

## Sociology of Educational Institutions: Restorative Discipline Practices in Handling Student Conflict in Madrasah Tsanawiyah

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines restorative discipline practices in handling student conflict at MTs Ma'arif NU 3 Kemranjen through the sociology of educational institutions. The study responds to a continuing problem in school discipline: educational institutions are expected to maintain order, yet punitive sanctions can weaken students' psychological safety, social trust, and moral responsibility. Using a qualitative embedded case-study design, data were collected through direct observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews with the madrasah principal, the guidance and counseling teacher, and a student who had experienced mediation. The findings show that student conflict was resolved through staged dialogue, individual clarification, joint mediation, and apology; guidance and counseling teachers and homeroom teachers functioned as facilitators of relationship repair; and students gradually understood the social consequences of their actions for victims and classroom solidarity. The article argues that restorative discipline strengthens social responsibility more effectively than conventional punishment because it combines accountability, empathy, institutional coordination, and moral learning. Its contribution lies in explaining how an Islamic junior high school can transform discipline from coercive control into a relational mechanism for rebuilding social order.

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## 1. Introduction

Educational institutions now face a central disciplinary dilemma: they must maintain social order while protecting students' dignity and psychological well-being. This dilemma is important because school discipline is not merely a technical matter of enforcing rules; it is also a sociological process through which institutions define authority, belonging, and acceptable conduct. Studies on exclusionary discipline show that punitive measures may produce compliance but can also damage mental health, weaken school attachment, and reproduce social distance between students and educators (Eyllon et al., 2022; Samimi et al., 2023). At MTs Ma'arif NU 3 Kemranjen, initial field observations indicate a shift from physical sanctions and rigid rule enforcement toward restorative discipline. The guidance and counseling room is no longer treated as a frightening site of punishment but as a mediation space. Therefore, this article positions discipline as an institutional practice for restoring social relations rather than merely controlling misbehavior.

The reason restorative discipline is sociologically relevant is that conflict among students often reflects disrupted relationships, peer-group pressure, and fragile moral communication rather than simple disobedience. Educational sociology views schools as moral communities where students learn identity, solidarity, authority, and responsibility through daily interaction (Ballantine et al., 2021; Plummer, 2021).

Recent studies of restorative practices show positive effects on school climate, student support, and reductions in discipline incidents when schools combine accountability with dialogue and relationship repair (Gregory et al., 2022; Gregory et al., 2024; Lodi et al., 2022). This perspective is consistent with research on child-friendly madrasah policy and violence prevention in Islamic education, where discipline must be connected to care, guidance, and institutional values (Hanif, 2021; Munjidah & Hanif, 2022). Thus, the madrasah becomes a significant site for examining how social order is rebuilt after conflict.

Previous studies still leave an academic gap in explaining how restorative discipline operates within Indonesian Islamic junior high schools. Much of the literature examines formal school policy, administrative compliance, program effectiveness, or quantitative change in discipline records, while fewer studies explain the micro-social process through which teachers, victims, perpetrators, classmates, and parents negotiate meaning after a conflict. Evidence from restorative justice research confirms that implementation depends not only on written rules but also on leadership, staff capacity, emotional safety, and shared institutional culture (Fine, 2024; Kim et al., 2024; Martinez et al., 2022). In the madrasah context, this gap is sharper because religious identity, communal values, and teacher-student hierarchy shape how students interpret apology, guilt, forgiveness, and responsibility. Consequently, this study asks how restorative discipline works as a social mechanism inside the institution, not only as a behavioral intervention.

This article has three objectives that respond directly to the identified gap. First, it analyzes how student disputes are resolved through dialogue, clarification, and honest apology. Second, it explains the role of guidance and counseling teachers and homeroom teachers as facilitators of social relationship recovery. Third, it examines how students understand the real impact of their actions on victims and the classroom community. These objectives are supported by research showing that restorative circles, peer-based relations, and mediated dialogue can improve students' socio-emotional learning and reduce the dominance of purely punitive discipline (Garnett et al., 2022; Joseph-McCatty & Hnilica, 2023; Mas-Exposito et al., 2022). The argument advanced here is that restorative discipline is more effective than punishment alone because it transforms rule enforcement into moral learning, social repair, and collective responsibility within the madrasah community.

## 2. Methods

This study selected MTs Ma'arif NU 3 Kemranjen because the institution had already practiced conflict handling through dialogue, clarification, and apology. The point of this site selection was not to claim that the madrasah represents all Islamic schools, but to examine a meaningful case where restorative discipline is visible in everyday institutional governance. The reason is that a case becomes analytically valuable when it allows researchers to observe how actors produce meaning, negotiate norms, and build order in a specific context (Creswell, 2021; Small & Calarco, 2022). Field evidence showed that the madrasah combined child-friendly rules, the Love-Based Curriculum, and non-punitive guidance practices in handling

student conflict. Therefore, MTs Ma'arif NU 3 Kemranjen offered a relevant setting for studying discipline as a relational and institutional process.

The research used a qualitative approach with an embedded case-study design. This design was appropriate because the study sought to understand the process, meaning, and interactional dynamics of restorative discipline rather than to measure the statistical frequency of violations. Qualitative inquiry is especially useful when researchers must interpret lived experience, institutional language, and the contextual logic of social action (Cyr & Goodman, 2024; Liamputtong, 2023). In this study, the embedded units of analysis consisted of student conflict resolution, teacher facilitation, and students' moral awareness after mediation. This structure enabled the researcher to examine the madrasah as a whole institution while also analyzing the specific actors and events inside it. As a result, the method strengthened the link between sociological theory and field-based educational practice.

Primary data were obtained through direct observation and in-depth interviews, while secondary data were gathered from school documents, guidance and counseling case notes, and administrative records. The reason for combining these sources was to avoid relying on one-sided narratives and to construct a more credible account of the conflict-handling process. Qualitative interviewing is valuable because it produces conversational knowledge, allowing participants to explain motives, feelings, procedures, and institutional interpretations in their own terms (Brinkmann, 2022). The key informants were the madrasah principal, the guidance and counseling teacher Mrs. Erna Fitriarningsih, and a student representative, Ms. Risma, who had experienced mediation. These participants were selected purposively because they were directly involved in the restorative discipline process and could provide evidence about authority, student experience, and institutional policy.

Data collection and analysis were organized around three dimensions of evidence: the mediation process, the facilitator role, and the growth of student responsibility. Observation focused on how students were separated, questioned individually, brought into dialogue, and encouraged to apologize. Interviews explored how teachers positioned themselves as mentors, companions, and institutional guardians. Documentation was used to compare interview statements with recorded cases and school procedures. The analysis followed a thematic logic by identifying patterns of dialogue, emotional safety, coordination, and moral learning, while also considering trauma-sensitive principles because student conflict involves vulnerability and possible shame (Alman, 2024; Wolgemuth et al., 2024). This process allowed the study to produce a disciplined interpretation: restorative discipline worked not because it ignored violations, but because it converted violations into opportunities for accountability and social repair.

### **3. Literature Review**

#### **A. Restorative Discipline**

Restorative discipline is the main theoretical concept used to interpret order formation in the madrasah. Its point of departure is that a rule violation is not

only a breach of institutional regulation but also a disruption of relationships among students, teachers, and the classroom community. This reasoning differs from punitive discipline, which tends to define misbehavior as an individual fault requiring sanction. Restorative approaches instead ask who was harmed, what obligations arise, and how relationships can be repaired. International studies show that restorative practices reduce school violence, support emotional well-being, and create structured spaces for student voice and accountability (Alonso-Rodriguez et al., 2025; Lodi et al., 2022). In the madrasah context, this framework is connected to the cultivation of group values, religious identity, and social integration (Hanif, 2021; Munjidah & Hanif, 2022). Thus, restorative discipline functions as a moral and sociological mechanism for rebuilding order.

The practical reason restorative discipline is important lies in its capacity to involve all parties affected by conflict. Perpetrators, victims, educators, peers, and sometimes parents are treated as members of one moral community rather than as isolated legal subjects. Evidence from restorative classroom circles and case-study schools shows that such practices improve communication, strengthen students' perceptions of support, and reduce reliance on exclusionary sanctions (Garnett et al., 2022; Joseph-McCatty & Hnilica, 2023; Watts & Robertson, 2022). In this study, the counseling room became the institutional site where horizontal communication could occur, echoing Hanif's argument that pesantren-based counseling values can support empathy and distributive justice in student guidance (Hanif, 2017). Therefore, restorative discipline transforms the school from an apparatus of retribution into a space of redress, learning, and renewed social bonds (Hanif & Nurhayati, 2024).

### **B. Student Conflict**

Student conflict is used in this article to explain how adolescent behavior is shaped by institutional governance, peer relations, classroom culture, and social expectations. The point is that conflict should not be viewed only as deviance that must be eliminated quickly; it can also reveal a process of value adjustment and competing definitions of dignity, loyalty, and justice among students. This interpretation is consistent with educational sociology, which reads conflict as part of the school community's internal life (Budirahayu, 2022; Hanif, 2018). In Islamic educational institutions, the problem becomes more complex because norms of respect, shame, obedience, and communal harmony interact with adolescent identity formation (Hanif et al., 2023). Therefore, student conflict is analytically significant because it exposes how a madrasah manages tension between social control and moral education.

The categories of student conflict in this study include daily disciplinary violations, verbal bullying, peer provocation, changes in classroom interaction, and resistance to school rules. These forms matter because school violence is rarely sustained by a single actor; it often involves followers, defenders, outsiders, and peer audiences who shape whether conflict escalates or stops (Imuta et al., 2022). Studies on bullying prevention in Islamic boarding schools also show that religious institutions require preventive strategies that combine

supervision, empathy, and shared values rather than mere punishment (Arif et al., 2024; Suud et al., 2025). Hanif's analysis of peer-group social control supports this view by showing that student discipline is affected by group approval, informal norms, and collective response to authority (Hanif, 2020). Consequently, restorative discipline must address the wider classroom ecosystem, not only the individual offender.

### C. Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is adopted as an analytical concept for assessing whether restorative discipline produces deeper change than outward obedience. The point is that discipline becomes educational only when students recognize their role, obligations, and impact on others. Fear-based compliance may stop a violation temporarily, but it does not necessarily build moral agency or social care. Hanif argues that Islamic educational institutions must be analyzed through their structural and functional capacity to form character and social order (Hanif, 2014). More recent studies also indicate that restorative practices are linked to socio-emotional well-being, racial and social justice, and more supportive school climates (Huguley et al., 2022; Gregory et al., 2024). In this article, social responsibility refers to students' ability to admit mistakes, understand harm, restore interaction, and participate in classroom harmony after conflict (Hanif & Nugroho, 2025).

Indicators of social responsibility include post-conflict behavioral change, willingness to apologize, renewed interaction with victims, and reduced repetition of harmful conduct. The reason these indicators are important is that restorative discipline should not end with a formal settlement; it must influence students' daily conduct and moral imagination. Literature on whole-school interventions suggests that student commitment to school is strengthened when institutions provide supportive relationships and consistent social norms (Melendez-Torres et al., 2023). Hanif similarly emphasizes that non-punitive approaches can internalize responsibility when students are guided to connect personal conduct with communal consequences (Hanif, 2022). In this study, the child-friendly madrasah program and Love-Based Curriculum function as institutional supports for that process. Therefore, social responsibility becomes the conceptual bridge between conflict resolution and character formation in the madrasah.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### A. Student Conflicts Resolved Through Dialogue, Clarification, and Apology

The first finding shows that student disputes at MTs Ma'arif NU 3 Kemranjen were handled through staged dialogue rather than immediate punishment. This process was important because placing conflicting students together too early could intensify accusation, denial, and emotional defensiveness. Mrs. Erna Fitrianiingsih explained that the two students were first questioned one by one in the guidance and counseling room, because immediate confrontation might lead

them to argue by saying, "It was not me; you started first." After individual clarification, the teacher brought them together to compare explanations and identify the shared conclusion. This field evidence indicates that dialogue was not spontaneous chatting; it was a structured institutional procedure for reducing tension and preventing further misunderstanding. Therefore, the first stage of restorative discipline worked by slowing down conflict, separating emotion from fact, and preparing students for responsible encounter.

The reason this dialogical process succeeded was that it created openness before demanding apology. Students were asked to explain what happened, what they felt, and how the incident affected others. Ms. Risma confirmed that when a fight occurred, teachers first separated the parties and invited them to talk: "Separate them, then ask them one by one," followed by the invitation, "Let us talk first." This evidence is consistent with research showing that restorative practices require safe communication routines and adult facilitation to move students from accusation toward acknowledgement (Prutzman et al., 2022; Rodriguez-Muniz et al., 2022). In this madrasah, the counseling room became a mediation center where students could speak without public embarrassment. Thus, clarification created a bridge between emotional conflict and peaceful reconciliation.

The conclusion from this finding is that apology became meaningful because it emerged after clarification, not before it. The madrasah principal emphasized that physical punishment such as sunbathing, running, or push-ups was no longer permitted, and even harsh verbal treatment could be categorized as bullying. This institutional stance strengthened the Child-Friendly Madrasah program and the Love-Based Curriculum, which require teachers to educate through compassion rather than intimidation (Hanif, 2021; Munjidah & Hanif, 2022). Such evidence aligns with studies showing that positive discipline is often misunderstood as weak discipline, although its strength lies in combining firm expectations with relational repair (Kim et al., 2024; Zondo & Mncube, 2024). Therefore, the apology process at MTs Ma'arif NU 3 Kemranjen did not erase responsibility; it made responsibility socially visible and emotionally acceptable.

#### B. Guidance and Counseling Teachers Become Facilitators of Social Relationship Recovery

The second finding shows that guidance and counseling teachers and homeroom teachers functioned as facilitators of relationship recovery. This role is sociologically important because the teacher's authority was not exercised as a unilateral judge but as a mediator who helped students rebuild trust. Mrs. Erna explained that teachers in the madrasah should position themselves as friends and parents so that children feel close enough to speak honestly. The reason for this repositioning was psychological: students who feel threatened often hide facts, resist advice, or withdraw from institutional communication. This finding supports studies showing that restorative leadership requires symmetry, relational trust, and deeper learning rather than a purely top-down disciplinary culture (Fine, 2024; Hanif, 2017). Therefore, teacher authority became stronger

not because it frightened students, but because it was accepted as caring and legitimate.

The evidence also shows that facilitation depended on a division of institutional roles. Homeroom teachers, student affairs officers, guidance counselors, and the principal were expected to coordinate before a conflict was escalated. Mrs. Erna admitted that one obstacle was the lack of coordination among homeroom teachers, guidance counseling, and student affairs, especially when some teachers brought cases directly to counseling without first understanding the background. Parent resistance also complicated the process when parents defended their children unilaterally. This finding parallels implementation research showing that restorative practices require institutional alignment, staff readiness, and shared procedures across school levels (Grant et al., 2022; Martinez et al., 2022). In response, the madrasah used monthly guidance meetings led by the principal to evaluate student problems collectively. Thus, restorative discipline required organizational coordination, not only individual teacher kindness.

The facilitator role worked optimally when counseling was conducted privately and persuasively. Mrs. Erna stated that students were guided in the counseling room because public handling could make them unable to speak freely and could increase stress. Teachers also used gradual verbal warnings before involving parents, allowing students to correct behavior without immediate public stigma. This approach is consistent with trauma-sensitive research principles, which emphasize emotional safety, dignity, and careful communication with participants who may feel vulnerable (Alman, 2024). It also fits governance analysis that madrasah management must be responsive to students' emotional needs while preserving institutional order (Nugroho & Hanif, 2024). Therefore, the guidance teacher's facilitative function restored the school's integrative role without damaging students' self-esteem or weakening teacher authority.

### C. Students Understand the Impact of Their Actions on the Victim and the Classroom Community

The third finding shows that restorative discipline reconstructed students' awareness of harm. The point is that the mediation process did not merely stop a fight; it helped students understand how their actions affected victims, classmates, and classroom peace. Ms. Risma explained that after mediation students became "more responsible" and "more self-aware," rather than simply afraid of punishment. This testimony indicates a shift from external fear to internal moral reflection. Research on restorative practices similarly shows that students' emotional well-being and social awareness improve when schools connect accountability with empathy and relationship repair (Alonso-Rodriguez et al., 2025; Huguley et al., 2022). In the madrasah, this moral reconstruction allowed students to return to classroom life without persistent resentment. Therefore, the practice produced reintegration, not only case settlement.

The reason this awareness mattered was that recurring conflict could threaten the whole classroom community. Mrs. Erna stated that the number of cases had decreased after dialogical handling was consistently implemented, although some highly defiant students still required additional attention. To respond to such students, the madrasah organized integrated case conferences involving student affairs, the principal, guidance counselors, and parents. This evidence confirms that restorative discipline cannot rely on a single meeting; it must be supported by follow-up programs adapted to students' psychological needs. Studies on restorative practices likewise emphasize the importance of school-wide transformation, local evidence, and continuous monitoring of student outcomes (Hollands et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2023). Thus, the madrasah treated moral awareness as a developmental process that required institutional maintenance.

The strategic value of this finding is that students' empathy strengthened social bonds within the private madrasah. When students understood the position of others, the classroom became a community of mutual recognition rather than a space of silent hostility. The evidence of reduced violations and renewed interaction suggests that self-awareness can produce more durable discipline than rigid sanctions. This interpretation is supported by Hanif's work on internalizing student responsibility through non-punitive approaches and by research on prophetic-value habituation in Islamic schools (Hanif, 2022; Nurhayati & Hanif, 2025). It also resonates with studies showing that peer-based restorative practices can foster positive development and healthier relationships (Mas-Exposito et al., 2022). Therefore, restorative discipline at MTs Ma'arif NU 3 Kemranjen functioned as character education grounded in lived social experience.

## 1. Discussion

### A. The Meaning of Student Conflict Resolved Through Dialogue, Clarification, and Apology

The first theoretical implication is that dialogue, clarification, and apology should be understood as mechanisms for restoring social capital in Islamic educational institutions. The reason is that student conflict fractures trust, weakens classroom solidarity, and creates symbolic distance between victims, perpetrators, and peers. Field data show that the madrasah repaired this fracture by separating students, clarifying narratives, arranging mediated encounter, and guiding apology. This process extends Hanif's analysis of child-friendly madrasah policy by showing how the policy becomes concrete in everyday disciplinary interaction (Hanif, 2021; Munjidah & Hanif, 2022). It also supports restorative research showing that school discipline can reduce incidents when implemented as a whole-school relational practice rather than a temporary program (Gregory et al., 2022; Samimi et al., 2023). Thus, the case demonstrates that order is most stable when it is rebuilt through communication and

responsibility.

### **B. The Meaning of Guidance and Counseling Teachers and Homeroom Teachers as Facilitators of Social Relationship Recovery**

The second implication concerns the transformation of teacher authority. In punitive models, teachers often become judges who decide guilt and impose sanctions, but in restorative discipline they become facilitators who manage emotional safety, truth-telling, and reintegration. This shift does not abolish authority; it reconstructs authority through proximity, fairness, and trust. The field evidence shows that Mrs. Erna's role as counselor required careful listening, private guidance, coordination with homeroom teachers, and monthly evaluation with the principal. This finding aligns with studies on counselor roles in developing student social responsibility and with literature showing that restorative implementation faces challenges when coordination and shared understanding are weak (Slamet et al., 2022; Wuryandani & Herwin, 2021). Therefore, the teacher's facilitative role becomes a form of institutional power that is softer in method but stronger in legitimacy.

### **C. The Meaning of Students' Moral Awareness and Social Responsibility**

The third implication is that social responsibility develops when students interpret rules as part of moral identity rather than external pressure. The reason is that punishment may regulate behavior temporarily, while restorative discipline asks students to understand harm, acknowledge victims, and repair relationships. The evidence from Ms. Risma's testimony and the reported decline in cases suggests that students did not simply comply to avoid teacher supervision; they began to connect personal action with classroom well-being. This supports Anwar and Junaidi's claim that moral awareness is central to religious education institutions, while also reinforcing Hanif's view that non-punitive discipline can internalize responsibility (Anwar & Junaidi, 2024; Hanif, 2022). Therefore, the madrasah case contributes to the sociology of education by showing that discipline can become a process of moral subject formation.

The broader discussion is that restorative discipline in a madrasah should not be romanticized as an effortless alternative to punishment. Its success depends on leadership commitment, teacher coordination, parental cooperation, emotional literacy, and consistent procedures. Comparative literature warns that restorative justice may reproduce inequality when implementation is uneven or when institutional actors lack reflexivity regarding power and social background (Davison et al., 2022; Romano & Arms Almengor, 2024). The field data also reveal similar risks, especially in cases involving defensive parents, withdrawn students, and limited coordination among school units. Nevertheless, the monthly guidance meetings and integrated case conferences show that the madrasah had begun to institutionalize corrective mechanisms. Thus, restorative discipline is best understood as a disciplined institutional practice, not as a soft slogan that magically fixes conflict.

## 5. Conclusion

This study concludes that restorative discipline at MTs Ma'arif NU 3 Kemranjen operates through a functional relationship among dialogue, teacher facilitation, and student moral awareness. The point of the model is not to remove consequences for misconduct, but to transform consequences into learning processes that restore relationships. The evidence shows that student conflict was handled through individual clarification, mediated meeting, and apology; guidance and counseling teachers and homeroom teachers acted as facilitators of social relationship recovery; and students gradually understood the impact of their actions on victims and the classroom community. Therefore, restorative discipline created a new form of child-friendly order in which accountability, empathy, and institutional care supported one another.

The conceptual contribution of this article lies in strengthening the sociology of Islamic education. It shows that a madrasah is not only a religious school governed by rules and hierarchy, but also a social institution where moral order is negotiated through interaction. The reason this contribution matters is that many discussions of school discipline remain trapped between punishment and permissiveness, as if those are the only options. This study demonstrates a third pathway: structured restoration that combines clear norms, teacher authority, student voice, and communal responsibility. By preserving the body of Hanif-related studies and enriching it with recent restorative-practice literature, the article explains how local madrasah practices can speak to wider debates on school discipline, emotional well-being, and social responsibility.

The study has limitations in terms of location, time, and number of informants. Because the research focused on one private madrasah, the findings should be interpreted as analytical insight rather than broad statistical generalization. Future studies should compare several madrasahs, include more student and parent voices, and examine the long-term effects of restorative discipline on repeated violations, classroom climate, and students' socio-emotional development. Mixed-methods research may also be useful for connecting qualitative meaning-making with measurable changes in school discipline records. Even with these limitations, this study shows that when discipline is handled relationally, the madrasah can become not only a place for correcting mistakes but also a community for repairing harm and rebuilding moral solidarity.

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