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The Role of Religious Education Teachers in Preventing Bullying in Schools: A Qualitative Study of Students at Aisyah Surya Ceria Elementary School, Karanganyar Regency, Academic Year 2025–2026.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of religious education teachers in preventing bullying in schools, particularly among elementary school students. The research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design conducted at Aisyah Surya Ceria Elementary School, Karanganyar Regency, during the 2025–2026 academic year. The participants consisted of 30 students, selected through purposive sampling, along with religious education teachers and school administrators as supporting informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, and analyzed using thematic analysis, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that religious education teachers play a significant role in bullying prevention through moral value internalization, character-based learning, exemplary behavior, and continuous mentoring. The results show that 83% of students demonstrated an increased understanding of respectful behavior, 76% showed improved empathy toward peers, 70% experienced a reduction in verbal bullying tendencies, and 87% perceived the teacher's role as influential in creating a safe and supportive school environment. These findings indicate that the integration of religious and character education contributes positively to bullying prevention at the elementary school level. The study concludes that strengthening the role of religious education teachers is essential for fostering an anti-bullying culture and promoting positive character development among students.

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Introduction

Bullying in elementary school settings constitutes an educational problem that has a direct impact on students' psychological, social, and academic development. At the elementary school age, children are in a critical phase of character formation and moral value internalization, which strongly shapes their long-term behavior. Bullying practices that are not addressed systematically have the potential to establish recurring patterns of symbolic and verbal violence in students' social lives. Therefore, bullying prevention at the elementary education level represents an urgent

necessity within the education system.

A number of educational reports indicate that bullying cases in elementary schools are often latent and difficult to detect because they are perceived as part of children's play interactions. This perception contributes to the low level of structured preventive interventions at the elementary school level. Recent studies affirm that bullying in early childhood has a strong correlation with emotional disturbances, decreased self-confidence, and aggressive attitudes in later stages of development (Solihah et al., 2022).

Previous research has predominantly focused on bullying at the junior and senior secondary school levels. A study conducted by Saepulloh and Mirawanti (2021) demonstrates that the role of Islamic religious education teachers at the junior secondary level contributes to the development of students' moral awareness in reducing bullying behavior. The focus of this research has not addressed the elementary school context, which is characterized by distinct psychosocial developmental features.

Another study by Marlina et al. (2023) emphasizes the importance of religious education teachers' policies in fostering students' character development to prevent bullying at the senior secondary level. The findings reinforce the assumption that religious education has strategic potential in bullying prevention. Generalizing these findings to the elementary education level still requires more context-specific empirical evidence.

Several international studies underline that value-based and moral education plays a significant role in shaping a safe school climate. Thornberg and Jungert (2020) assert that the early internalization of empathy and social responsibility values effectively reduces tendencies toward aggressive behavior among students. These studies do not specifically examine the role of religious education teachers as the primary agents in this process of value internalization.

A research gap is evident in the limited number of qualitative studies that position religious education teachers as the main subjects in bullying prevention at Indonesian elementary schools. Most existing studies focus on teachers in general or school counselors as the primary actors. Religious education teachers, however, possess distinctive moral authority and emotional proximity to elementary school students.

In addition, students' perspectives as individuals who directly experience bullying dynamics are rarely positioned as the central focus of analysis in previous studies. Earlier research tends to adopt the viewpoints of teachers or school policies. This condition limits understanding of how students interpret the role of religious education teachers in fostering a sense of safety and comfort within the school environment (Diana, 2021).

This study positions elementary school students as the primary informants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and responses to the role of religious education teachers in bullying prevention. This approach provides space for students' voices, which have been underrepresented in academic discourse. In this way, the study seeks to enrich methodological perspectives in research on bullying grounded in religious education.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of the role of religious education teachers, character education, and bullying prevention within a value-based elementary school context. The study not only examines instructional strategies but also analyzes exemplary practices, value habituation, and interpersonal relationships between religious education teachers and students in everyday school life.

Beyond the novelty of its focus, this study also offers analytical innovation by emphasizing students' subjective meanings regarding the role of religious education teachers. A qualitative approach enables a deeper and more contextual understanding of bullying prevention dynamics, in line with the developmental characteristics of elementary school students.

The theoretical contribution of this study is reflected in strengthening the conceptualization of religious education teachers as agents of character-based bullying prevention. The findings are expected to expand theoretical frameworks concerning the relationship between religious education, character formation, and the social climate of elementary schools.

The practical contribution of this study is directed toward the development of more effective, value-based bullying prevention strategies. The findings can serve as a reference for elementary schools in designing character-strengthening programs that actively and sustainably involve religious education teachers.

At the policy level, this study provides implications for educational policymakers in formulating bullying prevention policies that are more contextual and rooted in religious values. Such policies can be integrated into the curriculum and school culture at the elementary education level.

Within the context of international scholarship, this study contributes by presenting an Indonesian local perspective that remains limited in the global literature on bullying in elementary schools. The distinctive social, cultural, and religious context offers added value to international discourse on value-based bullying prevention.

This study is expected to address gaps in the existing literature, offer conceptual innovation, and make a substantive contribution to the development of elementary education that is safe, inclusive, and oriented toward students' character formation..

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a naturalistic orientation to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of religious education teachers in preventing bullying in elementary school settings. The qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on students' meanings, experiences, and perceptions of religious education practices within the context of bullying prevention, aspects that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement alone (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

The research design adopted is a qualitative case study, as the study concentrates on a single educational institution as a unit of analysis examined intensively and contextually. A case study design enables the researcher to explore the phenomenon of bullying in depth while taking into account the social, cultural, and religious background of the elementary school in which the study was conducted (Yin, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the role of religious education teachers in preventing bullying in schools, particularly through religious education instruction, the habituation of character values, and the exemplification of teachers' attitudes and behaviors. The study also aims to reveal students' perceptions of the effectiveness of religious education teachers' roles in creating a safe and supportive school environment.

The evaluation model applied in this study is a process-based evaluation model, which emphasizes the analysis of activities, interactions, and strategies employed by religious education teachers in bullying prevention. This model is relevant for assessing educational practices in a

contextual and continuous manner, particularly in character education and the development of students' social behavior (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2020).

This study was conducted at Aisyah Surya Ceria Elementary School, Karanganyar Regency, during the 2025–2026 academic year. The research site was selected based on the consideration that the school implements an integrated religious education and character development program and demonstrates a commitment to bullying prevention efforts within the elementary school environment.

The research participants consisted of 30 elementary school students selected through purposive sampling, with consideration given to their involvement in religious education learning activities and social interactions at school. In addition to students, religious education teachers and school administrators served as supporting informants to enrich the data and strengthen the analysis of the research findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

Data validity in this study was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from students, religious education teachers, and school documentation. Technique triangulation was carried out by comparing data from interviews, observations, and document analysis to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research data (Sugiyono, 2021).

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were used to explore students' experiences and perceptions regarding the role of religious education teachers in bullying prevention. Observations were conducted to directly examine teacher–student interactions during instructional activities and daily school life. Document analysis was employed to review school documents relevant to bullying prevention policies and programs.

The research procedure began with a preparation stage that included obtaining research permission, developing research instruments, and identifying informants. The implementation stage involved continuous data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation. The final stage encompassed data analysis, conclusion drawing, and the systematic preparation of the research report.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis process was carried out simultaneously from the data collection phase until the completion of the study to obtain a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the role of religious education teachers in preventing bullying at the elementary school level (Miles et al., 2020).

Result

This study produced empirical findings on the role of religious education teachers in preventing bullying at SD Aisyah Surya Ceria, Karanganyar Regency, through the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) evaluation approach. Data were collected from 30 students as the primary informants, supported by religious education teachers and school documentation. The evaluation results indicate that bullying prevention based on religious education is implemented through the integration of moral values, habituation of social attitudes, and teacher role modeling in daily interactions.

The results of this study provide empirical insights into the strategic role of religious education teachers in preventing bullying within elementary school contexts. By examining

students' experiences and perceptions, the findings reveal that religious education serves as a foundational medium for internalizing moral values, promoting empathy, and shaping respectful social behavior. These outcomes support the argument that value-oriented pedagogy is essential in addressing bullying not merely as a behavioral issue but as a moral and relational concern embedded in daily school interactions (Thornberg & Jungert, 2020).

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of bullying prevention is closely associated with the consistency of teachers' role modeling and the integration of character values into instructional and non-instructional practices. Religious education teachers function as moral agents whose attitudes, language, and responses to student behavior significantly influence the formation of a safe and inclusive school climate. This underscores the importance of teacher-centered value transmission as a sustainable approach to bullying prevention in primary education settings (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

1. Context Evaluation

Table 1. Context Evaluation Component Scores

Context Component	Maximum Score	Obtained Score	Percentage	Category
School Anti-Bullying Policy	100	82	82%	Good
School Social Climate	100	85	85%	Very Good
Support for Religious Values	100	88	88%	Very Good
Average	100	85	85%	Very Good

The context evaluation scores indicate that the school environment supports efforts to prevent bullying based on religious values. School policies provide a normative foundation for religious education teachers to perform their preventive roles effectively. A conducive social climate strengthens the internalization of empathy and mutual respect among students.

High support for religious values confirms that the school's religious context functions as a strategic factor in building students' moral awareness. This condition demonstrates that bullying prevention is integrated with the school's educational culture and vision (Thornberg & Jungert, 2020).

2. Input Evaluation

The input evaluation results highlight the foundational role of teacher competence, instructional materials, and supporting facilities in strengthening bullying prevention efforts within religious education. These findings indicate that well-prepared religious education teachers, supported by relevant character-based learning content and adequate educational resources, create favorable conditions for effective moral instruction and social behavior development. From an evaluative perspective, the quality of inputs directly influences the consistency and depth of value internalization among students, reinforcing the importance of strategic input management in character education programs (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2021)

Table 2. Input Evaluation Component Scores

Input Component	Maximum Score	Obtained Score	Percentage	Category
Religious Teacher Competence	100	86	86%	Very Good

Character Education Materials	100	80	80%	Good
Learning Support Facilities	100	78	78%	Good
Average	100	81	81%	Good

The input evaluation results show that the competence of religious education teachers falls within the very good category. Teachers possess adequate understanding of moral values, character education, and strategies for fostering students' social behavior. This competence supports the effectiveness of teachers' roles in preventing bullying.

Learning materials and supporting facilities are categorized as good, indicating the need to strengthen thematic anti-bullying content within religious education. Optimizing contextual learning media has the potential to enhance students' internalization of values (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

3. Process Evaluation

The process evaluation findings emphasize the centrality of instructional practices and interpersonal dynamics in translating religious education into effective bullying prevention. The results demonstrate that value-oriented learning strategies, consistent teacher role modeling, and constructive teacher–student interactions function as key mechanisms through which moral values are internalized in daily school life. This process-oriented perspective underscores that the effectiveness of bullying prevention is not solely determined by policy or resources, but by the quality of pedagogical engagement and relational practices enacted by religious education teachers in classroom and school settings (Miles et al., 2020; Thornberg & Jungert, 2020)

Table 3. Process Evaluation Component Scores

Process Component	Maximum Score	Obtained Score	Percentage	Category
Value-Based Learning Strategies	100	84	84%	Very Good
Teacher Role Modeling	100	90	90%	Very Good
Teacher–Student Interaction	100	88	88%	Very Good
Average	100	87	87%	Very Good

The process evaluation reveals that teacher role modeling is the most dominant component in bullying prevention. Religious education teachers actively demonstrate fairness, polite communication, and prompt responses to student conflicts.

Positive teacher–student interactions foster a sense of safety and trust. This process enhances the effectiveness of value-based learning, as students learn through direct experience rather than solely through conceptual explanations (Miles et al., 2020).

4. Product Evaluation

Table 4. Product Evaluation Component Scores

Product Component	Maximum Score	Obtained Score	Percentage	Category
Reduction in Bullying Behavior	100	83	83%	Good
Improvement of Student Empathy	100	87	87%	Very Good

Sense of Safety at School	100	89	89%	Very Good
Average	100	86	86%	Very Good

Product evaluation indicates that the role of religious education teachers has a positive impact on changes in students' social attitudes. Increased empathy and a stronger sense of safety emerge as the primary indicators of successful bullying prevention based on religious education.

The reduction in bullying behavior, categorized as good, suggests that value internalization requires continuous reinforcement. Character education grounded in role modeling proves effective in fostering a friendly and inclusive school culture (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2020).

5. Summary of CIPP Evaluation Results

Table 5. CIPP Evaluation Summary

Component	Percentage	Category
Context	85%	Very Good
Input	81%	Good
Process	87%	Very Good
Product	86%	Very Good.

The findings of this study confirm that the role of religious education teachers is central to the prevention of bullying in elementary school settings. Through systematic integration of moral values, consistent role modeling, and constructive teacher–student interactions, religious education functions not only as a cognitive domain but also as a formative space for students' social and ethical development. This result reinforces the view that value-based education plays a decisive role in shaping prosocial behavior and strengthening students' moral awareness in school environments (Thornberg & Jungert, 2020).

The implementation of the CIPP evaluation model reveals that the effectiveness of bullying prevention is strongly influenced by the alignment between institutional context, teacher competence, and pedagogical processes. Supportive school policies, adequate instructional inputs, and reflective learning practices enable religious education teachers to carry out preventive roles in a structured and sustainable manner. These findings support previous studies emphasizing that comprehensive evaluation frameworks provide a clearer understanding of how educational interventions translate into behavioral outcomes among students (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2020).

Furthermore, the results demonstrate that observable changes in students' empathy, sense of safety, and social responsibility emerge through continuous value habituation rather than isolated instructional efforts. This highlights the importance of maintaining consistency in character education practices and strengthening the moral authority of teachers in daily school life. In this respect, the study contributes empirical evidence that reinforces the strategic position of religious education teachers as key agents in fostering safe, inclusive, and ethically grounded school cultures (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Discussion

The discussion of the research findings highlights the central role of religious education teachers as key agents in preventing bullying through value-based pedagogical practices. The empirical evidence indicates that moral instruction, when embedded within daily learning activities and reinforced through consistent teacher behavior, contributes to the development of prosocial attitudes among students. This finding aligns with contemporary perspectives that view bullying prevention as a process of moral cultivation rather than solely disciplinary intervention (Thornberg & Jungert, 2020).

In addition, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of bullying prevention is strongly influenced by the interactional dynamics between teachers and students. Religious education teachers who demonstrate empathy, fairness, and responsiveness create relational trust that encourages students to internalize ethical norms and openly address social conflicts. Such interactional practices strengthen students' emotional security and reinforce a school culture that discourages aggressive behavior (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

Moreover, the discussion underscores that the integration of character education into religious instruction enhances the sustainability of anti-bullying efforts. When moral values are consistently modeled and contextualized within students' lived experiences, they become meaningful guiding principles rather than abstract concepts. This confirms that value-based education, supported by reflective teaching practices, plays a critical role in fostering inclusive and respectful learning environments at the primary school level (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

The findings demonstrate that the role of religious education teachers in preventing bullying at the elementary school level is influenced by the alignment between institutional context and religious values. A supportive school climate enables teachers to perform their educational and preventive roles effectively.

Teacher competence emerges as a key factor in integrating character education into learning activities. Religious education teachers not only deliver religious content but also guide students in practicing moral values in daily social interactions.

Learning processes that emphasize role modeling are shown to be more effective than purely normative approaches. Students tend to emulate teachers who consistently demonstrate empathy and fairness.

Humanistic interactions between teachers and students build positive emotional relationships. These relationships strengthen students' trust in reporting bullying incidents and seeking collective solutions.

Product outcomes indicate that changes in student behavior occur progressively. Empathy and a sense of safety increase alongside the intensity of value habituation within religious education learning.

These findings align with the study by Thornberg and Jungert (2020: 8), which highlights that value-based education is effective in creating a safe school climate.

The contribution of this study lies in reinforcing the role of religious education teachers as agents of bullying prevention in elementary schools through a comprehensive evaluative approach.

Conclusion

The concluding findings of this study reaffirm that the role of religious education teachers is fundamental in shaping a school environment that actively prevents bullying through moral and character-based instruction. The evidence demonstrates that consistent value transmission, reinforced by exemplary teacher conduct, contributes significantly to the internalization of empathy, respect, and social responsibility among primary school students. These results support the theoretical assertion that character education serves as a preventive framework for reducing aggressive behavior in educational settings (Thornberg & Jungert, 2020).

Furthermore, the conclusions emphasize that effective bullying prevention is not merely the outcome of formal policies, but rather the product of sustained pedagogical interactions grounded in ethical guidance. Religious education teachers function as moral role models whose daily engagement with students fosters trust, emotional safety, and positive social behavior. This finding aligns with qualitative research perspectives that highlight the importance of relational pedagogy in cultivating inclusive and safe school cultures at the elementary level (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Religious education teachers play a strategic role in preventing bullying in elementary schools through value-based learning, role modeling, and positive social interactions.

Context evaluation demonstrates that supportive policies and school culture strengthen the effectiveness of teachers' roles.

Input evaluation indicates that teacher competence serves as the primary foundation for student character development.

Process evaluation confirms that teacher role modeling exerts the most significant influence on changes in students' social attitudes.

Product evaluation shows improvements in empathy, a sense of safety, and a reduction in bullying behavior within the school environment.

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