



Forming the Anti-Bullying Character of Santri: The Role of Transformation of Adab Values from the Book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim*

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Adab, Anti-bullying, *Ta'limul Muta'allim*, Character Education, Islamic Boarding School

The phenomenon of bullying in educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools, continues to be a serious challenge that threatens the integrity and welfare of students. This study aims to analyze in depth the specific contribution of the adab values taught in the Book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim* to the formation of anti-bullying character in students of the Nuris Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, this study collected data through in-depth interviews with ustadz and students, as well as documentation analysis. The data was then analyzed thematically. Key findings suggest that manners toward teachers, which encompass respect and obedience, foster humility and empathy. Additionally, the practice of ukhuwah and solidarity among students, as manifested in loving and supporting one another, fosters a strong communal environment. The ability to maintain verbal communication and manage emotions also plays a crucial role in equipping students with wise communication skills, minimizing triggers of conflict and verbal aggression. These findings enrich socio-cultural theories by providing empirical evidence on the role of religious values-based environments in fostering prosocial behavior. The implication is that strengthening comprehensive adab education in pesantren can be an effective strategy to create a safe, harmonious, and value-centered learning environment, thereby significantly reducing the emergence of *bullying behavior* and supporting the development of positive character in students.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have long been recognized as traditional Islamic educational institutions that not only teach religious knowledge but also shape the character of students through the cultivation of manners and noble morals (Jubba et al., 2022; Roqib, 2021; Zahraini et al., 2022). One of the main pillars in the non-formal curriculum of Islamic boarding schools is the Book *Ta'limul Muta'allim Thariq al-Ta'allum* by Sheikh Burhanuddin Az-Zarnuji (Bela et al., 2023; Hamida & Sein, 2022; Sadiyah et al., 2022). This book systematically outlines the ethics of a student of knowledge, beginning with the manners of teachers, the importance of choosing friends, and maintaining verbal and emotional management (Lönngren et al., 2024; Sanderse, 2024; Xiao & Tian, 2023). The teachings in this book are believed to form the foundation for a person who is polite, empathetic, and socially responsible (Choli et al., 2025; Thalgi, 2024; Umezu, 2025). The immersive context of Islamic boarding schools, where students live and learn together, provides a conducive environment for the comprehensive internalization of these adab values, forming a culture that upholds togetherness and mutual respect.

Previous research has extensively studied the phenomenon of *bullying* in the educational environment, including in Islamic boarding schools, which highlights its psychological and social impact. Other studies have also explored the general relevance of the concept of character education in the context of the national education framework, as discussed in the Book *Ta'limul Muta'allim* (Al Saadoon et al., 2024; Ribeiro et al., 2024; Sabramani et al., 2021). Meanwhile, Gaffney et al. (2021) and Ime (2025) show the effectiveness of these books when integrated as a component in cognitive-behavioral counseling modules to reduce *bullying* that has already happened. Nonetheless, the existing literature tends to focus on problem identification or reactive interventions (Brewster et al., 2022; Riechers et al., 2021; Root et al., 2022), leaving a gap in a deep understanding of how the value of adab intrinsically and preventively contributes to the formation of anti-*bullying* in the daily life of students.

Although *bullying* in pesantren is an identified issue, and the Book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim* is recognized as a moral guideline, there is still a significant gap in the literature that qualitatively explores the mechanism of internalizing the value of adab as the foundation of anti-*bullying* character. Previous research has not explicitly described how daily manners practices, such as respect for teachers, the formation of ukhuwah, and verbal and emotional management, are practiced in a concrete and formative manner to prevent *bullying* behavior. This gap creates an urgent need to understand more deeply how these classical teachings translate into real behavior that resists aggression. Without a comprehensive understanding of this internalization process, *bullying prevention* efforts in Islamic boarding schools may not reach the root of the problem. Hence, the effectiveness of character education programs is limited.

This research makes a significant contribution to the field by analyzing specifically how the values of adab in the Book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim*, which are taught organically and are part of the pesantren culture, contribute both preventively and formatively to building the foundation of an anti-bullying character in students. Unlike studies that only prove the relevance of concepts or use them as components of curative interventions, this study will delve deeper into the process of internalizing manners naturally in the pesantren ecosystem. We will examine how manners shape a mindset and disposition that rejects bullying from an early age, rather than simply reducing the behavior that has already occurred. Thus, this study offers a new perspective on the fundamental role of classical teachings in building students' character and immunity to bullying proactively, thereby filling a gap in the literature.

This study aims to analyze qualitatively and in-depth the specific contribution of the adab values taught in the Book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim* to the formation of anti-bullying character in students of the Nuris Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School. This study will explore how respect for teachers, the practice of ukhuwah and solidarity among students, as well as the ability to maintain verbal and emotional control, are internalized and manifested in the daily behavior of students as a preventive mechanism against *bullying*. Through a thematic analysis of informants' experiences and perceptions, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of adab in fostering a safe, harmonious, and bullying-free pesantren environment, as well as presenting practical implications for character education in Islamic educational institutions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a case study design with a qualitative approach, which is strategically chosen to explore in depth and holistically the phenomenon of the contribution of adab values to the formation of anti-*bullying* at the Nuris Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School (Dunwoodie et al., 2023; Neumann et al., 2024; Priya, 2021). The case study design allows researchers to explore complex and unique real-world contexts, as well as understand the dynamic interactions between adab teachings, pesantren practices, and student behavior in prevention efforts *against bullying*. The selection of the type of qualitative research is based on the need to capture the subjective experiences, perceptions, and meanings constructed by the informants, which cannot be quantitatively measured (Khoa et al., 2023; Lim, 2025; Simpson et al., 2024). This qualitative approach, rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, enables researchers to develop a rich and nuanced understanding of how adab values are internalized and embodied in students' daily behavior, providing in-depth insights into the mechanisms of anti-*bullying*.

The primary data collection method in this study was in-depth interviews and documentation, chosen to ensure the richness and depth of data relevant to the research question. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with key informants (ustadz, senior students, boys/daughters) to explore their direct experiences, interpretations, and perspectives on the value of adab, ukhuwah, emotion management, and their impact on *bullying*. Documentation, including the Book *Ta'limul Muta'allim*, records of pesantren activities, and photos of student activities, is used to triangulate data, provide context, and verify practices expressed in interviews. The researcher served as the primary instrument, interacting directly with the informant at the research site, the Nuris Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School, for several months to facilitate adequate immersion. The validity of the research results was verified through data triangulation (comparing information from interviews and documentation) and *member checking* (confirming the interpretation of the data with the informant) to enhance the credibility of the findings (Hanson-DeFusco, 2023; Kazu & Kuvvetli, 2023; Yohannes et al., 2023).

The data analysis technique employed in this study is thematic analysis, following the interactive approach outlined in the Miles and Huberman model, which involves data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification (Karimi-Ghartemani et al., 2022; Kazu & Kuvvetli, 2023; Naeem et al., 2023). Once the data is gathered from the interviews and documentation, the first step is data reduction, i.e., selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting the raw data relevant to the research question. Furthermore, the reduced data is presented in the form of a systematic descriptive narrative, grouping the patterns and central themes that emerge. The final stage involves drawing conclusions, where the initial interpretation is verified by referring back to the original data and the existing literature. This iterative process significantly contributes to the increased credibility of the findings, ensuring that the interpretation of the data is strongly supported by empirical evidence. These steps allow the identification of core themes related to the contribution of adab to the character of anti-*Bullying*, as well as providing a deep and detailed understanding.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

In this section, the researcher will comprehensively explain and analyze the results of the research that has been collected, with the primary focus on identifying and interpreting the specific contributions of the values of adab taught in the Book *Ta'limul Muta'allim* towards the formation and strengthening of anti-bullying character among students of the Nuris Salafiyah Islamic boarding school. This discussion aims to relate empirical findings to existing theoretical foundations and draw important implications for the development of character education curricula.

Manners Towards Teachers and Their Role in Forming Anti-Bullying Characters

Manners towards teachers are a crucial foundation in the ethics of the learner, encompassing respect, obedience, and an awareness of the noble position of an educator as the inheritor of the knowledge of the prophets. Conceptually, this adab is not only interpreted as a mere manner, but also as a form of recognition for the teacher's services in imparting knowledge and guiding spiritual development. In the context of a pesantren, manners towards teachers are reflected in the daily behavior of students, ranging from how to interact and listen to advice to respecting the teacher's family and even the books taught. The foundation of this respect intrinsically instills the values of humility, empathy, and respect for positive authority, which directly contributes to the prevention of bullying behavior by forming the character of students who uphold togetherness and reject domination. The process of character formation through learning, as depicted in the book *Ta'limul Muta'allim*, is illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Learning in the Book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim*

Respect for knowledge and teachers is the essence of the learning ethics emphasized in Islamic teachings, as they are both paths to correct understanding and blessings. The following informant's statement evidences this: "We are taught that respecting teachers is the key to the blessing of knowledge. If we are not respectful, that knowledge will not permeate. We were taught that teachers are like our second parents in the pesantren. So, we must obey and must not argue, let alone hurt the feelings of the teacher (W-Santri_Khoirul Anam)." In line with that, Ustadz Yusuf Efendi also emphasized this aspect of respect: "Manners to teachers are absolute in Islamic boarding schools. Starting from not walking in front of him, not sitting in his seat, to not preceding his words. This is not just a rule, but to instill *tawadu* and appreciate the knowledge we convey.

If the student is used to respecting the teacher, he will automatically respect his fellow friends too (W-Ustadz_Yusuf Efendi)." The importance of respecting teachers' families was also conveyed by Ustadz Sumardi, who explained: "In this Islamic boarding school, we always teach that respect for teachers also means respect for their families. The teacher's wife, his children, and even his close relatives with whom we often interact must be treated well. This is part of maintaining the honor of teachers and the pesantren environment as a whole (W-Ustadz_Sumardi)."

Departing from several statements submitted by the research informants, it is explained that respect for science, teachers, and teachers' families in pesantren is not only taught as theory, but is internalized through daily practice and emphasis on the value of the blessing of knowledge. Students understand that good manners are a prerequisite for the acceptance of helpful knowledge. This adab directly fosters a humble attitude (*tawadu'*) and awareness of a positive hierarchy in the teaching and learning process. When students appreciate the teacher and the knowledge imparted, as well as respect the teacher's family as part of the dignity of educators, they tend to apply these values in their interactions with others. This effectively reduces the potential for demeaning or detrimental behavior towards others that is characteristic of *bullying*, as this mannerism instills emotional and verbal control, while also fostering a sense of collective responsibility towards the pesantren community.

The results of the study comprehensively show that manners for teachers, which include respect for the knowledge taught, the teacher himself, and his family, have proven to be fundamental in forming anti-bullying character in students. The internalization of these noble values effectively creates an Islamic boarding school environment that upholds humility, empathy, and self-control, so that it is automatically able to suppress and even prevent the emergence of bullying behavior. In other words, this in-depth education of manners is not just a social norm, but a strong foundation that allows students to develop emotional and social maturity, which ultimately minimizes the potential for conflict and aggression, as well as strengthens the pesantren community as a safe and harmonious place, free from *bullying*.

Ukhuwah and Solidarity Between Students

Ukhuwah and solidarity between students is a concept that refers to the bond of brotherhood and a strong sense of togetherness among fellow students, transcending differences in backgrounds. Conceptually, ukhuwah is not just an ordinary friendship relationship, but a spiritual and emotional bond rooted in Islamic values, fostering mutual help, care, and respect. In the context of pesantren, ukhuwah and solidarity are applied through the habit of living

together, learning together, and facing challenges together, which automatically builds a sense of belonging to the community. This foundation is a strong fortress against *bullying*, because students feel that they are part of a family that will protect each other and uphold justice, ensuring that oppressive behavior has no room to develop.

The formation of strong *ukhuwah* and solidarity in Islamic boarding schools is greatly influenced by positive social choices, the practice of mutual love, and the focus on the noble goal of seeking knowledge. The following informant's statement evidences this. Ustadz Sumardi explained the importance of compassion in building the pesantren community: "The essence of living in a pesantren is *ukhuwah*. Students must love each other, love their brothers. If anyone has difficulties, they are helped. If someone is sick, they are visited. There should be no envy, because it ruins togetherness. If you already love him, how can he have the heart to hurt his friend? (W-Ustadz_Sumardi)". Dinda, a female student, also explained about the sense of security she felt: "I feel very safe here. Never worry about being bullied or ridiculed. Because we all take care of each other, and if a problem arises, we will work together to resolve it properly. The family atmosphere here is robust, so we are not afraid to be ourselves (W-Santri_Dinda)."

Based on the results of the interview conducted with the informant above, it is evident that *ukhuwah* and solidarity among students are formed through a strategic combination of the principle of choosing constructive association, the practice of mutual love, and a strong focus on academic and spiritual goals. The teachings of the Book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim*, with their emphasis on the selectivity of friendship, the importance of sharing and helping others, and the encouragement to avoid unhelpful debates, collectively create a cohesive and supportive pesantren ecosystem. Students internalize the value that brotherhood binds them together as a big family, which effectively suppresses the growth of envy and diverts energy from conflict to collaboration. The concept of "own family" in the pesantren environment is vital because it eliminates the negative hierarchy that often triggers *bullying*. Thus, *bullying* behavior has difficulty developing because it is entirely contrary to the principles of brotherhood that have been firmly embedded in students, resulting in a safe and inclusive environment. Furthermore, information from informants corroborates that daily interactions and close family atmospheres significantly contribute to *bullying* prevention by fostering a sense of belonging, collective responsibility, and emotional support, ensuring each student feels protected and valued. Through this exposure, we aim to build and foster *ukhuwah* to prevent bullying at the Nuris Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School, as outlined in the book *Ta'limul Muta'allim*, as shown in Figure 2.

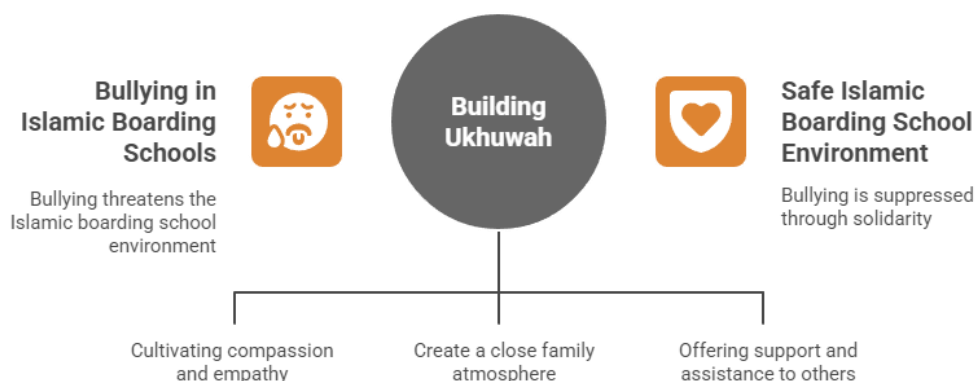


Figure 2. Building Ukhuwah to Prevent Bullying

It can be concluded that ukhuwah and solidarity among students, which are organically built through the principle of mutual love and supported by a close and deep family atmosphere, form a firm foundation in building an anti-bullying character. These embedded values of brotherhood collectively create an Islamic boarding school environment that is not only harmonious and supportive but also inclusive for each individual. In this kind of ecosystem, every student feels safe, appreciated, and fully integrated as part of the community, which significantly suppresses and even eliminates the emergence of bullying behavior. As such, this intense atmosphere of togetherness serves as an effective bulwark of defense, ensuring that every interaction is based on mutual respect and care, making *bullying* an anomaly that is difficult to thrive on.

Taking Care of Your Words and Emotions

Maintaining words and emotions is an essential ability in shaping the character of students who avoid *bullying* behavior, because many cases of bullying start from speech and the overflow of negative emotions. Conceptually, maintaining verbal control means avoiding every word that could hurt, slander, or provoke, while managing emotions involves being conscious, understanding, and expressing feelings constructively without harming oneself or others. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, this teaching is internalized as part of daily etiquette, where students are educated to think before speaking and control their emotions, including anger. This ability is a crucial shield in preventing verbal bullying and physical aggression, as students learn to communicate effectively and resolve conflicts peacefully.

The ability to maintain verbal control and manage emotions is a key indicator of character maturity, playing a significant role in preventing *bullying behavior*. The following informant's statement evidences this: Ustadz Yusuf Efendi emphasized the importance of self-control: "We always remind students to take care of their words. Once spoken, profanity or slander can hurt people's hearts and be difficult to retract. Even in the Book of *Ta'lim*, it is also stated that only mubah speech should be reduced, especially what is haram. This is very important to prevent quarrels between students (W-Ustadz_Yusuf Efendi)."

Table 1. Taking Care of Words and Emotions through Learning the Book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim*

Sub Findings	Description
1 The Importance of Verbal Control in Bullying Prevention	Controlling words (not hurting, slandering, provoking) is an essential ability to prevent bullying, especially verbal bullying and physical aggression, as emphasized in the teachings of pesantren and the Book of <i>Ta'lim</i> .
2 Emotion Management as an Anti-Bullying Shield	The capacity to be aware, understand, and express feelings constructively is essential to prevent bullying, as an outpouring of negative emotions is often a trigger for bullying.
3 Integration of Self-Control in the Daily Manners of Students	Students are educated to think before speaking and control their anger as part of daily manners in Islamic boarding schools, thereby forming wise communication and promoting peaceful conflict resolution.
4 Verbal Control Prevents Heartbreak and Arguments	Dirty words or slander can hurt the heart and are difficult to retract, potentially triggering quarrels between students, as emphasized by Ustadz Yusuf Efendi.
5 Direct Intervention against Abusive/Excessive Communication	Santri actively reprimands friends who use abusive language or make excessive jokes, as this can cause hurt feelings and trigger fights, demonstrating the internalization of the value of good communication.
6 Emotion Management Prevents Impulsive Aggression	Emotions must be well-managed (patiently talking with a cool head) to avoid aggressive expressions, such as shouting or snapping, which can be the seeds of bullying, as explained by Dinda's students.
7 The Contribution of Keeping Verbal & Emotional to Anti-Bullying Character	The ability to maintain verbal communication and manage emotions is a crucial factor in developing anti-bullying character traits in students, thereby fostering a safe and harmonious interaction environment.

A student also shared his experience regarding maintaining his language: "Here, if there is a friend who speaks roughly or likes to joke too far, he is usually immediately reprimanded. Because it can hurt your heart, and sometimes it can be the start of a fight. We are taught to speak well (W-Santri_Sofyan)." This is reinforced by the statement of the student, Dinda, who explained how emotions need to be managed: "Emotions must be managed properly. If you are angry, do

not immediately express it by shouting or yelling at your friends. We were taught to be patient, and if we had to say something, to do so with a calm head and kind words. Because if emotions have exploded, it can be the seeds of *bullying* (W-Santri_Dinda)." Building on this, to better understand the meaning of maintaining words and emotions through the study of the book *Ta'limul Muta'allim*, the following is presented in Table 1.

Based on existing findings, the ability to maintain verbal and emotional control effectively turns out to be a crucial factor in the formation of anti-bullying characters in students. A consistent emphasis on thoughtful control of speech and emotional expression in the pesantren environment has succeeded in equipping students with strong self-defense mechanisms against impulsive behavior, which can often harm others. Therefore, this approach directly contributes to creating a much safer and harmonious interaction environment, where every student learns to communicate with full awareness and responsibility, thereby minimizing the potential for bullying.

Discussion

This study comprehensively describes the fundamental contribution of adab values enshrined in the Book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim* to the formation of anti-bullying character among students of the Nuris Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School. The main findings indicate that manners towards teachers, ukhuwah, and solidarity between students, as well as the ability to maintain verbal and emotional control, collectively form a strong bulwark against bullying behavior. Manners towards teachers instill humility and empathy, while ukhuwah fosters a loving and supportive environment. Meanwhile, verbal and emotional control equips students with wise communication skills, minimizing conflict triggers. The integration of these values in the pesantren ecosystem results in a harmonious and safe community, where *bullying* becomes an anomaly.

The findings of this study enrich the existing literature on *bullying* in the Islamic education environment, especially Islamic boarding schools, by highlighting the formative role of adab values as a preventive mechanism. Previous research by Choli et al. (2025) has identified phenomena and impacts of *Bullying* in Islamic boarding schools, but has not specifically studied the intrinsic contribution of adab in its prevention. Meanwhile, Sadiyah et al. (2022) demonstrate the effectiveness of *Ta'limul Muta'allim* in curative interventions through counseling. This study complements the existing research by showing how the organic internalization of adab in pesantren culture functions as a preventive foundation. This fills a gap in the understanding of how classical heritage proactively builds students' character immunity to bullying, in contrast to reactive efforts or structured interventions alone.

The findings of this study are closely aligned with the principles of Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory (Lönngren et al., 2024; Riechers et al., 2021; Root et al., 2022), especially in explaining how the formation of anti-Bullying Santri occurs through social interaction and internalization of values in the cultural environment of the Islamic boarding school. *Zone of proximal development* (ZPD), which facilitates the understanding and practice of adab (Ime, 2025; Jubba et al., 2022; Sanderse, 2024). The pesantren environment as a "learning community" provides a social context where the values of manners, ukhuwah, and emotional control are not only taught but also practiced and enforced collectively. This research contributes theoretically by demonstrating how socio-cultural frameworks effectively explain the internalization process of classical religious values in shaping positive social behavior, particularly in the context of preventing *bullying* in religious-based educational institutions.

Through the presentation of the narrative, the above research discussion reaffirms that the values of adab from the Book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim* are invaluable assets in developing students' anti-bullying character. The findings of this study not only confirm the relevance of classical teachings in the modern context but also significantly advance the understanding of the mechanisms by which these values are internalized in the pesantren ecosystem. The specific contribution of this study is to expand on previous studies by analyzing the intrinsic contribution of adab as a preventive formative mechanism, rather than just the relevance of the curriculum or intervention components. This research enriches socio-cultural theory by providing empirical evidence of how a socio-cultural environment based on religious values effectively fosters prosocial behavior and suppresses aggression, changing the perspective of character education from a problem-centered approach to a values- and community-centered approach.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of bullying that continues to occur in the educational environment, especially in Islamic boarding schools, remains a serious challenge that threatens the holistic development and welfare of students. This research empirically demonstrates that the values of manners contained in the Book of *Ta'limul Muta'allim*, including respect for teachers, strengthening ukhuwah and solidarity among students, as well as the ability to maintain verbal and manage emotions collectively, form a solid fortress of defense against *bullying* behavior. These findings not only confirm the relevance of classical teachings in the modern context but also significantly enrich theoretical understanding of how socio-cultural environments based on religious values can proactively foster prosocial behavior and suppress aggression. Therefore, this study underscores the urgency for educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding schools, to strengthen a comprehensive adab curriculum, implement practical programs that strengthen

communal bonds and emotion regulation, and provide safe reporting channels, in order to create a learning ecosystem that is values-centered and community-based, free from bullying.

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