

Crab Mentality from the Perspective of the Prophet's Hadith: Implications for Social Ethics in Islamic Education

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Abstrak: Fenomena crab mentality merupakan bentuk perilaku sosial yang ditandai oleh kecenderungan menghambat dan menjatuhkan keberhasilan orang lain, yang kerap muncul dalam berbagai konteks relasi sosial, termasuk di lingkungan pendidikan. Dalam praktik pendidikan, sikap semacam ini berpotensi melemahkan nilai kebersamaan, merusak iklim akademik, dan menghambat proses pembentukan karakter peserta didik. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis fenomena crab mentality dalam perspektif hadis Nabi serta mengkaji implikasinya terhadap etika sosial dalam pendidikan Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui studi pustaka dengan metode tematik hadis (*maudhu'i*). Sumber data primer berasal dari hadis-hadis yang relevan dengan tema relasi sosial, iri hati, dan persaudaraan dalam Sunan At-Tirmidzi dan Sunan Abu Dawud, sedangkan sumber sekunder meliputi kitab syarah hadis dan literatur ilmiah terkait. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa hadis Nabi secara tegas mengkritik perilaku hasad, kebencian, dan tindakan yang merusak keharmonisan sosial, yang secara substansial sejalan dengan karakteristik crab mentality. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa nilai-nilai etika sosial dalam hadis memiliki relevansi penting bagi pendidikan Islam, khususnya dalam membangun budaya akademik yang sehat, kompetisi yang adil, dan relasi edukatif yang berlandaskan empati serta penghargaan terhadap sesama.

Kata kunci: *Crab mentality, Hadis Nabi, Etika Sosial, Pendidikan Islam*

Abstract: The phenomenon of crab mentality is a form of social behavior characterized by the tendency to hinder and undermine the success of others, which often appears in various social relationship contexts, including in educational environments. In educational practice, such attitudes have the potential to weaken the value of togetherness, damage the academic climate, and hinder the character-building process of students. This article aims to analyze the phenomenon of crab mentality from the perspective of the Prophet's hadith and examine its implications for social ethics in Islamic education. This research uses a qualitative approach thru library study with the thematic hadith method (*maudhu'i*). The primary data sources come from hadiths relevant to the themes of social relations, envy, and brotherhood in Sunan At-Tirmidhi and Sunan Abu Dawud, while the secondary sources include hadith commentary books and related scientific literature. The analysis results show that the Prophet's hadiths explicitly criticize envy, hatred, and actions that disrupt social harmony, which are substantially in line with the characteristics of crab mentality. These findings affirm that the social ethical values in hadith are of significant relevance to Islamic education, particularly in fostering a healthy academic culture, fair competition, and educational



relationships based on empathy and mutual respect.

Keywords: *Crab mentality, Prophetic hadith, Social Ethics, Islamic Education*

Introduction

The term crab mentality has gained increasing attention in contemporary social discourse as a pattern of social interaction in which individuals tend to obstruct or undermine the success of others. This behavior is commonly associated with jealousy, fear of being surpassed, and insecurity within competitive social environments (Nugroho & Fauziah, 2023). Rather than fostering collective progress, crab mentality instead generates negative competition and contributes to social fragmentation.

Several studies further indicate that crab mentality negatively affects interpersonal relationships as well as collective productivity. In academic settings, such unhealthy competition often results in distrust, social tension, and the weakening of collaborative learning cultures (Mahmud, 2021). These conditions are particularly problematic in educational institutions, which are ideally designed not only for intellectual development but also for moral and social formation.

From an Islamic ethical perspective, behaviors associated with crab mentality closely correspond to the concept of *hasad* (*jealousy*), which is explicitly criticized in Prophetic traditions. Hadith literature provides comprehensive ethical guidance not only for individual piety but also for social conduct and interpersonal relations (At-Tirmidhi, 2014; Abu Dawud, 2009). Islamic ethical scholarship further emphasizes that jealousy constitutes a socially destructive attitude that undermines communal harmony and weakens social solidarity (Aziz, 2022; Ismail & Aminah, 2023).

Within Islamic education, crab mentality may manifest in various forms, including competitive student relationships, rivalry among educators, and institutional cultures that prioritize individual achievement over ethical and collective values (Basri, 2020). Such dynamics can ultimately undermine the core mission of Islamic education, which emphasizes character formation, moral integrity, and social responsibility.

Despite the growing scholarly attention to crab mentality, *hasad*, and Islamic ethical discourse, there remains a significant conceptual and methodological gap. First, existing studies tend to separate social-psychological explanations of crab mentality from Islamic ethical analysis, resulting in a fragmented understanding of the phenomenon. Second, although Islamic scholarship has extensively discussed jealousy within Qur'anic ethics, the systematic use of Prophetic hadith as a primary analytical framework particularly through a thematic (*maudhu'i*) approach remains limited.

Hadith are often treated as supplementary references rather than as central epistemological foundations for interpreting contemporary social behavior. Third, in the context of Islamic education, studies that specifically examine how crab mentality operates within academic cultures such as pesantren and Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI) remain underexplored and insufficiently theorized.

Addressing these gaps, this study offers a novel contribution by repositioning crab mentality as a socio-ethical phenomenon that can be systematically analyzed through Prophetic hadith as the primary epistemological source. The novelty of this research lies in its integration of three dimensions: (1) the development of a thematic (*maudhu'i*) hadith-based framework to interpret contemporary social behavior; (2) the conceptual linkage between *hasad* and modern social-psychological understandings of destructive competition; and (3) the contextualization of this framework within Islamic educational environments to address unhealthy academic rivalry and strengthen collaborative ethical learning cultures. In doing so, this study bridges Islamic ethical epistemology with contemporary educational discourse, offering both theoretical enrichment and practical implications for character-based education.

Based on this background, this study addresses the following research questions: 1) How do Prophetic hadith interpret behaviors related to jealousy (*hasad*) that resemble crab mentality? 2) What are the ethical implications of these hadith for social relations? 3) How can these ethical values be applied within Islamic educational contexts to address crab mentality?

Method

This research adopts a qualitative design based on library research. This approach was chosen because its main object is textual manuscripts specifically the Prophet's hadiths which require in-depth interpretation to uncover the ethical meanings within them (Syamsuddin, 2020). The hadiths studied are selected based on three main criteria: (1) classified as *shahih* or *ḥasan* in the taxonomy of hadith scholars; (2) containing explicit keywords such as *hasad* (envy), *ghibab* (positive envy), or the prohibition of harming others; and (3) having a connection to the dynamics of social interaction and ethical behavior.

To analyze it, this research applies the thematic hadith method (*maudhu'i*). This method works by collecting narrations that share the same theme, interpreting their meanings systematically, and then synthesizing the ethical messages contained within them (Syamsuddin, 2020). The thematic focus of this research is directed toward envy, hatred, social danger, brotherhood, and interpersonal ethics, which are conceptually closely related to the phenomenon of crab mentality.

Primary data sources come from the hadiths contained in Sunan At-Tirmidhi and Sunan Abu Dawud, particularly those that regulate social relations and ethics (At-Tirmidhi, 2014; Abu Dawud, 2009). Meanwhile, secondary sources include classical hadith commentary books, works on Islamic social ethics (Rahman, 2021; Saeed, 2016), as well as contemporary academic articles published in the last five years.

Next, data analysis is conducted thru four systematic stages: (1) inventorying relevant hadiths from primary sources; (2) classification based on thematic relevance; (3) interpretation of hadith texts by referring to authoritative commentaries; and (4) contextualizing their meaning into the contemporary phenomenon of crab mentality. This step-by-step approach ensures textual accuracy while maintaining contextual relevance. This analysis places greater emphasis on ethical content and social impact, rather than merely examining the chain of narration (*sanad*) in detail.

Results and Discussion

Jealousy and the Disruption of Social Relations

Hadiths recorded in *Sunan At-Tirmidhi* explicitly condemn jealousy (*hasad*) and hostility as destructive forces that undermine social harmony. The Prophet Muhammad warned:

”لَا تَحَاسَدُوا، وَلَا تَبَاغَضُوا، وَلَا تَدَابَرُوا، وَكُونُوا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ إِخْوَانًا“

(Do not envy one another, do not hate one another, do not turn away from one another, but be servants of Allah as brothers) (Sunan At-Tirmidhi, no. 1935)

This Prophetic guidance indicates that jealousy is not merely an individual moral deficiency but a broader social threat capable of eroding trust, solidarity, and communal cohesion. The prohibition extends beyond internal feelings to observable social behaviors that disrupt relationships.

From an analytical perspective, jealousy can be understood as a socially embedded emotion, often intensified within competitive environments where success is perceived as limited or exclusive. In such contexts, individuals may respond to others' achievements with resentment rather than inspiration. This dynamic closely reflects what is described as crab mentality a pattern of behavior characterized by envy, social undermining, and resistance to others' success.

Such tendencies are further warned against in another Prophetic statement:

”دَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ دَاءُ الْأُمَّمِ قَبْلَكُمْ: الْحَسَدُ وَالْبَغْضَاءُ“

(The disease of the nations before you has crept into you: envy and hatred) (Sunan At-Tirmidhi, no. 2510)

This hadith frames jealousy and hatred as enduring social diseases, highlighting their collective and transhistorical nature. It suggests that these behaviors are not isolated incidents but recurring patterns that can weaken the moral fabric of society if left unaddressed.

Empirical studies support this perspective, demonstrating that jealousy negatively affects both individual moral development and broader social cohesion (Aziz, 2022; Ismail & Aminah, 2023). The consequences often include fractured relationships, reduced cooperation, and the normalization of toxic social interactions.

In modern competitive settings, particularly within educational environments, crab mentality can therefore be interpreted as a contemporary manifestation of these enduring social maladies. Without a strong ethical framework, competition may amplify insecurity and social comparison, ultimately fostering behaviors that disrupt harmony. Consequently, addressing jealousy through the ethical teachings of hadith is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic approach to cultivating healthy, cooperative, and ethically grounded social relations.

Social Ethics and the Principle of Preventing Harm

Hadiths narrated in *Sunan Abu Dawud* articulate fundamental principles of social ethics, including the prohibition of causing harm to oneself or others (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*) (Abu Dawud, 2009). This principle establishes a moral boundary for social interaction, emphasizing that actions resulting in social harm are ethically unacceptable (Latif, 2022). Crab mentality, which often leads to reputational damage, emotional harm, and obstruction of others' progress, clearly violates this ethical principle. Although such harm may not always be physical, its social and psychological consequences are significant (Rahman, 2021). Additionally, hadiths stressing the inviolability of a person's honor underscore the obligation to avoid defamation and social exclusion (Abu Dawud, 2009). These teachings are particularly relevant in educational contexts, where competition may easily generate subtle forms of social harm.

Crab Mentality and Its Implications for Islamic Education

Hadiths narrated in *Sunan Abu Dawud* articulate a foundational ethical framework for social life, most notably through the well-known Prophetic maxim: **”لَا ضَرَرَ وَلَا ضِرَارَ”** (There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm). (Sunan Abu Dawud, no. 2340).

This concise yet profound principle establishes a clear moral boundary governing human interaction, asserting that any form of harm whether physical, emotional, or social is fundamentally unacceptable (Latif, 2022). It not only prohibits direct harm but also discourages subtle and indirect behaviors that may negatively affect others. Within this ethical framework, the phenomenon of *crab mentality* emerges as a clear violation of Prophetic values. Often expressed through envy, social undermining, reputational damage, and the obstruction of others' success, this behavior contradicts the spirit of mutual respect and collective well-being promoted in Islamic teachings. While the harm inflicted may not always be visible or physical, its psychological and social consequences can be deep, cumulative, and long-lasting (Rahman, 2021).

Moreover, the Prophetic tradition strongly emphasizes the sanctity of human dignity and honor. The Prophet Muhammad stated: **“إِنَّ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَأَمْوَالَكُمْ وَأَعْرَاضَكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ حَرَامٌ”** (*Indeed, your blood, your property, and your honor are sacred*) (Sunan Abu Dawud, no. 1905).

This hadith reinforces the ethical obligation to refrain from actions such as defamation, humiliation, and social exclusion practices that are often embedded within crab mentality. Such behaviors not only harm individuals but also erode trust and cohesion within a community. These teachings hold particular relevance in educational settings, where competitive environments can unintentionally foster harmful social dynamics. Subtle acts of exclusion, discouragement, or rivalry may emerge under the guise of competition. Therefore, integrating the principle of *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār* into educational practices is essential to cultivating an environment that prioritizes ethical conduct, mutual support, and collective growth. By doing so, education can move beyond mere academic achievement toward the formation of morally responsible and socially conscious individuals.

Crab Mentality and Its Implications for Islamic Education

One of the central ethical ideals emphasized in Prophetic hadith is the imperative to wish goodness for others as one wishes it for oneself, reflecting a profound principle of moral reciprocity (At-Tirmidhi, 2014; Al-Nawawi, 2013). This ethical foundation directly challenges the zero-sum logic inherent in crab mentality, where individual success is often perceived as a threat to others. Rather than fostering rivalry, Islamic ethics promote empathy, mutual care, and the pursuit of collective well-being (Saeed, 2016; Kamali, 2017).

However, reducing crab mentality solely to an individual moral failure risks overlooking the broader structural and cultural dynamics within educational environments that enable such behavior to emerge. From a social psychological perspective, crab mentality can be understood as a manifestation of maladaptive social comparison (Festinger, 1954), where individuals respond to others' success with insecurity, competition, and resistance rather than inspiration. In this regard, the issue is not competition itself, but the absence of an ethical framework that regulates it (Dweck, 2006).

Within Islamic educational contexts, this ethical framework is not merely complementary but foundational. Education in Islam is inherently holistic, aiming not only at intellectual development but also at the formation of moral character and social responsibility (Al-Attas, 1991; Halstead, 2004). Without the integration of ethical values, competitive academic settings may unintentionally cultivate subtle forms of social harm, including exclusion, discouragement, and reputational undermining (Zins et al., 2004).

Integrating the social ethics of hadith into educational practice provides a critical mechanism for addressing these challenges. The Prophetic principle of moral reciprocity can be operationalized as a guiding framework to reshape how competition is perceived and practiced. Rather than eliminating competition, Islamic education can reframe it as a form of constructive motivation grounded in ethical awareness, where individual achievement contributes to collective progress (Zainuddin, 2024; Hattie, 2009).

Therefore, Islamic education holds a strategic and transformative role in countering crab mentality. Through both formal ethical instruction and the cultivation of supportive institutional cultures, it can function as a preventive ethical system that mitigates destructive competition. This approach not only preserves social harmony but also strengthens the moral integrity of educational environments. In this sense, the integration of Prophetic ethics offers a significant contribution to contemporary discussions on ethical education by providing a value-based framework to reinterpret and regulate competitive behavior (Mahmud, 2021; Biesta, 2015).

Conceptual Analysis: From Envy to Crab Mentality

To deepen the understanding of the relationship between hadith teachings and the phenomenon of crab mentality, a more systematic conceptual analysis is needed. The table below presents a mapping of the characteristics of crab mentality with ethical concepts in hadith:

Table mapping the characteristics of crab mentality with ethical concepts in hadith:

Characteristics of Crab Mentality	Concept in Hadith	Ethical Implications
Blocking someone else's success	Jealousy (heart's envy)	Explicitly prohibited; damaging brotherhood
Damaging reputation/defamation	Ghibah (slander), Namimah (sowing discord)	Including a grave sin; tarnishing honor
Unfair competition	Tafākhir (boasting)	Leading to arrogance and division
Dissatisfaction with the success of others	Envy and Hatred	Contrary to acceptance and trust
Excessive individualism	Aṣabiyyah (tribal fanaticism)	Weakening communal solidarity

This analysis shows that crab mentality is not a new phenomenon in Islamic discourse, but rather a contemporary manifestation of a moral disease that has long been identified and criticized in the prophetic tradition. By understanding this mapping, educators and practitioners of Islamic education can develop more targeted strategies to address this destructive behavior.

Applicative Strategies in the Context of Islamic Education

Based on the analysis of the above hadith, here are some applicable strategies that can be implemented in the Islamic educational environment to overcome crab mentality:

Internalization of Ukhuwah Values thru Collaborative Learning

Hadith about brotherhood (ukhuwah) serves as the foundation for developing a learning model that emphasizes cooperation rather than competition. This strategy can be realized thru: 1) Problem-based group projects that require students to help each other and share roles (Amirudin, 2023). 2) A collective assessment system that rewards not only individual achievements but also contributions to the success of the group (Educational Ecosystem from the Perspective of the Qur'an, 2023). 3) Cooperative extracurricular activities such as study clubs and discussion groups guided ethically (Use of Cooperative Learning Strategies, 2023).

Character Education Based on Hadith about Envy

The character education curriculum can explicitly integrate the teachings of hadith on envy and social ethics thru: 1) The subject of ethics that studies hadiths about the prohibition of envy contextually (Character Education in the Perspective of the Prophet's Hadith, 2016). 2) Case study on the negative impact of crab mentality in the school environment (Internalization of the Prophet Muhammad's Hadith Values as an Effective Educational Strategy to Address Juvenile Delinquency, 2025). 3) Daily reflection on intentions and motivation for achievement (The Concept of the Prophet Muhammad's Educational Model as a Character Education Model in Indonesia, 2025).

Creation of a Healthy Academic Culture

Islamic educational institutions need to create a culture that values the process rather than just the outcome, thru: 1) Appreciation for effort and improvement, not just the highest rank (The Value of Humility of the Prophet in Campus Academic Culture, 2021). 2) Consistently enforced anti-bullying and anti-slander policies (Learning 101 Hadiths of Noble Character Thru the Authentic Instruction Approach, 2025). 3) Routine ethical discussion forum addressing moral dilemmas in the academic context (The Use of Hadith in Islamic Boarding School Education, 2026).

Exemplary Educator (Qudwah Hasanah)

Teachers and lecturers as qudwah hasanah (good examples) must demonstrate attitudes that reflect the values of hadith: 1) Avoiding favoritism and bias in assessments (The Urgency of Exemplary Conduct in Islamic Education, 2021). 2) Showing humility and appreciating students' achievements (Implementation of the Story Method About the Exemplary Tales of the Prophet Muhammad, 2024). 3) Creating a classroom environment free from destructive competition (Concept of the Educational Pattern of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, 2025).

Strengthening Thematic Hadith Literacy

The development of modules and teaching materials that thematically organize hadiths about social ethics can help students and educators understand the relevance of the Prophet's teachings to contemporary challenges (The Epistemology of Sunnah as a Pillar of Transformative Curriculum, 2025; Internalization of Hadith Values, 2025).

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

For further research, it is recommended: (1) empirical research in Islamic educational institutions to identify specific forms of crab mentality that emerge; (2) the development of a crab mentality measurement instrument based on hadith values; (3) comparative studies of hadiths on social ethics in various major hadith collections;

and (4) classroom action research to test the effectiveness of the proposed strategies in addressing crab mentality.

Conclusion

This research argues that crab mentality should not be reduced to a simple interpersonal flaw, but rather understood as a patterned social behavior that reflects deeper moral and relational disturbances within the community. In line with the prophetic tradition, such behavior resonates strongly with the ethical warnings found in hadith literature that explicitly prevent envy, hatred, and actions that disrupt social solidarity (At-Tirmidhi, 2014; Abu Dawud, 2009). From this perspective, crab mentality is not just an individual psychological tendency, but a contagious social attitude that can gradually weaken trust, cooperation, and collective well-being if not addressed.

The findings of this research also indicate that the ethical framework embedded in the Prophet's hadith offers a substantial moral foundation for responding to such phenomena, particularly in the context of Islamic education. Instead of treating competition among students as inherently productive, the prophetic paradigm encourages the cultivation of mutual support, sincerity, and brotherhood as guiding principles for social interaction. This orientation becomes increasingly relevant in contemporary educational environments where academic comparisons, performance pressures, and achievement-oriented cultures often inadvertently trigger unhealthy competition and exclusionary behaviors.

In this case, integrating prophetic ethical values into Islamic education is not merely a normative recommendation, but a practical necessity to create a more humane and balanced learning environment. Such integration serves as both a preventive and transformative strategy: preventive because it helps reduce the emergence of destructive competitive attitudes; and transformative because it redirects students toward more ethical forms of achievement based on responsibility, empathy, and social awareness. As a result, Islamic education is positioned not only as a space for cognitive development but also as a moral ecosystem that actively builds healthy social relations and collective integrity.

Overall, this research asserts that addressing crab mentality requires more than just behavioral correction; it demands value-based educational interventions rooted in authentic religious ethics that consistently promote harmony over hostility, and collaboration over competition. These findings have important implications for the development of Islamic education curricula, teacher training, and institutional policies

aimed at creating a learning environment that is not only academically intelligent but also ethically mature.

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