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Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Strategies in Addressing Bullying Behavior through Religious Character Strengthening at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga

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ABSTRACT

Bullying in schools severely threatens students' psychological well-being and social relationships. Strengthening character education based on religious values offers a strategic framework to prevent and address bullying comprehensively. This study describes forms of bullying and analyses Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers' strategies in tackling bullying through religious character education at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga, West Bangka. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive field research design, data were collected from the headmaster, IRE teachers, guidance counsellors, and students through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The data were evaluated using thematic analysis. Findings reveal that bullying manifests physically, verbally, relationally, and indirectly, with verbal bullying being predominant. IRE teachers employ an integrated preventive, curative, and repressive strategy embedded with religious values, managed via POAC principles, and aligned with moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Integrating religious values through instruction, role modelling, routine worship, and cross-role collaboration effectively enhances moral awareness, empathy, and behavioural change among students. These results underscore the importance of collaborative, value-based educational management in creating a safe school climate. This research contributes an integrative IRE strategy model that synthesises religious character education and educational management to combat school bullying.

Keywords: bullying, religious character education, prevention strategies, educational management.

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INTRODUCTION

Ideal education is learner-centred, placing children at the heart of the learning process within an inclusive environment that is physically and psychologically safe and free from bullying. Under the concept of Child-Friendly Schools (SRA), schools play a vital role in ensuring the safety and optimal development of learners by facilitating social interaction within a safe school environment (Syamsul Arifin et al., 2025). The ideal of education in Indonesia has not yet been fully realised, partly because bullying remains rife, hindering the creation of a safe and inclusive

educational environment. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection show that around 41.1 per cent of children in Indonesia have experienced bullying either at school or outside school (Annisa et al., 2022).

In its report Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education, UNESCO (2021) stresses that the ideal education of the future must be grounded in social justice, non-discrimination, and respect for human dignity, so that the educational environment becomes a safe and inclusive space that supports learners' optimal development (UNESCO, 2021). In practice, however, this condition has not yet been fully realised, as bullying still occurs frequently and is often likened to an iceberg phenomenon because not all cases are disclosed or officially reported. In 2023, 30 cases of bullying in schools were recorded, an increase from 21 cases in the previous year (Pradana, 2024).

This situation highlights a gap between the ideal vision of education and the empirical reality on the ground. When examined by educational level, the distribution of cases shows that around 50 per cent occur at lower secondary school level or equivalent, 30 per cent at primary school level or equivalent, 10 per cent at upper secondary school level or equivalent, and 10 per cent at vocational secondary school level or equivalent (Pradana, 2024). These findings are consistent with those of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, which recorded that 20 per cent of boys and 25.4 per cent of girls aged 13–17 had experienced violence. These findings indicate that bullying occurs more frequently at lower secondary level, necessitating greater attention and more systematic prevention efforts within the school environment (Permanasari, 2024).

Various surveys indicate that violence and bullying remain serious issues within the education system. The 2022 National Survey reported that 34.51 per cent of pupils are at risk of experiencing violence, including sexual violence. These findings are reinforced by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Report (2018), which indicates that 41 per cent of pupils have experienced bullying, placing Indonesia amongst the five countries with the highest rates of bullying and above the average of 23 per cent for PISA participating countries (Permanasari, 2024). Furthermore, the 2021 National Assessment recorded that 24.4 per cent of pupils were at risk of experiencing bullying (Prastiwi, 2025), whilst the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, through the 2022 National Assessment, reported a potential bullying rate of 36.31 per cent among pupils. These figures highlight the need for stronger efforts in the prevention of and protection for pupils within the school environment (Sukarelawati, 2023).

The formal education system in Indonesia continues to face challenges in creating a conducive learning environment, one of which is the prevalence of bullying in schools (Silawati & Hidayati, 2024). Such behaviour has the potential to hinder pupils' psychological and social development and to undermine the moral values that should be fostered through the educational process (Priyatna, 2010). In this context, teachers of Islamic Religious Education play a strategic role in instilling religious values and moral character as a foundation for preventing bullying behaviour (Hidayah & Wahyudi, 2025). One approach considered effective in this endeavour is religion-based character education. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a vital role in building strong faith and fostering noble moral character in pupils through the instilling of values of faith and good conduct within the learning process (Azzahra et al., 2025; Rustandi et al., 2025).

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon, the concept of bullying needs to be explained in theoretical terms. According to Dan Olweus, bullying has three main, interrelated characteristics, namely: 1) it is carried out deliberately with the aim of hurting or harming the victim, 2) it occurs repeatedly over a certain period of time and is therefore not incidental, and 3) it involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim, whether physical, psychological or social (Olweus, 1993). Olweus (2013) classifies bullying into several forms, namely: 1) physical bullying, which involves physical contact such as hitting or

damaging and taking the victim's belongings; 2) verbal bullying, which is carried out through hurtful remarks such as insults or threats; 3) relational/social bullying, which aims to damage the victim's relationships or social status, for example by spreading rumours or influencing others to shun the victim; and 4) indirect bullying, which consists of aggressive actions carried out covertly without direct confrontation.

Efforts to prevent bullying cannot be separated from the strengthening of character education within the learning process. Thomas Lickona (1991) defines character as "a reliable inner disposition to respond to situations in a morally good way", that is, a reliable inner tendency to respond to situations in a morally sound manner. Lickona explains that character consists of three interrelated components: 1) moral knowing, which encompasses an individual's understanding of the moral values and ethical principles that form the basis for judging an action; 2) moral feeling, the internal drive for an individual to act morally, such as the emergence of empathy, compassion and a sense of responsibility; and 3) moral action, which refers to the application of moral and ethical values in concrete actions that reflect an individual's integrity and responsibility (Lickona, 1991).

For the process of instilling character values and preventing bullying to run effectively, systematic educational management at school level is required. The implementation of educational management in schools falls under the responsibility of the headteacher, who has the authority to manage the educational institution through a participatory decision-making process, so that educational objectives can be achieved in a focused and effective manner (Mulyati et al., 2022). From a management perspective, George R. Terry explains that management is a process comprising four main functions known as the POAC concept, namely planning, organising, actuating and controlling. These stages of the process are carried out systematically to establish and achieve organisational objectives through the optimal utilisation of human and other resources (Ambedkar, 2015; Syahputra & Aslami, 2023).

At State Junior High School No. 2 Parittiga, West Bangka, it was found that bullying still frequently occurs within the school environment, particularly in the form of verbal bullying, as confirmed by the headteacher. Efforts undertaken by the school to strengthen character and create a positive school environment have been carried out through the 'Cheerful Morning Gathering' (PPC) Programme, as part of the implementation of the G7KAIH Movement. The PPC programme is not a temporary initiative but has been implemented on an ongoing basis from 2020 to 2023. The PPC programme is designed as a routine pre-lesson activity that includes instilling spiritual and national values through communal prayer and singing the national anthem 'Indonesia Raya', strengthening religious character through the consistent recitation of Surah Yasin and other short surahs every morning, and improving physical and mental health through the 'Great Indonesian Children's Gymnastics' programme.

Research conducted by Dahana et al. (2026) highlights the strategic role of teachers as both educators and managers of the school's social environment in tackling bullying through persuasive, preventative, educational and corrective approaches. In line with this, research by Ningsih (2023) emphasises that Islamic Education teachers play a crucial role in preventing bullying through the integration of Islamic values, the reinforcement of the concept of 'amr bil ma'ruf wa nahi anil munkar', and the creation of an inclusive and communicative classroom environment. Mustofa et al. (2025) revealed that Islamic Religious Education serves as an effective instrument of character education in preventing bullying, whilst Pasaleron et al. (2023) demonstrated that Islamic Religious Education teachers' efforts to prevent bullying include instilling appropriate attitudes, integrating religious curriculum content, and involving parents. In light of this gap, this study aims to describe the forms of bullying behaviour and to examine the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in tackling bullying behaviour based on religious character through a qualitative approach.

METHOD

This study is categorised as field research because the data were obtained directly from the research site through interaction with the subjects and the empirical context under investigation. A descriptive qualitative approach was adopted, as it was deemed relevant to the research objectives, namely to describe and analyse in depth the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in addressing bullying behaviour rooted in religious character.

Research Subjects and Object

The research subjects are the primary sources of information and are directly involved in the phenomenon under investigation. In this study, the research subjects include: 1) the headteacher; 2) Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers as the main informants; 3) Guidance and Counselling (BK) teachers; and 4) pupils at Parittiga State Junior High School No. 2 who are involved in the dynamics of bullying behaviour within the school environment. The object of this research is the forms of bullying behaviour and the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in tackling bullying based on religious character at State Junior High School 2 Parittiga, West Bangka. This study examines the efforts of PAI teachers to instil religious values, build pupils' character, and implement preventive and curative strategies in the learning process and character-building activities within the school environment.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data collection in qualitative descriptive research focuses on revealing the characteristics of the events that are the subject of the study. The data collected are qualitative in nature and are obtained through observation, semi-structured interviews and documentation. In this study, the researcher acts as a 'human instrument', playing a central role in defining the research focus, selecting informants, collecting and assessing the quality of data, as well as analysing and drawing in-depth conclusions regarding the phenomena under investigation. The first technique used in data collection for this study was participatory observation. Participatory observation was used to obtain data on pupils' activities in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) lessons, particularly regarding the development of religious character and social behaviour in the classroom. The observation focused on teacher–pupil interactions, communication dynamics reflecting religious values, and pupils' behaviour demonstrating cooperation, empathy, discipline, or potential instances of bullying.

The second method employed in this study was in-depth interviews using semi-structured guidelines, which enabled the researcher to explore the subjects' understandings, experiences and challenges in a flexible yet focused manner. The interviews were used to obtain comprehensive data on the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in tackling bullying behaviour at school, whilst also providing space for informants to express their experiences and views more broadly. The questionnaire used in this study was designed based on the theory of bullying put forward by Dan Olweus, a pioneer in the study of bullying. This instrument was also used to gather data on the extent to which the reinforcement of religious character building provided by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers plays a role in shaping anti-bullying attitudes and behaviour amongst pupils at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga.

Table 1. Instrument for Measuring Bullying Behaviour Based on Olweus's Theory (1993)

Aspects of Bullying	Types of Bullying	Behavioural (Operational) Indicators
(***Intentional Harm***)	Verbal	The student engaged in verbal bullying by mocking a classmate using rude or derogatory language.
(***Intentional Harm***)	Physical	Students engage in physical bullying by hurting their classmates or taking their belongings as a form of intimidation.
(***Intentional Harm***)	Psychological	The student engaged in psychological bullying by making threats and exerting emotional pressure.

(***Intentional Harm***)	Social/Relational	Student engage in social bullying by deliberately excluding others or spreading negative gossip or rumours.
(***Repetition***)	All types	The student repeatedly bullied the same classmate, thereby demonstrating a pattern of persistent bullying behaviour.
(***Power Imbalance***)	All types	Students engage in bullying by exploiting power imbalances to oppress their peers.
(***Direct Bullying***)	Immediately	The student bullied the victim directly through physical and verbal abuse.
(***Indirect Bullying***)	Indirect	Students engage in indirect or covert bullying without direct confrontation.

Table 2. Strategies Employed by Islamic Education Teachers to Tackle Bullying (Integration of Lickona's Character Education Theory and George Terry's POAC Theory)

POAC Aspects (Teacher Strategies)	**Character Dimensions (Lickona)**	**Indicators of the PAI Teacher's Strategy**
Planning	Moral Knowing	Islamic Education teachers plan lessons that cover an understanding of bullying, its consequences, and religious values that reject violence
	Moral Feeling	Islamic Education teachers design learning activities that foster empathy and care for others
	Moral Action	Islamic Education teachers develop religious habit-forming programmes that encourage anti-bullying behaviour
Organizing	Moral Knowing	Islamic Education teachers work in collaboration with form tutors and guidance counsellors to help pupils understand what constitutes bullying
	Moral Feeling	Islamic Education teachers involve pupils in religious activities to foster a sense of togetherness
	Moral Action	Islamic Education teachers assign roles to pupils in positive activities based on religious values
Actuating	Moral Knowing	The Islamic Education teacher explains the Islamic values that prohibit bullying as part of the learning process
	Moral Feeling	Islamic Education teachers offer religious guidance to foster a sense of shame and empathy towards victims of bullying
	Moral Action	Islamic Education teachers set an example of polite, fair behaviour and respect for others
Controlling	Moral Knowing	Islamic Education teachers assess pupils' understanding of bullying behaviour
	Moral Feeling	Islamic Education teachers monitor changes in pupils' attitudes towards their classmates
	Moral Action	Islamic Education teachers address bullying behaviour through religious guidance and counselling

The third technique used in this study was a documentary study, which involved collecting data through the examination of documents relating to the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in tackling bullying, such as lesson plans, syllabuses, religious character-building programmes, school rules and regulations, student case records, counselling reports, and documentation of religious activities. This documentary data serves to supplement and reinforce the primary data obtained from observations and interviews.

Data Analysis Techniques

This study employed thematic analysis to identify, analyse and interpret patterns or themes emerging from the qualitative data obtained through interviews, observation and documentation (Perry, K. & Hill, 2006). The analysis was conducted on an ongoing basis from the initial stage of data collection until the end of the study, in line with the iterative nature of qualitative data analysis. The analysis process involved coding, sorting and grouping the data to generate meaningful themes. The stages of thematic analysis in this study refer to the framework proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006), which comprises six main stages, namely: 1) data familiarisation through an in-depth examination of transcripts and field notes; 2) generating initial codes for relevant data units; 3) searching for themes by grouping codes into themes and sub-themes; 4) reviewing themes to ensure their relevance and consistency with the data as a whole; 5) defining and naming themes to clarify the boundaries and meaning of each theme; and 6) producing the report in the form of a descriptive narrative accompanied by interpretations based on the theoretical framework employed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Based on the findings of a study at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga in West Bangka, bullying practices include physical, verbal, relational and indirect bullying, with verbal bullying—such as taunts and insults—being the most prevalent form. All these forms meet the characteristics of bullying as defined by Dan Olweus, namely the intention to cause harm, repetition and an imbalance of power. To tackle this, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers implement preventive, curative and repressive strategies based on religious values, managed through George R. Terry's POAC management model and aligned with Thomas Lickona's dimensions of character education.

Forms of Bullying at Parittiga State Secondary School No. 2

Based on the findings of a study conducted at Parittiga State Secondary School No. 2, it was found that bullying occurs repeatedly in various forms, both inside and outside the classroom. Bullying takes the form not only of physical violence, but also of verbal, relational and indirect bullying, which has an impact on pupils' psychological well-being and social relationships. The results of interviews and observations indicate that verbal bullying is the most prevalent form, accompanied by physical, relational and indirect bullying, which are interlinked within the pupils' social dynamics. These findings underscore the importance of the school's role—particularly that of Islamic Religious Education teachers—in creating a safe learning environment through a preventative approach based on religious values and moral guidance. The following provides a more detailed explanation of the forms of bullying identified at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga.

Table 3. Forms of Bullying Behaviour at Parittiga State Junior High School No. 2, West Bangka

Data Code	Status	Forms of Bullying Behaviour	Olweus's (1993) Theoretical Analysis
W/S-Kor/Etabda	Victim	Mocking and belittling friends	It fulfils the element of intent to cause harm directly through verbal statements (direct bullying).
W/S-Kor/Ricky	Victim	Negative nicknames that cause embarrassment	This includes direct bullying, as it is carried out directly against the victim.
W/S-Pel/Apr	Perpetrator	Shoving, kicking, bullying, taunting	This includes direct bullying; there is a power imbalance because it is carried out in groups.
W/S-Pel/Septian	Perpetrator	Making derogatory remarks about someone's physical appearance, hitting, pushing	Meets the criteria for body shaming and physical aggression.

W/S-Pel/Yuddha	Perpetrator	Insults & violence	This includes direct bullying; it demonstrates a pattern of imitation (social repetition).
W/S-Pel/Apr	Perpetrator	Peer pressure	Inequality of power based on group dominance.
W/S-Sak (umum)	Witness	The behaviour occurs repeatedly	Indicates a recurring pattern, not an isolated incident.

Physical Bullying

Based on the findings of the interviews, various forms of physical violence perpetrated by pupils at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga, West Bangka, were identified, including intimidation and extortion accompanied by threats against peers and younger pupils. Such behaviour frequently occurs during informal interactions between pupils, such as during lesson breaks, in classroom environments that are not conducive to learning, or in school areas such as the canteen and school grounds. These findings are clearly evident from the statements of the perpetrators, as recorded in data codes W/S-Pel/Apr, W/S-Pel/Sept, W/S-Pel/Yud, and W/S -Pel/Fad, which mention involvement in acts of mocking, insulting, shoving, hitting, kicking and intimidating other pupils, including taunts relating to the victims' physical appearance and their parents' names, accompanied by physical violence. The data indicate that physical violence frequently occurs within group interactions and is influenced by peer group dynamics.

Analytically, the findings of this study are consistent with Dan Olweus's view that physical bullying is often combined with verbal bullying as a form of direct aggression. Acts such as hitting, kicking and pushing constitute physical bullying as they involve physical contact with the intention of hurting, humiliating or dominating the victim. Such behaviour also fulfils the key elements of bullying, particularly the aspect of intentional harm; even though the perpetrators claim they were merely 'going along with it' or 'joking', their admission to hitting and kicking indicates an awareness of their aggressive behaviour. The excuse of 'joking' does not negate the element of intent if the actions cause physical or psychological suffering; thus, the element of intentionality remains fulfilled.

With regard to repetition, the witness's statement that the bullying occurred 'frequently' indicates a pattern of repeated behaviour, rather than an isolated incident, thereby fulfilling the element of repetition as an essential component of bullying. With regard to the power imbalance, the perpetrator's involvement due to 'going along with friends' reflects the group's dominance over the victim, which creates a social power imbalance. From a theoretical perspective, this imbalance relates not only to physical superiority but also to social support, thereby reinforcing the fulfilment of the element of power imbalance. Victims of physical bullying are generally in a vulnerable position and limited in their ability to defend themselves; consequently, acts of violence are likely to recur if not addressed firmly and systematically. This situation aligns with Olweus's view that physical bullying is the most overt and dangerous form of bullying, as it has psychological consequences whilst also posing a risk of long-term physical injury.

This view is supported by Wolke & Lereya (2015) in their study 'Long-term effects of bullying', which suggests that physical bullying has long-term effects on victims' physical and psychological health, including health problems, anxiety, depression and even the risk of self-harm. In adulthood (aged 18–50 years), victims also tend to have lower and less stable educational attainment, income and social relationships. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2026), in their study "Influential factors of school bullying among junior high school students: an analysis based on hierarchical linear models", emphasise that physical bullying behaviour is influenced by the

interaction between individual factors and the school environment. A less than conducive classroom environment, a lack of teacher supervision at certain times, and high levels of disciplinary offences have the potential to increase the likelihood of physical violence between pupils.

Verbal Bullying

Based on the results of the data analysis, verbal bullying was identified as the most prevalent form of bullying in interactions between pupils at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga, West Bangka. This behaviour manifested itself through taunts, the use of derogatory nicknames, name-calling based on physical appearance, the use of abusive language, and statements that demeaned the dignity of other pupils. In a number of cases, victims were called names such as 'fat', 'skinny', or names of animals, which psychologically served to humiliate them and undermine their self-esteem in front of their peers. This pattern of interaction demonstrates elements of intent and repetition; consequently, it cannot be categorised as spontaneous banter, but rather as a form of structured verbal aggression within the pupils' social relationships, with the potential to cause significant psychological harm.

The research findings are corroborated by the admissions of the perpetrators involved in taunting the victims about their physical appearance, calling them animal names, and insulting the victims' parents—which in some cases was accompanied by physical violence. These admissions are reflected in data codes W/S-Pel/Sept, W/S-Pel/Yud, and W/S-Pel/Fad. This pattern indicates that the insults targeted sensitive aspects of personal identity, thereby having the potential to cause profound psychological effects. Theoretically, Olweus (2013) categorises verbal bullying as a form of direct bullying that can manifest as psychological aggression without physical contact or accompany physical bullying within more complex patterns of aggression. In the context of SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga, verbal bullying is not merely a complement to physical violence but also frequently occurs independently in pupils' day-to-day interactions.

The identified actions met the three criteria for bullying, including the aspect of intentional harm, even though the perpetrators claimed they were merely 'joking'; forms of taunting such as racial slurs, being called animal names, and mockery of parents' names demonstrated an awareness that such remarks were demeaning. Regarding repetition, the statements of the victim and witnesses indicate that the taunts occurred repeatedly and formed a pattern of daily interaction, meaning they were not incidental. As for the power imbalance, verbal bullying was often carried out in groups, as reflected in the perpetrators' admissions, thereby placing the victim in a vulnerable position and limiting their ability to defend themselves. Actions causing psychological distress fulfil the element of intentionality, whilst the power imbalance is not merely physical but also social and psychological, stemming from the group's support for the perpetrators.

This situation indicates that the dominance of verbal forms positions language as an instrument of power in social relations, thereby making symbolic violence through speech the primary medium of oppression within the school environment. This finding is consistent with the research by Ma'arif et al. (2023), which confirms the link between symbolic violence and verbal bullying in the school social context, where speech acts serve as a means of symbolic domination.

Relational or Social Bullying

Based on the results of the data analysis, relational bullying at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga, West Bangka, does not always manifest explicitly through ostracism or the spreading of rumours, but is strongly indicated by peer pressure and negative solidarity that perpetuate bullying behaviour. These practices are evident in attempts to control, intimidate and dominate the victim's social relationships, both in the context of classroom learning and informal interactions within the school environment, including senior–junior relationships that demonstrate a power imbalance. The analysis also reveals instances of coercion by pupils in more dominant social positions towards

those perceived as weaker, such as ordering them to clean the toilets or sweep the school grounds. These actions reflect the misuse of social status and age differences as instruments of domination within the structure of pupils' social relationships.

In this context, peer support acts as a form of social legitimisation that reinforces the perpetuation of bullying behaviour through peer pressure and the need for social acceptance. According to Olweus, relational bullying is aggression that damages the victim's relationships or social standing through exclusion, manipulation of friendships, and group domination. Relational bullying is categorised as indirect aggression that still fulfils the essential characteristics of bullying, namely that it is deliberate, repeated, and involves an imbalance of social or structural power. Although it involves no physical violence, this form is significantly damaging as it operates through the manipulation of social relationships and group structures. Practices of social exclusion, such as being excluded from group interactions or treated differently, reflect mechanisms of social control that maintain group dominance whilst reinforcing the boundaries of social membership.

Relational bullying is often overlooked because it does not involve direct physical violence and is frequently regarded as a normal part of social dynamics. In fact, its impact is significant, including feelings of isolation, reduced self-esteem, and a weakening of pupils' attachment to the school environment. These conditions indicate a link between relational bullying, peer group dynamics, and the school climate as a structural context that influences the occurrence of bullying. A less than conducive classroom environment and weak social control have the potential to facilitate the formation of informal hierarchies based on social power. In line with the findings of Wang et al. (2026), factors at the school level have a significant influence on the prevalence of bullying. A positive school atmosphere has been shown to reduce the likelihood of bullying by strengthening pupils' emotional bonds with the school, whilst a negative atmosphere tends to weaken these bonds and increase the risk of bullying behaviour.

Indirect Bullying

The results of an analysis at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga in West Bangka identified the presence of indirect bullying, which takes place covertly and is difficult for teachers to detect. This behaviour is carried out without direct physical or verbal contact, but rather through manipulation such as spreading rumours, using veiled negative nicknames, and influencing other pupils to shun the victim. Although direct bullying appears more dominant at first glance, an in-depth analysis reveals a pattern of indirect bullying taking place without open confrontation. This indication is reinforced by the perpetrators' admissions in several data codes—W/S-Pel/Ap, W/S-Pel/Sept, and W/S-Pel/Yud—who stated that they were 'just following their friends', confirming that their involvement occurred within the dynamics of collective peer pressure and group solidarity. This suggests that some pupils acted not as the primary instigators, but rather as part of a collective peer group dynamic.

In this context, involvement does not always take the form of direct aggression, but may also consist of passive support, implicit approval, or turning a blind eye to such behaviour; thus, group dynamics play a role in perpetuating bullying. Conceptually, Dan Olweus (2013) explains that indirect bullying is covert aggression without explicit physical or verbal attacks, yet it still aims to harm the victim and fulfils the elements of intentionality, repetition, and social power imbalance. Witnesses' statements that bullying "often occurs" indicate the normalisation of such behaviour within student social circles, where taunts are perceived as "ordinary banter", thereby forming a pattern of interaction that is permissive towards symbolic aggression. From Dan Olweus's perspective, this situation reinforces the structure of power imbalance, as the victim finds themselves in an isolated position within social relations that collectively support the dominance of a particular group.

Theoretically, indirect bullying is explained through the perspective of relational aggression proposed by Crick and Grotpeter, which emphasises that aggression is not always physical in nature, but can manifest through attempts to damage an individual's social relationships and reputation, particularly within the dynamics of peer interactions (Lundh et al., 2014). This form of aggression includes exclusion, the spreading of rumours, and social manipulation, which functionally constitute forms of indirect bullying (Voulgaridou & Kokkinos, 2023). Indirect bullying has a significant impact on adolescents' emotional well-being, including increased psychological vulnerability and social relationship difficulties, in line with the conceptualisation of relational aggression as described by Crick and Grotpeter (Múzquiz et al., 2023).

From a social psychology perspective, bullying behaviour is closely linked to theories of conformity and peer pressure. In Monks' study, conformity is defined as the adjustment of an individual's behaviour to group standards through the imitation of peers' actions (Rachmawati & Laili, 2025). Findings at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga indicate that some pupils choose to remain silent or distance themselves from the victim in order to maintain their social standing, following the dominant group trend for the sake of social acceptance, which reflects the influence of conformity and the need for affiliation within group dynamics. In line with this, research by Álvarez-Turrado et al. (2025) shows that peer group pressure has a significant influence on the emergence of aggressive behaviour in digital spaces, including cyberbullying, with the mechanism of moral disengagement acting as a mediating variable.

Discussion

Strategies Used by Islamic Education Teachers to Tackle Bullying Behaviour

The strategy adopted by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to tackle bullying at State Junior Secondary School No. 2 Parittiga, West Bangka, is implemented systematically through preventive, curative and repressive approaches, combined with the reinforcement of religious values. This strategy not only focuses on resolving cases that have already occurred but is also directed towards the comprehensive character development of pupils through the reinforcement of the dimensions of moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action, as formulated by Thomas Lickona. From a managerial perspective, the entire process is managed in accordance with the POAC functions (planning, organising, actuating and controlling) as outlined by George R. Terry, ensuring that its implementation is purposeful, coordinated and sustainable.

Table 4. Strategies Used by Islamic Education Teachers to Tackle Bullying at Parittiga State Junior High School No. 2

Interview Findings	Theoretical Analysis (Lickona & POAC)	Differences & Argumentative Interpretation
B: general integration within the subject matter; **S: explicit integration within the learning objectives and lesson plans based on verses and hadiths.**	Systematic planning strengthens moral knowing and moral feeling.	S: a more structured curriculum; B: more contextual learning materials.
B: general religious practice; **S: a more varied and structured programme.**	Planning → habituation towards moral action.	S: indicates a more systematic programme design; B: simpler but still preventative.
B: co-ordinated cooperation; **S: strategic and procedural cooperation.**	Organising → coordination of roles within the school structure.	S: more formal and restorative; B: more communicative and collaborative.

B: a persuasive approach; **S: a dialogue-based approach and comprehensive role modelling.**	Moral feeling → moral action through setting a good example.	S: more reflective and transformational; B: more educational and normative.
B: curative and persuasive; **S: curative, restorative and procedural.**	Actuating → character development based on religious values.	S: more systematic, with a restorative approach; B: more directly based on a moral-religious approach.
B: simple monitoring; **S: comprehensive and ongoing monitoring.**	Controlling → evaluation of moral action through behavioural change.	S: more detailed and systematic; B: more practical and contextual.

Preventive Strategies

Based on the results of interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, supported by statements from Guidance and Counselling (BK) teachers at State Junior Secondary School No. 2 Parittiga, West Bangka. Preventive strategies are a fundamental step in tackling bullying behaviour as they focus on fostering moral awareness before any offences occur. Bullying is understood as behaviour that causes suffering, whether verbal or physical, which aligns with Lickona's 'knowing' moral dimension and forms the basis for designing prevention strategies rooted in religious values. Preventive strategies are implemented collaboratively through joint religious programmes, such as congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, monitoring of pupils' daily behaviour, and moral guidance, with religious values internalised within the school culture. Structurally, these strategies comprise: 1) the integration of anti-bullying material into lesson plans; 2) religious habit-forming programmes; and 3) short religious talks and communal prayers, which represent the function of systematic planning in educational management according to George R. Terry and are oriented towards fostering moral awareness among pupils.

During the implementation phase, the collaboration between Islamic Education (PAI) teachers and Guidance and Counselling (BK) teachers at State Junior High School 2 Parittiga, West Bangka, demonstrated the effectiveness of the organising and actuating functions in educational management, thereby ensuring that preventive strategies were carried out in a coordinated, systematic and sustainable manner. Within a managerial framework, this process does not stop at the planning stage but continues into the organising and actuating stages; that is, the implementation of learning strategies that activate pupils' affective dimensions through the strengthening of empathy as an internal control mechanism, thereby preventing tendencies towards aggression and fostering social behaviour that respects the dignity of others on a sustainable basis.

The implementation of this strategy is in line with Thomas Lickona's character education framework, which emphasises three key dimensions. 1) Moral knowing is realised through the internalisation of religious values as a normative foundation for shaping pupils' understanding of moral values and religious norms. 2) Moral feeling is developed through spiritual practices as well as discussions, reflection and case studies designed to foster empathy, particularly towards victims of bullying. 3) Moral action is realised through religious practice and courteous behaviour, implemented through regular religious activities and a systematic programme for the internalisation of noble character as a concrete means of instilling anti-violence values in everyday life.

From a managerial perspective, the effectiveness of preventive strategies is also underpinned by the controlling function, namely the evaluation of changes in pupils' attitudes and classroom dynamics. This control mechanism enables the monitoring of the programme's sustainability and

continuous improvement based on findings from the field. The preventative strategy implemented by all stakeholders at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga, West Bangka, can be understood as an effort that: 1) is systematically designed through planning; 2) is implemented through organising and actuating that address the cognitive and affective dimensions; 3) is reinforced through habit formation as a manifestation of moral action; and 4) is evaluated through control to maintain the consistency of behavioural change. This approach is in line with Thomas Lickona's concept of holistic character education and George R. Terry's principles of educational management, which place planning and control at the foundation of an educational organisation's effectiveness.

Curative Strategy (Handling Bullying Cases)

Curative strategies are a form of intervention implemented when bullying behaviour has already occurred and requires immediate attention. In an educational context, these strategies not only put a stop to deviant behaviour, but also restore social relationships and work towards the long-term character development of the perpetrator. The handling of bullying at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga, West Bangka, is not carried out individually by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, but rather through structured collaboration with form tutors, Guidance and Counselling (BK) teachers, and with the support of school policy. Islamic Education teachers focus on reinforcing religious values and moral development; form tutors monitor pupils' daily behaviour; Guidance and Counselling teachers handle counselling and psychological aspects; whilst the school provides regulations and institutional support.

Analytically, the coordination pattern within the POAC framework demonstrates the collective integration of managerial functions, ensuring that the approach is not piecemeal but rather coordinated and targeted. This reflects the functioning of the 'organising' aspect of George R. Terry's management theory through a systematic working structure and synergy amongst educators. The tackling of bullying is carried out through continuous planning, organising, implementation and supervision. Islamic Education teachers coordinate with form tutors, guidance counsellors, and the school administration to ensure that guidance addresses the moral, psychological, and social aspects of pupils in an integrated manner. This synergy emphasises that curative strategies are implemented in a structured, collaborative, and integrated manner, whilst also reflecting a systemic approach to case management. During the curative phase, once an incident of bullying has been identified, the Islamic Education teacher, together with the form tutor and the guidance counsellor, assesses the problem and determines proportionate guidance measures.

From Thomas Lickona's perspective on character education, the collaboration between Guidance and Counselling (BK) and Islamic Education (PAI) strengthens the 'moral knowing' dimension by providing bullies with an understanding of normative and religious principles, emphasising that harming peers is behaviour contrary to religious values and social norms; the 'moral feeling' dimension is realised through counselling and reflective dialogue, in which teachers employ personal dialogue, religious guidance, and counselling support to foster students' empathy and emotional awareness regarding the impact of their behaviour; whilst 'moral action' is realised through guidance on concrete corrective actions, such as repairing social relationships, offering apologies, attending specialised counselling sessions, and participating in positive activities grounded in religious values. Thus, the curative strategies applied are restorative and educational in nature, as they not only put a stop to deviant behaviour but also seek to bring about a sustainable transformation of attitudes.

Repressive Strategies and Ongoing Guidance

Repressive strategies are firm measures taken when bullying behaviour occurs repeatedly or shows no significant improvement following the implementation of preventive and curative strategies. Repressive strategies for tackling bullying at SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga, West Bangka, are implemented within the framework of school regulations integrated with an educational

approach. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers emphasise the prohibition of bullying through narrative and contextual methods, as well as real-life examples from everyday life, to reinforce an understanding of values, whilst Guidance and Counselling (BK) teachers emphasise that the effectiveness of intervention is greatly influenced by school policy, cooperation with parents, and coordination with the relevant authorities where necessary. This demonstrates that repressive strategies do not stand alone as a form of punishment, but are embedded within a structured school regulatory system.

From a managerial perspective, the implementation stage reflects the 'actuating' function, namely the execution of plans through concrete actions in the classroom, including the enforcement of consequences for breaches of school rules using a persuasive and religious approach. In the 'moral knowing' dimension, pupils are given an understanding of the moral and social implications of bullying; in the 'moral feeling' dimension, an awareness of responsibility and spiritual reflection is instilled, emphasising that every action has ethical consequences; whilst in the 'moral action' dimension, pupils are guided to demonstrate measurable behavioural change. From the perspective of George R. Terry's POAC management model, the 'controlling' aspect is crucial to ensuring consistency in the application of rules and structural support for their implementation.

The control phase is carried out through monitoring behavioural progress following guidance sessions, evaluating social interactions, and maintaining ongoing communication with form tutors and parents. Should bullying behaviour still be observed, follow-up measures are implemented through intensive guidance, parental involvement, and coordination across all school departments. This mechanism demonstrates that the control function operates through systematic monitoring and planned corrective actions. From a character education perspective, improvements in politeness, responsibility and mutual respect serve as indicators of success in the 'moral action' dimension, whilst also confirming that repressive strategies integrated with ongoing guidance are capable of fostering comprehensive and sustainable character change.

Ongoing guidance is an essential component in the implementation of a repressive strategy, as without a systematic follow-up mechanism, sanctions risk yielding only temporary compliance. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers carry out continuous monitoring through intensive coordination with form tutors, Guidance and Counselling teachers, and pupils' parents. This cross-role synergy reflects a systemic and structured approach to educational management. From the management perspective put forward by George R. Terry, an organisation's success is largely determined by the consistency of coordination and the effectiveness of the controlling function as a mechanism to ensure alignment between implementation and planned objectives.

The Integration of Religious Values into the Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers

The integration of religious values forms the cornerstone of the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in tackling bullying behaviour at State Junior Secondary School No. 2 Parittiga, West Bangka. Values such as compassion (rahmah), brotherhood (ukhuwah), justice, responsibility and good character (akhlakul karimah) are not merely conveyed as part of the curriculum, but are internalised through setting a good example, habitual practice and structured religious programmes. The implementation of activities such as congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, Yasinan, and moral guidance demonstrates that religious values are systematically integrated into the school culture. The findings of this study indicate that spiritual guidance contributes significantly to shaping pupils' attitudes, behaviour, and character, thereby playing a role in minimising bullying.

From the perspective of Thomas Lickona's character education theory, the integration of religious values strengthens the three dimensions of character formation. In the aspect of 'moral knowing', this is realised through the instilling of moral principles and religious teachings by Islamic

Education (PAI) teachers as a normative foundation that goes beyond mere administrative regulations; 'moral feeling' fosters religious values such as empathy, a sense of shame (haya'), and spiritual responsibility through guidance, reflection and the practice of worship, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation to avoid behaviour that harms others; whilst 'moral action' is realised through concrete practices such as mutual respect, apologising, valuing differences, and active participation in religious activities, so that the values understood and internalised are reflected in actual everyday behaviour.

Normatively, this approach is in line with Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which emphasises that education aims to shape individuals who are faithful, God-fearing and of noble character. The strategies employed by Islamic Education (PAI) teachers are not merely technical and operational in nature, but also ideological and spiritual. Teachers act as educators and role models (uswah hasanah) who embody exemplary values. From the perspective of POAC management according to George R. Terry, the integration of religious values forms part of systematic and sustainable educational management: it is planned within the learning process, organised through school collaboration, implemented through pedagogical strategies and exemplary behaviour, and monitored through evaluation and guidance. Analytically, the integration of religious values strengthens the effectiveness of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers' strategies because:

1) it provides moral and spiritual legitimacy for the prohibition of bullying;
2) it fosters learners' intrinsic motivation to behave in accordance with religious values;
3) it builds a religious and supportive school culture; and
4) it connects institutional regulations with faith-based awareness and personal responsibility.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that bullying in schools remains a serious challenge that requires a comprehensive approach. At SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga, West Bangka, the forms of bullying identified included physical, verbal, relational and indirect bullying, with verbal bullying predominating in pupil interactions. Countermeasures were implemented through preventive, curative and repressive strategies integrated with the reinforcement of religious values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons. These strategies are not only aimed at stopping deviant behaviour but also at character building and the restoration of pupils' social relationships. Their implementation is managed systematically through educational management functions, encompassing planning, organisation, implementation and supervision, carried out collaboratively between PAI teachers, guidance counsellors, form tutors, school management and parents.

These findings indicate that the integration of religious character education and structured educational management contributes significantly to fostering moral awareness, social empathy and behavioural change amongst pupils. Consequently, a collaborative approach based on religious values is effective in creating a safe, conducive school environment that is oriented towards sustainable character development. The results of this study emphasise the importance of strengthening religious character education as the foundation for the prevention and management of bullying in schools. The integration of religious values into learning, school culture and educational governance supports the development of moral awareness, social empathy and prosocial behaviour among pupils. Therefore, schools need to establish a structured system for managing bullying through cross-role collaboration between Islamic Education (PAI) teachers, guidance counsellors, form tutors, school leaders and parents.

In practical terms, this study recommends strengthening the integration of religious-values-based anti-bullying material into lesson planning; developing religious and school cultural programmes focused on character building; enhancing the competence of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in

strategies for moral guidance and student support; and strengthening a system for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of student behaviour through collaboration between schools and families. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative model for tackling bullying, which systematically combines religious character education with educational management. This study not only examines the forms and management of bullying but also positions Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers as central actors in preventative, curative and repressive strategies managed through the POAC management framework. Furthermore, this study offers a conceptual synthesis between character education theory and school managerial practice, thereby producing a collaborative and practical approach to building a safe and character-based school culture.

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Author Contributions

Ratno Hartadi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft; **Irawan:** Supervision, Methodology, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing; **Syarifuddin Idris:** Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing; **Dicky Ruchyat Shidik:** Formal Analysis, Writing – Review & Editing; **Mokbul Morshed Ahmad:** Validation, Writing – Review & Editing. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Ethical Approval and Informed Consent

This study was conducted with permission from the headteacher of SMP Negeri 2 Parittiga, West Bangka, Indonesia.

Data Availability Statement

The interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly available because they contain information from minors and are restricted to protect participant confidentiality and privacy.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) solely for language editing (grammar, spelling, and readability). The authors reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content of the publication. Generative AI was not used to produce data, analyses, findings, or references, and is not listed as an author.

Declaration of Originality

The authors declare that this manuscript is original, has not been published previously, is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, and is free from plagiarism. Its publication has been approved by all authors.

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