

Making Space in Reflective Practices as an Emotional Pedagogy in a Children's Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

Strengthening emotion regulation has become an urgent priority in educational research and practice, particularly in learning environments that demand high levels of self-discipline, emotional control, and social adaptation in communal life. This study aims to explore the practice of making space as a pedagogical mechanism that mediates children's emotion regulation processes in the *pesantren*. The research was conducted at a children's Islamic Boarding School in Rembang, Central Java, Indonesia, involving 20 elementary school-age children and 4 caregivers. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation study. The data were analyzed through four stages: data collection, condensation, display, and conclusion verification. The findings indicate that *pesantren*, responses to emotional triggers (ET) do not remain at the level of impulsive reactivity (IR) in the form of crying, anger, and harsh verbal expressions, but are mediated by the practice of making space (MS), manifested in momentary silence, withdrawal, writing, drawing, pausing play with peers, and engaging in free movement within reflective activities (RP) as part of emotion pedagogy (EP) embedded in children's daily lives, which is conceptualized as a space for the production of reflective-deliberative (RD) emotional responses. The study underscores that *pesantrens* may explicitly integrate emotion regulation into their pedagogical design through structured, programmed, and institutionally legitimized practices within boarding life.

Keywords: Emotional Pedagogy, Islamic Boarding School, Reflective Practices.

Abstrak

Penguatan regulasi emosi menjadi prioritas mendesak dalam penelitian dan praktik pendidikan, khususnya pada lingkungan belajar yang menuntut tingkat disiplin diri, pengendalian emosi, dan adaptasi sosial yang tinggi di kehidupan komunal. Studi ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi praktik pemberian jeda sebagai mekanisme pedagogis yang memediasi proses regulasi emosi anak di pesantren. Penelitian dilakukan di salah satu pesantren anak di Rembang, Jawa Tengah Indonesia, dengan melibatkan 20 anak usia sekolah dasar dan 6 pengasuh. Pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara dan studi dokumentasi. Data dianalisis melalui empat tahap; pengumpulan data, kondensasi, penyajian data dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam communal life (*pesantren*), respons terhadap *emotional triggers* (ET) tidak berhenti pada reaksi impulsif (IR) berupa tangisan, kemarahan, dan ujaran kasar, melainkan dimediasi oleh praktik *making space* (MS) berupa respon diam sejenak, menyendiri, menulis, menggambar, jeda bermain bersama teman, dan bergerak bebas dalam aktivitas refleksi (RP) sebagai bagian dari pedagogi emosi (EP) yang hidup dalam keseharian anak yang terkonseptualisasi sebagai ruang produksi

respons emosional yang reflektif-deliberatif (RD). Studi ini menggarisbawahi bahwa pesantren dapat mempertimbangkan pengintegrasian regulasi emosi secara eksplisit dalam desain pedagogis melalui praktik yang terstruktur, terprogram, dan terlegitimasi dalam kehidupan berasrama.

Kata Kunci: Pedagogi Emosi, Pesantren, Praktik Refleksi.

Introduction

Emotion regulation has emerged as a central construct in contemporary educational and developmental research due to its crucial role in children's socio-emotional adjustment, academic engagement, and long-term well-being.¹ Globally, attention to children's capacity to manage emotions has increasingly intensified alongside the growing psychosocial challenges, including academic pressure, social instability, digital exposure, and disruptions to educational systems in the post-pandemic context.² International studies have consistently demonstrated that deficits in emotion regulation during childhood are associated with various negative outcomes. Referring to Baroud et al.,³ across 26 districts in Lebanon indicates that the prevalence of emotion dysregulation among children aged 8-12 years is significantly correlated with lower school performance. Therefore, strengthening emotion regulation has become an urgent priority in educational research and practice, particularly within learning environments that demand high levels of self-discipline, emotional control, and social adaptation.

In line with this urgency, educational contexts that inherently demand high levels of emotion regulation capacity can be found in the *pesantren* education system,

¹ Paulo A. Graziano et al., "The Role of Emotion Regulation in Children's Early Academic Success," *Journal of School Psychology* 45, no. 1 (2007): 3–19, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2006.09.002>; Deleene S. Menefee et al., "The Importance of Emotional Regulation in Mental Health," *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine* 16, no. 1 (2022): 28–31, <https://doi.org/10.1177/15598276211049771>; Ramona Thümmeler et al., "Strengthening Emotional Development and Emotion Regulation in Childhood—As a Key Task in Early Childhood Education," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 7 (2022): 3978, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19073978>.

² Graham Moore et al., "Mental Health and Life Satisfaction among 10–11-Year-Olds in Wales, before and One Year after Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic," *BMC Public Health* 22, no. 1 (2022): 379, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-12752-6>; Catalina Sau Man Ng and Sally Sui Ling Ng, "Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children's Mental Health: A Systematic Review," *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 13 (2022): 975936, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.975936>; Valeria Rega et al., "Problematic Media Use among Children up to the Age of 10: A Systematic Literature Review," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20, no. 10 (2023): 5854, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20105854>; Sally Reynard et al., "Digital Interventions for Emotion Regulation in Children and Early Adolescents: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *JMIR Serious Games* 10, no. 3 (2022): e31456, <https://doi.org/10.2196/31456>.

³ "Prevalence and Correlates of Emotion Dysregulation among Children and Adolescents in Lebanon: Results from a National Survey," *BMC Psychiatry* 24, no. 1 (2024): 698, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-024-06169-1>.

which is a complex learning environment. Islamic Boarding Schools are widely recognized in the academic literature as distinctive Indonesian Islamic educational institutions characterized by the integration of academic learning, religious education, communal living, and moral formation.⁴ In contrast to boarding school systems in other contexts, which are often classified by regional distinctions such as rural and urban settings, Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools operate as a holistic religious educational ecology spanning from primary to higher levels of education. This structure means that children of elementary school age also live within structured boarding routines, collective rituals, disciplinary frameworks, and an intensive pattern of social interaction.

The development of children of elementary school age represents an early phase in the formation of increasingly reflective and internalized emotion regulation capacities, encompassing the ability to recognize, express, and manage emotional responses more independently.⁵ Within the context of boarding, this developmental phase unfolds amid a complex emotional landscape, marked by separation from parents, cross-age peer interactions in communal spaces, and demands for compliance with strict religious and institutional norms.⁶ The tension between children's developmental needs and the institution's collective expectations underscores the urgency of examining how children in Islamic Boarding Schools interpret, negotiate, and practice emotion regulation in their daily lives.

Reflective practices have the potential to serve as important mechanisms in helping children navigate the complexity of emotional experiences in an Islamic Boarding School. More specifically, this area remains underexplored, both theoretically and empirically. A systematic literature review mapping research trends on Islamic Boarding Schools (1994-2022) identifies two primary levels of analysis: the micro and

⁴ S. H. Dong, "Study on Problem of Boarding School in Rural Area in China" (Master dissertation, Wuhan, HB, China: Central China Normal University, 2012); Maisyatus Suadaa Irfana et al., "The Integrated Pathway: A Novel Educational Model for Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia," *Migration Letters* 20, no. 5 (2023): 552–67, <https://doi.org/10.59670/ml.v20i5.3999>; Akhmad Nurul Kawakip and Sulanam Sulanam, "The Practice of Shared Values and Islamic Educational Identity: Evidence from a Pesantren in East Java, Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 17, no. 1 (2023): 27–53, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2023.17.1.27-53>.

⁵ Harry Adynski et al., "The Role of Emotional Regulation on Early Child School Adjustment Outcomes," *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* 51 (2024): 201–11, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2024.07.003>.

⁶ Ling Li Leng and Nueraili Dayimu, "Longitudinal Effects of School Boarding on Adolescent Depression: Examining the Mediating Role of Parent-Child Closeness and School Connectedness," *BMC Psychology* 13, no. 1 (2025): 1281, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-03620-0>; Hao Li et al., "Social Support and Emotional Well-Being among Boarders and Day School Students: A Two-Wave Longitudinal Study," *Children and Youth Services Review* 155 (2023): 107217, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.107217>.

macro levels. At the micro level, research tends to focus on the internal dynamics of Islamic Boarding Schools, particularly systems, curriculum, values, and traditions, as well as the roles of *kiai* and *santri*. Meanwhile, at the macro level, studies examine the responsiveness of *pesantrens* to external changes, including ecological and social shifts, democratization, technological and digital media developments, and political changes.⁷ Recent studies further affirm the work of Gazali and Budiana, situating *pesantren* research within academic discourse and indicating that it tends to center on curriculum reform, instructional innovation, and the digitalization of education.⁸ This dominant orientation, although important, indirectly leaves a gap in understanding the emotional dynamics of children in Islamic Boarding Schools within the context of communal life. Studies addressing the domain of emotional processes underlying children's adaptive capacities have consequently received limited analytical attention.

In addition, few studies on reflective practices explicitly examine how children are allowed to "pause momentarily" in response to emerging emotional triggers before entering the reflective process. This gap is significant, considering that the elementary school period constitutes a crucial phase in the development of emotion regulation that requires space for conscious affective processing. This study aims to explore how children in elementary school in Islamic Boarding Schools experience and manage their emotional dynamics, how making space within reflective activities is implemented in the context of Islamic Boarding Schools, and how this process contributes to the development of children's emotion-regulation capacities. This study contributes by conceptualizing the practice of making space before reflection as a pedagogical mechanism that mediates children's emotion regulation processes within the structured ecology of the Islamic Boarding School.

Method

This study employs an exploratory qualitative approach, drawing on Creswell & Creswell,⁹ which aims to explore the practice of making space within reflective activities as a pedagogical mechanism that mediates children's emotion regulation

⁷ Erfan Gazali and Agnes Arum Budiana, "A Bibliometric Analysis of Pesantren's Educational Impact: Insights from the Scopus Database (1994–2022)," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 1 (2023): 15–33, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2023.121.15-33>.

⁸ Edi Suresman et al., "From Sorogan to Digital Learning: A Systematic Literature Network Analysis of Pesantren Learning Models," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025): 2580776, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2580776>.

⁹ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th edition (Sage Publication, Inc, 2018).

processes within the structured ecology of the Islamic Boarding School. The research was conducted at a children's Islamic Boarding School in Rembang, Central Java, Indonesia, from January to February 2026.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and document analysis; observation was conducted with 20 children to capture emotional dynamics within the context of communal boarding life; interviews employed a purposive sampling approach to gather data on the reflective practices implemented and to understand emotion regulation processes directly from participants' perspectives.

Table 1. Informant Data

Informant Code	Status	Informant Code	Status
C1	Children (Female)	C6	Children (Male)
C2	Children (Female)	T1	Teacher (Female)
C3	Children (Female)	T2	Teacher (Female)
C4	Children (Male)	T3	Teacher (Male)
C5	Children (Male)	T4	Teacher (Male)

Based on Table 1, the informants in this study comprised two main groups: children (C) and teachers (T). The children (C) group comprised six participants, with a composition of three females (C1, C2, C3) and three males (C4, C5, C6), while the teacher group consisted of four participants, including two females (T1, T2) and two males (T3, T4). This composition indicates balanced gender representation within each group of informants. The identities of the informants were kept confidential using specific codes. Document analysis included the examination of collective agreements, consequences regulations, and children's reflective artifacts, such as personal notes and visual media, while ensuring consent from the relevant parties.

Data analysis techniques were conducted in four steps, as shown in Figure 1: data collection, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and data verification. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and subsequently reduced through processes of selection and thematic coding to focus on relevant aspects of emotion regulation. The data were then presented descriptively in narrative form, supported by tables or diagrams to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn by linking the findings with theoretical frameworks and prior research. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation and member checking with participants, while the reliability of the analysis was strengthened through an audit trail and peer debriefing. Ethically, this study obtained formal approval from the

pesantren authorities, adhered to the principle of informed consent, and maintained participants' identities in confidence through anonymity.

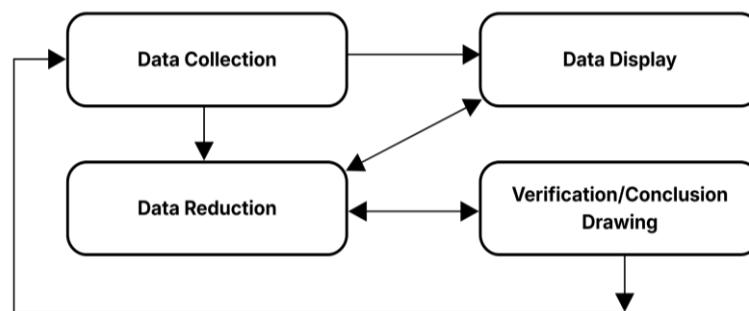


Figure 1. Data Analysis Techniques
(Source: Adapted from Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014))

Results and Discussion

Result

The flow of findings presented in Figure 2 shows that within communal life (pesantren), responses to emotional triggers (ET) do not remain at the level of impulsive reactivity (IR) in the form of crying, anger, and harsh verbal expressions, but are mediated by the practice of making space (MS), manifested in momentary silence, withdrawal, writing, drawing, pausing play with peers, and engaging in free movement within reflective activities (RP) as part of emotion pedagogy (EP) embedded in children's daily lives, which is conceptualized as a space for the production of reflective-deliberative emotional responses (RD).

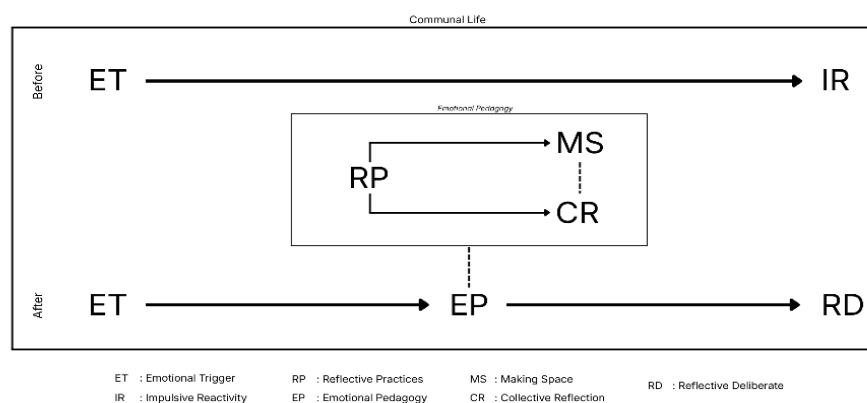


Figure 2. A Process Model of Emotional Pedagogy

Discussion

Emotional Triggers and Spontaneous Reactions in Communal Life

Children's emotional experiences in the Islamic Boarding School primarily emerge from the dynamics of everyday interactions rather than from major disciplinary

events. The six participants involved reported that peer relational tensions are the most dominant triggers. As expressed by C1, C4, C5, and C6, *"I feel sad when I am not invited to play together or when I have no one to accompany me in playing."* This is reinforced by the caregiver's statement (T1), *"most emotional incidents arise from friendship conflicts."* These findings are consistent with the literature, which indicates that peer support is significantly correlated with emotional well-being, whereas parental support does not always function as a protective factor in boarding environments.¹⁰

This dynamic is also reflected in the statement of T2, one of the children at the most senior age level (12 years), whose communication style reflects "seniority," thereby creating social distance from peers. The phenomenon of seniority constitutes a relatively pervasive concern within Islamic Boarding School culture.¹¹ From the perspective of social dominance theory, age differences may trigger the formation of relational hierarchies that influence interactional dynamics.¹² Furthermore, the impact of peer rejection on the manifestation of children's behavioral problems occurs due to limited emotion regulation capacity, leading them to express experiences of rejection through aggressive responses.¹³

In addition to relational conflicts, transitions in daily activities also constitute a source of emotional tension. A caregiver (T2) stated that the absence of confirmation regarding activity transitions may trigger children's frustration, *"for example, it needs to be communicated that after Activity 'A' there will be a 10-minute pause."* The lack of clear information about changes in activities generates emotional reactions, such as complaints about the schedule's density, which can make children angry and

¹⁰ Li et al., "Social Support and Emotional Well-Being among Boarders and Day School Students: A Two-Wave Longitudinal Study"; Isabella Pollak et al., "A Systematic Review of Intervention Programs Promoting Peer Relationships among Children and Adolescents: Methods and Targets Used in Effective Programs," *Adolescent Research Review* 8, no. 3 (2023): 297–321, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-022-00195-4>.

¹¹ Rizki Kamilia et al., "Culture of Santri Seniority Between Tradition and Modernization in Islamic Boarding School Education," *Proceeding of International Conference on Education, Society, and Humanity* 2, no. 2 (2024): 2227–33.

¹² Andreas Brouzos et al., "Associations between Emotional Intelligence, Socio-Emotional Adjustment, and Academic Achievement in Childhood: The Influence of Age," *Canadian Journal of School Psychology* 29, no. 2 (2014): 83–99, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0829573514521976>; Nicoletta Salerni and Marina Messetti, "Emotion Regulation, Peer Acceptance and Rejection, and Emotional–Behavioral Problems in School-Aged Children," *Children* 12, no. 2 (2025): 159, <https://doi.org/10.3390/children12020159>.

¹³ Salerni and Messetti, "Emotion Regulation, Peer Acceptance and Rejection, and Emotional–Behavioral Problems in School-Aged Children."

uncooperative. Unclear activity transitions can function as micro-stressors, increasing uncertainty and reducing children's perceived control over their environment.¹⁴

From a self-regulation perspective, activity transitions require executive functions such as shifting and inhibitory control, which are still developing in children of elementary school age.¹⁵ When expectations regarding pauses are not fulfilled, frustration emerges as a response to the obstruction of regulatory and emotional recovery needs. Thus, angry and uncooperative reactions may be understood as expressions of a high regulatory burden within a highly structured living system. These findings affirm that temporal factors and the communication of schedules carry significant psychological implications for children's emotional stability in boarding environments.

During the initial phase of residence at the Islamic Boarding School, spontaneous responses to emotionally triggering situations occurred more frequently (T3). Children tended to cry immediately, express anger verbally, or display tantrum-like behaviors. In several cases, the use of harsh words became a direct outlet for discomfort. The production of such utterances emerged alongside heightened emotional arousal and represented the form of emotion being experienced.¹⁶ The immediate emotional situation did not solely trigger these verbal expressions but also reflected communication patterns internalized from previous environments. As T4 stated, "*there are children who vent their emotions through 'misuh', carried over from the home environment.*"

In general, children's responses in confronting emotionally conflictual situations tended to be immediate and spontaneous. When children felt unaccompanied, the spontaneous responses that emerged typically took the form of crying, anger, and harsh verbal expressions. This pattern indicates a strong sensitivity to relational experiences, which were expressed promptly following the emergence of a trigger.¹⁷ Within the context of an intensive collective living space, age differences, perceptions of seniority,

¹⁴ Grant S. Shields et al., "Acute Stress Influences the Emotional Foundations of Executive Control: Distinct Effects on Control-Related Affective and Cognitive Processes," *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 162 (2024): 106942, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2023.106942>.

¹⁵ Sam Wass, *Contingencies and Periodicities: Two Types of Predictability in Children's Real-World Environment That Might Influence the Executive Control of Attention*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/z6rjc>.

¹⁶ Richard Stephens and Amy Zile, "Does Emotional Arousal Influence Swearing Fluency?," *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 46, no. 4 (2017): 983–95, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-016-9473-8>.

¹⁷ Sylvia Chu Lin et al., "Research Review: Child Emotion Regulation Mediates the Association between Family Factors and Internalizing Symptoms in Children and Adolescents—A Meta-analysis," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 65, no. 3 (2024): 260–74, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13894>.

communication styles, peer interactions, and differences of opinion often pose challenges and give rise to significant emotional tensions.¹⁸ These responses indicate a tendency toward high emotional reactivity that structured regulatory processes have not yet been able to mediate.

Making Space in Reflective Practice: Emotional Pedagogy

A shift in patterns of emotional responses was identified following the practice of making space, namely the provision of time to withdraw, calm oneself, and reduce emotional intensity in a structured manner. They demonstrated a tendency to remain silent for a moment, withdraw, write, and draw before speaking about events that triggered their emotions. These findings also highlight a habituation pattern in children's use of the i-message technique, focusing on validating emotions and personal needs, which may foster more positive and empathetic communication and reduce defensive responses.¹⁹ One child (C2) recounted, "*When I am angry, I choose to remain silent first*". In contrast, another child (C3) expressed that when feeling upset, he preferred to express his emotions privately through writing or drawing rather than speaking immediately. Studies indicate that the ability to delay responses is correlated with higher levels of self-control and lower tendencies toward aggression among school-aged children.²⁰

Critically, this is understood as a form of adaptive regulation that does not entail negative psychological consequences, provided that meaning-making processes and

¹⁸ Jakub Hladik et al., "Peer Interaction in Class: Exploring Students' Self-Regulation in Relation to Peer Acceptance and Rejection," *Cogent Education* 11, no. 1 (2024): 2343520, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2343520>; Bin Pan et al., "The Dynamic Associations between Social Dominance Goals and Bullying from Middle to Late Childhood: The Moderating Role of Classroom Bystander Behaviors," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 115, no. 2 (2023): 349, <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/edu0000776>; Salerni and Messetti, "Emotion Regulation, Peer Acceptance and Rejection, and Emotional-Behavioral Problems in School-Aged Children"; Yaping Yue et al., "The Relationship of Family Support and Peer Acceptance in Children Aged 4–6: The Mediating Role of Emotion Regulation Strategies," *Early Child Development and Care* 194, nos. 13–14 (2024): 1366–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2024.2371920>.

¹⁹ Wesley R. Burr, "Beyond I-Statements in Family Communication," *Family Relations*, 1990, 266–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/584870>; Muhyatun Muhyatun, "Transforming Stress to Happiness: Implementation of the I-Message Technique for Establishing Positive Communication Patterns in the Family," *IJIP: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Psychology* 4, no. 2 (2022): 18–35, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijip.v4i2.10>; Shane L. Rogers et al., *I Understand You Feel That Way, but I Feel This Way: The Benefits of I-Language and Communicating Perspective during Conflict*. *PeerJ*, 6, E4831 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.4831>.

²⁰ Gretchen R. Perhamus and Jamie M. Ostrov, "Inhibitory Control in Early Childhood Aggression Subtypes: Mediation by Irritability," *Child Psychiatry & Human Development* 54, no. 2 (2023): 366–78, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-021-01254-y>; Miriam Romero-López et al., "Reducing Aggression by Developing Emotional and Inhibitory Control," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 10 (2021): 5263, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18105263>.

constructive communication follow.²¹ Furthermore, the tendency to draw and write indicates the symbolization of emotions, which helps individuals reorganize emotional experiences and reduce affective distress.²² A caregiver (T4) stated that these changes began to appear after children were provided with alternative ways of expressing emotions in a more directed manner, "*when feeling angry, uncomfortable, or having a problem with a friend, releasing emotions does not have to mean crying immediately; one can calm down first, or write, and then share the story with a caregiver or a trusted friend*". The caregiver's role as a facilitator underscores the importance of regulatory support from adults in the development of executive functions and impulse control.²³

This statement also indicates that the practice of making space is facilitated through deliberate pedagogical guidance. In line with contemporary developments in emotion regulation theory, the findings on the practice of *making space* in the Islamic Boarding School represent a form of *attentional deployment*. This attentional redirection strategy reduces the intensity of arousal before a behavioral response emerges.²⁴ However, *making space* within the Islamic Boarding School context appears to be a socially legitimized regulatory practice, facilitated by caregivers and embedded as a valid, normatively supported strategy within the structure of boarding life. Caregivers consciously support this process by refraining from direct intervention or immediate corrective action when children's emotions remain at high intensity. They allow children to pause by playing with peers, engaging in free movement, or withdrawing until they appear more emotionally settled. These findings align with recent systematic literature

²¹ Kateri McRae and James J. Gross, "Emotion Regulation," *Emotion* 20, no. 1 (2020): 1–9, <https://doi.org/doi:%252010.1037/emo0000703>.

²² Claire Brechet et al., "From Blank Page to Bright Mind: Comparing the Emotional Benefits of Drawing and Other Activities in Children," *Cognitive Development* 75 (2025): 101606, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2025.101606>; Jennifer E. Drake, "How Drawing to Distract Improves Mood in Children," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 622927, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.622927>; Yuki Matsumoto et al., "Preliminary Trial of a Well-Being Diary with Japanese Primary School Students," *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy* 4 (2024): 100066, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2024.100066>.

²³ Elin Marie Frivold Kostøl and Kristiina Mänty, "Co-Regulating the Child's Emotions in the Classroom: Teachers' Interpretations of and Decision-Making in Emotional Situations," *International Journal of Educational Research* 127 (2024): 102390, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2024.102390>; Judith Silkenbeumer et al., "Emotion Socialization in Early Childhood Education and Care—How Preschool Teachers Support Children's Emotion Regulation," *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy* 4 (2024): 100057, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2024.100057>.

²⁴ James J. Gross, "The Emerging Field of Emotion Regulation: An Integrative Review," *Review of General Psychology* 2, no. 3 (1998): 271–99, <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.271>.

that emphasizes the importance of integrating emotion regulation mechanisms and reflective practices into institutional policies.²⁵

In addition to the interpersonal level, the structure of daily activities also provides a reflective space that is separate from immediate emotional dynamics. Collective reflection, conducted on a scheduled basis at 4 pm, serves as a temporal space that enables children to process emotional experiences and behaviors in a calmer, more directed manner through interactive dialogue. The forum invites children to reflect, "*What good deeds have been done today?*" and "*Are there any mistakes that remain unresolved?*" (T3). This collective reflective activity demonstrates that emotional experiences are not merely remembered but reconstructed within a pedagogical framework that connects emotions, actions, and social responsibility, and is institutionally facilitated.

These findings offer a reading of emotion regulation that goes beyond an individual coping mechanism and considers psychological adaptability.²⁶ Reflective practices in the Islamic Boarding School are also enriched through a visual-reflective mechanism using the "*positive tree*" and the "*negative tree*". The visual pedagogical mechanism in Figure 3 represents children's various emotions by transforming them from abstract experiences into collective visual forms and symbolically interpreting their daily actions. Furthermore, this visualization serves as a pedagogical tool that externalizes affective experiences, thereby transforming emotional regulation into a publicly mediated moral practice. A caregiver (T2) also emphasized, "*We intentionally put up two large sheets of paper on the board, each with a picture of a tree. The positive tree is for children's good achievements throughout the day, while the negative tree is for behaviors that are less appropriate or considered to violate the agreed-upon rules.*"

²⁵ Guohong Xu et al., "A 2025 Systematic Review of Teacher Emotion Regulation and Well-Being: Implications for Student Engagement, Learning Outcomes, and Professional Development in EFL Contexts," *Frontiers in Psychology* 16 (2026): 1715266, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1715266>.

²⁶ Magdalena Kozubal et al., "Emotional Regulation Strategies in Daily Life: The Intensity of Emotions and Regulation Choice," *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (2023): 1218694, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1218694>; Luise Pruessner and Catherine NM Ortner, "Adaptiveness of Emotion Regulation Flexibility According to Long-Term Implications," *Journal of Affective Disorders* 379 (2025): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2025.02.114>.

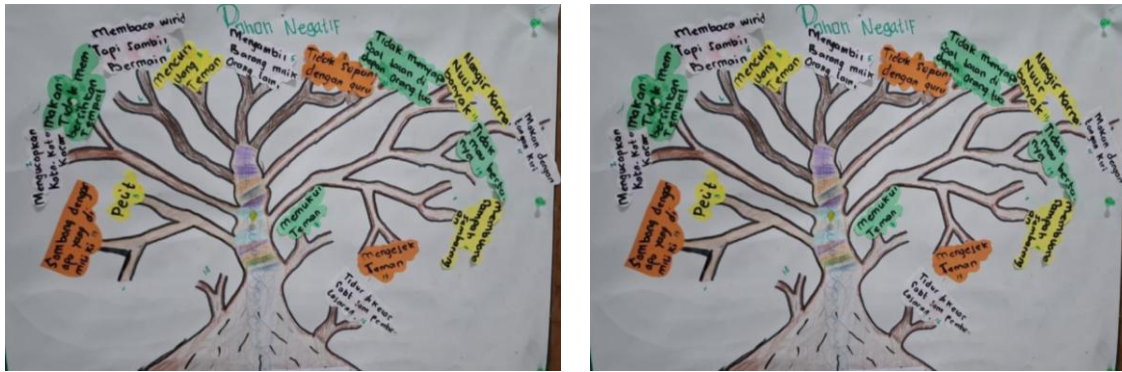


Figure 3. Positive and Negative Tree
(Source: Field Documentation)

The practice of *making space* (Figure 4) within the context of the children's Islamic Boarding School appears to be part of a programmed, facilitated reflective activity. Children are not directed to suppress or terminate emerging emotional conflicts immediately; rather, they are given space to process them before engaging in reflective dialogue. These findings indicate that the structure of daily activities in the Islamic Boarding School functions as a pedagogical mechanism that integrates emotion regulation into the rhythm of communal life. Through a temporal pause between emotional experiences and collective reflection, the Islamic Boarding School provides psychological conditions that enable more mature cognitive and moral processing. Thus, emotion regulation does not occur solely at the level of spontaneous interpersonal interaction, but is institutionalized through temporal structures and collective dialogue as part of everyday pedagogy.



Figure 4. Collective Reflection
(Source: Field Documentation)

From Impulsive Reactivity to Reflective Deliberation

After making space for processing emotional conflicts and engaging in structured reflective activities, improvements in children's emotion regulation capacities were observed. Caregivers noted that the children were "*more able to control themselves*" and no longer automatically discharged impulsive emotions when triggers emerged. These changes were evident not only in the context of peer relational tensions but also in children's broader adaptation to boarding life. A caregiver (T1) stated, "*At the beginning of their time in the Islamic Boarding School, several children frequently asked to go home because they still felt uncomfortable and had difficulty adapting; however, this frequency decreased significantly, along with a reduction in the intensity of emotional symptoms.*" This acknowledgment underscores an increased capacity to tolerate discomfort and to regulate emotions. These findings parallel quantitative studies on boarding students, indicating that emotion malleability beliefs, mediated by psychological resilience and the quality of peer relationships, are positively correlated with enhanced adaptive capacity.²⁷

Children's responses to violations of collective agreements also demonstrate a transformation in regulatory patterns. In certain cases, the consequences of a violation initially elicited tantrum responses; however, through a structured, reflective approach and joint reflection with parents, children became better prepared to accept the consequences and recommit to the shared agreements.²⁸ A caregiver (T3) explained, "*A child who violates certain agreements, such as leaving the Islamic Boarding School without permission, will be suspended at home to reflect together with their parents, until the child is ready and willing to return to the Islamic Boarding School.*" In this regard, longitudinal studies also support that the quality of family co-regulation can enhance children's emotional stability and social behavior.²⁹ Overall, the changes are evident in a shift from reactive emotional response patterns toward more deliberative responses. Children who previously responded directly when triggers emerged

²⁷ Yixuan Han et al., "The Relationship Between Emotion Malleability Beliefs and School Adaptation of Middle School Boarders: A Chain Mediating Effect of Psychological Resilience and Peer Relationships," *Behavioral Sciences* 15, no. 11 (2025): 1444, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15111444>.

²⁸ Karen De Raeymaecker and Monica Dhar, "The Influence of Parents on Emotion Regulation in Middle Childhood: A Systematic Review," *Children* 9, no. 8 (2022): 1200, <https://doi.org/10.3390/children9081200>.

²⁹ Baocheng Pan et al., "Parental Co-Parenting Quality, Children's Emotion Regulation Abilities, and Prosocial Behavior," *BMC Psychology* 13, no. 1 (2025): 635, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-02947-y>.

developed response patterns that involved pausing, processing, and considering before acting.

This shift signifies the development of more internalized emotion regulation capacities within the context of communal life in the Islamic Boarding School. This practice further demonstrates that making space is not merely a situational practice but part of a pedagogical interaction design that consistently facilitates reflective pauses, co-regulation, and the internalization of norms. Thus, the findings indicate the presence of an emotion pedagogy in the Islamic Boarding School, namely an educational practice that consciously cultivates emotion regulation competencies through institutionalized mechanisms of collective reflection.

Conclusion

The practice of *making space* within reflective activities constitutes part of an emotion pedagogy conceptualized in the daily lives of children in the Islamic Boarding School as a space for the production of reflective-deliberative emotional responses. The identified sources of emotional triggers tend to involve peer relations and transitions in daily activities, leading to impulsive reactivity characterized by crying, anger, and harsh verbal expressions. Making space appears as part of a pause awareness chosen by children in responding to emotional triggers by selecting momentary silence, withdrawal, writing, drawing, pausing play with peers, and engaging in free movement before articulating their emotions. A shift is evident in patterns of emotional responses from reactive to more deliberative responses after being mediated by the practice of making space.

Although this study was conducted within the context of a single Islamic Boarding School, the findings indicate that structured, institutionalized emotion regulation practices have the potential to serve as a model for strengthening emotion pedagogy in Islamic Boarding Schools more broadly. Therefore, Islamic Boarding School may consider explicitly integrating emotion regulation into their pedagogical design, not merely as an implicit implication of religious value transmission, but as a competency developed through structured, programmed, and institutionally legitimized practices within boarding life. Further research is recommended to expand the scope of inquiry through comparative and longitudinal studies, while also developing pedagogical models and structured instruments to examine and systematically integrate the practice of making space within pesantren education.

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