

## Strategic Function of Islamic School Principals in Combating Bullying Through the Promotion of Islamic Values

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46245/ijorer.vi.869>

### Sections Info

#### Article history:

Submitted: May 02, 2025

Final Revised: July 01, 2025

Accepted: July 06, 2025

Published: September 30, 2025

#### Keywords:

Bullying Prevention; Islamic Education; School Leadership; Character Education; Student Behavior



### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This research aimed to examine the strategic function of Islamic school principals in combating bullying through the promotion of fundamental values. **Method:** A sequential explanatory mixed-method was used to collect quantitative data from 192 junior high school students at SMP Islam Tahfidzul Quran Sunan Gunung Jati to evaluate knowledge and conduct about bullying. The next step included qualitative interviews with school principal to investigate value-based solutions. **Results:** The results showed that students had a profound conceptual knowledge of the detrimental nature and manifestations of bullying, specifically in the physical and verbal forms. Behavioral data reported a continued prevalence of verbal and relational bullying, including name-calling and social exclusion, despite students' recognition of the detrimental effects. Qualitative results suggested that school principal actively incorporated Islamic teachings, such as *adab* (etiquette), *ukhrawah islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), and *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and prohibiting wrong) into school activities to cultivate ethical behavior among pupils. **Novelty:** This comprised religious instruction, counseling, character development activities, and peer ambassador initiatives. The research showed that successful anti-bullying initiatives must be extended beyond awareness by improving moral consciousness through values-based leadership. Despite being confined to a single Islamic educational context, the results presented a reproducible framework for institutions. Future research should include various educational institutions and evaluate the enduring effects of values-based treatments. The incorporation of Islamic ideals into educational culture was essential for cultivating respectful, nonviolent learning environments.

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic education is among the most important types of education. In this context, Islam equips humans with morals, ethics, norms, and many rules to fight against violence and conflict through religion. Therefore, religious values should be included in education. The history of Islamic education can adapt to changes and become a pillar of support for national identity (Yusri M. Daud, 2021). Islamic education has a negative image due to some incidents. External and internal problems are associated with Islamic education. For example, problems related to the national curriculum evaluated often do not meet the needs and orientation of Islamic education (Huda, 2020). The presence of horizontal conflicts between students in various forms is an internal problem. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) shows that in 2023, there were 2,355 cases of child protection violations, with 861 occurring in educational environment, including sexual violence, disputes between students, bullying, and lack of attention from parties in educational environment which leads to neglect.

Minor issues often serve as the initial trigger of horizontal conflicts between students. Teasing leads to physical violence and conspiring on one another causes psychological trauma and long-term physical injuries. Students who are considered weak or helpless also experience similar bullying and should be treated well. Furthermore, numerous

cases are reported in the media and immediately affect policies (Saputra & Farid Pribadi, 2021).

Islamic educators must address this problem by implementing effective horizontal conflict management between students. This is due to the potential for disruption of teaching and learning process in the classroom. Furthermore, the impact on victims can also include physical injuries, psychological trauma, and feelings of inferiority in front of others (Bone Dominifridus, 2023). According to Islamic teachings in the verses of the Qur'an, violence is prohibited, specifically in the field of education (Rubini, 2018). SMP Islam Tahfidzul Quran Sunan Gunung Jati, located in Ngunut Tulungagung, uses the Al-Qur'an-based education program to prevent horizontal conflicts between students.

Based on the description above, this research aims to discover the management and minimization of horizontal conflicts between students in Islamic education. Furthermore, a welcoming Islamic educational atmosphere should be established. The objective is to promote the existence of Islamic educational institutions in a constantly evolving society.

## RESEARCH METHOD

A combination of qualitative and quantitative designs was adopted using a mixed method. Sequential and staged mixed methods were used, focusing on sequential explanatory strategies. The first stage included collecting and quantitatively analyzing data to determine knowledge of peer violence and the feelings about bullying. The second stage comprised the analysis of qualitative data to determine the methods of preventing and controlling peer violence at SMP Islam Tahfidzul Quran Sunan Gunung Jati. A broader understanding of the research problem is obtained by combining the methods. Mixed-method research is a combination or association of quantitative and qualitative designs. In conducting research using this method, philosophical assumptions are included with the use of quantitative and qualitative designs.

The simultaneous use of the method combines the collection and analysis of two types of data to become more effective than qualitative and quantitative designs. In this context, the type of research used is descriptive analysis. The objective is to provide an overview or description of the facts, characteristics, and relationships among the phenomena.

**Table 1.** List of Research Questionnaire Statements

Item	Variable	Statement
1	Bullying Behavior	Bullying is bad behavior, such as taunting and hurting friends, which makes someone unhappy or hurt.
2	Knowledge	Harassment is the use of violence, threats, or coercion against an individual.
3		Aggressive behavior, deliberate acts of violence, and repetition are signs of bullying.
4		Everyone can practice bullying.
5		Bullying is carried out for revenge, jealousy, and the desire to control the victim through violence and make the perpetrator more famous.
6		An individual or group known as a gang may commit harassment.
7		Violent perpetrators usually seek attention from many individuals and prefer trouble.
8		Bullying victims are usually quiet and have difficulty socializing with others.
9		Physical bullying consists of physical contact between the perpetrator and the victim that can be seen.
10		Verbal bullying is a type of violence that can be identified through hearing.

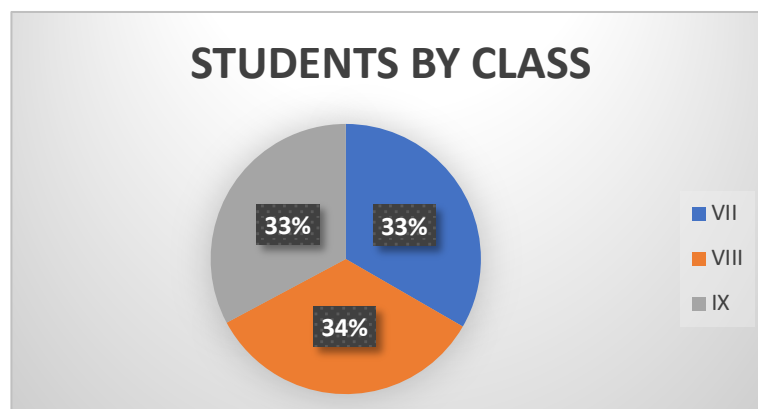
Item	Variable	Statement
11		Verbal abuse includes behaviors such as yelling, teasing, insulting, and criticizing.
12		One type of mental violence is a cynical, threatening, silent, and isolating view.
13		Bullying behavior can be caused by poor parenting patterns, such as parents who are always angry, critical, or spoil their children.
14		Bullying behavior can occur in families where one family member frequently hits or abuses others.
15		Violence will be very dangerous when not handled immediately.
16		Bullying can result in losing self-confidence, isolation, suffering from social anxiety, and suicide.
17		Bullying has psychological and physical impacts.
18	Peer Bullying Behavior	Once, I punched my friend for no reason.
19		My friend once hurt me on purpose.
20		We tend to push friends away for no reason.
21		It is permissible to touch a friend's body parts in an impolite manner, such as poking, stroking, patting, or pinching.
22		It is permissible to intentionally damage friends' belongings at school.
23		Using annoying nicknames.
24		Insulting a friend who has a bad face is an unpleasant act.
25		A friend may threaten or intimidate by saying, "Watch out."
26		I'm used to making friends do things they don't want to do.
27		I am used to asking friends for things violently.
28		Insulting friends with malicious intent to keep them from being approached.
29		You should not ignore friends when socializing.
30		With malicious intent, deliberately slander a friend.
31		Deliberately picky about friends.
32		Sending insults via social media.
33		Sending threatening words via social media.
34		Spreading hoax news through social media.
35		Borrowing a friend's communication device, such as a cell phone, to tease a peer at school.
36		Terrorizing friends through social media.
37		Laugh at your friends when they make mistakes in front of other people.
38		I deliberately frighten my friends.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

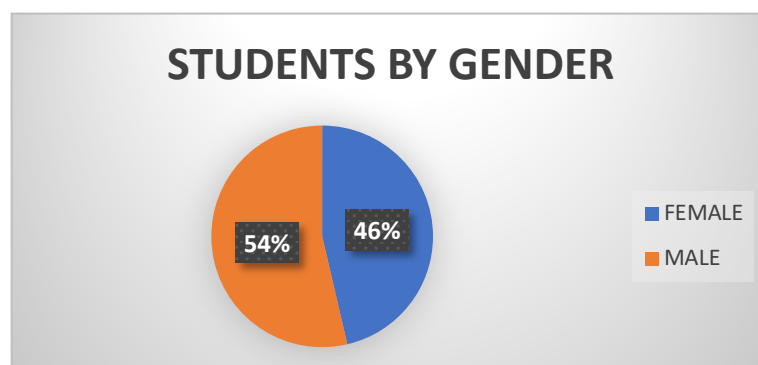
### *Characteristics of the Respondent*

The statistical significance of 192 responses received by students at SMP Islam Tahfidzul Quran Sunan Gunung Jati was determined. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of students across all three grade levels. Grades VII and IX had a total population of participants of 33%, while Grade VIII had a higher percentage of 34%. The results of bullying can be applied to all levels of junior high school students because there is a reasonable amount of parity between grades.

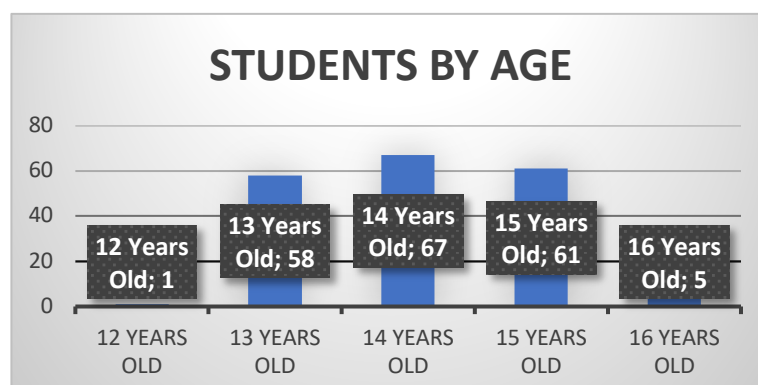
Figure 2 shows the percentage of students categorized by gender. The composition of the respondents is 54% male and 46% female. Due to the prevalence of gender differences in bullying behaviors, this ratio is remarkably balanced and important to examine. Figure 3 shows that three-quarters of the students are between the 13–15 age bracket. A total of 67, 61, and 58 students are classified in the 14, 15, and 16-year-old groups, respectively. Very few students who filled out the survey were between the ages of 12 and 16. This shows that most of the students are in the preteen or adolescent years.



**Figure 1.** SMP Islam Tahfidzul Quran Students by Class



**Figure 2.** SMP Islam Tahfidzul Quran Students by Gender



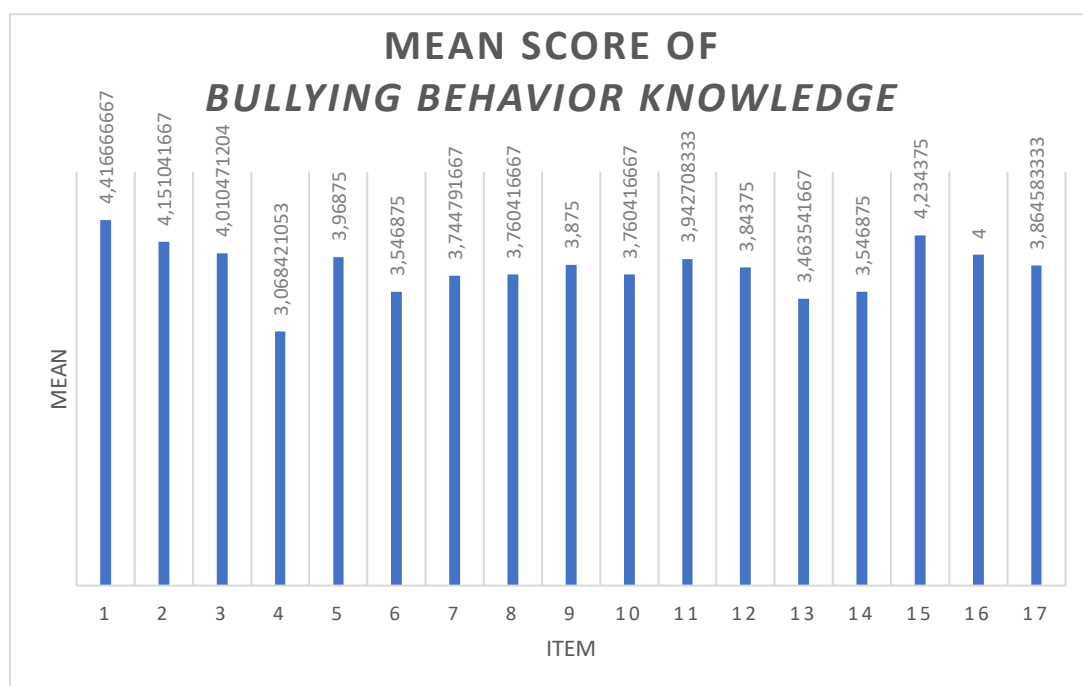
**Figure 3.** SMP Islam Tahfidzul Quran Students by Age

### ***Bullying Behavior Knowledge***

Descriptive research of the knowledge variable about bullying behavior was performed to acquire an overview of the understanding level among students of SMP Islam Tahfidzul Quran Sunan Gunung Jati. This information is crucial for evaluating the ability to identify bullying within an educational setting (Gredler, 2003). The analysis serves as the foundation for developing interventions or educational programs intended to enhance awareness and cultivate preventive attitudes toward bullying behavior (Swearer et al., 2010). Furthermore, this section elucidates the frequency distribution, response patterns, and interpretations of the acquired data. The data summary from items 1 to 17 in Figure 4 shows that respondents possess a relatively

strong comprehension of bullying concepts and the various forms. The mean value of each item ranges from 3 to 4.4.

A high average score was reported for the first item, "Bullying is bad behavior, such as taunting and hurting friends, which makes someone unhappy or hurt." This shows that children have a fundamental understanding of the concept. In addition, items 11 and 16 obtained high scores, reporting that students are aware of the harmful repercussions of bullying (Rigby, 2003). These items show the impact of verbal aggression and the psychological hazards caused by bullying. However, Items 4 (anyone can bully) and 12 (One type of mental violence is a cynical, threatening, silent, and isolating view) were found to have a score lower than the ideal average. These items suggest that students are confused or do not comprehend the indirect types of bullying (Smith et al., 2002). Therefore, education programs aimed at preventing bullying should place a greater emphasis on the non-physical and social aspects of the concept (Swearer et al., 2010).



**Figure 4.** Mean Score of Bullying Behavior Knowledge

To enhance the quantitative results of students' understanding of bullying behavior, qualitative interviews were conducted with Imron Rosyadi, M.Pd.I. as part of data triangulation. Imron Rosyadi asserted that the school was firmly dedicated to promoting Islamic values and character in students as a foundation for eliminating bullying. This is because character education rooted in Islamic values is the fundamental pillar in cultivating knowledge of the significance of mutual respect and improving healthy social connections. The Principal stated:

*"We intensively instill the principles of noble morals in students, including the prohibition of carrying out actions that physically or psychologically harm peers. These values are reinforced through religious teaching, character building, and extracurricular activities that foster respect and solidarity among students."*



Students' understanding of non-physical forms of bullying is still uneven. Some do not fully understand that actions such as exclusion, veiled threats, or deliberate silence toward friends are also included in the category of bullying. He added:

*"The finding that some items obtained lower average scores shows the need for a more comprehensive educational approach, specifically in explaining non-physical forms of bullying. This is our concern to develop more contextual learning and counseling materials."*

In response to this result, the school plans to strengthen the anti-bullying education program through the integration of Islamic Religious Education subjects, religious activities, and guidance and counseling services. This is in line with previous results suggesting that effective bullying prevention interventions need to include the affective dimensions and social values of students (Gredler, 2003; Thornberg, 2015). Therefore, the qualitative method shows that institutional support from school is an important factor in strengthening conceptual understanding and shaping attitudes toward bullying prevention.

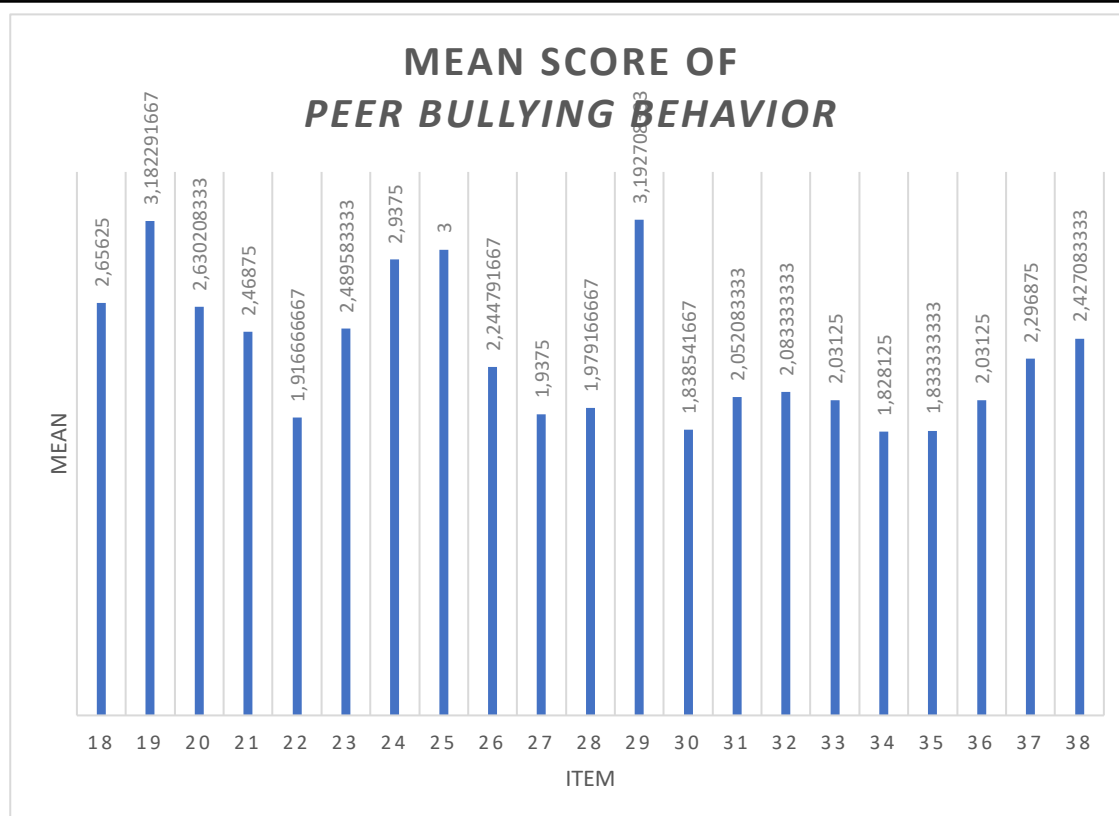
### **Peer Bullying Behavior**

Items 18 through 38 are designed to assess the attitudes and behaviors of students concerning acts of bullying. During the processing of the data, several questions had low average scores of 1.8 to 3.2 since the majority of students did not approve of bullying or did not directly engage in behavior, as presented in Figure 5. An example is the low score given to Item 22, "It is permissible to intentionally damage friends' belongings at school." (Gredler, 2003). This score showed that the majority of students did not approve of bullying. Therefore, behavior of slandering or picking on friends was not considered usual. Items 30 and 31 received low scores, while Items 19 and 23 received higher scores, ranging from 2.8 to 3.2. These items with high scores show that bullying is a problem in the classroom environment, and can take place in both direct and verbal forms. Even though awareness has been created about the negative effects, students continue to engage in some forms of bullying behavior in interactions with other individuals (Salmivalli, 2010).

As part of an effort to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of bullying behavior in the school environment, the Principal of SMP Islam Tahfidzul Quran Sunan Gunung Jati provided qualitative insights to support the quantitative results. Generally, students show an attitude that explicitly rejects bullying behavior. In practice, forms of covert bullying are found in everyday social interactions. He said:

*"We see that the majority of students already understand that behavior such as damaging friends' belongings or committing physical violence is the action that cannot be justified and is contrary to Islamic values. However, there are still forms of verbal bullying that tend to be considered normal by some students, such as giving derogatory nicknames or mocking comments".*

The item for "Damaging friends' belongings" received low average scores, showing an explicit rejection of the actions. However, the medium scores on items such as "Using annoying nicknames" and "Having been hurt by friends" show that verbal and relational bullying occur quite often but may not be considered aggressive behavior (Espelage & Swearer, 2004).



**Figure 5.** Mean Score of Peer Bullying Behavior

The principal also added that it is important to broaden students' understanding of the spectrum of bullying behavior, specifically in non-physical and symbolic forms, which are often hidden in peer communication practices. He emphasized:

*"We plan to strengthen education on values and ethics of communication in the students' social environment. This approach will be integrated through guidance and counseling programs, religious activities, and character-based thematic learning."*

The view of the principal emphasizes that interventions against bullying need to include a deep understanding of social norms as well as participatory and contextual preventive strategies (Salmivalli, 2010). A shift in attitudes from normative knowledge to the formation of more reflective and ethical social behavior is expected using this method.

### ***The Principal's Plan to Stop Bullying Based on Islamic Values***

The results showed that the majority of students possessed a solid foundational comprehension of bullying and reported a disapproving stance towards physical aggression and overt devastation. However, the mean scores derived from several measures showed that bullying behaviors, particularly in verbal and relational forms, such as assigning derogatory nicknames and social exclusion, persisted in daily interactions. This incident shows the necessity of a more profound preventive strategy in addressing the aspects of values and moral consciousness.

The Principal of SMP Islam Tahfidzul Quran Sunan Gunung Jati developed a strategy plan grounded on Islamic values to stop and manage bullying behavior in the school setting in reaction to the results. During a March 2025 interview, he stated:

*"One of the main goals of education in our school is to shape the character of students who have noble morals. We emphasize to students that hurting friends' feelings, both physically and verbally, is an act that is prohibited in Islam. Our basic principle is to foster an attitude of empathy and Islamic brotherhood as the main bulwark to prevent bullying behavior."*

The principal explained that the designed method is preventive and transformative, emphasizing value education in every aspect of learning. He explained:

*"We integrate moral issues such as the prohibition of bullying, guarding one's tongue, and respecting others in Islamic Religious Education and morals subjects. In addition, we also have routine activities such as weekly halaqah and student ta'lim assemblies that discuss social themes from an Islamic perspective. There, students are invited to discuss and reflect on their behavior towards friends in the school environment."*

The method is in line with the principles of Islamic education that teach the importance of manners as a foundation for forming civilized human behavior and avoiding acts of injustice (Al-Attas, 1999). The principal also emphasized the importance of including teachers, counselors, and parents in creating a safe and positive social climate. He said:

*"We believe that bullying prevention is a shared responsibility. Therefore, teacher training and homeroom guidance are regularly provided to detect and handle bullying cases."*

The initiative comprises the creation of a cohort of student allies or anti-bullying ambassadors, who act as catalysts for change among peers. These students receive specialized instruction to develop skills as attentive listeners, conflict mediators, and exemplars of respectful communication. The principal's approach is consistent with the socio-ecological framework for bullying prevention (Espelage & Swearer, 2004), implementing interventions across individual, interpersonal interactions, and educational institutions. Moreover, the idea of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar in Islamic teachings provides a normative framework for cultivating an equitable, compassionate school culture devoid of symbolic and physical violence (Nasr, 1994). The strategic plan aims to create a comprehensive educational ecosystem where Islamic values are taught and ingrained in social conduct through role models, the enhancement of positive communities, and incorporation into the curriculum and activities.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the students of SMP Islam Tahfidzul Quran Sunan Gunung Jati showed a conceptual comprehension of bullying, particularly in the explicit physical and verbal manifestations. The elevated mean scores in knowledge-based items reported that children comprehended the nature, causes, and detrimental effects of bullying. However, behavior-based reactions suggested a disparity between awareness and implementation since verbal and relational bullying, such as name-calling and exclusion, persisted inside the educational setting. This essential discovery showed the necessity for a more comprehensive and values-oriented strategy in anti-bullying education, transcending cognitive awareness and focusing on behavioral change.



**Implication:** The implications of this research are substantial since the principal's role is not merely administrative but fundamentally instructional and ethical. The results confirm that administrators who integrate Islamic ethical concepts into school culture, curriculum, and peer relationships can cultivate a more caring and respectful educational environment. The initiative to incorporate Islamic teachings, such as adab, ukhuwah islamiyah, and amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, into anti-bullying instruction serves as an exemplary model for schools encountering analogous issues. School is nurturing students who are not only well-informed but also guided by strong ethical values by addressing both the cognitive and emotional dimensions of bullying behavior.

**Limitation:** The limitations of this research must be acknowledged despite its merits. The research was performed at a singular Islamic junior high school characterized by a distinct cultural and religious milieu. Therefore, the generalizability to other educational institutions, specifically secular or multicultural ones, is constrained. Even though the mixed-methods approach enhanced the analysis, the qualitative data predominantly depended on the school principal, which may limit the range of institutional perspectives. An expanded array of stakeholder interviews, including teachers, parents, and students, can yield a more thorough perspective.

**Future Research:** Future research should broaden the sample to include other Islamic and non-Islamic schools across diverse areas to investigate the contextual discrepancies in bullying. Additionally, longitudinal research could be structured to assess the efficacy of intervention programs grounded in Islamic values over time. Investigating student-led initiatives, such as peer mentorship or ambassador programs grounded in Islamic ethics, can provide significant insights into sustainable, peer-driven transformation. Furthermore, cultivating a school culture grounded in spiritual and social responsibility may be essential for eliminating bullying in educational settings.

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