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Friends Without Boundaries: Islamic Value-Based Anti-Bullying Education for Child-Friendly Islamic Elementary Schools

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Abstract

Bullying at the elementary school level is a problem with broad implications for students' social-emotional development, sense of safety, and academic achievement. This community service program aimed to improve the understanding, empathy, and assertiveness of students at an Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) in preventing and rejecting bullying by integrating Islamic values such as compassion (*rahmah*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and mutual respect (*ihtiram*). The program was carried out over two days (3–4 June 2026) at SDIT Mutiara Miftahul Jannah, South Lampung, and targeted fourth- and fifth-grade students. The methods comprised interactive lectures, discussion and question-and-answer sessions, educational games and role-play simulations, reinforcement of Islamic values, and a collective anti-bullying declaration. The results showed an improvement in students' cognitive understanding of the concept and forms of bullying, the growth of empathy and tolerance, strengthened assertiveness in refusing and reporting bullying, and the formation of a collective commitment through the "My School Is Free from Bullying" declaration. The program demonstrates that a participatory educational approach combined with Islamic values is an effective preventive strategy against bullying in Islamic elementary schools. It further recommends continued reinforcement through child-friendly school policies and sustained parental involvement.

Keywords: bullying, character education, Islamic values, elementary school, community service

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Introduction

Elementary school is the initial stage of formal education and plays a crucial role in shaping students' character, social attitudes, and behavior. At this age, children are building their understanding of social relationships, rules, empathy, and the ability to interact with peers. Ideally, schools should be safe, comfortable, and nurturing spaces that embody the spirit of Panguripan—

promoting life, human dignity, and well-being while supporting students' academic and social-emotional development. Nevertheless, bullying has emerged even at the primary level and has become one of the serious challenges in creating a safe, inclusive, and life-affirming learning environment. Globally, UNESCO reports that almost one in three students (32%) has been bullied at school in the past month, and a similar proportion has been exposed to physical violence [1]. At the national level, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) has also recorded widespread cases of verbal and physical bullying in primary education units, indicating that bullying is not limited to secondary schools but is already rooted at an early age. This phenomenon negatively affects children's sense of safety, self-confidence, academic achievement, and social relationships at school.

Bullying among elementary school children often arises from students' limited understanding of healthy friendship, empathy toward peers, and respect for differences in character, ability, and background. Actions such as mocking classmates who are different, imposing one's will, spreading gossip, or ignoring friends during play have real psychological consequences, even though they are often dismissed as "harmless fun" or ordinary behavior. The Indonesian government has mandated the protection of students from all forms of violence in educational units, including bullying, through Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 46 of 2023 on the Prevention and Handling of Violence in Educational Units [2]. This regulation emphasizes the role of all members of the educational community, including higher education institutions through community service activities, in creating friendly, safe, and enjoyable learning environments.

Conceptually, bullying is a form of aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated, and involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim [3]. UNESCO [1] extends this definition by describing bullying as unwanted aggressive behavior that is repeated or has the potential to be repeated and that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. This definition implies that bullying need not occur repeatedly; the potential for repetition and an unequal power relationship are sufficient to categorize an act as bullying. In the elementary school context, such power imbalances may take the form of differences in age, physical size, popularity, academic ability, or social dominance within play groups [4].

Studies in developmental psychology explain that bullying among elementary school children often appears in subtler forms (*covert bullying*), such as social exclusion, teasing, or humiliating peers in front of a group. These forms frequently go unnoticed by perpetrators and adults alike, yet they have significant psychological effects on victims. Contemporary educational approaches view bullying not merely as individual behavior but as a phenomenon shaped by school climate, social norms, and patterns of interaction among school members; its prevention therefore requires the involvement of the entire school ecosystem.

Social and emotional development is a key aspect of primary education. In this

phase, children begin to understand their own and others' emotions, develop empathy, and build relationships with peers. Children who are bullied tend to withdraw socially, experience reduced self-confidence, and have difficulty interacting with others, whereas children who habitually bully others are at risk of difficulties in regulating emotions and forming healthy relationships. Elementary schools therefore need to provide learning that is oriented not only toward academic achievement but also toward strengthening social skills, empathy, and moral values as part of character education.

Character education is a systematic effort to instill moral, ethical, and social values in students [5]. In the context of bullying prevention, character education emphasizes empathy, tolerance, honesty, responsibility, and mutual respect, and has been empirically shown to reduce bullying tendencies in elementary schools [6], [7]. A bullying-free school is characterized not only by the absence of violence but also by an inclusive, safe climate that supports the well-being of all its members through the habituation of positive behavior, teacher role modeling, and social norms that reject all forms of violence.

Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools (*Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu*, SDIT) integrate academic learning with Islamic values in daily life. Values such as compassion (*rahmah*), brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and mutual respect (*ihtiram*) form an important foundation for healthy social interaction at school. From the perspective of Islamic education, any behavior that hurts others, whether physically or verbally, contradicts noble character (*akhlak*). Allah Swt. says in the Qur'an: "O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule another people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule other women; perhaps they may be better than them" (QS. Al-Hujurat/49: 11). This verse provides an important spiritual foundation for value-based bullying prevention, as affirmed by educational exegesis studies that specifically associate it with the prohibition of bullying [8]. Efforts to build a bullying-free school in an SDIT can therefore be harmoniously integrated with moral education, giving the anti-bullying message social, spiritual, and moral dimensions.

As a form of social responsibility and implementation of the *Tri Dharma* of higher education, a team of lecturers from the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, conducted a community service program at a partner SDIT. The theme "Friends Without Boundaries: Building a Bullying-Free School" (*Teman Tanpa Batas: Membangun Sekolah Bebas Bullying*) was chosen in response to the empirical evidence above, with an educational, interactive, and experience-based approach so that students could understand the anti-bullying message actively and apply it in their daily school life. Specifically, the program aimed to: (1) improve students' understanding of the definition, forms, and impacts of bullying; (2) foster empathy, tolerance, and mutual respect; (3) build students' early awareness of the importance of friendship without discrimination; (4) support the school's efforts to create a safe learning environment in line with student protection principles; and

(5) integrate Islamic values into bullying prevention in the SDIT environment.

The program is expected to benefit several parties: for students, a better understanding of bullying and a growing sense of empathy and safety; for the school, a stronger child-friendly and inclusive school culture; for teachers, greater awareness of their role in preventing bullying; and for the university, a concrete implementation of the *Tri Dharma* and a stronger partnership with elementary schools grounded in Islamic values.

Method

This community service program was carried out over two days, on 3–4 June 2026, at SDIT Mutiara Miftahul Jannah, South Lampung. The participants were fourth- and fifth-grade students, who are at an important developmental phase for forming social character, emotional regulation, and patterns of peer interaction. The program involved ten lecturers from the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, as the implementation team.

The methods were designed to be educational, interactive, and participatory, comprising: (1) brief presentations on bullying and healthy friendship through interactive lectures; (2) discussion and question-and-answer sessions to explore students' understanding and experiences of social interaction at school; (3) educational games and role-play simulations to train empathy and social skills; and (4) joint reflection to reaffirm the values learned and encourage students' commitment to creating a bullying-free school. Role-play simulation was chosen because it has been empirically shown to improve respect, empathy, and assertiveness in preventing and rejecting bullying [9], [10]. This combination of methods was used so that students would gain a comprehensive understanding, develop positive attitudes, and contribute to a safe, inclusive, and bullying-free school culture.

Implementation Stages

The program was carried out in four sequential stages: preparation, implementation on day one, implementation on day two, and evaluation and follow-up, as presented in Figure 1.

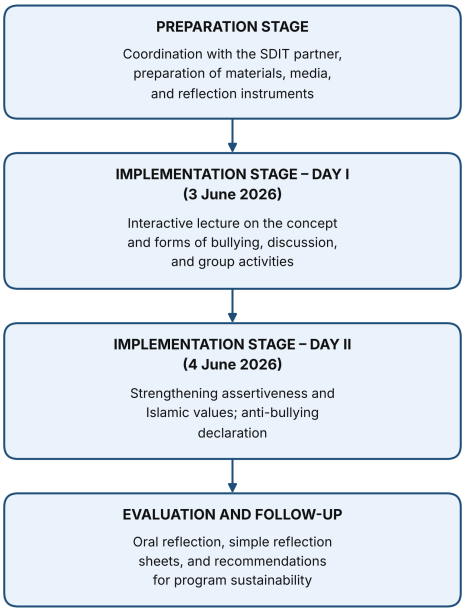


Figure 1. Flow of the community service program stages

The first stage was preparation, which included coordination with SDIT Mutiara Miftahul Jannah as the partner school, development of anti-bullying teaching materials based on Islamic values, preparation of ice-breaking media and role-play scenarios, and development of a simple reflection sheet as the evaluation instrument. This stage was essential to ensure that the materials suited the characteristics of fourth-

and fifth-grade students and that the activities were technically ready.

The second stage was implementation on day one (Tuesday, 3 June 2026), which focused on the basic concept of bullying, its forms, and its impacts on victims, perpetrators, and the school environment. The session opened with a joint prayer and classroom conditioning by the master of ceremonies and the team, followed by an educational ice breaker in the form of light games on friendship and empathy. The speakers then introduced the definition and forms of bullying in elementary schools and explained its impacts. This was followed by an interactive discussion on students' understanding and experiences of social interaction at school, group activities in the form of simple case studies, and anti-bullying role play. Day one closed with a reflection session to reaffirm the moral messages learned.

The third stage was implementation on day two (Wednesday, 4 June 2026), which focused on strengthening assertiveness and internalizing Islamic values. The session began with a joint prayer and a brief review of the day-one material, followed by a character-building ice breaker through collaborative games that foster mutual respect. The speakers then presented strategies for being a good friend and for daring to reject bullying, followed by a session reinforcing the Islamic values of brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), noble character, and the prohibition of hurting others. The highlight of day two was the anti-bullying declaration, a collective pledge by all students, "My School Is Free from Bullying," facilitated by the team together with the teachers. The activities concluded with a simple evaluation through oral reflection and reflection sheets, followed by the official closing, prayer, and documentation.

The fourth stage was evaluation and follow-up, conducted through participatory observation during discussions and role plays, oral questions and answers, and a short reflection sheet completed by students at the end of day two. The success indicators included improved understanding of the concept of bullying, the growth of empathy and assertiveness, and the completion of the anti-bullying declaration by all participants. The evaluation results served as the basis for the team's recommendations on program sustainability at the partner school.

Result and Discussion

Overview of Implementation

The program, themed "Friends Without Boundaries: Building a Bullying-Free School," was held over two days at SDIT Mutiara Miftahul Jannah and involved fourth- and fifth-grade students. Day one focused on basic material on the concept and types of bullying, delivered through interactive lectures, guided discussions, and simple group activities to encourage active student engagement. Day two focused on strengthening anti-bullying attitudes and behavior by building the courage to refuse bullying, assertiveness, and skills for forming healthy friendships, as well as reinforcing Islamic values such as compassion (*rahmah*), brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), and mutual respect (*ihtiram*). As a form of value internalization, the program concluded with an anti-bullying commitment declaration attended by all participants.



Figure 2. Opening session and presentation of a souvenir from the community service team to SDIT Mutiara Miftahul Jannah

Outcomes Achieved

The program produced several positive outcomes in the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. First, it improved fourth- and fifth-grade students' understanding of the concept of bullying. Students were able to recognize the definition of bullying and distinguish its common forms in elementary schools (verbal, physical, and social), as shown by their ability to give examples of bullying behavior and its impacts during the discussion and question-and-answer sessions.



Figure 3. Presentation of material on the concept and forms of bullying to fourth- and fifth-grade students

Second, the program contributed to greater awareness and empathy toward peers. Students showed a better understanding of the importance of respecting differences, not mocking or excluding classmates, and considering others' feelings, which was evident in group activities and role plays as students began to display supportive and cooperative behavior. Third, the program encouraged courage and assertiveness in dealing with bullying. Students learned what to do when they experience or witness bullying, such as reporting it to a teacher, refusing invitations to bully, and supporting victims, so that they can act as agents of change rather than passive bystanders.

Fourth, the program successfully integrated Islamic values into bullying prevention at the elementary level. Students understood compassion, brotherhood, and mutual respect as teachings of Islam that should be practiced in daily behavior, thereby strengthening the moral and spiritual context of a bullying-free school culture. Fifth, as a program output, a collective student commitment to the anti-bullying movement was formed through the "My School Is Free from Bullying" declaration, symbolizing students' moral agreement to create a safe, friendly, and inclusive school environment.



Figure 4. Reflection and joint prayer to strengthen the anti-bullying commitment at the closing session

Discussion

The results indicate that an educational and participatory approach is highly relevant for elementary school students in addressing bullying that emerges at an early age through preventive interventions based on character education and Islamic values. In the cognitive domain, students' improved understanding of bullying suggests that the material matched the cognitive developmental level of fourth- and fifth-grade students; students were not only able to state the definition of bullying but also to identify the forms of bullying that commonly occur at school. This finding confirms that anti-bullying education at the elementary level is effective when delivered through contextual methods close to children's experiences, in line with UNESCO's recommendation on the importance of evidence-based interventions in schools [1] and with studies showing that education and role-play methods consistently improve elementary students' knowledge of bullying prevention [10].

In the affective domain, the emergence of empathy and social awareness is an important indicator of the program's success. Discussions, role plays, and group work encouraged students to understand others' feelings and recognize the negative impacts of bullying on victims. This is consistent with character education approaches that emphasize direct experience in shaping children's attitudes and moral values. In the behavioral domain, strengthened assertiveness and courage to refuse bullying show that the program did not stop at understanding but began to build students' social skills, thereby reducing the likelihood that bullying will be tolerated.

The participatory approach combined with play and simulation gave students space to ask questions, express opinions, and reflect, which is important given that elementary school students respond better to concrete and enjoyable activities. The integration of Islamic values into the anti-bullying material was the main strength of this program, particularly because it was implemented in an SDIT. Compassion, brotherhood, and mutual respect were not merely presented as moral concepts but were directly linked to students' daily behavior at school, as mandated in QS. Al-Hujurat/49: 11. Thus, the anti-bullying message did not stand alone but was embedded in the school's religious identity and culture, in line with the spirit of Ministerial Regulation Number 46 of 2023 [2].

The anti-bullying declaration at the end of the program has strategic significance as a form of collective student commitment. Although symbolic, the declaration can trigger changes in school culture if it is consistently supported by teachers and the school. This program can be viewed as an initial step toward building a safe, inclusive, and child-friendly school ecosystem. However, sustained behavioral change requires follow-up and reinforcement from all members of the school community, so the involvement of teachers, homeroom teachers, and school policies remains a decisive factor in sustaining the program's impact.

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Conclusion

The community service program themed "Friends Without Boundaries: Building a Bullying-Free School" at SDIT Mutiara Miftahul Jannah was implemented successfully and achieved its objectives. The program improved fourth- and fifth-grade students' understanding of bullying, fostered empathy, and encouraged students to refuse and prevent bullying at school. Integrating an educational approach with the Islamic values of compassion (*rahmah*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and mutual respect (*ihtiram*) strengthened the anti-bullying message and supported the formation of a safe, friendly, and inclusive school culture. The "My School Is Free from Bullying" declaration marked the beginning of students' collective awareness to actively maintain a positive school climate.

Based on these results, several recommendations are proposed. First, the school should follow up on this program through sustained character-building activities, such as integrating anti-bullying material into lessons, religious activities, and the student profile strengthening program. Second, teachers and homeroom teachers should act as role models in applying anti-bullying values and monitor students' social interactions both inside and outside the classroom. Third, the school should develop or strengthen internal rules on the prevention and handling of bullying and communicate them to all school members, including students and parents. Fourth, similar programs should involve parents through socialization or mentoring so that anti-bullying values are reinforced at home. Fifth, the program should be developed and replicated in other elementary schools with adjustments to local contexts so that its positive impact can reach more students.

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