central figure, and the mosque is the hub of activity. The kyai directs Islam's teaching, followed by *santri* as the main activity (Amir, 1996). *Pesantren* is now a distinct Islamic educational institution. This *pesantren* institution is Indonesia's oldest Islamic institution and plays an essential role in the sustainability of national education. According to KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (2001), a *pesantren* is a place where *santri* live. The preceding definition demonstrates how vital the *pesantren* is in its overall meaning and nuance as a totality of the educational environment. *Pesantren* can also be described as a living laboratory where students learn to live and socialize in various ways.

Suffice it to say, Khasanah (2013) states that educators who can instil empathy in students are more appreciated. Empathy is the ability to understand the feelings, needs, desires, and problems of others. Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَ تَعَالَى teaches a lot about this tremendous and beautiful attitude of empathy in the Qur'an, for example, with some *rukhsah* in worship, inspirational stories of the Prophets, etc.

In dealing with students with various abilities and characters, flexibility is needed in acting with commendable attitudes, as exemplified by Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَ تَعَالَى in QS. al-Hasyr (59): 23, affectionate attitude (Surat al-Fath/48: 29), forgiving (Surat an Nisa '/4: 23-24), gentle and polite (QS. Luqman/31: 19), (Surat Ibrahim/14: 75), (Surat al-Kahf/18: 19), shows love and is easy to forgive (Surat Ali Imran/3: 134), generous by giving ease and do not complicate matters (Surat al-Baqarah/2: 185), advise on a good way (Surat an-Nahl/16: 125), be wise (Surat Ali-Imran/3: 6), (QS. al-Ahzab/33: 1), and various other commendable attitudes so that students feel special and feel valuable in front of their educators (Khazanah, 2013).

3. Methodology

This study employs the method of a literature review. Okoli and Schabrfam (2010) define "a literature review as a systematic and straightforward method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing previous researchers' and practitioners' work." In this case, the researcher carries the theme of the role of empathic teaching in Islamic boarding schools. Thus, the literature sources include books, journals, and articles related to the theme. Thematic analysis techniques are employed in this literature review. Using thematic analysis, it is possible to identify patterns or themes in data. The three stages or steps of this analysis technique are:

1. Compare: Look for similarities across multiple reading sources.
2. Contrast: comparing and contrasting several reading sources.
3. Critique: express an opinion based on the findings of the reading analysis. (Heriyanto, 2018).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Effect of Empathy on Students

This research will link it to several previous scientific works related to the abovementioned. The following are the scientific works referred to by the authors:

McAllister and Jacqueline (2010) described the beliefs of 34 practising teachers about the role of empathy as an attribute in their effectiveness with culturally diverse students. Teachers believed empathy exhibited cognitive, affective, and behavioural components in their practice. They had

participated in a professional development program to improve their culturally responsive practice. In a study of more than 125 documents, it was discovered that three common themes emerged in teacher practice: more positive interactions with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, better classroom climates, and a focus on the needs of students. Furthermore, during the professional development course, teachers discussed their most valuable learning experiences. Some of the things they did were a cross-cultural simulation, cultural immersion trips, and talking about what it was like for them to be a minority. The results of this study show how important it is for teacher education and professional development programs to create settings where teachers and teachers-to-be can use and develop their empathy.

Similarly, another study conducted by Cooper in 2010 also discussed the teacher's use of empathy in classrooms. She interviewed 16 practising teachers in England to find out how to employ empathy effectively in the classroom. She discovered a link between four distinct types of empathy: *fundamental, profound, functional, and feigned*. Each was made up of several smaller parts. The lines between categories and how they relate to each other are unclear. Instead, they show complex relationships between different people and groups in different situations.

Fundamental empathy concerns the characteristics required to initiate relationships, which increase classroom stereotyping; the first is *initial characteristics*. Teachers use a non-judgmental approach to begin building relationships. Teachers link empathy to attentiveness, which they define as being accepting and open in one's beliefs and attitudes, as well as paying close attention to the feelings of others, listening intently, and demonstrating an interest in what the other person has to say. Pupils learn to mimic their teacher's behaviour when they are focused, engaged, and communicate effectively with their teacher. First of all, there is the method of communication. Instruments of exchange Teachers and students can better communicate their thoughts and feelings using facial expressions such as smiles, eye contact, and nodding.

Profound empathy. Teachers who show genuine concern for their students' well-being and serve as role models for them by exhibiting personal levels of empathy in their interactions can progress from basic empathy to profound empathy with practice and frequency of interaction (Cooper, 2010). Students benefit most from one-on-one interactions between teachers, such as those provided by specialized support staff. Teachers are aware of the emotional barriers to learning and seek out informal and joyful interactions, which result in happiness and humour. She stated that empathetic teachers know the importance of physical contact with some children, are well-acquainted with themselves, draws on their childhood experiences, are very human and fallible in the classroom, and share personal information with students. As a result, they equalize relationships, allow for flaws, and promote positive attitudes toward life and learning.

Furthermore, empathic teachers recognize how students' attitudes are influenced by their interactions with staff, peers, and parents. They treat students as individuals, appreciating and expanding on their prior knowledge. The value differences over normative comparisons encourage all students to grow. They create tools and environments that help students grow in their self-assurance, commitment, competence, and understanding. (Cooper, 2010).

Functional empathy. When it comes to moral development, functional empathy is more concerning. Teachers describe a phenomenon known as functional or relative empathy, an adaptation of empathy for dealing with large groups in large classes because it is impossible to interact with 30 different mental models of 30 students. Teachers use a mental representation of the entire class when interacting with students, fostering a sense of belonging and group cohesion. A teacher once described it as having the "ability to touch multiple people simultaneously." In short, functional empathy is critical for effective classroom management (Cooper, 2010).

Lastly, Cooper found *feigned empathy* in her research. Teachers only act like they care, making it harder for students to connect with them in the classroom. This last category, talked about in interviews but not seen in observations, is about people who seem kind on the outside but are dishonest.

Those studies above (Cooper, 2010 and McAllister, 2002) demonstrate that empathy positively impacts creating a positive classroom environment. Empathy in schools reduces bullying among students and fosters a stronger classroom community (Su, 2010).

Furthermore, empathy can be measured using "Basic Empathy Scales" (Carre et al., 2013). "The Basic Empathy Scale (BES) is a tool that has been used to measure empathy in young people and teens based on this two-part idea" (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006). Recent studies on empathy have led to a definition based on three parts: emotional contagion, emotional disconnection, and cognitive empathy (Carre et al., 2013).

4.2. Research on Empathy

The following research examines the relationship between empathy, bullying, and classroom management. First, Raskauskas et al. (2010) conducted a study in 2010 involving 1168 New Zealanders aged 8 to 13 years. The researcher found that bullying was related to empathy and classroom climate, with bullies and bully/victims having the lowest connection to school and the worst relationships with their teachers.

The shortened PRQ (Peer Relations Questionnaire) is an excellent way to measure victimization, bullying, and prosocial skills among New Zealand teenagers. When self-identification was used to compare groups, the expected links between bullying, empathy, and school connectivity were found, the results might make it possible to compare bullying studies in New Zealand to those in Australia and other countries. Students showed more prosocial behaviour when connected to school and had good relationships with their teachers. Victimization went down when people were friendly to each other, but not when they were mean to others. Teachers can teach young children to be kind by teaching them directly and by being good role models. It gives us another way to stop bullying since empathy was shown to be good and bad for bullying behaviour in these New Zealand kids.

Second, Malti et al. (2009) researched empathy and bullying in children's moral motivation, empathy, and prosocial behavior. Along with the 175 kindergarteners from Switzerland who participated, surveys and interviews were conducted with the pupils' families and instructors. Using a variety of informants and measurements, including behavioural observations, this study studied the role of moral motivation and compassion in children's prosocial behaviour. The results demonstrated strong relationships between sympathy and prosocial behaviour, although they were dependent on the measures utilized and were cross-sectional primarily in nature. On the one hand, the results give empirical evidence that compassion may be a powerful motivator for prosocial behaviour. Also, they underline the need to investigate potential (moderating) motivations for prosocial behaviour (Eisenberg, 2000).

The findings show that children with poor moral motivation, in particular, exhibit enhanced prosocial conduct with rising degrees of compassion. The researchers also discovered a direct relationship between moral motivation and prosocial conduct. These results may support the hypothesis that moral motivation is a crucial forerunner of the moral self and associated (prosocial) moral activities as early as infancy. However, these relationships may vary depending on the populations and metrics employed.

Third, a study conducted by Baker et al. in 2009, entitled Teaching Social Skills in a Virtual Environment: An Exploratory Study, involving 54 rural Pennsylvania students, found that empathy,

even in a virtual environment, also gave positive results. This article talks about an exploratory study that looked at how virtual environments could be used to teach elementary school kids how to get along with others. The participants in small group interventions were looked at to see how they were different in 7 different ways that could be measured: problem behaviours, academic competence, cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. Four of the seven dependent variables, such as problem behaviours, cooperation, responsibility, and self-control, changed in a way that could be measured.

According to some of the studies mentioned above, even though the research was conducted at different times, the approaches and theories are not the same. However, it can be stated that the application of the value of empathy has a perfect effect on the learning process and learning in the classroom environment, as well as on the students. Through this research, I can state unequivocally and confidently that empathy is a value that can be taught and can change students' attitudes toward bullying others. If this value is consistently taught, it will give them good character for their social activities in the community after they finish their schooling.

5. Conclusion

The researcher wishes to communicate three findings to answer the questions raised in the first chapter of this paper about the actual effects of teaching empathy in the classroom. The first discovery concerns the significance of empathic values in the classroom. One of the issues raised by the researcher is bullying in schools, particularly Islamic boarding schools. This paper presents findings on the beneficial effects of applying empathy values to bullying. Cooper's 2010 findings show that functional empathy is critical for effective classroom management. McAllister's paper from 2002 demonstrates that empathy positively impacts creating a positive classroom environment. Furthermore, school empathy reduces bullying among students and fosters a stronger classroom community (Su, 2010).

The second finding of this study is that the value of empathy is very beneficial for teachers because empathy can positively impact the learning and learning process. They were strengthened by McAllister's findings in 2010, specifically the role of empathy as an attribute in their effectiveness with culturally diverse students. According to McAllister, the findings of Raskauskas et al. (2010) showed that bullying was linked to empathy and classroom atmosphere. Bullies and bullies/victims had the slightest connection to school and the worst relationships with their teachers. The implication is that if teachers can foster positive student-student relationships, they will be able to reduce bullying in schools and positively influence the learning and learning process.

The following finding relates to the impact of empathy values on students' understanding of themselves and others. The results support the conclusions of Malti et al. (2009). They looked at how children's moral motivation, empathy, and prosocial behavior are affected by bullying. The results show that children with low moral motivation act more compassionately and do more good things for others. The researchers also found a direct link between moral motivation and doing good things for others. These results may support the idea that moral motivation is crucial to the ethical self and related (prosocial) ethical behaviors as early as infancy. These relationships, however, may vary depending on the populations and metrics used. On the one hand, the results show that compassion is a powerful way to get people to act in ways that help others.

Next, the researcher believes that empathy can be taught to students under any circumstances. Empathy can be measured using "Basic Empathy Scales" (Carre et al., 2013). Furthermore, the findings of a study conducted by Baker et al. in 2009, with an exploratory study involving 54 rural

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Pennsylvania students, demonstrated that empathy, even in a virtual environment, can yield positive results.

At the very least, I would like to summarize this paper by shifting from a literature review to telling a story. It is a true story about empathy and bullying in schools, particularly in the classroom, that I learned while teaching at Islamic boarding schools from 2018 to 2021. I hope that by sharing this story, I can help support the paper's conclusion that teaching students to empathize can have a significant positive impact on schools. Because I teach English at all junior and senior high school levels, I witness much bullying in the classroom. They make fun of each student's physical appearance, clothing, and social skills in class. One of them, when I was teaching in the eighth grade of junior high school, was a student who was bullied because he had darker skin than his classmates. Then I decided to stop studying for the day because I believed this problem needed to be solved immediately. I had them form a circle and write a story about themselves on paper, which they then read to their other friends. Another friend was then asked to listen to the story and summarize what they heard. They can learn to listen to and appreciate other people's stories by engaging in storytelling. They also recognize that everyone shares some characteristics. This method also improves the students' empathy for one another. Bullying against each other is proven to stop after the class ends and the students meet again in the next lesson.

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