

Resolving an inherent controversy: How *pesantren's* philosophical ideals confront the reality of bullying

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Abstract

This article examines how philosophical values embedded in the *pesantren* tradition can be operationalised into a contextual anti-bullying program. Using a qualitative case study of *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin* (Indonesia), the study triangulates in-depth interviews with eight key participants (a *pesantren* leader, five educators, and two students), participatory observation, and document analysis. Data were analysed through iterative thematic coding. The findings suggest that bullying in *pesantren* is repeated peer aggression sustained by power imbalance. At the same time, severe incidents may be contained when a strong moral ecology regulates institutional life. At *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin*, four ideals such as *tawadhu'*, *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, *silaturahmi*, and *ihsan*, function as moral anchors that restrain domination, strengthen belonging, and activate prosocial defending. However, the study also identifies the limits of informal norms; values may be unevenly applied and insufficient when victims hesitate to disclose harm. Accordingly, the article proposes a values-based, Whole-School Approach-aligned protocol that formalises local wisdom into safeguards, including a confidential reporting mechanism, a peer-inclusive anti-bullying team, staged restorative responses, educator role-modelling, and parent or community engagement.

Keywords: bullying prevention; *pesantren*; philosophical values; Whole-School Approach; local wisdom

Introduction

Indonesia is currently confronting a persistent bullying problem across educational settings, including faith-based institutions that are normatively committed to cultivating character and mutual respect. Bullying is not a marginal phenomenon, but a systemic challenge that undermines students' psychosocial well-being (Baharun et al., 2025). The urgency is reflected in the 2018 PISA report, where 44.1% of Indonesian students experienced bullying, positioning the country as the fifth highest globally at that time (Abdurrohim et al., 2024). This crisis manifests strongly in *pesantren* as a survey reported that 59% of *pesantren's* students (*santri*) experienced peer bullying (Suryadi et al., 2023), while national data shows that physical bullying is the most frequent form (55.5%), followed by verbal (29.3%) and psychological (15.2%) bullying (Abdurrohim et al., 2024).

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These indicators demonstrate a fundamental contradiction between the peaceful educational ideals of *pesantren* and the reality of daily social interaction, signalling the need for more context-sensitive prevention strategies.

Existing studies have advanced the field by documenting prevalence patterns, causal drivers, and psychological harms of bullying among *santri* (S. Ramli et al., 2024; Wisudariani et al., 2024). In response, several general interventions have been implemented, including prevention and handling models, campaigns, and the strengthening of character education and the internalisation of general Islamic values (Abdurrohim et al., 2024; Rijal, 2025; Suryadi et al., 2023). However, these approaches tend to apply universal solution frameworks and have not systematically excavated the distinctive philosophical values of a particular *pesantren* tradition, translating them into a structured, operational anti-bullying program. As a result, anti-bullying initiatives risk being insufficiently grounded in the institution's lived moral ecology, limiting their credibility and consistent uptake in everyday student behaviour.

This study aims to offer a bottom-up intervention model that revitalises the philosophical values of *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin* as the basis for bullying prevention. Specifically, it identifies *pesantren*'s core values, such as humility (*tawadhu*), Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*), and benevolence (*ihsan*). It organises them into a practical framework for anti-bullying campaigns and programs in the *pesantren*. This article translates institutionally legitimate values into actionable program components and aligns them with contemporary best practices in school-wide prevention through a culturally adapted Whole-School Approach (WSA) (Hidayati et al., 2025; Sanusi et al., 2025).

This article argues that a durable anti-bullying strategy in *pesantren* is one rooted in the institution's own normative infrastructure. It contends that the internalisation of *tawadhu*, *ukhuwah*, and *ihsan* can generate a protective socio-spiritual ecosystem that discourages aggression and strengthens collective responsibility. *Tawadhu* restrains domination; *ukhuwah* builds inclusive belonging that prevents exclusion; and *ihsan* encourages prosocial action and bystander defending. When formalised through institutional support, these values can function as a collective defence mechanism that complements disciplinary measures, thereby addressing the tension between *pesantren*'s moral ideals and the persistence of bullying in practice.

Literature Review

Bullying is commonly defined as intentional and repeated aggressive behaviour enacted by individuals or groups against a target who is relatively unable to defend themselves, thereby producing an asymmetrical relation of domination (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). A defining feature of bullying is power imbalance, which may be grounded in physical strength, social status, seniority, or psychological leverage, and

which sustains cycles of fear and vulnerability among victims while reinforcing perpetrators' sense of control (Andrews et al., 2023; Nielsen et al., 2022). This conceptualisation is particularly relevant for *pesantren*, where communal living intensifies peer contact and can amplify the social visibility of hierarchy and influence within daily interactions (Hidayah & Wahyudi, 2025). Accordingly, bullying should be read not merely as episodic misbehaviour but as a patterned practice that can become embedded in institutional routines and informal hierarchies.

Analytically, bullying in educational institutions, including *pesantren*, can be categorised into physical, verbal, and relational forms (Hidayah & Wahyudi, 2025). National patterns further indicate that physical bullying often appears as the most frequent form, followed by verbal and psychological bullying, signalling that prevention efforts must address both overt violence and less visible relational harms (Abdurrohim et al., 2024). The consequences are likewise multi-layered, such as beyond immediate distress, bullying correlates with lowered academic functioning, psychosocial disruption, and longer-term mental health risks (S. Ramli et al., 2024). At the institutional level, persistent bullying corrodes trust, damages the learning climate, and normalises fear as a social condition, making the problem not only individual but decisively communal (Kadir & Umiarso, 2023).

To explain why bullying persists in institutional settings, Social Learning Theory provides a foundational lens: aggressive behaviour can be acquired through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within peer and authority structures (Khadka, 2024). In this perspective, bullying becomes more likely when students observe intimidation being rewarded or left unchecked, while prosocial behaviour is neither modelled nor reinforced. The theory emphasises the strategic importance of role modelling, such as teachers, caregivers, and institutional leaders, who serve as behavioural exemplars whose responses shape what is perceived as acceptable within the community (De Luca et al., 2019). Hence, prevention is not only about rules but also about the visible enactment of norms by legitimate authorities.

Complementing this, the ecological perspective conceptualises bullying as a product of interlocking systems, peer groups, institutional routines, family contexts, and broader cultural expectations, suggesting that bullying is sustained across multiple levels rather than by individual traits alone (Hong & Espelage, 2012). Empirically, this translates into recurring institutional pathways, including permissive climates, status hierarchies (such as seniority-based dominance), peer reinforcement, and weak protective efficacy when reporting mechanisms are unclear or perceived as unsafe (Rozi et al., 2025; Bussey, 2023). Social learning and ecological explanations suggest that effective prevention must be multi-level, involving the reshaping of peer norms, strengthening adult modeling and accountability, and building institutional safeguards that reduce opportunities for

domination while increasing collective protection (Hong & Espelage, 2012; De Luca et al., 2019).

In *pesantren*, prevention resources are not limited to formal regulation; they also include an internally legitimate moral repertoire grounded in Islamic ethical formation and longstanding communal pedagogy (Suwendi et al., 2024). Values such as humility (*tawadhu*), Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*), benevolence (*ihsan*), ethics (*adab*), and tolerance (*tasamuh*) function as normative anchors shaping how students are expected to treat others and how social conflicts should be resolved (Mala et al., 2024). Conceptually, these values are often referred to as a moral-social ecology, a shared normative environment that legitimises care, respect, and responsibility while delegitimising domination, humiliation, and exclusion. For anti-bullying design, this framing is crucial because it locates prevention within an institution's moral authority; interventions grounded in the community's own normative infrastructure are more likely to be recognised as credible and consistently enacted in daily life (Mujahid, 2021).

The internal architecture of *pesantren* values is often articulated through structured ethical frameworks such as *Panca Jiwa Pesantren*, which emphasises sincerity, simplicity, self-reliance, *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, and freedom as pillars of character formation (Zarkasyi, 2020; Aziz et al., 2025). These values can be categorised in ways directly relevant to bullying prevention of anti-dominance ethics (*tawadhu*'s restraining arrogance and status abuse), belonging and inclusion mechanisms (*ukhuwah* countering exclusion and relational bullying), and prosocial obligation and moral courage (*ihsan* motivating protection of the vulnerable) (Mala et al., 2024). Such a categorisation clarifies how *pesantren* ideals can move beyond moral discourse; they can be translated into behavioural standards, peer expectations, and institutional routines that actively reduce conditions enabling power abuse.

In terms of intervention design, anti-bullying efforts in *pesantren* have been discussed as planned and systematic initiatives to prevent, detect, and respond to bullying through coordinated educational and institutional instruments (Abdurrohim et al., 2024). The sustainable prevention requires broad participation from students, teachers, administrators, and (where relevant) parents and community stakeholders, because bullying is embedded in social relations and institutional climates rather than isolated individual pathology (Rofiki et al., 2025). Within *pesantren*, intervention proposals frequently include campaigns, workshops, special anti-bullying teams, safe reporting systems, and the integration of Islamic ethics and local wisdom as sources of legitimacy and motivation (Baharun et al., 2025; Rijal, 2025). This logic converges with the Whole-School Approach (WSA), which is widely recognised as a comprehensive framework for bullying prevention that addresses policy, culture, relationships, and coordinated procedures across the institution (Hidayati et al., 2025).

Operationally, WSA is commonly described in terms of layered intervention levels, ranging from individual to classroom or dormitory climate and whole-institution governance, each with distinct mechanisms and measurable outcomes (Sanusi et al., 2025). At the individual level, interventions develop character, empathy, and social skills; at the classroom or dormitory level, they shape inclusive norms and peer climates; and at the institutional level, they require clear policies, safe procedures, monitoring, and a culture that rejects violence (Nuryadi et al., 2025; Margas, 2023; Azizah & Sa'adah, 2025). Crucially, when WSA is integrated with *pesantren* philosophical values, prevention is anchored in both structural comprehensiveness and culturally authoritative norms, increasing the likelihood of acceptance and sustainability (Malik, 2017). This synthesis operationalises the specific philosophical ideals cultivated within *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin* as the normative engine of a WSA-aligned, values-based anti-bullying protocol.

Method

This study examines bullying as it occurs within *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin*, treating the *pesantren* as a bounded socio-educational setting where everyday interactions, informal hierarchies, and value-habitation practices shape students' conduct. The unit of analysis, therefore, includes bullying dynamics in the *pesantren* environment, as well as the philosophical values cultivated within the institution that may serve as internal normative resources for prevention. A qualitative approach with a case study design was chosen to enable an in-depth and context-sensitive interpretation of how these values are understood, practised, and potentially operationalised for bullying prevention.

The study utilises primary and secondary data, selected through purposive sampling, to ensure that participants and sources have relevant institutional roles, sustained engagement with the *pesantren*, and knowledge or experience related to bullying issues. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight key participants: one *pesantren* leader, five educators (*ustadz/ustadzah*), and two students (*santri*) from different academic levels, combined with participatory observation to document daily interactions and value-habitation practices in the *pesantren*. Secondary data were derived from internal *pesantren* documents and relevant literature on Islamic philosophical values and *pesantren*-based anti-bullying initiatives. Data collection proceeded in stages, beginning with a literature review, followed by interviews and observation, and complemented by documentary analysis of institutional materials relevant to culture, routines, and programmatic practices.

All qualitative materials (interview transcripts, observational field notes, and documents) were analysed using thematic coding through iterative steps: transcription, initial coding, aggregation of codes into themes, review and refinement of themes, definition and naming of final themes, and writing the analytical report. The analytic process involved continuous comparison between emerging themes and new data to

strengthen consistency and interpretive depth (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Credibility was supported through triangulation across interviews, observation, and document analysis.

Results and Discussion

Bullying Dynamics and Power Imbalance in *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin*

Bullying in *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin* is a patterned form of peer aggression sustained by a power imbalance, not merely as incidental misbehaviour. Conceptually, bullying involves repeated and intentional harm under asymmetrical relations of domination, where unequal power (physical, social status, seniority, or psychological leverage) produces fear and vulnerability for victims while reinforcing control for perpetrators (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Andrews et al., 2023; Nielsen et al., 2022). This lens is particularly relevant in *pesantren* because communal living intensifies peer contact and can amplify the visibility of hierarchy and influence within daily routines (Hidayah & Wahyudi, 2025). However, within this structural risk setting, interviews at *Nurul Yaqin* indicate a relatively low occurrence of severe bullying incidents, suggesting that the institution's lived norms may already function as a practical constraint on escalation.

Empirically, the central dynamic that determines whether bullying becomes entrenched is not only the presence of conflict, but whether an imbalance of authority and social leverage can be converted into domination. In *pesantren*, such leverage can emerge through informal hierarchies, group reputations, and everyday micro-practices that legitimise exclusion or silence. However, participants described *Nurul Yaqin*'s relational ethos as actively resisting the logic of exclusion that typically enables social hierarchy to harden into abuse. One teacher explained that *ukhuwah* and *silaturahmi* are an obligation to treat peers as siblings, thereby making the isolation of a peer normatively illegitimate within the community (Interview, July 2024). In practical terms, this moral grammar reduces the social distance required for power to be exercised as domination, limiting the conditions under which bullying can be normalised.

At the same time, the results do not imply that the *pesantren* is immune, but rather that the bullying is being contained by a cultural architecture that discourages harmful conduct before it consolidates. This containment was repeatedly attributed to the internalisation of four institutional principles, such as *tawadhu'*, *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, *silaturahmi*, and *ihsan*, which are described as fostering inclusion and strong interpersonal bonds that disrupt conditions favourable to bullying. This pattern aligns with the view that character development must be thoroughly habituated and that harmful behaviours can be reduced when values are embedded as lived practice rather than abstract instruction (A. Ramli et al., 2023; Warsah et al., 2024). As one teacher stated, "bullying is fundamentally contradictory to the values at *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin*," indicating that anti-bullying is already present as a normative boundary within the institution's moral order (Interview, July 2024).

Philosophical Ideals as Moral Anchors: *Tawadhu'*, *Ukhuwah Islamiyah*, *Silaturahmi*, and *Ihsan* in Practice

Pesantren Nurul Yaqin's anti-bullying capacity is not primarily derived from external rules, but from a set of internally legitimate moral anchors that regulate everyday interaction. The findings indicate that four ideals, such as *tawadhu'*, *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, *silaturahmi*, and *ihsan*, function as a values infrastructure that shapes what is socially acceptable, morally praised, and collectively sanctioned within the community. In this sense, bullying is constrained because it contradicts the *pesantren*'s lived ethical identity, which is cultivated through habituation, example, and communal expectations. This values-based logic is consistent with Islamic psychology arguments that character formation requires deep internalisation and that harmful behaviours are reduced when moral dispositions are sustained through practice rather than instruction alone (A. Ramli et al., 2023; Warsah et al., 2024).

Table 1.

Philosophical Values as Anti-Bullying Resources in Pesantren Nurul Yaqin

No	Value	Operational meaning	Enactment/habituation	Anti-bullying function
1	<i>Tawadhu'</i> (humility)	Ethical self-restraint that counters egoistic superiority and domination	Internalised through lived example and daily relational practice	Reduces status-based aggression; weakens motives to dominate or humiliate peers
2	<i>Ukhuwah Islamiyah</i> (brotherhood)	Communal belonging and sibling-like ties that delegitimise exclusion	Treating peers like siblings; cultivating strong brotherhood bonds as a normative baseline	Prevents social exclusion; reduces relational violence; builds protective social capital
3	<i>Silaturahmi</i> (relational bonding)	Sustained interpersonal/familial-like relationships that strengthen connectedness	Maintaining close relational ties; strengthening familial relationships across members	Increases connectedness and peer monitoring; makes exclusion socially costly; supports early informal correction
4	<i>Ihsan</i> (benevolence/ prosocial virtue)	Dispositional compassion expressed as proactive care and moral courage	Encouraging defending behaviour and active protection; mobilising community members from passive bystanders to protectors	Promotes bystander intervention; strengthens protection for victims; fosters a climate that rejects victimisation

Note. This table synthesises the qualitative findings on four *pesantren* ideals; *tawadhu'*, *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, *silaturahmi*, and *ihsan* by mapping their operational meanings, everyday enactments, and their functions in constraining domination, exclusion, and victimisation. Entries were derived from the iterative thematic coding of interviews, participatory observations, and institutional document data. Data processed by the authors (2024).

More specifically, *ukhuwah Islamiyah* and *silaturahmi* operate as inclusion mechanisms that directly negate the social logic of exclusion and relational domination. This is because both ideals treat community members as morally kin-like, thereby establishing a strong presumption of belonging that makes social isolation and peer humiliation normatively deviant. Empirically, informants emphasised that *ukhuwah* and *silaturahmi* mean building strong brotherhood bonds where each student is treated as a sibling, making exclusion inconsistent with the *pesantren's* core relational norms (Interview, July 2024). In evaluative terms, this is significant because relational bullying often relies on social boundary-making and group-based status hierarchies. By institutionalising belonging as a moral duty, *ukhuwah* and *silaturahmi* weaken the cultural permission structure that enables exclusion to appear normal or justified (Asrin et al., 2024; Kirom, 2025).

The next philosophical ideal, *tawadhu'*, functions as an anti-dominance ethic that restrains the motivations and symbolic performances that typically sustain bullying in hierarchical settings. The reason is straightforward; bullying thrives under conditions of power imbalance and status leverage, while humility delegitimises arrogance, superiority claims, and the social rewards of humiliation. When *tawadhu'* is treated as a core virtue, domination becomes morally discredited rather than socially celebrated, which reduces the likelihood that seniority, popularity, or physical strength can be converted into acceptable coercion. This moral stance was reinforced by participants' insistence that bullying is fundamentally incompatible with *Nurul Yaqin's* values, indicating that anti-bullying norms are embedded in the *pesantren's* moral self-understanding rather than appended as an external campaign (Interview, July 2024).

Finally, *ihsan* provides the prosocial activation principle that shifts students from passive bystanders into moral agents who protect peers and interrupt victimisation. This matters because prevention fails when community members recognise harm but remain socially inactive. *Ihsan* reframes intervention as a religious-ethical obligation grounded in compassion and responsibility. Here, it can be stated that affective empathy is a stronger predictor of defending behaviour than cognitive empathy (Deng et al., 2021; Garandeau et al., 2022), and that compassion-related dispositions promote helping behaviour and the courage to stand up against bullying (A. Ramli et al., 2023). Within *Nurul Yaqin*, the bonds cultivated by *ukhuwah* strengthen affective concern, while *ihsan* channels that concern into action, thereby producing a protective socio-spiritual ecology in which victimisation is actively resisted rather than silently tolerated.

Between Ideals and Reality: Limits of Informal Values and the Case for Formalisation

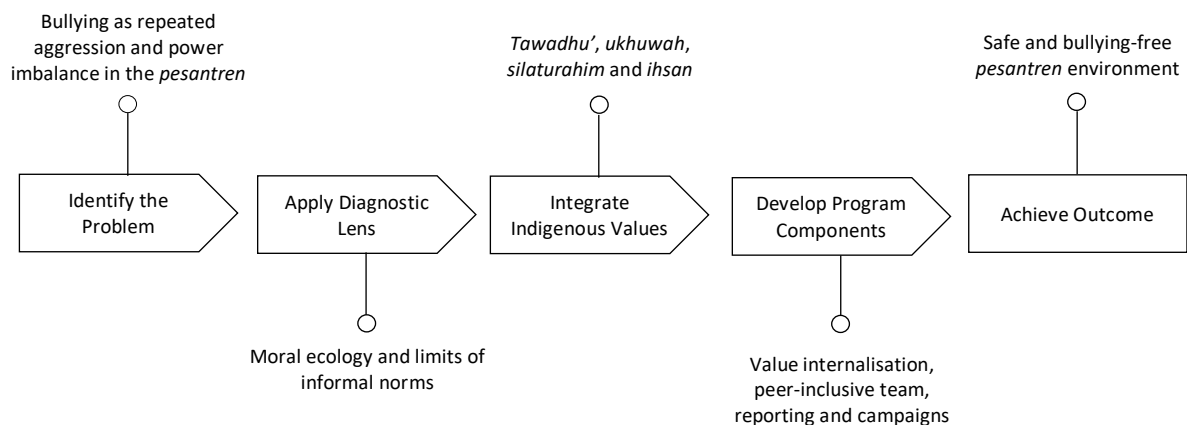
Despite the apparent strength of *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin's* value-based culture, the findings suggest that informal moral norms remain structurally vulnerable when they are not translated into explicit institutional safeguards. Interviews with teachers and students indicate a relatively low occurrence of severe bullying incidents, which participants

attributed to the deep internalisation of *tawadhu'*, *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, *silaturahmi*, and *ihsan* as a cohesive socio-spiritual ecology that discourages aggression and reinforces belonging (Interview, July 2024). However, this very reliance on what is implicitly understood exposes a critical limitation; informal norms can be unevenly applied, inconsistently enforced, and insufficiently protective in situations where power imbalances intensify, relational exclusion becomes normalised, or victims hesitate to disclose harm.

The decisive vulnerability is not simply whether values exist, but whether the institution provides clear, trusted, and consistent channels that enable those values to operate when bullying risks escalate. The effective prevention depends on students' confidence that disclosures will be handled seriously, fairly, and without retaliation, hence the need for a secure and confidential reporting mechanism supported by explicit and phased intervention procedures (Kent et al., 2020). In this logic, the move toward formalisation is not a shift away from *pesantren* ideals; it is the mechanism through which ideals become actionable protections, particularly by reducing underreporting, preventing silent endurance by victims, and ensuring that responses do not rely solely on ad hoc moral persuasion.

Figure 1.

Conceptual Logic Model: From Pesantren Values to a Contextual Anti-Bullying Program



Note. The figure summarises the study's analytic synthesis from problem identification to program formulation. It visualises how *pesantren* philosophical ideals (*tawadhu'*, *ukhuwah*, *silaturahmi*, and *ihsan*) are translated into operational components (value internalisation, peer-inclusive team, confidential reporting, and campaigns) to achieve a bullying-free *pesantren* environment.

Accordingly, the study's results indicate that formalisation represents the institutionalisation of *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin*'s informal values, which set the normative direction, while structures ensure their implementation. In operational terms, the formal elements that translate ideals into practice include a proactive Special Anti-Bullying Team with peer involvement to strengthen trust and ownership, a tiered response model prioritising restorative conversations and mediation, and a zero-tolerance policy with

clarity from leadership (Kent et al., 2020). Beyond the *pesantren* boundary, the program's logic also depends on teacher role-modelling and the sustained involvement of parents and the community, consistent with evidence that whole-school prevention becomes more effective when stakeholders beyond students are actively engaged (Shim & Ye, 2024; Harte & Barry, 2024; Podiya et al., 2025).

Why Values Need Institutional Support to Disrupt Bullying Systemically

The results imply that *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin's* philosophical ideals already perform a protective function; *tawadhu'* restrains domination, *ukhuwah-silaturahmi* reinforces belonging, and *ihsan* activates prosocial defence, thereby narrowing the social space in which bullying can be normalised. However, the same reliance on an implicit healthy communal ethos can also generate a structural vulnerability when harm occurs. In a community where connectedness and moral fraternity are highly valued, victimisation may be experienced as a more profound betrayal of what the institution claims to embody, a dynamic described as the healthy context paradox (Lehmann et al., 2025). This paradox helps explain why values alone may be insufficient at the point of crisis: victims may hesitate to report because disclosure threatens communal harmony, bystanders may avoid escalation to preserve social cohesion, and responses may depend on ad hoc moral persuasion rather than predictable safeguards.

For that reason, institutional support should be understood as the mechanism that converts moral commitments into reliable protection. A key institutional lever is a trusted reporting pathway, which is secure, confidential, and socially legitimate, because the effectiveness of prevention hinges on whether students believe disclosures will be taken seriously and handled without retaliation (Kent et al., 2020). Once reporting is enabled, values can operate as more than private virtues; they become enforceable institutional expectations. *Tawadhu'* becomes an anti-dominance standard in social relations, *ukhuwah-silaturahmi* becomes an inclusion mandate that actively discourages exclusionary peer practices, and *ihsan* becomes an obligation of protection that legitimises defending behaviour and adult intervention. In short, formal procedures provide the consistency that informal norms cannot guarantee under stress.

At the level of underlying structure, bullying persists not only because individuals lack values, but because aggression is reproduced through institutional affordances and reinforcement patterns. Social Learning Theory clarifies that bullying behaviours can be learned and stabilised when students observe aggression, especially by seniors, being rewarded socially, tolerated, or left without clear consequences (Khadka, 2024; Rozi et al., 2025; Bussey, 2023). Bronfenbrenner's ecological lens further suggests that prevention must operate across interacting systems, such as peer groups, teachers, routines, and institutional climate, rather than focusing narrowly on individual attitudes (Hong & Espelage, 2012). This is precisely why values require institutional scaffolding; educator role-modelling becomes a deliberate prevention mechanism (De Luca et al., 2019; Shim

& Ye, 2024), while formalised procedures, such as a secure reporting system and phased, restorative-first interventions, ensure that the institution consistently interrupts reinforcement cycles and communicates a credible zero tolerance boundary (Kent et al., 2020).

Locating *Pesantren* within Global Discourse: A Critical Dialogue with the Whole-School Approach

The findings position *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin*'s model as conceptually consistent with the Whole-School Approach (WSA), but with a distinctive normative foundation rooted in the moral authority of *pesantren*. In the WSA scholarship, bullying prevention is framed as an institution-wide responsibility that encompasses policy, culture, relationships, and coordinated procedures, rather than focusing narrowly on individual attitudes (Hidayati et al., 2025). Operationally, WSA is commonly articulated as a layered intervention across personal development, classroom or dormitory climate, and whole-institution governance (Sanusi et al., 2025; Nuryadi et al., 2025; Margas, 2023; Azizah & Sa'adah, 2025). Within this framework, *Nurul Yaqin*'s philosophical ideals already provide a strong cultural and relational layer by narrowing the social space in which domination and exclusion can be normalised. However, the results also indicate that durable prevention still requires institutional mechanisms, such as value socialisation routines, a peer-inclusive mediation or support team, and a trusted reporting channel, to translate ideals into consistent protective routines (Rofiki et al., 2025; Kent et al., 2020).

A further alignment with WSA emerges at the level of stakeholder coherence. The bullying reduction is more sustainable when educator role-modelling is deliberate and when the institutional climate is reinforced through collaboration with families and community actors (Shim & Ye, 2024; Harte & Barry, 2024; Podiya et al., 2025). This is particularly relevant for *pesantren* because students' moral formation is shaped not only through formal instruction but through continuous social interaction and supervision in daily life. In this context, WSA's emphasis on coordinated governance provides a functional architecture for clarifying responsibilities, standardising procedures, and ensuring that prevention is not reduced to episodic counselling or disciplinary responses. When combined with the *pesantren*'s internal normative resources, the WSA architecture strengthens consistency, as it supports the early identification of risks, credible reporting, restorative-first resolution pathways, and collective accountability that does not depend solely on individual virtue.

At the same time, a critical dialogue with the WSA framework is necessary because WSA is not a culturally neutral plug-and-play solution. Global prevention frameworks become more effective when they are culturally adapted and anchored in an institution's legitimate moral authority. In this sense, indigenous wisdom is not an accessory but a prerequisite for implementation success (Malik, 2017; Harte & Barry, 2024). The contribution of this study is therefore to present a WSA-aligned scaffold infused with

pesantren-specific philosophical values, rather than a generic WSA transfer, so that internalised norms and faith-based motivational resources sustain procedures such as reporting, mediation, and stakeholder coordination (Meroni & Velasco, 2023; Bernardi & Steyn, 2023). The implication for transferability is significant; other *pesantren* may adopt the logic of whole-institution coordination, but they cannot simply copy the content; they must first excavate their own moral ecology and then institutionalise it through context-sensitive mechanisms that are legitimate within their respective traditions.

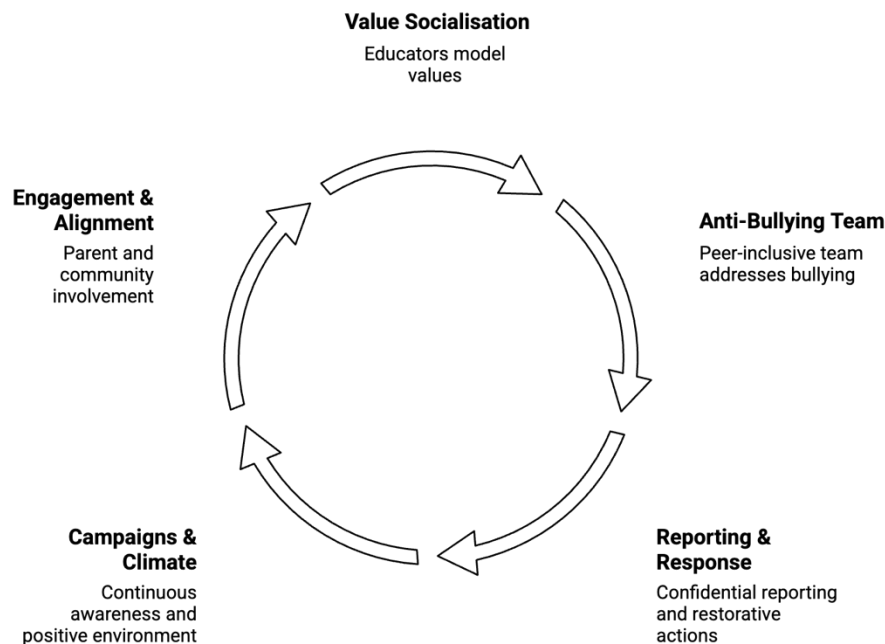
Revitalizing Tradition through Policy: Towards a Values-Based Anti-Bullying Protocol

A values-based anti-bullying protocol in *pesantren* should be understood as policy-enabled revitalisation, not as a bureaucratic replacement of tradition. The core implication of this study is that *tawadhu'*, *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, *silaturahmi*, and *ihsan* already operate as moral anchors that restrain domination, strengthen belonging, and activate protection. Nevertheless, these ideals will disrupt the bullying systemically only when translated into predictable institutional safeguards that reduce underreporting, clarify responsibilities, and standardise response pathways. This is because values can be unevenly enacted under stress, whereas formal procedures provide reliability precisely when incidents escalate. In the prevention literature, a secure and confidential reporting mechanism, paired with a staged response protocol, functions as a decisive institutional lever for safeguarding victims and ensuring consistent handling (Kent et al., 2020). When *pesantren* ideals are embedded in policy, they become enforceable commitments; *tawadhu'* becomes an anti-dominance standard, *ukhuwah-silaturahmi* becomes an inclusion mandate, and *ihsan* becomes an obligation of protection.

Operationally, the protocol should be organised as a WSA-aligned, *pesantren*-specific governance package with clear components and role allocation. *First*, the *pesantren* formalises value internalisation through routine practices, such as daily reminders, *halaqah* or *adab* sessions, and value-based behavioural standards, while ensuring educator role-modelling, since modelling and reinforcement are central to disrupting learned aggression patterns (De Luca et al., 2019; Shim & Ye, 2024). *Second*, it establishes a Special Anti-Bullying Team with peer participation to strengthen trust and legitimacy, coupled with a confidential reporting channel and a restorative-first, phased intervention pathway, such as early mediation, supervised reconciliation, and escalation where necessary, to make responses consistent and non-retaliatory (Kent et al., 2020; Rofiki et al., 2025). This architecture ensures that values are not merely preached but operationalised into protective routines that can be activated regardless of who is involved or how sensitive the incident becomes.

Figure 2.

WSA-Aligned Governance Package for a Values-Based Anti-Bullying Protocol in Pesantren



Note. The figure summarises the program's governance components and role coordination. It highlights the institutional mechanisms required to operationalise *pesantren* values into reliable safeguards, including role-modelling, a peer-inclusive team, confidential reporting linked to a staged restorative response, and sustained campaigns and stakeholder engagement.

Beyond internal governance, the protocol should extend prevention across the home-institution continuum, because *pesantren* climate is shaped by continuity between institutional supervision and broader social reinforcement. Evidence from prevention research suggests that sustained bullying reduction is more likely when educator role-modelling is supported by parent engagement and community collaboration, producing consistent expectations and reducing normative gaps between school and home environments (Harte & Barry, 2024; Podiya et al., 2025). In *pesantren* settings, this matters because students live and learn in close-knit communities where reputational dynamics and conflict narratives can circulate quickly across peer groups and family ties. Parent or community involvement, therefore, strengthens legitimacy, reduces resistance to reporting, and supports restorative reintegration when mediation is pursued.

Finally, to ensure sustainability, the protocol should include minimal monitoring indicators that connect moral goals to institutional learning. Practical measures can consist of reporting uptake, recurrence patterns, bystander intervention, and climate perceptions, enabling the *pesantren* to assess whether procedures are trusted and whether relational norms are shifting over time. This monitoring is conceptually aligned with evidence that *ihsan*-driven defending behaviour is strengthened by affective empathy and

prosocial orientation, dispositions that can be cultivated through habituation and evaluated through repeated observation and feedback loops (Deng et al., 2021; Garandeau et al., 2022). Through this design, tradition is not merely celebrated rhetorically but converted into a coherent policy architecture that is culturally authoritative, operationally actionable, and institutionally sustainable (Malik, 2017; Meroni & Velasco, 2023; Bernardi & Steyn, 2023).

Conclusion

This study shows that bullying in *Pesantren Nurul Yaqin* is a relational and institutional phenomenon sustained by power imbalance. The findings indicate that the pesantren's internal moral ecology, anchored in *tawadhu'*, *ukhuwah*, *silaturahmi*, and *ihsan*, already functions as a practical constraint on domination, exclusion, and victimisation by shaping everyday interaction norms, strengthening belonging, and encouraging prosocial defending. At the same time, the results underscore a key boundary; informal values alone remain vulnerable when protective responses depend on ad hoc moral persuasion and when victims or bystanders hesitate to disclose harm. Therefore, the study concludes that a sustainable prevention strategy requires translating philosophical ideals into explicit institutional safeguards, particularly a trusted reporting mechanism and a consistent, staged response pathway, so that values operate reliably at the point of escalation.

Conceptually, this article contributes a values-based intervention logic that bridges *pesantren* tradition and contemporary prevention architecture. It advances an interpretive claim that *pesantren* philosophical ideals are not merely moral rhetoric or teaching materials; they can be operationalised as institutional resources that structure a coherent anti-bullying programme. Methodologically and practically, the study positions the proposed model as a Whole-School Approach (WSA)-aligned approach, while insisting that effectiveness depends on cultural adaptation. Global prevention frameworks become durable when they are embedded in locally legitimate norms, sustained through role modelling, peer participation, and institution-wide coordination. In this sense, the study reframes local wisdom as the normative engine that strengthens institutional ownership, credibility, and long-term sustainability of anti-bullying governance in *pesantren* settings.

This study has limitations that shape the scope of its claims. *First*, it is based on a single institutional case and qualitative evidence, which supports depth of interpretation but limits broad generalisation across *pesantren* with different cultures and governance structures. *Second*, the findings derive from a bounded set of informants and observations, and the proposed protocol has not yet been tested through longitudinal implementation or outcome evaluation. Future research should therefore pilot the proposed protocol and assess its effects on reporting uptake, recurrence patterns,

bystander defending, and climate perceptions; undertake comparative multi-*pesantren* studies to map variations in moral ecology and governance capacity; and integrate mixed-method designs to link qualitative mechanisms with measurable prevention outcomes. These directions would strengthen both the evidence base and the transferability of values-based, culturally grounded anti-bullying interventions for *pesantren* and related faith-based educational institutions.

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