

The Efforts of the Madrasah Principal in Preventing Bullying Among Students at MTs NW Aik Bukaq

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore and analyze the efforts made by the principal in preventing bullying among students at MTs NW Aik Bukaq. Bullying is a serious issue within educational settings that can negatively impact students' psychological and social development. As the leader of an educational institution, the principal holds a strategic role in fostering a safe and conducive school environment. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, involving the principal, teachers, and several students as informants. The data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that the principal had implemented various preventive measures to address bullying: (1) anti-bullying policies were established through school regulations; (2) supervision of student interactions within the school environment was strengthened; (3) character development activities were conducted through religious and social programs; and (4) collaboration with guidance and counseling teachers as well as homeroom teachers was established to follow up on potential bullying cases. In addition, the principal applied a persuasive approach toward students with bullying tendencies and maintained intensive communication with parents. These efforts demonstrate the importance of leadership commitment, teacher collaboration, and parental involvement in preventing bullying. The study concludes that comprehensive preventive strategies supported by strong leadership and active stakeholder participation are essential to create a safe and supportive learning environment.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, education plays a crucial role in shaping high-quality human resources with strong character and competitiveness. However, the Indonesian education system still faces complex and multidimensional challenges, including low educational quality, unequal access to education across regions, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, and weak character development among students. Additionally, negative behaviors such as bullying, violence, intolerance, and lack of social responsibility exacerbate the educational climate. These issues hinder the achievement of national educational goals and impact the mental and emotional development of students. Therefore, active participation from the government, educators, and society is

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necessary to address these problems and realize quality, equitable, and character-based education (Putri, 2018).

Education is a conscious and planned process aimed at creating a learning environment in which students can actively develop their potential (Junaedi, 2019). Beyond knowledge transfer, education serves as a tool for social transformation, character formation, and the development of human creativity that can be passed down through generations. In modern society, education is vital for producing skilled human resources capable of facing contemporary challenges (Hikmah & Maulana, 2025).

Albert Bandura's social learning theory suggests that aggressive behavior can be minimized by modeling positive behaviors, strengthening self-control, and improving the social environment of students. Similarly, Travis Hirschi's social control theory emphasizes the importance of strong social bonds between students and their schools and teachers, which encourages compliance with norms and discourages deviant behaviors such as bullying. These theories serve as a foundation for school principals in formulating policies and strategies to prevent bullying.

Bullying has become a common social phenomenon in schools, manifesting as teasing, extortion, intimidation, and social isolation. Such behavior disrupts the learning environment and creates discomfort among students. Therefore, school principals must implement specific strategies to prevent and manage bullying, including fostering a respectful school culture, appreciating diversity, and upholding tolerance. Education aims to develop students into individuals who are faithful, virtuous, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and responsible citizens. This underscores that education not only targets academic achievement but also character and personality development (Sulistiarso, 2024).

Bullying is an aggressive behavior executed repeatedly to harm, intimidate, or demean others perceived as weaker. The consequences of bullying include trauma, fear, decreased academic performance, social withdrawal, and mental health issues (Iman, 2021; Bu'ulolo, 2022). At MT's NW Aik Bukaq, preliminary observations on June 12, 2025, revealed various forms of bullying, including verbal teasing, physical aggression, and seniority-based intimidation. Interviews with the principal indicated that some students intentionally bully others for reasons such as envy, revenge, or gaining social recognition. These incidents negatively affect students' motivation, concentration, academic participation, and character development.

Previous studies have examined bullying in school contexts. Trisnani and Wardani (2019) identified and described bullying behaviors and influencing factors, finding that verbal bullying was most common and often occurred in classrooms, cafeterias, and restrooms. Similarly, Tumon (2014) emphasized verbal bullying as the most frequent form, distinguishing between intentional and unintentional acts, unequal power dynamics, and repeated occurrences. Welhendri Azwar (2017) explored the motives behind bullying, noting that perpetrators were often former victims seeking revenge or asserting dominance. The similarities with MT's NW Aik Bukaq include the prevalence of verbal bullying, while differences lie in the perpetrators' gender distribution and motivational factors.

Bullying prevention requires the active involvement of families, schools, and the wider community. Families influence children through parenting styles and role modeling, while schools are responsible for supervising student interactions and implementing anti-bullying policies (Munawir et al., 2022). Principals play a critical role as educators, managers, administrators, supervisors, leaders, innovators, and motivators, ensuring a safe and conducive learning environment (A'yun, 2022; Darma & Banurea, 2019; Setiyadi & Rosalina, 2021). Effective anti-bullying strategies include creating a positive school culture, maintaining a supportive physical

environment, encouraging student participation in constructive activities, and establishing clear reporting and disciplinary mechanisms (Ratiyono, 2020).

While previous studies have focused on bullying prevalence, motives, and general prevention strategies, there is limited research specifically addressing the role of school principals in preventing bullying in the context of MTs NW Aik Bukaq. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the specific strategies, supporting and inhibiting factors, and outcomes associated with principal-led bullying prevention efforts.

This study aims to answer the following questions: (1) What forms of bullying occur at MTs NW Aik Bukaq?; (2) What efforts does the principal undertake to prevent bullying among students?; (3) What factors support and hinder the principal in implementing bullying prevention measures?. The objectives of the study are: (1) To identify the forms of bullying occurring at MTs NW Aik Bukaq; (2) To examine the principal's efforts to prevent bullying; (3) To analyze supporting and inhibiting factors in the principal's anti-bullying initiatives.

Theoretically, this research contributes to knowledge on school management and character education by elucidating principal-led anti-bullying strategies. Practically, it provides reference material for school principals, helps researchers understand bullying dynamics, and serves as a resource for future studies in similar educational settings.

METHODS

This research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand social phenomena holistically and deeply, including behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions within their natural context (Sugiyono, 2019; Moleong, 2018). The case study method was applied to provide a comprehensive and detailed exploration of the principal's strategies in preventing bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq. According to Bungin (2017), a case study is appropriate when the researcher intends to explore a particular case in depth within its real-life context.

The study was conducted at MTs NW Aik Bukaq, located on Wisata Aik Bukaq Street, Aik Bukaq Village, Batukliang Utara District, Central Lombok Regency, precisely in Mesoran Hamlet. The research was carried out over a specified period, enabling the researcher to conduct preparation, direct observation, interviews, and documentation in a systematic manner (Moleong, 2019).

The participants of this study included the principal, teachers, and students of MTs NW Aik Bukaq, particularly those directly involved in or affected by bullying incidents. In qualitative research, participants are often referred to as informants, since they provide crucial information needed to answer the research questions (Sugiyono, 2018). The selection of participants employed purposive sampling, which allows researchers to deliberately choose informants considered most knowledgeable and relevant to the problem under study (Moleong, 2009).

Data were collected using three techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to systematically record behaviors and interactions in the school environment, particularly student interactions, classroom dynamics, and anti-bullying initiatives. As Bungin (2012) explains, observation in qualitative research serves as a fundamental tool to capture natural social processes. Interviews were carried out in an in-depth and semi-structured manner with the principal, teachers, and students. The interview guide focused on preventive measures, school policies, sanctions for bullying, and the role of the principal in implementing anti-bullying strategies. Documentation was also employed to obtain written data such as school decrees, policies, records of anti-bullying programs, and workshop materials (Moleong, 2012).

The research instruments included interview guides for the principal and teachers, observation sheets for monitoring classroom and school activities, and documentation checklists for school policies and related records. These instruments were developed to explore preventive measures, school regulations, student attitudes, and the principal's leadership role in fostering an anti-bullying culture (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data were analyzed inductively through three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved summarizing and selecting essential information from raw data while eliminating irrelevant details. Data display was organized systematically to facilitate interpretation and generate meaningful insights. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns and linking them with relevant theoretical frameworks (Moleong, 2018).

To ensure trustworthiness, the study adopted four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through triangulation of sources and member checking. Transferability was addressed by providing a detailed description of the research context. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a consistent research process, while confirmability was enhanced through reflective notes and cross-checking data sources (Sugiyono, 2019; Moleong, 2018).

RESULTS

Based on the research findings obtained by the researcher regarding the efforts of the madrasah principal in preventing bullying among students at MTs NW Aik Bukaq, the results can be described as follows:

1. Forms of Bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq

Bullying is an aggressive act carried out deliberately and repeatedly by an individual or a group toward another individual or group perceived as weaker, with the intention of hurting, oppressing, or demeaning the dignity of the victim. Bullying does not only involve physical actions such as hitting, kicking, or pushing but also includes verbal violence such as mocking, insulting, and threatening, as well as psychological violence such as exclusion, spreading rumors, or public humiliation (Bu'ulolo, 2022).

Based on the findings of this study, several forms of bullying were identified at MTs NW Aik Bukaq:

a. Verbal Bullying

Verbal bullying was found to be the most common form of bullying occurring at MTs NW Aik Bukaq. It was usually carried out through mockery, derogatory nicknames, insults, and offensive remarks directed at peers. Some students admitted that they often experienced ridicule related to their physical appearance, family background, or academic ability. Common examples included calling peers by animal names, making fun of body shape (such as fat or thin), or mocking those with lower academic performance. The school principal stated that such behaviors were difficult to control, as they were often perceived by students as mere jokes.

In this regard, Mr. Mas'ud, M.Pd., the principal of MTs NW Aik Bukaq, explained: *"Indeed, the form of bullying that most often occurs here is not only physical violence such as hitting or kicking but rather verbal forms such as mockery, insults, or calling peers by their parents' names. Such behaviors deeply hurt students' feelings because they make them feel humiliated and unappreciated. In addition, we also found cases of social exclusion, such as not being invited to play, not being included in study groups, or being deliberately avoided by peers. All of these acts can have serious psychological consequences,*

such as shame, low self-esteem, or even long-term trauma.” (Interview with Mas’ud, M.Pd., Thursday, June 12, 2025).

This was reinforced by a teacher who stated:

“One of the most common forms of bullying is verbal bullying, such as mocking peers based on their physical appearance, speech patterns, or certain habits. Furthermore, mocking by insulting the victim’s parents’ names is also frequently found. Such ridicule often causes feelings of shame, inferiority, and even psychological trauma for the victims. In addition to verbal bullying, there are also cases of physical bullying, such as damaging a peer’s belongings—whether by deliberately hiding, scribbling on, or destroying them. This not only causes material loss but also creates a sense of insecurity among students.” (Interview with Totok Handoko, Thursday, June 12, 2025).

The forms of bullying found at MTs NW Aik Bukaq were varied, ranging from verbal, physical, to social bullying. According to Olweus, bullying is an aggressive act carried out repeatedly and involving an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim; its forms include ridicule, insults, hitting, or exclusion. Similarly, Rigby categorized bullying into direct forms (such as physical violence and harsh words) and indirect forms (such as spreading rumors or social exclusion). Based on the findings at MTs NW Aik Bukaq, the most dominant forms of bullying were mocking by using parents’ names, insults related to physical conditions or academic abilities, and excluding peers from playgroups or group activities—all of which may cause deep psychological wounds to the victims. The research further indicated that verbal and physical bullying were the two most frequent forms of bullying occurring in the school environment. Both forms had significant negative impacts on students’ comfort and social development. Therefore, preventive and responsive measures are needed from the school, including policies, supervision, and character education.

b. Physical Bullying

Physical bullying was also found in the school environment, though its intensity was lower compared to verbal bullying. Its forms included pushing, light hitting, or dropping a peer’s belongings. Several teachers reported that these actions usually occurred during recess or outside class hours, particularly when there was no teacher supervision. Although they did not result in serious injuries, such actions still caused fear and discomfort among victims. The school’s Guidance and Counseling (BK) teacher recorded that some students had reported being victims of physical bullying from their classmates.

In this regard, Mr. Mas’ud, M.Pd., the principal of MTs NW Aik Bukaq, explained: *“It is true that we have found several cases of physical bullying here, although the number is relatively smaller than verbal bullying. Typically, the forms of physical bullying include pushing, light hitting, or playful acts such as tapping a peer’s head while playing outside the classroom, especially during recess or when teachers are not directly supervising. Although such acts may appear trivial and are often regarded as jokes among children, we still consider them serious behaviors that must be addressed immediately. This is because, even if they do not cause severe physical injuries, they can create feelings of fear, anxiety, and even psychological trauma for the victims. Victims may feel uncomfortable, lose their sense of safety at school, and become reluctant to interact or play with their peers. Other observed impacts include a decline in learning motivation and reduced self-confidence. Therefore, every form of physical aggression, no matter how minor, is treated seriously through counseling, personal approaches, and reinforcement of school regulations, to prevent it from developing into more severe behaviors in the future.” (Interview with Mas’ud, M.Pd., Thursday, June 12, 2025).*

This was further emphasized by another teacher, who explained:

“Physical bullying often occurs during recess, on the school grounds, or in front of classrooms, especially when teachers are not supervising directly. Children usually take advantage of moments when the atmosphere is crowded or when teachers are busy elsewhere. Its forms vary, ranging from pushing, light kicking, tapping, or even dropping and hiding a peer’s belongings. Although these actions may seem playful, in reality many students feel afraid and uncomfortable. Some even reported directly to me or to the BK teacher, saying they no longer wanted to sit near or play with peers who often engaged in such acts. They expressed fear of being hurt again or mocked in front of their friends. From the students’ stories, it is clear that physical bullying has significant impacts. Some victims became withdrawn, quiet, or even reluctant to attend school. This requires us as teachers to be more vigilant and to increase supervision, particularly outside the classroom. We also provide regular guidance to students so they understand that even the smallest physical act is still a violation that can hurt others. When cases arise, we usually summon the involved parties, discuss the matter carefully, and involve parents so that students can be guided both at school and at home.” (Interview with Totok Handoko, S.Sos., Thursday, June 12, 2025).

Based on the research findings at MTs NW Aik Bukaq, physical bullying was still present, although its frequency was lower than that of verbal bullying. The forms of physical bullying included pushing, light hitting, tapping a peer’s head, mild kicking, and dropping or damaging others’ belongings. These actions generally occurred during recess, on the school grounds, or when teachers were not supervising.

c. Social Bullying

The form of social bullying identified at MTs NW Aik Bukaq includes exclusion or deliberate neglect of certain students in group activities, both inside and outside the classroom. Students experiencing this type of bullying tend to feel marginalized, disregarded, and emotionally pressured. One student reported that he was never invited to participate in group work and was often left alone during recess. This behavior is generally less visible, making it more challenging to detect without emotional engagement.

Based on an interview with one of the students who became a victim of social bullying, he expressed the following:

“I am often excluded when there is group work. My classmates prefer to choose others, and I am frequently left alone. During recess, I am rarely invited to play. It feels like I have no friends, which makes me sad and sometimes unmotivated to study. I usually just sit on the bench watching my classmates laugh and play together. Sometimes I try to approach them, but they move away or pretend not to notice me. Once I even tried to start a conversation, but they only responded briefly and then left. This makes me feel inferior and ashamed, as if I am not acknowledged. As a result, I often feel reluctant to come to school, especially if I have to face group work where I do not belong to any group. Sometimes I also feel worthless, as though everything I do is wrong. I truly hope to have friends who would accept me as I am and include me, so that I could also feel happy and motivated to learn like everyone else.”

The student’s response illustrates a form of relational bullying, which is a type of non-physical bullying that targets the victim’s social relationships and reputation. Relational bullying is carried out by ignoring, excluding, spreading gossip, or deliberately not including the victim in group activities. Its purpose is to weaken the victim’s social position in the eyes of others, causing the victim to feel rejected, undervalued, and deprived of social support. Relational bullying is often covert, which makes it less noticeable to teachers and parents. Compared to physical bullying, it is more difficult to detect because it does not involve direct confrontation or visible violence. Nevertheless, its impact on the victim is equally serious. Victims may suffer from deep psychological distress, including feelings of shame, inferiority, worthlessness, and withdrawal from social environments.

Therefore, the principal emphasized the need for well-planned and sustainable strategies to prevent and address such cases. He stressed that relational bullying, although not physically visible, is far more dangerous because it undermines students' psychological well-being and self-esteem. The first strategies implemented are as follows:

- 1) Character development through religious activities and the inculcation of moral values. The principal believes that instilling religious and moral values from an early age helps students develop empathy, mutual respect, and prevents harmful behavior toward peers.
- 2) Enhancing the role of guidance and counseling teachers as well as homeroom teachers. The principal encourages guidance counselors and homeroom teachers to actively engage in personal approaches with students, observe classroom social dynamics, and provide spaces for open dialogue so that students feel safe to share their experiences.

Regarding this issue, Mr. Mas'ud, M.Pd., the principal of MTs NW Aik Bukaq, explained:

"I believe that relational bullying is more dangerous than physical bullying, because it attacks a child's feelings, emotions, and self-esteem. Victims usually do not show visible injuries, but their wounds are internal, within their hearts and minds. If left unchecked, children may feel inferior, lose confidence, fear coming to school, and even lose their motivation to learn. They feel unappreciated, friendless, and unwanted in the school environment. That is why we consider it necessary to have well-planned, systematic, and continuous strategies. It is not enough to simply reprimand or impose temporary sanctions, but rather we must build awareness and instill values from an early age. One of our main steps is character education through religious activities. We encourage students to deepen their understanding of religious values and moral conduct. Every morning, we hold a short sermon (kultum) before class, followed by dhuba prayers, Qur'an recitation, and other religious practices. In this way, we hope that students grow into individuals who are more caring, respectful, and virtuous toward their peers."

Based on the interview with the principal, it was revealed that relational bullying is considered more dangerous than physical bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq. The principal highlighted that relational bullying attacks students' emotions and self-worth. While victims may not display physical injuries, they often suffer profound psychological wounds, resulting in feelings of inferiority, lack of confidence, fear of attending school, and loss of motivation to learn.

2. The Principal's Efforts in Preventing Bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq

Bullying is a serious problem that disrupts the teaching and learning process as well as the psychological development of students. Therefore, the principal, as the leader of the educational institution, holds a strategic role in preventing bullying within the school environment. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that the Principal of MTs NW Aik Bukaq has undertaken various preventive, repressive, and educational efforts to address bullying. The prevention measures at MTs NW Aik Bukaq are implemented in an integrated manner through several strategies. The principal has demonstrated strong commitment by establishing an anti-bullying policy that has been socialized to all members of the school community. Student interactions are also closely supervised, particularly during periods most vulnerable to bullying. The principal's efforts include the following:

a. Establishment of an Anti-Bullying Policy

One of the main efforts has been the implementation of a formal and informal anti-bullying policy for all members of the school community. This policy is incorporated into school regulations and disseminated through morning assemblies, parent meetings, and religious as well as organizational activities. The principal emphasized that all forms of violence—whether physical, verbal, social, or cyber—are strictly prohibited within the school environment.

“One of the main steps we have taken in preventing bullying at school is the establishment of a firm and comprehensive anti-bullying policy. This policy is not only formalized in the school’s official documents but also communicated orally to all members of the community, including students, teachers, and staff. The policy is integrated into the school regulations, serving as a binding guideline that must be understood and followed by all parties as a collective commitment to create a safe, comfortable, and conducive learning atmosphere.”
(Interview with Mas’ud, June 12, 2025)

b. Strengthening Supervision of Student Interactions

The principal enhanced monitoring of student behavior by involving on-duty teachers, homeroom teachers, and guidance counselors to actively observe students’ social dynamics. This supervision takes place in classrooms, school yards, and the canteen. Teachers are also encouraged to be more sensitive to signs of violence or intimidation among students.

“One concrete step we have taken is strengthening the supervision of students’ behavior comprehensively. We involve on-duty teachers and homeroom teachers to actively monitor social interactions both inside and outside the classroom. This supervision is carried out routinely, especially in strategic areas such as classrooms, school yards, and the canteen, as these are where student interactions most frequently occur. We also instruct teachers to be more responsive to even the smallest indications of violence or intimidation.”

c. Character Building through Religious Activities

Another effective effort is character education through religious practices, such as reciting *hizib*, Qur’an recitation (*tadarus*), and short sermons (*kultum*) after congregational *Dhuba* prayer. These activities are believed to instill noble values, encouraging students to respect one another and refrain from harmful behavior. Religious teachers and *ustadz* are also involved in delivering sermons emphasizing Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*) and compassion among peers.

“Certainly. One of the most effective efforts, in our view, is character building through religious activities. Every day, we conduct activities such as hizib recitation, Qur’an recitation, and short sermons after Dhuba prayer. We strongly believe these practices help instill noble moral values in students, motivating them to be respectful, polite, and to avoid behaviors that could harm others.”

d. Persuasive and Educational Approaches

In addressing existing cases of bullying, the principal prioritizes persuasive and educational approaches. Offenders are not immediately punished but are first guided through advice, *hizib* recitation, and reinforcement of religious values, with the aim of encouraging self-awareness and repentance.

“In handling bullying cases that have already occurred, we prioritize persuasion and guidance rather than immediately imposing punishment. Offenders are not directly sanctioned; instead, we first encourage self-reflection through advice and spiritual guidance. Typically, they are asked to participate in hizib recitation and are given reinforcement of religious values by teachers or ustadz. The goal is to ensure that offenders genuinely realize their mistakes, regret them, and avoid repeating such actions in the future. We want behavioral change that arises from awareness, not fear of punishment.”

e. Collaboration with Parents/Guardians

The principal also fosters effective communication with parents, especially when indications of bullying are identified. In certain cases, parents are invited to school to discuss and seek the best solutions. Parental involvement is considered essential in the process of shaping students’ character.

Based on interviews with the principal and teachers, as well as observations of school activities, it was found that the principal of MTs NW Aik Bukaq has implemented multiple strategies to prevent bullying among students. As the principal stated:

“We have taken several steps to prevent bullying within the school. First, we have clearly established an anti-bullying policy in the school regulations, informing students that all forms of violence, both physical and verbal, are strictly prohibited. This policy is also communicated to teachers and parents. Second, we have strengthened supervision, especially during vulnerable times such as recess or after school. Teachers are directed to actively monitor and pay close attention to student interactions. We also assign on-duty teachers to specific areas so that there is no space for bullying to occur without supervision.” (Interview with Mas’ud, June 12, 2025)

In conclusion, based on interviews with the principal, it can be summarized that the prevention of bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq is carried out comprehensively through various strategies. The principal demonstrates strong commitment by implementing an anti-bullying policy that is widely socialized to the school community. Supervision of student interactions has also been reinforced, particularly during times prone to bullying.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Preventing Bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq

a. Supporting Factors

1) Firm and Visionary Leadership of the Principal

The school principal plays a crucial role in creating a safe and conducive learning environment. The principal’s firm leadership and strong commitment to enforcing anti-bullying policies serve as the primary factors in preventing bullying. Clear school rules are established, accompanied by educational sanctions for violators.

“As the principal, I hold the principle that leadership must be firm yet nurturing. Firmness is important so that all members of the school community understand that every form of violation, including bullying, cannot be tolerated. However, this firmness must be accompanied by a clear vision, namely creating a safe, religious, and educational learning environment. Therefore, I always strive to guide teachers and staff to be aligned in fostering a positive culture at the madrasah.” (Interview with Mas’ud, Thursday, June 12, 2025)

2) Strong Collaboration between Teachers and Parents

Active communication between teachers and parents helps in identifying students who may be victims or perpetrators of bullying. Teachers can immediately report suspicious behaviors to parents, enabling early intervention.

“In my opinion, strong collaboration between teachers and parents is very important in preventing and handling bullying. As teachers, we cannot monitor students 24 hours a day, so intensive communication with parents is very helpful. For example, when there are signs that a student is experiencing behavioral changes, we immediately contact the parents to discuss the issue. Likewise, parents often provide us with information from home that we can consider in addressing problems at school.” (Interview with Totok Handoko, Friday, June 13, 2025)

3) Character Building through Religious Activities

The madrasah routinely organizes religious activities such as Islamic study sessions, Qur’an recitation, and moral development programs. These activities instill moral values and empathy, encouraging students to refrain from deviant behaviors such as bullying.

“Religious activities play a very significant role in shaping students’ character. At this madrasah, every day we conduct character-building programs through religious practices such as Qur’an recitation, hizib reading, congregational Dhuba prayer, and student-led short sermons. Through these activities, we instill noble values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, and care for others.” (Interview with Totok Handoko, Friday, June 13, 2025)

4) A Religious School Environment

MTs NW Aik Bukaq is known for its religious and conducive environment. The culture of mutual respect and cooperation, instilled from an early stage, strengthens efforts to prevent bullying. The principal, Mr. Mas’ud, explained:

"In preventing bullying at our madrasah, of course there are supporting factors as well as challenges. For supporting factors, the first is the commitment of all teachers and staff. Alhamdulillah, teachers here are very attentive to students' behavior and actively help supervise and guide them so they do not engage in bullying. Furthermore, our madrasah environment is very religious. Activities such as Qur'an recitation, congregational prayers, and routine sermons greatly assist in shaping students' character to be more moral and respectful. In addition, the presence of guidance counselors and active homeroom teachers is very helpful in detecting and handling bullying cases. Parents are also responsive when we involve them, especially in guiding children's behavior at home. However, we also face some obstacles. One of them is that some students do not realize that certain jokes or teasing can be considered bullying. They think it is just normal." (Interview with Mas'ud, Thursday, June 12, 2025)

Another teacher also stated:

"In my view, there are several supporting factors in preventing bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq. One of them is the character-building programs such as congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, and morning literacy activities. These programs help instill good morals in students so that they respect their peers and are less likely to engage in bullying. In addition, the principal's support is very strong. He constantly reminds us teachers to pay attention to students' behavior, not only their academics. On the other hand, there are also inhibiting factors we experience. One is the limited number of supervisors. During recess or outside class, teachers cannot fully monitor all students, so sometimes teasing or pushing still occurs. Moreover, some students bring habits from home, such as using harsh words or mocking peers. This is difficult to change, as external influences outside school are very strong."

b. Inhibiting Factors

In its efforts to prevent bullying, MTs NW Aik Bukaq faces several significant inhibiting factors. These challenges must be addressed to ensure the creation of a safe and comfortable school environment for all students.

1) Limited Teacher Supervision

One major inhibiting factor is the insufficient number of supervisors to monitor student behavior comprehensively, especially outside classroom hours such as during recess, before classes start, or after school. At these times, students interact more freely, creating opportunities for verbal or physical bullying. The lack of duty teachers makes it difficult to detect acts of bullying early.

"Yes, one of the obstacles we face is the limitation in teacher supervision. The large number of students and the dense learning schedule make it impossible for teachers to continuously monitor every student's behavior, particularly during recess, in the canteen, or in less-supervised areas. We realize this creates opportunities for negative behaviors such as bullying." (Interview with Totok Handoko, Friday, June 13, 2025)

2) Limited Teacher Knowledge on Handling Bullying

Some teachers lack sufficient knowledge and skills in handling bullying cases appropriately. Inappropriate handling, such as scolding perpetrators in public or blaming victims, can worsen the situation and reduce students' trust in teachers. The absence of specific training in conflict resolution and psychological approaches poses a significant challenge in prevention efforts.

"Frankly, many of us teachers still lack adequate understanding of how to handle bullying properly. Sometimes we just see it as ordinary mischief among students, while in fact, it can have very serious impacts on victims' psychology. Although we try to give warnings or advice, not all teachers fully understand systematic and procedural steps for handling it. Therefore, I think there needs to be special training or workshops for teachers so we are more prepared to deal with bullying cases."

3) Influence of Family and Social Environment

Some students bring negative habits from their families or peer groups outside school. For example, using harsh words, mocking, or belittling others has already become normalized in their

social environment. This weakens the school's efforts to prevent bullying, as it must counter external influences deeply ingrained in students' behavior.

4) Low Willingness of Victims to Report

Feelings of fear, shame, and concern about retaliation discourage many victims from reporting bullying to teachers or the school. The culture of silence and the negative stigma toward those who report further increase the likelihood of bullying persisting. As a result, cases often remain undisclosed until they have caused severe psychological impacts on victims. The principal, Mr. Mas'ud, stated:

"At our madrasah, we have tried our best to prevent bullying. However, it cannot be denied that there are still some challenges we face. One is the limited number of supervisors. The number of teachers is still insufficient, so not all areas of the school can be closely monitored, especially during recess or dismissal. In addition, students' family backgrounds and social environments also present challenges. Some students are accustomed to speaking harshly or mocking others at home, and such habits are difficult to change with school guidance alone. Collaboration with parents and the community is necessary. We also observe that many victims are still reluctant to report. They feel afraid or embarrassed, worrying about being labeled weak or facing retaliation. This causes bullying cases to sometimes only be discovered after they have already had psychological impacts on students."

Based on interviews with the principal, it can be concluded that in efforts to prevent bullying, both supporting and inhibiting factors significantly influence the success of the programs implemented at MTs NW Aik Bukaq.

DISCUSSION

1. Forms of Bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq

Bullying behaviors occurring at MTs NW Aik Bukaq take various forms. Students engage not only in verbal bullying, but also in physical and psychological acts that negatively affect victims. Additionally, there are indications of bullying rooted in seniority among students. In several cases, senior students tend to treat junior students unfairly, such as ordering them around, humiliating them in public, or exerting psychological pressure. This form of seniority is often normalized by perpetrators, yet it falls into the category of bullying because it involves coercion and power domination that harms others.

The forms of bullying identified in this madrasah demonstrate that bullying is not limited to physical violence; it may also appear in verbal and symbolic forms that are equally harmful to students' mental and social development. Therefore, accurate understanding and serious intervention are required by all stakeholders, including the principal, teachers, and parents. The main forms of bullying that occur include:

a. Verbal Bullying

Verbal bullying is the most frequent type of bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq. Recent studies confirm that verbal aggression is often normalized as "joking" among peers, but its impact on victims can be profound, leading to lowered self-esteem and social withdrawal (Espelage & Hong, 2022). Some students reported experiencing mockery related to physical appearance, family background, or academic performance. Examples include calling peers by animal names, mocking body shape (e.g., overweight or skinny), and ridiculing classmates with lower academic achievement. According to the school principal, this form of bullying is difficult to control because students frequently perceive it as harmless banter.

b. Physical Bullying

Physical bullying also occurs within the madrasah, although less frequently than verbal bullying. Research has shown that physical aggression among adolescents is often linked to environmental factors, including lack of supervision and peer group influence (Chen, Zhu, & He, 2020). At MTs NW Aik Bukaq, physical bullying takes the form of pushing, light hitting, or intentionally damaging belongings. Teachers reported that such acts commonly occur during breaks or outside class hours, particularly in areas with minimal supervision. Although these incidents do not always cause serious physical injuries, they create fear and insecurity among victims. The school counselor also noted several reports from students who had been subjected to such physical aggression.

c. Social Bullying

Social bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq includes exclusion from group activities, both inside and outside the classroom. According to recent findings, social exclusion is a subtle but damaging form of bullying that can lead to long-term emotional distress and hinder social development (Saarento et al., 2021). Some students expressed that they were often left out of group work or ignored during recess, leading to feelings of isolation. This form of bullying is more difficult to detect because it does not manifest in overtly aggressive acts, requiring teachers to use emotional sensitivity and close observation to identify it.

In response, the principal has emphasized increased supervision of student interactions during class, recess, and extracurricular activities. Teachers and homeroom advisors are directed to be more attentive to student behaviors and to act immediately if signs of intimidation or exclusion are observed. Furthermore, the school prioritizes character development through religious and extracurricular activities. Activities such as Qur'an recitation circles, religious lectures, leadership training, and student organizational involvement are designed to foster students' moral integrity, responsibility, and mutual respect. Embedding Islamic values from an early age serves as a crucial foundation for cultivating respectful and empathetic relationships among students.

These findings highlight that bullying is a serious issue requiring the attention of all parties—schools, teachers, parents, and students themselves. The forms of bullying identified at MTs NW Aik Bukaq illustrate that bullying can occur both openly and covertly, each having detrimental effects on students' academic performance and socio-emotional well-being. Therefore, it is imperative for the madrasah not only to implement written anti-bullying policies but also to build a school culture that is inclusive, respectful, and tolerant. Preventive measures grounded in Islamic values also represent a relevant approach in the madrasah context, given the importance of character education in shaping morally responsible student behavior.

2. The Efforts of the Madrasah Principal in Preventing Bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq

Based on the findings, it is evident that the principal of MTs NW Aik Bukaq does not merely act as an administrator but also as a moral leader and character builder. The efforts undertaken demonstrate that addressing bullying must be holistic, encompassing not only legal or disciplinary measures but also religious, cultural, and psychological approaches.

The results of this study reveal that the principal plays a pivotal role in preventing bullying within the school environment. As highlighted by Leithwood et al. (2020), effective instructional leadership involves promoting a positive school climate, fostering character development, and ensuring the well-being of students. Thus, the principal at MTs NW Aik Bukaq assumes responsibility not only as an administrative leader but also as a moral exemplar and a guiding figure for the entire school community.

One of the principal's key initiatives has been the establishment of clear internal policies against all forms of bullying. These policies are integrated into the school's code of conduct and

are communicated to students, teachers, and staff at the beginning of each academic year. Dissemination occurs through school assemblies, teachers' meetings, and parent-teacher forums. Such practices align with the findings of Kowalski et al. (2021), who emphasize that school-wide policies and early communication are essential in fostering a safe and inclusive learning environment.

In addition, the principal actively promotes student character development through programs such as Strengthening Character Education (PPK), religious activities, and the habituation of positive behaviors. Routine programs, including congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and religious lectures, are believed to instill moral values and noble character in students. This is consistent with the research of Alzyoud & Al-Awidi (2022), which found that faith-based and value-oriented programs significantly reduce the likelihood of aggressive or bullying behaviors.

The principal also collaborates with guidance and counseling teachers as well as homeroom teachers to detect potential bullying cases early. Teachers are encouraged to be more attentive to behavioral changes in students, such as isolation, sadness, or visible signs of being bullied. Preventive actions are taken through personal approaches, counseling, and guidance sessions. This resonates with findings by Gaffney et al. (2019), who highlight the critical role of teacher vigilance and intervention in mitigating bullying.

Beyond internal efforts, the principal seeks to engage parents and the wider community. This is achieved through school committee meetings and strengthened communication channels between the school and parents, ensuring that monitoring student behavior occurs both at school and at home. Such collaboration reflects the argument of Evans & Smokowski (2019), who stress the importance of family-school partnerships in creating a comprehensive bullying prevention strategy.

Furthermore, the principal provides a living example through daily attitudes and behaviors. His friendly, fair, and open demeanor serves as a role model for teachers and students in cultivating a positive school culture. Despite challenges such as limited supervisory staff, inadequate facilities, and the lack of parental awareness in supporting children's character development, the efforts of the principal have generally been successful and demonstrate a significant positive impact in reducing bullying cases at MTs NW Aik Bukaq.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Preventing Bullying at MTs NW Aik Bukaq

In implementing bullying prevention efforts at MTs NW Aik Bukaq, the principal encountered several supporting and inhibiting factors. Findings obtained through interviews and observations revealed that both types of factors influenced the effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying programs and policies. As recent educational systems research emphasizes, schools operate as interconnected systems in which leadership, teachers, students, facilities, and the broader social environment interact to determine outcomes (García & Weiss, 2020).

The prevention of bullying within the school context, particularly at MTs NW Aik Bukaq, is shaped by both internal and external conditions. Based on interviews with the principal, teachers, and students, it was found that the success of anti-bullying initiatives depends on several supporting and inhibiting factors, outlined as follows:

a. Supporting Factors in Bullying Prevention

- 1) **Strong and Visionary Principal Leadership** The principal plays a vital role in creating a safe and supportive learning environment. Decisive leadership and a firm commitment to enforcing anti-bullying policies emerged as a primary factor in prevention efforts. This aligns with recent scholarship showing that transformative school leadership inspires collective responsibility and nurtures a positive school climate (Day et al., 2021).

- 2) Collaboration between Teachers and Parents Active communication between teachers and parents allows for early detection of bullying behaviors. Teachers can report concerning behavior to parents, enabling early intervention. Recent research highlights that strong school–family partnerships foster social-emotional growth and reduce the risk of aggressive behavior among students (Daniel et al., 2020).
- 3) Character Building through Religious Activities The school regularly organizes religious and moral activities, such as Qur’an recitation, religious lectures, and character development programs, to instill empathy and discourage deviant behaviors such as bullying. Studies confirm that character education programs grounded in moral and religious values significantly reduce bullying behaviors (Santrock, 2021).
- 4) A Religious and Supportive School Environment MTs NW Aik Bukaq is known for its religious and cooperative atmosphere, which cultivates mutual respect and solidarity. Research has shown that collective values within a school culture contribute to the internalization of moral norms, thereby preventing violence and bullying (Sari & Kustandi, 2020).
- 5) Active Guidance and Counseling Services The presence of a committed counseling team is another important supporting factor. Counseling teachers provide preventive and curative support to students facing social or psychological challenges, which might otherwise trigger bullying. Evidence shows that comprehensive school counseling programs are central to creating safe and supportive environments (Meyer & Evans, 2020).

b. Inhibiting Factors in Bullying Prevention

- 1) Lack of Student Awareness about the Impact of Bullying Despite awareness campaigns, some students still perceive bullying as mere “joking” or harmless fun. This reflects findings that when students fail to fully grasp the psychological and social harm of bullying, they normalize such behaviors (Baraldsnes, 2022).
- 2) Limited Supervision Outside of Class Hours Monitoring during recess, after school, or in unstructured spaces remains limited. Studies show that inadequate supervision in school microsystems allows opportunities for bullying to occur unnoticed (Wang et al., 2019).
- 3) Low Parental Involvement Not all parents actively monitor their children’s behavior at home or cooperate with the school when incidents arise. Some even underestimate reports of bullying, thereby weakening school efforts. Research confirms that parental disengagement negatively impacts school-based bullying prevention programs (Lee & Song, 2020).

In summary, the effectiveness of bullying prevention at MTs NW Aik Bukaq is strongly influenced by the involvement of all stakeholders—school leadership, teachers, students, and parents. These efforts are further strengthened by adequate facilities and collective awareness. Nevertheless, obstacles such as limited supervision and a lack of student awareness remain challenges that require systematic and sustained intervention.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research regarding the efforts of the madrasah principal in preventing bullying among students at MTs NW Aik Bukaq, several key points can be concluded: (1) The forms of bullying that occur at MTs NW Aik Bukaq include verbal bullying (mockery, insults), physical bullying (hitting, kicking, damaging property), and social bullying (exclusion, intimidation). This indicates that various types of bullying are still present and require serious handling; (2) The efforts of the madrasah principal to prevent bullying are carried out through strategic measures such as: establishing anti-bullying policies within the school rules, strengthening supervision of student interactions, fostering students’ character through religious and social

activities, collaborating with guidance counselors and homeroom teachers, adopting persuasive approaches to students, and maintaining communication with parents; and (3) The supporting factors for bullying prevention include the commitment of the principal, collaboration among teachers, parental support, and a religious school environment. Meanwhile, the inhibiting factors consist of students' lack of awareness regarding the negative impacts of bullying, limited supervisory facilities, and the suboptimal involvement of all stakeholders in supporting prevention programs.

The findings of this study provide both practical and theoretical contributions. Practically, the research demonstrates that proactive leadership, collaborative efforts among teachers, engagement with parents, and the integration of religious and character-building activities are crucial in preventing bullying in schools. These insights can guide school principals, educators, and policymakers in designing effective anti-bullying programs that foster a safe and supportive learning environment. Theoretically, the study enriches the field of educational leadership and school management by highlighting the strategic role of madrasah principals in shaping student behavior and mitigating social risks such as bullying. It also contributes to the literature on school-based interventions that integrate moral, social, and religious education.

Future studies could expand the scope of this research in several ways. First, quantitative studies can be conducted to measure the effectiveness of specific anti-bullying strategies and programs, providing statistical evidence of their impact. Second, comparative studies across multiple madrasahs or regions would help identify contextual factors that influence the success of bullying prevention efforts. Third, longitudinal research could examine the long-term outcomes of leadership strategies on students' social behavior and school climate. Additionally, exploring the perspectives of students themselves could offer deeper insights into the experiences and perceptions of bullying and its prevention. This study underscores the vital role of school leadership, teacher collaboration, parental involvement, and a supportive school culture in preventing bullying. By providing evidence-based insights into effective strategies, the research contributes to the broader goal of creating safe, inclusive, and nurturing educational environments. The findings highlight that preventing bullying is not only a disciplinary task but also a comprehensive educational effort that fosters students' moral, social, and emotional development.

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