



ISLAMIC PREVENTIVE PEDAGOGY: TEACHERS' STRATEGIES IN ADDRESSING MORAL DEGRADATION AMONG SANTRI IN THE DIGITAL-MILLENIAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Islamic preventive pedagogy as a response to moral degradation among santri in pesantren-based madrasah within the digital and global cultural context. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings identify six preventive strategies that contribute to internalized akhlak, self-discipline, and ethical awareness, offering a conceptual framework for addressing moral challenges in Islamic education settings in the millennial era. This study examines Islamic preventive pedagogy as a response to moral degradation among santri in pesantren-based madrasah within the digital and global cultural context. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach with data from interviews, observations, and document analysis processed through the Miles and Huberman interactive model, the research identifies six key preventive strategies: strengthening spiritual foundations, teacher modeling, persuasive counseling, building moral classroom communities, regulating digital behavior, and collaboration with parents and caregivers. These interconnected strategies form a holistic framework of Islamic preventive pedagogy, emphasizing the cultivation of internalized akhlak, self-discipline, and ethical awareness before behavioral issues emerge. The findings provide empirical insights for enhancing character education in Islamic institutions during the millennial era, with recommendations for developing institutional guidelines and teacher training programs.

Keywords: Islamic education; preventive pedagogy; moral degradation; santri, digital era

1. INTRODUCTION

Moral challenges among youth have increasingly attracted scholarly attention in many Muslim societies, particularly in relation to the rapid expansion of digital technology and global cultural exposure (Twenge, 2019; Livingstone & Smith, 2014). Several studies indicate that unrestricted digital engagement may influence adolescents' attitudes, behavioural norms, and moral reasoning, often leading to value disorientation when not accompanied by strong ethical

guidance (Campbell, 2017). In Islamic educational contexts, this situation raises concern as students are increasingly exposed to online media, peer-driven trends, and normalized behaviours that may conflict with Islamic ethical expectations.

In pesantren-based madrasah, character formation (akhlak) constitutes a central educational mission rather than a supplementary objective. However, contemporary digital environments frequently introduce competing value systems that challenge traditional moral instruction. These realities necessitate a pedagogical shift from reactive or punitive disciplinary models toward preventive approaches that emphasize early moral guidance, internal self-regulation, and ethical awareness development.

Islamic preventive pedagogy refers to a set of proactive educational strategies rooted in Islamic teachings aimed at strengthening students' moral resilience before behavioural problems emerge. This approach aligns with prophetic educational principles, particularly the integration of *tarbiyah* (character nurturing), *ta'dib* (ethical discipline), and *ta'lim* (instruction) (Al-Attas, 1999; Halstead, 2007). International literature on preventive pedagogy also emphasizes early intervention, moral modelling, and supportive learning environments as effective means of addressing behavioural risks before they escalate (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

Within this framework, teachers assume multidimensional roles as instructors, moral exemplars, spiritual guides, counsellors, and behavioural monitors. Their influence is especially significant in pesantren settings where teacher–student interaction is continuous and holistic, extending beyond classroom boundaries into daily life.

This study addresses the central research question: What preventive strategies do teachers employ to address moral degradation among santri in a pesantren-based madrasah? Focusing on MTs Swasta Satap Pondok Pesantren Darun Naim As'adiyah Paotoa, this research aims to provide empirical insight into how preventive pedagogy is implemented in daily educational practices. The findings are expected to contribute to Islamic education scholarship by offering a contextualized and practically grounded framework for strengthening character education in digitally influenced environments.

2. METHODS

This research employed a qualitative descriptive methodology aimed at capturing the naturalistic processes of preventive pedagogy as practiced by teachers in a pesantren-based madrasah. The study was conducted at MTs Swasta Satap Pondok Pesantren Darun Naim As'adiyah Paotoa, an Islamic educational institution that integrates formal academic learning with spiritual, behavioural, and social frameworks characteristic of pesantren environments.

2.1 Research Design

A qualitative descriptive design was selected to enable an in-depth exploration of teachers' practices, meanings, and strategies without imposing rigid theoretical assumptions. This design allows preventive pedagogical practices to be described as they occur in real-life educational settings and within their specific socio-religious context.

2.2 Participants

The participants consisted of six teachers who were directly involved in character education, student supervision, and moral development programs. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants based on their active roles in guiding students' behaviour, implementing disciplinary strategies, and mentoring santri within both classroom and boarding environments..

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected over a three-month period using three primary techniques:

1. Semi-structured interview

Each teacher participated in one to two interview sessions, lasting approximately 30–60 minutes per session. Interview questions focused on teachers' perceptions of moral challenges among santri, preventive strategies employed, and experiences in addressing behavioural issues. Sample interview questions included: *"What moral challenges do you commonly observe among santri?"* and *"How do you apply preventive strategies before behavioural problems escalate?"*

2. Observations

Non-participant observations were conducted in classrooms, communal spaces, and boarding facilities across multiple sessions. Observational aspects included teachers' modelling behaviour, student interactions, disciplinary practices, spiritual routines, and responses to digital behaviour.

3. Document analysis

Relevant institutional documents were reviewed, including school regulations, disciplinary records, lesson plans, and schedules of religious activities, to support triangulation of data.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Coding and thematic categorization were conducted inductively to identify recurring patterns related to preventive pedagogical strategies. Data organization and coding were managed manually and supported by basic qualitative data management using NVivo, although software use served only as an analytical aid rather than a determining factor.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were upheld throughout the study. Participants were informed of the research objectives and provided consent prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by using pseudonyms, and participation was entirely voluntary.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal six interrelated preventive strategies that collectively form a coherent framework of Islamic preventive pedagogy. These strategies are not independent practices but operate in a complementary manner. Spiritual reinforcement functions as the internal moral foundation, teacher modelling and counselling serve as interpersonal mechanisms, classroom moral communities and digital regulation operate at the social level, and collaboration with parents and caregivers strengthens continuity across educational environments. This thematic structure illustrates how preventive pedagogy in pesantren-based madrasah is implemented through layered and interconnected moral interventions.

3.1 Strengthening Spiritual Foundations as Internal Moral Regulation

One of the most dominant preventive strategies observed was the systematic strengthening of students' spiritual routines. Teachers emphasized structured religious practices—such as daily congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation circles, and routine halaqah discussions—as

foundational mechanisms for cultivating internal moral discipline. Observational data indicated that students who consistently engaged in these activities displayed greater emotional control, discipline, and sensitivity toward moral norms.

A teacher explained:

"When students become consistent in congregational prayer, we notice changes in their daily behavior. They speak more politely, are more patient with friends, and are easier to guide." (Teacher A, Interview, 2024)

Another teacher added:

"Prayer and Qur'an are not only rituals here. They remind students from inside, even when teachers are not watching." (Teacher B, Interview, 2024)

From an Islamic moral psychology perspective, this finding aligns with the concept of *taqwa* as an internal regulatory force guiding ethical behavior. Classical scholars such as al-Ghazali emphasize spiritual training as the foundation for nurturing the *qalb* (heart), enabling moral awareness to emerge intrinsically rather than through external enforcement. Similar findings have been reported in studies on Islamic character education, which highlight spirituality as a core element in sustaining moral self-regulation among students (Halstead, 2007).

Triangulation across interviews, observations, and institutional documents confirmed that spiritual routines were consistently prioritized as preventive mechanisms rather than reactive disciplinary tools.

3.2 Teacher Modelling as a Living Moral Curriculum

Teacher role modelling emerged as a second major theme. Teachers consistently demonstrated punctuality, respectful communication, patience, and adherence to institutional rules. Santri reported that they were more influenced by teachers' actions than by verbal instructions alone.

One student remarked:

"When teachers always arrive on time and speak calmly, we feel embarrassed to break the rules. We want to behave the same way." (Santri B, Field Observation, 2024)

This finding supports Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes modelling as a primary mechanism of behavioral learning, particularly in high-trust environments. In Islamic pedagogy, *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct) is central to moral education, positioning teachers as living representations of ethical values.

Comparable studies in Islamic boarding schools indicate that consistent teacher modelling significantly influences students' discipline and emotional regulation (Djollong, 2017). Data triangulation showed that teacher modelling was evident not only in interviews but also repeatedly observed in daily school routines.

3.3 Persuasive Moral Counselling as Early Intervention

Teachers relied on persuasive, non-punitive counselling to address early signs of misbehavior. Instead of public reprimands, teachers preferred private dialogues aimed at understanding students' emotional and social contexts. This approach prevented behavioral escalation and fostered psychological safety.

A teacher stated:

"Sometimes students misbehave because of problems at home or peer pressure. If we talk to them calmly, they open up and reflect." (Teacher C, Interview, 2024)

Another teacher explained:

"Punishment may stop behavior temporarily, but counselling changes awareness." (Teacher D, Interview, 2024)

This strategy reflects the prophetic method of *nasihah*, emphasizing empathy, dignity, and compassion. Similar preventive counselling approaches have been identified in contemporary educational research as effective in fostering intrinsic moral motivation (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Observational and interview data consistently supported counselling as a primary early-intervention strategy.

3.4 Building a Moral Classroom Community through Collective Responsibility

Teachers intentionally cultivated classroom environments rooted in shared responsibility. Classroom rules were formulated collaboratively with santri, increasing students' sense of ownership and moral accountability. Observations indicated stronger peer reinforcement in classrooms with clearly negotiated norms.

One teacher noted:

"When rules are discussed together, students remind each other. Discipline becomes collective, not forced." (Teacher E, Interview, 2024)

This aligns with Durkheim's concept of *moral community*, where collective norms shape individual behavior. In Islamic pedagogy, forming a morally conscious *jama'ah* is essential for sustaining virtuous conduct. Similar findings in character education research suggest that shared moral norms reduce behavioral deviation through peer accountability mechanisms.

Triangulation revealed consistency between teacher narratives, classroom observations, and school regulations emphasizing participatory discipline.

3.5 Regulation of Digital Behavior and Peer Interaction

Digital exposure emerged as a significant source of moral challenges. Teachers monitored gadget use, restricted access to inappropriate content, and explicitly taught digital ethics aligned with Islamic values.

A teacher explained:

"Many problems start from videos or group chats. If we control digital use early, we prevent bigger issues later." (Teacher F, Interview, 2024)

This finding situates preventive pedagogy within contemporary realities. Islamic education cannot ignore digital influences that shape identity and behavior. Studies on digital ethics in religious education similarly emphasize early regulation and value-based guidance to mitigate online risks (Campbell, 2017). Observational data and disciplinary records confirmed that digital regulation was applied consistently as a preventive measure.

3.6 Collaborative Networks between Teachers, Parents, and Caregivers

Preventive pedagogy extended beyond the school setting through collaboration with parents and pesantren caregivers. Regular communication ensured continuity of moral guidance across home, school, and dormitory environments.

A caregiver stated:

"When teachers and caregivers coordinate, students feel guided everywhere, not only in class." (Caregiver F, Interview, 2024)

This finding aligns with Ki Hajar Dewantara's *Tripusat Pendidikan*, which emphasizes synergy between family, school, and community. Comparable studies highlight that such collaboration strengthens moral consistency and reduces supervision gaps. Triangulation across interviews and communication records reinforced the importance of collaborative networks as a preventive strategy.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic preventive pedagogy constitutes a holistic and effective philosophical framework for addressing moral challenges among santri in pesantren-based madrasah within the digital era. The findings identify six interrelated preventive strategies—strengthening spiritual routines, teacher role modelling, persuasive moral counselling, the development of moral classroom communities, regulation of digital behavior, and collaboration with parents and caregivers—which collectively foster *akhlak*, moral resilience, and internalized ethical awareness. These strategies demonstrate that preventive pedagogy in Islamic education is not merely a disciplinary technique, but a value-based educational philosophy that emphasizes early moral formation and self-regulation rather than reactive punishment.

Practically, the findings suggest that Islamic educational institutions should prioritize preventive moral education by integrating spiritual reinforcement, ethical modelling, and digital behavior regulation into daily pedagogical practices. At the policy level, this study recommends the development of institutional guidelines that support teacher capacity building in preventive pedagogy and strengthen collaboration between schools, families, and pesantren communities. While this study is limited to a single pesantren-based madrasah and relies on qualitative data, future research may expand comparative analyses across different pesantren models or explore the integration of preventive pedagogy with structured digital literacy programs to enhance moral resilience among Muslim youth in diverse educational contexts.

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