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Premarital Education And Ustadzah Parenting Development Through The Study Of Riyadus Sholihin

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Abstract

Premarital education is commonly understood narrowly as marriage-related content, while its role in preparing the parenting orientations of prospective mothers, particularly through classical text recitation in Islamic boarding schools, remains underexplored. This study examines the premarital education of female Islamic teachers (ustadzah) through the study of Kitab Riyadus Sholihin, the accompanying parenting perceptions and orientations, and the conceptual relationship between the two. A qualitative case study was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Pudak with seven informants (six ustadzah and one caregiver) over eight months, using semi-structured interviews and participant observation; data were analyzed through reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Three findings emerged. First, informants reported that parenting values are transmitted through textual content, historical exemplarity, and the caregiver's contextual experience, with the management of heart, mind, and action as a foundation preceding technical skills. Second, ustadzah take part in simulated caregiving of new students and report a shift from viewing parental roles as physical care toward the "first madrasah." Third, the orientation they report resembles authoritative parenting, combining text-grounded firmness with the caregiver's warmth. Because the data rest mainly on perceptions and post-marriage practice was not observed, the findings are read as changed perceptions and anticipated practice, not demonstrated parenting-style formation. The study proposes broadening premarital education toward character formation, a proposition that remains to be tested.

Kata kunci:
Pendidikan Pranikah; Pola Pengasuhan; Ustadzah; Kitab Riyadus Sholihin; Pesantren.

Abstrak

Pendidikan pranikah umumnya dipahami sempit sebagai materi seputar pernikahan, sedangkan perannya dalam mempersiapkan orientasi pengasuhan calon ibu, khususnya melalui kajian kitab kuning di pesantren, masih kurang dieksplorasi. Penelitian ini mengkaji pendidikan pranikah ustadzah melalui kajian Kitab Riyadus Sholihin, persepsi dan orientasi pengasuhan yang menyertainya, serta keterkaitan konseptual keduanya. Studi kasus kualitatif dilakukan di Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Pudak dengan tujuh informan (enam ustadzah dan satu pengasuh) selama delapan bulan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan observasi partisipan; data dianalisis melalui reduksi, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Tiga temuan muncul. Pertama, menurut informan, nilai pengasuhan ditransmisikan melalui muatan teks, keteladanan historis, dan pengalaman kontekstual pengasuh, dengan penataan hati, pikiran, dan tindakan sebagai fondasi sebelum keterampilan teknis. Kedua, ustadzah terlibat dalam simulasi pengasuhan santri baru dan melaporkan pergeseran pemaknaan peran orang tua dari perawatan fisik menuju "madrasah pertama". Ketiga, orientasi pengasuhan yang dilaporkan menyerupai pengasuhan otoritatif, yakni memadukan ketegasan berbasis teks dengan kehangatan pengasuh. Karena data bersumber terutama dari persepsi dan praktik pascanikah tidak diamati, temuan dimaknai sebagai perubahan persepsi dan antisipasi praktik, bukan pembentukan gaya pengasuhan yang terbukti. Penelitian ini mengajukan perluasan konsep pendidikan pranikah menuju pembinaan karakter, yang masih perlu diuji.

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Introduction

The family is the first and foremost educational institution for every individual, since it is within this environment that values, norms, and character are first shaped before a person interacts with the wider community (Mahmud et al., 2023). Readiness to become a parent, therefore, cannot be regarded as something that emerges naturally simply because a marriage has taken place; rather, it needs to be prepared for well before a person enters married life. It is in this context that premarital education finds its urgency, namely as a means of equipping prospective husbands and wives with knowledge, attitudes, and mental-spiritual readiness, including their future readiness in raising and educating children.

The issue of the importance of premarital education and Islamic value-based parenting has recently received considerable attention in the study of Islamic education. A lack of knowledge about family life, particularly in preparing for marriage, is often one of the obstacles faced by prospective couples, while the obligation of premarital education as a marriage registration requirement still lacks firm legal force and currently remains merely a recommendation in Indonesia (Cahaya et al., 2023). This condition is reinforced by findings that existing family resilience programs, such as Suscatin and Bimbingan Perkawinan (Binwin), are essentially aimed at prospective brides and grooms who have already registered to marry, and thus have not specifically reached out to provide preparation from adolescence or an earlier premarital stage (Mustaqim et al., 2021). On the other hand, studies on prophetic parenting show that parenting patterns grounded in the example of the Prophet and religious figures have a significant impact on the formation of children's character, from the prenatal to the postnatal stage, as demonstrated in the parenting practices of Kyai within pesantren environments, which emphasize the four prophetic traits Siddiq, Amanah, Tabligh, and Fathanah as the foundation for shaping children's character, behavior, personality, and morals (Mundiri et al., 2022). In line with this, studies of Qur'anic verses also affirm that parenting is a shared responsibility of both father and mother, carried out democratically and cooperatively from the beginning

of a child's life until the child becomes sufficiently independent, and indeed continuing throughout the parents' lives (Sumayah, 2020).

The role of the caregiver figure as a role model (uswah hasanah) has also become an important focus in recent literature. An ustadzah (female religious teacher) does not merely serve as an instructor of religious material, but also as a mentor and role model who influences the moral and ethical development of santri (students), with the ustadzah's exemplary conduct serving as a crucial element in holistically shaping the learning ethics and character of santri (Chabib & Subando, 2025). This finding is reinforced by studies showing that the parenting styles applied within pesantren environments whether authoritarian, democratic, or a combination of both effectively contribute to the formation of discipline, noble morals, and religious character among santri, thereby offering a potential solution to the problem of moral degradation among the younger generation (Wiyanto & Herpratiwi, 2024). In the broader field of child education, it has also been found that authoritative parenting is the most effective approach to character formation in children compared to other parenting styles, as it is characterized by democratic attitudes, respect, and understanding of the child's condition (Ambariani & Rakimahwati, 2023).

Although the literature above has quite extensively discussed the relationship between parenting, caregiver exemplariness, and the formation of santri character, research that specifically links premarital education with the process of forming ustadzah parenting patterns through the medium of classical text study, in this case, the Kitab Riyadus Sholihin has not been the specific focus of the studies discussed below. These studies have generally discussed premarital education within a formal institutional framework such as the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) and government programs (Cahaya et al., 2023), or have discussed the parenting of Kyai and ustadzah as standalone variables (Mundiri et al., 2022; Chabib & Subando, 2025), without exploring how premarital education and the formation of parenting patterns can develop simultaneously through the same medium of classical text (kitab kuning) learning. Furthermore, none of these studies examined how this process of value internalization unfolds in a narrative and personal manner, namely through a blend of textual content, the historical exemplariness of prophets and scholars, and the caregiver's own contextual experience. This study seeks to fill this research gap while also distinguishing itself from previous studies that have tended to separate premarital education from pesantren-based parenting.

The contribution of this study needs to be distinguished sharply from three neighbouring streams of research. First, studies of prophetic parenting and Kyai parenting (Mundiri et al., 2022; Musafiri & Miftahurrohmah, 2022) examine parenting in practice, that is, how parents or caregivers who already perform the parenting role enact prophetic values; the present study instead examines the preparation phase among adult women who are not yet, or not yet fully, in the parenting role. Second,

studies of service-learning and parenting psychoeducation for prospective parents (Sahputra et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2023) generally evaluate purpose-designed programs measured through gains in knowledge or readiness; in this case, caregiving simulation was not designed as a premarital program but emerges from the pesantren's institutional routines and is embedded in the recitation. Third, studies of pesantren-based character education (Maryono, 2022; Wiyanto & Herpratiwi, 2024) treat santri as the target of character formation; here the target is ustadzah who are simultaneously educators and prospective parents.

A more fundamental question is why the recitation of the Kitab Riyadus Sholihin should be treated as a distinctive medium rather than simply another instance of religious value internalization. This work by Imam al-Nawawi is a thematically arranged collection of hadith on sincerity, patience, self-vigilance, manners, and moral character; it is not a parenting manual. The analytic proposition advanced here, and tested against the data in the Discussion, is that readiness for parenting in this case is approached indirectly, through self-formation (the ordering of the heart, speech, and conduct) that precedes technical parenting skill, with the caregiver acting as the contextual bridge between text and daily life. This proposition is defensible only if it can be distinguished from alternative explanations such as general pesantren culture and the caregiver's charisma; the study therefore addresses these alternatives explicitly.

Based on this gap, the present study is formulated to address the question of how premarital education takes place, and how the parenting perceptions and orientations of ustadzah are formed or articulated, through the study of the Kitab Riyadus Sholihin at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Pudak, as well as the conceptual relationship between the two. Specifically, this study aims to examine the premarital education of ustadzah through the study of this text, to examine the parenting perceptions and orientations of ustadzah that accompany it, and to examine the conceptual relationship between premarital education and these parenting orientations. This study was conducted within the context of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Pudak, with the unit of analysis being the experiences, meaning-making, and learning processes of the ustadzah who participate in the study of the Kitab Riyadus Sholihin under the guidance of the pondok's caregiver. This study does not assess the actual parenting competence of the ustadzah.

Methods

This study used a qualitative case study design, appropriate for an in-depth, bounded examination of a contemporary phenomenon observed as it naturally unfolds, without researcher manipulation of subjects or setting (Perreault, 2011). The design fits three epistemological considerations (Yin, 1996, as cited in Nasution, 2023) uses to justify a case study strategy: the research questions ask how premarital education and parenting-style formation occur; the researcher exercised no control

over events, observing the recitation of the Kitab Riyadus Sholihin as it naturally unfolded; and the phenomenon is a contemporary one examined in its real-life context.

The researcher served as the primary instrument setting the study's focus, selecting informants, collecting and interpreting the data, and drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2013) and was directly and continuously present at the recitation at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Pudak for eight months (January–August 2026). This extended engagement was intended to build the rapport needed for informants to move beyond guarded, surface-level answers (Perreault, 2011).

Informants were selected purposively, that is, deliberately chosen for their direct experience of the phenomenon under study rather than at random (Sugiyono, 2013). Of the twenty ustadzah who take part in the recitation, six were selected as key informants against two criteria: frequency of attendance and length of participation in the recitation. The pesantren caregiver was included as a seventh informant, both as the primary source of the material and as the figure the ustadzah themselves named as their model. Unlike conventional sampling, this logic is informational rather than statistical: its purpose is "to maximize information, not to facilitate generalization" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Sugiyono, 2013). On most themes the same substantive statement was obtained from five of the six ustadzah; this was taken as a preliminary indication of data adequacy (Nasution, 2023). This was not a condition for accepting a finding (see the data analysis below). Because selection by attendance frequency and length of participation tends to recruit the most engaged ustadzah, the experiences of less active ustadzah are not represented, and this is acknowledged as a limitation.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Interviews with the six ustadzah used an identical twelve-question guide, conducted entirely in Indonesian between 09 and 14 September 2026, audio-recorded with informants' consent, and later translated into English by the researcher; the resulting transcripts totalled four pages. Observation was carried out across 30 sessions of the recitation, held every Sunday evening after Maghrib prayer between January and August 2026, focused on the caregiver's delivery of material, caregiver–ustadzah interaction, and the ustadzah's involvement in caring for newly arrived students as a form of simulated practice. Field notes were written per session and recorded observable episodes of behaviour (who did what toward whom, in what situation) separately from the researcher’s interpretation.

Three types of evidence are distinguished, and they are not merged when drawing claims: (a) parenting intentions and perceptions reported by the informants themselves (from interviews); (b) parenting-related behaviour observed by the researcher, limited to the ustadzah’s interactions with newly arrived students during recitation sessions and caregiving simulation (from observation); and (c) actual parenting competence with their own children, which was not studied because the

informants were not followed after marriage. This study therefore cannot conclude that a parenting style has been formed in practice; it can only report perceptions, orientations, and observed simulated behaviour.

Data from the interviews and observation notes were analysed following the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, as cited in Sugiyono, 2013). Transcripts and field notes were read repeatedly and condensed into statements addressing the study's three research foci; recurrence in substance across at least five of the six ustadzah was used only as a marker that a pattern is widely shared, not as a threshold for accepting a finding. Statements voiced by only a few informants, differing statements, and contradictory evidence were still coded and are reported as variations or deviant cases, so that divergent experiences are not suppressed by the majority pattern. The condensed statements were organised and displayed as the six findings reported in the Results section, each supported by the relevant excerpts. The label "authoritative parenting" is the researcher's analytic interpretation, which maps informants' statements onto a category known from the literature; it is not the result of a standardized instrument. Conclusions drawn from this display were verified by cross-checking interview statements against the observation notes from the same period (technique triangulation) and, where accounts diverged, through follow-up discussion with the informant concerned.

Beyond this analytic cross-checking, credibility was reinforced through source triangulation and member checking, two of the validity strategies Creswell (2009) recommends for qualitative research. Triangulation cross-checks data drawn from different sources, through different means, and at different times (Wiersma, 1986, as cited in Sugiyono, 2013). Source triangulation compared the six ustadzah's accounts against the caregiver's account to identify shared perspectives, points of divergence, and features specific to each informant (Sugiyono, 2013). Member checking, described as the single most important technique for establishing data credibility (Nasution, 2023), was carried out by returning the final themes to all seven informants for their confirmation before the findings were finalised. It should be noted that member checking involving the caregiver and the ustadzah within one setting may reinforce socially desirable answers; this is discussed as a limitation.

Permission to conduct the study was conveyed to and obtained from the caregiver of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Pudak on 23 August 2025, prior to the eight-month observation period that began in January 2026. All informants were informed of the study's purpose and consented to being interviewed and audio-recorded. The six ustadzah are identified only by code; the caregiver is likewise identified only by code (PA), with her consent, even though her distinctive role in the recitation makes her more readily identifiable within the pesantren than the coded

ustadzah. Informants were free to withdraw at any stage and reviewed the excerpts attributed to them before submission.

To protect their privacy, the six ustadzah who were interviewed, and the pesantren caregiver, are identified throughout the Result section only by code U1 to U6 for the ustadzah, numbered in the order in which they were interviewed, and PA for the caregiver. These codes identify the informants themselves and are not applied to the interview or observation data. Interviews were conducted entirely in Indonesian; the excerpts presented below were transcribed verbatim and translated into English by the researcher, then returned to the respective informants for confirmation before use.

Result and Discussion

This study involved seven informants: six ustadzah (U1–U6) who actively participate in the recitation of the Kitab Riyadus Sholihin, and the pesantren caregiver (PA), the main source of the material and the figure the ustadzah named as their model. The six ustadzah were interviewed using an identical twelve-question guide; PA was studied through eight months of participant observation. Informant profiles are presented in Table 1. Throughout this section, claims are labelled by type of evidence: reported perception (interview) or observed behaviour (observation).

Code	Role in the Study	Data Collection Technique	Date of Collection	Attendance Frequency	Length of Participation
U1	Ustadzah	Semi-structured interview (12 questions)	09 September 2026	28 times	7 years
U2	Ustadzah	Semi-structured interview (12 questions)	12 September 2026	24 times	5 years
U3	Ustadzah	Semi-structured interview (12 questions)	14 September 2026	30 times	7 years
U4	Ustadzah	Semi-structured interview (12 questions)	14 September 2026	23 times	4 years

Code	Role in the Study	Data Collection Technique	Date of Collection	Attendance Frequency	Length of Participation
U5	Ustadzah	Semi-structured interview (12 questions)	14 September 2026	20 times	3 years
U6	Ustadzah	Semi-structured interview (12 questions)	14 September 2026	25 times	7 years
PA	Caregiver, Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Pudak	Participant observation	Jan–Aug 2026 (8 months)	35 times	7 years

Ustadzah's Premarital Education through the Recitation of the Kitab Riyadus Sholihin

The six ustadzah consistently stated that values are transmitted through a fusion of three approaches at once. This is confirmed by the statement, "Here, in this Kitab Riyadus Sholihin, the theme of the recitation material usually relates to the stories of past predecessors, particularly the stories of the prophets, companions, and religious scholars. Besides that, there is also a great deal of knowledge related to daily life, for example how to order one's mindset, guard the heart, speech and actions, as well as provisions for married life later on" (U3, interview, 14 September 2026). This shows that the kitab's content is not a standalone normative text but is consistently tied to exemplary stories and to daily practical concerns, further enriched by the caregiver's (PA) own contextual experience and by a bidirectional format, "Yes, there is a discussion and question-and-answer session between the ustadzah and the caregiver." (U5, interview, 14 September 2026). This three-layered pattern theoretical, historically exemplary, and contextually experiential aligns with prophetically grounded mindful parenting among Kyai, in which prophetic virtues are transmitted through lived example (Mundiri et al., 2022), and with Prophetic Parenting's premise that such caregiving begins by forming the person long before they are called a parent (Musafiri & Miftahurrohmah, 2022). Unlike Mundiri et al.'s implicit, observation-based exemplarity, here it is explicitly built into the recitation's content itself. The finding also reinforces the experiential-contextual model of kitab kuning learning (Lailaturrohmah et al., 2025; Khairani et al., 2025), and the two-way format supports

the view that direct caregiver-led instruction builds closeness alongside knowledge transfer (Maryono, 2022).

Five of six ustadzah identified the material on managing the heart, mind, and behavior as most impactful. U2 stated, "In this book, we are equipped with knowledge on how to order our mindset, heart, actions, and speech in living married life in the future" (U2, interview, 12 September 2026), reinforced by U3: "The part that left the deepest impression from studying the book of Riyadus Sholihin is the material on managing the heart, mind, and actions, because it becomes the main provision for daily life… in preparing oneself for married life in the future" (U3, interview, 14 September 2026), and aligned with PA's guidance that "every process you go through, you must succeed in enjoying it" (PA, participant observation, 2 August 2026). Together these suggest the material's dual function as social guidance and mental preparation. This indicates, in the informants' accounts, that the foundation being instilled is affective-spiritual maturity preceding technical skill an emphasis paralleling the Qur'anic account of Luqman, who addressed moral-theological grounding before practical counsel (Sumayah, 2020), and matching the integrated triad of moral knowledge, feeling, and action required for character formation (Maryono, 2022; Mahmud et al., 2023).

All six ustadzah agreed that preparation is reinforced through direct practice, as U4 put it: "practicing it directly by taking part in caring for the younger santri" (U4, interview, 14 September 2026), and U3: "the practice of future child-rearing is carried out by directly applying the knowledge that has been learned to the younger students (santri)… so that learning about parenting is not only understood theoretically but is also practiced directly with the santri as a form of real simulation before entering married life" (U3, interview, 14 September 2026). According to the informants, caregiving simulation bridges theory and practice, broadening the conventional, short-term view of premarital education tied to formal institutions such as the KUA (Cahaya et al., 2023), and echoing service-learning and psychoeducation findings that experiential, discussion-based formats strengthen readiness and confidence more than material delivery alone (Sahputra et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2023). Observational evidence of this simulation is presented in a later subsection.

All six ustadzah also distinguished "knowledge" from "readiness." One explained: "what distinguishes knowledge from readiness is that knowledge refers to the information or theory from the Kitab Riyadus Sholihin, whereas readiness here refers to our ability to apply that knowledge in daily life; so it does not stop at parenting understood merely in theory, but also includes mental readiness, emotional readiness, and maturity gained through experience" (U3, interview, 14 September 2026) a distinction that held even among unmarried informants, who regarded present knowledge as a sufficient initial foundation. This conceptual awareness is often overlooked in formal programs, where the obstacle is framed simply as a lack of

knowledge (Cahaya et al., 2023), though it echoes the service-learning distinction between religious and psychological readiness (Sahputra et al., 2025). Unlike community-based programs that measure success only through knowledge gains (Setyaningsih et al., 2026; Santosa et al., 2022), the ustadzah here articulated a metacognitive distinction rarely made explicit elsewhere. The data, however, do not allow us to determine whether this distinction was built independently by the ustadzah or influenced by the caregiver and pesantren culture (see Alternative Explanations and the Limits of Attribution).

All six ustadzah named the caregiver (PA) as the figure who most shaped their understanding, "the figure who most influences the mindset of premarital education is the caregiver. She is a simple, friendly figure who is full of affection toward her santri… she also directly provides support and advice to us" (U3, interview, 14 September 2026), reinforced by U1: "She is a very patient figure in dealing with her santri when there are problems. So, she handles it gently, even when the santri is at fault" (U1, interview, 09 September 2026). According to the informants, this points to personal exemplarity as an implicit curriculum, consistent with the concept of the ustadzah as uswah hasanah (Chabib & Subando, 2025) and with pesantren parenting research emphasizing the caregiver's role-model function (Wiyanto & Herpratiwi, 2024), notably a qualitative counterpoint to an effect that a quantitative study found statistically insignificant (Wijaya & Miyanto, 2022), suggesting relational nuance that surveys may miss.

Finally, all six emphasized manners (adab), moral character (akhlak), and exemplary conduct as what they would most want to pass on, "the thing I would most want to emphasize is the aspect of moral character and manners, as well as how to apply the knowledge I have gained in daily life" (U3, interview, 14 September 2026) reflecting an orientation toward value continuity consistent with research linking Islamic-value-based parenting to intergenerational family resilience (Abubakar et al., 2023). Table 2 summarizes these six findings.

Table 2. Findings on the Pre-Marital Education of Ustadzah.

No.	Findings Aspect	Brief Description
1	Value-transmission approach	Theoretical content, historical exemplars, and the caregiver's contextual experience
2	Most impactful material	Management of the heart, mind, and actions
3	Form of practical reinforcement	Simulation of caring for new students
4	Conceptual awareness	Distinction between "knowledge" and "readiness"
5	Influential figure	The caregiver as personal role model

No.	Findings Aspect	Brief Description
6	Sustainability orientation	Emphasis on manners, moral conduct, exemplary behavior

Together, these findings answer the first research question, based on informants' perceptions and observation of the recitation sessions: ustadzah's premarital education unfolds as a layered process integrating cognitive, affective, experiential, metacognitive, personal, and generative dimensions rather than one-way delivery of religious material.

Observational Evidence: Episodes of Interaction and Behavioural Change

Much of the evidence above consists of self-reported perceptions. To assess whether the reported changes are reflected in practice, this subsection presents episodes observed across the 30 observation sessions, covering the ustadzah's interactions with younger santri and, where present, changes in behaviour between the beginning and the end of the observation period.

According to the ustadzah, the same sessions also reshaped their parenting perspective. One stated, "there have certainly been many changes in the way I view the parental role, which is no longer understood merely as a physical role… parents hold the position of the child's first madrasah. Not only that, the most important thing is character formation" (U3, interview, 14 September 2026) a shift from an orientation of providing toward one of educating, echoed in Kyai-based parenting that extends beyond meeting physical needs (Mundiri et al., 2022) and in the Qur'anic account of Ya'qub's lifelong attentiveness to his sons' faith (Sumayah, 2020). This is a shift in how the role is perceived, not evidence of changed caregiving practice.

Faced with tension between textual teaching and prevailing social practice, the ustadzah exercised selective wisdom: "if there are differences between the teachings in the kitab and common parenting practices, I take the positive side and leave the negative one, while still keeping up with the times and not violating the provisions of Islamic law" (U1, interview, 09 September 2026). This reported disposition resembles the characteristics of authoritative parenting, empirically the most effective style, combining firm control with warmth and flexibility (Ambariani & Rakimahwati, 2023; Elan & Handayani, 2023), and consistent with findings that democratic parenting protects against aggressive and bullying behavior among santri while authoritarian and permissive styles do not (Salwa & Hanifah Qodriyaturrosidah, 2026; Majdah et al., 2025). It also invites critical comparison with other pesantren where the kiai's authority produces a more one-directional, authoritarian style even from the same kitab kuning (Witasari & Subur, 2022) suggesting that the caregiver's leadership style, not the text alone, may shape the resulting parenting pattern.

All six ustadzah likewise mapped a difference in emphasis between the classical text and modern parenting: "The classical text places greater emphasis on moral character, manners, and spiritual values… whereas modern parenting tends to focus more on aspects of child psychology, communication, and positive discipline. Although the emphases differ, the two influence and complement one another rather than contradict each other" (U3, interview, 14 September 2026), a fairly mature literacy that mirrors the academically recognized division between religious and relational character (Mahmud et al., 2023) and aligns with modern parenting content already present in Indonesia's formal premarital curriculum (Suud Sarim Karimullah, 2021).

The caregiving simulation discussed earlier also functioned, in the informants' accounts, as concrete skill-building, letting the ustadzah test managing heart, speech, and action in real interaction, with the caregiver's warm, even-tempered character internalized as their reference model consistent with the experiential-contextual model of kitab kuning learning (Lailaturrohmah et al., 2025), service-learning literature (Sahputra et al., 2025), and the closeness-building role of direct classical-text instruction (Maryono, 2022). Table 3 summarizes these findings.

Table 3. Findings on the Reported Parenting Perceptions and Orientation.

No.	Findings Aspect	Brief Description
1	Paradigm shift	From physical role to "first madrasah"
2	Attitude toward value sources	Adaptive selection between text and contemporary practice
3	Mapping of parenting sources	Classical text and modern parenting as complementary
4	Skill development	Caregiving simulation as a testing ground
5	Internalized model	The caregiver: warmth combined with firm control

The combination of firm, text-grounded control and personal warmth is the hallmark of authoritative parenting, empirically linked to independence, confidence, and achievement motivation (Ambariani & Rakimahwati, 2023), with the caregiver's exemplarity, as uswah hasanah, essential to genuine (not merely cognitive) value transmission (Chabib & Subando, 2025). Based on informants' statements, these findings answer the second research question: the parenting orientation reported by the ustadzah is formed through a paradigm shift, an adaptive weighing of classical and contemporary values, experiential skill-strengthening, and internalized personal exemplarity together producing an orientation that resembles authoritative parenting, Islamically grounded yet responsive to contemporary contexts. This is a reported and anticipated orientation, not a parenting style that has been practiced with their own children.

The Conceptual Relationship between Premarital Education and Parenting Orientation

Comparing the two sets of findings reveals a conceptual correspondence, summarized in Table 4. This mapping is the researcher's analytic interpretation, not the result of a test of causal relationships.

Table 4. Conceptual Correspondence between Premarital Education and Parenting Orientation.

Pre-Marital Education Element	Parenting Orientation Element
Managing the heart, mind, and actions	Shift toward the "first madrasah" role
Theoretical, historical, and contextual approaches	Firm control (text) combined with warmth (exemplary conduct)
Caregiving simulation as mental-emotional readiness	Caregiving simulation as technical skill-building
"Knowledge" vs. "readiness"	Adaptive weighing of classical and contemporary practice
The caregiver as personal role model	Warmth-based parenting model

Table 4 shows that these five elements of pre-marital education appear to correspond conceptually to their matching parenting-orientation elements. In other words, a single learning activity namely, the study of Kitab Riyadus Sholihin is perceived to produce two types of outcomes simultaneously (a proposition advanced here): pre-marital readiness on one hand, and an emerging parenting orientation on the other. Both outcomes originate from a single medium of learning, a single caregiver figure, and a single, continuous, and identical set of experiences throughout the study sessions. However, the design of this study does not permit causal inference; the correspondence indicates a plausible conceptual link, not evidence that the recitation causes a particular parenting orientation. This study therefore proposes that pre-marital education and the development of parenting orientation among ustadzah at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Pudak are difficult to separate as two independent processes and are better understood as a single process of holistic personality formation, a proposition that remains to be tested.

This correspondence addresses the third research question namely, that premarital education and parenting orientation at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Pudak are not two independent, self-standing processes, but rather a single process that appears to produce two perceived outcomes at once (a single medium, dual outcome) through one and the same instructional medium, the recitation of the Kitab Riyadus Sholihin. The material on managing the heart, mind, and conduct, which lies at the core of premarital education, appears to serve as the affective-spiritual foundation for the reported parenting orientation, as reflected in the ustadzah's shift in perspective from parental roles as merely physical toward the role of "first

madrasah." In other words, material originally intended as provision for personal premarital readiness also appears to become the conceptual foundation for how the ustadzah interpret their future task of raising children suggesting that premarital education grounded in classical texts may not be strictly separable from parenting preparation, since both draw on identical material and identical instructional moments.

This relevance can likewise be explained through the logic of early-adult cognitive development, given that the ustadzah, at this stage of life, are in the phase of executive-function formation the capacity for decision-making, self-regulation, and problem-solving which prior research has shown to correlate with the parenting they received from childhood through adulthood (Azima et al., 2025). If the parenting received in childhood shapes an individual's executive function in early adulthood, then the premarital education the ustadzah receive during this early-adult phase through the recitation of the Kitab Riyadus Sholihin can be understood as a subsequent intervention that supplements the cognitive-emotional foundation already established, while simultaneously preparing the decision-making framework they will later draw upon in raising their own children. This logic supports the plausibility that premarital education and parenting orientation are intertwined not only thematically and materially, but also psychologically and developmentally, since both operate within the same phase of life early adulthood which constitutes the critical juncture for the formation of one's parenting capacity. Because Azima et al. is correlational and does not study pesantren, this reasoning is offered as a plausible explanation, not as evidence.

The combination of the theoretical approach, historical exemplarity, and the caregiver's contextual experience in delivering the recitation's material corresponds to the authoritative-style orientation reported by the ustadzah the combination of firm control (drawn from the normative authority of the kitab) and warmth (drawn from the caregiver's personal exemplarity) appears to be the model the ustadzah take as their reference point for their own future parenting. The simulated caregiving of newly arrived students, meanwhile, serves a dual function at once: within the context of premarital education, it functions as a vehicle of experiential learning that builds mental-emotional readiness, while within the context of parenting orientation it functions as a vehicle for developing tested technical caregiving skills suggesting that a single activity can yield two kinds of learning outcomes simultaneously. The ustadzah's explicit distinction between "knowledge" and "readiness" is likewise conceptually identical to their ability to adaptively weigh classical teachings against contemporary practice both reflect the same metacognitive awareness that normative knowledge must be continually renegotiated against a dynamic context of application, whether in the context of personal premarital readiness or in the context of applying parenting to their own future children.

This structural relevance offers a conceptual contribution, put forward as a proposition, to the framework for understanding premarital education, which has

remained predominantly and narrowly understood as short-term cognitive guidance immediately preceding the marriage contract at formal institutions such as the KUA, through programs such as Pusaka Sakinah, which, although covering cross-sectoral material, remains confined to prospective couples who have already registered to marry and has yet to reach provision as early as adolescence or an earlier premarital stage (Mustaqim et al., 2021). This model also differs from community-based parenting-education programs, which are generally a single round of socialization whose success is measured only by an improvement in knowledge scores (Setyaningsih et al., 2026; Santosa et al., 2022) because the model at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Pudak unfolds in a staged and sustained manner as part of the ustadzah's post-formal educational trajectory, such that parenting preparation is not merely one topic among the other premarital-education materials as is commonly found in formal premarital-education curricula that separate topics such as financial management, family communication, conflict management, and parenting into standalone modules (Suud Sarim Karimullah, 2021) but is instead integrated organically into the whole process of the ustadzah's personal formation, through a single text, a single caregiver, and a single, continuous chain of experience.

The findings of this study therefore suggest a conceptual modification to the existing understanding of premarital education, moving from the model of "premarital education as pre-contract guidance separate from parenting education" toward the model of "premarital education as a holistic process of personal formation, within which parenting preparation unfolds as a built-in feature rather than an add-on module." This conceptual modification reinforces and extends the notion that a caregiver's personal exemplarity and an experiential-learning approach are the key to the effectiveness of value education in pesantren (Wiyanto & Herpratiwi, 2024), by suggesting that this same key appears relevant not only when the target audience is child santri, but also when it is adult ustadzah being prepared to enter married life. The implication, which is hypothetical, is that the success of premarital education in a pesantren context cannot be measured solely by mastery of cognitive material about marriage, as is commonly measured through pre-test and post-test instruments in conventional parenting-education programs (Sahputra et al., 2025), but must also be measured by the extent to which the resulting parenting orientation is adaptive, authoritative, and grounded in spiritual values a more holistic and longer-term indicator of success. This can only be tested in subsequent research.

Alternative Explanations and the Limits of Attribution

The claim that the recitation of Riyadus Sholihin is a distinctive medium must be tested against equally plausible alternative explanations. Five are considered.

First, prior educational experience. The informants have attended the recitation for three to seven years (Table 1) and have probably been in the pesantren environment for longer; earlier religious education and the parenting they received in their own families may shape the views they now report. Second, the caregiver's personal

influence. All ustadzah named PA as the figure who most shaped them. The influence of the text is therefore difficult to separate from the caregiver's charisma, patience, and leadership style. The finding that the same kitab kuning can yield a more authoritarian parenting pattern under a different kiai (Witasari & Subur, 2022) suggests that the orientation reported here may reflect the caregiver more than the kitab.Third, wider pesantren culture. Values of manners, moral character, and exemplarity, together with the routines and hierarchy of the pesantren, operate outside the Sunday-evening sessions, and pesantren culture is itself known to shape santri character (Maryono, 2022). This study did not compare ustadzah who attended and did not attend the recitation, so the specific contribution of the recitation cannot be separated from that culture. Fourth, pre-existing caregiving responsibilities. The ustadzah already care for new santri as part of their institutional roles. The "simulation" of caregiving may therefore reflect a role they performed before or outside the recitation, and may not be wholly formed by the study of Riyadus Sholihin. Fifth, social desirability. Informants answered a researcher who had been present in their environment for eight months, about a figure they respect, and the final findings were returned to them for confirmation. The caregiver is also relatively easy to identify despite being coded. These conditions may encourage answers that portray the caregiver and the recitation favourably.

Considering these five explanations, the data support the view that informants perceive the recitation of Riyadus Sholihin as one important medium for their premarital preparation and parenting orientation, but they are not sufficient to conclude that these outcomes originate specifically from the kitab rather than from the wider institutional learning environment. To separate these contributions, future research could use a comparative design (for example, a pesantren that studies a different kitab or has no comparable recitation), ask informants explicitly about other sources of influence, or follow informants after marriage.

Table 5. Types of Evidence and Limits of Claims.

Claim	Evidence source	Limit of claim
Values are transmitted through three approaches	Interviews; observation of sessions	Supported as a description of the recitation; does not prove effects on recipients
Shift in how the parental role is understood	Interviews	Reported change in perception only
Caregiving simulation with new santri	Interviews; observation	Involvement can be observed; quality or competence of caregiving was not assessed

Claim	Evidence source	Limit of claim
Orientation resembling authoritative parenting	Interviews; observation of PA	Reported and anticipated orientation; not a style that has been practiced
Parenting competence after marriage	Not studied	Cannot be claimed

Conclusion

Based on informants' perceptions and observation of the recitation sessions, the ustadzah's premarital education through the study of the Kitab Riyadus Sholihin unfolds as a layered process integrating theoretical content, historical exemplarity, and contextual experience, with the management of the heart, mind, and conduct as its foundation. At the same time, the ustadzah report a parenting orientation that resembles authoritative parenting and appears to correspond conceptually to this premarital education. The framework of a single medium, dual outcome is therefore put forward as a proposition, not a causal finding, suggesting that premarital education may be understood as holistic personal formation rather than merely pre-marriage guidance.

All findings concern perceived readiness, not demonstrated parenting competence, because the study did not assess actual parenting practice or follow the informants after marriage. The findings are also limited by self-reported data, a single site with seven informants, interviews in a single period, and the inseparability of the kitab's influence from that of the caregiver and pesantren culture. The model is therefore not recommended for broad adoption in the Binwin or Pusaka Sakinah curricula, but should first be tested at other pesantren, through comparative designs, or longitudinally.

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Ethical Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles for qualitative research involving human participants. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the caregiver of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Huda Pudak. All informants were informed about the research objectives and provided consent to participate in interviews and audio recordings. Participation was voluntary, and informants

retained the right to withdraw at any stage. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of participant codes, and interview excerpts were reviewed by the respective informants before publication.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Statement

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used solely to assist with language editing, grammatical correction, and improving the clarity and readability of the manuscript. AI was not used for data collection, interview transcription, qualitative coding, data analysis, interpretation of findings, or formulation of research conclusions. All scholarly content, interpretations, and references were reviewed and verified by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the manuscript.

Author Contributions

Destria Nur Fadila contributed to the conceptualization, research methodology, field investigation, data collection, qualitative data analysis, interpretation of findings, and preparation of the original manuscript. Ahmad Saiful Rizal contributed to the conceptualization, methodological refinement, research supervision, validation of findings, critical interpretation, and manuscript review and editing. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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