Jurnal Profesi Pendidikan dan Keguruan ALPHATEACH, Vol. 6 No. 1, 67 - 73
ISSN: 2809-462X

THE ROLE OF LEARNING ABILITY AND MORALITY IN AVOIDING BULLYING BEHAVIOR AMONG 7TH GRADE STUDENTS AT MTS AHMAD YANI, WONOTUNGGAL, BATANG REGENCY

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ARTICLE INFO

***Article history*:**
Received : 08/04/2026
Accepted : 18/06/2026
Published : 30/06/2026

***Keywords*:**
Akidah Akhlak
Bullying
The Role of Learning

ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the continued occurrence of bullying behavior among students at MTs Ahmad Yani Wonotunggal and the gap between the objectives of Akidah Akhlak education and students' actual behavior. The study aimed to: (1) describe the characteristics of bullying behavior among seventh-grade students, (2) analyze the implementation of Akidah Akhlak instruction, and (3) identify its role in preventing bullying. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation involving Akidah Akhlak teachers, seventh-grade students, homeroom teachers, and the madrasah principal. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, while validity was ensured through source and method triangulation. The findings revealed that bullying behavior was predominantly verbal, such as taunting and negative nicknames, and social, including mild exclusion and gossip. Contributing factors included individual characteristics (low self-control and lack of empathy), family conditions (limited parental supervision), school factors (weak monitoring and absence of a reporting system), and peer influence (conformity pressure). The implementation of Akidah Akhlak instruction was generally aligned with Ministerial Decree No. 183 of 2019, incorporating materials on praiseworthy and blameworthy behavior. However, teaching remained largely lecture-based and assessment focused mainly on cognitive achievement. Akidah Akhlak education contributed positively to students' understanding of the Islamic prohibition of bullying, but its impact on affective and psychomotor domains was limited. Teachers served as role models, dialogue facilitators, and spiritual counselors, yet lacked sufficient systemic support. Therefore, strengthening instructional methods, assessment practices, and collaboration among school stakeholders is necessary to enhance bullying prevention efforts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying behavior has become one of the most concerning issues in the Indonesian education sector and is often described as an iceberg phenomenon because many cases remain hidden or unreported. Bullying can occur in various forms, including physical, verbal, social, psychological, and cyberbullying, all of which can negatively affect students' well-being and development. According to data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, approximately 30% of students in Indonesia have experienced bullying in one form or another. This condition indicates that bullying is not an isolated incident but a widespread problem that requires serious attention from educators, parents, and policymakers. The urgency of addressing bullying becomes even greater at the junior secondary school level, where students are undergoing significant physical, emotional, and social changes.

Seventh-grade students are particularly vulnerable to involvement in bullying behavior because they are in a transitional stage from childhood to early adolescence. During this period, peer acceptance becomes increasingly important, while emotional regulation, empathy, and self-control are still developing. As a result, students may be more susceptible to peer pressure and may engage in behaviors intended to gain social status or acceptance among their peers. These developmental characteristics can contribute to the emergence of aggressive actions, teasing, social exclusion, and other forms of bullying if not properly guided through educational and moral development programs.

The consequences of bullying extend beyond temporary conflicts among students. For victims, bullying can lead to anxiety, depression, fear of attending school, low self-esteem, social withdrawal, and decreased academic performance. In severe cases, prolonged exposure to bullying may result in long-term psychological trauma. For perpetrators, repeated involvement in bullying can normalize aggressive behavior and hinder the development of empathy and positive social relationships. Furthermore, bullying negatively affects the overall school climate by creating an environment characterized by fear, insecurity, and weakened social cohesion. Therefore, effective preventive efforts are needed to foster a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

One of the educational approaches that can contribute to bullying prevention in Islamic schools is Akidah Akhlak learning. As a core subject in Islamic education, Akidah Akhlak aims not only to provide students with knowledge about Islamic beliefs and moral principles but also to cultivate noble character and ethical behavior. Through this subject, students are expected to develop awareness of their responsibilities toward Allah and fellow human beings, as well as values such as honesty, compassion, tolerance, respect, and self-discipline. These character traits are essential for building positive interpersonal relationships and preventing harmful behaviors such as bullying.

The relevance of Akidah Akhlak learning to bullying prevention is supported by Islamic teachings that emphasize the dignity and equality of all human beings. Islam strongly condemns actions that humiliate, ridicule, insult, or harm others. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah prohibits believers from mocking one another and from calling others by offensive names, as stated in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 11. Likewise, numerous Hadiths emphasize kindness, mercy, brotherhood (ukhuwwah), and respect for others. The concepts of rahmah (compassion), ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood), and mujahadah an-nafs (self-control) provide a strong moral foundation for preventing bullying behavior. Therefore, Akidah Akhlak learning has the potential to serve as an important medium for internalizing anti-bullying values among students.

Despite the important role of Akidah Akhlak learning in character development, a gap remains between the moral values taught in the classroom and students' actual behavior in daily life. Preliminary observations conducted at MTs Ahmad Yani Wonotunggal, Batang Regency, indicate the presence of behaviors such as teasing, social exclusion, and interpersonal conflicts among students that may lead to bullying. Although students receive instruction on moral values and ethical conduct, these teachings do not always appear to be fully reflected in their interactions with peers. This discrepancy raises questions about how Akidah Akhlak learning is implemented and the extent to which it influences students' attitudes and behaviors related to bullying.

Furthermore, while numerous studies have examined bullying among adolescents and the effectiveness of character education programs, relatively few studies have specifically investigated the role of Akidah Akhlak learning in preventing bullying behavior within Islamic junior secondary schools. Most previous research has focused on identifying the prevalence, causes, and consequences of bullying, whereas the contribution of Islamic moral education as a preventive strategy remains underexplored. This research gap highlights the need for further investigation into how Akidah Akhlak learning can contribute to the development of anti-bullying attitudes and behaviors among students.

The researcher's interest in this topic is also influenced by personal observations of the negative effects of bullying on peers. The researcher has witnessed how repeated teasing, gossip, and social exclusion can damage students' confidence, emotional well-being, and social relationships. These experiences, combined with preliminary findings from the research site, have motivated the researcher to examine this issue scientifically. Understanding the relationship between Akidah Akhlak learning and bullying prevention is important for identifying effective educational strategies that promote moral character and positive social behavior among students.

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to describe the bullying behavior of seventh-grade students, analyze the implementation of Akidah Akhlak learning, and identify the role of Akidah Akhlak learning in preventing bullying behavior at MTs Ahmad Yani Wonotunggal, Batang Regency. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of knowledge in Islamic education and character education, particularly regarding bullying prevention. Practically, the results may provide useful insights for teachers, school administrators, parents, and policymakers in strengthening educational efforts to foster a safe, respectful, and bullying-free school environment.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type. The qualitative method was chosen because the purpose of this study is to understand the meaning behind a complex social phenomenon, namely the role of Akidah Akhlak learning in preventing bullying. Qualitative methods produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior. This approach allows researchers to explore in depth the perceptions, motivations, and actions of research subjects in their natural setting.

This study was conducted at MTs Ahmad Yani Wonotunggal, Batang Regency. The research subjects consisted of the Akidah Akhlak teacher, seventh-grade students, the homeroom teacher, and the head of the madrasah. These participants were selected because they are directly involved in the implementation of Akidah Akhlak learning and students' daily social interactions within the school environment. Data were collected using several techniques to obtain

comprehensive and credible information. First, observation was conducted to examine the learning process of Akidah Akhlak and students' social interactions, particularly behaviors related to bullying and interpersonal relationships. Second, in-depth interviews were carried out with teachers, students, and school authorities to explore their experiences, perceptions, and views regarding bullying behavior and the role of Akidah Akhlak learning in its prevention. Third, documentation was used to collect supporting data, including school profiles, learning materials and tools, school regulations, and records of student activities relevant to the research topic. The combination of these data collection techniques enabled the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Meanwhile, data validity was ensured through source triangulation and method triangulation. In this study, the sampling technique used was nonprobability sampling with a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a data source sampling technique based on certain considerations. The reason for using purposive sampling is that not all samples meet the criteria according to the phenomenon being studied. The samples or informants in this study were: (a) Grade VII Akidah Akhlak teacher, (b) Grade VII students (representatives from various social groups), (c) Grade VII homeroom teacher, (d) Guidance and Counseling teacher/School counselor. To obtain the expected data in this study, the data collection methods used by the researcher were observation, interview, and documentation methods.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Overview of Bullying Behavior Among Grade VII Students of MTs Ahmad Yani Wonotunggal, Batang Regency

The research results show that bullying behavior at MTs Ahmad Yani Wonotunggal is dominated by verbal bullying and social bullying. The forms of verbal bullying found include mockery, giving negative nicknames, and remarks that demean friends. Meanwhile, social bullying is seen in the form of mild exclusion, gossip, and the formation of exclusive friendship groups.

Based on interviews with the homeroom teacher and the Akidah Akhlak teacher, bullying behavior in grade VII occurs sporadically, not every day, but is reported quite frequently on a mild scale. The Akidah Akhlak teacher noted that within one month, there were around 2–3 reports related to conflicts between students that led to bullying, especially verbal bullying.

Factors causing bullying include individual, family, school, and peer environment factors. From the individual side, some students have low self-control and lack empathy toward their friends. From the family side, the lack of parental supervision and inappropriate parenting patterns also influence students' behavior. Meanwhile, school factors are related to weak supervision and the absence of a structured bullying reporting system.

The impacts of bullying on victims include impaired concentration in learning, decreased self-confidence, depression, and in extreme cases, it can trigger suicidal thoughts. Meanwhile, the impacts on perpetrators include difficulty building healthy social relationships and the reinforcement of aggressive behavior.

3.2. Implementation of Aqidah Akhlak Learning

The implementation of Akidah Akhlak learning at MTs Ahmad Yani Wonotunggal has referred to KMA No. 183 of 2019 concerning the PAI and Arabic Language Curriculum in Madrasahs, which emphasizes that Akidah Akhlak textbooks are directed not merely to provide comprehensive and moderate religious understanding, but also to guide the process of internalizing religious values in students. The Director General of Islamic Education, Kamaruddin Amin (2019), emphasized that these textbooks are expected to become a reference for ways of thinking, behaving, and acting in daily life. The material taught is related to commendable morals and reprehensible morals, including the values of compassion, tolerance, and the prohibition against hurting others.

Table 1. Materials

Material on Noble Morals	Material on Despicable Morals
Al-'Adl (Justice)	Al-Ghadlab (Excessive anger)
Ar-Rahmah (Mercy)	Al-Ghibah (Backbiting)
At-Tawadu' (Humility)	An-Namimah (Sowing discord)
Al-Ihsan (Doing good)	As-Sukhriyah (Mockery)
Ash-Shabr (Patience)	Al-Kibr (Arrogance)
Al-Hilm (Gentleness)	Al-Hasad (Envy)

The learning methods used are still dominated by lectures, question-and-answer sessions, and assignments. The teacher has made efforts to provide advice and examples of good behavior to students. However, the learning process still focuses more on cognitive aspects than on affective and psychomotor aspects.

Learning evaluation also tends to focus on students' ability to understand the material theoretically, while the evaluation of students' behavior and social practices has not yet been carried out optimally.

3.3. The Role of Aqidah Akhlak Learning in Preventing Bullying

Aqidah Akhlak learning plays an important role in preventing bullying behavior through the cultivation of Islamic values that emphasize the importance of respecting fellow human beings. Aqidah Akhlak teachers act as educators, role models, dialogue facilitators, and spiritual counselors for students. However, this understanding has not been fully internalized into critical awareness. Some students still differentiate between “serious mockery” and “joking mockery,” so they consider mild teasing to be something normal. Based on Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, most seventh-grade students are at the conventional stage, where their behavior is strongly influenced by peer group norms. If group norms justify mockery as a “

Aqidah Akhlak learning is quite effective in improving students' understanding of the prohibition of bullying in Islam. Students understand that mocking, insulting, and hurting friends are reprehensible morals prohibited by religion.

However, the effectiveness of learning is still limited to the knowledge aspect. In the affective aspect, students' empathy remains normative and has not been fully reflected in daily behavior. In the psychomotor aspect, there has been no training in social skills such as how to refuse bullying, resolve conflicts peacefully, or report acts of bullying. Efforts to address bullying

must include creating opportunities to do good deeds, fostering empathy, teaching friendship skills, and teaching how to act in good faith.

Table 2. Research Findings

Mechanism	What Happened on the Field	Description
Normative-social	Weak	Peer group norms are still stronger than religious norms in real-life situations.
Spiritual-transcendental	Starting to form	Some students mentioned fear of sin as a reason for avoiding bullying.
Behavioral-practical	Minimal	There is no specific skills training to resist or report bullying.

The findings of this study indicate that Akidah Akhlak learning needs to be developed using more contextual methods such as case discussions, role play, collaborative learning, and the habituation of positive behavior within the school environment. Figure 1, 2, and 3 present the interview with the teacher and student.



Figure 1. Interview with the Aqidah Akhlak Teacher



Figure 2. Interview with the Homeroom Teacher



Figure 3. Interview with Students

4. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that bullying behavior among seventh-grade students at MTs Ahmad Yani Wonotunggal is predominantly verbal and social in nature, including mockery, negative nicknames, gossip, slander, and social exclusion, while physical bullying is rare and cyberbullying was not identified. The occurrence of bullying is influenced by individual, family, school, and peer-related factors, resulting in psychological, social, and academic consequences for students. Although the implementation of Akidah Akhlak learning has followed KMA No. 183 of 2019 and includes materials related to moral values, the learning process remains largely teacher-centered

and focuses primarily on cognitive achievement, with limited attention to affective and psychomotor development. Time constraints, strong peer group influence, and insufficient collaboration among teachers, counselors, and parents further reduce its effectiveness. Consequently, Akidah Akhlak learning contributes to students' understanding of moral principles and bullying prevention but has not yet been fully effective in shaping anti-bullying attitudes and behaviors in daily practice.

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