Tafsir Tarbawi of Restorative Justice in Qur'anic *Jinayat* Verses; Nahdatul Ulama Pesantren Perspective

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of restorative justice in Qur'anic jinayat verses (QS. Al-Baqarah 178-179; Al-Maidah 45) through a tafsir tarbawi approach and the Aswaja Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) theological framework within pesantren character education. Employing a mixed-methods Design with 71 respondents 45 from the general public and 26 NU pesantren education experts this study reveals three significant findings. First, islah (reconciliation) and diyat (compensation) are reinterpreted as theological foundations of Islamic restorative justice within *pesantren* contexts. Second, the NU character education model, based on *al-muḥāfaẓah 'alā al-qadīm al-ṣāliḥ* (preserving valuable traditions) and *al-akhdh bi al-jadīd al-aṣlaḥ* (adopting beneficial innovations), creates a natural ecosystem for restorative practices. Third, the principle of maqāṣid syarī'ah functions as a harmonizing axis between local 'urf values and global restorative justice norms. Theoretically, the study constructs a Restorative Justice Theology integrating *Bayani* (textual) and Burhani (rational-contextual) epistemologies characteristic of NU pesantren education. Practically, it provides an operational model for transforming *qishāṣ* from retribution to restoration, institutionalizing ṣulḥ (reconciliation) in conflict resolution, and aligning character education with SDGs Goal 16 on peace and justice.

Keywords: Restorative Justice, Tafsir Tarbawi, Pesantren Education, Maqāṣid Syarī'ah, Nahdlatul Ulama.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi restorative justice dalam ayat-ayat jinayat (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 178-179; Al-Māidah [5]: 45) melalui pendekatan tafsir tarbawi dan kerangka teologi Aswaja Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) dalam konteks pendidikan karakter di pesantren. Dengan menggunakan metode campuran (mixed methods) terhadap 71 responden terdiri atas 45 masyarakat umum dan 26 pakar atau praktisi pendidikan pesantren NU, penelitian ini menghasilkan tiga temuan utama. Pertama, konsep islah (rekonsiliasi) dan diyat (kompensasi) direinterpretasikan sebagai dasar teologis keadilan restoratif Islam di lingkungan pesantren. Kedua, model pendidikan karakter NU yang berpijak pada prinsip al-muḥāfaẓah 'alā al-qadīm al-ṣāliḥ (memelihara tradisi yang baik) dan al-akhdh bi al-jadīd al-aṣlaḥ (mengambil inovasi yang lebih maslahat) membentuk ekosistem alami bagi praktik restoratif. Ketiga, prinsip maqāṣid syarī'ah berperan sebagai poros harmonisasi antara nilai lokal 'urf dan standar global keadilan restoratif. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini membangun model Teologi Keadilan Restoratif yang mengintegrasikan epistemologi bayānī (tekstual) dan burhānī (rasional-kontekstual) khas pendidikan pesantren NU. Secara praktis, model ini menjadi panduan operasional untuk mengubah konsep qiṣāṣ dari retributif menuju restoratif serta menginstitusionalisasikan ṣulḥ (rekonsiliasi) dalam pendidikan karakter yang selaras dengan Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs) ke-16 tentang perdamaian dan keadilan.

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Kata Kunci: *Keadilan Restoratif, Tafsir Tarbawi, Pendidikan Pesantren, Maqāṣid Syari'ah, Nahdlatul Ulama.*

INTRODUCTION

Restorative justice has emerged as a transformative paradigm in modern legal systems, emphasizing the restoration of relationships between perpetrators, victims, and communities through dialogue, reconciliation, and moral accountability (Williams, 2024; Zehr, 2015). Pioneered by scholars such as Howard Zehr, this paradigm shifts law enforcement from retributive approaches toward humanitarian values and the active participation of all parties in conflict resolution (Zehr, 2015). Meta-analyses show that this approach significantly reduces recidivism rates and increases victim satisfaction (Fulham et al., 2023; Lloyd & Borrill, 2020).

In the Islamic context, criminal law (*jināyat*) verses in the Qur'an, such as QS. al-Baqarah: 178 and QS. al-Mā'idah: 45, are traditionally understood within retributive frameworks that emphasize proportional punishment through qiṣāṣ and diyat (Martha et al., 2024). However, a deeper examination reveals broader Qur'anic ethics that emphasize forgiveness, reconciliation, and social welfare (Absar, 2020; Finlayson, 2020). The Qur'an, for instance, uses the term akhīhi (his brother) to reframe perpetrators as community members bound by brotherly ties, describing forgiveness and compensation as '*takhfīfun min rabbikum wa raḥmah*' (a relief and mercy from your Lord) (Absar, 2020). Thus, Islamic legal tradition contains principles that are remarkably resonant with restorative justice through the concepts of iṣlāḥ (reconciliation) and diyat as restorative mechanisms (Fallon, 2020; Qafisheh, 2012).

This relevance is particularly significant in the pesantren (Islamic boarding school) environment, which serves as a '*natural laboratory*' for restorative justice practices (Saiin et al., 2020). Pesantren represent unique educational ecosystems that combine spiritual leadership through the moral exemplarity of the kyai (cleric), immersive 24-hour character formation, and a holistic curriculum (Hanafi et al., 2021; Saiin et al., 2020). Traditional Islamic mediation practices such as ṣulḥ (peaceful settlement) and taḥkīm (arbitration)—align with modern restorative principles and have long been part of the conflict resolution mechanisms in pesantren (Saefuddin Zuhri, 2020; Ubaidillah & Faiz, 2025).

However, academic studies that specifically integrate the concepts of restorative justice, the hermeneutics of Tafsīr Tarbawī, and the principles of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) character education remain limited. Most previous research has focused on the formal-legal aspects from a fiqh perspective (Darmawan et al., 2025), with few exploring the epistemological and practical potential of Tafsīr Tarbawī in grounding these values within the pesantren character education system (Baihaqi et al., 2023; Huda et al., 2020; Rosidin, 2018; Surahman, 2019). The critical literature gap lies in understanding the mechanisms that bridge these three fields, as no study has positioned Tafsīr Tarbawī as the main pedagogical epistemology to translate, internalize, and institutionalize restorative justice principles within the distinctive theological and educational ecosystem of NU (Fatmawati et al., 2023; Junaedi et al., 2025).

Based on this background, this research aims to analyze the reinterpretation of iṣlāḥ and diyat as a theological foundation for restorative justice through the perspective of Tafsīr Tarbawī, identify the NU character education model in integrating restorative values, and elaborate on the central role of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah in harmonizing local values with global

standards. This study argues that by employing Tafsīr Tarbawī within the Aswaja NU theological framework, a robust, authentic, and practical model of restorative character education can be constructed, not by importing a Western concept, but by rediscovering principles long embedded in the Islamic tradition (Qafisheh, 2012).

METHOD

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design to address the complexity of integrating Islamic theology with contemporary educational practice (Creswell & Plana Clark, 2007). The research unfolded in two interconnected phases: first, mapping community preferences on conflict resolution quantitatively through survey data to establish what patterns exist; second, exploring the theological and pedagogical mechanisms qualitatively to understand why these preferences emerge and how they might be operationalized. This sequential approach ensures our proposed educational model is both empirically grounded in actual community needs and theoretically robust within authentic Islamic epistemology.

Participants and Sampling

We engaged 71 respondents through purposive sampling adapted for digital contexts, prioritizing theoretical saturation over statistical representativeness. All participants were recruited through established *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) organizational networks to ensure theological and institutional affiliation consistency. The sample was stratified into two complementary groups:

Community voices (n=45): Members of NU community WhatsApp groups across East Java, representing the 'societal ʾurf perspective' everyday Muslims whose understanding of justice is shaped by lived Islamic tradition rather than formal theological training. These participants embody the cultural substrate upon which any educational reform must build. Data collection occurred through online surveys (Google Forms) distributed via trusted community leaders (*ketua takmir* masjid, *pengurus majlis taklim*), ensuring higher response rates and reducing self-selection bias.

Expert perspectives (n=26): *Pesantren* education experts representing the highest authority in Islamic education management, recruited from two strategic clusters. First, national policymakers (n=12) from the Central Board of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (PBNU) in Jakarta, who shape organizational policy and curriculum guidelines for thousands of *pesantren* nationwide. Second, senior practitioners (n=14) from Darul Ulum *Pesantren* in Jombang—veteran educators including senior *ustadz*, dormitory supervisors, and curriculum coordinators who daily navigate the practical realities of character education. This stratification captures the macro-micro dialectic between institutional vision (Jakarta) and grassroots implementation (Jombang), ensuring our model would resonate across both policy and practice domains.

Research Instruments

Data collection employed two complementary instruments. First, a structured questionnaire using five-point Likert scales measured respondent preferences between retributive and restorative approaches to conflict resolution. The instrument presented scenarios involving common conflicts (theft, interpersonal disputes, moral violations) and asked participants to indicate preferred resolution methods. To ensure validity, the questionnaire underwent rigorous content validation by three independent experts: a Senior Lecturer in *Fiqh*

Jinayat (Doctoral degree), a *Pesantren* Curriculum Developer, and an Educational Psychologist. This interdisciplinary panel reviewed each item for clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness, yielding high content validity indices suitable for our specific NU context.

Second, semi-structured interview guides explored experiencial understanding of justice and pedagogical practices. Questions for community members focused on everyday conflict resolution experiences, while expert interviews probed deeper into current teaching methods, actual conflict handling practices, and perceived tensions between doctrine and practice. Additionally, we conducted two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) at Darul Ulum: the first involving 12 senior teachers and dormitory supervisors exploring the disconnect between formal *Fiqh Jinayah* curriculum and informal practices; the second with 8 curriculum coordinators discussing integration feasibility. The FGD format proved particularly valuable in revealing communal sense-making processes and s*urf*acing taken-for-granted assumptions (McQuarrie & Krueger, 1989).

Data Analysis

Our analytical process mirrored the sequential design. Quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (SPSS), calculating frequency distributions and percentages to identify patterns. This revealed the 87% community preference for *islah* approaches and 91% expert validation of *Tafsir Tarbawi* effectiveness—providing empirical foundation for qualitative exploration. We acknowledge that with 71 participants, findings offer robust descriptive evidence within NU communities but do not support broad inferential generalizations.

Interview transcripts and FGD recordings underwent thematic analysis following (Braun & Clarke, 2021) framework. We employed both deductive codes (derived from *Tafsir Tarbawi*, *Aswaja* NU principles, restorative justice theory) and inductive codes (emerging from close reading of data). Three researchers independently coded transcripts, then established inter-coder reliability through consensus discussion. This collaborative process enhanced analytical rigor while allowing diverse interpretive perspectives. Most notably, this phase uncovered the implicit-explicit paradox the disconnect between punitive classroom teaching and restorative daily practices that participants consistently described without naming.

The final phase integrated quantitative and qualitative findings using *Tafsir Tarbawi* as synthesizing framework. We moved iteratively between numbers and narratives, allowing each to illuminate the other: quantitative data showed strong reconciliation preference, while qualitative data explained this as rooted in *Aswaja* NU values; quantitative data confirmed expert validation, while qualitative data revealed why this hermeneutical approach resonates. From this integrated analysis emerged the PKR-AJ model, discovered within the data rather than imposed externally.

Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent after receiving clear explanations of research purposes and their right to withdraw. We employed pseudonymization (P-01, K-01, *etc.*) to protect anonymity while allowing readers to track individual voices. As researchers embedded within NU educational networks, we acknowledge our insider-outsider positionality, which offered cultural fluency and institutional access but required reflexive awareness of potential

biases. The research received institutional ethical clearance, confirming adherence to established standards for human participant research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Revealing the Paradox: When Theory Meets Practice in Pesantren

To understand how restorative justice principles operate within pesantren environments began with a seemingly straightforward question: How do NU communities actually respond to criminal matters? What we discovered, however, was far more nuanced than anticipated. Our survey of 45 NU community members revealed a striking pattern 39 respondents (86.7%) expressed clear preference for *islah* (reconciliation) approaches over strictly punitive measures when dealing with conflicts. This was not merely a marginal preference but a decisive inclination that demands explanation. Table 1 presents the detailed distribution of community preferences.

Table 1. Community Preferences on Conflict Resolution Approaches (n=45)

Approach Preference	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly prefer *islah*/reconciliation	25	55.6%
Moderately prefer *islah*	14	31.1%
Neutral	4	8.9%
Prefer punitive approach	2	4.4%
Total favoring restorative approach	39	86.7%

The data reveals more than statistical preference—it suggests a deeply ingrained cultural orientation toward reconciliation within NU communities. More than half of respondents (55.6%) expressed strong preference, indicating this is not merely intellectual agreement but visceral inclination rooted in lived Islamic practice (Huda et al., 2020).

Why this overwhelming preference? The answer began to emerge when we examined the theological underpinnings. Among the 26 *pesantren* education experts we interviewed comprising administrators from PBNU Jakarta and senior practitioners from Darul Ulum Jombang 24 participants (92.3%) agreed that *Tafsir Tarbawi* provides an effective framework for transforming how *Jinayat* verses are understood. Table 2 details the levels of expert agreement.

Table 2. Expert Assessment of *Tafsir Tarbawi* Effectiveness (n=26)

Level of Agreement	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	15	57.7%
Agree	9	34.6%
Neutral	2	7.7%
Disagree	0	0%
Total agreement	24	92.3%

The near-unanimous expert consensus validates *Tafsir Tarbawi* as a credible hermeneutical framework for reinterpreting Jinayat verses in educational contexts (Rosidin, 2018; Surahman, 2019). Notably, no expert disagreed with the proposition, and neutrality was minimal (7.7%). This strong validation from practitioners and policymakers individuals who daily navigate the complexities of Islamic education lends significant weight to our theoretical framework. But agreement on paper is one thing; implementation in practice is quite another.

The Living Contradiction: Classroom Doctrine *vs*. Dormitory Reality

Our field observations and focus group discussions uncovered what we term the "implicit-explicit paradox" a fascinating contradiction that lies at the heart of *pesantren* education (Leiner, 2018; Rothschild, 2022). In the classroom, *ustadz* teach *Fiqh Jinayah* with precision: *qisas* for murder, hudud for theft, ta'zir for lesser offenses. Students memorize these categories, understand the legal conditions, and can recite the relevant Qur'anic verses (Anwary, 2022; Kasim & Kirkwood, 2020). Yet when conflicts actually occur in the dormitory theft, fights, disputes the response looks entirely different.

One senior *ustadz* from Darul Ulum articulated this disconnect candidly during our FGD session:

"Kalau di kelas, kami mengajar *qisas*, hudud, ta'zir sebagaimana tertulis dalam *kitab kuning*. Tapi kalau *santri* berantem di asrama, ya tidak mungkin kita terapkan hukuman-hukuman itu. *Kyai* memanggil mereka, diminta saling memaafkan, kadang disuruh kerja bakti bareng bersih-bersih masjid. Itulah cara kami menyelesaikan konflik di sini sebenarnya."

This testimony exposes a pedagogical gap that has gone largely unexamined in Islamic education literature. The doctrine taught in formal instruction emphasizes sanctions and retribution, while the lived practice in *pesantren* communities operates according to an entirely different logic one of reconciliation, rehabilitation, and community reintegration (Benson & Asaah-Junior, 2024).

A female dormitory supervisor provided another revealing example:

"If there is a rare case of theft between students, of course we do not cut off their hands. We gather the students, facilitate confession, encourage repentance, and find ways for the perpetrator to make amends for their mistakes. The focus is always on restoring relationships and reintegrating students into the community."

These accounts from the field demonstrate that *pesantren* educators already practice restorative justice intuitively, guided by Islamic values of mercy and community cohesion (Ramizah Wan Muhammad, 2020; Ubaidillah & Faiz, 2025). Yet this practice remains informal, untheorized, and disconnected from formal curriculum.

The *Kyai* as Mediator: Living Curriculum of Restorative Values

Our interviews with senior *kyai* revealed another crucial dimension. When asked how they handle student disputes, their responses consistently emphasized process over punishment. One *kyai* explained his approach:

"When students come to me with problems, I don't immediately judge who is right or wrong. I ask them to sit down together, listen to each other, and find a middle ground. This is the essence of tawasuth that we teach. The Qur'an itself, in the verse on qisas, refers to the perpetrator as 'your brother'. We do not cast out students when they make mistakes."

This testimony illuminates how *Aswaja* NU principles—tawasuth (moderation), tasamuh (tolerance), tawazun (balance), and i'tidal (justice)—function not as abstract theological concepts but as operative frameworks in conflict resolution (Hasyim & Hasanuddin, 2023; Muhajir, 2022). The *kyai* serves as what we might call a "living curriculum," modeling restorative values through their mediation practices (Azizi et al., 2025).

Yet here lies the challenge: if these values are already practiced informally, why formalize them? The answer emerged from our thematic analysis of FGD data. One senior teacher articulated the problem succinctly:

> "We teach qisas as a legal principle, but never connect it to its true wisdom behind it, which is to preserve life and open up space for forgiveness. Students memorize the rules but do not understand its restorative spirit."

This observation captures the core issue: the disconnect between textual learning and practical application creates a missed opportunity. Students learn what the law says but not why it exists or how it connects to the restorative practices they witness daily in *pesantren* life (Halimang et al., 2025; Morales, 2025).

Building Bridges: From Empirical Findings to Educational Model

The convergence of our quantitative and qualitative findings reveals a coherent pattern. The 87% community preference for *islah* is not accidental but reflects the deep internalization of *Aswaja* NU values within NU culture (Asrohah, 2011; Huda et al., 2020). The 91% expert validation of *Tafsir Tarbawi* confirms that *pesantren* educators recognize the need for hermeneutical tools to bridge the gap between doctrine and practice (Rosidin, 2018; Surahman, 2019). And the implicit-explicit paradox demonstrates that *pesantren* already possess the cultural resources for restorative education they simply need systematic integration.

This realization led us to formulate the *Pesantren*-based Restorative Character Education Model grounded in *Jinayat* Verses (PKR-AJ). Rather than importing a foreign framework, this model rediscovers and formalizes what *pesantren* have practiced implicitly for generations. The model rests on three interconnected pillars, each responding to specific gaps identified in our field research.

Pillar One: Reforming How We Teach *Fiqh Jinayah*

The first pillar addresses the cognitive dimension how *Fiqh Jinayah* is taught in classrooms. Our FGD participants consistently reported that current teaching focuses on legal mechanics: the conditions for *qisas*, the nisab for theft, the evidence required for zina. While this knowledge is important, it obscures the deeper ethical and pedagogical dimensions of these verses (Darmawan et al., 2025; Surahman, 2019).

Tafsir Tarbawi offers an alternative approach. Rather than treating *Jinayat* verses merely as legal texts, this hermeneutical method reads them as sources of moral wisdom and character formation (Rosidin, 2018). Consider QS. *Al-Baqarah*: 178-179. The standard *fiqh* approach analyzes the legal mechanics of *qisas* and *diyat*. A *Tafsir Tarbawi* approach, however, asks different questions: Why does the verse use the term akhihi (his brother) for the perpetrator? What does it mean that forgiveness is described as relief and mercy from your Lord? How might this verse inform our response to conflict in contemporary *pesantren* communities? (Absar, 2020; Suliman, 2025).

This shift from legal analysis to moral reflection transforms how students engage with these texts. Implementation involves developing thematic learning modules that connect *Jinayat* verses to character values relevant to *pesantren* life. For example, the theme Responsibility and Forgiveness is explored through *qisas* verses, while Honesty and Second Chances is discussed through sariqah verses. Each lesson begins with asbab al-nuzul (contextual analysis) and

maqasid examination to demonstrate that Islamic laws serve higher objectives: preserving life, protecting dignity, maintaining social cohesion (Auda, 2011; Farag & Rashed, 2023).

Critically, this approach does not abandon traditional sorogan and bandongan methods that define *pesantren* pedagogy. Rather, it enriches these methods with contemporary educational techniques case studies, peer discussions, applied ethics that help students connect classical texts to lived experience (Alid et al., 2022; Triyono et al., 2023).

Advanced implementations include integrated learning modules connecting *Jinayat* verses with other subjects taught in *pesantren* (Hidayatullah, 2021), case study methodologies using actual *pesantren* conflict resolution examples to illustrate Islamic legal principles, peer discussion formats that encourage students to apply *Tafsir Tarbawi* principles to contemporary scenarios they encounter in boarding life, and assessment approaches that evaluate character development alongside academic understanding (Hayah, 2017; Saiin et al., 2020).

Research demonstrates that cognitive restructuring of *fiqh* teaching produces significant outcomes in *pesantren* contexts, including enhanced critical thinking about Islamic law (Mustofa, 2021), deeper understanding of maqasid principles (Farag & Rashed, 2023), increased capacity for contextual application of Islamic teachings (Auda, 2011), and stronger moral reasoning skills that integrate Islamic values with contemporary challenges (Baharun, 2017).

Pillar Two: Cultivating Restorative Values Through *Pesantren* Culture

The second pillar targets the affective dimension how values are internalized, not merely learned. Our research confirmed what *pesantren* educators have long known: character formation happens primarily through uswah hasanah (exemplary conduct), not abstract instruction(Anam et al., 2019). The way a *kyai* mediates conflicts, demonstrates forgiveness, and models compassion teaches more powerfully than any textbook (Azizi et al., 2025; Ma'arif et al., 2025; Paisun et al., 2025).

This pillar formalizes what our field research revealed as informal practice. It involves consciously cultivating *Aswaja* values as lived culture in every dimension of *pesantren* life—from morning prayers to dormitory interactions to academic discussions. The 24-hour boarding environment provides continuous opportunities for what we might call value osmosis the gradual internalization of character traits through sustained immersion in a moral community (Hanafi et al., 2021; Jubba et al., 2022; Kuncorowati et al., 2025; Maulida et al., 2025; Pambayun, 2025).

Specific strategies include strengthening mentorship programs where senior students model restorative approaches for juniors (Lacuesta-Vizcaino & Traver-Martí, 2018), organizing community service projects that demonstrate Islamic values of social responsibility (Ningtias et al., 2020), integrating spiritual counseling that connects personal development with Islamic teachings (Hasibuan et al., 2025), and celebrating cultural diversity within the *pesantren* community as an expression of tasamuh (Asror, 2017; St. Rodliyah, 2022).

Research demonstrates that *pesantren* environments naturally support affective learning through their emphasis on adab (proper conduct), continuous moral guidance, peer learning systems, and integration of spiritual and academic development (Anam et al., 2019; Mujahid, 2021). The boarding system creates optimal conditions for character internalization through consistent modeling, peer influence, community expectations, and spiritual practices that reinforce desired values. Studies show that affective interventions in *pesantren* contexts result in

measurable improvements in empathy, forgiveness orientation, conflict resolution skills, and prosocial behavior—all essential components of restorative character (Walther-Puri, 2025).

Pillar Three: Equipping Students with Practical Restorative Skills

The third pillar focuses on the psychomotor dimension developing actual skills for practicing restorative values. While *pesantren* already engage in informal mediation, our research revealed limited student agency in these processes. Conflicts are typically resolved by *kyai* or senior teachers, with students as passive recipients rather than active participants **(Marsh & Wager, 2015)**.

This pillar formalizes restorative practices while increasing student involvement. Key initiatives include establishing Student Deliberation Councils adapted from restorative circles where students involved in conflicts meet with peer representatives under facilitator guidance to find solutions together (Mendlow, 2021; Nagin et al., 2009). These councils operate according to Islamic mediation principles, ensuring that processes honor both victims' needs and perpetrators' dignity.

Additionally, educational-restorative sanctions replace purely punitive measures. Rather than expulsion or corporal punishment, students who violate community norms engage in activities that repair relationships and demonstrate commitment to community welfare: tutoring younger students, environmental restoration, assisting in *pesantren* operations (Walther-Puri, 2025). The goal is not to humiliate but to facilitate growth and reintegration.

Perhaps most significantly, senior students receive training in peer mediation, learning Islamic conflict resolution techniques rooted in traditional *sulh* and *islah* practices (Abu-Nimer & Nasser, 2013; Ariefulloh et al., 2023; Ramizah Wan Muhammad, 2020). This serves dual purposes: it provides effective grassroots conflict resolution while developing leadership capacity for students' future roles as community peace-builders (Lacuesta-Vizcaino & Traver-Martí, 2018).

Advanced psychomotor implementations include conflict resolution workshops teaching specific Islamic mediation techniques based on traditional *sulh* and *islah* practices, leadership development programs preparing students to facilitate community healing processes (Arifin et al., 2024), practical law clinics where advanced students practice applying Islamic legal principles in restorative contexts under *kyai* supervision (Husnaeni & Burga, 2024; Waris et al., 2025), and community outreach programs where students apply their skills in broader social contexts beyond the *pesantren*, serving as agents of peace in their home communities (Rozaki & Izudin, 2025).

The boarding environment provides ideal laboratory for practicing these skills through authentic conflicts and relationships, continuous supervision and feedback from *kyai* and senior teachers, multiple opportunities for skill application in daily community life, and integration with academic and spiritual development programs that reinforce theoretical understanding with practical experience (Mawardi & Ruhiyah, 2022; Sukardi et al., 2022).

Integration and Assessment Framework

The PKR-AJ Model recognizes that effective implementation requires systematic integration of all three pillars within the unique ecosystem of *pesantren* education. Assessment approaches combine traditional Islamic evaluation methods with contemporary character development measures, including peer evaluation systems reflecting Islamic principles of

mutual accountability (*nasiha*) (Huda et al., 2020), self-reflection processes based on Islamic concepts of muhasabah (self-examination) conducted through regular spiritual guidance sessions (Hasibuan et al., 2025), community impact assessments measuring contribution to *pesantren* harmony and development through observable behavioral indicators (Saiin et al., 2020), and spiritual development indicators evaluating growth in Islamic character traits such as *sabr* (patience), *hilm* (forbearance), *'afw* (forgiveness), and *ihsan* (excellence in conduct) (Mujahid, 2021).

Quality assurance mechanisms ensure model fidelity while allowing adaptation to specific *pesantren* contexts through *kyai* leadership development programs enhancing mediation and character education skills based on contemporary restorative justice research integrated with Islamic pedagogical traditions (Arifin et al., 2024), curriculum alignment processes ensuring integration with existing *pesantren* educational approaches including both traditional *kitab kuning* instruction and modern academic subjects (Alid et al., 2022), community engagement strategies involving families and local communities in supporting restorative character development through regular communication and collaborative programs (Jubba et al., 2022), and outcome monitoring systems tracking both individual student development and overall *pesantren* community health through quantitative and qualitative indicators (Sukardi et al., 2022).

Through the integration of these three pillars within authentic *pesantren* environments, the PKR-AJ Model offers a comprehensive approach to making *pesantren* a true center for restorative character education, where the noble teachings of *Fiqh Jinayah* are no longer separated from the practice of noble character formation (*akhlak mulia*), but become a harmonious unity in shaping a generation of Muslims who are not only ritually pious but also possess social piety, as reflected in their ability to build peace, realize justice, and maintain social harmony amid diversity while maintaining their distinctive Islamic identity and commitment to community welfare (Hasibuan et al., 2025; Triyono et al., 2025; Widiana et al., 2023).

Situating Our Findings in Broader Scholarship

Our empirical findings resonate with and extend existing literature in several ways. The 87% preference for *islah* aligns with meta-analytical evidence showing that restorative approaches increase satisfaction and reduce recidivism (Fulham et al., 2023; Lloyd & Borrill, 2020). However, our study demonstrates that Islamic communities possess indigenous theological foundations for these practices through concepts like *islah*, *sulh*, *diyat*, and *'afw* rather than requiring Western secular frameworks (Fallon, 2020; Qafisheh, 2012).

The implicit-explicit paradox we identified represents a novel contribution to *pesantren* studies. Previous research documented *pesantren*'s holistic character education (Hanafi et al., 2021), Saiin and their role as conflict mitigation institutions (Rozaki & Izudin, 2025), but did not identify the specific disconnect between *Fiqh Jinayah* instruction and daily practice. This gap creates concrete opportunities for curriculum reform grounded in *Tafsir Tarbawi* hermeneutics (Rosidin, 2018; Surahman, 2019).

Our findings also contribute to scholarship on Islamic moderation (wasatiyyah) and countering violent extremism. By demonstrating how authentic Islamic education rooted in classical texts but interpreted through moderate, contextually-aware hermeneutics naturally fosters values of tolerance, empathy, and peaceful conflict resolution, the PKR-AJ model

showcases *pesantren* as potential centers of peace education (Asrohah, 2011; Huda et al., 2020; Muhajir, 2022).

Implications for Theory and Practice

The PKR-AJ Model contributes to both theoretical development and practical implementation of restorative justice in Islamic educational contexts. Theoretically, it demonstrates that restorative justice is not merely a Western secular concept that can be applied to Islamic contexts, but rather represents a rediscovery of principles deeply embedded in Islamic legal and educational traditions (Fallon, 2020), Qafisheh. The model shows how classical Islamic concepts like *islah*, *sulh*, *diyat*, and *'afw* can be reinterpreted through *Tafsir Tarbawi* hermeneutics to provide authentic Islamic foundations for restorative practices that are fully compatible with contemporary restorative justice scholarship while maintaining distinctive Islamic character (Absar, 2020).

Practically, the model provides operational framework for *pesantren* and Islamic schools to systematically implement restorative character education aligned with SDGs Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) (Kowkas et al., 2024). It offers concrete strategies for curriculum development, pedagogical innovation, community building, and assessment that can be adapted to diverse *pesantren* contexts while maintaining core principles (Hariadi et al., 2025; Prasojo et al., 2023). The three-pillar structure ensures comprehensive coverage of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, addressing the full spectrum of character development needs (Baharun, 2017; Mujahid, 2021).

Furthermore, the model contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic moderation (*wasatiyyah*) and countering violent extremism by demonstrating how authentic Islamic education can foster values of tolerance, empathy, reconciliation, and peaceful conflict resolution (Abdullah et al., 2025; Ichsan et al., 2024; Muhajir, 2022; Rusmana et al., 2025; Waslah et al., 2025). In an era where Islamic education is often scrutinized and sometimes unfairly associated with radicalism, the PKR-AJ Model showcases how *pesantren* can be centers of peace education grounded in authentic Islamic teachings interpreted through moderate, contextually-aware hermeneutics (Asrohah, 2011; St. Rodliyah, 2022).

Acknowledging Boundaries and Future Directions

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. Our research focused exclusively on NU-affiliated *pesantren* in Java, specifically Darul Ulum Jombang and related institutions. This geographical and organizational specificity limits generalizability. Muhamma*diyah pesantren*, Persis institutions, or *pesantren* in Sumatra and Sulawesi may exhibit different patterns due to varying theological orientations and cultural contexts.

Additionally, our sample of 71 participants while providing rich qualitative insights offers limited statistical power for broad generalizations. The purposive sampling strategy ensured depth and relevance but sacrificed representativeness. Future research should conduct cross-regional comparative studies examining how restorative practices manifest in diverse Islamic educational contexts.

Methodologically, this study provides a snapshot of current practices and preferences. Longitudinal research is needed to assess actual outcomes when the PKR-AJ model is implemented: Does it measurably improve conflict resolution? Enhance student character

development? Reduce disciplinary problems? Such questions require systematic intervention studies with control groups and long-term follow-up.

Finally, while this research examines theological, pedagogical, and sociological dimensions, psychological mechanisms remain underexplored. Future studies might investigate how restorative character formation affects moral reasoning development, empathy capacity, or forgiveness orientation using validated psychological instruments.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals three significant findings that challenge conventional assumptions about criminal justice in Islamic education. First, the reinterpretation of iṣlāḥ (reconciliation) and diyat (compensation) through Tafsīr Tarbawī demonstrates a greater impact than previously estimated, as 91% of NU education experts confirmed the effectiveness of shifting focus from sanctions ('uqubah) to moral lessons ('ibrah). Second, the "Implicitly Restorative, Explicitly Punitive" paradox discovered in pesantren environments opens new discussions about bridging theological principles with practical implementation. Third, the strong preference (87%) for the iṣlāḥ approach among NU general public indicates that restorative justice principles are deeply embedded in the community's worldview, challenging the long-held assumption that Islamic criminal law is primarily retributive.

This research strengthens previous findings on the compatibility between Islamic law and restorative justice while challenging the validity of studies that portray qiṣāṣ as purely punitive. The study introduces the Restorative Character Education Model Based on Ayat Jināyat (PKR-AJ), a new pedagogical framework that enriches scholarly discourse in this field. Theoretically, this model contributes to the development of a "Theology of Restorative Justice" that integrates bayānī (textual) and burhānī (rational-contextual) epistemologies, demonstrating that restorative justice is not a Western import but a rediscovery of principles firmly embedded in Islamic legal and educational tradition. Practically, the PKR-AJ model provides an operational blueprint for pesantren to align their character education with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

This study is limited to a small sample of 71 participants and specific cases within Java-based pesantren, making it difficult to generalize across Indonesia's diverse pesantren cultures. Other factors, such as data variation, gender distribution, and age differences, were also constrained in this research. Additionally, the qualitative approach provides depth but offers limited statistical generalization. Future research with larger, more diverse samples across multiple regions is necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of restorative justice implementation in Islamic education. Longitudinal studies assessing PKR-AJ implementation outcomes and investigations into psychological mechanisms underlying restorative character formation would further advance this field.

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