

ISLAMIC COUNSELING STRATEGIES IN HANDLING BULLYING BEHAVIOR IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY AT MADRASAH ALIYAH SWASTA PLUS AL-ULUM MEDAN

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze Islamic counseling strategies for addressing bullying behavior among students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan and to describe changes in students' behavior following the implementation of counseling. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The informants consisted of guidance and counseling teachers, homeroom teachers, students who engaged in bullying, and students who were victims of bullying. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation and were subsequently analyzed descriptively. The findings indicate that Islamic counseling strategies were implemented through problem identification, a personal approach, the counseling process, reinforcement of Islamic values, victim support, and continuous monitoring. Prior to counseling, verbal and social bullying was identified in the form of teasing, derogatory nicknames, humiliation, and social exclusion, which caused victims to feel uncomfortable and tend to withdraw from social interactions. Following counseling, positive behavioral changes were observed, including a reduction in teasing and degrading behavior, improved self-control and empathy, greater respect for peers, and increased willingness among victims to interact with others and communicate their concerns to teachers. The reinforcement of moral values, *ukhuwah* (brotherhood and solidarity), compassion, responsibility, and mutual respect constituted important components of the behavioral change process. The study concludes that Islamic counseling strategies contribute positively to addressing and reducing bullying tendencies while fostering healthier and more constructive social interactions among students.

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INTRODUCTION

High school is a stage of development marked by complex psychological, emotional, and social changes. At this stage, interactions with peers play an important role in shaping identity, self-confidence, communication skills, and students' ability to adapt (Iskandar, Thalal, Sari, & Azhari, 2026). However, the dynamics of relationships between

students don't always happen positively. Differences in character, physical condition, academic ability, social background, or communication styles can lead to conflicts, which if not managed well, can develop into bullying behavior. Bullying shouldn't just be seen as a joke or normal conflict because it involves deliberate aggressive actions and can put the victim in a weaker position. It can take the form of physical, verbal, social actions, or behavior through digital media that can potentially disrupt students' psychological and social development (Hasan & Azizah, 2022).

Bullying has become a significant issue in educational settings because its effects can be felt by both the victims and the perpetrators. Students who experience bullying may show fear, shame, low self-esteem, withdraw from social interactions, struggle to build relationships, and even have difficulties participating in learning activities. These experiences can also affect how students see themselves and their social environment. On the other hand, students who bully others also need guidance because unchecked aggressive behavior can develop into unhealthy interaction patterns (Yuliza & Daulay, 2023). Therefore, dealing with bullying is not enough just through giving punishment, but requires an approach that can understand the student's condition, provide support to the victims, help the perpetrators realize the impact of their behavior, and rebuild healthier social relationships in the school environment.

From an Islamic perspective, handling bullying is closely related to shaping moral character and social relationships based on respect for human dignity. Islam teaches love, brotherhood, respect, empathy, and forbids belittling or hurting others. For example, Surah Al-Hujurat verse 11 prohibits people from belittling, insulting, or giving bad names to one another. These values show that bullying behavior goes against the principles of social relationships in Islam (Utaminingsiha, Idammatussilmib, Intaniaa, & Kristiyuana, 2025). Therefore, efforts to handle bullying in the madrasah environment should be aimed not only at stopping harmful behavior, but also at building students' moral and spiritual awareness. Students need help understanding the importance of respecting others, controlling themselves, developing empathy, and using Islamic values as a foundation in interacting with their peers.

Islamic counseling holds a strategic position in addressing these issues because the counseling process can integrate psychological aspects with Islamic values. Through counseling, students can have a safe space to express their experiences, feelings, conflicts, and difficulties in social relationships. For bullying victims, counseling can focus on providing support, boosting self-confidence, restoring a sense of safety, and developing skills to handle social environments more adaptively. Meanwhile, for students who engage in bullying, counseling can help raise awareness about the consequences of their behavior, develop empathy, control aggressive behavior, and improve interaction patterns. Islamic counseling strategies can also include individual counseling, group counseling, character building, strengthening religious values, persuasive communication, as well as collaboration between counselors, teachers, parents, and the madrasa (Maulana, et al., 2026).

Madrasahs have an educational environment that allows Islamic values to be integrated into the process of shaping student behavior. In the context of Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan, handling bullying becomes important to study because student interactions take place in an educational setting that not only emphasizes academic achievement but also character and moral development. The issue that needs attention is not just about whether bullying exists or not, but how counselors understand the problem and determine the appropriate Islamic counseling strategies according to the students' conditions. This includes how the problem is identified, how counselors provide services to both victims and perpetrators, how Islamic values are applied in the counseling process, and how collaboration with the school and family is carried out. Studying these aspects is important to gain a deeper understanding of Islamic counseling practices in dealing with bullying.

Research on bullying and counseling services in educational settings has been conducted from various perspectives. (Imaroh, Rahman, Rosyadi, & Izzati, 2024) studying the role of guidance and counseling teachers in reducing bullying behavior among middle school students and showing the importance of the counselor's role through counseling services in handling bullying problems. Next, (Rozikin & Muali, 2025) discussing bullying among students and its prevention through Islamic counseling, emphasizing the contribution of Islamic counseling in building good relationships with God and fellow humans. (Sahri & Saufi, 2025) then examined efforts to prevent and handle violence and bullying through Islamic counseling guidance at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Pati, carried out through personal advice, stop bullying programs, role modeling, educational punishments, and collaboration with teachers and parents. Another study by Ulandari and Mailin on the role of Islamic counseling in dealing with bullying also showed that an approach based on Islamic values can be used to support victims, even though their research context was in a college environment.

Based on these studies, it appears that previous research has paid attention to the role of counselors, bullying prevention, and the implementation of Islamic values, but there is still room to deepen the study regarding Islamic

counseling strategies as a process for handling bullying contextually among high school madrasah students. Previous research tends to focus on the role of services, forms of prevention, or handling outcomes, while aspects such as how counselors identify cases, determine strategies, build communication with victims and perpetrators, integrate Islamic values, involve the school and parents, and follow up have not been fully explored within a single research framework. The most recent study by (Yompa, Sahwan, & Dinata, 2026) It has indeed studied Islamic counseling communication in dealing with bullying and academic anxiety among madrasah students, but its main focus is on the communication process in counseling, not on the overall strategies for handling bullying in depth. So, there's still a need for research that looks at Islamic counseling strategies more comprehensively in the real madrasah context.

The novelty of this research lies in a thorough study of Islamic counseling strategies in handling bullying behavior among high school students through a case study at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan. This study not only identifies forms of bullying or describes the counselor's role but also analyzes the series of strategies used in the management process, starting from problem identification, approaching victims and perpetrators, conducting counseling, applying Islamic values such as morals, empathy, brotherhood, compassion, self-control, and respect for others, to cooperation with the madrasah and families, as well as follow-up actions. Thus, this study offers a perspective that integrates psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions in dealing with bullying. This novelty is further strengthened by the research context at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan, so the study can provide a contextual understanding of how Islamic counseling strategies are applied in addressing bullying in Islamic educational settings.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aimed to deeply understand the phenomenon of bullying behavior and the Islamic counseling strategies applied in dealing with it based on the experiences, views, and actions of the people involved. Qualitative research allows the researcher to understand phenomena in their natural settings and to explore the meanings that emerge from the informants' experiences in context (Moleong, 2024). Meanwhile, a case study is used because the research focuses on a specific phenomenon in a real-life context, namely Islamic counseling strategies in addressing bullying behavior among students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan. (Creswell, 2018) explaining that a case study is one of the approaches in qualitative research used to explore a case in depth through various sources of information. Therefore, a case study design is suitable for getting a comprehensive picture of the processes, strategies, experiences, and conditions related to handling bullying through Islamic counseling.

The research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan. The location was chosen purposively, considering how well it fit the characteristics relevant to the study, namely the presence of a madrasah education environment that integrates general learning with Islamic values. The research informants were chosen using purposive sampling, meaning they were selected based on the consideration that they have knowledge, experience, and direct involvement with the phenomena being studied. The informants included guidance and counseling teachers, homeroom teachers, students who bully, and students who are victims of bullying. Guidance and counseling teachers were positioned as the main informants because they possess knowledge about problem identification, providing counseling services, and strategies for handling student behavior. The homeroom teacher acts as a supporting informant who can provide information about students' behavior and development in learning activities as well as daily interactions. Meanwhile, students who bully and students who are victims of bullying provide information about their direct experiences, types of bullying behavior, the circumstances behind the incidents, and their experiences during the handling process. Choosing informants with different positions and experiences allows the researcher to get diverse perspectives, so the phenomenon can be understood more fully.

Data collection was carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to get an idea of the madrasa environment, student interactions, social behavior patterns, as well as situations related to the emergence of bullying behavior and the implementation of counseling services. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with all research informants using a set of questions prepared based on the research focus. Interviews with guidance and counseling teachers focused on identifying cases, types of bullying found, Islamic counseling strategies, handling stages, approaches used, challenges, and follow-up actions. Interviews with homeroom teachers focused on observing student behavior, forms of student interaction, and the involvement of homeroom teachers in handling cases. Meanwhile, interviews with students who bully and their victims focused on their experiences, the types of incidents they faced or carried out, the underlying factors, their response to counseling, and changes they felt

after receiving support. Documentation was used to supplement research data in the form of guidance and counseling service notes, case handling records, guidance and counseling programs, activity documentation, and relevant school documents. In qualitative research, using multiple data collection techniques can help researchers get deeper data and allow cross-checking information from various sources (Arikunto, 2021).

Data analysis was carried out interactively from the data collection process until the research was completed. The data from interviews, observations, and documentation were first condensed by selecting, focusing, grouping, and simplifying information that was relevant to the research focus. Next, the data was presented in the form of narrative descriptions and theme groupings so that the relationships between various pieces of information could be clearly seen. The next step was drawing conclusions and verifying to find patterns, meanings, and relationships related to Islamic counseling strategies in handling bullying. (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2024) placing data condensation, data presentation, as well as drawing and verifying conclusions as an important part of the qualitative data analysis process. In this study, the analysis themes include forms of bullying behavior, factors underlying bullying, Islamic counseling strategies, the counseling implementation process, responses from victims and perpetrators, involvement of homeroom teachers, handling obstacles, and counseling follow-ups.

The validity of the data was done through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information obtained from the guidance and counseling teacher, the homeroom teacher, students who engage in bullying, and students who are victims of bullying. These comparisons were made to find out the similarities and differences in information regarding the forms of bullying, the factors causing it, the handling process, and the Islamic counseling strategies applied. Technique triangulation was done by comparing interview data with the results of observation and documentation. If different information was found, the researcher conducted further checks and deepened the investigation through interviews or other relevant data sources. This cross-checking was done so that the research findings did not rely solely on one source or one data collection technique. In qualitative research, the process of validating and checking data is an important part of boosting the credibility of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Because the research involves students who are both victims and perpetrators of bullying, the study also considers research ethics principles. The identities of all students are anonymized in presenting the research results to maintain confidentiality and protect the informants from potential stigma. Interviews are conducted with attention to the students' conditions and comfort, especially when discussing bullying experiences that could cause discomfort. The researcher also avoids judgmental questions and ensures that the data collection process does not worsen the relationship between victims and perpetrators. The data obtained is used solely for academic purposes and is presented based on the facts found in the field (Sugiyono, 2022). With this design, the research is expected to provide a deep and contextual understanding of Islamic counseling strategies in handling bullying behavior among high school students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan, including the types of strategies used, how they're implemented, students' experiences, supporting and hindering factors, as well as the follow-up actions taken by the school.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Implementation of Islamic Counseling Strategies in Handling Bullying Behavior

Based on observations conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan, the implementation of Islamic counseling strategies to address bullying behavior was carried out systematically and involved direct interaction between guidance and counseling teachers and students. At the initial stage, the guidance and counseling teacher observed patterns of student interaction within the madrasah environment, particularly during classroom activities, transitions between lessons, and break periods. The observations revealed several forms of interaction indicative of bullying behavior, including teasing peers, assigning derogatory or inappropriate nicknames, excessively ridiculing classmates, and making remarks that caused other students to feel uncomfortable. Homeroom teachers were also observed providing information to the guidance and counseling teacher regarding changes in students' behavior that required further attention and guidance.

Subsequent observations showed that the guidance and counseling teacher adopted a personal approach toward students involved in bullying incidents. The approach was conducted through direct communication in a calm setting and away from other students. Students were given an opportunity to explain the incidents from their own perspectives. Throughout the process, the counselor employed persuasive and non-judgmental communication, enabling students to

express their experiences, reasons for engaging in particular behaviors, and feelings following the incidents. For students who were victims of bullying, the approach focused on providing a sense of safety and creating opportunities for them to communicate their experiences without pressure from their peers.

During the counseling process, observations indicated that Islamic values were reinforced as an integral component of student guidance. The guidance and counseling teacher encouraged students to understand the importance of maintaining good character in interpersonal interactions, respecting peers, using appropriate language, regulating emotions, and avoiding behaviors that could demean or hurt others. Values such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood and solidarity), compassion, empathy, patience, responsibility, and mutual respect were used to help students understand that relationships with peers are not merely governed by school regulations but are also part of moral and character development. Students who engaged in bullying were encouraged to reflect on their behavior and recognize its potential impact on the feelings and well-being of the victims.

Among students who were victims of bullying, observations indicated that the guidance and counseling teacher provided support through affirming and strengthening communication. Students were given opportunities to express their feelings and experiences and were encouraged not to feel alone in dealing with their difficulties. The counselor also encouraged them to maintain positive social interactions and to report incidents to teachers if bullying behavior occurred again. This approach demonstrates that intervention was not focused solely on changing the behavior of students who engaged in bullying but also took into account the psychological well-being and need for safety of the victims.

Observations of homeroom teachers' involvement further indicated that the management of bullying was not carried out solely by the guidance and counseling teacher. Homeroom teachers also monitored students' behavioral development during classroom activities and everyday interactions. Communication between homeroom teachers and guidance and counseling teachers was used to obtain information regarding students' progress following counseling and guidance interventions. This monitoring was conducted to determine whether previously observed behaviors continued to recur or began to change. Through continuous monitoring, the counseling strategy did not end with the provision of counseling services but continued through behavioral supervision and ongoing student guidance. The observational findings were also consistent with the interview findings, which are presented below.

Interviews with the guidance and counseling teacher indicated that bullying was addressed through a process of problem identification, personal engagement, counseling, reinforcement of Islamic values, and monitoring of students' development. The guidance and counseling teacher explained:

"When a student is involved in bullying, I usually do not immediately impose a punishment. First, I try to understand the problem through observation, reports from the homeroom teacher, or information provided by the student. After that, I meet with the student privately so that they can speak more openly. During counseling, I guide them to understand that teasing, humiliating, or hurting others is inconsistent with Islamic moral values. I emphasize mutual respect, appropriate speech, empathy, and how we should treat our peers properly. After counseling, I continue to monitor their progress together with the homeroom teacher."

Interviews with the homeroom teacher indicated that the homeroom teacher also played an important role in identifying and monitoring changes in students' behavior after they received intervention from the guidance and counseling teacher. The homeroom teacher stated:

"I usually observe directly how the students interact in the classroom. If someone frequently teases or makes another student uncomfortable, I report it to the guidance and counseling teacher. After the student receives counseling, we also continue to observe their behavior. There have been changes, particularly in the way the student communicates with peers. A student who previously frequently teased others has begun to be more careful with their words and relationships with classmates."

Interviews with a student who engaged in bullying indicated that initially the student did not fully understand that the behavior could be considered harmful to others. After participating in the counseling process, the student began to recognize the consequences of their behavior and the importance of repairing relationships with peers. The student stated:

"At first, I thought teasing my friends was just a joke because my friends also often joked in that way. After I was called in and talked to by the guidance and counseling teacher, I realized that my friend actually felt uncomfortable. The teacher also explained that, in Islam, we are not allowed to demean others. After that, I tried to reduce my teasing and became more careful with my words so that my friends would not feel offended."

Meanwhile, interviews with a student who was a victim of bullying indicated that the bullying behavior had previously caused the student to feel uncomfortable when interacting with peers. After receiving support and guidance,

the student felt more confident in reporting problems to teachers and gradually regained a sense of safety within the madrasah environment. The student stated:

“Previously, I felt uncomfortable whenever I met the friend who often teased me. Sometimes I chose to remain silent and avoided socializing because I was afraid of being teased again. After I told the guidance and counseling teacher about what happened, I felt relieved because someone was there to help me. The teacher also told me that I did not need to be afraid and that I should continue to value myself. Now I feel more confident interacting with others, and if there is a problem, I know that I can report it to a teacher.”

Based on the findings, the implementation of Islamic counseling strategies to address bullying behavior at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan was carried out through problem identification, a personal approach, counseling, reinforcement of Islamic values, and continuous monitoring. These strategies helped students who engaged in bullying to recognize the consequences of their behavior and encouraged positive changes in their interpersonal interactions, while students who experienced bullying received support, a greater sense of safety, and increased confidence in communicating their concerns. The involvement of homeroom teachers further strengthened the monitoring and guidance process. Overall, Islamic counseling contributed to fostering students' awareness, empathy, self-control, and social behavior in ways that are more consistent with Islamic values.

Bullying Behavior Conditions Before and After Implementing Islamic Counseling Strategies

Based on observations conducted prior to the implementation of the Islamic counseling strategy, bullying behavior was still evident in interactions among students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan. The most prominent forms involved verbal and social bullying, including teasing peers, assigning unpleasant nicknames, excessively ridiculing classmates, humiliating others, and making degrading remarks. There was also a tendency to exclude certain students from peer groups. These behaviors were particularly evident during group interactions. Some students appeared to perceive teasing and assigning nicknames as forms of joking and therefore had not yet developed sufficient awareness of the potential impact of such behavior on their peers who were the targets.

The observations also revealed particular responses among students who experienced bullying. Students who were subjected to teasing or other unpleasant treatment appeared more passive in social interactions, limited their communication with certain peers, and tended to avoid situations that might lead to further ridicule. In some situations, students chose to remain silent when confronted with degrading remarks. These conditions indicate that bullying behavior affected students' comfort and willingness to engage in social interactions within the madrasah environment. The findings also highlight the need for appropriate guidance to help students distinguish between acceptable forms of joking and behavior that may hurt, demean, or negatively affect others.

Following the implementation of the Islamic counseling strategy, the observations indicated changes in students' interaction patterns. Students who had previously frequently teased or assigned nicknames to their peers began to reduce such behaviors and appeared more cautious in their choice of words when communicating. Interactions among students also demonstrated a more positive tendency, particularly in the way they communicated and responded to one another. Several students began to demonstrate greater respect for their peers and were less inclined to use their classmates' shortcomings or differences as subjects of ridicule. These changes indicate an improvement in students' understanding of the potential impact of bullying behavior on others.

Among students who had previously been victims of bullying, post-counseling observations indicated increased confidence in social interactions. Students appeared more open in communicating with teachers and peers and were less likely to avoid social environments. They also demonstrated greater willingness to report problems when they encountered situations that made them uncomfortable. Nevertheless, these changes still require continuous monitoring because the development of healthy behavior and social relationships is a gradual process that does not occur instantaneously. Overall, the observations indicate positive developments following the implementation of the Islamic counseling strategy, reflected both in the reduction of bullying behavior and in increased students' confidence and comfort in interacting within the madrasah environment. The observational findings were also consistent with the interview findings presented below.

Interviews with the guidance and counseling teacher indicated that, prior to counseling, the bullying behaviors identified primarily involved teasing, assigning nicknames, and verbal remarks that students perceived as jokes. Following counseling, changes were observed in both students' understanding and behavior. The guidance and counseling teacher stated:

"Before counseling was provided, there were indeed several students who frequently teased or assigned nicknames to their peers, and they considered it merely a joke. After we provided counseling using an approach based on Islamic values, we explained the impact of their behavior on the students who were targeted. Afterward, we observed that the students began to be more careful with their words and reduced their tendency to tease others. However, we continue to monitor them because behavioral change requires a process."

Interviews with the homeroom teacher indicated that changes in students' behavior were also evident in their everyday classroom interactions. Before counseling, some students tended to become targets of teasing and responded by remaining silent. Following the intervention, interactions among students appeared more conducive. The homeroom teacher explained:

"Previously, I observed that one student was frequently teased and usually remained quiet or distanced themselves from their peers. After the student who was involved received intervention from the guidance and counseling teacher, the teasing behavior began to decrease. Students in the class also became more careful in the way they spoke, while the student who had previously remained quiet began to communicate more confidently with peers."

Interviews with a student who had engaged in bullying indicated a change in the student's understanding of behavior that had previously been perceived as joking. After receiving counseling, the student began to recognize that comments directed at peers could cause discomfort. The student stated:

"I used to think that teasing my friends was just a joke and not a serious problem. After I was called in and given an explanation by the guidance and counseling teacher, I realized that my friend felt embarrassed and uncomfortable. The teacher also explained the importance of respecting others according to Islamic teachings. Now I try not to tease others and to be more careful with my words when joking."

Meanwhile, interviews with a student who had experienced bullying indicated that, prior to receiving support, the student felt uncomfortable and tended to avoid interactions with peers. After receiving counseling, the student felt safer and more confident in communicating their concerns. The student explained:

"Previously, I often felt embarrassed and uncomfortable when I was teased, so I tended to remain quiet and sometimes avoided my friends. After I told the guidance and counseling teacher about what happened, I felt calmer because someone was helping me. Now I feel more confident socializing with others, and if someone makes me uncomfortable, I feel able to report it to a teacher."

Based on the findings, verbal and social bullying remained evident prior to the implementation of the Islamic counseling strategy, including teasing, derogatory nicknames, and social exclusion, which caused victims to feel uncomfortable and tend to withdraw from social interactions. Following the counseling intervention, positive changes were observed, including a reduction in bullying behavior, increased awareness among students regarding the importance of monitoring their speech and respecting their peers, and greater confidence among victims in interacting with others and reporting problems. These findings indicate that the Islamic counseling strategy contributed to behavioral change and the development of more positive social interactions within the madrasah environment.

The Contribution of Islamic Counseling Strategies to Reducing Bullying Behavior

Based on observations conducted after the implementation of the Islamic counseling strategy, changes were evident in students' interaction patterns within the Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan environment. Students who had previously demonstrated a tendency to tease, assign derogatory nicknames, or humiliate their peers appeared to become more cautious in their communication. The frequency of such behaviors appeared to decrease in daily interactions, particularly when students were engaged in group activities. Several students also began to demonstrate greater respect for their peers and were less likely to use their classmates' shortcomings or differences as subjects of ridicule.

The observations also indicated improvements in students' ability to exercise self-control during interactions with peers. Students appeared better able to regulate their responses when disagreements occurred or in situations that had previously had the potential to trigger teasing. Interactions among students tended to become calmer and were less likely to escalate into degrading behavior. This condition indicates an increased awareness among students of the importance of monitoring their speech and behavior in social relationships.

The reinforcement of Islamic values during the counseling process was also reflected in changes in students' attitudes. Students began to demonstrate an understanding that respecting peers, being mindful of their words, helping one another, and avoiding behavior that could hurt others are moral values that should be practiced in everyday life.

Empathy and social responsibility became increasingly evident through students' greater sensitivity to their peers' feelings during interactions. These changes indicate that the counseling process was not solely oriented toward compliance with madrasah rules but also encouraged the development of internal moral awareness among students.

Observations of students who had previously been victims of bullying also indicated positive developments. Students appeared more confident in interacting with their peers, more open in communicating their concerns to teachers, and less likely to avoid social environments. The guidance and counseling teacher, together with the homeroom teacher, continued to monitor the students to ensure that bullying behavior did not recur. This monitoring demonstrates that behavioral change requires an ongoing process and cannot depend solely on a one-time counseling intervention. The observational findings were also consistent with the interview findings presented below.

Interviews with the guidance and counseling teacher indicated that following the implementation of the Islamic counseling strategy, changes occurred in students' behavior, particularly in the reduction of teasing and the development of greater awareness of the importance of respecting peers. The guidance and counseling teacher stated:

"After receiving counseling, the students who previously frequently teased others have become more careful with their words. They are beginning to understand that what they considered a joke could actually hurt their friends' feelings. I have also observed that they are becoming better able to control themselves during interactions. The Islamic values we emphasize help them understand that respecting others and avoiding harm to their peers are important aspects of good character."

Interviews with the homeroom teacher indicated that changes were also evident in students' interactions during classroom activities. The homeroom teacher explained:

"After receiving guidance, the students' interactions in the classroom have improved. The student who previously frequently teased others has become more careful in speaking and is less likely to use their classmates' shortcomings as a subject of jokes. I continue to monitor the situation and communicate with the guidance and counseling teacher so that these changes can be maintained."

Interviews with a student who had engaged in bullying indicated increased awareness of the impact of their behavior. The student began to understand that actions previously perceived as jokes could cause discomfort to peers. The student stated:

"Now I am more aware that even when joking, I need to consider my friends' feelings. I used to tease others without thinking that they might be hurt. After receiving counseling and learning about the importance of respecting others in Islam, I have tried to reduce my teasing and exercise greater self-control when joking with my friends."

Meanwhile, interviews with a student who had been a victim of bullying indicated improvements in their sense of safety and confidence in social interactions. The student stated:

"Now I feel more comfortable because the teasing from the friend who used to bother me has decreased. I also feel more confident socializing with others and am not as afraid as I was before. If something makes me uncomfortable, I am now more confident about telling a teacher."

Based on the findings, the Islamic counseling strategy demonstrated a positive contribution to the reduction of bullying behavior. Students began to reduce teasing and degrading behavior, demonstrated improved self-control, and showed greater respect and empathy toward their peers. Meanwhile, students who had experienced bullying felt more comfortable and confident in interacting with others and communicating their concerns to teachers. These changes indicate that the reinforcement of Islamic values through counseling can contribute to the development of stronger moral awareness and healthier social behavior, although continued monitoring and guidance remain necessary to sustain these positive changes.

DISCUSSION

Implementation of Islamic Counseling Strategies in Handling Bullying Behavior

The findings indicate that Islamic counseling strategies for addressing bullying at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan are implemented through problem identification, personal approaches, counseling sessions, reinforcement of Islamic values, victim support, and continuous monitoring. Counselors identify bullying through direct observation, reports from homeroom teachers, and communication with students involved. This approach emphasizes

understanding students' backgrounds and problems before determining appropriate interventions. These findings are consistent with (Khoir & Kurniawati, 2025), who found that Islamic counseling in handling bullying involves personal guidance, *mau'izhah hasanah* (good counsel), exemplary behavior, educational consequences, and cooperation with teachers and parents, resulting in reduced bullying and increased student confidence.

The personal approach enables counselors to establish a safe, open, and non-judgmental counseling environment. Students who engage in bullying are given opportunities to explain their behavior and reflect on its consequences, while victims are encouraged to express their experiences and feelings. This finding is consistent with (Chailani, et al., 2023), who found that religious guidance in addressing bullying involves direct interaction between counselors and students and emphasizes behavioral change through Islamic values. The reinforcement of Islamic values, including *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), compassion, patience, responsibility, and mutual respect, is connected directly to students' daily social experiences. Thus, Islamic counseling functions not merely as religious instruction but also as a foundation for developing students' moral awareness and social responsibility, consistent with (Us'an, Suyadi, & Siraj, 2023).

The findings concerning behavioral and character development are also consistent with (Almizri, Firman, & Karneli, 2024), who demonstrate that religious materials concerning faith and morality can support changes in bullying-related behavior. In the present study, students who previously considered teasing to be merely a form of joking began to recognize that such behavior could cause embarrassment, discomfort, and emotional harm to their peers. This change indicates a shift from simple compliance with school rules toward greater awareness of the moral and social consequences of behavior. Therefore, Islamic counseling serves not only as a mechanism for correcting inappropriate behavior but also as a process of internalizing moral values.

Islamic counseling also addresses the needs of students who experience bullying. Counselors provide emotional support, encourage victims to communicate their experiences, and strengthen their confidence to report bullying when it occurs. This finding is consistent with (Dzakiyyah, et al., 2026), who found that Islamic counseling can strengthen students' courage to report bullying and improve their self-confidence. Accordingly, bullying intervention should not focus exclusively on changing perpetrators' behavior but should also restore victims' sense of safety, confidence, and ability to participate in social interactions.

The involvement of homeroom teachers demonstrates that bullying prevention and intervention require collaborative efforts. Homeroom teachers contribute by observing students' behavior, reporting problematic interactions, and monitoring behavioral changes following counseling. This finding supports (Ma'ie & Rahman, 2026), who emphasize the importance of collaboration between Islamic Religious Education teachers and guidance and counseling teachers in addressing bullying. The observed reduction in teasing and derogatory behavior, together with increased self-control, respect, empathy, and victim confidence, is also consistent with (Nasirudin, Sudjai, Siswayanti, Miftah, & Nasikhin, 2025), who reported that Islamic counseling is associated with reduced bullying, increased self-confidence, and the development of forgiveness.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted within the methodological limitations of this study. Because the research employed a qualitative case study design, the observed behavioral changes cannot be interpreted as statistical evidence of causal effects. Rather, they represent contextual indications of the contribution of Islamic counseling to addressing and reducing bullying, consistent with the qualitative approach used by (Hafidloh & Maksum, 2025) to examine religious guidance in bullying prevention. Overall, the Islamic counseling strategy at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan can be characterized as personal, persuasive, religious, collaborative, and continuous, contributing not only to reducing bullying but also to developing moral awareness, empathy, self-control, victim confidence, and healthier peer relationships based on Islamic values.

Bullying Behavior Conditions Before and After Implementing Islamic Counseling Strategies

Before the implementation of the Islamic counseling strategy, bullying behavior at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan primarily occurred in verbal and social forms, including teasing, assigning unpleasant nicknames, humiliating, ridiculing, and excluding peers. Some students who engaged in such behavior still perceived it as joking and therefore lacked adequate awareness of its impact on victims. This finding is consistent with (Sartina, Tanjung, Hidayati, & Setiawan, 2025), who found that bullying in madrasah environments may occur in both verbal and nonverbal forms, as well as (Sholichah & Ahmad, 2026), who emphasized the importance of understanding bullying within the context of students' social interactions.

The impact of bullying on victims was reflected in more passive behavior, a tendency to remain silent, limited social interaction, and avoidance of certain situations. This finding is consistent with (Abdillah, Purnama, Elmami, Azahra, & Aprilia, 2025), who demonstrated that victims of bullying may experience psychosocial consequences that affect their comfort within educational environments. (Hakim, Hasyim, Budiyo, & Wijono, 2025) similarly found that verbal and social bullying is associated with reduced self-confidence and increased anxiety among victims. Therefore, addressing bullying should include efforts to restore victims' sense of safety and self-confidence rather than focusing solely on stopping the perpetrators' behavior.

Following the implementation of the Islamic counseling strategy, changes were observed in students' interaction patterns, particularly through reduced teasing, fewer derogatory nicknames, and a decline in the tendency to use peers' shortcomings as subjects of jokes. Students also became more cautious in their communication and demonstrated greater respect toward their peers. This finding is consistent with (M, Imamuddin, Hadini, Nurbayani, & Hayati, 2025), who found that Islamic counseling guidance can serve as an approach to minimizing bullying. (Suryadi, Ilmi, & Sofkhatin, 2023) similarly demonstrated that personal advice, *mau'izhah hasanah* (good counsel), exemplary conduct, reinforcement of patience, forgiveness, and educational guidance can support positive behavioral changes among students.

The reinforcement of Islamic values constituted an important component of this behavioral change. Guidance and counseling teachers encouraged students to monitor their speech, respect their peers, regulate their emotions, develop empathy, and avoid behaviors that could demean or hurt others. This finding is consistent with (Hasanuddin, Tamuri, Chandra, & Parinduri, 2023), who demonstrated that Islamic value-based interpersonal communication through exemplary conduct, gentle communication, empathetic dialogue, personal advice, and reinforcement of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) can contribute to reducing verbal bullying. Thus, the values of *rahmah* (compassion), *ukhuwah*, and ethical speech function not only as religious teachings but also as foundations for developing students' social behavior.

These changes further indicate that Islamic counseling operates at the level of students' understanding and moral awareness. Students who had previously regarded teasing as merely joking began to recognize that such behavior could cause embarrassment and discomfort to victims. This finding is supported by (Munir, 2026), who demonstrated that Islamic counseling communication in addressing bullying can serve as a space for conveying and internalizing Islamic values rather than merely instructing students to stop particular behaviors. Accordingly, Islamic counseling helps students connect their everyday behavior with moral values that guide their social relationships.

The involvement of homeroom teachers further demonstrates that addressing bullying requires collaboration among educators. Homeroom teachers play a role in observing student interactions, providing information to guidance and counseling teachers, and monitoring behavioral changes following counseling. This finding is consistent with (Rijal, 2025), who emphasizes the importance of collaboration between Islamic Religious Education teachers and guidance and counseling teachers in character development and bullying intervention. In addition, the increased willingness of victims to interact with peers and communicate their concerns to teachers supports (Alwi & Iqbal, 2023), who found that psychologically and spiritually based Islamic counseling can enhance victims' self-confidence through empathetic relationships, problem exploration, self-reflection, and spiritual reinforcement.

Overall, the Islamic counseling strategy made a positive contribution to addressing and reducing bullying tendencies, as reflected in decreased teasing and degrading behavior, improved self-control, empathy, and respect for peers, as well as increased willingness among victims to interact and report problems. These findings reinforce previous research on the role of Islamic counseling and value-based education in fostering healthier social interactions. However, because this study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, the observed changes should not be interpreted as statistical evidence of causal effects but rather as contextual findings derived from observations, interviews, and documentation. Accordingly, the strength of this study lies in its illustration of how psychological, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions can be integrated within Islamic counseling strategies to foster more positive student behavior.

Contribution of Islamic Counseling Strategies to the Reduction of Bullying Behavior

The findings indicate that following the implementation of the Islamic counseling strategy, positive changes occurred in student interactions at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan, as reflected in reduced teasing, derogatory nicknames, and humiliating behavior toward peers. Students also became more cautious in their communication and demonstrated greater respect for others. This finding is consistent with (Abdurrohm, et al., 2024),

who found that Islamic counseling guidance can help minimize bullying and encourage more positive changes in students' attitudes and behavior.

Improvements were also evident in students' self-control during social interactions. Students became more likely to consider their peers' feelings before speaking and less likely to use differences or shortcomings as subjects of ridicule. This finding is relevant to Pama et al., who explain that Islamic values such as *rahmah* (compassion), *adl* (justice), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *tazkiyah* (self-purification), and *karamah* (human dignity) are associated with empathy, self-control, social connectedness, and respect for others. Thus, Islamic counseling can serve as a means of internalizing moral and spiritual values in students' social behavior.

The reinforcement of Islamic values was also reflected in students' increased understanding of the importance of appropriate speech, respect, mutual assistance, and avoiding behavior that may hurt others. Counseling was not limited to promoting compliance with school rules but also aimed to foster students' internal moral awareness. This finding is consistent with (Ali & Naz, 2025), who demonstrated that Islamic counseling communication can help madrasah students understand the relationship between everyday behavior and Islamic values in addressing bullying and academic anxiety.

Among students who had experienced bullying, positive changes were reflected in increased confidence in social interactions, greater openness in communicating problems to teachers, and a reduced tendency to avoid social environments. This finding is consistent with (Herman, Sufriyanto, & Ida, 2022), who found that verbal and social bullying can reduce victims' self-confidence and increase anxiety, while Islamic counseling through empathetic relationships, problem exploration, self-reflection, and spiritual reinforcement can support the restoration of victims' self-confidence. (Hidayah & Wahyudi, 2025) similarly demonstrated that the integration of Qur'anic values, including *rahmah*, *hikmah*, and *mau'izhah*, can strengthen victims' resilience in dealing with emotional pressure.

These changes nevertheless require continuous monitoring. Guidance and counseling teachers, together with homeroom teachers, continue to monitor students' development to prevent the recurrence of bullying behavior. This finding is consistent with (Mustofa, Subakri, & Gunawan, 2025), who emphasize that Islamic counseling guidance encompasses various methods that can be adapted to students' needs to prevent and minimize bullying. Therefore, collaboration and continuous monitoring constitute important components in sustaining positive behavioral changes.

Overall, the Islamic counseling strategy contributed positively to three main aspects: the behavior of students who engaged in bullying, the condition of victims, and the quality of students' social interactions. Students who engaged in bullying demonstrated reduced teasing and improved self-control, victims became more confident and willing to interact, and peer relationships became more conducive. This finding is consistent with (Alam, Failasufah, & Said, 2026), who found that Islamic counseling guidance is associated with reduced bullying, increased self-confidence, and the development of forgiveness among students.

Thus, Islamic counseling strategies serve not only to reduce bullying behavior but also to foster moral awareness, empathy, self-control, respect for others, and victims' confidence to re-engage socially. The strategy integrates psychological, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions into student development. However, because this study employed a qualitative case study approach, these findings should be understood as contextual evidence of contributions and observed changes identified through observations, interviews, and documentation, rather than as statistically established causal effects.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the Islamic counseling strategy at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Plus Al-Ulum Medan was implemented through problem identification, a personal approach, the counseling process, reinforcement of Islamic values, victim support, and continuous monitoring. The strategy demonstrated a positive contribution to reducing the tendency toward *bullying*, as reflected in decreased teasing and degrading behavior, improved self-control and empathy, and greater respect for peers. Meanwhile, victims reported a greater sense of safety and confidence, as well as increased willingness to interact with others and communicate their concerns. These findings indicate that Islamic counseling serves not only to address and reduce *bullying* behavior but also to foster students' moral awareness and character development in their social lives. However, this study is limited by its qualitative approach and case study design conducted in a single madrasah. Consequently, the findings are context-specific and cannot be broadly generalized, nor do they establish a statistically measurable causal effect. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a larger number of schools and informants and to employ quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to measure behavioral changes more objectively. Long-term monitoring is also recommended to examine the sustainability of behavioral changes following the counseling

intervention. Future studies could additionally involve parents, Islamic Religious Education teachers, madrasah principals, and peers to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the sustainability of Islamic counseling strategies in preventing and addressing *bullying* behavior.

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