

From Respect to the Potential for Domination: The Power Relationship Between Educators and Students in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*

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ABSTRACT

Respect for educators is central to Islamic educational ethics, yet its relationship with pedagogical authority requires clarification when respect becomes associated with obedience. This study analyzes how *ta'zim* in *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* structures power relations between educators and students and identifies conditions under which legitimate pedagogical authority may create the potential for domination. The study employs a qualitative literature design with a philosophical and conceptual approach, treating *ta'zim* as the material object and pedagogical power relations as the formal object. Textual identification, relational categorization, conceptual interpretation, analytical reconstruction, theoretical dialogue, and interpretive assessment were used to examine the relationship among respect, hierarchy, legitimacy, authority, and obedience. The findings show that *ta'zim* establishes pedagogical hierarchy through recognition of educators' qualifications and legitimizes authority that generates expectations of obedience. Domination is not inherent in *ta'zim*; its potential emerges when authority shifts from pedagogical responsibility toward personal status while opportunities to evaluate or correct its exercise diminish. These findings clarify boundaries between legitimate authority and domination, although their conceptual nature limits empirical generalization to contemporary educational settings.

Penghormatan kepada pendidik merupakan bagian penting dalam etika pendidikan Islam, tetapi hubungannya dengan otoritas pedagogis memerlukan penjelasan ketika penghormatan berkaitan dengan kepatuhan. Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana ta'zim dalam Ta'lim al-Muta'allim membentuk relasi kuasa antara pendidik dan peserta didik serta mengidentifikasi kondisi ketika otoritas pedagogis yang sah dapat membuka potensi dominasi. Penelitian menggunakan desain kualitatif berbasis kepustakaan dengan pendekatan filosofis dan konseptual, dengan ta'zim sebagai objek material dan relasi kuasa pedagogis sebagai objek formal. Analisis dilakukan melalui identifikasi tekstual, kategorisasi relasional, interpretasi konseptual, rekonstruksi analitis, dialog teoretis, dan penilaian interpretatif terhadap hubungan penghormatan, hierarki, legitimasi, otoritas, dan kepatuhan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa ta'zim membentuk hierarki pedagogis melalui pengakuan terhadap kualifikasi pendidik dan melegitimasi otoritas yang menghasilkan ekspektasi kepatuhan. Dominasi bukan konsekuensi inheren ta'zim; potensinya muncul ketika dasar otoritas bergeser dari tanggung jawab pedagogis menuju status personal, sementara ruang untuk mengevaluasi atau mengoreksi pelaksanaan otoritas semakin terbatas. Temuan ini memperjelas batas antara otoritas yang sah dan dominasi, meskipun sifat konseptual penelitian membatasi generalisasi empiris terhadap konteks pendidikan kontemporer.

Keywords: educators, power relations, students, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*

Introduction

The relationship between educators and students constitutes a fundamental structure through which educational processes are organized, experienced, and given meaning. This relationship is inherently asymmetrical because educators and students occupy different positions with regard to knowledge, experience, responsibility, and pedagogical authority. Such asymmetry, however, should not automatically be interpreted as domination. Educational practice requires educators to provide intellectual direction, organize learning, exercise professional judgment, and assume responsibility for students' development, while students participate as learners who gradually develop their intellectual and moral autonomy. Within Islamic educational thought, the position of the educator is likewise closely associated with professional and ethical responsibilities rather than being justified solely by formal status (Narayanan, 2021; Syauky & Mulia, 2026). The central issue, therefore, is not simply whether educators possess authority, but how that authority acquires legitimacy, what normative boundaries govern its exercise, and whether students retain meaningful opportunities to respond to, evaluate, and, when necessary, question the exercise of pedagogical authority.

This question becomes particularly significant in Islamic education because educator–student relationships are shaped not only by institutional arrangements but also by ethical traditions concerning knowledge, adab, and respect. Ta'lim al-Muta'allim provides an influential formulation of this relationship by positioning respect for knowledge and educators as an integral dimension of learning. Contemporary scholarship continues to demonstrate the relevance of these ethical principles. Huda (2020) examine respect in learning as an element of character education through a reconsideration of al-Zarnuji's educational thought, while Helmi et al. (2026) discuss the continuing relevance of educational ethics in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim within contemporary educational contexts. Aziz and Rosidi (2026) similarly address the reconstruction of student–teacher adab relations in Islamic education. Taken together, these studies indicate that respect cannot be reduced to interpersonal courtesy; it belongs to a broader moral understanding of learning in which the acquisition of knowledge is inseparable from appropriate ethical conduct. Yet precisely because ta'zim shapes how students position themselves in relation to educators, it also raises a further question concerning the role of respect in establishing and legitimizing pedagogical authority.

To address this question, it is necessary to distinguish hierarchy, pedagogical authority, obedience, and domination rather than treating them as interchangeable expressions of unequal relationships. In this study, hierarchy refers to differentiated positions arising from pedagogical roles and responsibilities, while pedagogical authority refers to the recognized legitimacy of educators to guide, direct, and make judgments within educational processes. Obedience concerns students' willingness to follow directions perceived as legitimate, whereas domination refers to a relational condition in which asymmetrical authority becomes increasingly resistant to evaluation, criticism, or correction. These distinctions are important because neither hierarchy nor obedience is inherently evidence of domination. Recent scholarship on Islamic education has similarly drawn attention to the need to reconsider the relationship between educator authority and more reciprocal forms of pedagogical interaction. Mustofa et al. (2026) examine the movement from hierarchy toward reciprocity in Islamic teacher–student relationships, while Wahyuningsih et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of harmonizing the ethics of compliance with autonomy of thought in pesantren education. These perspectives suggest that respect, authority, obedience, and student agency need not be

positioned as mutually exclusive; the more consequential issue concerns the conditions under which they are balanced within an educational relationship.

Previous scholarship on Ta'lim al-Muta'allim has provided an important foundation for understanding the ethical and educational significance of ta'zim. Huda et al. (2024) discuss respect as an element of character education, while Khoiroh et al. (2026) relate the teaching of Ta'lim al-Muta'allim to the strengthening of students' character. Rahman and Fitria (2024) likewise examine its contribution to students' moral formation within the pesantren context. Such studies help explain why ta'zim continues to occupy an important position in Islamic educational practice and discourse. At the same time, another strand of scholarship has begun to examine educator–student relationships through the lenses of reciprocity, intellectual autonomy, disciplinary boundaries, and unequal pedagogical relations (Mustofa et al., 2026; Wahyuningsih et al., 2025; Wasik et al., 2026). The conceptual tension becomes particularly visible in Malik et al. (2026), who address competing interpretations of pesantren relational practices through the categories of feudalism and ta'zim. Viewed together, this literature reveals that the contemporary debate cannot be adequately reduced to a simple opposition between traditional respect and modern educational values. Rather, it concerns the conditions under which respect operates within an asymmetrical pedagogical relationship and the implications of that operation for the exercise of authority.

This issue becomes more complex when respect is translated into expectations of obedience. Within an adab-oriented educational framework, deference toward educators may be understood as part of the ethical discipline required in seeking knowledge. Contemporary educational concerns, however, also emphasize learners' capacity for reflection, participation, intellectual autonomy, and meaningful engagement in the learning process. Wahyuningsih et al. (2025) approach compliance and autonomy of thought as dimensions that require harmonization rather than absolute opposition. Similarly, Mustofa et al. (2026) highlight the possibility of more reciprocal teacher–student relationships in Islamic education, while Yusuf and Aziz (2026) critically reconsider the configuration of teacher–student relations within Islamic adab education. These perspectives indicate that the central problem should not be framed as a choice between respecting educators and preserving student agency. A more analytically useful question concerns how both can coexist and where the boundary lies between pedagogically justified asymmetry and a relationship in which obedience increasingly derives from status rather than educational responsibility. Such a distinction is essential because the educational legitimacy of authority depends not merely on the existence of respect but also on the grounds, purposes, and limits through which that authority is exercised.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on these issues, a conceptual and integrative gap remains. Existing studies have substantially discussed ta'zim in relation to respect, adab, character formation, and the moral dimensions of educator–student relationships. A parallel body of scholarship has addressed hierarchy, reciprocity, learner autonomy, disciplinary practices, and unequal educational relationships (Huda et al., 2024; Wahyuningsih et al., 2025; Mustofa et al., 2026; Wasik et al., 2026). What remains insufficiently articulated is the relational mechanism connecting these domains. More specifically, previous discussions have not fully explained how respect may contribute to the legitimacy of a hierarchical pedagogical position, how such legitimacy becomes recognized as authority, how authority is translated into expectations of obedience, and under what conditions obedience becomes increasingly difficult to evaluate or correct. The gap addressed in this article is therefore not the absence of research on ta'zim or educator authority as separate subjects. Rather, it concerns the limited conceptual

integration of respect, hierarchy, legitimacy, authority, obedience, and the potential for domination within a coherent explanatory sequence.

Against this background, the present study takes a position that avoids two opposing simplifications. It neither treats ta'zim as inherently oppressive nor assumes that every expression of respect and obedience toward educators is necessarily free from pedagogical problems. Instead, ta'zim is approached as a relational norm whose educational consequences depend partly on the basis, boundaries, and accountability of the authority that it helps to legitimate. This position responds to recent scholarship that calls for a more balanced relationship between respect and compliance on the one hand and learner autonomy and pedagogical reciprocity on the other (Wahyuningsih et al., 2025; Mustofa et al., 2026; Yusuf & Aziz, 2026). Building on these discussions, this study shifts the analytical emphasis from what ta'zim means as an ethical value to how ta'zim functions within an asymmetrical educator–student relationship. Its conceptual novelty lies in examining a relational sequence in which respect may reinforce hierarchy, hierarchy may acquire legitimacy as pedagogical authority, and legitimate authority may generate expectations of obedience. Within this framework, domination does not arise simply because respect exists; it becomes possible when the justification of authority shifts from pedagogical competence, responsibility, and accountable educational purposes toward the personal status of the educator, while opportunities to evaluate or correct the exercise of that authority become progressively restricted.

Accordingly, this article aims to analyze how ta'zim operates within the power relationship between educators and students in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim and to explain the conditions under which respect may move from supporting legitimate pedagogical authority toward creating the potential for domination. The analysis proceeds through a conceptual sequence beginning with ta'zim and the formation of pedagogical hierarchy, followed by the legitimization of educator authority, the translation of authority into expectations of obedience, and the identification of the normative boundaries that distinguish legitimate obedience from a potentially dominating relationship. The discussion subsequently considers the implications of this mechanism for educator accountability, student agency, and adab-based education. The central proposition guiding the analysis is that domination is neither an inherent nor an inevitable consequence of ta'zim. Rather, it becomes possible when authority increasingly derives its legitimacy from the educator's personal status instead of pedagogical merit and responsibility, while the space available for questioning, evaluating, and correcting the exercise of authority becomes increasingly constrained. By developing this relational explanation, the study seeks to contribute to Islamic educational scholarship by extending the understanding of ta'zim beyond an ethical norm of respect toward a conceptual consideration of the legitimacy, boundaries, and accountability of pedagogical authority.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative literature-based design using a philosophical-conceptual approach to examine ta'zim and its implications for power relations between educators and students in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim. A conceptual approach was considered appropriate because the study was not intended to measure the empirical prevalence of particular educational practices, but to clarify the meanings, relationships, and normative boundaries among concepts that structure educator–student relations. Conceptual research requires an explicit analytical design in which the concepts under examination, the theoretical resources used to interpret them, and the contribution expected from their reconstruction are

clearly specified (Jaakkola, 2020; Suhirman et al., 2026) . Within educational research, conceptual analysis is particularly relevant when the inquiry concerns how educational concepts are understood, differentiated, and related to their normative purposes (Gatley, 2023; Zrudlo, 2024) . Accordingly, the material object of this study was the conception of ta'zim in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, particularly passages concerning respect for knowledge and scholars, the selection and position of educators, student conduct toward educators, and obedience within the learning relationship. The formal object was the structure of power within pedagogical relationships, with particular attention to hierarchy, legitimacy, pedagogical authority, obedience, and the conditions under which legitimate authority may develop into domination.

The literature was organized into primary and secondary sources according to its analytical function. Ta'lim al-Muta'allim served as the primary source, with attention directed to passages that explicitly or implicitly regulate educator–student relations, including the qualifications attributed to educators, forms of respect expected from students, patterns of interaction, and normative limits surrounding obedience. Secondary sources consisted primarily of peer-reviewed academic publications selected purposively according to their direct relevance to the conceptual problem rather than merely their thematic similarity. The selection focused on two interrelated bodies of scholarship: studies of Ta'lim al-Muta'allim, ta'zim, adab, Islamic education, and educator–student relations; and studies addressing pedagogical authority, hierarchy, reciprocity, learner autonomy, power relations, and domination. Recent publications were prioritized to situate the interpretation within contemporary educational discourse, while older and foundational works were retained when necessary for conceptual or textual clarification. Such purposive organization is consistent with conceptual research, in which the relevance and analytical function of theoretical sources need to be explicitly established (Jaakkola, 2020) . The study was therefore not designed as a systematic literature review intended to exhaustively retrieve all publications concerning ta'zim, but as a focused conceptual inquiry in which literature was selected for its capacity to clarify, contextualize, compare, or critically examine the relational problem under investigation.

The analysis was conducted through four interconnected analytical processes. First, relevant passages in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim were identified and organized according to their relational functions, including recognition of educator status, regulation of student conduct, formation of pedagogical hierarchy, legitimization of authority, expectations of obedience, and indications concerning the limits of such obedience. Second, these textual categories were interpreted conceptually to examine how ta'zim operates within educator–student relations rather than treating it solely as an individual moral disposition. Third, the relationships among the categories were reconstructed through interpretive, inductive, and deductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning was employed to identify recurring relational patterns within the selected textual passages, whereas deductive reasoning was used to examine these patterns through the concepts of hierarchy, legitimacy, pedagogical authority, obedience, and domination. Fourth, the resulting conceptual structure was placed in dialogue with previous educational scholarship to identify points of convergence, conceptual extension, and tension. This procedure is consistent with conceptual analysis in educational inquiry, which requires attention not only to the meaning of concepts but also to their relationships, boundaries, and implications (Gatley, 2023). The analytical procedure is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Conceptual-Analytical Procedure of the Study

Stage	Analytical focus	Procedure	Analytical output
1. Textual identification	Relevant passages in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim	Identifying passages concerning educator status, student conduct, respect, hierarchy, and obedience	Corpus of relevant textual passages
2. Relational categorization	Functions of ta'zim within educator–student relations	Grouping passages according to recognition of educator status, regulation of student conduct, hierarchy, authority, obedience, and limits of obedience	Relational categories for subsequent analysis
3. Conceptual interpretation	Meaning and relational function of ta'zim	Interpreting ta'zim within an asymmetrical pedagogical relationship rather than solely as an individual moral disposition	Ta'zim conceptualized as a relational norm
4. Analytical reconstruction	Relationships among the identified concepts	Combining inductive identification of textual patterns with deductive interpretation through hierarchy, legitimacy, authority, obedience, and domination	Conceptual sequence linking ta'zim, hierarchy, legitimacy, authority, and obedience
5. Theoretical dialogue	Relationship between textual interpretation and previous scholarship	Comparing the reconstructed categories with relevant educational studies	Points of convergence, conceptual extension, and tension
6. Interpretive assessment	Boundaries between legitimate authority and potential domination	Examining the basis of authority, its accountability, and the possibility of evaluating or correcting its exercise	Conceptual distinction between legitimate pedagogical authority and the potential for domination

Interpretive caution was maintained throughout the analysis because pedagogical authority, power relations, and domination function in this study as contemporary analytical categories rather than as concepts assumed to have been formulated as a unified theory in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim. They were therefore employed as interpretive tools for examining the relational implications of the text, not as categories attributed directly to al-Zarnuji in their

contemporary theoretical meanings. Such caution is important in philosophical and conceptual inquiry because interpretation should clarify conceptual relationships without erasing the historical and intellectual context of the object being examined (Zrudlo, 2024). Consequently, the analysis did not treat every form of hierarchy, respect, or obedience as evidence of domination. The potential for domination was considered conceptually relevant only when the reconstructed relationship indicated a shift in the basis of authority from pedagogical qualification, responsibility, and educational purpose toward personal status, accompanied by a narrowing of students' opportunities to evaluate or correct the exercise of that authority. The findings should therefore be understood as a philosophical-conceptual reconstruction of relational mechanisms contained within the analyzed text rather than as empirical evidence that such mechanisms necessarily characterize contemporary pesantren or other Islamic educational institutions.

Result

1. Ta'zim and the Formation of Pedagogical Hierarchy

The textual analysis indicates that ta'zim in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim operates beyond an individual expression of politeness toward educators. It establishes a relational arrangement in which educators and students occupy differentiated positions within the educational process. This differentiation begins with the recognition that educators possess knowledge and experience that students have not yet acquired. Az-Zarnuji's description of the qualities considered important in selecting an educator, particularly knowledge, piety, and maturity, places the educator's position within a framework of qualification rather than presenting it merely as a consequence of formal status (Az-Zarnuji, 2009, p. 20). The educator is therefore positioned as someone whose scholarly and moral qualities provide a reason for students to acknowledge a particular pedagogical standing. In this configuration, ta'zim does not initially emerge as submission to power; it develops from the recognition of an epistemic and educational difference between the person who provides guidance and the person who seeks it. The first analytical pattern identified in the text can therefore be expressed as a movement from recognition of qualification to differentiation of pedagogical position.

This differentiation becomes more visible when respect is translated into concrete expectations concerning student conduct. Ta'lim al-Muta'allim does not confine respect to an internal disposition but expresses it through practical forms of interaction. The student is expected to regulate speech, avoid interrupting the educator inappropriately, refrain from occupying the educator's place, observe appropriate conduct when visiting, and maintain behavior that signifies recognition of the educator's position. These prescriptions demonstrate that ta'zim has a relational and behavioral dimension. Respect becomes observable through the manner in which students organize their actions in the presence of educators. Consequently, the relationship is not structured only by differences in knowledge but also by norms governing how those differences should be acknowledged in everyday educational interaction. The resulting hierarchy is therefore reproduced through conduct: the educator occupies the position of the person whose knowledge and guidance are recognized, while the student demonstrates that recognition through forms of restraint, attentiveness, and appropriate behavior.

The hierarchy identified in the text nevertheless cannot be reduced to a simple command-obedience relationship. The educator's differentiated position remains embedded in an educational purpose. Knowledge, guidance, moral responsibility, and the transmission of

learning provide the context within which the educator receives recognition. The text therefore contains an important distinction between hierarchy grounded in pedagogical qualification and hierarchy grounded solely in personal superiority. Respect is directed toward the educator in relation to the knowledge and educational role represented by that position. This distinction is analytically significant because it prevents every unequal educational position from being interpreted as domination. The textual pattern instead indicates a pedagogical hierarchy: an asymmetrical relationship justified by differentiated educational functions. The educator possesses greater authority within the learning process because the educator is expected to possess capacities relevant to guiding the student, rather than simply because one individual is socially superior to another.

At the same time, the behavioral expression of *ta'zim* means that pedagogical hierarchy is not merely conceptual; it becomes embedded in the organization of interaction. Recognition of the educator's qualifications produces respect, and respect provides normative reasons for students to regulate their behavior in relation to the educator. The resulting hierarchy therefore contains both epistemic and normative dimensions. Epistemically, educators are recognized as possessing knowledge and experience relevant to the student's learning. Normatively, students are expected to express that recognition through particular forms of conduct. This combination constitutes the first major finding of the analysis: *ta'zim* contributes to the formation of pedagogical hierarchy by connecting recognition of educational qualification with norms of student behavior. The hierarchy is not inherently dominating at this stage. Nevertheless, because it differentiates who is entitled to guide and who is expected to receive guidance, it establishes the relational structure within which questions of authority and power subsequently arise.

2. From Pedagogical Hierarchy to the Legitimization of Authority

The second analytical pattern concerns the transformation of differentiated pedagogical positions into legitimate authority. Hierarchy alone indicates that educators and students occupy different positions, but it does not explain why the educator's directions should be accepted by the student. The analysis shows that *ta'zim* contributes to this transition by providing a normative connection between the educator's qualifications and the student's recognition of the educator's right to guide. In *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, the educator is not presented simply as an individual who exercises control over students. The educator's position is connected to knowledge, piety, experience, and responsibility within the learning process. These attributes provide the basis upon which pedagogical direction becomes intelligible and acceptable. Authority thus emerges when the hierarchical position of the educator is recognized not merely as a difference in status but as a position carrying a legitimate educational function. This finding is consistent with the conceptual distinction between authority and control: the analytical question is not simply whether students comply, but whether there are pedagogically relevant reasons that make the educator's direction worthy of recognition (Macleod et al., 2012).

The analysis further demonstrates that legitimacy is produced through the interaction between qualification and recognition. The educator's knowledge and pedagogical role provide one side of this relationship, while the student's *ta'zim* provides the other. Authority cannot operate only because an educator possesses particular qualities; those qualities must also be acknowledged within the relationship. *Ta'zim* supplies this element of recognition by positioning respect for the educator in connection with respect for knowledge. The educator

consequently acquires authority through a relational process: scholarly and moral qualification establishes a basis for recognition, recognition strengthens the educator's pedagogical position, and that position provides a normative basis for accepting educational direction. Pedagogical authority in this sense is not identical to the capacity to compel behavior. It depends on a justification that makes the educator's influence meaningful within the purposes of education. This distinction is central to the findings because it identifies legitimacy, rather than power alone, as the conceptual bridge between hierarchy and authority.

Once authority has acquired legitimacy, ta'zim also shapes how that authority is experienced by students. Directions given by educators are not necessarily perceived simply as external commands. Within an adab-based relationship, following an educator's guidance can itself be understood as appropriate educational and moral conduct. The distinction between externally imposed compliance and normatively accepted obedience therefore becomes increasingly important. The textual prescriptions concerning speech, interaction, waiting, and obedience indicate that students are expected to regulate themselves in accordance with the recognized position of the educator. At this stage, power does not need to appear as explicit coercion. The relationship can operate through norms that students themselves understand as appropriate expressions of respect. The analytical significance of this pattern lies in the fact that authority becomes effective not only because educators can issue directions, but because ta'zim contributes to the normative acceptance of those directions.

This process reveals the second major finding: ta'zim participates in the legitimization of pedagogical authority by connecting the educator's differentiated position with reasons for recognizing and following educational direction. The reconstructed relationship can therefore be expressed as ta'zim → pedagogical hierarchy → legitimacy → pedagogical authority. Each element performs a different function. Ta'zim provides a normative orientation of respect; hierarchy differentiates the positions of educator and student; legitimacy supplies reasons for recognizing the educator's position; and pedagogical authority enables the educator to provide direction within the educational relationship. Importantly, the analysis does not identify this sequence as domination. At this point, authority remains pedagogical insofar as its legitimacy continues to depend on educational qualifications, functions, responsibilities, and purposes. The critical transition occurs only when legitimate authority begins to generate expectations of obedience and the basis and boundaries of that obedience become increasingly consequential.

3. Obedience, the Boundaries of Authority, and the Potential for Domination

The third pattern identified in the analysis concerns the translation of legitimate authority into obedience. Ta'lim al-Muta'allim contains behavioral prescriptions that demonstrate that recognition of educator authority is expected to have practical consequences for student conduct. Students are not merely encouraged to acknowledge the educator's knowledge symbolically; they are also expected to respond to educational direction in ways consistent with that recognition. Obedience therefore appears as a relational consequence of authority. Yet the text also provides an important qualification: obedience is not represented as entirely without limits. The requirement to follow the educator does not extend to commands involving sinful conduct, and the educator's position is accompanied by expectations of compassion and appropriate educational guidance. These elements indicate that obedience is located within a normative framework rather than being presented as an unrestricted obligation. The presence of such limits is analytically important because it shows that the text itself provides grounds for distinguishing pedagogically justified obedience from absolute submission.

This finding changes the central question from whether students should obey educators to the basis and limits of that obedience. As long as an educator's authority remains connected to knowledge, pedagogical responsibility, and legitimate educational purposes, obedience can function as part of an organized learning relationship. Under these conditions, students follow educational direction because the educator occupies a position justified by pedagogical considerations. The relationship becomes more problematic when the justification for obedience shifts. If the educator's personal position becomes sufficient reason for compliance regardless of the pedagogical relevance of a particular direction, the source of legitimacy is altered. Authority then risks becoming detached from the qualifications and responsibilities that originally justified it. The conceptual boundary identified through the analysis therefore lies not between obedience and disobedience, but between obedience that remains answerable to pedagogical reasons and obedience whose justification increasingly rests on the personal status of the educator.

A further condition concerns the availability of corrective space within the relationship. Legitimate pedagogical authority remains distinguishable from domination when its exercise can still be evaluated against the purposes and responsibilities that justify it. The possibility of asking questions, identifying inappropriate directions, and recognizing normative limits prevents the educator's authority from becoming self-justifying. Conversely, when respect is interpreted in a manner that makes questioning itself appear improper, the relationship begins to change. Ta'zim can then acquire an additional function: rather than merely supporting recognition of pedagogical authority, it can contribute to narrowing the space through which the exercise of authority is evaluated. This does not mean that respect necessarily suppresses student agency. The finding is conditional. The potential for domination appears when the moral expectation of respect becomes intertwined with an assumption that the educator's status alone is sufficient to validate the exercise of authority.

The analysis therefore identifies domination as a possible relational development rather than an inherent property of ta'zim. The reconstructed sequence is not a deterministic progression in which respect inevitably produces domination. Instead, it contains a critical conditional point. Ta'zim can support hierarchy; hierarchy can acquire legitimacy; legitimate hierarchy can become pedagogical authority; and pedagogical authority can produce expectations of obedience. The relationship remains within the domain of legitimate educational authority when obedience continues to be bounded by pedagogical purpose, moral responsibility, and the possibility of evaluation. The potential for domination emerges when legitimacy shifts from pedagogical merit toward personal status and when the student's capacity to question, evaluate, or correct the exercise of authority becomes increasingly restricted. Thus, the decisive analytical distinction concerns not the presence or absence of respect, hierarchy, or obedience, but the grounds upon which authority is justified and the extent to which its exercise remains accountable.

4. Philosophical Implications of Power Relations on the Educator–Student Relationship

The findings above position ta'zim as a relational norm whose educational significance extends beyond interpersonal etiquette. The analysis demonstrates that respect participates in organizing the positions occupied by educators and students, contributes to the legitimacy attributed to pedagogical authority, and influences the form through which students respond to that authority. This relational dimension makes ta'zim relevant to questions of power without requiring the concept itself to be equated with domination. The philosophical significance lies

precisely in this distinction. If all hierarchy were treated as domination, the differentiated roles necessary for educational guidance would become conceptually indistinguishable from coercive relationships. Conversely, if every expression of respect and obedience were assumed to be educationally legitimate simply because it occurs within an adab-based relationship, the normative boundaries of educator authority would disappear from analysis. The findings therefore place legitimacy and accountability between these two positions.

A second implication concerns the status of the student within an asymmetrical educational relationship. Ta'zim positions students as recipients of guidance, but the findings do not require students to be understood as passive objects of authority. The existence of normative limits on obedience indicates that students retain a moral position from which the legitimacy of particular directions can, at least conceptually, be distinguished from the educator's status. This distinction is important because pedagogical authority derives its educational meaning from its orientation toward the development of the learner. If students are deprived of any capacity to evaluate the exercise of authority, the relationship no longer rests solely on guidance but increasingly depends on the preservation of asymmetry itself. Student agency, in this sense, need not be expressed through rejection of authority. It can instead be understood as the capacity to participate in a relationship of guidance without surrendering moral judgment altogether.

A corresponding implication applies to the educator. Recognition and respect do not remove the educator from accountability; rather, the legitimacy generated through ta'zim increases the importance of responsible authority. The more an educator is trusted as a bearer of knowledge and moral guidance, the greater the significance of ensuring that such recognition remains connected to pedagogical purposes. Authority cannot be justified solely by the fact that students have learned to respect the person who exercises it. Its legitimacy remains dependent on the qualities, responsibilities, and educational functions that make the educator worthy of recognition in the first place. This finding therefore reverses a possible interpretation of hierarchy: the educator's higher position does not simply expand the right to direct students but simultaneously increases the obligation to exercise authority within defensible pedagogical and moral boundaries.

The final implication concerns the meaning of adab-based education itself. Preserving ta'zim does not require eliminating questions about power, just as recognizing power relations does not require rejecting respect for educators. The findings instead suggest that the educational value of ta'zim depends partly on maintaining a distinction between respect that supports pedagogical guidance and respect that renders authority personally unquestionable. This distinction allows adab to coexist with student agency and enables hierarchy to remain connected to educational responsibility rather than becoming an end in itself. From this perspective, protection against domination does not begin only after coercion or violence has occurred. It also involves preserving the normative boundaries through which authority can be evaluated before relational inequality becomes self-legitimizing. Education may therefore require authority, hierarchy, and forms of obedience, but their pedagogical legitimacy depends on whether they remain oriented toward learning, responsibility, accountability, and the moral standing of students as subjects of education.

Discussion

The findings provide a more differentiated understanding of ta'zim by demonstrating that its educational significance lies not only in the cultivation of respectful conduct but also in the

way it structures the relationship between educators and students. The analysis shows that respect contributes to the formation of pedagogical hierarchy because recognition of the educator's knowledge, moral qualities, and educational responsibility establishes a differentiated position within the learning relationship. This finding is consistent with studies that have interpreted ta'zim and the ethical teachings of Ta'lim al-Muta'allim primarily through adab, character formation, and respect for educators (Huda et al., 2024; Khoiroh et al., 2026). However, the present study extends these interpretations by showing that respect also has a relational consequence: it helps determine who is recognized as entitled to provide educational direction and how students are expected to respond to that position. This finding is important because it avoids two opposing interpretations. Ta'zim need not be idealized as an entirely neutral ethical virtue, but neither should it be reduced to an instrument of subordination. Its educational meaning depends on how respect operates within an asymmetrical relationship and on the normative conditions under which that asymmetry is maintained.

The hierarchical structure identified in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim should therefore be distinguished from domination. The educator occupies a differentiated position because the text associates educational authority with knowledge, moral qualities, maturity, and responsibility for guidance. This finding is consistent with Karpouza and Emvalotis (2019), who demonstrate that hierarchy in educator-student relationships can coexist with reciprocity and meaningful relational engagement. It also corresponds with Joinel Alvarez (2024), who shows that legitimate teacher authority is grounded substantially in professional expertise rather than formal status alone. The present study nevertheless develops this argument further by identifying legitimacy as the mechanism through which differentiated pedagogical positions become recognized authority. Knowledge and educational responsibility provide a basis for authority, but they become relationally effective when students recognize them as legitimate grounds for guidance. Ta'zim performs an important function in this process because respect for the educator is connected with recognition of knowledge and educational responsibility. Thus, the findings suggest that pedagogical authority is neither merely possessed by educators nor simply imposed upon students; it is relationally constituted through the interaction between educational qualification and normative recognition. This interpretation also supports Symonds' (2021) argument that educational power is embedded in socially organized roles and relational expectations rather than operating exclusively through explicit coercion.

The transition from authority to obedience constitutes the most critical point in this relational structure. The findings indicate that obedience is not inherently equivalent to domination because pedagogical relationships necessarily involve forms of direction, regulation, and response. What determines the educational character of obedience is the basis upon which it is expected and the boundaries governing its exercise. Ta'lim al-Muta'allim itself does not present obedience as entirely unlimited, since the educator's position remains associated with moral responsibility and obedience does not extend indiscriminately to every possible command. This interpretation finds a useful comparative parallel in contemporary research on autonomy-supportive teaching. Patall et al. (2022) demonstrate that instructional guidance and student agency can coexist when students retain opportunities to express perspectives and contribute to their learning, while Yang et al. (2022) similarly emphasize the educational significance of autonomy-supportive conditions. These studies do not empirically validate the interpretation of Ta'lim al-Muta'allim because they emerge from different historical and educational settings. Nevertheless, they provide an important comparative perspective: educational structure does not necessarily eliminate student autonomy, just as student agency

does not require the disappearance of educator authority. The present findings therefore challenge interpretations that position obedience and agency as inherently incompatible categories.

The possibility of domination emerges when this balance changes. The findings indicate that domination cannot be located in ta'zim, hierarchy, authority, or obedience as isolated elements. Rather, it becomes possible when the grounds of legitimacy shift from pedagogical competence, educational responsibility, and defensible purposes toward the personal status of the educator, particularly when this shift is accompanied by a narrowing of the student's capacity to evaluate or question the exercise of authority. This is where the present findings both converge with and extend contemporary research on student agency and voice. Conner et al. (2024) show that meaningful student voice is supported by strong student-teacher relationships, opportunities for input, and participatory educational environments, while Conner et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of teachers' receptivity and responsiveness to students' contributions. Similarly, Patall et al. (2022) demonstrate that students' agentic engagement is positively connected with autonomy-supportive educational conditions and negatively associated with perceptions of controlling teaching. The present study extends these findings conceptually into adab-based education by suggesting that the critical issue is not whether educators possess greater authority than students, but whether students retain meaningful corrective space within that unequal relationship. Respect becomes educationally problematic when questioning the exercise of authority is interpreted as a violation of respect itself.

Viewed in relation to the research objective, these findings explain the mechanism through which ta'zim may move from supporting legitimate pedagogical authority toward creating the potential for domination. The process can be understood as a relational sequence rather than a deterministic causal chain: ta'zim contributes to pedagogical hierarchy; hierarchy receives normative legitimacy; legitimacy supports pedagogical authority; and authority generates expectations of obedience. The decisive point occurs at the level of accountability. When authority remains grounded in pedagogical competence, educational responsibility, moral boundaries, and the possibility of evaluation, obedience remains within the domain of legitimate pedagogical authority. When authority becomes increasingly justified by personal status and corrective space contracts, the same asymmetrical structure acquires the potential to become dominating. This explanation directly addresses the central research problem because it identifies not only how respect contributes to authority but also the conditions under which legitimate authority may change its relational character. The findings therefore reject a deterministic interpretation in which ta'zim necessarily produces domination. Instead, domination is conceptualized as a conditional possibility arising from changes in the basis, boundaries, and accountability of authority.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies primarily in connecting bodies of scholarship that have often been discussed separately. Research on ta'zim and Ta'lim al-Muta'allim has largely emphasized respect, adab, moral education, and character formation, whereas contemporary educational research has examined hierarchy, authority, autonomy, student voice, and power relations. By bringing these conversations together, the present study proposes a conceptual sequence in which ta'zim contributes to the formation of pedagogical hierarchy, hierarchy acquires legitimacy, legitimacy supports pedagogical authority, and authority generates expectations of obedience that, under particular conditions, may create the potential for domination. This sequence does not suggest that each stage inevitably produces

the next. Rather, it identifies the relational mechanisms through which ethically valued respect may participate in the organization of educational power. This interpretation also refines the concept of student agency within adab based education. Agency need not mean rejecting educators, abolishing hierarchy, or treating educators and students as occupying identical pedagogical positions. Rather, students can remain active moral and intellectual subjects while recognizing legitimate educator authority. In this respect, the findings converge with research showing that asymmetry can coexist with reciprocity (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019) and that student participation can coexist with structured teacher guidance (Conner et al., 2024; Patall et al., 2022).

The findings also have practical implications for Islamic education, particularly educational environments in which adab and respect for educators occupy an important normative position. The practical implication is not that ta'zim should be weakened or abandoned. Rather, educational institutions may benefit from distinguishing respect for educators from unconditional obedience to educators. Respect can continue to be cultivated as part of moral education while the legitimacy of educator authority remains tied to competence, responsibility, appropriate conduct, and educational purposes. At the same time, students need not be positioned as passive recipients of direction. Opportunities to ask questions, express academically relevant disagreement, provide feedback, and identify inappropriate uses of authority can function as safeguards that preserve the pedagogical character of asymmetrical relationships. Such practices are compatible with contemporary findings concerning student voice and agentic engagement (Akmalia et al., 2025; Conner et al., 2024; Itzkovich et al., 2020; Patall et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022). Accountability should likewise be understood as integral to educator authority rather than as a threat to it. The stronger the moral recognition granted to educators, the stronger the responsibility to ensure that their authority remains directed toward learning and the intellectual and moral development of students.

Several limitations should nevertheless qualify the interpretation of these findings. First, the study is philosophical-conceptual and literature-based; consequently, the reconstructed relationship among ta'zim, hierarchy, legitimacy, authority, obedience, and potential domination should not be interpreted as empirical evidence that these mechanisms necessarily occur in contemporary pesantren, madrasahs, or other Islamic educational institutions. Second, the analysis concentrates on selected relational dimensions of Ta'lim al-Muta'allim and interprets them through contemporary analytical concepts of pedagogical authority, agency, and domination. Although interpretive caution was maintained, differences between the historical-intellectual context of the primary text and contemporary educational theory necessarily limit direct equivalence between them. Third, institutional practices may vary considerably according to educational traditions, leadership, teacher characteristics, student backgrounds, and local cultures, none of which can be captured through textual analysis alone. Future research should therefore examine how ta'zim is interpreted and negotiated in actual educational relationships through qualitative studies involving educators and students, comparative research across pesantren or Islamic educational settings, or mixed-method investigations of the relationships among respect, perceived teacher authority, student agency, and opportunities for voice. Such research would not merely "test" whether ta'zim causes domination; more importantly, it could investigate the conditions under which respect, authority, accountability, and student agency are successfully balanced in educational practice. In practical terms, Islamic educational institutions may likewise consider strengthening pedagogical guidelines that preserve respect for educators while making the ethical boundaries and accountability of authority sufficiently

clear. In this way, ta'zim can remain a meaningful component of adab-based education without becoming a justification for authority that is detached from pedagogical responsibility.

Conclusion

This study concludes that ta'zim in Ta'lim al-Muta'allim functions not only as an ethical expression of respect for educators but also as a relational norm that contributes to the formation of pedagogical hierarchy and authority. Respect becomes educationally meaningful when it is grounded in recognition of the educator's knowledge, moral qualities, experience, and responsibility for guiding students. The central finding of this study is therefore expressed through a relational sequence in which ta'zim contributes to hierarchy, hierarchy acquires legitimacy, legitimacy supports pedagogical authority, and authority generates expectations of obedience. This sequence does not imply that ta'zim inherently produces domination. Obedience remains pedagogically legitimate when authority is grounded in competence, educational responsibility, moral boundaries, and accountability. The potential for domination emerges when the basis of legitimacy shifts from pedagogical merit toward the educator's personal status and when students' opportunities to question, evaluate, or correct the exercise of authority become increasingly restricted. This conceptual distinction extends the understanding of ta'zim beyond an ethical principle of respect by demonstrating its relevance to the legitimacy, boundaries, and accountability of authority within educator-student relationships.

These findings imply that adab, educator authority, and student agency need not be positioned as competing principles within Islamic education. Respect for educators can coexist with students' moral and intellectual agency when pedagogical authority remains accountable, educationally justified, and open to appropriate evaluation. In practice, strengthening ta'zim should therefore be accompanied by clear ethical boundaries for educator authority and meaningful opportunities for students to ask questions, express academically relevant perspectives, and exercise moral judgment without such participation being automatically interpreted as disrespect. Nevertheless, because this study is philosophical-conceptual and literature-based, the reconstructed mechanism represents a conceptual possibility within the analyzed text rather than empirical evidence that domination characterizes contemporary pesantren or other Islamic educational institutions. Future research may therefore examine how ta'zim, pedagogical authority, student agency, and accountability are interpreted and negotiated in diverse educational settings, thereby clarifying the conditions under which respect and legitimate authority can be maintained without restricting students' capacity for participation, evaluation, and moral judgment.

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