


Development of an Emotional Wellness Counseling-Based Counseling Program Oriented to Improve the Mental Health of Students in Islamic Boarding Schools

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an individual's condition that enables them to develop their potential, manage life stress, and function effectively in their social environment (Mawaddah & Prastya, 2023). In education, mental health plays a strategic role because it affects students' learning abilities, emotional control, and social adjustment (Laia et al., 2024; Noval et al., 2025). Mental health is an important aspect in the development of students, including students in Islamic boarding schools who undergo a boarding school education system and face various mental health problems such as stress, anxiety, and academic and social pressure (Alfianto et al., 2025; Nurfitria, 2025).

West Sumatra Province is one of the regions with a significant number of Islamic boarding schools and students (Zulmuqim et al., 2020). In recent years, a few cases involving students in Islamic boarding schools in the West Sumatra region have been revealed through public reports and media coverage, including cases of physical violence, sexual abuse, and inhumane treatment that had a serious impact on the psychological condition of the students. Among them, in July 2024, it was revealed that 43 male students were the targets of alleged sexual abuse by two teachers at a boarding school in Agam Regency. In addition, a case of sodomy involving students in Tanah Datar Regency came to light in August 2024. In 2023, at a boarding school in Tanah Datar, there was physical violence against students by their seniors, which resulted in death. There are still many other problems related to the mental health of students at Islamic boarding schools.

Mental health issues among students in Islamic boarding schools are inseparable from the limited safe spaces available for students to express their feelings and emotional experiences (Farhan & Shobahiya, 2025; Hamidiyah, 2024). The hierarchical communication patterns, strong disciplinary culture, and lack of counseling services focused on emotional aspects make it difficult for students to express their psychological pressures to teachers, caregivers, or parents (Chandra et al., 2025; Jahidin et al., 2024; Salman, 2024). These conditions have the potential to exacerbate the emotional burden on students and increase the risk of stress, anxiety, and adjustment disorder during the educational process at Islamic boarding schools (Muttaqin et al., 2024; Ramli et al., 2024; Ratodi et al., 2025). Therefore, a form of psychological counseling is needed that can address the emotional needs of students in an adaptive and contextual manner. One approach that can address the emotional challenges faced by students is Emotional Wellness Counseling (EWC). EWC is a counseling approach that focuses on emotion management, mental resilience, and emotional balance (Merlo et al., 2021; Sandua, 2024). This approach can help santri to manage stress and anxiety and improve the mental health of students (*santri*) in the unique context of Islamic Boarding Schools (*Pesantren*) life.

Various studies have examined the application of Wellness Counseling and counseling services in the context of education and adolescents. The study (Arifin et al., 2024) found that *Pesantren*-based counseling contributes to improving the psychological well-being of new female students, while Nasution et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of integrating spiritual practices and social-emotional learning in supporting the mental health of students. However, these studies have not specifically examined the application of Emotional Wellness Counseling that focuses on managing students' emotions and emotional resilience, nor have they positioned it as a comprehensive and structured counseling approach in the context of *Pesantren* education. Based on these limitations and gaps in the study, this research was designed to examine the application of Emotional Wellness Counseling as an approach oriented towards managing emotions and strengthening the mental resilience of santri in the context of *Pesantren* education. This study considers the distinctive social, cultural, and religious characteristics of *Pesantren*, so that it is expected to provide relevant and contextual empirical evidence. The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of guidance and counseling science, as well as provide practical implications for strengthening counseling services that are more responsive to the emotional needs of santri.

Study Aim and Hypothesis

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Emotional Wellness Counseling (EWC) Based Counseling Program in improving the mental health and emotional well-being of students in West Sumatra boarding schools. This study assesses the extent to which the EWC program is able to improve the ability of emotional regulation, mental resilience, and the ability of students to deal with academic and social pressures. The hypothesis of this study is that the implementation of the Emotional Wellness Counseling Program has a significant effect on improving the mental health and emotional well-being of students.

METHODS

Design

This study uses a Research and Development (R&D) design with the Mantap (Steady, Precise, Accurate, and Productive) model, which includes the stages of needs analysis, product development, expert validation, practicality test, and effectiveness test. This design is used to develop and test the feasibility and effectiveness of the Emotional Wellness Counseling (EWC) based Guidance Program in improving the mental health of students in *Pesantren*. The effectiveness test was conducted using a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test approach to determine changes in the ability of emotion regulation and emotional well-being of students after participating in the EWC program.

Participants

The participants in this study were students who lived and studied at Islamic boarding schools in West Sumatra Province. Participants were selected using simple random sampling, taking into account the proportion of the population in each boarding school to ensure sample representativeness. Through this procedure, 78 students were found to meet the criteria for participating in the study. This sample size was determined based on statistical guidelines suggesting that approximately 20% of the total population is sufficient to represent a quantitative study (Agustianti et al., 2022). The characteristics of the participants included students from three Islamic boarding schools, namely the Perkampungan Minangkabau Islamic Boarding School in Padang City, the MTI Candung Islamic Boarding School in Agam Regency, and the Al-Qur'an Al-Zamriyah Islamic Boarding School in Payakumbuh City.

All participants were active students who participated in academic and religious activities, ranging in age from adolescence to early adulthood, and lived in dormitories during their education. The inclusion criteria established include willingness to participate in the entire research process, participation in counseling sessions, and completion of the research instruments at both the pre-test and post-test stages. The sample composition is not only statistically representative but also relevant to the research context, which focuses on the dynamics of student life in the boarding school environment.

Instruments

The researcher referred to a modified development model adapted from the Mantap approach. The Mantap model consists of five main stages: Introduction, Model Development, Model Validation, Effectiveness Test, and Dissemination. The data collection techniques employed in this study include questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documentation.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted using validated instruments to measure the emotional regulation of santri and evaluate the effectiveness of the Emotional Wellness Counseling (EWC)-based counseling program. The main instrument used was the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), which measures emotional regulation through two aspects, namely cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. The ERQ was administered before and after the program implementation to observe changes in the students' emotional regulation abilities. In addition to the ERQ, this study used expert validation and practicality test questionnaires, semi-structured interview guidelines, program implementation observations, and supporting documentation. All instruments were deemed highly feasible by experts and were used to strengthen the analysis of needs, the implementation process, and the evaluation of the EWC program results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study uses the Mantap (Steady, Precise, Accurate, Productive) Model as a framework for program development and evaluation. This model was chosen because it provides a systematic flow in designing, implementing, and assessing the effectiveness of a program in a gradual and structured manner (Siregar, 2023). Through this model, each development process is carried out continuously so that the results obtained are more focused and in line with the research objectives. The Mantap model consists of five main stages, which are described as follows.

Previous Research Stage

Mental health is one of the important aspects in supporting the success of the educational process, including in the *Pesantren* environment. Santri as learners are not only required to master religious and general knowledge, but are also faced with various psychological challenges that can affect their emotional well-being (Farhan & Shobahiya, 2025; Irawan et al., 2025). Research conducted by Wulandari & Anikoh (2025) revealed that academic pressure not only affects learning performance but also negatively affects the mental health of santri, thus triggering stress, reducing motivation, and causing difficulties in the learning process. Based on this literature study, good mental health will enable students to adapt more easily, develop their full potential, and engage in optimal learning activities. Conversely, mental health disorders can reduce motivation, trigger prolonged stress, and hinder academic achievement and character building (Dewangan et al., 2023; Jin, 2022; McLeod et al., 2012).

Preliminary findings from field studies conducted through interviews, observations, and questionnaires distributed at several Islamic boarding schools in West Sumatra indicate that students experience various psychological challenges. The results of the needs assessment indicate that these challenges affect the mental health of students, requiring systematic attention and treatment. Factors of the *Pesantren* environment, academic demands, less harmonious family conditions, and the process of social adaptation cause stress, anxiety, and prolonged sadness which have an impact on decreased concentration, motivation to learn, and involvement in *Pesantren* activities. Findings on mental health indicators show that new santri are vulnerable to experiencing adaptation difficulties, feelings of discouragement, and obstacles in making friends. Meanwhile, students who stay longer in *Pesantren* tend to face academic pressures and social relationship dynamics that affect their emotional stability. The second indicator shows that santri need emotional support from close friends, dormitory coaches, or counseling teachers, especially those who come from incomplete families. Emotional management efforts are carried out through independent strategies such as prayer and solitude. In the third indicator, Guidance and Counseling services are available, but their utilization is still limited due to the negative stigma against BK services. In addition, the limited number of counseling teachers is an obstacle. These results confirm the need for the development of an Emotional Wellness Counseling-based Guidance and Counseling program as a promotive and preventive effort to comprehensively improve the mental health of students in a boarding school environment.

Model Development Stage

The model development stage produces an initial product in the form of an Emotional Wellness Counseling Program Module for boarding school students. This module serves as a practical guide for counselors and *Pesantren* coaches in providing counseling services oriented to the emotional well-being of students. The main purpose of the module is to help students understand and manage emotions in a balanced manner through a psychological approach that is aligned with Islamic spiritual values. The Emotional Wellness Counseling approach in this module emphasizes the development of self-awareness, emotional control, empathy, and the ability to cope

with stress that arises in the dynamics of *Pesantren* life. The integration of modern psychological concepts and religious practices is designed so that the development of students not only focuses on academic aspects, but also cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and social balance. The module is structured based on the characteristics of *Pesantren* life which demands discipline, solid routines, and intense social interactions. Therefore, the counseling material is directed at applicative activities such as muhasabah, communication training, stress management based on dhikr and Islamic breathing techniques, and reflective group discussions. The module structure consists of: cover, instructions for use, program objectives, stages of service implementation, supporting media, counseling materials based on the integration of psychological and spiritual values, as well as reflection activity sheets and evaluation of students. This module is expected to be a strategic instrument in strengthening the character and mental health of students in the *Pesantren* environment.



Figure 1. Initial Product Module

Model Validation Stage

The results of the validation of the "Emotional Wellness-Based Counseling Guidance Program for Islamic Boarding School Students" Module show that this module has met the eligibility standards for use in counseling services in *Pesantren*. The validation process involved three experts, namely media experts, material experts, and linguists, each of whom assessed through questionnaire instruments, interviews, and observations. This assessment aims to assess the quality of the appearance, material substance, and language of the module. The results of the initial validation showed that the media expert gave a score of 93% with a very feasible category, the material expert gave 77% with a feasible category, and the linguist gave 91% with a very feasible category. Overall, the average validation reached 87% and showed that the module was feasible to use with some minor improvements according to the validator's input.

Expert suggestions for improvement included improving design consistency, simplifying language, and adding illustrations that were appropriate for the *Pesantren* context. In addition, material experts requested that the module strengthen the integration of Islamic values, as well as include examples of counseling activities that are relevant to the emotional challenges of students such as longing for family and friendship conflicts. Further validation was carried out by three field practitioners, in the form of lecturers and *Pesantren* counselors who assessed the linguistic aspects, the suitability of the psychological context of the students, and the practicality of module implementation. As a result, the three validators gave a very decent score with an average of 90%. The highest assessment was given by the *Pesantren* counselor because the module was considered applicable and easy to use in daily counseling activities. The validators still provided important

notes, such as the addition of counseling evaluation instruments and simplification of psychological terms, to make it easier for ustadz and coaches who do not have a background in counseling guidance to understand.

As part of the formative evaluation, researchers conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in September 2025 involving 12 participants consisting of academics, counselors, and *Pesantren* coaches. The FGDs focused on the feasibility of content, appearance, language, and module applicability in the application of counseling services. The FGD results showed appreciation for the integration of Islamic values and psychological wellness theory in the module. Participants also assessed that the module was able to answer students' emotional problems, such as learning stress, social pressure, and dormitory environment adaptation. However, participants suggested that the module be equipped with real case examples in *Pesantren*, more detailed technical instructions for group counseling, and reflection sheets to assess the results of counseling.

Overall, feedback from validators and FGD participants became the basis for revising the module. Improvements included visual enhancements such as font size and layout, language simplification, and the addition of a glossary, and the addition of illustrations and more contextual counseling activities. The module also further emphasizes the integration of Islamic values so that the entire counseling process remains based on the principles of tazkiyatun nafs and moral development. With the strengthening of substance, visuals, and field implementation, this module is declared very feasible to use as a guide for emotional wellness-based counseling guidance in *Pesantren*. The module is expected to help improve the mental health, emotional well-being, and character of students in a dynamic boarding life.



Figure 2. Final Product Module

Effectiveness Test

Practicality Test by Santri: The practicality test of the "Emotional Wellness-Based Counseling Guidance Program for Islamic Boarding School Students" module was conducted to determine the level of ease of use, readability, and usefulness of the module for students as the main users. The practicality test was carried out in two stages, namely the small group test and the large group test. In the small group practicality test stage, 8 students were involved in counseling activities using the module. The assessment results showed that all aspects of practicality obtained a very practical category, with an average score of 88%. The attractiveness aspect obtained a score of 89%, which illustrates that the appearance of the module is considered attractive and the activity content is in accordance with the emotional experience of students in *Pesantren*. The usage process aspect obtained the highest score of 91%, indicating that the instructions in the module were easy to follow and supported cooperation and interaction between students. In the ease of use aspect, the module

obtained 88% because the activity steps were systematically organized and equipped with a reflection guide. As for the time aspect, the module obtained 86%, indicating that the activities can be completed in an ideal duration for small group learning. Based on the input from the students and assistants, revisions were made to the visual elements, as well as providing additional instructions for reflective activities.

The large group practicality test stage involved 28 students with more diverse emotional characteristics. The assessment results showed an average value of 86.5% with a very practical category. In the aspects of attractiveness and the process of use, the module scored 87% and 90% respectively, which indicates that the activities can be applied well in large groups and encourage active participation of students. The ease of use aspect scored 86%, while the time aspect scored 83%, noting the need for duration adjustments in classes with a large number of participants. Overall, both test stages show that the Emotional Wellness module is practical to use in counseling services in *Pesantren*, both in small and large groups, and is able to support the achievement of the goal of fostering the emotional well-being of students.

Practicality Test by Ustadz/Ustadzah: The practicality test of the "Emotional Wellness-Based Counseling Guidance Program for Islamic Boarding School Students" module was carried out by the accompanying Ustadz/Ustadzah to determine the ease and feasibility of applying the module in counseling services in *Pesantren*. Practicality was assessed through four aspects, namely attractiveness, use process, ease of use, and time efficiency. The assessment results showed that the module obtained an average score of 93.75% with a very practical category.

In the aspect of attractiveness, the module scored 94%. Ustadz/Ustadzah assessed that the visual appearance of the module was neat, the colour combination was soothing, and the Islamic illustrations were able to create a comfortable learning atmosphere. The usage process aspect scored 95%, which shows that the activity steps in the module are easy to apply and support the flow of counseling systematically, from emotion recognition to self-reflection. Ease of use received the highest score of 96%. The language used is considered communicative, instructions are clear, and worksheets are easy to use for various forms of services, both individual and group. The time aspect scored 90%, indicating that the module can be implemented according to the specified duration. Overall, the results of the practicality test prove that this module is very feasible to use as a counseling guide to improve the ability of students to understand and manage emotions according to Islamic values in a *Pesantren* environment.

Module Effectiveness Test: The effectiveness test of the "Emotional Wellness-Based Counseling Guidance Program for Islamic Boarding School Students" module was conducted to determine the extent to which the module was able to improve students' understanding, emotion regulation skills, and emotional well-being attitudes. Testing was carried out using a pretest-posttest design, with the administration of instruments before and after the use of the module. The effectiveness assessment includes cognitive aspects through comprehension tests, psychomotor aspects through observation of emotion regulation skills, and affective aspects through attitude and empathy questionnaires.

Table 1. Module Effectiveness Test Results

Santri Group	n	Pre-test Average	Post-tests Average	N-Gain (M)	Effectiveness Category
Santri at Tsanawiyah level	20	54,0	84,5	0,61	Medium-High
Aliyah level students	20	58,5	88,0	0,66	Medium
Total (Overall)	40	56,2	86,3	0,64	Medium-High

The results showed that there was a significant increase in scores in both groups of students. The average N-Gain value of 0.64, which is in the medium-high category, indicates that the module is effective in improving students' emotion management skills. Aliyah level students showed the highest increase because they had more mature reflective thinking skills. Meanwhile, students at the Tsanawiyah level also experienced a good improvement, especially through collaborative activities such as peer counseling simulations.

Table 2. Comparison of Module Class vs Control Class

Group	n	Pre-test Average	Post-tests Mean	N-Gain (Mean)	Effect Size (d)	Interpretation
Module Class	40	56,2	86,3	0,64	0,81	Large Effect
Control Class	38	57,0	71,5	0,32	-	Low Effect

Comparison with the control class strengthens these results, where the module class obtained a large effect with an effect size of 0.81. This shows that the use of the module has a strong influence on increasing the emotional competence of students compared to conventional learning. Overall, this module is proven to be effective and feasible to use as a medium for Islamic values-based counseling guidance in *Pesantren*.

Dissemination Stage

The dissemination stage is a strategic part of developing the Emotional Wellness-Based Counseling Guidance Program Module for Islamic boarding school students. Dissemination is carried out to ensure that the module not only remains in the conceptual realm but can be implemented widely and sustainably. The main dissemination activities include: (1) scientific publications to strengthen the academic foundation and contribute to the development of Islamic counseling science; (2) socialization to Islamic boarding schools to introduce the content, objectives, and implementation mechanisms of the module in accordance with the context of the institution; (3) training guidance counselors through MGMP to improve their practical competence in applying Islamic counseling techniques based on emotional wellness; and (4) refining the linguistic aspects of the module to make it more communicative, easy to understand, and relevant to the characteristics of students. These dissemination efforts ensure that the module can be used effectively in counseling practices in Islamic boarding schools and make a real contribution to improving the emotional well-being of students.

Discussion

The results showed that the Emotional Wellness Counseling (EWC)-based Guidance and Counseling program proved to be relevant to the psychological needs of students in *Pesantren*. This program is designed not merely as a counseling intervention that treats emotional wounds, but as a strategy to strengthen the adaptive capacity of santri in facing the challenging dynamics of boarding life. In this context, the research findings become a reflection that mental health is not simply the absence of problems, but rather an inner balance that allows a person to grow optimally, both spiritually, emotionally, and socially.

In the *Pesantren* environment, santri often face academic pressure, high discipline, memorization demands, and separation from family (Jahidin, 2023; Muali et al., 2021; Zaenurrosyid & Sholihah, 2025). This condition raises stress, anxiety, and a tendency to social isolation, in line with the findings (Ekström, 2020) that adolescents in a structured environmental system need a safe space to express emotions to avoid prolonged distress. The Emotional Wellness Counseling (EWC) program developed in this study is designed to address these needs through a holistic approach as emphasized by Hettler and Myers & Sweeney in the Wheel of Wellness Model, which views

wellbeing as a dynamic and interconnected process. The integration of spiritual wellness and social wellness is the foundation of students' mental health (Bahrami et al., 2024; Nasrin, 2025).

The program addresses academic stress through cognitive restructuring techniques based on Cognitive-Behavioral Theory, which helps students change negative thoughts into rational and adaptive mindsets. This approach supports the strengthening of the coping self (Choate & Smith, 2003; Myers et al., 2000). Furthermore, anxiety and uncertainty about the future are responded to through mindfulness, self-reflection, and spiritual strengthening related to the Essential Self and Physical Self (Myers et al., 2000) as well as spiritual wellness principles (Hettler, 1976). Social isolation is addressed through group counseling that strengthens social wellness and community support.

In addition to improving stress and anxiety management skills, this program also plays a role in reducing santri's feelings of alienation from their social environment. The culture of silence, shyness, and concerns about being considered emotionally weak proved to be obstacles for some santri in opening up in the initial phase of counseling. However, the presence of a group approach based on deliberation and empathic communication is able to melt the barriers between students. This finding is in line with (Fikriyyah et al., 2024), which states that peer social support is a crucial factor in the emotional well-being of adolescents in a boarding-based environment. Research shows that peer social support contributes significantly to the psychological well-being of santri, even making a higher positive contribution than spiritual intelligence. With the strengthening of peer relationships, *Pesantren* becomes more than just a space for studying, but an arena for strengthening emotional brotherhood that is vital for adolescent development (Ridhani & Abidarda, 2020; Yuniardita, 2015; Yunita & Isnawati, 2022).

This study confirmed that the success of the program increased significantly when Islamic values and Minangkabau cultural wisdom were authentically integrated in the counseling process. The Emotional Wellness Counseling (EWC) approach in West Sumatra *Pesantren* reflects the concepts of spiritual wellness (Hettler) and essential self (Myers et al., 2000), which place values, meaning of life, and spirituality as the foundation of wellbeing. The integration of Islamic values and Minangkabau culture ensures that counseling is both religiously and culturally relevant, in line with the principles of *Adat Basandi Syarak and Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*, so that interventions are not only modern and psychologically oriented but also rooted in the local worldview.

Spiritual practices such as prayer, dhikr, and reflection on Qur'anic verses serve as emotion regulation strategies as well as strengthening transcendental relationships (Irfansya & Azizah, 2024; Irhas et al., 2023; Zahir & Qoronfleh, 2025). These activities parallel CBT (cognitive restructuring, self-reflection, positive reframing) through self-reflection and positive reframing mechanisms, which encourage students to interpret pressure as a spiritual test, a form of spiritual reframing in Islamic psychology (Mawadah & Irsyadunnas, 2025). The findings Devianti & Safitri (2025) corroborate that the internalization of Islamic values improves adolescents' mental health through patience, resignation, and reinterpretation of life challenges.

Minangkabau cultural values, such as *musyawarah mufakat* and *dunsanak sakampung* solidarity, strengthen the social wellness dimension. Group counseling facilitates emotional support and social connectedness, in line with the view that supportive relationships are pillars of well-being (Choate & Smith, 2003; Myers et al., 2000). This integration also involves the role of teachers and religious leaders. Research Mulyadi et al. (2025) showed that collaboration with religious leaders strengthened the legitimacy of counseling and increased acceptance among *santri*. This approach is reinforced by Hira et al. (2025) those who emphasized spirituality as a major protective factor against psychological distress.

The pre-test and post-test comparison results showed a significant increase in emotional wellness scores, accompanied by a decrease in symptoms of stress, anxiety, and withdrawal tendencies. This is empirical evidence that EWC is not only beautiful on paper, but also has a real

impact on the lives of santri. If emotional wellness is likened to a lantern, then this program has added light to the steps of the students in their spiritual and academic journey.

However, this study also reveals challenges that deserve attention in ongoing implementation, such as the initial resistance of *santri*, limited counseling facilities, and tight scheduling of activities. These challenges show that the success of the program depends not only on the effectiveness of the module but also on institutional support, the readiness of human resources, and the flexibility of adaptation in the field. Counseling in *Pesantren* is not just a technical activity, but a process of cultural transformation towards a more open and inclusive acceptance of mental health services.

Theoretically, the research results enrich the literature on emotional wellness-based counseling in the context of religious and collectivistic *Pesantren*. The integrative approach between Western theories, such as CBT, and Islamic values, along with Minangkabau culture, produces a distinctive Indonesian counseling model that is more relevant and contextual. Practically, this program can be a policy reference in strengthening counseling services in *Pesantren* through the provision of facilities, counselor training, and the development of a sustainable mental health learning curriculum. Thus, this research confirms that emotional wellness is not just a psychological achievement, but a spiritual and social capital that strengthens the resilience of santri as the next generation of the nation and religion. Counseling rooted in faith and culture is an effort to care for the soul, ignite hope, and keep every santri firm in their life voyage, even though storms sometimes come to shake them.

This research makes an important contribution to the development of Emotional Wellness-based counseling theory by expanding its application to the context of traditional Islamic education, especially *Pesantren* in West Sumatra. So far, the Wellness theory developed by Hettler and Myers and Sweeney has focused more on the psychological and social dimensions. This research expands the scope by adding spiritual and cultural dimensions that are unique to the *Pesantren* environment, giving birth to a new conceptual model called Islamic-Contextual Emotional Wellness. This model emphasizes the balance between spiritual, emotional, social, and cultural aspects in building students' well-being holistically.

From a theoretical perspective, this research shows that the concept of Emotional Wellness can be adapted contextually in a *Pesantren* environment that has unique characteristics: boarding life, discipline of worship, and attachment to local customary and cultural values. This proves that the Wellness theory is not universal, but needs to be adapted to the religious and socio-cultural context in which individuals develop.

The integration of Wellness theory with the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach is the next theoretical contribution. CBT provides a practical framework for changing maladaptive mindsets and behaviors, while the Wellness Model provides a foundation for a broader meaning of life balance. The results show that the combination of the two results in an approach that is holistic, preventive, and transformative. This approach not only helps students manage negative emotions, but also fosters deeper spiritual awareness and social responsibility.

In addition, this research confirms that emotionally wellness-based counseling needs to include elements of religiosity and local culture to achieve maximum effectiveness. In the context of *Pesantren*, the emotional health of santri cannot be separated from worship activities, the value of tawhid, and Islamic moral principles. Spirituality is at the core of emotional balance and a source of adaptive strength in dealing with the pressures of boarding school life.

The Emotional Wellness Counseling (EWC) module developed in this study also shows how theory can be modified according to field needs. For example, the use of group deliberation, habituation to prayer and dhikr, and strengthening ukhuwah between students as part of the emotional management strategy. These elements become empirical evidence that Emotional Wellness-based counseling theory can be implemented contextually and produce a typical

Pesantren model that is different from Western counseling approaches that tend to be secular and individualistic.

Implications

Overall, this research makes theoretical and practical contributions to the development of counseling science in Indonesia. Theoretically, this research strengthens the conceptual basis of Emotional Wellness by expanding it towards the integration between psychology, spirituality, and culture. Practically, this research produces an intervention framework that is in accordance with the characteristics of Islamic education, as well as being the first step in the formation of a typical Indonesian counseling model based on local wisdom and Islamic values.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This study has several major limitations. First, data collection was not entirely optimal because some students tended to be closed off in expressing their emotional conditions, which was influenced by the *Pesantren* culture. Second, this study was conducted on a limited scale with a relatively small sample size and only involved three *Pesantren*, so the results cannot be generalized broadly. Third, the research design emphasized a qualitative approach and development evaluation, so the effectiveness of the Emotional Wellness Counseling (EWC) program has not been tested through a rigorous experimental design. Based on these limitations, further research is recommended to use a more comprehensive experimental design, involve a more diverse sample, and apply longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of the EWC program. Further research can also explore the use of digital technology to improve access to counseling services in *Pesantren* environments.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the Emotional Wellness Counseling (EWC)-based Guidance Program was successfully developed as an effective intervention to improve the mental health and emotional well-being of students in Islamic boarding schools in West Sumatra. The research findings reveal that in the initial condition, students face various emotional problems such as stress, anxiety, difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions, and the tendency to withdraw. These conditions indicate the need for counseling interventions that are in accordance with the characteristics and culture of *Pesantren*. The EWC program, arranged in the form of a module, has proven to be able to improve the emotional wellness aspects of santri. The results of the pre-test and post-test analysis showed a significant increase in self-awareness, emotion regulation skills, and resilience in facing academic and social pressures, along with a significant decrease in symptoms of stress and anxiety. The integration of Islamic values and Minangkabau culture also strengthens the relevance and acceptability of the program. The use of Qur'anic verses, prayers, and dhikr, as well as the values of togetherness, mutual care, and deliberation, helps the process of internalizing counseling materials into the daily lives of santri. Although the implementation of the program faced obstacles such as the initial resistance of the santri, limited facilities, and the busy activities of the *Pesantren*, the support of the *Pesantren* leadership and the flexibility of the implementation strategy were able to minimize these obstacles. Overall, EWC can be seen as a strategic innovation in counseling guidance services in *Pesantren* because it not only helps santri overcome psychological stress but also strengthens their emotional, spiritual, and social balance. Thus, the EWC program is recommended to be implemented more widely as a systematic effort to strengthen the mental health of santri and create a healthier, adaptive, and empowered *Pesantren* education environment.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

All authors collaborated on every stage of the research and article preparation. The authors formulated the research problem, developed the theoretical framework, developed and validated the instruments, conducted data collection and analysis, interpreted the findings, and refined the manuscript to the final version. The authors have read and approved the final draft of this article in full.

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