

The Role of PAI Teachers in Managing Class Conflicts to Increase Social Empathy and Anti-Bullying Attitudes of Junior High School Students (Case Study in Junior High School in Pacitan District)

Fithri Hidayati

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Nahdlatul Ulama Pacitan, Indonesia; fithriwok135@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

PAI Teachers;
Class Conflict;
Social Empathy;
Anti-Bullying

Article history:

Received 2025-09-07

Revised 2025-10-10

Accepted 2025-11-11

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of bullying in the school environment is a serious problem rooted in low social empathy and students' inability to manage conflicts positively. The role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers (PAI) as central figures who teach noble moral values and compassion is crucial, especially through their example in dealing with dynamics and conflicts that occur in the classroom. This study aims to examine the extent to which the example of PAI teachers in managing classroom conflicts has a significant influence on increasing social empathy and forming anti-bullying attitudes in junior high school (SMP) students. This research is a qualitative approach with a type of case study research. The purpose of this research aims to fill the literature gap by proving that PAI teachers are key actors who use conflict management as a medium to form the character of students who empathize and reject violence. The results of the research of PAI teachers have a very important and strategic role in managing classroom conflicts to increase social empathy and foster anti-bullying attitudes.

This is an open access article under the CC BY [SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Fithri Hidayati

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Nahdlatul Ulama Pacitan, Indonesia; fithriwok135@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

National education currently places character education as the main foundation in the formation of graduates, in line with the vision of the Pancasila Student Profile which prioritizes the dimensions of faith, fear of God, and noble character. The context of Junior High School (SMP) is a crucial stage in the psychosocial development of students, where they are in a period of identity search and high intensity of group interaction (Santrock, 2024). These complex social dynamics inherently create potential for interpersonal conflict and strife in the classroom environment.

The urgency of character education in this phase is increasingly urgent considering the rampant cases of bullying in schools, both physically, verbally, and cyber. The latest data from relevant agencies (KPAI, 2023) consistently shows that cases of violence and bullying in education units are still high. Bullying is a real manifestation of a deficit of social empathy, which is the failure of students to understand and feel the perspectives and suffering of others (Hoffman, 2018). Without strong

internalization of empathy, the moral values taught will only stop at the cognitive level without being able to encourage pro-social and non-violent behavior.

This is where Islamic Religious Education Teachers (PAI) have a very strategic role. PAI teachers are not only in charge of delivering Akidah or Akhlak material, but also act as role models (*uswah hasanah*) that represent the core values of Islam such as compassion (*rahmah*), justice, and brotherhood (*ukhuwah*) in daily practice (Mulyasa, 2020). Therefore, the way a PAI Teacher interacts and, more importantly, the way they manage classroom conflicts in a fair, thoughtful, and empathetic manner, is the most authentic and directly impactful model of character learning. The success of PAI teachers in conflict management can directly facilitate the improvement of students' social empathy, which will further serve as a major psychological bulwark in strengthening anti-bullying attitudes. Specifically, when conflicts occur in the classroom, PAI teachers can use the moment as a moral laboratory. They serve as mediators who integrate Islamic teachings in the settlement process. Islamic values, such as justice (*al-'adl*), patience, tolerance, and the principle of peaceful resolution (e.g., through *tabayyun* or deliberation), provide an inclusive moral framework for resolving disputes (Moh. Ali, 2024)

What distinguishes the role of PAI teachers from other subject teachers is the emphasis on example in real actions (*Moral Modeling*). The way PAI teachers resolve disputes, for example, by listening to both parties fairly, showing empathy, avoiding discrimination, and seeking brotherhood-oriented solutions (*ukhuwah*) is a much more effective form of learning than just theoretical lectures. The involvement of PAI teachers in this social issue must be transformative, where moral theory is transformed into real practice. PAI teachers are required to play an active role as classroom managers and conflict mediators. Every conflict between students in the classroom is a real time *moral laboratory*. The way PAI teachers resolve disputes through a fair, deliberative, and principle-based approach of *tabayyun* (clarification) directly demonstrates how Islamic values are implemented in social life.

This research is based on the researcher's observation and deep concern about crucial issues that are intertwined in the Junior High School (SMP) education environment, especially in the Pacitan District area. Although there have been many prevention programs organized by schools, the phenomenon of conflict between students that often leads to cases of verbal, physical, and cyber bullying is still a latent problem in various junior high schools throughout Pacitan District. Preliminary data and case reports show that existing conflict resolution tends to be administrative (punitive) and does not touch the root of the problem. Anxiety arises because this approach fails to foster students' intrinsic moral awareness, so bullying cases often recur and only change forms. There are strong indications of a drastic decline in students' social empathy. Students tend to be indifferent to the suffering of their peers who are victims of conflict or bullying. Dependence on gadgets and social media is suspected to have eroded students' ability to understand and feel the emotions of others. This raises concerns, because successful character education should produce sensitive, caring, and proactive individuals in defending the truth, in line with human and religious values.

The latest data shows that bullying cases are still a serious threat at the junior high school (SMP) level (KPAI, 2023). Bullying is not just a violation of discipline, but a critical indicator of low social empathy among students. Empathy, which is the ability to sense and understand the emotional state of others, is a fundamental prerequisite for pro-social and nonviolent behavior (Hoffman, 2018). Therefore, research that focuses on efforts to increase empathy and instill anti-bullying attitudes is relevant and urgent.

There are several previous studies that have raised the variables used by researchers, but there have not been many studies that specifically integrate the role of PAI teachers in classroom conflict management with multiple outcomes, namely social empathy and anti-bullying attitudes. Some previous research such as, (Kamaludin, 2020) The Example of Islamic Religious Teachers in Shaping Students' Morals, (Danim, 2023) Principals and Teachers' Strategies in Managing Conflicts Between Students to Create a Conducive School Climate, (Wahyudi, 2021) The Effectiveness of Caring-Based Empathy Training to Reduce the Tendency of *Bullying Behavior* in Adolescents, and (Ma'rufah, 2024) Conflict Management Based on Islamic Values in a Multicultural Education Environment.

Based on the above comparison, the *novelty* of this study lies in the integrated constellation of three variables. This study not only examines the influence of PAI teachers' exemplary work in general, but sharply focuses on the behavior of managing classroom conflict as an effective and *real-time* moral intervention, resulting in two important outcomes: the improvement of Social Empathy (as a *character root*) and Anti-Bullying Attitudes (as an *application*) character). Thus, this study aims to fill the literature gap by proving the causality model that PAI teachers are key actors who use conflict management as a medium to form the character of empathetic students and reject violence.

2. METHODS

In this study, the researcher uses a Qualitative (Descriptive Analytical) approach to research and understand the meaning associated by individuals or groups with social or humanitarian problems. The research process involves specific questions and procedures, data collection from participants in their environment, and inductive data analysis from specific to general (Creswell, 2023). This approach was chosen to understand in depth (holistic) the roles, strategies, processes, and meanings behind the actions of PAI teachers in the context of conflict management, which aims to improve the quality of students' non-cognitive attitudes (empathy and anti-bullying).

The type of research used by the researcher is the *Multi Site Case Study*. A *multiple-case study* is a study that includes two or more cases (Robert, 2018). The main goal is to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition (Robert, 2018). The study was conducted in two or more Junior High Schools (SMP) to compare and contextualize the role of PAI teachers in different school settings, thus providing richer findings and more analytically robust generalizations.

To ensure that the data collected is comprehensive, valid and in-depth, the researcher uses three techniques in data collection, namely observation, interviews and documentation.

1. Observation of inactive participants is a field observation strategy in which the researcher is present in the subject's natural environment, recording their behavior and interaction, but limiting their involvement to the minimum necessary to maintain presence (Creswell, 2023), the primary role being to observe and document, rather than influence or participate in the nature dynamics of the group being observed (Yin, 2018).
2. In-depth interviews are qualitative data collection techniques that involve face-to-face interactions focused on key informants, the goal of which is to dig into data in a holistic, detailed, and contextual manner (Seidman, 2019). This technique is characterized as flexible, exploratory, and open, allowing researchers to follow up on informant responses to deeply understand the context of how and why the phenomenon occurred (Denzin, 2018). By using in-depth interviews, researchers can explore subjective information, perspectives, and experiences of key informants orally (PAI teachers, Victim Students, Perpetrators, Observers, and BK Teachers/Homeroom Teachers).
3. Documentation is a qualitative data collection technique that involves collecting, examining, and analyzing existing written or visual materials that are relevant to the focus of the research (Creswell, 2023).

Data analysis used an interactive model from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which was carried out continuously from the first data collection to the drawing of final conclusions:

1. Data *Condensation/Reduction*: Selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting raw data from interview transcripts and observation notes.
2. Data Display: Organizing the condensed data in the form of narratives, matrices, or flowcharts to visualize the relationships between variables (PAI Teacher Roles, Conflict Processes, Student Empathy Enhancement)
3. Conclusion *Drawing/Verification*: Draw general conclusions based on the patterns and themes that have been presented. Conclusions are verified repeatedly during and after the study to guarantee their validity.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of PAI Teachers as Mediators and Conflict Resolution Agents

The results of the study show that PAI teachers not only function as passive mediators, but also adopt a moral educational mediation model that involves three main steps, namely:

- a. Initiating and creating a safe space, PAI teachers always prioritize personal data collection and are separate from the classroom forum. Siswaa and BK teachers confirmed that PAI teachers often use special rooms (such as PAI consultation rooms or small prayer rooms) to mediate conflicts. This creates an environment that is free from peer social pressure .

This stage is important to encourage openness (honesty) from the parties to the conflict, which is a prerequisite for the identification of the root of the problem (Yin, 2018).

- b. Transformation of conflict based on morals, PAI teachers consistently use religious narratives. For example, in bullying conflicts, they cite the concepts (brotherhood of faith) and its importance (tolerance). For the perpetrator, the emphasis is on moral responsibility. The application of these values transforms interpersonal conflict into a violation of social-religious ethics. This significantly increases the moral burden of students to admit mistakes and come to peace, rather than just fear of school sanctions.

- c. Closing mediation and full commitment, mediation always ends with a promise that has a spiritual dimension. This spiritual commitment serves as an internal strengthening. Promises to God are more binding and encourage the internalization of anti-bullying behavior than ordinary promises to teachers, supporting the increased dependence of good behavior on personal beliefs.

Overall, the role of PAI teachers as mediators in managing class conflicts is effective because he fuses the mediation process (social techniques) with the cultivation of spiritual values (moral education). This Moral Educational Mediation model has succeeded in triggering internal reflection in students, which is a strong prerequisite for increasing Social Empathy and internalizing Anti-Bullying Attitudes at the junior high school level.

Improving Students' Social Empathy Through the PAI Approach

Guru Pai consistently uses the concept of *ihsan* (doing good or feeling watched by Allah) as an ethical foundation in managing conflicts. In mediation, Pai's teacher always asks reflective questions, such as "What if you are in the position of your friend who is hurting his feelings? Is your behavior in accordance with Allah's command to do *Ihsan* to others?". This approach directly targets students' Cognitive Empathy ability to take the perspective of others. By referring to *Ihsan*, the PAI teacher provides a theological basis that *self-interest* must be subject to socio-religious ethics (Huda & Khadavi, 2025).

In addition to the above methods, there is such a thing as internalizing suffering through *tafakkur*. This is the strongest mechanism in increasing the depth of empathy, where PAI Teachers encourage deep reflection after the conflict is resolved. This instilling fear of social sin (as opposed to fear of sanctions) results in the internalization of values. This is very effective in fostering Affective Empathy, which then becomes a strong driver of Anti-Bullying Attitudes (Tyas, 2024).

The increase in Social Empathy of junior high school students is triggered by the role of PAI teachers who use mediation and learning methods that are rich in Islamic ethical values. By focusing on the reflection of *Ihsan*, and *Tafakkur* on social sins, PAI teachers succeeded in internalizing students' Cognitive and Affective Empathy. This increase in empathy then becomes an effective moral bulwark, significantly reducing aggressive behavior and improving students' Anti-Bullying Attitudes.

Internalization of Anti-Bullying Attitudes Based on Religious Values

The results of the study show that the process of internalizing anti-bullying attitudes carried out by PAI teachers in junior high school runs through three main mechanisms, namely Reconceptualization of Bullying, Formation of Collective Responsibility, and Religious Moral Sanctions.

- a. Reconceptualizing Bullying as Tyranny. Based on interviews with PAI teachers, it was revealed that they always refer to hadiths that emphasize the prohibition of tyranny and the importance of staying away from all forms of tyranny against all humans. By using the label of *dzulmun*, it instills a deeper moral fear than just fear of school punishment. This encourages the formation of anti-bullying attitudes rooted in religious beliefs (Daulay et al., 2025).
- b. Formation of collective responsibility. PAI teachers actively educate students to switch from passive positions to defenders through the concept of *Nahi Munkar*. Based on the results of observations, it shows that PAI teachers always involve students around conflicts to take responsibility. They were taught the hadith about the obligation to change evil with their hands, mouth, and heart. This assignment of religious responsibility transforms passive attitude into proactive behavior. This internalization produces moral courage driven by religious obligations to defend the truth (Hasibuan, 2025).
- c. Religious Moral Sanctions. Bullying behavior is often asked to make a sacred promise not to repeat its actions witnessed by victims and witnesses. The promise to God creates internal *reinforcement*. This serves as a much more effective and sustainable 'internal control' than external sanctions (suspension), ensuring that anti-bullying attitudes are internalized as part of their religious identity (Tyas, 2024).

The internalization of Anti-Bullying Attitudes in junior high school students was successfully achieved through the role of PAI teachers who strategically used religious values as a moral framework. By defining bullying as *dzulmun* (tyranny) and promoting the obligation of *Nahi Munkar*, PAI teachers succeeded in shifting students' motivation from external obedience to internal spiritual commitment. This process results in a more stable, proactive, and sustainable anti-bullying attitude.

4. CONCLUSION

The role of PAI teachers as mediators in managing class conflicts is effective because he fuses the mediation process (social techniques) with the cultivation of spiritual values (moral education). This Moral Educational Mediation model has succeeded in triggering internal reflection in students, which is a strong prerequisite for increasing Social Empathy and internalizing Anti-Bullying Attitudes at the junior high school level. The increase in Social Empathy of junior high school students is triggered by the role of PAI teachers who use mediation and learning methods that are rich in Islamic ethical values. By focusing on the reflection of *Ihsan*, and *Tafakkur* on social sins, PAI teachers succeeded in internalizing students' Cognitive and Affective Empathy. This increase in empathy then becomes an effective moral bulwark, significantly reducing aggressive behavior and improving students' Anti-Bullying Attitudes. The internalization of Anti-Bullying Attitudes in junior high school students was successfully achieved through the role of PAI teachers who strategically used religious values as a moral framework. By defining bullying as *dzulmun* (tyranny) and promoting the obligation of *Nahi Munkar*, PAI teachers succeeded in shifting students' motivation from external obedience to internal spiritual commitment. This process results in a more stable, proactive, and sustainable anti-bullying attitude.

REFERENCES

- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Danim, S., & Suparno (2023). Strategi Kepala Sekolah dan Guru dalam Mengelola Konflik Antar Siswa untuk Menciptakan Iklim Sekolah yang Kondusif. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*. Vol. 17, No. 1. 1-12
- Daulay, H. H., Saputra, T., & Matondang, W. G. (2025). Mencegah Bullying Melalui Pendidikan Agama Islam: Analisis Peran Guru dan Siswa di Al-Yusufiyah. *Ahsani Taqwim: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Keguruan*, 2(3), 729-738.

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Hasibuan, N. H. (2025). Pendidikan Agama Islam Sebagai Media Pencegahan Perilaku Bullying Di Sekolah. *Jurnal Komprehensif*, 1(2), 101-110.
- Huda, M. M., & Khadavi, M. J. (2025). Peran Guru PAI dalam Mencegah Perilaku Bullying di SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Probolinggo. *ISLAMIKA: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Agama Islam*, 7(1), 124-140.
- Kamaludin, A. (2020). Keteladanan Guru Agama Islam dalam Membentuk Akhlak Karimah Siswa, Al-Hasanah: *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Juli - Desember), 34-45
- KPAI (Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia). (2023). *Laporan Tahunan Pengawasan Perlindungan Anak: Isu Kekerasan di Satuan Pendidikan*.
- Hoffman, M. L. (2018). *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ma'rufah, A. (2024). Manajemen Konflik Berdasarkan Nilai-Nilai Islam di Lingkungan Pendidikan Multikultural. *Jurnal Edukasia*. Vol. 18, No. 1hlm. 68-81
- Wafa, Moh Ali. (2024). STRATEGI MANAJEMEN KONFLIK DALAM LINGKUNGAN PENDIDIKAN AGAMA ISLAM: PENDEKATAN RESOLUSI DAMAI. . *Jurnal Cahaya Mandalika*. 1441-1447.
- Mulyasa. (2020). *Menjadi Guru Profesional*. PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Santrock, J. W. (2024). *Life-Span Development* (20th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education
- Seidman, I. (2019). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (5th ed.). Teachers College Press
- Sopandi, dkk. (2024). Peran Guru PAI dalam Penanaman Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Beragama di Sekolah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*. Vol. 5 No. 2.
- Stake, R. E. (2018). *Multiple Case Study Analysis* (SAGE Benchmarks in Social Research Methods). The Guilford Press.
- Tyas, E. Y. N. (2024). Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam Menanggulangi Bullying Melalui Penerapan Guru Sahabat Anak. *Jurnal Istifkar: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat*, 1(1), 22-35.
- Wahyudi, S., & Hartati, S. (2021) Efektivitas Pelatihan Empati Berbasis *Caring* untuk Menurunkan Kecenderungan Perilaku Bullying pada Remaja. *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan* Vol. 8, No. 1hlm. 1-10
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.