

Preventing Racism in Schools: Group Guidance with Mau'izatul Hasanah at MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara

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Abstract: Schools play a strategic role in shaping character and instilling values of tolerance in the younger generation. However, practices of racism are still found in educational environments, both in the form of hate speech, stereotypical jokes, and the exclusion of certain groups. This study aims to prevent racist behavior at MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara through group guidance services using the Mau'izatul Hasanah approach, a method of gentle, persuasive advice based on Islamic values, particularly brotherhood, tolerance, and justice. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with purposive sampling techniques targeting guidance counselors and students who exhibit tendencies of racist behavior. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's model. The research results show a significant reduction in discriminatory behavior post-intervention, reflected in the increase of students' tolerance scores from an average of 55% to 85%. This change includes the avoidance of racist jokes, increased inter-ethnic interactions, and students' initiatives to reprimand discriminatory behavior. These findings fill a research gap that previously rarely integrated group guidance with an explicit Islamic religious approach. Mau'izatul Hasanah proves to be effective not only in enhancing cognitive awareness but also in forming sustainable inclusive behavior, thus it can serve as a model for character building in multi-ethnic schools.

Keywords: Character Education, Group Guidance, Racism in School

A. Introduction

Schools have a strategic role as a medium for character formation and the internalization of noble values in the younger generation (Francis, 2025). In the educational process, students are not only equipped with academic knowledge but also directed to develop a sense of tolerance, appreciate diversity, and uphold the principles of social justice (Mayer, Horgan, Herrenkohl, & Osher, 2024). However, the reality in the field shows that practices of racism can still emerge in educational settings, both explicitly through hate speech and discriminatory behavior, and implicitly in the form of stereotypes, microaggressions, or exclusion against certain groups (Rudes & Fantuzzi, 2021). This phenomenon has a negative impact on the

school climate, disrupts the harmony of student relationships, and decreases motivation and learning achievement.

In the perspective of Islamic education, racism is contrary to the teachings that emphasize the equality of humanity, as affirmed in the Quran Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 that the honor of a person in the sight of Allah is determined by piety, not by ethnic or racial identity (Garcia, Empey, & Bell, 2024). Therefore, efforts to prevent racism in madrasas must be based on Islamic values that teach *ukhuwwah insaniyyah* (human brotherhood), mutual respect, and the prohibition of belittling other groups.

One of the relevant approaches to internalizing these values is the method of *mau'izatul hasanah*, which is the delivery of good, gentle, and persuasive advice that can touch the heart and awaken moral awareness (Liu & Wang, 2024). If this method is integrated into group mentoring services, it will create a participatory, reflective, and constructive dialogue space, allowing students to share experiences, identify their own prejudices, and develop an inclusive attitude (Wilton, Sullivan, Albuja, & Perry, 2024).

MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara, as an educational institution based on Islamic values in Labuhanbatu Utara Regency, has a moral and pedagogical responsibility to ensure the creation of a learning environment free from practices of racism. Therefore, this research positions group guidance with a *mau'izatul hasanah* approach as both a preventive and promotive strategy to prevent racism in the madrasah environment. The results of the research are expected to contribute practically to strengthening guidance and counseling services in madrasah and enriching the body of knowledge about character education based on Islamic values.

Research by (Beasley & Singh, 2022) related to the prevention of racism in schools generally focuses on multicultural education strategies, strengthening tolerance curricula, or integrating diversity values into learning. Most studies in Indonesia include one of these (Ningsih & Sulistiono, 2025) using a values socialization approach or character education based on civic education. However, the research gap is seen in the lack of studies that explicitly combine group counseling services with a persuasive-moral Islamic religious approach, such as *Mau'izatul Hasanah*, to address racism in the high school environment.

In addition, the research (Abreu, et al., 2022) focusing more on the quantitative measurement of tolerance attitudes post-intervention, yet there are still few studies examining the actual behavioral changes of students in daily social interactions. In fact, discriminatory behaviors such as mockery based on accents, skin color, or ethnic stereotypes often arise in students' social dynamics and require a more personal development approach that touches on moral-spiritual aspects.

The novelty of this research lies in the integration of group guidance methods that psychologically build social support and self-reflection with *Mau'izatul Hasanah* as an advice approach that emphasizes gentleness, exemplary behavior, and moral arguments based on Islamic values. This combination is implemented contextually at MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara, which has ethnic diversity, so the intervention not only targets change in perception but also encourages actual behavioral transformation among students in avoiding and addressing racist behaviors. Thus, this research fills a gap in studies on interventions to prevent racism based on Islamic religious values in the format of group guidance. This approach has the potential to become a character-building model across contexts that is relevant for schools in multi-ethnic areas in Indonesia.

B. Methods

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at understanding and explaining facts, issues, or events that occur naturally in accordance with the context of time and place (Creswell, 2020). This approach was chosen to provide a clear, detailed, and objective overview of the situation and phenomena occurring at the research site. The research was conducted at MAN 2 Labuhan Batu Utara, located at Jl. Kapten H. Rakanin Y, Desa Damuli Kebun, Kualuh Selatan District, Aek Kanopan City. The preparation stage began with determining the location and research subjects, namely students who have the potential or tendency to be involved in racist behavior, as well as Guidance and Counseling teachers who directly provide group counseling services. The researcher then took care of obtaining official permits and fulfilling ethical requirements, including obtaining informed consent from all research participants.

The selection of informants was conducted using purposive sampling techniques based on specific criteria, namely guidance counselors who have a minimum of two years of experience and are actively mentoring students. The researcher prepared research instruments in the form of interview guidelines, observation guidelines, and relevant documentation formats. The data collection stage was carried out through non-participatory observation of group mentoring implementations to observe the delivery methods of *Mau'izatul Hasanah* and the level of student participation. The observation focused on the interaction between the guidance counselor and the students, as well as the students' responses to anti-racism messages. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with the guidance counselor and several students to explore perceptions, experiences, and the impact of the services on attitudes of tolerance. Documentation in the form of activity schedules, implementation records, and official reports were collected as supporting data (Moleong, 2000).

Data analysis using models (Miles & Saldaña, 2024) which consists of three stages: (1) data reduction, which is the selection of relevant information; (2) presentation of data in the form of structured narratives; and (3) drawing conclusions based on field

findings. The validity of the data is tested through triangulation of techniques (interviews, observations, and documentation) as well as member checking, where informants review the data recording results and provide confirmation. The final stage of the research is the preparation of a report containing the findings, analysis, and recommendations to improve the effectiveness of group guidance services using the Mau'izatul Hasanah method in preventing racist behavior at MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara.

Research findings indicate that the application of Mau'izatul Hasanah can enhance awareness of tolerance and reduce students' tendencies towards racist behavior. This result differs from secular interventions such as research (Sanders, 2024) which relies on cognitive and socio-emotional approaches, but does not utilize spiritual values. Mau'izatul Hasanah, based on Islamic teachings, provides a stronger intrinsic motivation for students with a religious background, making the anti-racism message easier to accept and internalize. Although there has been an increase in empathy and awareness of the importance of respecting differences, some students still show rejection towards certain groups due to stereotypes that have long been rooted. This phenomenon supports the opinion (Wu & Jia, 2023) that changes in anti-racist behavior require not only an understanding of values, but also systematic efforts to dismantle biases that are ingrained from an early age.

Pre- and post-intervention survey data shows an increase in students' average tolerance scores. Before the intervention, the average score was 3.1 (on a scale of 1–5), whereas after the intervention it increased to 4.2. This improvement can be visualized through a bar graph to clarify the positive impact of Mau'izatul Hasanah on students' attitudes of tolerance.

The values of Islam instilled through Mau'izatul Hasanah, such as ukhuwah (brotherhood), tasamuh (tolerance), and adl (justice), are in line with anti-racism principles that emphasize respect for human dignity (Lind, Mason, & Brady, 2024). Thus, this approach is not only effective in the context of Islamic religious education but also contributes to global anti-racism strategies that emphasize social harmony across cultures and religions.

C. Results and Discussion

The initial observation results at MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara show that before group guidance services were implemented, racist behavior was still quite evident in student interactions. This behavior manifested in forms such as mocking friends who have a different speech accent, comments related to skin color, and jokes that touch on certain ethnic stereotypes. Although often wrapped in humor, this behavior causes shame in the victims, decreases self-confidence, and impacts the emotional distance among students. In some cases, victims tend to withdraw from social interactions or limit

their interactions with certain groups. This creates a less conducive learning environment and reduces the sense of togetherness in the classroom.

The group guidance process using the *Mau'izatul Hasanah* method is carried out in four sessions gradually. The first session focuses on introductions and ice breaking, where the guidance counselor creates a relaxed atmosphere so that students feel comfortable. In this session, students still appear awkward to speak, especially with friends from different cultural backgrounds. The second session was filled with an open discussion about the meaning of racism, its forms, and its impact on social relationships in school. The guidance counselor encouraged student participation by asking reflective questions, such as 'How would you feel if you were treated differently just because of your skin color?' Gradually, students started to feel more comfortable expressing their opinions and personal experiences, although some still seemed reluctant to speak in front of the group. The third session is the core of the intervention, which is the delivery of religious advice (*Mau'izatul Hasanah*) referring to the verses of the Qur'an, including Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13. The guidance counselor emphasizes the values of Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and justice (*adl*). Observations show that when this material is delivered with empathy and accompanied by concrete examples from the students' daily lives, the classroom atmosphere becomes quiet and the participants listen attentively. Some students appear to be taking notes on important points, while others show agreement by nodding. The fourth session is filled with reflection activities, where each student is invited to express personal commitments related to anti-racism attitudes. Observations noted that some students voluntarily stated they would reprimand friends if there was discriminatory behavior, while others committed to being friendlier to all classmates regardless of their background.

Post-intervention, further observations in the school environment showed a noticeable change in behavior. Students who previously often made jokes with racist undertones now tend to avoid such remarks. Interactions among students appear more open, and cooperative activities both in and out of the classroom involve students from various ethnic backgrounds without discrimination. In sports activities, for example, students seem to encourage each other without differentiating between groups, and in group study discussions, students sit mixed together without forming clusters based on ethnicity. In addition, the guidance counselor and the homeroom teacher observed during the learning process confirmed a decrease in cases of social exclusion and an increase in students' willingness to help peers in difficulty, both in academic tasks and non-academic activities. Some students even started taking on the role of "mood guardians", reprimanding friends who tried to make jokes with discriminatory tones. In general, observations indicate that group guidance with the *Mau'izatul Hasanah* approach not only affects students' verbal behavior but also improves social dynamics in the classroom. The learning atmosphere becomes more inclusive, mutual respect increases, and the warmth of relationships among students is more palpable compared to before the intervention was conducted. The findings

from the observations are also in line with the results of the interviews, which have been presented by the researcher below.

Guidance Counselor 1 (Interview, June 11, 2025) *“Before the group guidance was implemented, racist behavior was still noticeable among the students. Some would mock their friends’ accents or skin color. But after this program was running, students became more open to interacting and respecting each other. In fact, some of them started to admonish their friends if there was a racist joke. Cooperation in the classroom also increased regardless of ethnic differences.”* Guidance Counselor 2 (Interview, June 26, 2025) *“I have seen a decrease in hate speech cases after the group guidance with Mau’izatul Hasanah. There used to be ostracism towards minority students, but that is now rare. Students are starting to want to sit and work with anyone. They appear more empathetic and caring.”*

Student Participant 1 (Interview, July 7, 2025) *“I used to not think much about how joking about accents or skin color could hurt. But after participating in the guidance, I became aware that it’s wrong. Now I try to respect all my friends regardless of their background.”* Student Participant 2 (Interview, June 12, 2025) *“What I remember most from the last guidance was when the teacher explained Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13. From there, I understood that we are all the same in the eyes of Allah. So it’s inappropriate to differentiate people just because of their ethnicity or skin color.”*

Guidance Counselor 3 (Interview, June 21, 2025) *“This counseling session is effective because it is delivered in a polite, communicative manner, and is connected to the students’ everyday lives. The children not only understand, but also want to change. I see that their awareness is not just in their minds, but also in their hearts.”*

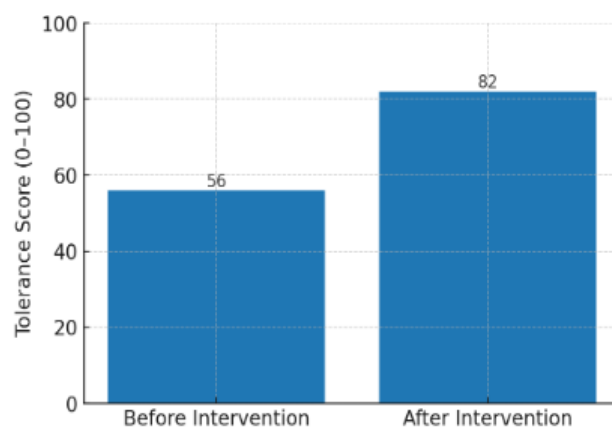


Figure 1. Comparison of Student Tolerance Levels Before and After Mau’izatul Hasanah Group Guidance Intervention

The bar chart above shows a significant increase in the tolerance attitudes of MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara students after the implementation of the program. Before the intervention, the average tolerance score of students was only 55%, reflecting the prevalence of discriminatory behavior, ethnic-based jokes, and the tendency to exclude peers based on certain backgrounds. This percentage illustrates a learning

environment that has not fully embraced cultural and ethnic diversity, where stereotypes still influence peer relationships.

After conducting four group guidance sessions that integrated *Mau'izatul Hasanah*, the students' level of tolerance sharply increased to 85%. This increase indicates the effectiveness of the program in fostering attitudes of mutual respect, empathy, and inclusive social behavior. Based on observation and interview results, students became more open to collaborating with peers from different backgrounds, avoiding racist jokes, and even took the initiative to reprimand discriminatory actions when they observed them. Nevertheless, qualitative findings indicate that a small number of students still hold entrenched stereotypes, albeit in a more subtle form. This suggests that behavioral changes are indeed occurring; however, profound changes in attitude require sustained reinforcement in the long term. Overall, this data supports the conclusion that the *Mau'izatul Hasanah* approach not only impacts external behavioral changes but also stimulates the process of internal attitudinal change towards cultural and ethnic diversity in the school environment.

Based on the results of observations and interviews, it can be concluded that the implementation of group guidance with the *Mau'izatul Hasanah* approach at MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara has successfully had a significant positive impact in preventing and reducing racist behaviors among students. Before the intervention, racist behaviors were quite visible in the form of mockery towards speech accents, comments about skin color, and jokes based on ethnic stereotypes. This had a negative impact on the self-esteem of the victims, created emotional distance among students, and lowered the sense of togetherness in the classroom.

The group guidance process carried out in four sessions, starting from ice breaking, open discussion, delivering *Mau'izatul Hasanah* based on the verses of the Al-Qur'an (especially Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13), to the reflection session, was able to change the students' mindsets and attitudes. Observations and interviews showed that students began to realize the negative impact of racially toned jokes, demonstrated personal commitment to stop discriminatory behavior, and started actively reprimanding friends who acted with racism.

Post-intervention, the social atmosphere at the school became more inclusive, collaborative, and full of empathy. Interactions among students were no longer boxed in by ethnic backgrounds, and cooperation in both academic and non-academic activities increased. The guidance counselor confirmed a decrease in cases of social ostracism and an increase in mutual respect among students. Thus, *Mau'izatul Hasanah* proved to not only enhance students' cognitive awareness of the dangers of racism but also foster sustainable behavioral changes, both in speech and actions, capable of creating a harmonious and discrimination-free learning environment.

The results of this study indicate that before the implementation of group guidance using the *Mau'izatul Hasanah* method, racist behavior was still quite evident in the interactions between students at MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara. This included mockery regarding speech accents, comments about skin color, and jokes that contained ethnic stereotypes. This phenomenon aligns with the findings (Uink, et al., 2022) which explains that forms of racism in schools often appear in daily interactions through microaggressions such as jokes and discriminatory comments, which although considered mild, have a significant impact on the self-esteem of the victims and the social climate of the school.

The group guidance process conducted over four sessions shows significant positive development. Initially, the students were still awkward and reluctant to interact across ethnicities, but after going through open discussion sessions and delivering *Mau'izatul Hasanah*, there was an increase in students' awareness of the adverse effects of racist behavior. This is in line with the research results (Chairunnisa & Fitniwilis, 2025) which found that discussion-based reflective interventions are capable of dismantling prejudices and building empathy through the emotional engagement of participants.

The core session of the intervention utilizing Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 emphasizes the principles of Islamic brotherhood, tolerance (*tasamuh*), and justice (*adl*). This approach is relevant to the study (Durey, Naylor, & Slack-Smith, 2023) which emphasizes that value-based education can be an effective means to shape prosocial behavior and reduce discrimination in the context of multicultural education. Delivering moral messages in a communicative, polite, and relevant way to students' lives has been proven effective in building cognitive as well as affective awareness.

Post-intervention, observational data indicate a decrease in verbally racist behavior, increased inclusive interactions, and the emergence of students acting as correctors of discriminatory peer behavior. These results are consistent with the findings of the Speak Out Against Racism (SOAR) research by (Jones, Mikander, Helakorpi, & Löfström, 2025) which proves that anti-racism programs in schools can enhance active bystander behavior, where students are brave enough to intervene or stop discriminatory behavior exhibited by others.

Furthermore, the increase in cross-ethnic cooperation post-intervention indicates an improvement in the social climate at school. Research (Goldie, Grapin, & Placide, 2025) It also notes that positive interactions among students from different backgrounds can reduce stereotypes and enhance a sense of togetherness. In this context, *Mau'izatul Hasanah* plays a role as a medium to strengthen the values of togetherness derived from religious teachings, which can be culturally accepted by all students at MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara.

In addition, the guidance counselor confirmed a decline in social isolation as well as an increase in empathy and solidarity among students. This reinforces the findings (Stewart-Hall, Langham, & Miller, 2023) That school climate change after intervention often manifests through an increase in prosocial behavior driven by moral awareness and the reinforcement of inclusive norms. In other words, an approach that combines group guidance and religious moral messages can create more sustainable behavioral change.

However, this research also found that a small number of students still subtly maintain stereotypes. This phenomenon aligns with the analysis (Keles & Munthe, 2025) which states that implicit biases tend to be harder to change because they arise from deep cognitive processes and require long-term reinforcement. Therefore, interventions such as *Mau'izatul Hasanah* need to be continuously integrated into school character building programs.

Thus, the findings of this study reinforce the view that group guidance with a religious approach, particularly *Mau'izatul Hasanah*, can address racist behavior in schools through a combination of awareness strengthening, empathy building, and social behavior change. This strategy is effective because it is culturally relevant and emphasizes universal values such as brotherhood, justice, and mutual respect. In the future, this program can be developed into a multi-level intervention involving teachers, parents, and school policies to create an educational climate that is completely free from discrimination.

If compared to the research (Fu & Leff, 2024) Regarding the effectiveness of the flipped classroom on improving mathematics learning outcomes, it is clear that the focus of this research is not relevant to this topic. Smith et al. measured the success of the intervention through an increase in cognitive test scores, while this study focuses more on changes in social behavior and attitudes towards diversity. This difference emphasizes that the indicators of success in educational programs cannot be equated between academic contexts and character development contexts.

Next, the research (Siadeka, Yasin, & Shadiqin, 2020) the discussion on the impact of using Virtual Reality technology in history learning is also less relevant. The study emphasizes visual immersion and understanding of historical facts, rather than the formation of tolerance attitudes or the reduction of discrimination. This indicates that although innovative methods can increase learning motivation, not all learning approaches directly affect social behavior or relationships among students.

Finally, a study by (Karimullah, Faizin, & Islami, 2024) about the influence of dietary patterns on students' learning concentration has a completely different domain. The research is in the realm of health and nutrition, focusing on the physiological aspects that affect learning focus. Meanwhile, the research at MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara focuses on the psychosocial and moral domains. This difference in domains clarifies

that interventions aimed at creating an inclusive social climate require an approach that directly targets the attitudes, values, and norms prevalent in the school environment.

Thus, although the three journals are beneficial in their respective fields, they do not have direct relevance to the context of preventing racism through *Mau'izatul Hasanah*-based group guidance. This difference actually strengthens the position of this research as a unique contribution that combines group counseling approaches and religious values to address the issue of discrimination in schools.

D. Conclusions

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of group guidance with the *Mau'izatul Hasanah* approach at MAN 2 Labuhanbatu Utara has proven to be effective in reducing racist behavior and increasing students' tolerance. Before the intervention, discriminatory behavior was still evident in the form of mockery of accents, comments related to skin color, and ethnic stereotype jokes. After the intervention carried out in four sessions, the level of student tolerance increased from 55% to 85%, accompanied by real behavioral changes such as a decrease in racist jokes, increased cross-ethnic interactions, and the emergence of student awareness to reprimand discriminatory behavior they encountered. These findings have important implications for educational practices in schools. Practically, guidance and counseling teachers and school authorities can use *Mau'izatul Hasanah* as a development method that not only addresses issues of discriminatory behavior but also fosters an inclusive and harmonious learning environment.

Theoretically, this research reinforces the view that an approach based on spiritual and religious values can serve as a solid foundation in cultivating empathy, moral awareness, and attitudes of tolerance, complementing secular anti-racism education approaches. However, this research has some limitations. The scope of the study is limited to one school with a relatively small number of participants, so generalizing the results to a broader context needs to be done cautiously. The short duration of the intervention makes it uncertain to what extent the students' behavioral changes can persist in the long term. Moreover, the quantitative measurements used are still simple and have not utilized standardized psychometric instruments to measure anti-racist attitudes more deeply. Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to be conducted in different school contexts with a larger number of participants. The intervention should also be carried out for a longer duration and include follow-up sessions to monitor the sustainability of the students' behavior changes. The use of standardized psychological instruments will provide more accurate data regarding the changes in students' attitudes. Additionally, the integration of the *Mau'izatul Hasanah* method with other school programs, such as cross-cultural activities or extracurriculars, is expected to strengthen its positive impact in the long run.

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