



Early Childhood Education Teacher Management Strategy in Preventing Verbal Bullying in Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT

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Early childhood is a critical stage for character formation and socio-emotional development, making children vulnerable to deviant behaviors such as verbal bullying. This study aims to identify and analyze teacher management strategies in Islamic Early Childhood Education (PIAUD) to prevent verbal bullying in the classroom through Islamic values. This research employed a qualitative phenomenological design, using in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation with PIAUD teachers experienced in handling verbal bullying. The findings reveal three main strategies: internalizing Islamic values through storytelling and routine practices; humanistic classroom management based on compassion and positive communication; and active collaboration with parents and school institutions. These strategies effectively raise children's verbal awareness, build social leadership, and reduce verbal bullying behavior across genders. The study concludes that value-based teacher management is a constructive and preventive approach to fostering a safe, inclusive, and character-driven learning environment. These findings have practical implications for developing teacher training programs and Islamic early childhood education policies grounded in moral and spiritual values.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a crucial phase of character formation and social-emotional development, so it requires a learning environment that is safe, supportive, and free from violence, including verbal bullying. At this stage, teachers not only act as academic educators but also as role models in instilling noble moral values (Kim, 2023; Tan et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2023). Verbal bullying, such as teasing or rejection from peers, can disrupt a child's self-confidence and psychological development if not addressed promptly (Purwanto et al., 2023; Suryaningsih & Aisyah, 2024; Santoso et al., 2024). Therefore, classroom management strategies by teachers are an important element in creating a

healthy learning climate and preventing verbal bullying in early childhood education environments (Forster et al., 2022; García-Fernández et al., 2023).

Ironically, the problem of verbal bullying in Islamic educational institutions is still often considered a normal part of children's interactions (Hidayah, 2024; Hina, 2024; M. Faisol, 2024; Setiawan Putri et al., 2024). Hurtful verbal behavior can cause long-term psychological wounds. This shows the need to study in depth the management strategies of Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) teachers in preventing verbal bullying in the classroom (Aziz & Sain, 2025; Heru & Bali, 2024; Nisa' & R, 2024). This study is important because it can explore the educational and spiritual approaches typical of Islamic education to overcome these problems preventively and constructively.

Previous studies have shown that verbal bullying is the most common form of violence in PAUD, especially through words of ridicule and social rejection (García-Fernández et al., 2023; Pratiwi, Islamy, et al., 2024). However, teachers often do not have a systematic classroom management strategy due to limited training. In the context, Pratiwi (2024) says that Islamic education, the integration of Islamic values in classroom management, is considered important to shape children's character who respect each other. In addition, the involvement of teachers as authoritative figures and companions has been shown to reduce the intensity of verbal bullying (Peng et al., 2024). Another study also noted that Islamic schools that have anti-bullying policies and implement good classroom management strategies experience a significant decrease in bullying cases (Rizki et al., 2024).

This study maps the management strategies of ECD teachers in preventing verbal bullying through instilling Islamic values such as compassion, mutual respect, and empathy. These strategies include managing children's behavior, positive communication approaches, and collaboration between teachers, parents, and schools. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, this study explores the real practices of teachers in handling verbal bullying in the classroom, with the hope of recommending a relevant classroom management model that can be adapted by various Islamic ECD institutions.

As attention to the importance of classroom management that is responsive to the dynamics of early childhood behavior has increased, previous studies have explored various approaches to preventing bullying, both in general education and Islamic education. However, studies that specifically highlight the management strategies of ECD teachers in the context of Islamic values are still limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring concrete strategies used by ECD teachers in preventing verbal bullying. This study also emphasizes the importance of a humanistic and spiritual approach in managing early childhood classes. The originality of this study lies in its contextual focus on

verbal bullying within Islamic early childhood education settings, combining empirical classroom practices with Islamic pedagogical ethics. Furthermore, the study contributes a nuanced framework that integrates moral-spiritual nurturing and behavior regulation strategies, offering a culturally relevant model for educators in similar religious and educational contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the strategies used by early childhood education (ECD) teachers in preventing verbal bullying within the context of Islamic education. A phenomenological design was chosen to allow the researchers to understand deeply the lived experiences of teachers in managing classroom behavior and cultivating a verbal bullying-free environment (Creswell & Poth, 2024; Lester, 2023). This design is particularly relevant for examining personal meaning, values, and strategies embedded in the spiritual-pedagogical practices of Islamic ECD institutions.

The research was conducted at an Islamic-based early childhood education institution located in [insert location], which was selected due to its commitment to integrating Islamic values into classroom management. The institution had also encountered several verbal bullying cases in the past, making it a relevant site for exploring teacher responses and management practices. The participants in this study were five to eight PIAUD (Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini) teachers who had direct experience in dealing with verbal bullying incidents in their classrooms. The participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the relevance and depth of experience required for phenomenological inquiry.

Data collection techniques included in-depth face-to-face interviews, classroom observations, and field notes. Semi-structured interview guidelines were used to explore how teachers identify, respond to, and manage verbal bullying. Observations focused on teacher-student interactions, classroom communication patterns, and implementation of preventive strategies. Field notes were used to capture contextual nuances and emotional expressions during interactions, which helped triangulate findings and provide a holistic view of the phenomenon.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis with three coding stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This process allowed researchers to extract significant themes related to verbal bullying prevention, spirituality-based discipline, and emotional regulation in early childhood classrooms. To ensure the validity of the data, techniques such as triangulation of sources and methods, member checking, and audit trails were employed. Ethical principles

such as informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of participant identity were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of the study showed that PIAUD teachers have various strategies in preventing verbal bullying, which can be grouped into three main themes, namely the approach of Islamic values in the formation of children's character, classroom management based on affection and positive discipline, and collaboration with parents and schools. All informants stated that preventive measures are much more effective than repressive approaches in dealing with deviant verbal behavior in the classroom.

Internalization of Islamic Values in Preventing Verbal Bullying

The internalization of Islamic values in early childhood classrooms plays a pivotal role in shaping children's behavior, particularly in preventing verbal bullying. This strategy refers to how teachers embed spiritual and moral teachings such as mutual respect (*ta'āwun*), politeness (*adab*), and empathy into daily classroom routines. Rather than using punitive measures, teachers emphasize value-based reminders and model ethical behavior rooted in Islamic teachings. This approach forms the foundation of humanistic classroom management that is sensitive to children's developmental needs and emotional expressions.

The results of in-depth interviews with early childhood teachers at the Islamic institution revealed that value internalization begins from the very start of the school day. One teacher shared, "I always start the morning by reminding the children to speak nicely, because words reflect the heart. If someone makes fun of a friend, I immediately approach them and talk to them slowly." This statement illustrates the teacher's conscious effort to shape students' verbal behavior through moral reflection and gentle correction. Rather than reprimanding harshly, the teacher utilizes verbal guidance that aligns with the Islamic ethic of *maw'izhah hasanah* (giving good advice).

Teachers consistently reinforced the value of "mutual respect" during routine activities such as eating together, storytelling sessions, and playtime. For example, during a communal snack time, the teacher would prompt children to say "please" and "thank you," followed by short reflective stories about kindness from prophetic traditions. These micro-interactions function as daily moments of character building that reduce the likelihood of verbal aggression.

Insights from a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) further emphasized the holistic strategy of value internalization. Teachers agreed that instilling Islamic values must be supported by consistent communication with parents. One

participant remarked that “the values we teach at school will not be effective if they are not continued at home.” As a result, the school implemented a routine parent–teacher communication system to share weekly themes, behavioral observations, and recommended home activities. This collaboration ensures that moral education becomes a shared responsibility between the school and family environments.

The strategy of internalizing Islamic values is not merely doctrinal, but practical and relational. Teachers act as moral role models and facilitators of emotional development, guiding children to understand the impact of their words and nurturing a respectful classroom atmosphere. The integration of spiritual values into classroom management demonstrates a unique approach to bullying prevention that aligns with both pedagogical best practices and Islamic ethical teachings. In this way, ECD teachers contribute not only to discipline but also to early moral formation and the cultivation of verbal empathy among young learners.

Humanistic Class Management Strategy

Humanistic class management strategy in the context of early childhood Islamic education refers to the teacher's consistent efforts to create a classroom atmosphere based on empathy, respect, and emotional understanding. This strategy includes the establishment of routines that promote kindness, the use of gentle corrective methods, and the cultivation of mutual care among children. The purpose of this management approach is to prevent verbal bullying by embedding prosocial values into daily interactions and by modeling appropriate verbal behavior within a safe and emotionally supportive environment.

Teachers consistently applied non-punitive corrective actions during learning and playtime. For example, when conflicts arose between children during group activities, teachers were observed immediately intervening using calm verbal redirection, guiding children to express feelings with respectful language, and facilitating reconciliation without assigning blame. This proactive behavior management technique is consistently applied, particularly during free play sessions and transition times, when the risk of verbal conflict tends to increase. The teachers' presence, tone, and body language all play a central role in preventing verbal aggression before it escalates.

During structured activities such as morning greetings, storytelling, and communal meals, teachers were seen integrating ethical language norms through repetitive routines. For instance, before eating, children were guided to express gratitude and share food, reinforcing the values of respect and politeness. In addition, when children used inappropriate language, teachers redirected them to restate their words using gentler expressions, often repeating this routine as

part of daily reflection at the end of the school day. That showed a deliberate pedagogical pattern rooted in emotional coaching and moral development.

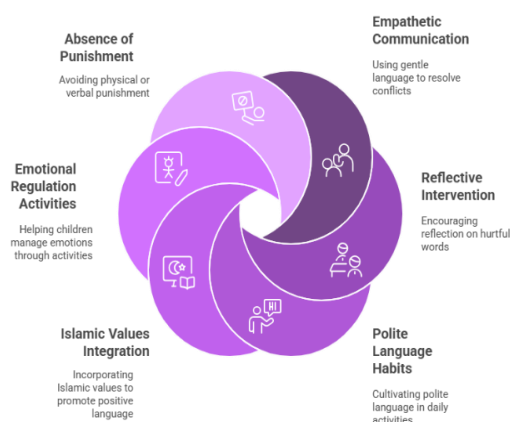


Figure 1. Key Components of Humanistic Class Management Strategy

Documentation of class schedules and weekly thematic plans further illustrated the humanistic approach taken by the school. Emotional literacy activities were embedded in weekly lessons, emphasizing the naming of feelings, role-playing kind communication, and conflict resolution strategies. In several documented lesson plans, themes such as "Speaking with Kindness" and "Friends Who Forgive" were aligned with Islamic values and delivered through stories, group discussions, and expressive art. These structured approaches indicate that the prevention of verbal bullying is not incidental but an intentional outcome of the school's class management framework.

Based on the classroom observations, documentation, and behavioral patterns noted throughout the learning process, it can be concluded that humanistic class management in this early childhood Islamic institution is implemented through emotionally attuned routines and ethical modeling. Rather than employing punitive methods, the school adopts a preventive approach that fosters self-regulation and prosocial behavior from an early age. This pattern of humanistic classroom practice not only reduces the incidence of verbal bullying but also supports the development of children's social-emotional competencies within an Islamic ethical framework.

Partnership with Parents and Schools

Partnership with parents and schools in the context of preventing verbal bullying in Islamic early childhood education refers to the collaboration between educators, school administrators, and parents to reinforce consistent moral and behavioral values both at school and home. This strategy includes the establishment of two-way communication systems, routine parent involvement in moral education programs, and joint behavioral monitoring to ensure children

receive coherent guidance across environments. Effective partnerships aim to build a shared understanding of respectful communication, positive reinforcement, and verbal ethics based on Islamic values.

During observations conducted over one month, researchers found that the institution actively engaged parents through structured communication routines, including weekly parent-teacher notebooks, monthly parenting meetings, and home behavior logbooks. These tools were designed not only to report children’s behavior but also to invite parents to reinforce classroom-taught values at home. In several cases, teachers invited parents for private consultations when verbal conflicts reoccurred, using restorative dialogue approaches rather than disciplinary warnings. This indicates the presence of a proactive and collaborative framework in addressing verbal bullying through home–school synergy.

Teachers also distributed thematic booklets titled (Good Words, Good Heart), which contained weekly language goals, Islamic moral stories, and recommended phrases to use at home. These resources were observed being used during morning arrival time, when teachers briefly reviewed them with children and their parents. Furthermore, the institution held joint events such as “Language of Love Week,” where children performed polite expressions and Qur’anic verses about qaulan karīma (noble speech), with parents participating as audience and co-facilitators. These activities revealed a structured effort to build consistency in children’s verbal behavior through joint reinforcement.

Table 1. Evidence of Findings: Partnership with Parents and Schools

Data Source	Key Practice or Finding	Interpretation
Observation of Daily Routine	Use of communication books is reviewed daily by parents and teachers	Indicates structured and consistent two-way communication to monitor behavior
Classroom Observation	Parents are involved in morning reflections using value booklets on positive speech.	Shows the school’s effort to actively engage parents in value reinforcement
Event Documentation	Language of Love Week involves joint parent-child verbal expression performances.	Demonstrates cultural integration and active collaboration in behavior education
School Artifact Review	Distribution of Islamic value-based phrase booklets for home use	Suggests intentional effort to synchronize verbal behavior norms across environments

Table 1 show it can be concluded that the institution has established a systematic and proactive partnership with parents to support the prevention of verbal bullying. Communication tools, shared moral education, and joint events serve as key instruments in aligning behavior guidance between school and

home. Partnerships are not limited to administrative involvement but are deeply pedagogical and moral, rooted in Islamic teachings on respectful communication.

The pattern emerging from these findings shows that verbal bullying prevention becomes more effective when schools and families co-construct shared norms, routines, and language ethics. Rather than isolating behavioral interventions within the classroom, the institution expands them into the home environment, ensuring that children receive coherent and continuous reinforcement. This approach reflects a holistic educational strategy in which school–parent collaboration is integral to character development, verbal discipline, and early Islamic moral formation.

Discussion

The discussion of this study compares empirical findings in the field with existing literature and elaborates on their theoretical and practical implications. Based on the findings, three central strategies were identified in the efforts of PIAUD teachers to prevent verbal bullying: internalization of Islamic values, humanistic class management, and partnership with parents and schools. These strategies reflect a preventive, character-based approach that contrasts with traditional punitive models often applied in early childhood discipline.

The first finding, internalization of Islamic values, is in line with the literature on Islamic pedagogy, which emphasizes the cultivation of *adab* (moral behavior) from an early age. Scholars such as García (2023) argue that Islamic education must prioritize moral and spiritual formation rather than mere behavior control. The findings affirm this by demonstrating how teachers embed values like *ta'āwun* (mutual respect) and *qaulan karīma* (noble speech) in daily routines. However, a key contribution of this study is the identification of value internalization as a structured, dialogic process, not only through storytelling or rituals but also through reflective conversations and consistent verbal modeling in response to children's speech (Bulut & Yorguner, 2023). This expands upon existing theory by highlighting the micro-level pedagogical practices through which Islamic values are socially constructed in early education.

The second finding regarding humanistic classroom management resonates with developmental psychology theories and early childhood best practices. Scholars such as Smith et al. (2023) emphasize that discipline in early childhood should focus on guidance, empathy, and emotional regulation. The observed use of emotional coaching, positive redirection, and consistent routines in this study aligns with these principles. However, unlike most general early childhood literature, this study incorporates an Islamic moral lens, where affective guidance is fused with spiritual goals. Teachers not only coach language but do so with an ethical intention rooted in faith (Arifin et al., 2024; Jali, 2025).

This represents a significant theoretical integration of Islamic moral education with humanistic developmental approaches, a dimension that has been largely underexplored in previous literature.

The third finding, partnership with parents and schools, supports the notion from Lin et al. (2022) theory of overlapping spheres of influence, which states that child development is most effective when schools and families share consistent values and practices. Previous studies (Baharun, 2023; Li et al., 2023; Putri, 2024) affirm that school-home collaboration enhances prosocial behavior in children. This study confirms such claims by identifying practices like communication books, moral value booklets, and joint thematic events. However, the originality of this study lies in how these tools are intentionally designed to reinforce Islamic verbal ethics, not just generic behavioral norms (Munawwaroh, 2024). Thus, this research contributes a culturally and religiously contextualized model of school-parent partnership for character education.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the growing discourse on integrated Islamic early childhood education by offering an empirically grounded framework for how bullying prevention can be approached through the fusion of moral, emotional, and spiritual education (Abdullah, 2024; Sain, 2025; Umar & Khaer, 2024). While previous works have separately examined Islamic education or anti-bullying efforts, this study brings them together in a coherent and actionable strategy, emphasizing that early moral formation must include not only ethical values but also emotionally intelligent pedagogy and community collaboration (Seguí-Grivé et al., 2024).

The practical implications of these findings are multifold. First, Islamic ECD institutions need to invest in teacher training that integrates emotional literacy with Islamic character-building, ensuring that educators are equipped to model and reinforce positive speech and moral behavior. Second, schools should design structured routines and reflective classroom activities that promote prosocial communication, such as storytelling with prophetic values and guided peer interactions. Third, parent engagement should be transformed from informational meetings to collaborative moral reinforcement, using tools like weekly value themes, home tasks, and co-learning events.

Effective prevention of verbal bullying in Islamic early childhood contexts requires a holistic pedagogical model that intertwines spiritual values, emotionally supportive management, and collaborative cultural reinforcement. These findings offer both confirmation of best practices in early education and a distinct contribution in terms of integrating faith-based values with child-centered approaches. This research can serve as a model for other Islamic educational institutions seeking to balance discipline, moral development, and socio-emotional growth in their classrooms.

CONCLUSION

The management strategy of PIAUD teachers based on Islamic values plays a significant role in preventing verbal bullying through an integrated approach between character building, humanistic communication, and environmental involvement. The novelty of this study lies in the formulation of a classroom management model that is not only preventive but also constructive in fostering children's social leadership from an early age through the systematic internalization of Islamic values. These findings reinforce the importance of teacher training based on Islamic values and spirituality in creating safe, inclusive, and empathetic classes. For future development, it is recommended that similar research be conducted in more diverse social and cultural contexts and use a quantitative approach to strengthen the validation of the results and expand the application of the developed management model.

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