

The Role of Teachers in Addressing and Preventing Bullying in Primary Madrasahs

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ABSTRACT. Bullying in madrasahs can undermine pupils' sense of security, social interaction and the learning process, and therefore requires consistent management and prevention. This study aims to describe the role of teachers in managing and preventing bullying in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through passive participant observation, semi-structured interviews and documentation, involving the headteacher, the deputy head for student affairs, teachers and pupils. The data were analysed through the stages of collection, reduction, presentation and drawing of conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the bullying observed took the form of physical and verbal abuse, such as hitting, kicking, mocking, physical insults, and addressing peers by their parents' names. Teachers fulfil the roles of educators, mentors and counsellors through education, individualised approaches, responding to complaints, providing advice and consequences, reinforcing religious values, and communicating with parents. Management and prevention still face obstacles in the form of repeated behaviour, pupils' backgrounds, and inconsistent parental involvement. These findings indicate that tackling bullying requires continuous character education, support for pupils, a consistent response from the school, and collaboration with families.

Keywords: the role of teachers; bullying; prevention; management; primary madrasah.

ABSTRAK. Bullying di madrasah dapat mengganggu rasa aman, interaksi sosial, dan proses belajar peserta didik sehingga memerlukan penanganan dan pencegahan yang konsisten. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan peran guru dalam penanganan dan pencegahan bullying di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Data diperoleh melalui observasi partisipatif pasif, wawancara semiterstruktur, dan dokumentasi dengan melibatkan kepala madrasah, wakamad kesiswaan, guru, dan peserta didik. Data dianalisis melalui tahapan pengumpulan, reduksi, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bullying yang ditemukan berbentuk fisik dan verbal, seperti memukul, menendang, mengejek, menghina fisik, dan memanggil teman dengan nama orang tua. Guru menjalankan peran sebagai pendidik, pembimbing, dan penasihat melalui edukasi, pendekatan individual, respons terhadap aduan, pemberian nasihat dan konsekuensi, penguatan nilai keagamaan, serta komunikasi dengan orang tua. Penanganan dan pencegahan masih menghadapi hambatan berupa pengulangan perilaku, latar belakang peserta didik, dan keterlibatan orang tua yang belum konsisten. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penanganan bullying memerlukan pendidikan karakter yang berkelanjutan, pendampingan peserta didik, respons sekolah yang konsisten, dan kolaborasi dengan keluarga.

Kata Kunci : peran guru; bullying; pencegahan; penanganan; madrasah ibtidaiyah

Introduction

Bullying is one of the issues within the educational environment as it can disrupt pupils' safety, well-being and social relationships. Such behaviour can take verbal or physical forms, such as giving nicknames, mocking, insulting, ostracising, hitting, kicking or carrying out other acts that harm those who are more vulnerable (Abdillah, 2024; Amnda dkk., 2020; Hamzah dkk., 2023). The impact is not limited to relationships between pupils; it can also affect their self-confidence, sense of well-being at school, concentration and engagement with their learning (Simanjuntak dkk., 2026; Wulandari dkk., 2026). Therefore, bullying should be viewed as an educational issue requiring a pedagogical response and consistent school management, rather than merely as a matter of individual behaviour.

In the context of primary education, teachers play a vital role because their interactions with pupils take place directly, both in the learning process and in the social life of the school. The role of teachers is not limited to teaching, but also encompasses educating, guiding, directing, advising and setting an example for pupils (Julismawati & Eliana, 2024; Kandiri & Arfandi, 2021). In tackling bullying, this role can be fulfilled by promoting an understanding of appropriate behaviour, providing support to pupils, counselling the perpetrators, and offering guidance to those involved. In the context of madrasahs, this function can be reinforced through moral education and religious values, so that the prevention of bullying relies not only on rules, but also on fostering an attitude of mutual respect and avoiding actions that cause harm to others (Ardyanti dkk., 2025; Aulia & Alimulloh, 2026; Jumarnis dkk., 2023).

The management of bullying cannot be viewed in isolation from the environment in which pupils grow up and interact. Factors such as family, school, peers, the social environment and the media may be linked to the emergence and recurrence of such behaviour (Febrianti dkk., 2024; Ririn, 2024). Prevention measures must therefore take into account school culture, peer relationships and family involvement, as well as the response to both the perpetrators and the victims. The impact experienced by victims also highlights the importance of teachers' involvement. Pupils who are bullied may display fear, low self-esteem, social withdrawal, a loss of interest in learning, and become more passive in the classroom (Nirwana, 2024; Yusni & Bakri, 2022).

Previous studies have examined teachers' involvement in tackling bullying from several perspectives. Strengthening teachers' capacity in anti-bullying education is a focus of this research (Permatasari dkk., 2025), whereas the support provided by teachers to victims is the focus of the research (Hairani & Putikadyanto, 2025). Teachers' responses to managing bullying behaviour were also examined by (Andryawan dkk., 2023). These studies indicate that teachers play a vital role in providing support and addressing bullying behaviour. This research expands on this discussion by

examining the interrelationship between the teacher's roles as an educator, mentor and counsellor in both addressing and preventing bullying within the context of madrasah ibtidaiyah. Attention is also given to the reinforcement of religious values, support for both perpetrators and victims, family involvement, and the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing these measures.

This situation was observed at MI Darul Hijrah Madani BTN-Kolhua, Kupang City, specifically in Class 2A. Initial observations revealed instances of physical bullying, such as hitting and kicking, as well as verbal bullying, including taunting, physical insults, and addressing classmates by their parents' names. Teachers have responded through reprimands, minor punishments, communication with parents, and counselling; however, such behaviour continues to occur, necessitating a study of teachers' practices in addressing and preventing it. In light of these circumstances, this study aims to analyse the role of teachers in addressing and preventing bullying, covering the forms of bullying identified, teachers' strategies, the obstacles encountered, changes in pupils' attitudes, and school programmes related to bullying prevention. It is hoped that this study will provide a contextual overview of teachers' pedagogical practices in addressing bullying in madrasah-based primary education through the integration of the teacher's role and religious character education.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of teachers in addressing and preventing bullying, based on the informants' behaviour, experiences, perspectives and actions in natural settings. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study seeks to understand the phenomenon based on the informants' experiences and perspectives in a natural context, whilst a case study design was used to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon under investigation within a specific context (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this study, the case examined was the role of teachers in addressing and preventing bullying, covering the forms of bullying, teachers' responses, strategies for addressing and preventing it, and the obstacles encountered. The research was conducted at MI Darul Hijrah Madani BTN-Kolhua, Jl. Fetor Funai, Kolhua, Maulafa Sub-district, Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara, from late April to early June 2024.

The sources of research data comprised informants and school documents. The research informants included the form tutor for Class 2A, the deputy head of student affairs, subject teachers for Class 2A, the head of the madrasah, and pupils in Class 2A. Data from the informants were obtained through observation and interviews, whilst school documents were used as supplementary data to corroborate the research findings. Data collection was carried out through passive participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The use of observation, interviews, and documents as data sources enabled the researcher to obtain diverse

and in-depth information in this qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Observations focused on the madrasah environment, pupils' behaviour both inside and outside the classroom, and teachers' responses when bullying occurred. Interviews were used to explore the informants' understanding of bullying, the role of teachers, intervention strategies, the obstacles encountered, and changes in pupils' behaviour. Documentation was used to supplement the findings from observations and interviews and to support the credibility of the research data.

Data analysis was carried out interactively throughout the research process via the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and the drawing and verification of conclusions (Miles dkk., 2014). Data from observations, interviews and documentation were collected and subsequently condensed through a process of selecting, focusing and grouping information in accordance with the research focus, namely forms of bullying, the role of teachers, intervention and prevention strategies, barriers, and changes in pupils' behaviour. The condensed data were subsequently presented in the form of descriptive analyses to identify patterns, relationships, and connections between findings. Conclusions were drawn based on the patterns identified and verified by re-examining the connections between data from various sources and data collection techniques.

Results and Discussion

Results

Forms of Bullying Identified

Interactions amongst pupils at MI Darul Hijrah Madani revealed instances of both physical and verbal bullying. The physical bullying observed included hitting, kicking, kicking classmates' desks or chairs, and taking and hiding classmates' belongings. Meanwhile, verbal bullying took the form of mocking, insulting a classmate's physical appearance, giving a classmate a nickname, and calling a classmate by their parent's name. Such behaviour was more frequently observed during break times, although some verbal incidents also occurred during lessons.

The informant's account corroborates this pattern of behaviour. The Deputy Head of Student Affairs stated:

“Complaints about common forms of bullying often involve taunts, whether using parents' names or using nicknames that refer to a person's physical appearance. In the lower classes, the most common form of bullying is physical bullying, such as hitting and kicking classmates.”

The findings of the observation revealed instances of physical altercations between pupils. One such incident occurred when a Year 4 pupil struck a Year 2 pupil over a dispute regarding the use of the football pitch. In Year 2A, a pupil struck a classmate on the head after the classmate accidentally stepped on their foot. The form teacher responded immediately to these incidents by issuing a reprimand and asking the pupils involved to explain their actions.

Bullying in madrasahs is predominantly characterised by physical and verbal acts, with physical behaviour occurring more frequently during break times, whilst verbal behaviour is observed both during break times and during lessons.

The Role of Teachers in Addressing and Preventing Bullying

Teachers play a direct role in responding to every incident of bullying, particularly through reprimands, support, guidance and the imposition of consequences. The form tutor explained that every complaint, particularly regarding physical violence, must be addressed immediately. Victims are given support and recognition for positive behaviour, whilst perpetrators are dealt with on an individual basis. The approach taken with perpetrators is tailored to the nature of their behaviour. The Deputy Head of Student Affairs stated:

“If the bullying is verbal, the perpetrator will be reprimanded and given guidance. If the bullying is physical, the perpetrator will be called in for a one-to-one meeting, given guidance and also face disciplinary action for their behaviour.”

This information was also confirmed by pupils who had previously been involved in bullying, who stated that the teacher had reprimanded them, given them advice, made them apologise, and made them promise not to repeat their behaviour.

Support was also provided to the victims. One pupil said that after the incident was reported to the teacher, the form tutor moved their seat, offered advice and provided support during break time. These actions demonstrate that the teacher’s response was not solely focused on the perpetrator, but also on the well-being of the pupil who had been bullied.

As well as dealing with incidents, teachers take preventative measures by providing education on bullying, reinforcing religious values and hadiths, and communicating with parents where necessary. The head of the madrasah emphasised that bullying is dealt with firmly, involving teachers, form tutors, the head of the madrasah and parents. Thus, the role of teachers encompasses direct intervention, supporting victims, counselling perpetrators, and prevention through education and family involvement.

Barriers to the Management and Prevention of Bullying

Efforts to tackle bullying continue to face obstacles in the form of repeated behaviour by pupils, their diverse backgrounds, and inconsistent parental involvement. Although reprimands, advice and consequences have been imposed, some pupils continue to engage in bullying behaviour, meaning that addressing the issue requires ongoing follow-up.

The form tutor stated that one of the obstacles relates to the fact that parents are not always actively involved in managing their children’s behaviour. He explained, “There are parents who are not very involved and tend to assume their children are always right.” This situation poses a challenge when the school requires family cooperation in managing pupils’ behaviour.

Challenges also arise when bullying behaviour persists despite intervention. In such circumstances, the matter is not resolved at the form tutor level, but is referred to the headteacher during the monthly review. This mechanism is employed when the issue cannot be resolved at class level.

Consequently, the main obstacles to tackling bullying lie in the recurrence of pupils' behaviour, their individual and social circumstances, and the lack of consistent parental involvement. These factors mean that tackling bullying requires ongoing follow-up and coordination between teachers, madrasahs and families.

Impact and Changes in Pupils' Behaviour

Bullying has an impact on pupils, particularly the victims, which manifests itself in the form of passive behaviour, low self-confidence, a tendency to withdraw from social interactions, and a decline in interest in learning. These issues are a key concern for teachers when providing support following incidents of bullying.

The pupils' accounts reveal the form of support provided by the teacher following the incident. One of the victims stated that after the incident had been reported by a friend, "the teacher moved their seat and offered advice and encouragement." This support was provided after the victim had not dared to report the incident directly to the teacher.

Changes were also evident among pupils who had previously engaged in bullying. One of the perpetrators explained that after teasing or hitting a classmate, he was reprimanded, taken to the library for a talk, asked to apologise, and made to "promise not to repeat the behaviour". As for the victims, they began to show an ability to socialise with their classmates, mingle more, and participate more actively in teaching and learning activities.

These changes indicate positive developments among some of the pupils following the provision of support and guidance. The victims have begun to re-engage in social interactions and learning activities, whilst some of the perpetrators have shown a change in attitude towards their peers. These changes are understood as indications based on the results of observations and interviews conducted during the research, rather than as changes measured quantitatively.

School Programmes for the Prevention of Bullying

Bullying prevention is carried out through education integrated into school activities. Lessons on bullying are delivered regularly during sessions with pupils, including after the Dhuha prayer and before teaching and learning activities. These discussions are also linked to religious studies, hadith, and virtuous and reprehensible behaviour. In addition to educating pupils, the madrasah involves parents through parenting classes that cover emotional regulation, stress management and child development. This programme extends prevention efforts from the school environment to the family.

The programme demonstrates that bullying prevention is carried out proactively through repeated education, the reinforcement of religious values, and family involvement. This approach treats bullying prevention as part of the process of instilling good behaviour in pupils, rather than merely as a response after an incident has occurred.

Table 1. Findings on the Management and Prevention of Bullying

No.	Focus	Findings
1	Forms of Bullying Identified	Physical: hitting, kicking, hiding belongings. Verbal: taunting, making derogatory remarks about physical appearance, giving someone a nickname, calling someone by their parents' names.
2	The Role of Teachers in Addressing and Preventing Bullying	Teachers act as educators, mentors and counsellors through education, an individualised approach, responding to complaints, offering advice, imposing consequences, supporting victims, reinforcing religious values, and communicating with parents.
3	Barriers to the Management and Prevention of Bullying	Repetitive behaviour, pupils' backgrounds, and inconsistent parental involvement.
4	Impact and Changes in Pupils' Behaviour	Impact: passivity, low self-confidence, withdrawal, and a decline in interest in learning. Changes: some victims are becoming more sociable and active; some perpetrators are beginning to show concern.
5	School Programmes for the Prevention of Bullying	Regular anti-bullying education, reinforcement of religious teachings and hadiths, and moral values, as well as parenting classes for parents.

Discussion

Bullying observed in madrasahs takes the form of both physical and verbal abuse. The physical acts identified include hitting, kicking and damaging a classmate's belongings, whilst verbal abuse takes the form of taunting, insults regarding physical appearance, giving classmates nicknames, and addressing them by their parents' names. Some physical incidents were observed during break times, whilst verbal abuse also occurred during lessons.

This pattern suggests that, when identifying bullying in the madrasah environment, attention must be paid to both the nature of the behaviour and the context in which the interactions take place (Hamatae & Alumu, 2026; Hasan, Solechan, dkk., 2024). Break times, for example, are a context that requires attention because pupils' interactions are more unstructured than during

lessons. Teachers' ability to recognise various forms of bullying is also important, as their knowledge, attitudes, perceived norms and self-confidence are linked to their tendency to identify and intervene in cases of bullying in primary schools (van Aalst dkk., 2024). Consequently, an understanding of bullying provides a basis for teachers to distinguish between behaviour requiring intervention and situational conflicts between pupils.

Teachers' responses to bullying indicate that the approach taken in madrasahs is not solely aimed at stopping problematic behaviour, but also forms part of the process of guiding pupils. Reprimands and consequences serve as a means of correcting behaviour, whilst individualised approaches, counselling and support demonstrate an effort to help pupils understand their mistakes and improve their behaviour. The attention paid to victims also demonstrates that the response is not solely focused on the perpetrators, but takes into account the social and emotional circumstances of the affected pupils.

This approach positions teachers not merely as those who respond to misbehaviour, but as pedagogical agents who guide the process of behavioural improvement. This view is consistent with research (Hasan, Mujahidin, dkk., 2024; Pondaag dkk., 2026) which indicates that teachers' knowledge, attitudes, perceived norms and self-confidence play a role in determining their propensity to recognise and intervene in cases of bullying in primary schools. In this context, teachers' interventions become more meaningful when corrective action is followed by guidance, so that the cessation of the behaviour does not stop at the imposition of consequences, but is directed towards a change in the pupils' behaviour.

The effectiveness of this kind of approach is supported by (Aisyah dkk., 2025; Fathma dkk., 2026) which indicates that anti-bullying programmes can reinforce the factors that support teacher intervention whilst also enhancing teachers' intervention when bullying occurs. Thus, the role of teachers in the context of this study can be understood through their interrelated functions as educators in providing education, mentors in adopting an individualised approach, and advisers in offering guidance and correcting pupils' behaviour.



Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Teacher's Role in Addressing and Preventing Bullying in Madrasahs.

Once intervention has taken place, the sustainability of behavioural change becomes a key issue, as responses to bullying do not always result in immediate change. The recurrence of such behaviour indicates that intervention requires an ongoing guidance process, whilst the students' backgrounds and the inconsistent involvement of parents highlight the need for an approach that takes into account the students' context and ensures continuity of guidance between the madrasah and the family. When intervention at class level proves insufficient, the involvement of the madrasah becomes part of the follow-up mechanism. Bullying intervention is best understood as an ongoing process requiring consistent intervention, monitoring and the involvement of various parties.

This situation highlights the fact that tackling bullying requires a sustained approach, monitoring and coordination between all parties. Family involvement is crucial because interventions to address pupils' behaviour do not take place solely at school (Basiroh dkk., 2025). A meta-analysis of anti-bullying programmes that include a parental component indicates a positive effect on bullying and victimisation, although the magnitude of the effect is relatively small (Huang dkk., 2019). In the context of this study, the family is more appropriately viewed as part of the continuum of support between the school and home environments, rather than as a single factor explaining the emergence of bullying.

The impact of bullying is particularly evident among pupils who are victims. Class teachers identified changes such as a lack of self-confidence, shyness, fear of being teased, a decline in interest in learning, and a passive attitude in class. These circumstances indicate that bullying does not stop at social relationships between pupils, but can also affect the victims' engagement in learning activities. These findings are consistent with systematic reviews showing that victimisation through bullying is associated with social and academic consequences, including loneliness, reduced well-being, and lower academic achievement (Moore dkk., 2017). This association is also supported by a meta-analysis (Samara dkk., 2021) which found a link between involvement in bullying and low levels of academic engagement, motivation, self-esteem and academic achievement. Consequently, supporting victims is a vital part of the response. The reallocation of seating, the provision of advice, attention and support from teachers demonstrate efforts to help victims re-engage with their social and learning environments.

The behavioural changes observed following the intervention process indicate positive progress, although these were not uniform and were not measured quantitatively. Some of the perpetrators began to stop bullying their peers and showed concern for the victims. As for the victims, they began to demonstrate improved social skills, mingled more with their peers, and were

more active in teaching and learning activities. These changes need to be interpreted with caution, as the study design does not allow them to be directly attributed to any single teacher strategy. It is more accurate to view this progress as a process linked to a series of interventions comprising reprimands, advice, individualised approaches, mentoring, and the reinforcement of positive behaviours. This perspective is consistent with the findings of systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which indicate that school-based anti-bullying programmes can generally reduce bullying behaviour and victimisation, although their levels of effectiveness vary between programmes (Gaffney dkk., 2021). Consequently, the changes observed in this study are best understood as an indication of progress in the coaching process rather than as a measure of the effectiveness of any particular intervention.

Prevention is then reinforced through activities carried out routinely at madrasah level. Lessons on bullying are delivered during sessions with pupils, including after the Dhuha prayer and before teaching and learning activities, and are linked to religious studies, hadith, virtuous behaviour and reprehensible behaviour. Madrasahs also organise parenting classes that discuss emotional regulation, stress management and child development. This approach demonstrates that bullying prevention has been integrated into the daily educational process, rather than merely serving as a response when cases arise. Reinforcement through repeated education is crucial because behavioural change requires consistent practice, whilst parental involvement extends the educational message from the madrasah environment to the family.

Empirical evidence on anti-bullying programmes also suggests that components involving parents can help to reduce bullying and victimisation (Huang dkk., 2019). Meanwhile, broader research suggests that school-based programmes can reduce bullying and victimisation overall (Gaffney dkk., 2021). In the context of madrasahs, the integration of anti-bullying education with religious values is a key feature, as prevention is directed not only towards compliance with rules, but also towards fostering habits of interaction in line with moral values.

This framework demonstrates that teachers play a central role in linking the handling of cases to a more sustainable educational process. Teachers recognise forms of bullying, respond to complaints, guide perpetrators, support victims, provide education, and communicate with parents. At the institutional level, the involvement of the headteacher and the review of cases where issues remain unresolved at class level provide support for the sustainability of the response. Therefore, the handling and prevention of bullying should not be viewed merely as the responsibility of individual teachers, but as a process that links character education, student support, the school's response, and family involvement. This approach is also consistent with evidence that anti-bullying strategies involving various school and family stakeholders are more appropriate for addressing

bullying as an issue within the educational environment, rather than merely as a matter of individual behaviour (Gaffney dkk., 2021).

Conclusion

Addressing and preventing bullying in madrasahs is essentially an educational process that requires the direct and ongoing involvement of teachers. Teachers do not merely intervene when bullying occurs, but also play a role in shaping understanding, guiding behaviour, supporting pupils, and fostering patterns of interaction that are in line with religious values. This approach demonstrates that tackling bullying is more appropriately situated as part of pupil guidance rather than merely imposing sanctions for a breach of rules.

The continuity of intervention is a crucial aspect, as behavioural change does not always occur after a single intervention. Recurring behaviour, differences in pupils' backgrounds, and the inconsistent involvement of families indicate that intervention efforts require coordination between teachers, madrasahs and parents. On the other hand, the positive developments observed in some pupils demonstrate that guidance and mentoring can support the process of behavioural change, even though such changes cannot yet be regarded as the result of any single form of intervention.

Bullying prevention must be directed towards the creation of an educational ecosystem that consistently fosters an understanding of and habituation to positive behaviour. The integration of anti-bullying education with character education and religious values, accompanied by student support and family involvement, is a key element in the sustainability of these efforts. Thus, the main contribution of this research lies in the understanding that the role of teachers in addressing bullying does not stand alone, but forms part of a process that links student guidance, institutional responses and family support.

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