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Victimization Perpetration Overlap in Indonesian Pesantren: Implications for Implementation Focused Anti-Bullying Policy

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Abstract. Bullying in faith-based residential schools remains understudied, particularly where students share classrooms, dormitories, worship spaces, and daily supervision. This cross-sectional multisite survey examined the overlap between peer victimization and perpetration and assessed their associations with perceived anti-bullying policy implementation quality, safety, and trust in reporting mechanisms. Institution-mediated nonprobability sampling recruited 112 respondents from 11 modern pesantren across Jakarta, Bekasi, and South Tangerang in Greater Jakarta. Five reflective constructs measured through a 38-item questionnaire were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling. The measurement model demonstrated acceptable internal consistency and convergent validity for victimization, perpetration, implementation quality, and reporting trust. However, the safety construct did not meet the recommended reliability and validity criteria and should therefore be interpreted cautiously. The structural model identified a positive association between victimization and perpetration, supporting the presence of victimization–perpetration overlap within the sample. Associations involving perceived implementation quality, safety, and reporting trust, including the proposed indirect relationships, were not supported. Given the cross-sectional design and nonprobability sample, these findings neither establish temporal ordering nor demonstrate policy effectiveness. Safeguarding systems in pesantren should identify students occupying both bullying roles, provide confidential reporting channels beyond immediate hierarchies, and monitor implementation fidelity. Future research should revalidate the safety measure and employ longitudinal or intervention designs to clarify directionality and assess safeguarding effectiveness.

Keywords: *self-leadership, self-regulated learning, social media addiction, university students, mediation*

Introduction

Bullying is a persistent form of peer aggression with consequences that extend beyond the students most visibly involved. It can undermine psychological well-being, school participation, peer relationships, and trust in adults while also damaging the wider climate in which learning occurs (Walker, 2025). Intervention research indicates that school-based anti-bullying programs can reduce aggression and improve related outcomes, although their effects are often modest and

vary across contexts and implementation conditions (Fraguas et al., 2021; Huitsing et al., 2020; Kärnä et al., 2011). This variation matters because a written policy or branded program is not an intervention by itself. Prevention depends on what adults and students do when risks are identified: how prohibited behavior is defined, how reports are received, how allegations are investigated, how immediate safety is secured, and how recurrence and retaliation are monitored.

Conceptual precision is a prerequisite for examining these processes. Bullying is commonly distinguished from broader peer aggression by repetition and an actual or perceived power imbalance (van Aalst et al., 2024; Volk et al., 2014). Hazing is narrower, referring to conduct connected to initiation, membership, status transition, or the maintenance of group hierarchy (Rizzo et al., 2023). These concepts may overlap, but they should not be treated as interchangeable unless the instrument measures their defining features. The available dataset labels its focal constructs as victimization and perpetration, but the original questionnaire wording does not establish whether every reported incident involved repetition and power imbalance. Accordingly, this article uses peer aggression as the most defensible umbrella term, discusses bullying when the relevant conceptual criteria are met, and does not claim to have measured hazing. This distinction prevents the interpretation from becoming more specific than the measurement permits.

The distinction is particularly important in residential education. In Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, commonly known as pesantren, education, residence, worship, peer interaction, and supervision are concentrated within the same institution (Islamic et al., 2024; Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022). Students may encounter the same peers throughout the day in classrooms, dormitories, dining areas, worship spaces, extracurricular activities, and informal gathering places. Older students may also hold formal or informal responsibilities for supervising younger students, maintaining dormitory order, or enforcing daily routines. These arrangements can strengthen belonging, moral learning, responsibility, and mutual care. However, they can also allow harmful interactions to continue across spaces and times that would normally be separated in a non-residential school. Authority is similarly layered across religious leaders, teachers, dormitory supervisors, student leaders, and peer groups. A student who does not trust

one layer of authority may therefore have no practical reporting route unless an accessible alternative is deliberately provided.

Empirical studies offer concrete examples of how bullying can appear in everyday pesantren life. A qualitative study conducted in three integrated Islamic boarding schools in Lhokseumawe documented physical acts such as hitting, pushing, throwing, jerking another student's head, and fighting (Alwi et al., 2023). Verbal behaviors included mocking, insulting, using derogatory nicknames, and berating other students, whereas relational behaviors included defamation, deliberate isolation, and exclusion from peer groups (Alwi et al., 2023). These behaviors may be reinforced by differences in age, physical strength, length of residence, popularity, group membership, or authority within the dormitory. Consequently, an act that appears minor when observed in isolation may constitute bullying when it is repeated, directed consistently at a less powerful student, and supported by a peer group or seniority structure.

Other studies illustrate how harmful conduct may become normalized. Nugroho et al. (2020) found that aggression toward newly enrolled or younger students was sometimes interpreted by participants as ordinary joking, an inherited pesantren tradition, or entertainment during demanding schedules with limited recreational opportunities. A more recent case study reported recurrent teasing, rude jokes, loud commands from senior students, and rumor-driven ostracism. It also found that some students were reluctant to disclose their experiences because they feared being regarded as weak or becoming targets of further exclusion (Windarwati & Dartim, 2025). These findings show why organizational labels matter. When repeated humiliation or coercion is described merely as a joke, discipline, or tradition, bystanders may fail to intervene and victims may conclude that reporting will not produce a protective response.

In practical terms, several harmful behaviors may occur as an interconnected sequence rather than as isolated incidents. For example, a junior santri may be repeatedly ordered by a senior student to perform personal errands, verbally humiliated for refusing, and subsequently excluded from dormitory activities after objecting or seeking help. Another student may be repeatedly called a degrading nickname in the classroom, dormitory, and dining area, allowing

the same humiliation to follow the student across the residential environment. A student who has previously been victimized may later reproduce similar behavior toward younger peers after acquiring senior status. Qualitative research has described this progression through experiences of victimization, grievance, frustration, maladaptive coping, experimentation with aggression, and eventual perpetration (Nugroho et al., 2021).

These scenarios should nevertheless be assessed carefully. A single disagreement between students of comparable power, an isolated insensitive comment, or mutually accepted joking does not automatically meet the definition of bullying (Menin et al., 2021). The relevant questions are whether the behavior is repeated or likely to be repeated, whether the targeted student can refuse or defend themselves safely, whether a power imbalance is present, and whether resistance or disclosure creates a risk of retaliation. The source of power may be formal, such as a student leadership position, or informal, such as seniority, physical strength, social popularity, control over dormitory routines, or support from a dominant peer group (Puente-Martínez et al., 2025). This functional assessment is especially important in residential institutions because the target cannot simply leave the social environment at the end of the school day.

Pesantren should not, however, be represented as a homogeneous institutional category (Huda et al., 2025). Institutions differ in educational orientation, size, boarding arrangements, governance, gender composition, counseling capacity, and the distribution of supervisory authority (Hasan, 2025). Religious education itself should not be framed as a risk factor. A faith-based ethos can provide strong resources for dignity, non-harm, accountability, solidarity, and restorative responsibility (Sailian et al., 2024). At the same time, organizational hierarchy and concerns about institutional reputation may create barriers when safeguarding procedures are unclear or inconsistently implemented. Research with children has suggested that religiosity may interact with the relationship between victimization and subjective well-being, underscoring the need to examine religion as a contextual and psychosocial resource rather than as a simple institutional label (Massarwi & Gross-Manos, 2022). Recent qualitative work with female pesantren leaders similarly identifies local theological resources for protection alongside

structural challenges involving toxic seniority, surveillance gaps, unequal power relations, and reluctance to disclose violence (Faishol et al., 2026).

The empirical literature on bullying within Indonesian pesantren is growing but remains fragmented. A pilot study in Pekanbaru reported substantial bullying involvement among participating students (Nugroho et al., 2018). Research involving 200 santri in West Sumatra linked emotional regulation and agreeableness with bullying behavior (Oktaviani et al., 2020). Grounded-theory research described a process through which some victimized students later engaged in aggression following frustration and maladaptive coping (Nugroho et al., 2021). These studies establish the relevance of context-specific inquiry but leave three important gaps. First, victimization and perpetration are often analyzed as separate roles even though the same student may occupy both positions. Second, institutional responses are frequently discussed normatively rather than measured as implementation processes. Third, measurement quality is not always reported in sufficient detail to determine whether apparent relationships represent genuinely distinct constructs.

This study makes three bounded contributions. First, it tests whether self-reported victimization and perpetration overlap within an Indonesian pesantren sample. Second, it examines associations between aggression involvement and three institutional perceptions; implementation quality, safety, and reporting trust without treating these associations as evidence of policy effectiveness. Third, it audits the measurement model before interpreting the structural coefficients. This third contribution is essential because statistically significant structural relationships are not substantively meaningful when the underlying constructs are unreliable or insufficiently distinct.

The primary hypothesis was that higher victimization would be positively associated with higher perpetration (H1). Two exploratory research questions were also addressed. RQ1 asked whether victimization and perpetration were associated with perceived implementation quality, safety, and trust in reporting mechanisms. RQ2 asked whether victimization had indirect statistical associations with these institutional perceptions through perpetration. No causal

mediation hypothesis was specified because the cross-sectional design did not establish temporal ordering.

The study was intentionally framed as measurement-aware and exploratory. Stronger conclusions would require validated instruments, transparent probability-based sampling, and longitudinal or intervention data. In the present analysis, the inferential priority was therefore to identify which relationships were defensible, which were unsupported, and which could not be interpreted because the relevant measurement model did not demonstrate adequate quality.

Method

Design and setting

The available dataset contains a cross-sectional survey of 112 respondents and 38 items scored on five-point response scales. All records were complete, and the exported SmartPLS analysis did not specify a missing-value marker or imputation procedure. The design is suited to estimating contemporaneous associations and auditing measurement properties, but it cannot establish temporal direction, within-person change, or institutional effects. Reporting was organized with reference to the STROBE guidance for cross-sectional studies (von Elm et al., 2014).

The study was conducted in 11 modern pesantren located in the Special Capital Region of Jakarta (DKI Jakarta), Bekasi City, and South Tangerang City. These three urban jurisdictions form part of the Greater Jakarta metropolitan region and combine high population mobility with diverse educational and residential environments. Modern pesantren integrate Islamic education and boarding-school routines with formal general education, creating sustained interaction across classrooms, dormitories, worship, extracurricular activities, and student-governance structures. The multisite design was used to capture contextual variation across metropolitan pesantren rather than to estimate school-level differences. Respondents were the unit of analysis; the archived dataset did not retain school identifiers that would support institutional comparison or multilevel estimation.

Participants and procedure

Table 1.
Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	Category or statistic	*n*	%
Gender	Male	59	52.7
	Female	53	47.3
Age, years	Mean (*SD*)	26.34 (3.95)	—
	Median (IQR)	26.00 (23–29)	—
	Range	18–35	—

The analytical sample comprised 112 active students (santri) with complete item-level data. In the absence of a retained sampling register, recruitment is most conservatively classified as institution-mediated nonprobability sampling. The 11 pesantren were purposively approached to provide geographical coverage across the three metropolitan jurisdictions. After institutional access was granted, a designated school liaison circulated the study invitation to students who were actively enrolled, resided or participated in the pesantren educational environment, could understand the Indonesian-language questionnaire, and were willing to participate. No incomplete records entered the analytical file. Recruitment logs, however, were not preserved; consequently, the number approached, the refusal rate, the response rate, respondent demographics, and the distribution of the 112 respondents across institutions cannot be reconstructed and no claim of statistical representativeness is made.

The field procedure was reconstructed from the multisite survey context and the structure of the deidentified analytical file and should be checked against the original field records before submission. Following institutional permission, prospective respondents received a brief explanation of the study purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, the option to omit an item or stop, and the intended use of aggregated results. The questionnaire was completed once and individually during an institution-facilitated session. To reduce response inhibition, students were instructed not to discuss answers and teaching or dormitory personnel were not permitted

to inspect individual responses. Completed questionnaires were assigned numeric study codes and entered into a password-protected dataset without names or other direct identifiers. Respondents who experienced discomfort were directed to a designated adult or counseling/safeguarding contact within the institution. The archived file contains no direct personal identifiers.

Measures

The study used a 38-item questionnaire organized into five operational constructs (Table 2): perceived implementation quality (IQS1-IQS6; six items), perpetration (P1-P8; eight items), safety (S1-S8; eight items), trust in reporting (T1-T6; six items), and victimization (V1-V10; ten items). All indicators used a five-point coded response metric from 1 (lowest coded endorsement or frequency) to 5 (highest coded endorsement or frequency). Respondent-level averages were calculated only for descriptive summaries; the PLS-SEM analysis used the individual indicators assigned to each construct. Higher coded scores represented greater endorsement of the construct named in the analytical model.

Table 2.
Representative Questionnaire Items

Construct	Code and number of items	Representative questionnaire items	Interpretation
Victimization	V1–V10, 10 items	V1: "I was mocked or insulted, including through degrading nicknames or verbal insults." V3: "I was pushed, slapped, hit, or otherwise physically harmed." V6: "I was forced to perform humiliating or painful tasks or punishments as part of seniority-based initiation." V10: "I was intimidated so that I would not report the incident to a *musyrif*, *ustadz*, or *pesantren* administrator."	Higher scores indicate greater exposure to peer aggression.
Perpetration	P1–P8, 8 items	P1: "I mocked or insulted another student using demeaning words." P4: "I encouraged other people to exclude or	Higher scores indicate greater involvement in

		avoid someone." P6: "I participated in forcing a junior student or peer to perform a humiliating or painful task or punishment." P8: "I engaged in a 'joke' even though I knew it made another student afraid or distressed."	perpetrating peer aggression.
Safety	S1–S8, 8 items	S1: "I feel safe in the dormitory during the day and at night." S4: "In my dormitory, seniority is not used to pressure junior students." S5: "I feel respected and accepted by my peers." S8: "My peers reject bullying, indicating a strong anti-bullying norm."	Higher scores are intended to indicate greater safety and a more supportive institutional climate. The items also cover staff responsiveness, fairness, peer acceptance, and anti-bullying norms.
Trust in Reporting	T1–T6, 6 items	T1: "I know where to report an incident of bullying." T2: "I trust that a report will be handled confidentially." T3: "I am confident that I will not face retaliation or threats if I make a report." T5: "I am confident that my report will be followed up according to established procedures."	Higher scores indicate greater confidence in institutional reporting mechanisms.
Perceived Implementation Quality	IQS1–IQS6, 6 items	IQS1: "The anti-bullying policy is communicated clearly." IQS2: "More than one reporting channel is available." IQS5: "Protection for victims and individuals who make reports is implemented in practice." IQS6: "Cases are handled promptly."	Higher scores indicate more favorable perceptions of policy implementation.

The six implementation-quality indicators represented students' perceptions of the visibility, clarity, consistency, accessibility, and follow-up of institutional anti-bullying or safeguarding responses. The eight perpetration and ten victimization indicators operationalized involvement in harming peers and being harmed by peers across direct, verbal, relational, intimidation-related, property-related, or digitally mediated experiences. The eight safety indicators represented perceived security and freedom from threat across the educational and residential environment. The six reporting-trust indicators represented willingness to disclose,

expected confidentiality and fairness, protection from retaliation, and confidence that adults would respond. These content descriptions are conceptually reconstructed from the construct labels and the pesantren context; the archived analytical file does not contain the verbatim item booklet.

Because the original scale sources, item wording, recall period, response anchors, translation history, and reverse-scoring instructions were not retained with the analytical output, the measures are reported as study-specific operational composites rather than as verified standardized scales. The instrument appears to have been administered in Indonesian. The original questionnaire should be recovered and deposited as a supplementary file before submission, both to verify the reconstructed content domains and to determine whether the victimization and perpetration items established repetition and power imbalance. Until that verification is completed, peer aggression remains the more defensible umbrella term and the scores should not be interpreted as prevalence estimates.

Ethics and safeguarding

The reconstructed field protocol treated participation as voluntary, separated research participation from academic or dormitory evaluation, and used anonymous study codes rather than direct personal identifiers. Prospective respondents were informed that they could decline participation, omit questions, or stop without penalty. For participants below the legal age of consent, the original protocol should document parental or guardian permission together with student assent, unless an ethics committee approved a waiver. Confidentiality was limited by safeguarding duties: a disclosure indicating imminent danger, severe violence, sexual harm, or a serious risk of retaliation required referral through the designated institutional protection pathway rather than an unconditional promise of secrecy.

The archived manuscript and analytical outputs do not contain the name of the approving ethics committee, the approval number, or the approval date. These identifiers cannot be inferred from the dataset and have therefore not been fabricated. Before submission, the authors must

verify the original ethics record and replace the ethics statement in the declarations section with the exact committee name, reference number, date, consent/assent arrangement, and referral procedure. If no prospective ethics approval can be documented, the manuscript should not state that formal approval was obtained and the target journal should be consulted before submission.

Statistical analysis

The supplied reports were generated in SmartPLS 3 (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The PLS algorithm standardized indicators to a mean of 0 and variance of 1, used the path-weighting scheme and initial outer weights of 1.0, allowed up to 300 iterations, and applied a stopping criterion of 10^-7. PLS-SEM can be useful for exploratory and prediction-oriented modeling, particularly when distributions are non-normal, but it is not a remedy for an undersized sample or poorly specified reflective constructs. Because the constructs appear to be common factors, a final analysis should justify PLS-SEM against covariance-based confirmatory factor analysis and consider consistent PLS or robust CFA as sensitivity analyses (Benitez et al., 2020; Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015; Hair et al., 2019).

Reflective measurement models were evaluated using standardized outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), cross-loadings, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). Reliability values around .70-.95, AVE of at least .50, and HTMT below .85 or .90 were treated as diagnostic guides rather than mechanical rules (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2015). Values above .95 were examined for indicator redundancy, and rho_A values above 1 were treated as evidence of instability or misspecification rather than superior reliability. Outer variance inflation factors (VIFs) were reviewed for redundancy and local dependence.

For the structural model, the analysis reported standardized path coefficients, bootstrap standard errors, two-tailed p values, bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) 95% confidence intervals, R-squared and adjusted R-squared values, and f-squared effect sizes. Inner-model VIFs were inspected for collinearity. Specific indirect effects were reported as statistical

decompositions only. Global diagnostics, including standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), normed fit index (NFI), and rms theta, were treated cautiously because global-fit interpretation in PLS-SEM remains model-dependent (Henseler et al., 2016).

The supplied bootstrap used 500 resamples, a two-tailed test, and alpha = .05. This is adequate for a preliminary stability check but not ideal for final inference, especially near a significance threshold. The final sample-size justification should use power analysis or simulation based on the smallest effect of substantive interest rather than the imprecise 10-times rule (Kock & Hadaya, 2018).

Results

All 112 records contained responses to the 38 analyzed indicators. Respondent-level means were high for perceived implementation quality and trust in reporting, low for perpetration, and intermediate for victimization (Table 3). Safety scores were also relatively high, although the construct later failed measurement validation. Item-level distributions showed pronounced ceiling concentration for implementation and trust indicators and floor concentration for perpetration indicators. Perpetration-item skewness reached 2.94 and excess kurtosis reached 8.24. These distributions support the use of resampling, but they also raise substantive questions about social desirability, limited disclosure, and whether the response scale differentiated low-frequency behavior adequately.

The descriptive means should not be interpreted as prevalence estimates. A mean of 1.50 on a perpetration scale does not reveal how many students perpetrated a qualifying bullying act, how often the act occurred, whether power imbalance was present, or whether different forms of aggression were combined. The score direction and item content must be verified before labels such as high, low, or safe are used in the final manuscript.

Table 3.
Descriptive statistics from the available item scores

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Perceived implementation quality	6	4.067	1.058	.929
Perpetration	8	1.500	.883	.966
Safety	8	3.890	.798	.789
Trust in reporting	6	4.070	.938	.882
Victimization	10	2.281	1.230	.949

Measurement model

Four constructs met conventional CR and AVE benchmarks: perceived implementation quality, perpetration, trust in reporting, and victimization (Table 4). Their composite reliability ranged from .903 to .972, and AVE ranged from .615 to .814. These values support internal consistency and convergent validity at the construct level. Nevertheless, reliability estimates near or above .95 for perpetration and victimization may indicate that some indicators are redundant rather than merely precise. This concern was reinforced by outer VIF values as high as 29.79 for perpetration and 12.79 for victimization.

Perceived implementation quality also required caution. Its rho_A value was 1.022, which is outside the admissible 0-1 range and suggests instability, extreme indicator similarity, sampling fluctuation, or misspecification. The construct's largest HTMT value was .863 with trust in reporting. This value is below .90 but above the stricter .85 guide, making conceptual clarity and item inspection important. The constructs may be related dimensions of a wider safeguarding climate, but a higher-order model should not be introduced solely to improve statistical fit; it requires a theoretical account of their shared and distinct content.

The safety construct was not adequate for structural interpretation. Its loadings ranged from -.267 to .839, only two loadings exceeded .70, and four indicators were not statistically different from zero at alpha = .05. CR was .627 and AVE was .256. The construct therefore failed both internal-consistency and convergent-validity expectations. It also failed discriminant validity: HTMT between safety and trust in reporting was 1.011, and cross-loadings showed that several safety indicators aligned as strongly or more strongly with implementation or trust.

Possible explanations include reverse-coded items that were not recoded, multiple dimensions combined under one label, ambiguous translation, or a construct that is formative rather than reflective. The available files cannot distinguish between these explanations.

Table 4.
Reflective measurement-model audit

Construct	Loading range	alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE	Largest HTMT
Perceived implementation quality	.739-.928	.929	1.022	.941	.729	.863 (trust)
Perpetration	.737-.979	.966	.976	.972	.814	.521 (victimization)
Safety	-.267-.839	.789	.443	.627	.256	1.011 (trust)
Trust in reporting	.563-.916	.882	.932	.903	.615	1.011 (safety)
Victimization	.686-.924	.949	.956	.957	.691	.521 (perpetration)

Structural model

H1 was supported. Victimization was positively associated with perpetration (beta = .511, SE = .093, p < .001), and the 95% BCa bootstrap interval excluded zero [.344, .692]. Victimization accounted for 26.1% of the variance in perpetration (adjusted R-squared = .254), and its f-squared effect size was .353. In standardized terms, respondents who reported more victimization also tended to report more perpetration. Because the data are cross-sectional, this result demonstrates overlap rather than a temporal transition from victim to perpetrator.

Table 5.
Direct structural associations

Path	beta	SE	t	p	95% bootstrap CI
Perpetration -> perceived implementation quality	.122	.120	1.021	.308	[-.100, .374]
Perpetration -> safety	.239	.171	1.396	.163	[-.099, .536]
Perpetration -> trust in reporting	.218	.126	1.736	.083	[-.052, .444]

None of the six paths from victimization or perpetration to the institutional-perception constructs reached p < .05 (Table 5). The association from perpetration to trust in reporting was the closest to the threshold (beta = .218, p = .083), but its confidence interval included zero [-.052, .444] and it should not be described as marginally significant evidence. Figure 1 shows that uncertainty was substantial for several estimates, especially the path from victimization to safety. That estimate is additionally compromised by the invalid safety measurement model.

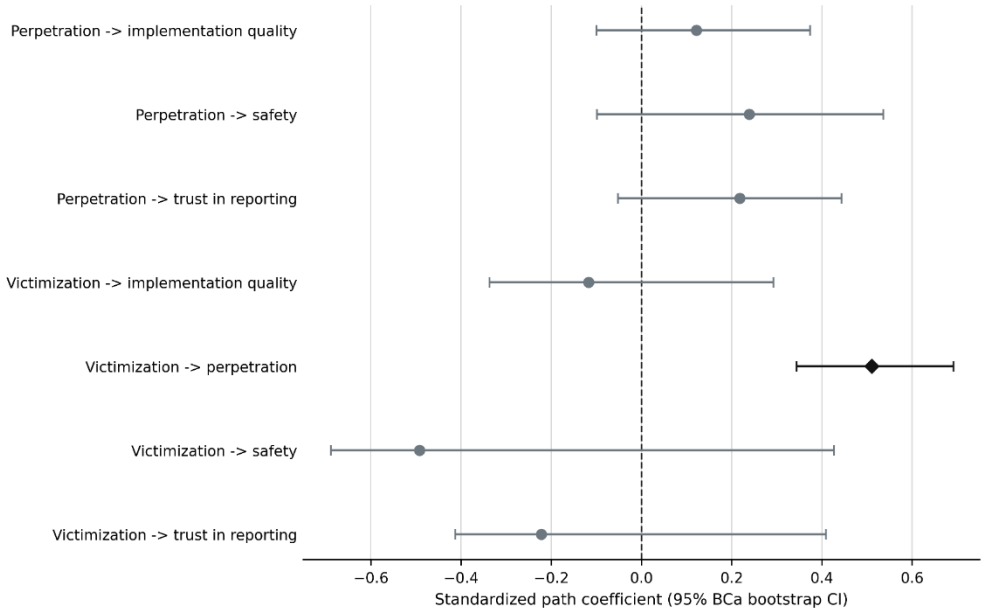


Figure 1. Standardized direct associations with 95% BCa bootstrap confidence intervals

Explained variance was negligible for perceived implementation quality (R-squared = .014; adjusted R-squared = -.004) and small for trust in reporting (R-squared = .047; adjusted R-squared = .030). The apparent R-squared for safety was .179 (adjusted R-squared = .164), but invalid measurement prevents a substantive prediction claim. Global diagnostics were unfavorable: saturated-model SRMR was .152, estimated-model SRMR was .229, NFI was .435, and rms theta was .217. Global thresholds should not be used mechanically in PLS-SEM, but these values reinforce rather than resolve the local measurement and specification problems.

Indirect associations

None of the specific indirect associations from victimization through perpetration was statistically significant (Table 6). The intervals were wide and included zero. The indirect association involving safety also inherits the safety construct's measurement failure. More importantly, a cross-sectional product of coefficients does not demonstrate mediation because exposure, mediator, and outcome were not separated in time. These results are therefore reported as descriptive decompositions of the specified model, not as evidence that victimization changes institutional perceptions by increasing perpetration.

Table 6.
Specific indirect associations through perpetration

Indirect path	beta	SE	t	p	95% bootstrap CI
Victimization -> perpetration -> perceived implementation quality	.062	.069	.910	.363	[-.041, .257]
Victimization -> perpetration -> safety	.122	.102	1.202	.230	[-.039, .355]
Victimization -> perpetration -> trust in reporting	.122	.075	1.480	.140	[-.023, .289]

Discussion

Principal's findings

This study examined the overlap between peer victimization and perpetration and their associations with perceived implementation quality, safety, and trust in reporting among 112 respondents from modern pesantren. Three findings require emphasis. First, victimization was positively associated with perpetration ($\beta = .511$, 95% BCa CI [.344, .692], $p < .001$), explaining 26.1% of the variance in perpetration. Second, neither victimization nor perpetration showed statistically reliable direct associations with perceived implementation quality or reporting trust. The specific indirect effects through perpetration were also nonsignificant. Third, the safety construct demonstrated inadequate reliability and validity; consequently, paths involving safety cannot be interpreted substantively.

These findings provide evidence of victimization–perpetration overlap in this sample, but they do not show that victimization causes subsequent perpetration. The cross-sectional design measured both experiences at the same time and therefore cannot establish temporal ordering. The results also do not demonstrate that institutional policies are ineffective. The study measured respondents' perceptions of institutional conditions rather than independently observed policy implementation, and the direction of the structural model treated those perceptions as outcomes rather than antecedents of peer aggression.

Victimization–perpetration overlap in relation to previous research

The positive association between victimization and perpetration is consistent with evidence that students' roles in peer aggression are not always mutually exclusive. Walters' (2021) meta-analysis of prospective studies found a strong concurrent relationship and bidirectional longitudinal associations between bullying victimization and perpetration. The present result supports the concurrent overlap identified in that literature. However, because the present data were collected at one time point, they cannot determine whether victimization preceded perpetration, perpetration increased later victimization, or both were influenced by shared individual or contextual factors.

The finding also converges with qualitative research conducted in Indonesian pesantren. Nugroho et al. (2021) described a process in which some victimized students experienced frustration and subsequently used maladaptive coping strategies that included aggression toward others. The current quantitative result is compatible with the coexistence of these roles, but it does not independently confirm the temporal stages or psychological mechanisms proposed in that grounded-theory study. The association should therefore be interpreted as evidence of role overlap rather than proof of a victim-to-perpetrator developmental sequence.

Several mechanisms identified in previous longitudinal research may help explain why the two roles overlap. Benatov et al. (2022), for example, found that hostility mediated part of the longitudinal association between victimization and later perpetration. Moral disengagement contributed to the cycle between victimization and subsequent bullying behavior (Imani1 et al., 2021; Montero-Carretero et al., 2021). Other possible mechanisms include anger, retaliatory motives, status protection, affiliation with aggressive peers, and attempts to avoid appearing vulnerable. None of these mechanisms was measured in the present study, so they should be regarded as hypotheses for future research rather than explanations established by the current model.

The pesantren environment may shape how such processes are expressed. Previous Indonesian research has identified adjustment difficulties among new students, the normalization of aggressive conduct as joking or tradition, dense daily schedules, restricted recreational opportunities, and seniority-based peer relations as potentially relevant contextual factors (Nugroho et al., 2020). These conditions do not imply that pesantren or Islamic education inherently generate bullying. Instead, they indicate that residential routines and peer hierarchies may influence when aggression occurs, how it is interpreted, and whether students feel able to seek assistance.

The present result should also be considered alongside Camacho et al. (2023), who used a four-wave design to distinguish stable differences between adolescents from changes within individuals over time. Their findings demonstrate that associations observed between students at one time point do not necessarily represent the processes occurring within the same student across time. The current coefficient may therefore reflect a mixture of individual characteristics, repeated exposure, peer-group position, institutional context, and reciprocal interaction. Longitudinal data are necessary to separate these possibilities.

A further qualification concerns the characteristics of the current sample. Respondents were 18–35 years old, with a mean age of 26.34 years. Much of the existing bullying literature concerns children and adolescents. Although peer aggression can continue into higher education and other residential settings, mechanisms established in school-age populations cannot automatically be generalized to adult santri. Future studies should analyze adolescent and adult pesantren populations separately.

Interpreting the null associations with institutional perceptions

Victimization and perpetration did not significantly predict perceived implementation quality or reporting trust. These null findings should not be interpreted as evidence that policy implementation and reporting systems are unimportant. Previous studies have generally examined implementation as an antecedent of bullying outcomes, whereas the present model

examined whether aggression involvement was associated with respondents' perceptions of institutional conditions. The difference in model direction, measurement, level of analysis, and research design limits direct comparison.

Hall and Dawes (Hall & Dawes, 2019) found that greater fidelity in implementing anti-bullying policy was associated with lower reported bullying and stronger teacher protection. Similarly, Haataja et al. (2014) reported that adherence to the KiVa curriculum and time spent preparing lessons were associated with reductions in victimization, although implementation indicators did not predict all bullying outcomes equally. In a randomized controlled trial, Tolmatcheff et al. (2024) found that implementation fidelity and delivery quality strengthened changes in moral disengagement that accompanied reductions in bullying, but they did not produce significant changes in every classroom-level outcome. Collectively, these studies suggest that implementation effects can be outcome-specific and may depend on the particular components delivered, the quality of delivery, and the institutional level at which implementation is assessed.

The present study did not include independent evidence of whether institutions had written procedures, trained staff, accessible reporting channels, documented response times, case-monitoring systems, or protection against retaliation. Perceived implementation quality may therefore have varied because of respondents' knowledge of institutional procedures rather than the actual fidelity with which those procedures were applied. Limited variability in institutional perceptions, insufficient statistical power, or differences between the eleven participating institutions could also have obscured associations.

Reporting trust is similarly complex. Research indicates that students' willingness to disclose bullying is influenced by anticipated consequences, beliefs about whether adults will respond effectively, fear of retaliation, embarrassment, and concerns that reporting will worsen the situation (Gizzarelli et al., 2025). Trust in school personnel has also been associated with willingness to report bullying (Helka et al., 2024). The absence of significant paths in the present model therefore does not establish that reporting trust is unrelated to aggression. Respondents

with similar trust scores may have had very different experiences of disclosure, adult intervention, confidentiality, and retaliation. Those experiences were not measured directly.

It is also possible that the association between aggression involvement and institutional perceptions is conditional rather than uniform. For example, victimization may reduce trust primarily when a report is dismissed, confidentiality is breached, or retaliation follows. Conversely, an effective institutional response may preserve or restore trust even after victimization. Testing such propositions would require information about whether an incident was reported, to whom it was reported, what response occurred, whether the behavior stopped, and whether the student experienced retaliation. The current data do not contain this sequence.

Thus, the present null findings do not directly contradict earlier implementation research. Instead, they show that respondents' victimization and perpetration scores alone did not explain their perceptions of implementation quality or reporting trust in this cross-sectional sample.

Measurement implications

The measurement results are substantively important because conclusions about institutional safeguarding depend on the quality of the measures. Victimization, perpetration, implementation quality, and reporting trust demonstrated acceptable internal consistency and convergent validity. Nevertheless, several very high outer VIF values suggest possible indicator redundancy or local dependence. When multiple items use very similar wording, they may inflate reliability estimates without proportionately increasing the conceptual coverage of a construct (Hair et al., 2019). Future revisions should retain items that represent distinct aspects of each construct rather than multiple items that restate the same idea.

The safety construct presented a more serious problem. Its composite reliability was .627, its AVE was .256, and its HTMT value with reporting trust was 1.011. Inspection of the available item wording indicates that the eight indicators combined personal feelings of safety, clarity of institutional rules, staff responsiveness, seniority relations, peer acceptance, fairness, nonviolence, and peer norms concerning bullying. These domains may not represent a single

reflective construct. The indicators could instead describe several related but distinct dimensions of institutional climate.

This content heterogeneity provides a plausible explanation for the weak measurement performance, although it cannot be established from the present analysis alone. Because the indicators did not demonstrate adequate reliability, convergent validity, or discriminant validity, neither significant nor nonsignificant paths involving safety should be interpreted as evidence about actual safety conditions. The appropriate response is not to remove indicators solely to improve statistical fit. A revised scale should begin with a clearer construct definition, qualitative consultation with santri and safeguarding personnel, expert content review, and cognitive interviews. Exploratory factor analysis followed by confirmatory factor analysis in an independent sample should then determine whether personal safety, adult protection, peer norms, seniority-related threat, and procedural fairness should be modeled separately.

The implementation-quality construct also requires further examination because its rho_A value exceeded 1. Values outside the usual parameter range may indicate estimation instability, strongly correlated indicators, or model misspecification. The scale should therefore be re-evaluated even though its alpha, composite reliability, and AVE met conventional thresholds. Measurement validity should be treated as a substantive requirement rather than a preliminary statistical formality.

Implications for implementation-focused safeguarding

The practical implications presented here are informed jointly by the present findings and previous research; they were not directly tested as intervention effects in this study.

First, safeguarding assessments should allow for overlapping involvement rather than forcing students into mutually exclusive categories of “victim” and “perpetrator.” The association observed in this study, together with longitudinal and meta-analytic evidence (Benatov et al., 2022; Montero-Carretero et al., 2021; Walters, 2021), indicates that some individuals may require simultaneous protection from further victimization and intervention concerning their own

harmful behavior. Disciplinary responses that address only perpetration may overlook continuing exposure, retaliation, or underlying distress.

Second, reporting procedures should address the specific barriers identified in disclosure research. Students need to know where and how to report, who will receive the information, what confidentiality limits apply, how immediate risk will be managed, and how retaliation will be monitored (Gizzarelli et al., 2025; Helka et al., 2024). In a residential institution, reporting routes should not depend exclusively on the same peer hierarchy or immediate supervisory structure that may be involved in the complaint. Alternative routes may include a trained safeguarding officer, counselor, designated senior educator, or another authorized adult outside the student's direct dormitory chain of command.

Third, institutions should monitor implementation fidelity rather than relying only on the existence of written rules. Previous studies have associated implementation fidelity and delivery quality with better bullying-related outcomes, while also showing that not every implementation component affects every outcome (Haataja et al., 2014; Hall & Dawes, 2019; Tolmatcheff et al., 2024). Relevant indicators may include staff-training completion, student awareness of reporting routes, response times, documentation of protective actions, follow-up contacts, recurrence, and reported retaliation. These data would permit institutions to distinguish between policy adoption and actual implementation.

Fourth, safeguarding procedures should be culturally and institutionally appropriate without treating religious identity as either a cause of risk or a substitute for procedural protection. Qualitative research with female pesantren leaders has identified theological resources that can support dignity, responsibility, non-harm, and protection, while also recognizing structural challenges such as seniority, surveillance gaps, and reluctance to disclose violence (Faishol et al., 2026). Religious and moral commitments can therefore reinforce safeguarding, but they should be linked to explicit responsibilities, trained personnel, confidential procedures, documentation, and accountability.

These recommendations should not be interpreted as evidence that the participating institutions lacked such systems. The available data did not audit institutional policies or individual cases. They identify areas that should be measured and evaluated in subsequent implementation research.

Research agenda

Future research should first establish a stronger measurement foundation. The original sources, response anchors, recall period, scoring instructions, and development or translation procedures for the questionnaire should be documented. The safety construct should be redeveloped, while potentially redundant indicators in other constructs should be reviewed. Cognitive interviews with respondents could determine whether terms referring to joking, discipline, seniority, intimidation, and bullying are understood consistently.

Second, longitudinal designs are needed to clarify temporal ordering. At least three measurement waves would allow researchers to examine whether victimization predicts later perpetration, whether perpetration increases later victimization, and whether hostility, moral disengagement, anger, coping, or peer affiliation explain these transitions. Such designs should distinguish stable differences between respondents from within-person change, following the methodological concerns illustrated by Camacho et al. (2023).

Third, studies should retain institutional identifiers and collect implementation information from multiple sources. Student surveys could be combined with policy documents, staff questionnaires, training records, incident logs, and structured observations. Multilevel analysis could then separate respondent-level perceptions from dormitory- and institution-level practices.

Fourth, reporting should be studied as a process rather than only as a general attitude. Future measures should identify whether an incident was disclosed, the recipient of the report, the speed and type of response, perceived fairness, confidentiality, recurrence, and retaliation.

This approach would make it possible to test whether actual institutional responses modify the relationship between victimization and later aggression.

Finally, adolescent and adult santri should be examined separately. Age, duration of residence, student leadership roles, dormitory assignment, gender composition, and prior exposure to aggression may influence both involvement and willingness to report. These factors should be incorporated into sampling and analysis.

Limitations

Several limitations define the boundaries of the findings. First, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inference and temporal ordering. The positive victimization–perpetration coefficient cannot determine whether victimization preceded perpetration or whether the relationship was reciprocal.

Second, all constructs were measured through self-report in a single survey session. Shared method variance, recall error, interpretation of sensitive wording, and social-desirability pressures may have influenced the observed associations. Future studies should combine self-reports with appropriately protected multi-informant or administrative data while recognizing that each source captures different aspects of peer aggression.

Third, the sample was small and recruited through institution-mediated nonprobability procedures. The 112 respondents included 59 males and 53 females and ranged from 18 to 35 years of age. Although respondents reported origins or locations across 3 provinces, these categories should not be interpreted as institutional sampling strata. Recruitment logs and the number of students approached were unavailable, so a response rate could not be calculated. The results cannot be generalized statistically to all pesantren, all santri, or adolescent boarding-school populations.

Fourth, the study documentation described participation from 11 modern pesantren, but school identifiers were not retained in the analytical dataset. Clustering, institution-level

differences, and between-school variation could therefore not be estimated. Standard errors may be underestimated if respondents within the same institution had correlated responses.

Fifth, although item wording was recoverable from the spreadsheet, the original scale sources, exact verbal response anchors, recall period, translation history, pilot-testing procedure, and reverse-scoring instructions were not documented. It also remains uncertain whether the victimization and perpetration items explicitly established repetition and power imbalance. The results are consequently better described as peer-aggression involvement than as prevalence estimates of bullying.

Sixth, the safety construct failed reliability, convergent-validity, and discriminant-validity assessments. The structural paths involving safety are therefore uninterpretable. High outer VIF values in several other constructs and an implausible rho_A value for implementation quality also indicate the need for measurement redevelopment and independent validation.

Seventh, the reported bootstrap inference was based on 500 resamples. Although sufficient for preliminary analysis, this number is lower than commonly recommended for stable final confidence intervals. The available item-level data should be reanalyzed with a larger number of bootstrap resamples, such as 5,000 or 10,000, before publication.

Finally, the model did not include potentially relevant covariates or mechanisms, including length of residence, student leadership status, dormitory structure, previous reporting experiences, retaliation, emotional regulation, hostility, moral disengagement, peer norms, or exposure to institution-level intervention. Their omission limits explanatory interpretation.

In summary, this study provides evidence of victimization–perpetration overlap among the participating respondents, consistent with previous research indicating that peer-aggression roles can coexist and develop reciprocally. It does not establish a causal victim-to-perpetrator sequence, and it does not show that institutional safeguarding is ineffective. The most defensible conclusion is that overlapping involvement warrants attention, while stronger measures,

longitudinal evidence, and direct implementation data are required to evaluate safety, reporting systems, and policy effectiveness in pesantren.

Conclusion

Across 11 modern pesantren in DKI Jakarta, Bekasi City, and South Tangerang City, the only supported structural association was the positive overlap between victimization and perpetration. The finding challenges a simple victim-versus-perpetrator binary and supports safeguarding systems that assess both experiences, provide protection, and maintain accountability. The study did not show that policy implementation prevents aggression, and the invalid safety measure prevents conclusions about safety. Its policy contribution is therefore implementation-focused rather than causal: written rules should be translated into confidential reporting, standardized response, anti-retaliation protection, documented follow-up, and monitoring that reaches residential and digital spaces. Religious ethos can strengthen legitimacy and care, but it should operate alongside independent escalation and procedural accountability. A publishable final analysis still requires verification of the reconstructed field procedures, the exact ethics record and instrument documentation, revalidation of safety, and a raw-data bootstrap reanalysis. With those repairs, research in metropolitan pesantren can contribute a distinctive faith-based residential perspective to international bullying-prevention scholarship.

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