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CULTIVATING EMPATHIC COMPASSION IN AQIDAH AKHLAK LEARNING AS A BULLYING PREVENTION STRATEGY AT MADRASAH ALIYAH TARBIYATUL MUSTAFID NARMADA

Fitri Syawal Johandi, Syukri, Erlan Muliadi
UIN Mataram, Indonesia
220101157.mhs@uinmataram.ac.id; syukri_hib@uinmataram.ac.id

Abstract

This study is motivated by the limited research that explicitly positions empathic compassion as the core of bullying prevention in *Aqidah Akhlak* learning, despite the persistence of verbal bullying and social exclusion in madrasah settings. This study aims to analyze the strategies used by the *Aqidah Akhlak* teacher to cultivate empathic compassion as a bullying prevention strategy and to identify the obstacles and solutions encountered in this process at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatul Mustafid Narmada. A qualitative descriptive phenomenological design was employed, involving one *Aqidah Akhlak* teacher, one guidance and counseling teacher, and one perpetrator–victim pair from class XI.1 as key cases selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, supported by triangulation of sources, techniques, and time to ensure credibility. The findings reveal three mutually reinforcing strategies: communicative value-based lectures, case-based reflective group discussions, and role play with guided reflection. These strategies activated perspective-taking in the perpetrator, consistent with Martin L. Hoffman's moral empathy theory. The study concludes that cultivating empathic compassion plays a critical role in shifting how students interpret and respond to bullying. However, its effectiveness remains constrained by time limitations, peer group pressure, and limited parental involvement, indicating the need for broader ecosystem-based interventions. This study contributes to the literature on Islamic moral education and bullying prevention by demonstrating

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the role of empathic compassion in strengthening students' moral awareness and prosocial responses, while also opening opportunities for future multisite and mixed-methods research.

Keywords: *Aqidah Akhlak* Learning; Bullying Prevention; Empathic Compassion; Madrasah Education; Phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamentally a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment that not only sharpens intellectual abilities but also nurtures students' spiritual and emotional maturity. Constitutionally, this is clearly stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes that national education functions to develop students' potential and to shape the character of a dignified national civilization (Andikaratri et al., 2024). However, this noble ideal is currently confronted with the dynamics of a complex social reality in which educational settings are not entirely free from verbal bullying practices. From an Islamic theological perspective, the ethical foundations of social interaction have in fact been firmly established. As stated in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hujurat verse 11, Allah SWT says (Uswatun Hasanah, et al., 2025):

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاۤءٌ مِّنْ نِّسَاۤءٍ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّۚ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوْا بِالْاَلْقَابِۗ بِئْسَ الِاسْمُ الْفُسُوْقُ بَعْدَ الْاِيْمَانِۚ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَاُولٰۤىِٕكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ

O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule (another) people; perhaps they may be better than them. Nor should women (ridicule]) other women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another or call each other by (offensiv) nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after (one's) faith. And whoever does not repent then it is those who are the wrongdoers. (QS. Al-Hujurat: 11) (Bakri&Faza et al., 2025).

In this verse, Allah SWT explicitly forbids mutual mockery between groups as well as the use of labels that demean the dignity of others (Bakri&Faza et al., 2025) The madrasah environment, which ideally functions as a moral sanctuary and as an embodiment of the values of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, still leaves room for the emergence of unhealthy patterns of social interaction (Wardi, 2025).

This phenomenon was documented during the author's Field Experience Practice (PPL) at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatul Mustafid, where empirical evidence was found of a decline in students' ethics and empathy. The culture of exclusive friendship groups (circles) leads to social segregation, while verbal bullying through teasing, parental name mockery, body shaming, and mentally damaging gossip is still considered normal.

Curricularly, the Aqidah Akhlak subject in grade XI (Independent Curriculum) already includes topics related to adolescents' faith and morality. In classroom practice, the Aqidah Akhlak teacher uses a lecture method combined with note taking tasks on the board, followed by explanations of real life examples relevant to the material being studied. This situation shows that students who have cognitively mastered religious knowledge still struggle to control their speech and behavior. If the teaching of Aqidah Akhlak stops at the level of information delivery without being accompanied by an approach that cultivates compassion and touches the affective domain, practices such as physical teasing and social neglect of peers are likely to persist (Asyifa et al., 2023).

To comprehensively analyze these dynamics, this study adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive phenomenological paradigm. This paradigm was chosen because of its strength in uncovering the essence of meaning behind students' behavior and the interaction patterns that emerge both during and outside classroom learning (Ireine et al., 2025). In examining value internalization strategies, this study employs the theory of empathy and moral development formulated by Martin L. Hoffman, which emphasizes empathy as the basis for prosocial behavior and for self control over actions that may harm others. Empathy in adolescents has been shown to be positively associated with prosocial behavior and with the courage to reject bullying in educational settings (Yusnita et al., 2024; Akhzalini, 2024). This theoretical framework helps explain how teachers can channel students' emotional experiences and their understanding of victims' feelings to foster a reluctance to demean, mock, or ostracize their peers.

Field observations and preliminary interviews conducted during the author's field experience practice (PPL) at the madrasah revealed direct evidence of verbal bullying between students in class XI.1, including physical teasing, body shaming, and social exclusion that caused the victim significant psychological distress, forming the empirical basis for this study.

Based on the above description, the main focus of this study is to analyze the strategies used by Aqidah Akhlak teachers to cultivate empathic compassion as a strategy to prevent bullying, as well as the obstacles they encounter in instilling empathic compassion at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatul Mustafid. In line with this focus, the study is entitled "Cultivating Empathic Compassion in Aqidah Akhlak Learning as a Strategy for Preventing Bullying at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatul Mustafid."

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach to examine in depth the process of cultivating empathic compassion in Aqidah Akhlak (faith and moral) instruction as a bullying prevention strategy within the natural context of a madrasah. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand the meanings, lived experiences, and perspectives of teachers and students regarding the phenomenon under study, rather than merely measuring statistical relationships between variables (Annasthasya et al., 2025.; Mutmainah & Hilmiyati., 2025).

The research was conducted during the even semester of the 2025-2026 academic year at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatul Mustafid, specifically from April to May 2026, covering three sequential classroom sessions and follow up interviews and observations. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, consisting of the Aqidah Akhlak teacher (Mursid), the bullying perpetrator (Hariawan Jayawiguna), the victim (Julia Marlina), and the Guidance and Counseling teacher (Muhammad Nasir), who were considered the most knowledgeable and directly involved in the dynamics of empathy cultivation and bullying cases in the classroom (Wijaya et al., 2025; Wijayanti & Fitriani, 2023). The data comprised primary data in the form of observations and interviews with these participants, and secondary data in the form of supporting documents such as the madrasah's vision and mission, lesson plans and teaching materials, religious programs, codes of conduct posters, and written policies related to bullying prevention (Rahmawati et al., 2025.)

Data were collected through non participant open observation, semi structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations were used to directly examine teachers' strategies for cultivating empathic compassion, the dynamics of student interactions, and manifestations of verbal bullying and social exclusion in the classroom (Putri & Murhayati, 2025; Pratiwi et al., 2024). Semi structured interviews with the Aqidah Akhlak teacher, the

perpetrator, the victim, and the Guidance and Counseling teacher were conducted to explore in depth their experiences and views regarding Aqidah Akhlak learning, empathic compassion, and bullying prevention (Pratiwi et al., 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2024) Document analysis of the madrasah's vision and mission, lesson plans, and relevant policy documents was used to strengthen and complement the field data (S. Rahayu et al., 2025)

Data analysis followed an interactive model involving the continuous cycles of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification from the beginning of data collection through to the final interpretation, as recommended in qualitative data analysis literature (Ash-shiddiqi et al., 2025; Ilmiah, 2024; Bina & Getsempena, 2022).

Data reduction was carried out by transcribing, coding, and organizing the data into key themes such as teacher strategies, student responses, and forms of bullying. The reduced data were then displayed in the form of descriptive narrative accounts and concise tables to facilitate the identification of emerging patterns. Conclusions were drawn by interpreting these patterns to answer the research questions concerning strategies for cultivating empathic compassion and the obstacles faced by teachers. Data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, time triangulation, and prolonged engagement of the researcher in the field, so that the resulting findings are expected to be credible and academically defensible (Mulia, 2024; Ardiansyah et al., 2023; Siroj et al., 2024; Fadly & Hayati, 2025)

RESULTS

This study aims to analyze the strategies of Aqidah Akhlak teachers in cultivating empathic compassion as a bullying prevention strategy, as well as to identify the obstacles and solutions encountered at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatul Mustafid. Based on direct observation, semi structured interviews, and documentation, the findings are presented according to each research problem formulation.

Teacher Strategies for Cultivating Empathic Compassion in Aqidah Akhlak Learning

The findings reveal that the Aqidah Akhlak teacher (Mursid) implemented three interconnected strategies across three sequential classroom sessions, grounded in a deliberate pedagogical decision to avoid direct confrontation with the perpetrator (Observasi, 2026). These strategies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Teacher Strategies for Cultivating Empathic Compassion as a Bullying Prevention Strategy

Strategy	Mechanism	Empirical Evidence
Communicative value based lecture	Inserting Prophetic exemplars, connecting QS al-Hujurat 11 to daily classroom reality	Hariawan still made a comment during the lecture session
Reflective case based discussion	Cross clique group division, case study questions on ukhuwah and verbal bullying	Julia spoke more openly in small groups, Hariawan responded that he "didn't feel it was about him" (Hariawan, 2026)
Role play with guided reflection	Perpetrator placed in victim's position, structured reflection questions	Hariawan stated: "It feels uncomfortable. Especially when everyone is silent and no one stands up for us." (Jullia, 2026)

Strategy 1: Communicative Value Based Lecture. The first session was conducted on Monday, 13 April 2026 (08.00-09.30 WITA) with the topic of *Akhlak Pergaulan Remaja*. The teacher opened with a provocative question: *"Have you ever had a friend who receives daily comments about their appearance?"* and proceeded to connect the content of QS al-Hujurat verse 11 with classroom reality through Prophetic exemplars (Observasi, 2026). A key statement from the teacher was: *"The impact of an action is not determined by the intent of the doer, but by the feelings of the person who receives it."* Field observation recorded that Hariawan still made a quiet comment directed at Julia during this session, while Julia maintained her forward gaze without responding (Observasi, 2026). When interviewed, Hariawan stated: *"What I said about Julia is a fact. Friends laughed too, so I thought it was normal"* (Hariawan, 2026). Julia described her cumulative psychological condition: *"The hardest part is not when Hariawan speaks. The hardest part is when the others laugh. It feels like everyone agrees that what he says about me is true"* (Julia, 2026).

Strategy 2: Reflective Case Based Discussion. The second session was conducted on Monday, 20 April 2026. The teacher independently organized students into five cross clique small groups, deliberately separating Hariawan from his usual circle. Hariawan was placed in Group 1 with Nabil, Dinia, Maysa, Husnul, and Tiara. Julia was placed in Group 3 with Restu, Zarkasyi, Mutia, Aulia, and Wanat (Observasi, 2026). Each group received one discussion question. Group 1 received: *"What are the concrete forms of ukhuwah in daily school life?"* During the discussion, Hariawan responded singularly when asked directly: *"Take care of each other, don't say words that hurt feelings, Teacher."* (Observasi, 2026). In Group 3, Julia stated during discussion: *" A joke is different from teasing. A joke is when both parties laugh. If one party remains silent or forces a smile, it's not a joke."* (Observasi, 2026). A witness student, Gilang Pramudita, reflected: *"When Group 4 said that silence is not a neutral choice, I immediately thought about it. I have also been one of those who stayed silent"* (Gilang Pramudita, 2026). When interviewed after the

session, Hariawan acknowledged: *"The discussion ran fine. When another group presented about jokes and victims, I listened. But I didn't immediately feel it was talking about me"* (Hariawan, 2026). Julia stated: *"In a small group, I was more willing to speak. I could say what I thought"* (Julia, 2026). The teacher explained: *"I arranged the groups myself because if I let them choose, they would sit in the same clique as usual. The value only starts to work in reality when they are forced to sit and talk with people they don't normally talk to"* (Mursid, 2026).

Strategy 3: Role Play with Guided Reflection. The third session was conducted on Monday, 27 April 2026. Hariawan was placed in the role of victim alongside Zulhelmi, while three students who were not in his close circle (Mifzal, Ramadhan, and Syabil) played the perpetrators. Julia and other students served as observers (Observasi, 2026). During the simulation, the perpetrators made degrading comments about appearance and posture, bystanders remained silent, and defenders (Nabil and Restu) argued: *"If it makes people feel uncomfortable, it's not a joke."* (Observasi 2026). In the guided reflection session, Hariawan responded: *" Same. Uncomfortable. Especially when others are silent, no one is there to stand up for you"* (Observasi, 2026). When interviewed after the simulation, Hariawan stated: *"Ooh, so this is how it feels to be mocked. It's uncomfortable. The longer it went, the more it genuinely felt uncomfortable, especially when the others were just silent"* (Hariawan, 2026). Julia observed: *"When Hariawan said the hardest part was when the others stayed silent, I immediately understood what he meant. Because I feel that every day"* (Julia, 2026). Observer student Dinia Putri Utami added: *"I realized that I have also been among those who stayed silent when Hariawan said something to Julia"* (Dinia, 2026). The teacher reflected: *"I placed Hariawan as the victim not to humiliate him, but because that is the only way I believe can make him feel it himself not be told, not be scolded, not be summoned"* (Mursid, 2026).

Learning Evaluation. The learning sequence was closed with two forms of evaluation. In daily evaluation, the teacher maintained brief written notes after each session about the dynamics of Hariawan and Julia, coordinated with the Guidance and Counseling teacher. Observational data showed that: (1) after the lecture, Hariawan still made a comment directed at Julia, (2) after the discussion, Hariawan made no comments toward Julia during the session, (3) after the role play, Hariawan and Zulhelmi were observed conversing briefly after class something that had never happened before (Observasi, 2026). In the end of topic evaluation, the teacher administered a psychological reflection instrument followed by a class commitment sheet. All 26 students of class XI.1 individually signed the commitment containing five points covering, mutual respect regardless of physical differences, refraining from degrading remarks, refusing to remain silent when witnessing injustice, open socializing

beyond clique boundaries, and maintaining the classroom as a safe space (Observasi, 4 Mei 2026). After reading the instrument results, the teacher stated: *"From Hariawan's responses, something has shifted especially in emotional awareness and moral perspective. He now understands that the impact of words is not determined by the doer's intent. Julia has changed as well she is now more willing to express her discomfort directly rather than only staying silent or reporting"* (Hariawan, 2026). Pak Nasir confirmed: *"The frequency of Hariawan's comments directed at Julia has decreased. Not entirely gone, but reduced. And Julia now comes to my room not to report, but to talk. She is calmer"* (Nasir, 2026). Hariawan stated: *"I now think more before saying something"* (Hariawan, 2026), and Julia stated: *"I am now more willing to say directly when something makes me uncomfortable"* (Julia, 2026).

Obstacles and Solutions in Cultivating Empathic Compassion

Four interconnected obstacles were identified, each followed by the teacher's responsive solution.

Table 2. Obstacles and Solutions in Cultivating Empathic Compassion as a Bullying Prevention Strategy

Obstacle	Evidence	Solution Implemented
Perpetrator resistance	Hariawan escalated teasing after each BK referral	Personal persuasive approach outside class hours
Limited instructional time	Reflection session during role play had to be shortened	Value integration in informal interaction moments
Peer group pressure	Students melirik ke arah Hariawan before daring to speak	Class commitment sheet signed collectively
Minimal parental involvement	No written followup from parents after school meetings	Partnership communication through BK channel

Obstacle 1: Perpetrator Resistance. Field observation recorded that Hariawan showed a consistent pattern of defensiveness when directly confronted. After each BK referral, rather than reducing his behavior, Hariawan escalated his teasing toward Julia. He stated: *"I don't understand why I keep being summoned. What I said to Julia is a fact"* (Hariawan, 2026). Julia confirmed: *"Every time Hariawan was called to BK, I was actually scared. Because after he came back, he would be more sarcastic toward me"* (Julia, 2026). The solution implemented was a personal persuasive approach conducted outside class hours. Pak Nasir opened conversations informally asking about Hariawan's activities before approaching the core issue. The teacher similarly approached Hariawan casually at the classroom door after each lesson (Observasi, 2026). Hariawan responded: *"Pak Nasir doesn't immediately blame me during our conversations. He asks me questions first. That's what makes me willing to listen"* (Hariawan, 2026).

Obstacle 2: Limited Instructional Time. Observational data recorded that during the roleplay session, the reflection component identified as the most critical part had to be shortened because the class period was nearly over. The teacher was observed checking the time repeatedly during reflection (Observasi, 2026). Student Gilang Pramudita noted: *"When the discussion was just getting to the important points, Pak Mursid said time was almost up. It felt unfinished"* (Gilang, 2026). The solution was value integration outside formal hours: the teacher inserted brief reflective moments at the start or end of each session, maintained informal conversations with students during breaks, and Pak Nasir conducted non scheduled personal accompaniment (Observasi, 2026). Julia noted: *"I go more often to Pak Nasir's room after the learning sessions. Not to report anymore, but to talk. And that helps me feel lighter"* (Julia, 2026).

Obstacle 3: Peer Group Pressure and Culture of Silence. Observational data showed that students in Hariawan's discussion group were visibly hesitant to speak their minds, occasionally glancing toward Hariawan before responding to questions (Observasi, 2026). Student Nita Handayani stated: *"When the class is noisy like that, I choose to stay silent. Not because I agree, but if I speak, I might become the next target"* (Nita, 2026). Julia confirmed: *"The hardest part is when the others laugh or remain silent. It feels like everyone agrees that what he says about me is true"* (Julia, 2026). The solution was collective class norm reinforcement through the commitment sheet. After all 26 students individually signed the five point commitment, a small but observable shift was recorded, on one occasion observed after the learning sequence concluded, when a degrading comment was made, two students immediately asked it to stop a response that previously would have been met only with silence or laughter (Observasi, 2026). Student Nita added: *"After the commitment, something changed a bit in class. Not immediately drastic, but now someone dares to say 'stop it'"* (Nita, 2026).

Obstacle 4: Minimal Parental Involvement. Coordination session observation between the teacher and Pak Nasir after the learning sequence showed no written follow up or concrete action from the parents of Hariawan, despite previous meeting invitations (Observasi, 2026). Pak Nasir stated: *"His parents came, listened, said they would pay attention. But the follow up at home was not visible"* (Nasir, 2026). Hariawan confirmed: *"My parents don't know much about what happens at school. I also don't tell them much"* (Hariawan, 2026). The solution was intensifying parent communication through a partnership approach shifting from reporting mode to collaborative mode, where both teachers jointly met with Hariawan's parents and framed the conversation as. Following this, Hariawan noted: *"My mother now often asks how school is. Before, she never asked about that"* (Hariawan, 2026).

DISCUSSION

Analysis of Teacher Strategies and Their Empirical Significance

The three strategies identified in this study communicative value based lecture, reflective case based discussion, and role play with guided reflection represent a staged pedagogical architecture designed to activate *perspective taking* progressively rather than through direct confrontation. This pattern aligns with the finding of (Amaly et al., 2024) that the most effective strategies by Aqidah Akhlak teachers in addressing bullying are those that do not place the perpetrator in a position of social destruction, but instead guide them toward moral awareness through a gradual and sustained process. The teacher's deliberate avoidance of confrontation reflects precisely this principle.

The communicative lecture strategy operated at the cognitive level by linking normative Islamic teachings particularly QS al-Hujurat verse 11 to the lived classroom reality. However, as the observational data showed, cognitive knowledge about prohibitions on mockery was insufficient to halt Hariawan's behavior during the very session in which that content was taught (Observasi, 2026). This finding confirms Hoffman's moral empathy theory, which positions *induction* the explanation of how one's actions impact the feelings and welfare of others as the most effective method for developing moral empathy in adolescents, because it activates a cognitive affective process that compels genuine consideration of the impact of one's actions rather than mere avoidance of consequences (Hoffman, 2000). Hariawan's case shows that knowing the rule and internalizing it are two distinct processes requiring different pedagogical interventions.

The reflective discussion strategy operated at both cognitive and social levels simultaneously. By deliberately forming cross clique groups, the teacher disrupted the exclusive social structures that had been reinforcing a culture of verbal teasing and social exclusion. This is consistent with the finding of (Hasnah & Rahmah, 2025) that reflective discussion strategies emphasizing active peer interaction produce a stronger impact on social character reinforcement compared to one way approaches. The data from this study concur, Julia who had consistently been silent in whole class settings demonstrated her sharpest empathic articulation during the small group discussion when she distinguished *candaan* (jokes) from *ejekan* (mockery) based on whether both parties are laughing (Observasi, 2026). This suggests that small group cross clique interaction functions as a psychologically safer discursive space for victimized students to voice empirical moral judgments.

The role play with guided reflection represents the deepest intervention in this study, operationalizing what Hoffman identifies as the most powerful cognitive affective mechanism for activating moral empathy, *perspective taking* through actual occupancy of another's position rather than mere imagination (Hoffman, 2000). The empirical significance is clear, Hariawan's statement "*It's uncomfortable. Especially when others are silent, no one is there to stand up for you"* constitutes the first concrete verbal indicator that *perspective taking* had begun to work within him, even though this had not yet fully shifted his behavior (Observasi, 2026). In Islamic pedagogical terms, this finding resonates with QS Ibrahim verses 26-27, in which the teacher grounded the roleplay's moral significance, those who speak degrading words are compared to a tree pulled out by its roots possessing no true strength or stable foundation while those who speak well are affirmed in both this world and the next (Syukri, 2020).

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study are consistent with and extend prior research in several significant ways. (Ardiyanti, 2025) found that teachers who function as primary role models and managers of the learning environment through personal approaches to perpetrators and victims, combined with parental cooperation, contribute to reducing bullying and creating safer learning climates. This study confirms and deepens that finding by demonstrating that the *mechanism* through which personal approach works is the systematic reduction of perpetrator defensiveness not through directive confrontation, but through informal trust building that gradually opens emotional channels. The difference lies in focus, while Ardiyanti's study examines general akhlakul karimah values, this study specifically positions empathic compassion (*welas asih*) as the core internalized value analyzed through Hoffman's moral empathy framework within the Islamic educational context.

Demonstrated that conscious integration of anti bullying values in Aqidah Akhlak instruction through lecture, daily life connections, Prophetic exemplars, discussion, and sociodrama triggers behavioral changes. (K. A. Rahayu, 2024) The present study advances this finding by capturing the moment by moment dynamics of how each strategy operates differentially, lecture opens cognitive understanding, discussion forces social engagement across clique boundaries, and role play creates the irreplaceable affective experience of inhabiting the victim's position. Rahayu's study, conducted at MTs level, does not address the specific phenomenon of exclusive peer cliques (*sirkel*) and subtle social exclusion that characterize the Madrasah Aliyah context of this study (Observasi, 2026).

Similarly found that cooperative models, group guidance, simulation, and role play increase students' social empathy. (Afifah et al., 2024) This study extends that finding to the context of an active bullying case between a specific perpetrator and victim, demonstrating that role play effectiveness depends critically on the assignment logic placing the perpetrator in the victim's position in a way that feels non punitive, a design decision confirmed by the teacher's own reasoning.

Found that structured empathy programs help students identify and understand others' perspectives and form inclusive environments. (Azzahrah, 2025) The present study provides contextual specificity that Azzahra's school level study lacks: empathic compassion must be embedded in the specific moral spiritual language of madrasah education *ukhuwah*, *tasamuh*, *rahmah* to resonate authentically with students whose primary normative framework is Islamic.

Implications of Findings

The findings carry both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study operationalizes Hoffman's moral empathy theory within the specific context of Indonesian Islamic secondary education, demonstrating that the sequence of *induction* (lecture) → *social perspective taking* (discussion) → *direct perspective taking* (roleplay) constitutes a replicable graduated architecture for empathy cultivation in madrasah settings. Practically, the findings affirm that bullying prevention through Aqidah Akhlak learning requires three structural supports beyond classroom pedagogy: (1) coordinated teacher counselor evaluation systems that allow for continuous monitoring, (2) collective norm mechanisms such as the class commitment sheet, which transform external rules into personal pledges (Nurdini & Iriantara, 2025) and (3) sustained partnership communication with parents, framed as collaborative support rather than problem reporting (Rizki et al., 2024; (Asiyah & Darmayanti, 2024).

The four obstacles identified in this study perpetrator resistance, limited instructional time, peer group pressure, and minimal parental involvement collectively point to a structural insight, the most resistant element in bullying prevention is not the pedagogical strategy itself, but the surrounding ecosystem of norms that either enable or constrain the strategy's reach. (Ramdan et al, 2025) As found, the culture of silence among bystanders constitutes one of the factors that most sustains bullying, because perpetrators read silence as approval. This study confirms that finding and adds that the class commitment sheet by individually

implicating all 26 students in a shared norm can begin to fracture that culture of silence (Observasi, 2026).

Research Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations. First, the research focuses on a single class (XI.1) at a single madrasah, which limits transferability of the findings across different school contexts and grade levels. Second, the behavioral changes observed in Hariawan and Julia while empirically documented remain partial and ongoing, the study captures a process rather than a completed outcome. Third, the limited instructional time available for participatory strategies (discussion and roleplay) constrained the depth of reflection achievable within the formal class period, as both the teacher and students themselves acknowledged. Fourth, parental involvement, which literature identifies as essential for effective bullying prevention, remained only partially achievable within the timeframe of this research (Asiyah & Darmayanti, 2024). Future research could expand the scope by involving multiple classes or schools, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to measure empathy and behavioral changes more systematically, and extending the observation period to track longer term outcomes of the strategies documented in this study.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the cultivation of empathic compassion in Aqidah Akhlak learning at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatul Mustafid Narmada is implemented through three mutually reinforcing strategies: (1) a communicative lecture strategy, namely the delivery of Aqidah Akhlak content that directly connects religious values with real cases of bullying in the classroom to stimulate students' empathy, (2) a case based reflective discussion strategy, namely cross group discussions that use real bullying incidents so that students re evaluate their words and attitudes from the victim's perspective, and (3) a role play strategy with guided reflection, namely role simulations that place the perpetrator in the victim's position, followed by structured reflection sessions so that students can experience the psychological impact of bullying themselves. This sequence of strategies is strengthened by two forms of evaluation, namely daily evaluations and an end of topic evaluation using reflection instruments and a class commitment sheet, which together begin to shift class dynamics from normalizing teasing toward an awareness that bullying causes serious psychological harm to victims.

The study also identifies four main obstacles in cultivating empathic compassion: (1) resistance from the perpetrator, who interprets physical insults such as the labels "two door refrigerator," "sea cow," and "smelly" as mere facts and harmless jokes, (2) limited instructional time, which constrains the depth of in class reflection sessions, (3) peer group pressure (friendship circles) that produces a culture of silence among other students, and (4) minimal parental involvement at home. To address these obstacles, the teacher implemented four strategic steps: (1) a personal and persuasive approach to the perpetrator outside regular class hours to reduce defensiveness, (2) integration of values beyond formal lesson time through relaxed yet consistent interactions between teacher and students, (3) strengthening collective norms through a class commitment sheet or "loyalty pledge" signed by all students as a form of social control, and (4) intensified partnership communication with parents via the school counseling channel to ensure continuity of guidance between school and home. The changes observed are not yet complete, but they indicate an initial shift in how students interpret and respond to bullying behavior in the classroom. This study contributes to the literature on Islamic moral education by operationalizing Hoffman's moral empathy theory within the specific context of madrasah based bullying prevention, offering a replicable pedagogical architecture for empathy cultivation in secondary Islamic education settings

These findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. The study focuses on a single class in one madrasah with a relatively short observation period, so the changes in empathy and bullying behavior captured in this research are still partial and processual. Furthermore, limited instructional time and suboptimal parental involvement mean that the strategies implemented by the teacher are not yet fully supported by a strong ecosystem, either within the school or within the family.

Based on these limitations, future research could expand the scope by involving more than one class or comparing strategies for cultivating empathic compassion across several different madrasahs, as well as combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to measure changes in empathy and bullying behavior in a more systematic and generalizable way within the context of secondary Islamic education.

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