



Strategies Of Akidah Akhlak Teachers in Preventing Bullying Behavior Against Students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Soleh Al-Mubarak, Tanjung Jabung Barat

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Abstract

The persistence of bullying in educational settings reflects a critical disjunction between formal moral instruction and students' lived social practices, a challenge increasingly recognized across global education systems. This study aims to investigate the structural patterns of bullying behavior and to analyze the preventive strategies employed by Akidah Akhlak teachers within an Islamic junior secondary school context. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving one principal, two teachers, and twelve students selected through purposive sampling, with data collected via semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, and analyzed using triangulation and thematic analysis to ensure analytical rigor. The findings reveal that bullying is socially reproduced through normalized peer interactions, with verbal aggression emerging as the most dominant and persistent form. The study identifies an integrated set of teacher strategies, including moral exemplification, contextual Quranic value internalization, restorative discipline, and collaborative learning, which collectively function as a preventive system fostering moral awareness, emotional regulation, and prosocial behavior. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is constrained by external influences, particularly family environment and digital media exposure, which introduce competing value systems beyond the school context. This study offers a novel contribution by advancing an integrated Islamic-based framework that bridges moral pedagogy with socio-emotional and contextual dimensions of student interaction, thereby moving beyond fragmented approaches to bullying prevention. Positioned within the global educational discourse, the proposed framework provides a comprehensive and context-sensitive model for addressing complex social challenges, while offering practical insights for educators and policymakers in designing sustainable anti-bullying interventions across diverse educational settings.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional process that extends beyond cognitive development to encompass the cultivation of moral consciousness, emotional intelligence, and socially responsible behavior. In the twenty-first century, educational systems worldwide are confronted with the urgent task of preparing individuals not only for economic participation but also for ethical coexistence within increasingly complex social environments (Erdoğan Coşkun, 2022; Shabalala & Photo, 2025). Despite these aspirations, a persistent challenge that continues to undermine the integrity of educational institutions is the prevalence of bullying behavior among students. Bullying, as a form of systematic aggression embedded within peer interactions, disrupts not only individual well-being but also the broader educational climate that schools seek to establish (Izadi & Hart, 2024; Stefes, 2025). The persistence of such behavior indicates that existing approaches to character education may not yet be sufficiently effective in addressing the underlying dynamics of student interaction. This condition calls for a critical re-examination of how moral values are taught,

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internalized, and enacted within educational settings. Consequently, there is a growing need for integrative approaches that bridge ethical instruction with lived social practice.

The phenomenon of bullying has evolved into a global educational concern, manifesting across diverse cultural and institutional contexts, including religious-based schools. Conceptually, bullying is characterized by repeated acts of intentional harm, reinforced by power imbalances that enable perpetrators to dominate their victims through physical, verbal, relational, or digital means (Hammarén, 2022; Tay, 2025). In Indonesia, national data consistently indicate that bullying remains highly prevalent, particularly among adolescents in junior secondary education, where developmental vulnerabilities are most pronounced (Putra & Dendup, 2022; Yusuf et al., 2022). Within madrasah environments, bullying often appears in normalized forms such as verbal teasing and social exclusion, which are frequently dismissed as harmless interactions despite their profound psychological consequences. Empirical studies demonstrate that even non-physical forms of bullying can lead to long-term impacts, including diminished self-esteem, emotional distress, and academic disengagement (Li et al., 2025; H. Zhou et al., 2022). The normalization of such behaviors reflects a deeper structural issue in how social norms are constructed within student communities. This suggests that bullying is not merely an individual deviation but a socially reproduced phenomenon requiring systemic intervention.

The urgency of addressing bullying is further amplified by the developmental characteristics of adolescence, a stage marked by heightened emotional volatility, identity exploration, and susceptibility to peer influence. During this transitional phase, adolescents often engage in behaviors that serve to negotiate social status, sometimes through domination or exclusion of others (Colombo et al., 2023; Rind, 2024). Research has consistently identified multiple interacting factors contributing to bullying behavior, including family dynamics, peer pressure, and exposure to aggressive content through digital media (Bullo & Schulz, 2022; Zografova & Dimitrova, 2023). Inadequate parental supervision and inconsistent moral reinforcement further intensify these tendencies, creating a fragmented moral environment for students. As a result, schools are increasingly expected to assume a dual role as both academic institutions and agents of character formation. However, without coherent strategies that integrate emotional, social, and ethical dimensions, interventions often remain reactive rather than preventive. This reality highlights the necessity for approaches that address the root causes of bullying rather than its surface manifestations.

Within Islamic educational institutions, the issue of bullying presents a particularly significant ethical paradox. Islamic teachings explicitly emphasize the preservation of human dignity, compassion, and mutual respect, rendering any form of humiliation or aggression fundamentally incompatible with its moral framework. The Qur'anic directive in Surah Al-Hujurat (49): 11, which prohibits ridicule and derogatory labeling, provides a clear normative foundation for anti-bullying values. This theological grounding positions Islamic education as a potentially transformative force in shaping students' moral behavior (Khan & Ahmed, 2025). Nevertheless, the persistence of bullying within madrasah contexts indicates that the translation of religious values into behavioral practice remains incomplete. Moral instruction, when delivered as abstract doctrine, often fails to produce meaningful behavioral change unless it is embedded within students' everyday social interactions. This gap between normative ideals and lived realities underscores the importance of pedagogical strategies that operationalize ethical values in concrete and experiential ways. Thus, the role of Akidah Akhlak education becomes critically important in bridging this divide.

Recent research has increasingly highlighted the effectiveness of value-based educational approaches in reducing bullying behavior. Studies demonstrate that moral education programs, particularly those grounded in religious or ethical frameworks, can foster internal self-regulation and prosocial behavior among students (Purwaningsih, 2024; Schütz & Koglin, 2023). Teacher-centered strategies such as moral exemplification, dialogic engagement, and restorative discipline have been shown to significantly influence students' behavioral transformation (Muassomah et al., 2025). Moreover, the integration of religious literacy into classroom practice has been found to strengthen students' moral reasoning and ethical decision-making (Khairani & Aulia, 2025; Tinambunan & Napitupulu, 2025). Collaborative learning environments also contribute to empathy development by fostering positive interdependence among students (Dikwanyane & Phuti, 2024; T. Zhou & Colomer, 2024). Collectively, these findings suggest that effective bullying prevention requires a multidimensional approach that integrates cognitive, emotional, and moral dimensions. However,

the extent to which these elements are systematically combined within specific educational contexts remains underexplored.

Despite these advances, existing literature reveals several critical limitations that necessitate further investigation. First, many studies remain fragmented, examining individual strategies without proposing an integrated framework that connects moral education, social-emotional learning, and behavioral outcomes. Second, there is limited empirical exploration of how teacher practices function as a cohesive system in shaping students' internalization of values within real classroom settings. Third, previous research often underestimates the influence of external ecological factors, such as family environment and digital media exposure, which significantly mediate the effectiveness of school-based interventions (Chai et al., 2022; O'Dean et al., 2024). As a result, the current body of knowledge lacks a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic value-based approaches can be operationalized in a holistic and sustainable manner. This gap highlights the need for contextually grounded research that not only describes teacher strategies but also conceptualizes their interconnections and broader implications.

Responding to this gap, the present study aims to examine bullying behavior and analyze the strategies employed by Akidah Akhlak teachers in preventing such behavior within a madrasah context. More importantly, this research seeks to advance theoretical understanding by proposing an integrated Islamic-based framework for bullying prevention that combines moral exemplification, Quranic value internalization, restorative discipline, and collaborative learning practices. This framework is positioned as a model that bridges moral theology with contemporary educational psychology, thereby offering a more comprehensive approach to character education. Practically, the findings provide actionable insights for educators, school leaders, and policymakers in designing sustainable and context-sensitive anti-bullying interventions. By situating teacher strategies within a broader socio-cultural and moral ecosystem, this study contributes to the development of a more nuanced understanding of how ethical values can be effectively internalized and translated into student behavior. Ultimately, this research positions Islamic character education not merely as a normative discourse but as an operational framework for addressing complex social challenges in contemporary education.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to investigate the strategies implemented by Akidah Akhlak teachers in preventing bullying behavior within a specific madrasah context. A qualitative case study was selected because the research aimed to explore complex social interactions, meaning-making processes, and context-bound pedagogical practices that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement. This design allows for an in-depth understanding of how moral values are interpreted, enacted, and internalized within real educational settings. Furthermore, it enables the integration of social, cultural, and religious dimensions that shape student behavior and teacher intervention strategies. The choice of this design is methodologically justified as it aligns with the study's objective to generate a contextually grounded and theoretically informed understanding of bullying prevention practices (Green et al., 2022; Hunt-Anderson, 2025).

The research was conducted at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Soleh Al-Mubarak, located in Tanjung Jabung Barat, Jambi Province, Indonesia. This site was purposively selected due to its relevance as an Islamic educational institution experiencing observable instances of bullying behavior among students, while simultaneously implementing value-based character education. Data collection took place over a four-month period, from October 2025 to January 2026, allowing sufficient time for prolonged engagement and in-depth observation of daily school dynamics. The extended duration of fieldwork facilitated the identification of recurring behavioral patterns and ensured a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between teacher strategies and student responses.

The participants in this study consisted of one school principal, two Akidah Akhlak teachers, and twelve students who were directly involved in classroom interactions and social activities within the school environment. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their relevance to the research focus and their experiential knowledge of bullying phenomena and prevention strategies (Roques et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2025). Inclusion criteria required participants

to have direct involvement in teaching, learning, or experiencing peer interactions related to bullying, while individuals without such relevance were excluded. The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, where data collection was concluded once no new themes or insights emerged (A. Christou, 2025; Lim, 2025). This approach ensured depth, richness, and contextual validity of the data rather than statistical generalization.

Data were collected using three primary instruments: semi-structured interview guides, participatory observation protocols, and document analysis. The semi-structured interviews were designed to elicit participants' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations regarding bullying behavior and prevention strategies. Key indicators included types of bullying, teacher responses, implementation of Islamic values, and perceived challenges in intervention. Participatory observation was conducted to capture naturally occurring interactions in classrooms and school environments, focusing on communication patterns, behavioral responses, and teacher-student dynamics. Document analysis involved reviewing institutional records, school policies, and visual documentation to support data triangulation. The use of multiple instruments allowed for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2024; Lumineau et al., 2025).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study adopted a trustworthiness framework encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Agilan, 2026). Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation of data sources, methods, and time. Member checking was conducted by returning key findings to participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations. Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to similar settings. Dependability was ensured through the use of an audit trail documenting all stages of the research process, including data collection, coding decisions, and analytical procedures. Confirmability was established by maintaining reflexive field notes and ensuring that interpretations were grounded in empirical data rather than researcher bias (Boda, 2025).

The data collection procedure was conducted in three sequential stages. The first stage involved preparation, including obtaining research permissions, developing research instruments, and identifying participants. The second stage consisted of fieldwork, where data were gathered through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and document collection. Observations were conducted in a participatory manner, allowing the researcher to engage with the natural setting while minimizing disruption to routine activities. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of participants' responses. The final stage involved data organization and management, where all collected data were systematically categorized and prepared for analysis. This structured procedure ensured consistency and transparency throughout the research process.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach integrated within the interactive model of (Istenič, 2024; Robinson, 2022). The analysis began with open coding, where raw data were segmented into meaningful units and labeled according to emerging concepts. This was followed by axial coding, which involved grouping codes into categories based on conceptual similarities and relationships. Subsequently, selective coding was conducted to develop overarching themes that captured the core patterns of teacher strategies and bullying prevention mechanisms. Throughout this process, constant comparison techniques were employed to refine categories and ensure analytical consistency. The final stage involved interpreting themes in relation to existing theoretical frameworks, enabling the development of a conceptual understanding of Islamic-based bullying prevention practices.

In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary instrument; therefore, reflexivity was carefully maintained throughout the study. The researcher continuously reflected on their positionality, assumptions, and potential biases during data collection and analysis. Reflexive journaling was employed to document personal interpretations and to critically examine how these might influence the research process. By maintaining awareness of subjective influence, the researcher aimed to ensure that findings remained grounded in participants' perspectives rather than imposed interpretations. This reflexive practice strengthened the overall rigor and integrity of the study.

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, ensuring that participation was voluntary and based on a clear understanding of the study's purpose. Participants' identities were protected through anonymization, and all data were treated with strict confidentiality. The research also ensured that no psychological or social harm was inflicted upon participants during the study. Ethical approval and institutional permission were secured prior to fieldwork, and all procedures complied with established academic research ethics standards. Through these measures, the study upheld both methodological rigor and ethical responsibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study are presented to provide a comprehensive understanding of bullying behavior patterns and the strategies employed by Akidah Akhlak teachers in preventing such behavior within the madrasah context. The findings are derived from in-depth analysis of observational data, interview transcripts, and supporting documentation collected during the research period. These data were systematically processed through coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation to identify recurring patterns and meaningful relationships. The analysis focuses not only on describing observable phenomena but also on uncovering the underlying dynamics that shape student behavior and teacher intervention practices. In order to ensure clarity and coherence, the results are organized into three main sections, namely bullying behavior patterns, teacher strategies in bullying prevention, and barriers encountered in the implementation process. Each section is presented with detailed narrative explanation supported by empirical evidence from the field. The presentation of findings emphasizes both the complexity of the phenomenon and the interconnection between its various dimensions. Through this structured approach, the results aim to provide a holistic and analytically grounded account of bullying prevention within Islamic educational settings.

Bullying Behavior Patterns in the Madrasah Context

The findings reveal that bullying behavior at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Soleh Al-Mubarak is not incidental but structurally embedded within everyday student interactions. Verbal bullying emerges as the most dominant form, frequently expressed through mocking nicknames, sarcastic comments, and subtle humiliation that is often normalized as playful communication. Students commonly perceive these actions as harmless, yet observations indicate that they create sustained emotional discomfort for the victims. One student expressed that "they keep calling me names every day, even when I tell them to stop," indicating the repetitive and normalized nature of such behavior. In addition to verbal aggression, physical bullying was also identified in the form of pinching, pushing, and minor acts of intimidation that function as symbolic demonstrations of dominance. These behaviors tend to occur in semi-supervised spaces, particularly during breaks and informal peer interactions. The coexistence of verbal and physical bullying suggests an interconnected pattern of aggression rather than isolated incidents. This pattern indicates that bullying is socially reproduced through peer dynamics and embedded within the informal structure of student relationships.

The emergence of bullying behavior is closely linked to the psychological characteristics of adolescents, particularly their need for recognition and their limited emotional regulation capacity. Students often engage in dominance-seeking behavior as a way to establish their position within peer groups. Interviews with teachers reveal that many perpetrators are not fully aware of the consequences of their actions, which reflects a gap in socio-emotional awareness. One teacher noted that "students often joke excessively without realizing they are hurting others," highlighting the blurred boundary between humor and aggression. At the same time, victims tend to avoid confrontation due to fear of exclusion or retaliation, which allows bullying behavior to persist unchallenged. This creates a reinforcing cycle in which aggressive behavior becomes normalized and socially tolerated. Observational data further show that peer groups rarely intervene, indicating the absence of collective responsibility among students. Consequently, bullying in this context is sustained not only by individual tendencies but also by shared social norms.

Table 1. Types and Characteristics of Bullying Behavior

Type of Bullying	Observed Behaviors	Context of Occurrence	Psychological/Social Impact
Verbal	Mockery, negative nicknames, sarcasm	Classroom and peer interaction	Emotional distress, reduced self-confidence
Physical	Pinching, pushing, minor aggression	Informal school spaces	Fear, discomfort, avoidance
Relational	Social exclusion, ignoring peers	Group activities	Isolation, reduced participation

Table 1 presents the categorization of bullying behaviors observed in the field. The data indicate that verbal bullying is the most dominant and frequent form, followed by physical and relational bullying. Each type occurs in different social contexts and produces distinct psychological and social consequences. This classification reinforces the finding that bullying is multidimensional and requires targeted intervention strategies. The table also demonstrates that even seemingly minor behaviors can produce significant long-term impacts on students.

Teacher Strategies in Bullying Prevention

The findings indicate that Akidah Akhlak teachers implement a structured and integrated approach to bullying prevention that combines moral, pedagogical, and relational strategies. The first strategy is moral exemplification, where teachers consistently model respectful communication, fairness, and emotional control in their daily interactions. This approach provides students with a visible standard of behavior that is gradually internalized through observation. The second strategy involves the contextual integration of Quranic values, where moral teachings are linked directly to students' real-life experiences. One teacher explained that "we do not just teach the verse, we ask them to reflect on their own behavior," indicating an emphasis on internal reflection. The third strategy is educative restorative discipline, which focuses on reflection, accountability, and behavioral improvement rather than punishment. Students who engage in bullying are encouraged to reflect on their actions and repair relationships with their peers. The fourth strategy is collaborative learning, which creates structured opportunities for students to interact across social boundaries and develop empathy. These strategies operate collectively as a preventive system rather than isolated interventions.

The integration of these strategies reflects a shift from reactive discipline toward proactive character formation. Teachers actively construct an environment that reduces the likelihood of bullying by shaping students' moral awareness and social behavior. Observations indicate that students exposed to these strategies demonstrate increased sensitivity toward others and reduced engagement in aggressive behavior. However, the effectiveness of these strategies depends on consistency and reinforcement across different contexts. While classroom interventions show positive outcomes, their impact is sometimes weakened by external influences beyond school control. This suggests that teacher strategies function as a necessary but not sufficient condition for sustainable behavioral change. The findings highlight the importance of integrating classroom practices with broader social environments. Therefore, bullying prevention must be understood as a systemic rather than isolated effort.

Table 2. Teacher Strategies and Their Observed Effects

Strategy	Implementation Practice	Observed Student Response	Behavioral Outcome
Moral Exemplification	Consistent respectful communication by teacher	Students imitate teacher behavior	Reduced verbal aggression
Quranic Integration	Reflection on moral values in daily interaction	Increased moral awareness	Improved self-regulation
Restorative Discipline	Reflection tasks and peer reconciliation	Students acknowledge wrongdoing	Reduced repeated offenses
Collaborative Learning	Mixed-group interaction activities	Increased empathy and cooperation	Reduced social exclusion

Table 2 illustrates the relationship between teacher strategies and their observed effects on student behavior. Each strategy is linked to specific implementation practices and measurable behavioral outcomes. The table demonstrates that moral and pedagogical interventions produce both cognitive and behavioral changes in students. It also shows that the effectiveness of these strategies lies in their combined application rather than isolated use. This strengthens the argument that bullying prevention requires an integrated approach.

Barriers in Bullying Prevention

Despite the effectiveness of teacher strategies, several structural barriers were identified that limit their impact. One major barrier is the psychological condition of students, particularly their impulsive behavior and limited emotional control. Students often react spontaneously without considering the consequences of their actions, which reduces the effectiveness of moral instruction. Another significant barrier is the family environment, where inconsistent parental supervision weakens the reinforcement of values taught at school. Teachers reported that some students come from environments where aggressive communication is normalized. In addition, digital media exposure plays a critical role in shaping student behavior. Students are frequently exposed to content that normalizes mockery and humiliation as entertainment. This creates conflicting value systems between school and external environments. As a result, bullying prevention efforts face challenges that extend beyond the classroom context.

Efforts to address these barriers remain ongoing but face structural limitations. Teachers attempt to provide consistent guidance and create reflective learning spaces, but these efforts are not always supported by external environments. The lack of structured collaboration between school and family reduces the sustainability of behavioral change. Without alignment between different social contexts, students struggle to maintain consistent behavior. This indicates that bullying prevention requires a multi-layered approach involving various stakeholders. Teachers alone cannot fully address the complexity of influencing factors. Therefore, systemic intervention is necessary to strengthen the effectiveness of school-based strategies. This finding reinforces the need for integrated approaches that extend beyond classroom boundaries.

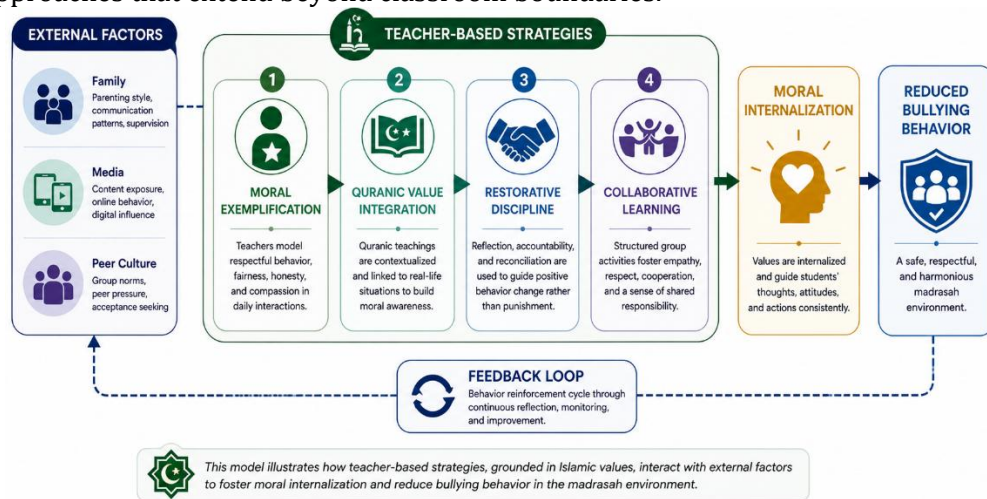


Figure 1. Integrated Islamic-Based Bullying Prevention System (Dynamic Model)

Figure 1 presents a dynamic model of bullying prevention derived from the findings. Unlike a linear model, this framework illustrates the interaction between teacher strategies and external factors such as family and media influence. The model emphasizes that moral internalization functions as a central mechanism linking intervention strategies to behavioral outcomes. The presence of a feedback loop indicates that behavioral change is continuously reinforced through repeated interaction and reflection. This dynamic perspective highlights that bullying prevention is an ongoing process rather than a one-time intervention. The figure strengthens the conceptual contribution of the study by presenting an integrated and adaptive system.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that bullying behavior within the madrasah context is not merely incidental but structurally embedded in students' everyday social interactions. This indicates

that bullying has undergone a process of social normalization, where aggressive acts are implicitly accepted as part of peer communication. Such a pattern aligns with earlier observations that bullying is often reproduced through collective social norms rather than isolated individual actions (Hammarén, 2022; Tay, 2025). As highlighted in the Introduction, bullying persists despite the increasing emphasis on ethical education, suggesting a disconnect between normative frameworks and lived social realities (Erdoğan Coşkun, 2022; Shabalala & Photo, 2025). This study extends prior research by demonstrating that the persistence of bullying is rooted in the informal social structures that govern student interactions. Unlike previous studies that emphasize individual psychological traits (Li et al., 2025), the present findings underscore the importance of socio-cultural dynamics in sustaining aggressive behavior. This implies that effective intervention must move beyond individual correction toward transforming the collective norms that legitimize such behavior. Consequently, the study contributes to the literature by reframing bullying as a socially constructed phenomenon embedded within peer culture.

A key finding of this study is the dominance of verbal bullying, which reflects an ambiguous boundary between humor and aggression in student interactions. This phenomenon resonates with the concept of relational aggression, where harm is inflicted through symbolic and indirect means, often remaining unrecognized as violence (Izadi & Hart, 2024; H. Zhou et al., 2022). As noted in prior research, such forms of bullying can have profound psychological consequences despite their seemingly trivial nature (Stefes, 2025; Li et al., 2025). The present study confirms these findings but further reveals that cultural normalization of teasing within peer groups reinforces this behavior. This diverges from earlier studies (Colombo et al., 2023) that attribute bullying primarily to developmental instability, by highlighting the role of interactional norms in sustaining aggression. Moreover, the persistence of such behavior within a religious educational setting underscores a critical paradox between moral doctrine and actual practice, as previously identified in Islamic education research (Khan & Ahmed, 2025). This suggests that moral instruction alone is insufficient when not operationalized in everyday communication practices. Therefore, the study advances the argument that redefining communicative norms is essential for disrupting the cycle of verbal aggression.

Another important finding concerns the role of adolescent psychological development in shaping bullying behavior, particularly the need for social recognition and group positioning. Consistent with prior studies (Rind, 2024; Bullo & Schulz, 2022), the findings indicate that students engage in dominance-oriented behaviors to establish their identity within peer groups. However, this study provides a deeper insight by identifying limited emotional regulation and low socio-emotional awareness as critical mediating factors. As emphasized in the Introduction, adolescence is characterized by heightened vulnerability to peer influence and emotional instability (Colombo et al., 2023). The current findings extend this understanding by showing that the absence of structured socio-emotional learning exacerbates these tendencies. While previous studies highlight empathy-based interventions (Schütz & Koglin, 2023), this research demonstrates that empathy is not automatically developed without deliberate pedagogical intervention. This discrepancy may explain why bullying persists even in environments that promote moral values. Consequently, the study suggests that integrating emotional regulation into character education is essential for addressing the root causes of aggressive behavior.

The study further demonstrates that moral exemplification by Akidah Akhlak teachers plays a central role in shaping students' behavior. This finding strongly supports existing literature emphasizing the importance of teacher modeling in value internalization (Muassomah et al., 2025; Purwaningsih, 2024). As previously discussed in the Introduction, effective moral education requires not only cognitive instruction but also behavioral demonstration. The present findings confirm that students tend to imitate the respectful and controlled behavior exhibited by their teachers, indicating the effectiveness of this approach. However, this study advances prior research by highlighting the critical role of consistency in teacher behavior across different contexts. Unlike earlier studies (Khairani & Aulia, 2025) that focus on knowledge transmission, the findings suggest that affective and experiential dimensions are more influential in shaping behavior. This implies that moral education must shift from a didactic to a performative model, where values are enacted rather than merely taught. As a result, the study reinforces the conceptualization of teachers as moral agents whose behavior directly influences student conduct.

In addition, the integration of Quranic values into contextual learning emerges as a significant factor in enhancing students' moral awareness and self-regulation. This finding aligns with prior research demonstrating the effectiveness of religious-based education in promoting ethical behavior (Tinambunan & Napitupulu, 2025; Khan & Ahmed, 2025). However, the present study extends these findings by emphasizing the importance of reflective engagement rather than doctrinal instruction. As noted in the Introduction, the gap between theological principles and behavioral practice remains a critical challenge in Islamic education. The current findings show that when Quranic teachings are linked to students' real-life experiences, they become more meaningful and impactful. This differs from earlier studies (Erdoğan Coşkun, 2022) that focus primarily on cognitive understanding of moral values. The implication is that moral internalization requires an active process of reflection and contextualization. Therefore, the study contributes to the literature by bridging the gap between religious doctrine and pedagogical practice through a reflective learning approach.

The effectiveness of restorative discipline as an alternative to punitive approaches represents another significant contribution of this study. Consistent with previous findings (O'Dean et al., 2024; Chai et al., 2022), restorative practices are shown to reduce repeated aggressive behavior by fostering accountability and relational repair. The present study confirms these findings while further highlighting the role of reflective dialogue in facilitating behavioral change. Unlike traditional disciplinary methods that focus on punishment, restorative discipline encourages students to understand the consequences of their actions and take responsibility for them. This aligns with the broader shift toward humanistic education, as emphasized in contemporary literature (Schütz & Koglin, 2023). However, this study extends the discussion by demonstrating that restorative approaches are particularly effective when integrated with moral and religious values. This suggests that the combination of ethical reflection and relational repair creates a more sustainable form of behavior change. Consequently, the study strengthens the argument for adopting restorative frameworks in character education.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that collaborative learning plays a crucial role in reducing social exclusion and fostering empathy among students. This is consistent with research showing that cooperative learning environments enhance social interaction and mutual understanding (Dikwanyane & Phuti, 2024; T. Zhou & Colomer, 2024). The present study confirms these outcomes but also demonstrates that collaborative learning functions as a preventive mechanism against bullying by restructuring peer relationships. As discussed in the Introduction, positive interdependence is essential for developing prosocial behavior. The findings extend this perspective by showing that structured group interaction can disrupt exclusionary practices and promote inclusivity. This differs from earlier studies that primarily focus on academic outcomes, highlighting instead the social impact of collaborative learning. The implication is that pedagogical design plays a critical role in shaping student interaction patterns. Thus, the study contributes to the literature by positioning collaborative learning as both an educational and social intervention strategy.

Finally, the study identifies external factors, particularly family environment and digital media exposure, as significant barriers to the effectiveness of school-based interventions. This finding aligns with ecological perspectives emphasizing the influence of multiple environmental systems on student behavior (Bullo & Schulz, 2022; Zografova & Dimitrova, 2023). As noted in the Introduction, inconsistent parental supervision and exposure to aggressive media content contribute to the normalization of bullying. The present study confirms these findings while demonstrating that such external influences often undermine the values promoted within the school environment. This creates a tension between competing value systems, making behavioral consistency difficult for students. Compared to previous studies (O'Dean et al., 2024), this research places greater emphasis on the interaction between internal and external factors. The implication is that bullying prevention cannot rely solely on school-based strategies but requires a multi-layered approach involving family and community engagement. Therefore, the study advances the literature by conceptualizing bullying prevention as a systemic rather than isolated intervention.

Overall, this study not only supports existing theoretical frameworks but also extends them by proposing an integrated Islamic-based model that connects moral education, socio-emotional development, and pedagogical practice. By explicitly linking the findings to prior research discussed in the Introduction, the study addresses a critical gap in the literature, where previous approaches have often been fragmented. The proposed framework offers a holistic perspective that situates

teacher strategies within a broader socio-cultural and moral ecosystem. This contribution is particularly relevant in the global context, where the need for value-based education is increasingly emphasized. In this regard, the study positions Islamic character education not merely as a normative discourse but as an operational framework capable of addressing complex social challenges such as bullying. Consequently, the research provides both theoretical advancement and practical implications, making it highly relevant for international scholarly discourse.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that bullying behavior within the madrasah context is a socially constructed phenomenon embedded in everyday peer interactions rather than an isolated individual deviation. The findings reveal that the persistence of bullying is sustained by normalized communication patterns, limited socio-emotional awareness, and the broader socio-cultural environment that shapes student behavior. In response to this complexity, the study confirms that Akidah Akhlak teachers play a pivotal role in disrupting this cycle through an integrated set of strategies, including moral exemplification, contextual Quranic value internalization, restorative discipline, and collaborative learning. These strategies function not as isolated interventions but as an interconnected system that facilitates moral internalization and behavioral transformation. Importantly, the study advances existing literature by demonstrating that the effectiveness of value-based education lies in its ability to bridge normative religious teachings with lived social practices. By situating moral education within a dynamic interaction between cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, this research offers a more comprehensive understanding of how ethical behavior can be cultivated in educational settings. Consequently, the study contributes theoretically by reframing bullying prevention as a multidimensional process that requires the integration of moral pedagogy, socio-emotional development, and contextual interactional practices.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, this study provides a significant practical and conceptual advancement by proposing an integrated Islamic-based framework for bullying prevention that is both contextually grounded and globally relevant. The findings highlight that sustainable behavioral change cannot be achieved solely through classroom-based interventions, as external factors such as family environment and digital media exposure continue to influence student behavior. This underscores the necessity of adopting a systemic approach that extends beyond the school and involves multiple stakeholders, including parents and the wider community. In the broader landscape of international education, the study positions Islamic character education as a viable and adaptable model for addressing complex social challenges, particularly in contexts where moral and cultural values play a central role. By offering a framework that combines ethical principles with pedagogical innovation, this research not only fills a critical gap in the literature but also provides actionable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to design effective anti-bullying strategies. Ultimately, the study affirms that bullying prevention must be understood as a continuous, context-sensitive process of moral formation, thereby contributing to the development of more inclusive, ethical, and resilient educational environments.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Riska Ameliya conceptualized the study, designed the research framework, conducted data collection and fieldwork, performed data analysis, and drafted the original manuscript. Khoirul Anwar contributed to the refinement of the research design, provided critical supervision throughout the research process, validated the analytical interpretation, and substantially revised the manuscript for important intellectual content. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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