

## Development of an Assertive Training Module to Prevent Bullying on Islamic Boarding School

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study aims to develop an assertiveness training module to prevent bullying in Islamic boarding schools, addressing the need for culturally relevant interventions. While existing programs offer general social skills training, few are tailored to the unique environment of pondok pesantren. The Research and Development (R&D) method was chosen for this study. This study followed the Borg & Gall development model modified and simplified from ten to seven steps. Data were collected using a validation questionnaire assessed by material experts, media experts, and prospective users (Musyrifah). The results of the study showed that the assertive training module was declared feasible in terms of content and media based on validation by media experts (77%) and materials (71%), with a score of the category "feasible." In the next step, a limited field trial involving seven participants resulted in 81.78%, categorized as "Very Feasible." These results indicate that the module is acceptable and relevant to the intended educational environment. A small trial group, typical of developing-country contexts, limited the study. Further large-scale testing is recommended. This study presents an innovative, context-specific tool for bullying prevention in Islamic boarding schools. It contributes to the limited literature on culturally tailored educational interventions and offers a foundation for future development and wider application.*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan modul pelatihan asertif untuk mencegah perundungan di pesantren, dengan menjawab kebutuhan akan intervensi yang relevan secara budaya. Meskipun program yang ada menawarkan pelatihan keterampilan sosial umum, hanya sedikit yang dirancang khusus untuk lingkungan unik pesantren. Metode Penelitian dan Pengembangan (R&D) dipilih untuk penelitian ini. Penelitian ini mengikuti model pengembangan Borg & Gall yang dimodifikasi dan disederhanakan dari sepuluh menjadi tujuh langkah. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner validasi yang dinilai oleh ahli materi, ahli media, dan calon pengguna (*Musyrifah*). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa modul pelatihan asertif dinyatakan layak dari segi konten dan media berdasarkan validasi ahli media (77%) dan materi (71%), dengan skor kategori "layak". Pada tahap

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selanjutnya, uji coba lapangan terbatas yang melibatkan tujuh peserta menghasilkan 81,78%, yang dikategorikan "Sangat Layak". Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa modul tersebut dapat diterima dan relevan dengan lingkungan pendidikan yang dituju. Penelitian ini dibatasi oleh kelompok uji coba kecil, yang merupakan karakteristik konteks negara berkembang. Uji coba skala besar lebih lanjut direkomendasikan. Studi ini menyajikan sebuah perangkat inovatif yang spesifik konteks untuk pencegahan perundungan di pesantren. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada keterbatasan literatur tentang intervensi pendidikan yang disesuaikan dengan budaya dan menawarkan landasan bagi pengembangan di masa mendatang serta penerapan yang lebih luas.

**Keywords:** *Assertive Training, Prevent Bullying, Islamic Boarding School.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a persistent form of aggressive behavior that occurs in educational settings and poses a significant threat to students' psychological and emotional well-being. The phenomenon affects not only the victims but also disrupts the overall learning environment, leading to feelings of insecurity, social withdrawal, and decreased academic performance (Espelage & Swearer, 2009). Victims of bullying are more vulnerable to long-term mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation (Kowalski et al., 2014). As a psychosocial issue with global prevalence, bullying has become a key concern in the realm of child and adolescent development, particularly within educational institutions (Lai et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2019).

Although often associated with public or secular school systems, bullying is not exclusive to these environments. It is also prevalent in dormitory-based educational institutions, including Islamic Boarding School, or *Pesantren*, in Indonesia. The nature of Islamic Boarding School with its hierarchical structures, communal living, and intensive routines, can inadvertently contribute to increased risks of peer victimization and abusive behavior (Olweus & Limber, 2010; Pfeiffer & Piquart, 2014). In these environments, bullying is not consistently recognized as such. Instead, it may be disguised as discipline, jokes, or even misinterpreted religious traditions, blurring the line between authority and abuse.

A growing body of research reveals that bullying in boarding school settings often takes verbal and psychological forms, with students subjected to name-calling, exclusion, intimidation, and coercive seniority practices (Francia & Edling, 2017). Nugroho & Ainyfardhana (2018) revealed that 59% of Islamic boarding school students in Pekanbaru experienced verbal bullying, including being ignored or ridiculed. Of these, 19.5% reported incidents occurring more than once per week. This type of bullying is often normalized in Islamic Boarding School culture under the guise of *tabarrukan* (a tradition of reverence for seniors), leaving victims feeling powerless and unsupported.

More alarmingly, the frequency and severity of bullying cases in Islamic Boarding School have escalated recently. According to the Indonesian Education Monitoring

Network (JPPI), there were 573 cases of violence reported in educational institutions in 2024, with 31% categorized as bullying (Zuhriyah, 2024). In Central Java alone, 85 cases of bullying in Islamic boarding schools were recorded between 2021 and March 2025 (Fauziyah & Dennys, 2025). A tragic incident in Nganjuk exemplifies the extreme consequences of unchecked bullying: a 12-year-old student suffered a brain hemorrhage after physical abuse by his peers (Harianto, 2024). This incident underscored the urgent need for improved prevention and supervision mechanisms in the Islamic Boarding School system and a cultural shift in how bullying is understood and addressed.

Several factors contribute to the occurrence and perpetuation of bullying in Islamic Boarding School. These include inadequate adaptation support for new students, normalization of aggressive behaviors, unclear school policies, and insufficient adult supervision. Teachers or *musyrif/musyrifah* (dorm supervisors) sometimes dismiss reports of bullying as jokes or minor conflicts. This undermines students' trust in adult intervention and further reinforces a culture of silence (Mugove, 2017; Rigby, 2002). In some cases, students reported being punished after disclosing bullying incidents, which only intensifies their vulnerability and reluctance to seek help.

In response to these challenges, there is an urgent need for targeted interventions that empower students to assert their rights and protect themselves from peer victimization. One such approach that has gained increasing empirical support is assertiveness training. Assertiveness refers to the ability to express one's thoughts, feelings, and needs confidently and respectfully, without infringing upon the rights of others (Alberti & Emmons, 2008). It equips individuals with the social skills to communicate boundaries, resist peer pressure, and respond constructively to interpersonal conflicts.

Research has consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of assertiveness training in reducing bullying and improving students' psychological resilience. Avşar & Alkaya (2017) found that assertiveness training significantly improved adolescents' communication skills, increased self-confidence, and reduced tendencies toward social withdrawal. In the Indonesian context, Nafwari & Qudsyi (2024) reported that assertiveness training helped lower the incidence of bullying victimization among junior high school students, while enhancing their capacity to cope with peer aggression. Furthermore Eslami et al. (2016) highlighted that assertiveness training contributes to reductions in anxiety, depression, and stress, suggesting its broader applicability to emotional health promotion.

More importantly, recent efforts have explored the integration of assertiveness training into Islamic Boarding School settings. According to Hidayatullah (2023), assertiveness can make the Islamic boarding school environment comfortable and safe for students. Despite these promising developments, most assertiveness training models remain generalized and lack specific adaptation to the Islamic Boarding School environment. As traditional Islamic educational institutions, Islamic Boarding School are governed by strong communal values, hierarchical leadership, and a unique blend of religious and moral teachings. These characteristics require that any intervention in social skills be carefully contextualized, both in content and delivery method. An assertiveness training module developed for Islamic Boarding School must respect the values of *adab* (manners) and *akhlaq* (moral character) while promoting student agency and emotional strength.

Furthermore, bullying prevention efforts must rely on reactive policies or disciplinary measures and include proactive, educational strategies aimed at equipping students with

life skills. Assertiveness training, grounded in Islamic ethical teachings, can empower *santri* to engage in respectful communication, protect their dignity, and support their peers in doing the same. Assertiveness is a core component of emotional intelligence and interpersonal problem-solving, essential for healthy social adaptation during adolescence (Keliat et al., 2015).

Developing a contextualized assertiveness training module for *santri* is both timely and essential. This study aims to design an Islamic-based training module that integrates assertive communication strategies with reflective activities, spiritual reinforcement, and discussions rooted in Islamic teachings. The module is expected to serve as a preventive and promotive tool to address bullying and enhance the moral and psychological development of *santri*. It is intended for sustainable implementation through school counseling programs, character education, or group training sessions facilitated by teachers or *musyrif/musyrifah*.

The module seeks to foster a safe, inclusive, and ethically grounded school culture by involving educators, religious mentors, and students in a collaborative process. Its successful implementation could be a model for other Islamic educational institutions, including madrasahs and boarding schools. Grounded in cultural and religious values, this assertiveness training is expected to empower *santri*, promote respectful relationships, and create a supportive learning environment. Ultimately, this initiative aspires to cultivate a generation of youth capable of navigating social challenges with dignity, empathy, and moral clarity.

## II. METHOD

This study was conducted at Darul Hikmah Islamic Boarding School, located in Tulungagung, East Java. The school was selected based on contextual relevance to the issue of bullying in communal educational environments, where students live and interact intensively within a closed social setting. Such environments, typical of Islamic Boarding School, present unique interpersonal dynamics that may increase both the risk of peer bullying and the need for assertive communication skills. In addition, Darul Hikmah is one of the largest Islamic Boarding School in the Tulungagung area, with more than one thousand students, and holds significant influence within the local community. This prominence further reinforces the importance and potential impact of implementing assertiveness-based interventions in such a socially central institution.

This study uses a Research and Development (R&D) approach modified from the educational development model of Borg & Gall (1984). This model has been widely adapted in the context of developing educational products based on user needs and field validity testing. In this study, the Borg & Gall model is simplified into seven main stages, which are considered relevant to the needs and resources of the study (Sugiyono, 2019). The seven stages are as follows: 1) determining the problem; 2) planning; 3) designing a product prototype; 4) conducting expert tests; 5) product revision; 6) product user trials; 7) product revision.

The subjects involved in the trial phase of this study included a content expert holding at least a master's degree in guidance and counseling, with a minimum of three years of professional experience; a media expert with a minimum of a master's degree in instructional media and at least three years of relevant experience; and seven prospective users of the product, consisting of *Musyrifah* (female student mentors). These

participants were purposively selected based on their qualifications, expertise, and relevance to the objectives of the study. Their involvement was crucial for ensuring the content validity, media feasibility, and practical usability of the developed assertive training module.

The data collected in this study include both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were obtained from the average scores of validation sheets and student response questionnaires, which were used to assess the level of acceptance of the module. Meanwhile, qualitative data consisted of suggestions, critiques, and feedback from the validators, which served as considerations for revising the assertiveness training module to better align with student needs.

The data collection instrument used was a validation questionnaire administered to two experts: a content expert and a media expert. Comments and suggestions included in the validation sheets were used as a basis for improving the module. In addition, the *musyrifah* who were the subjects of the trial were asked to fill out a questionnaire to evaluate the module. Their responses were also used to assess the module's acceptability and to provide additional input for further revision. The instrument blueprint is presented in Table 1, 2, and 3.

**Table 1. Blueprint of the validation questionnaire by the content expert**

No	Indikator	Sub Indikator
1	Content Appropriateness	Alignment of the material with learning objectives Practice questions reflect the intended competencies Practice questions are relevant to the presented material
2	Language Appropriateness	Clear and concise language Communicative style Dialogic and interactive expressions Suitability with students' language abilities Compliance with standard language conventions
3	Presentation Appropriateness	Material is presented in a logical sequence The module is organized systematically The presentation emphasizes student-centeredness and engagement Illustrations are relevant and aligned with the content

**Table 2. Blueprint of the validation questionnaire by the media expert**

No	Indicator	Sub Indikator
1	Book Size	Size
2	Book Cover Design	Book cover layout Cover typography Cover illustration
3	Book Content Design	Content layout Content typography Content illustration

**Table 3. Blueprint of the questionnaire for prospective product users**

No	Aspect	Indicator
1	Usefulness	Flexibility of the assertive module Module novelty The module helps students understand the material
2	Content	Completeness of material with relevant examples Content accuracy
3	Language	Use of religious terminology Typography of the content

According to Masyhud (2014) the assessment data from the experts were then analyzed using the percentage formula as follows.

$$\frac{\sum \text{Average score obtained}}{\sum \text{Average ideal score}} \times 100\%$$

Based on the average results, the level of acceptance was categorized according to the criteria in table 4.

**Table 4. Product feasibility categories**

No	Percentage Score Interval	Product Feasibility Category
1	81 – 100%	Highly Feasible
2	61 – 80%	Feasible
3	41 – 60%	Fairly Feasible
4	21 – 40%	Less Feasible
5	0 – 20%	Not Feasible

A product is said to be feasible and can be used if based on expert test assessments it at least shows a sufficient assessment for all criteria.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Development of an Assertive Training Module

##### *Determining the Problem*

The initial stage of this research focused on identifying the bullying issues that occur within the Islamic boarding school environment, particularly those linked to students' limited assertiveness skills. Data were collected using qualitative methods, including interviews and observations. Specifically, interviews were conducted with three students, four *musyrifah*, and two Islamic boarding school administrators, all selected purposively based on their direct experience with interpersonal conflicts and disciplinary cases in the boarding school.

To support this, researchers also carried out four separate observation sessions within the school environment, focusing on daily interactions in dormitories, classrooms, and communal areas. The collected data were then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, including data reduction, categorization, and coding to identify recurring patterns and issues.

Findings revealed that some students tend to avoid expressing disagreement or reporting inappropriate behavior due to fear of being judged or punished. In contrast, others express themselves through verbal aggression or passive resistance. One student stated,

"If we speak up, sometimes we're labeled as rebellious, so we just stay quiet—even when it's not fair." A *musyrifah* shared, "There are students who bottle up their feelings and suddenly explode. They're afraid of being judged if they speak their minds early on." An administrator added, "The problem is not just behavior, but also their lack of communication skills to express their boundaries respectfully."

These findings highlight the urgency of equipping *santri* with assertiveness training that is culturally and religiously contextualized to help them develop healthier interpersonal communication and prevent bullying behavior rooted in communication failure or emotional suppression.

### ***Planning***

In the planning stage of the Borg and Gall development model, the assertiveness training module for *santri* in Islamic Boarding School was systematically and structurally designed through several measurable steps. *First*, a needs analysis was conducted through field observations and literature review to understand the core issues faced by *santri* related to assertive behavior, particularly within the unique social and cultural context of the Islamic Boarding School. Initial data were gathered through observations of *santri's* interpersonal behavior, interviews with *musyrif/musyrifah*, and a review of documents related to bullying cases within the boarding school environment.

Based on the results of this needs identification, a detailed development plan was formulated with the primary goal of creating an assertiveness training module grounded in Islamic values and relevant to the daily lives of *santri*. The initial module design adopted an integrative approach that combined Islamic content and assertive theory. The module structure was carefully planned, beginning with the formulation of learning objectives, selection of core materials, determination of delivery methods, and design of evaluation formats. This planning phase serves as a crucial foundation before proceeding to the next step, the development of the preliminary product, ensuring that the module is genuinely responsive to the needs and context of *santri* in Islamic boarding schools.

### ***Designing the Product Prototype***

Based on the planning results, the researcher developed a prototype of the assertiveness training module, which includes instructional materials, learning activities, participant worksheets, and a facilitator guide. The module was designed using an active learning approach and the integration of Islamic values to align with the characteristics of Islamic Boarding School. The module content includes an introduction to assertiveness concepts, self-expression exercises, role-playing activities, and spiritual reflection sessions. We design the module using the Canva application. Once the design is complete, the next step is to conduct validation tests with material and media experts. After that, we revise the product based on the experts' feedback.

### ***Expert Validation***

The assessment in this validation was conducted using two approaches: quantitative, which involved a Likert scale-based instrument to numerically measure feasibility, and qualitative, which included feedback such as criticism, suggestions, and recommendations from the validators. The validation data of the material and media expert was obtained from the results of filling out the questionnaire by the material and media expert. This validation instrument consists of 20 statements.

In the material experts, the assessment was based on three leading indicators: content feasibility, language feasibility, and presentation feasibility, each comprising several sub-indicators. The percentage score obtained was 71%, with an average score of 3.55.

Based on the established criteria, 71% were in the feasible category. This indicates that from an academic standpoint, the module is considered suitable for use. The module was assessed to be well-aligned with its objectives, used language that is generally communicative and appropriate for *santri*, and presented content coherently and systematically, supported by relevant illustrations. Although some sub-indicators received lower scores—such as "the extent to which exercises represent what is being measured" and "communicativeness"—the overall score reflects a high level of quality. These results suggest that the module is ready for further trial stages with only minor revisions needed.

Widya Multisari, M.Pd., as a material expert, recommended that evaluation columns should not be placed only at the end of the module but also be included after each reflection section to assess students' understanding more effectively. Based on her review, the expert concluded that the module is highly suitable for use with minor revisions, indicating that it generally meets the required standards while still needing slight improvements in the evaluative aspect.

The results of the media expert's evaluation of the assertiveness training module, based on three leading indicators: book size, cover design, and content layout. The assessment included several sub-indicators such as layout, typography, and illustrations for both the cover and the internal content. The total score obtained was 77, with an average score of 3.85, which translates to a 77% achievement rate.

According to the feasibility criteria, this score falls into the feasible category. This indicates that, from a visual and design standpoint, the module meets the necessary standards for educational use. Certain elements, such as the content layout and cover typography, received high scores, highlighting the module's strengths in visual presentation. However, some aspects, such as the cover illustration, received lower scores and may benefit from minor improvements. Overall, the module is considered suitable for use and could be enhanced further through refinement of specific design components.

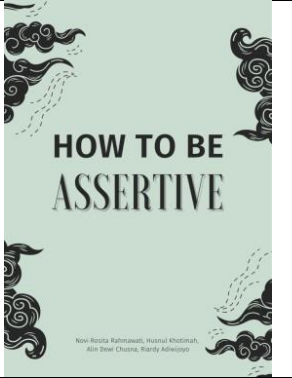
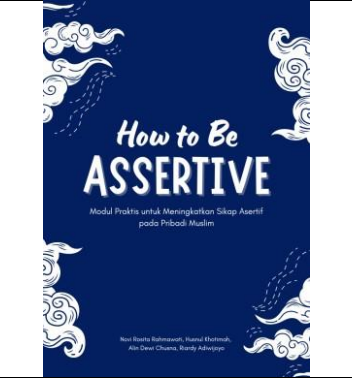




Muhammad Luqman Hakim, M.Pd., as a media expert, provided input regarding the visual and aesthetic aspects of the module. Key suggestions include improving the cover design to make it more appealing, adding a brief description of the module content beneath the title, and using varied visual elements in each section to create a more engaging appearance. Additionally, it was recommended that the fonts used for Qur'anic verses and Hadiths be aligned with the fonts used in the rest of the content to maintain visual consistency. For key points, the expert suggested using colored backgrounds or visual effects to enhance comprehension. Based on this evaluation, the module was deemed highly suitable for use with revisions.

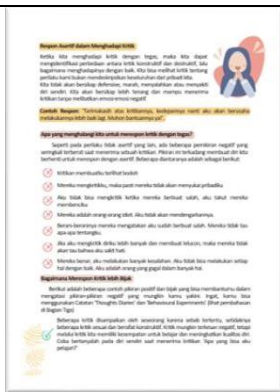
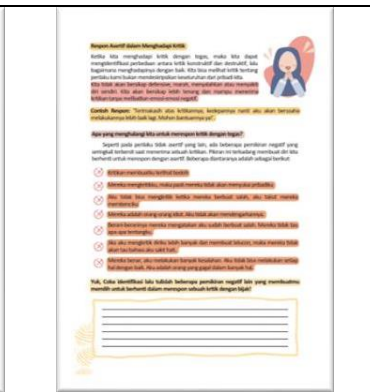
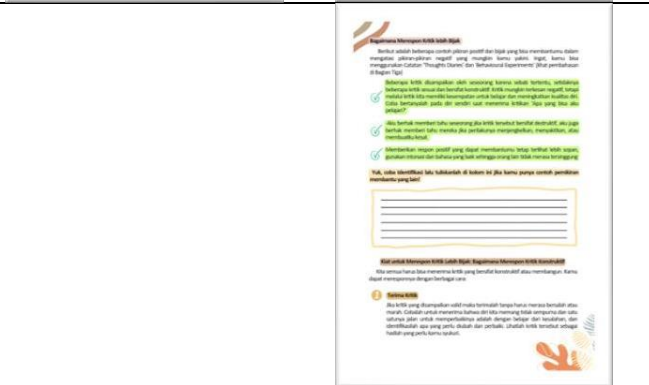
### ***Product Revision***

The results of expert validation served as the basis for module revision. Revisions were made in several areas, such as simplifying psychological terminology to ensure better understanding among students, adding real-life case examples, and more explicitly integrating Islamic teachings into the training activities. These revisions aimed to enhance the module's quality both substantively and pedagogically. In terms of media

design, the media expert recommended that each section include varied visual elements to increase appeal, and suggested adjusting the font used for Quranic verses or Hadiths to maintain appropriate aesthetic and readability. At this revision stage, researchers received input and suggestions from the validator on product study, which has already been developed, that is, module Assertive Training. Revision results from the validator can be seen in Table regarding Results Revision Expert Media.

**Table 5. Result revision**

No	Points Which Revised	Before Revised	After Revised
1	<p>a. Pay attention to the module cover design, give an appealing impression.</p> <p>b. Write a brief description related to the module's content at the bottom of the title (not just the title alone).</p>		
2	<p>a. Create an appealing appearance at the beginning of each material.</p> <p>b. Use different elements for each material to create an engaging impression.</p> <p>c. Adjust the font used for Quranic verses or Hadiths to match the font used in other content.</p>		
3	<p>a. Use different colored backgrounds or effects for important points to facilitate understanding.</p>		

<p>4 a. To achieve greater maturity in measuring the level of comprehension, evaluation columns should not only be included at the end but also included for each reflection material</p>		
		

**Product User Testing**

The revised module was pilot-tested with seven *Musyrifah* (female mentors) at Darul Hikmah Islamic Boarding School, Tulungagung. The trial was conducted over three training sessions and was accompanied by an evaluation sheet covering aspects such as material comprehension, engagement in activities, and perceived benefits of the training. Qualitative data were also collected through interviews and observations of students' behavior during the sessions. The questionnaire responses from prospective product users yielded a score of 81,78%. According to the feasibility criteria, this score falls within the "Highly Feasible" range, indicating that the module is usable. Based on these validation results, the Assertive Training module is considered suitable for implementation.

Following revisions based on input from media and content experts and limited trials with seven *musyrifah*, several additional suggestions are proposed to enhance the assertive training module further. These include developing a more detailed facilitator guide, incorporating supporting media such as videos or audio recordings, and adjusting the level of difficulty based on *santri's* age and cognitive development. It is also recommended to integrate self-reflection sheets after each session, create a simplified companion module for parents and teachers, and contextualize the content by incorporating local traditions and Islamic Boarding School culture to increase relevance and engagement.

**Product Revision**

The second revision stage was conducted after a limited trial with seven *musyrifah* as prospective users. This stage focused on practical implementation aspects, such as refining the delivery methods, adjusting the training duration to fit Islamic Boarding School schedules, and adding more interactive and reflective activities tailored to the

needs of *santri*. These enhancements aimed to ensure the module's effectiveness, adaptability, and sustainability in diverse Islamic Boarding School contexts.

The following is a comparison table of the two stages of the revision of the assertive training module for Islamic boarding school students:

**Table 6. comparison of the first and second stage revisions**

Aspect	First Revision Stage (Based on Expert Validation)	Second Revision Stage (Following Trial with <i>Musyrifah</i> )
Basis of Revision	Validation by content and media experts	Results of limited trial with 7 <i>musyrifah</i>
Content Focus	Simplification of psychological terms; addition of real-life case examples	Adjustment of session duration and communication approach based on field experience
Islamic Values	Explicit integration of Islamic values into each session	Emphasis on the relevance of activities to students' spiritual lives
Visual and Typography Design	Improvements to layout, font consistency for Qur'anic verses and Hadiths, varied designs	Addition of interactive visuals such as icons or symbols for activities
module format and structure	Addition of a brief description below the title; systematic organization of content	Inclusion of self-reflection sheets after each session
Evaluation and Reflection	Suggestion to add evaluation sections for each session by expert reviewers	Strengthened evaluation through personal reflection and direct feedback from <i>musyrifah</i>
Impact of revisions	Enhanced content quality and visual appeal of the module	Improved readiness and applicability of the module in real Islamic Boarding School settings

This comparison highlights how each revision stage addressed different areas of improvement, collectively contributing to a more effective, relevant, and contextually grounded training module.

### **Assertiveness Training Module to Prevent Bullying in Islamic Boarding Schools**

At the problem identification stage, it was found that a lack of assertiveness contributed to the emergence of bullying behavior and passive conflict among *santri* (Islamic boarding school students). One student stated, "Sometimes we don't know how to express disagreement..." (Student Interview 2). This finding was reinforced by a *Musyrifah* (female student mentor) who remarked, "Many students cannot say 'no'; as a result, they feel forced or end up exploding when they can no longer tolerate the situation." (*Musyrifah* Interview 1). These findings are consistent with the study by Aini & Yati (2019), which noted that students with low assertiveness skills tend to exhibit passive or aggressive behavior as a form of emotional release.

Based on the interviews, it was also revealed that some students were afraid to express their opinions or refuse inappropriate requests due to fear of being negatively labeled. This indicates that low assertive communication skills are a contributing factor to aggressive behavior and bullying among students. This finding is supported by (Maulia et al., 2021), which found that low assertiveness skills correlate with an increased tendency toward bullying behavior, both physical and verbal. The collective nature of Islamic boarding schools requires the development of healthy interpersonal skills, including the confidence to express opinions and emotions appropriately.

One of the essential developmental principles to consider revolves around focusing on the potential, development, and needs of students and their environment (Indaryanti et

al., 2008). This study aimed to develop a media tool in the form of a module to help students develop assertive behavior. As there are typically no counselors in Islamic boarding schools, this module could be utilized by supervisors (*Musyrifah*) as facilitators in guiding students' use of the module. Therefore, the module's content was developed to meet students' needs regarding assertive behavior. Each section of the module includes activity instructions, exercises, and student assessments, making it easy for guidance counselors/ teachers to implement. The module is crafted using simple language and common terminology for easy understanding by students.

Preliminary trials involving seven *Musyrifah* revealed that participants perceived the module as equipping them with practical skills for handling conflict situations. One respondent stated, "The material is easy to understand, there are case examples, and the practical exercises make me feel more confident." (*Musyrifah* Interview). This aligns with findings by (Pramesti, 2016), which indicated that the use of simulations and role-playing in assertiveness training significantly enhances participants' self-confidence.

From a media perspective, the use of varied visual designs—such as icons, background colors for key points, and consistent typography—contributed to increasing participants' interest in the module. According to the media expert validation results, visual elements supported the clarity and comprehensibility of the module content. These findings are supported by a study by (Mayer, 2020), which explained that the integration of visual elements in instructional media has a positive impact on learners' information processing and retention.

In the feasibility evaluation, both the content expert and media expert concluded that the module was categorized as "feasible with minor revisions." Suggestions such as adding an evaluation component at the end of each session and adjusting the font used for Qur'anic verses and Hadith were accommodated in the first revision phase. This indicates that the development process adhered to the principles of responsive, feedback-based instructional design (Gall et al., 2006). The second revision phase, conducted after user trials, also led to several enhancements, including the addition of reflection sheets, adjustments to training time to align with the boarding school schedule, and the development of a more detailed facilitator guide.

Validation by the content expert yielded an average score of 3.55 (71%), categorized as "feasible," with the recommendation to include session-based evaluations: "Periodic evaluations are needed, not only at the end of the module..." These findings are in line with the study by (Kamilah et al., 2025), which highlighted the positive effects of formative evaluation. The media aspect received a score of 3.85 (77%), also categorized as "feasible." The media expert provided key feedback regarding visual layout, design variation between sessions, and consistency in the Qur'anic font.

The media validation results indicated an average score of 3.85 (77%), placing the module in the "feasible" category for use. This assessment covered aspects of visual design, including book size, cover design, content layout, typography, and illustrations. Expert evaluation suggested that the content layout and cover typography were of high quality, while the cover illustration still had room for improvement.

According to the aesthetic-usability effect theory, aesthetically pleasing designs not only enhance visual appeal but are also perceived as easier to use and understand (Pavlas et al., 2010; Yong et al., 2016). This is further supported by eye-tracking studies that found interface layouts incorporating emotionally positive elements—such as warm colors and anthropomorphic shapes—help to improve cognitive focus and learning

performance (Peng et al., 2021). Similarly, a meta-review on emotional design in multimedia concluded that the use of emotionally engaging colors and visual elements can significantly strengthen knowledge retention and transfer (Li et al., 2020; Mutlu-Bayraktar, 2024).

In the context of the Islamic Boarding School module, the consistent use of font—particularly for Qur'anic verses and Hadith—enhances readability while preserving a reflective aesthetic impression. This type of visual design aligns with Norman's three levels of design (visceral, behavioral, and reflective): the module is not only visually appealing, but also functionally practical and capable of establishing an emotional connection with users.

Other studies also emphasize that well-designed interface aesthetics reduce users' cognitive load, thereby enabling more efficient comprehension of learning materials (Priyadarshini, 2024). In addition, Sauer & Sonderegger (2011) assert that aesthetic design enhances user comfort and motivation, making learning modules more effective.

Overall, the two research questions—namely, the development procedure and media feasibility—have been addressed. The development process was conducted systematically and grounded in field data, while the module's feasibility has been academically and visually validated. Recommendations for future development include improving session-based evaluations, enhancing the facilitator guide, developing supplementary modules, and incorporating interactive media elements to increase the module's adaptability and effectiveness within the Islamic Boarding School environment. These improvements would support the module's trial implementation with prospective users.

The limited trial conducted with seven *Musyrifah* at Darul Hikmah Islamic Boarding School yielded a score of 81,78%, categorized as Highly Feasible. This reinforces the previous validation findings from both content and media experts. These results demonstrate the alignment between theoretical validation and practical acceptance in the field, indicating that the module is not only feasible from an academic standpoint but also applicable in real-world educational settings.

Recommendations from initial users highlighting the need for non-digital methods are highly relevant, considering that Islamic Boarding School generally avoid the use of devices such as mobile phones. Therefore, the module was developed using a low-tech but high-engagement approach—relying on group discussions, role-play activities, written reflection sheets, scenario cards, and posters. This approach aligns with findings from studies conducted in Islamic Boarding School and school settings, such as Yuhbaba et al. (2022), which demonstrated the effectiveness of assertiveness training in Islamic boarding schools through group-based methods without technological assistance, and (Lubis, 2020), who found that group-based assertiveness training effectively improved students' interpersonal skills.

The material was adapted to suit the age and cognitive levels of the *santri*, with session-based self-reflection components. The literature suggests that assertiveness exercises are practical in enhancing self-confidence, self-disclosure, and reducing stress or anxiety among adolescents and university students (Zahra & Wangid, 2025). Overall, the results of the practical trials confirm the expert validation, reinforcing that the module is feasible in terms of both media and content, and is well-suited for implementation in the Islamic Boarding School context.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the assertiveness training module for *santri* in Islamic boarding schools, developed using the Borg and Gall model, has met the criteria for both content and media feasibility. Validation by content and media experts indicated that the module is suitable for use, with minor revisions that enhanced the quality of both its substance and visual presentation. The module not only addresses the specific need to improve assertive communication skills among *santri* within the Islamic Boarding School context, but is also designed with an integrative approach grounded in Islamic values and active learning methods. The strength of the design lies in its integration of reflective content, practical exercises, and an aesthetic, communicative visual layout. Considering the unique characteristics of the Islamic Boarding School environment and feedback from initial user trials, this assertiveness training module demonstrates strong potential for broader implementation. Enhancements such as the inclusion of non-digital learning tools, culturally adapted activities, and structured facilitator support contribute to making the module not only feasible but also contextually relevant and sustainable over time. Future research may involve wider-scale trials to evaluate the module's effectiveness in preventing bullying and enhancing assertiveness skills in Islamic boarding school settings.

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