



Pesantren Strategies in Anti-Bullying Education and Protection of Students in Pesantren

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ABSTRACT

Bullying among school-aged children is a global issue that threatens the mental health, safety, and social development of students. This phenomenon also occurs in Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, including Al Ma'ruf Islamic Boarding School in Kediri City, which ideally should be a safe space for character and spirituality building for students. This study aims to examine the individual and school environmental factors that influence the effectiveness of teachers' strategies in preventing and handling bullying, as well as to explore how anti-bullying education is integrated into learning activities and communal life in Islamic boarding schools. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were obtained through non-participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Research informants included madrasah leaders, teachers who were members of the violence prevention team, and students who had experienced bullying. The results showed that bullying in Islamic boarding schools mostly took the form of verbal abuse, such as teasing or insults, while physical acts were relatively rare. However, the emotional impact remained and had the potential to create a cycle of bullying if not handled properly. The Islamic boarding school implemented humane resolution measures, such as mediation, personal dialogue, emotional approaches, and character building through the example set by the *ustadz*. Efforts to integrate anti-bullying values were carried out through learning, orientation activities, moral training, and teacher training. The research findings emphasize the importance of collaboration among all stakeholders to create a safe, inclusive, and violence-free *pesantren* environment. This study contributes to the development of a character education model that is responsive to the issue of bullying in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: *Pesantren* Strategies, Bullying, Anti-Bullying Education.

ABSTRAK

Perundungan (*bullying*) pada anak usia sekolah merupakan persoalan global yang mengancam kesehatan mental, keselamatan, dan perkembangan sosial peserta didik. Fenomena ini juga terjadi di lembaga pendidikan Islam seperti pesantren, termasuk Pesantren Al Ma'ruf Kota Kediri, yang idealnya menjadi ruang aman bagi pembinaan karakter dan spiritualitas santri. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor individual dan lingkungan sekolah yang memengaruhi efektivitas strategi guru dalam mencegah serta menangani perundungan, sekaligus menelusuri bagaimana pendidikan anti-perundungan diintegrasikan ke dalam kegiatan pembelajaran dan kehidupan komunal pesantren. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data diperoleh melalui observasi nonpartisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan studi dokumentasi. Informan penelitian meliputi pimpinan madrasah, guru anggota tim pencegahan kekerasan, serta santri yang memiliki pengalaman terkait perundungan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bentuk perundungan di pesantren lebih banyak terjadi dalam bentuk verbal, seperti ejekan atau hinaan, sementara tindakan fisik relatif jarang. Meskipun demikian, dampak emosional tetap muncul dan berpotensi menimbulkan siklus perundungan apabila tidak ditangani secara tepat. Pihak pesantren menerapkan langkah-langkah penyelesaian yang humanis, seperti mediasi, dialog personal, pendekatan emosional, serta pembinaan karakter melalui keteladanan *ustadz*. Upaya integrasi nilai-nilai anti-perundungan dilakukan melalui pembelajaran, kegiatan

orientasi, pembiasaan akhlak, serta pelatihan guru. Temuan penelitian menegaskan pentingnya kolaborasi seluruh pemangku kepentingan untuk menciptakan lingkungan pesantren yang aman, inklusif, dan bebas dari kekerasan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan model pendidikan karakter yang responsif terhadap isu perundungan di lembaga pendidikan Islam.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Pesantren, Perundungan, Pendidikan Anti-Perundungan, Pesantren.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying among school-aged children is a global epidemic, and members of the school community play a crucial role in eradicating this problem (Blood et al., 2010). Bullying in schools is a serious issue that affects students' mental health and safety; therefore, effective strategies are urgently needed to address it. In this study, we examine personal factors and school-environment elements that can strengthen the effectiveness of teachers' strategies in preventing and reducing intimidation against students (Li et al., 2017). In Indonesia, the rising number of bullying cases has become a critical concern. Data from 2020 to 2024 indicate a worrying increase in violence, particularly bullying (Badan Pembinaan Hukum Nasional, 2025). The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) recorded that 25 children nationwide ended their lives in 2025, most of them allegedly due to pressure and bullying experienced at school (Romadoni et al., 2025).

Bullying is influenced by several factors, including parenting style, school environment, self-esteem, and group norms (Theodore & Sudarji, 2020). Peer-to-peer bullying is often shaped by social constructions such as group norms and peer pressure. In schools, contributing factors include weak rule enforcement and noncompliance with existing regulations. Meanwhile, inappropriate parenting and poor parent-child relationships also significantly influence bullying behaviors (Sholihul, 2024).

Schools—which should serve as safe and comfortable learning environments—are sometimes the very places where students feel unsafe. Bullying also occurs in Islamic educational institutions, particularly *pesantren*. Alarmingly, such cases are not only perpetrated by fellow students but also involve teachers or even the leadership of the *pesantren* (Hamzah & Fajri, 2024). Despite this, *pesantren* remain unmatched as comprehensive educational institutions. With many parents busy and lacking sufficient time to guide their children directly, *pesantren* have become a preferred choice for children's education (Awalia et al., 2023).

Various measures have been taken to address bullying in educational settings. Regulations require the adoption of anti-bullying approaches, and educational providers are now obligated to participate in school-wide prevention programs. Collective participation within the school community is encouraged through curriculum design, while monitoring mechanisms ensure schools meet established standards (Paul et al., 2012).

This study is important to conduct within *pesantren* because they are Islamic educational institutions that emphasize not only intellectual and religious development but also the shaping of students' (*santri*'s) character and morals. In the intensely communal life of *pesantren*—where students live, learn, and interact within a dense social system—the

potential for bullying, whether verbal, physical, or social, is high. However, this phenomenon is often overlooked and perceived merely as part of the maturation or disciplinary process.

Bullying among school-aged children is a global epidemic with serious consequences for mental health and student safety (Azizah et al., 2024; Blood et al., 2010). In Indonesia, bullying cases continue to rise from 2020 to 2024, and in 2025 the KPAI reported 25 child suicides allegedly linked to bullying pressure. This phenomenon also occurs in *pesantren*, which ideally should be safe and conducive environments for character formation. Several cases, however, show bullying perpetrated not only by fellow students but also by teachers and supervisors, reinforcing the need for effective anti-bullying strategies tailored to the *pesantren* context.

A number of previous studies have examined bullying in *pesantren*. Khoir and Kurniawati (2025) conducted a systematic review of 21 studies and found that interventions tend to focus more on individual factors rather than institutional structures. Suryadi et al. (2023) emphasized Islamic education values as a preventive measure yet revealed the strong influence of seniority culture. Abdurrohim et al. (2024) compared *pesantren* in Indonesia and Malaysia, uncovering variations in anti-bullying strategies—from character-building curricula to the involvement of caregivers. Albab and Syaifudin (2024) highlighted regulatory and communication aspects in *Pesantren Lirboyo* but noted the weakness of formal reporting systems. Meanwhile, Hafidzi et al. (2024) explored the link between gender bias and bullying and stressed the need for gender-equity training.

From these previous studies, it is evident that there remains a gap in research focused on integrating teacher strategies with institutional support within *pesantren* in a comprehensive way. Most studies concentrate on individual attributes, cultural norms, or descriptive analyses without examining how anti-bullying educational strategies can be systematically designed and implemented in the *pesantren* ecosystem. Moreover, few studies propose preventive models that are practical, collaborative, and sustainable, even though *pesantren* life requires a holistic approach. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective by exploring anti-bullying educational strategies that combine personal aspects of students, teachers' pedagogical practices, and institutional policies. This approach is expected to produce a more adaptive preventive model aligned with *pesantren* culture and to strengthen the role of *pesantren* as safe, humane, and violence-free educational environments.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore how teachers play a role in instilling anti-bullying values through both verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as through various creative activities designed to prevent and address violence in the elementary school environment, particularly at *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf* in Kediri City. The focus of the study is on the strategies and methods used by teachers to manage bullying cases while fostering anti-violence attitudes throughout the learning process.

Three main techniques were used in data collection. First, non-participatory observations were conducted for one month to understand the situations and interactions occurring in the *Pesantren*. Second, the researcher collected supporting documents, especially those related to teachers involved in the *Pesantren's* Violence Prevention and Handling Team.

Third, in-depth interviews were conducted with several key informants who possess direct understanding and experience related to bullying issues in the *Pesantren*.

Table 1. Description of Themes and Respondents

No	Themes	Respondents
1	Bullying cases	AF, RI, AJ, RA, and MI
2	Impacts of bullying	AJ, RA, MI
3	School policies for handling bullying	NI, WS, MR
4	Steps in handling bullying	WS, MR
5	School anti-bullying programs	NI
6	Integration of anti-bullying programs into teaching and learning	NI, WS, WR
7	The school's role in ensuring students feel safe and protected	NI
8	Student socialization or training on bullying	NI
9	Effectiveness of the programs implemented by the school	WS
10	Collaboration with external parties	NI

The informants consist of the Head of the Madrasah (NI), two teachers from the violence prevention team (WS and MR), and three students (AJ, RA, and MI). They were selected purposively based on criteria relevant to the research focus, such as experience in designing or implementing anti-bullying programs and direct involvement in bullying situations. The *Pesantren* was chosen because it is considered representative for examining structured practices of bullying prevention and handling carried out through collaboration between teachers and students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bullying Cases

Bullying is considered a common and increasingly prevalent problem in many communities and schools. It can occur at any time and has negative impacts, particularly on students' academic, emotional, and social development during their school years (Kartal & Bilgin, 2009). At *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf Kediri*, bullying has become a major concern for the institution's management. The head of the *pesantren* emphasized that bullying still occurs among students, although it is mostly in the form of verbal teasing rather than physical violence. One of the supervising *ustadz* confirmed this, explaining that bullying in the *pesantren* generally manifests verbally and often arises from daily interactions among students. As stated by AF:

“At Pesantren Al Ma'ruf Kediri, non-verbal forms of bullying such as pushing, pinching, or other physical acts are very rare and remain manageable by the caregivers and ustadz. Meanwhile, verbal bullying such as teasing, mocking, and sarcasm is more commonly found among students.”

The researcher obtained similar information from Ustadz NI. He explained that the most frequent type of bullying in the *pesantren* is verbal—such as ridicule or insults—while physical actions are very rarely found. This indicates that the social environment of the *pesantren* is still relatively controlled, although communication among students still requires serious attention.

Verbal bullying cannot be underestimated because it may escalate into other forms of violence. Humiliating or degrading words can hurt feelings and trigger emotional reactions such as anger, low self-esteem, or even a desire for revenge. If not addressed promptly, this may lead to physical conflict among students. Therefore, fostering self-control and proper communication ethics should be a priority in bullying prevention efforts within the *pesantren*. Students' perspectives also support these findings. One student, MA, shared his experience:

“At that time I was teased, so I fought back. At first it was just joking, but eventually I felt offended. We ended up not talking to each other for several days.”

RI's statement reveals that bullying at *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf Kediri* is not only limited to verbal acts such as teasing or insults, nor physical actions like pushing or hitting, but also includes coercive behaviors—for example, forcing peers to do something against their will. Meanwhile, MA added another interesting dimension: when he was bullied, he coped with his emotional pain by bullying others.

This confession illustrates a potential cycle of bullying, where victims may turn into perpetrators if they do not receive proper emotional support and guidance. If left unaddressed, bullying can negatively impact children's short-term well-being, particularly anxiety and depression levels. The reduction of harmful effects over time highlights the potential resilience of individuals who have experienced victimization. Therefore, secondary prevention interventions for children who experience bullying should focus on strengthening resilience and addressing existing vulnerabilities (Schoeler et al., 2018).

Beyond examining bullying patterns, this study also highlights how students respond when witnessing their peers being bullied. Some choose to remain silent out of fear of becoming involved, while others try to calm the situation or report it to their supervising *ustadz*.

These findings align with previous research indicating that verbal bullying involves repeatedly delivering negative statements aimed at demeaning or hurting someone. Verbal bullying is twice as likely to be observed or reported compared to physical bullying among children (Vaillancourt et al., 2003). It is also the most common form of bullying in elementary schools. Teachers at NI confirmed that bullying at school occurs more frequently in verbal forms than physical ones, signifying that the school environment still maintains good control over student behavior, although verbal bullying remains a major issue (Pratiwi et al., 2024).

Impacts of Bullying Cases

Bullying is a problem that affects all students—whether they are perpetrators, victims, or witnesses. Bullying can include verbal or physical attacks, threats, jokes or derogatory language, teasing and criticism, demeaning behavior, and facial expressions. These factors operate individually or collectively and contribute to the likelihood of students engaging in violence (Al-Raqqad et al., 2017). Incidents of bullying that occur at *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf Kediri* inevitably leave an impact on the students who experience them. Although such experiences often cause discomfort and disappointment, some students actually view them as lessons that help them become stronger and wiser in dealing with peers.

Based on interviews, students who had experienced bullying stated that it did not diminish their motivation or interest in learning. They continued to participate in lessons and *pesantren* activities as usual.

“Bullying cases do not significantly affect us. Feeling upset, angry, or sad is normal, but we understand that in life there will always be people who like us and those who don’t.”

During the interviews, AJ, RA, and MI explained that their experiences with bullying did not have a meaningful impact on their emotional condition or self-confidence. They felt capable of interacting with friends and participating in *pesantren* activities without feeling pressured. These findings show that the way individuals respond to bullying depends greatly on their level of mental resilience and the social support they receive from peers and supervising *ustadz*. This contrasts with the view of Adams and Gloria, who argue that the effects of bullying are long-term; college students who were victims of bullying reported that it had occurred during their school years. Their study reveals that bullying in junior and senior high school continues into college, and negative effects associated with being a victim or perpetrator persist into higher education (Adams & Lawrence, 2011).

However, bullying remains a serious threat to education because it may lead to long-term resentment and because adolescents who become victims are at greater risk of experiencing various physical and mental health problems. Some issues commonly experienced by bullied children include mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and sleep disturbances that may persist into adulthood; physical complaints such as headaches, stomachaches, and muscle tension; feelings of insecurity at school; and decreased motivation and academic performance. In rare cases, bullied children may even display violent behavior. An example is the case of a 15-year-old student in Denpasar, Bali, who killed his friend out of revenge after reportedly being bullied by the victim since the first year of junior high school (Vanista & Patmawati, 2023).

Steps to Address Bullying Cases

In response to the emergence of bullying cases, *Pesantren* Al Ma’ruf Kediri is firmly committed to creating a conducive and safe environment for all students. The caretakers (*pengasuh*) and *ustadz* actively monitor student interactions to prevent behaviors that may develop into bullying. These efforts reflect the *pesantren*’s seriousness in maintaining harmony within the dormitory and ensuring a supportive learning atmosphere.

This was also acknowledged by several students, including AJ, RA, and MI, who stated that the *pesantren* consistently strives to create an environment where students feel respected, safe, and comfortable. Any problems that arise—especially those related to conflicts among students—are promptly handled by supervisors to prevent them from escalating into more serious bullying.

“The first step taken when a bullying case occurs is to call both parties—the perpetrator and the victim—for an open dialogue. During this process, the supervising ustadz tries to trace the root cause by asking the students directly. If the perpetrator cannot clearly explain the issue, the supervisor may seek help from the student’s close friends to understand the background of the problem. Based on past experience, most cases stem from small things such as misunderstandings, spontaneous teasing, or minor incidents during daily activities. Therefore, the ustadz immediately conduct mediation so

the issue doesn't escalate. In addition, the pesantren leadership emphasizes the importance of preserving the dignity and emotions of the students involved. All discussions and problem-solving are held privately in the supervisor's room—not in front of other students. This approach ensures that students feel respected, not humiliated, and able to speak calmly in a friendly and supportive atmosphere.”

Similar information was obtained from Ustadz WS at *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf Kediri* on the same date. Based on the researcher's observations, the strategies implemented by the *ustadz* and *pesantren* leaders show a humanistic approach focused on character building. The initial step of calling the involved students and inviting them to dialogue is considered effective for understanding the root causes of the conflict.

This approach not only helps clarify the origins of the bullying incident but also provides space for both parties to express their feelings openly. The *pesantren* supervisors' concern for the emotional condition of the students plays an important role in this resolution process. By engaging students in private conversations conducted with calmness and empathy, the *ustadz* create a warm and educative dialogue environment. This method prevents students from feeling embarrassed or pressured while reinforcing core values of mutual respect and peaceful conflict resolution within *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf Kediri*.

These findings align with the study by Anjani et al., which suggests that addressing the growing prevalence of bullying requires strengthening good communication, building strong emotional relationships, fostering empathy among children, and providing guidance to instill social inclusion while explaining the harms of bullying in various aspects (Anjani et al., 2024). Another study mentions that humanistic learning strategies—such as active learning and internalizing religious values—are effective in increasing students' religious intelligence. The findings further indicate that students with higher religious intelligence tend to avoid bullying behavior (Abdillah et al., 2025).

According to Alexa, in understanding social problems such as bullying, we must pay attention to the perspectives or language used to shape our understanding of the issue. Teachers often view bullying from an angle that emphasizes personal responsibility and assumes that individuals' traits are fixed. Such thinking keeps bullying-prevention strategies focused on individuals rather than on their social environment. Therefore, the study recommends that bullying prevention efforts also involve transforming the ways people think and talk about bullying itself (Hepburn, 1997).

Integrating Anti-Bullying Education into Learning Activities

Integrating anti-bullying values into the learning process at *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf Kediri* is a strategic effort to build a safe, respectful, and inclusive school culture. This is carried out by embedding anti-bullying principles into various educational activities, both inside the classroom and within the dormitory environment. Values such as empathy, respect, and social awareness are incorporated through learning materials, exemplary stories, and daily habitual practices.

In addition, habituation activities such as thematic discussions, educational games, conflict-resolution simulations, and hadrah performances with themes of mutual respect serve as effective means of fostering collective awareness among students. In this process, teachers and dormitory supervisors act as role models who demonstrate positive behavior,

guide students to develop empathy, and nurture a sense of moral responsibility toward others.

“Every morning before learning begins, students are welcomed with greetings and handshakes from the teachers as a way of instilling respect and strengthening emotional bonds between teachers and students. A personal approach is also carried out through light conversations about their feelings or personal condition before class starts, to create a warm and emotionally supportive atmosphere. Before the new academic year begins, the pesantren routinely organizes an orientation program for new students and their parents. This activity aims to build shared understanding regarding anti-bullying values and ethical conduct in the pesantren. The pesantren also provides training for teachers and counselors to enhance their skills in managing student behavior, addressing conflicts, and resolving potential bullying cases wisely and educationally.”

The implementation of anti-bullying education at *Pesantren Al Ma’ruf Kediri* is carried out holistically through classroom learning and daily character-building activities. Teachers often integrate exemplary stories from classical Islamic scholars to instill empathy, compassion, and respect for others. The tradition of greeting students with handshakes every morning and asking about their well-being is part of an effort to build emotional closeness and a harmonious atmosphere within the *pesantren*.

Furthermore, orientation programs for new students and meetings with parents are held to foster a shared understanding of the importance of preventing bullying and cultivating a respectful culture. The *pesantren* also conducts special training for teachers to improve their ability to recognize early signs of bullying and address them appropriately and educationally. These initiatives reflect *Pesantren Al Ma’ruf Kediri*’s commitment to developing an educational system focused on character formation, emotional well-being, and social harmony.

These findings align with research by Mappanyompa et al. (2026), which shows that reformulating Islamic Education materials by integrating *aqidah*, ethics, and multicultural values through Qur’an, *hadith*, prophetic practices, and historical materials—combined with teaching methods that recognize students’ personalities and inclusive classroom organization—significantly contributes to bullying prevention. This integration instills equality, empathy, and respect for diversity, creating a humane, tolerant, and discrimination-free academic environment. Similarly, research by Kadiyono et al. (2025) highlights the importance of developing interventions that strengthen adaptive religious coping strategies and address bullying to improve adolescents’ mental health outcomes.

These studies reinforce the present findings that curriculum reconstruction in Islamic educational institutions that integrates anti-bullying values successfully reduces bullying incidents in schools. This success is achieved through systematic implementation, including the development of learning modules, teacher training, and collaborative activities. A holistic approach that involves moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action has proven effective in increasing students’ awareness and understanding of the negative impact of bullying. Continuous evaluation confirms positive changes in school culture, marked by increased empathy and cooperation among students. The research indicates that integrating anti-bullying values into Islamic education curricula not only prevents bullying but also

contributes to the development of students' positive character and the creation of a safe and inclusive learning environment (Hasan & Azizah, 2022).

The Role of Stakeholders in Ensuring Students Feel Safe and Comfortable in the *Pesantren*

All components of the *pesantren* play an essential role in ensuring a safe, comfortable, and respectful educational environment for all students. This responsibility is realized through the implementation of firm policies against all forms of bullying, supported by continuous guidance and prevention programs. The *pesantren* also provides counseling spaces for students who need emotional support, enabling them to express their feelings and resolve problems in a healthy manner.

Through a structured monitoring system, open communication between students, teachers, and parents, and the integration of moral values into daily activities—both in class and in the dormitory—*Pesantren Al Ma'ruf Kediri* aims to cultivate a learning environment that supports not only academic development but also character formation and students' social well-being.

“The pesantren consistently ensures that students feel safe and calm throughout their learning activities and daily life in the dormitory. One form of this care is the monitoring of students' emotional conditions, including paying attention to whether they appear happy, anxious, or show noticeable changes in mood. Teachers and supervisors actively observe any behavioral changes as early indicators of discomfort or problems a student may be experiencing. This approach enables the pesantren to take appropriate steps promptly, whether through personal guidance, counseling, or mediation, ensuring that students who feel stressed or threatened receive the support they need.”

The researcher notes that the strategies implemented by *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf Kediri* in monitoring students' emotional conditions are highly effective in maintaining a sense of safety within the educational environment. By observing expressions, attitudes, and daily behavioral changes, teachers and supervisors can detect early signs of discomfort or emotional pressure. This allows timely intervention through personal or group guidance. Such an approach demonstrates the *pesantren's* strong commitment to creating an environment that is not only physically safe but also emotionally healthy. This continuous monitoring system is a key element in preventing bullying and violence, as well as strengthening the values of care and solidarity among the *pesantren* community.

These findings also align with Kahveci's (2023) study, which shows that teachers play an essential role in shaping students' social attitudes. They cultivate positive behavior through personal approaches and consistent supervision, thereby creating a supportive and safe learning environment.

Other findings indicate that teachers should integrate Islamic values into school culture, teach moral principles through Islamic education, and encourage empathy and compassion among students. Teachers must also foster effective communication and conflict resolution, act as role models, contribute to creating a safe and inclusive environment, and collaborate with other stakeholders. Through these actions, teachers can build a respectful and inclusive school climate and prevent bullying incidents. The level of success in

preventing and intervening in bullying strongly depends on how effectively Islamic teachers apply relevant strategies and approaches (Ningsih, 2023).

Strategies for Preventing and Addressing Bullying

Bullying is an aggressive, repeated, and intentional act aimed at harming others—physically or psychologically—and may take the form of physical aggression, insults, threats, or spreading rumors (Pajri et al., 2024). At *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf*, bullying occurs verbally and through intimidation. The *pesantren* has taken strategic steps to address this issue. As stated by Mahbubi, adopting a proactive and sustainable engagement approach ensures that new students feel supported and integrated into the school community. This method significantly helps prevent bullying by prioritizing relationship-building, empathy, and mutual respect. The study highlights the effectiveness of character education programs in shaping school culture and reducing intimidation. Through structured mentoring systems and interactive initiatives, schools can foster a culture of care and responsibility among students (Mahbubi, 2024).

At *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf*, several strategies are implemented, including key components of successful prevention programs such as comprehensive school policies, staff training, and integration of anti-bullying curriculum. These elements highlight effective strategies to reduce intimidation. In addition, intervention strategies and collaboration with parents and community partners are emphasized as crucial factors in creating a safer school environment (Turyamureeba, 2024). Teachers at *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf* are also expected to foster collective awareness to reject all forms of violence. Such initiatives are anticipated to serve as models for character development and the establishment of a positive school climate, resulting in a harmonious, safe, and supportive learning environment for optimal student development (Saleh et al., 2025).

Addressing bullying in schools is a major concern for school administrators and policymakers, particularly given the widely documented negative effects of peer victimization. The foundation of school bullying response lies in policies that outline preventive and intervention measures. This paper critically reviews the evolution of anti-bullying policies, particularly the strengths and limitations of two major approaches: zero-tolerance policies and early intervention strategies (Roberge, 2012).

Teachers at *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf* also learn from various sources in responding to bullying cases, as inadequate teacher responses could result in ineffective intervention. Burger's study notes that teachers do not use all possible strategies to effectively combat bullying. This is concerning because teachers are likely to encounter numerous bullying cases throughout their careers. Systematic measures must therefore be taken to improve this status quo (Burger et al., 2015).

Teachers at *Pesantren Al Ma'ruf* also apply responsive strategies through immediate and effective intervention, such as restorative practices, behavioral counseling, and emotional support for victims. Moreover, studies highlight the crucial role of school climate and leadership in determining the effectiveness of anti-bullying measures. Strong leadership provides the framework needed for consistent policy enforcement and resource allocation, empowering teachers to act confidently. This research emphasizes the importance of

integrating prevention, intervention, and leadership to build a safer and more supportive educational environment (Seong, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Bullying practices still occur in the daily life of students, particularly in verbal forms such as teasing and sarcasm that often arise from everyday interactions. Although physical bullying is relatively rare, verbal bullying nonetheless has the potential to trigger emotional tension and create a cycle of bullying in which victims may become perpetrators if they do not receive adequate guidance. Its impacts vary; some students appear unaffected in terms of learning motivation, yet research shows that bullying can lead to long-term consequences such as anxiety, depression, declining academic performance, and the emergence of aggressive behavior in the future. This indicates that bullying—even in verbal form—should never be taken lightly.

Pesantren Al Ma'ruf Kediri has implemented strategic measures through humanistic and educational approaches, including mediation, dialogue, emotional support, and the integration of anti-bullying values within the curriculum, character formation, daily activities, and teacher training. The roles of teachers, supervisors, parents, and the students themselves are crucial in building a safe and supportive *pesantren* environment, while collaboration with parents and external partners further strengthens these efforts. This study concludes that the combination of character education, prompt and humanistic intervention, and *pesantren* leadership that prioritizes students' emotional well-being has successfully created an empathetic and inclusive environment. It also serves as a model of best practice for other Islamic educational institutions in preventing and addressing bullying.

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