
Building bridges, diverging future: The role of empathy training management in preventing bullying in islamic boarding schools

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Abstract: One of the most significant issue in today's education is bullying, but many studies focused only on the escalation of this problem in public schools or workplaces. A little attention is given to the recent situation of bullying in Islamic boardingschools and the possible program to deal with it. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of Empathy Training Management (ETM) programs in reducing bullying incidents within such environments. Employing a qualitative approach, this study utilized purposive sampling to gather data from 64 participants, including students and teachers across two Islamic boarding schools in East Java, through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Preliminary findings indicate that empathy training, encompassing role-playing, guided discussions, and reflective exercises, notably improves interpersonal relations and reduces bullying. Participants reported increased awareness of the emotional impacts of bullying and improved conflict resolution skills. Teachers observed a marked decrease in bullying incidents and enhanced communication among students. This study also underscores the importance of empathy in educational settings and supports the integration of structured empathy training into school curricula to foster a supportive and understanding community.

Keywords: Bullying, empathy training, Islamic boarding schools, qualitative research, school climate

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Introduction

In the last decade, the issue of bullying is both prevalent and concerning. This incident occurred not only in public and Islamic school (*madrasah*), but also in Islamic boardingschools (*pesantren*). In 2024, Indonesian Education Monitoring Network (*Jaringan Pemantau Pendidikan Indonesia* or JPPI) recorded a significant spike in reported violence cases within educational environments, including schools, madrasahs, and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), totaling 573 incidents. This marks a substantial increase compared to previous years. For comparison, there were 91 reported cases of violence in 2020. This number increased to 142 cases in 2021, continued to rise to 194 cases in 2022, and reached 285 cases by 2023 (Zuhriyah, 2024). Not only in *pesantren*, it also occurred in general schools. According to the data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the incidence of bullying in 2023 among students in 5th grade of elementary school (SD), 8th grade of junior high school (SMP), and 11th grade of high school/vocational school (SMA/SMK) was recorded at 31.6%, 32.22%, and 19.68%, respectively. Additionally, the cases of bullying among female students in these categories were reported at 26.8%, 26.32%, and 15.54%, respectively (BPS, 2023).

The high incidence of bullying is particularly alarming given the close communal living conditions inherent to these institutions, where students not only study but also live together, potentially exacerbating the effects of such negative behaviors. Bullying in communal living conditions, such as dormitories, can lead to significant psychological harm for students. A recent study on 13 students in

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five boarding schools in Indonesia found that student living in dormitory facilities are also subjected to such bullying, which could be identified in five main themes, including inner (mental) torment, difficulty concentrating, nightmares approaching, loneliness being the best, and self-surrender (Kusumawaty et al., 2022). Specifically, many studies highlights that the impact of bullying in such environments can lead to significant declines in academic performance, with victims of bullying showing up to a 5% decrease in academic outcomes compared to their non-bullied peers (Huang, 2022; Nikolaou, 2022). Moreover, the psychological ramifications are severe, with reports indicating increased rates of depression and anxiety among bullied students, up to three times higher than those who are not bullied (Abd Razak et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2018; Sibold et al., 2020). Despite many studies focusing on the bullying and its impact on the psychological students in *pesantren*, a little attention is given to the possible strategies to deal with the bullying cases in *pesantren*. Furthermore, this research becomes essential to address this issue and mitigate the pervasive issue of bullying by exploring effective strategies, such as empathy training, to improve the overall well-being and academic success of students.

Previous research has extensively explored bullying in general educational settings, with numerous studies documenting the psychological and social dynamics of bullying and its effects on victims and perpetrators alike (Bochaver, 2024; Karanikola et al., 2018; Limber et al., 2018; Musalem & Castro, 2015). Studies such as those by Arif et al. (2024) and Hadisi et al. (2019) have touched on interventions in similar settings but have not focused on empathy training as a structured program comprising role-playing, guided discussions, and reflective exercises. Additionally, while the effectiveness of various anti-bullying programs has been studied in western contexts (Gómez-Galán et al., 2021; Hall, 2017; Salameh, 2024), the adaptability and impact of these programs within the socio-cultural framework of Islamic boarding schools remain underexplored. However, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to the implementation of empathy training specifically within Islamic boarding schools. This study aims to fill these gaps by tailoring and testing an empathy-based intervention specifically designed for the communal and educational context of these schools.

The primary aim of this research is to investigate whether structured empathy training program can effectively reduce bullying incidents in Islamic boarding schools. This question is explored through the implementation of a comprehensive empathy training program that includes role-playing, guided discussions, and reflective exercises. The study seeks to determine the effectiveness of these components individually and collectively, in fostering a more empathetic student body and reducing the prevalence of bullying. By addressing this question, the research not only contributes to the broader field of educational psychology but also offers practical insights that can be utilized by educators and administrators in similar educational settings.

The preliminary findings suggest that empathy training has significant potential to reduce bullying in Islamic boarding schools. The training sessions, which allow students to experience both the perspectives of the bully and the victim, have led to notable changes in student behavior and attitudes towards bullying. This study underlines the importance of empathy in educational settings, suggesting that when students understand and internalize the feelings of their peers, they are less likely to engage in bullying behaviors. This research not only supports the implementation of empathy training in schools as an effective anti-bullying strategy but also provides a model that can be adapted to different educational and cultural contexts, potentially having a global impact on the way schools address the problem of bullying.

Method

To investigate the effectiveness of empathy training programs in reducing bullying within Islamic boarding schools, this study employs a purposive sampling technique, carefully selected to align with the unique context of *pesantren*. Unlike random sampling, which may not capture the specific insights required for understanding nuanced phenomena, purposive sampling allows for the selection of

participants who are directly involved in or impacted by the empathy training. This technique is particularly suitable for the pesantren context, where the close-knit community dynamics, hierarchical teacher-student relationships, and cultural values significantly influence the implementation and outcomes of such programs. By focusing on participants with first-hand experiences—students who receive the training and teachers who administer or oversee it—this approach ensures the collection of rich, context-specific data that reflects the psychological and social dynamics of bullying in these settings (Campbell et al., 2020; Douglas, 2022). This method ensures that the sample consists of individuals who have direct experience with, or are integral to, the implementation and reception of the empathy training.

This study encompasses a total of 64 participants from two Islamic boardingschools in East Java, with an even distribution among students and teachers who either participate in or oversee the training sessions. Participants are also chosen based on their potential to offer diverse perspectives on the psychological and social dynamics of bullying within these unique educational settings. These criteria include the participants’ age, role within the pesantren (e.g., as students or teachers), and their experiences related to bullying—either as individuals directly involved in incidents of bullying, witnesses to such behavior, or those responsible for managing and observing interactions within the community. By considering these factors, the study ensures the inclusion of a wide range of viewpoints, reflecting varying levels of involvement and exposure to bullying dynamics, which are crucial for a nuanced understanding of the impact of empathy training in these settings. This strategic selection is crucial for capturing in-depth qualitative data through observations, interviews, and document analysis (Chai et al., 2021; Galanis, 2017), aimed at understanding both the immediate and lasting impacts of the empathy training initiatives.

Table 1. Characteristics of Participants

Category	School	Participant Type	Number	Selection Criteria	Data Collection Method
Implementation	Pesantren A	Students	10	Directly involved in receiving empathy training	Observations during training
		Teachers	5	Teachers administering or observing the training	Observations during training
	Pesantren B	Students	10	Directly involved in receiving empathy training	Observations during training
		Teachers	5	Teachers administering or observing the training	Observations during training
Perceptions	Pesantren A	Students	10	Students with varied experiences of bullying	In-depth interviews
		Teachers	5	Teachers with insights into student interactions and changes	In-depth interviews

Category	School	Participant Type	Number	Selection Criteria	Data Collection Method
Key Components	Pesantren B	Students	10	Students with varied experiences of bullying	In-depth interviews
		Teachers	5	Teachers with insights into student interactions and changes	In-depth interviews
	Both Pesantrens	Document Analysts	2	Experienced in educational program analysis	Document analysis of training materials and policies

Table 1 ensures a comprehensive approach by including both those who experience the training firsthand and those who implement or observe the processes, providing multiple perspectives on the impact and effectiveness of the empathy training. To comprehensively analyze the impact of empathy training management on bullying in two Islamic boarding schools, a multi-faceted qualitative methodology is employed, focusing on four primary components: the implementation of the training, the observed behaviors during training, the the perceptions of teachers and students, and the critical elements that make the training effective.

Firstly, the implementation of the empathy training program consists of three main components: Role-Playing, Guided Discussions, and Reflective Exercises. During the 90-minute Role-Playing session, participants are divided into small groups to simulate bullying scenarios, taking on roles as perpetrators, victims, and mediators. This activity aims to help participants understand different perspectives, supported by simulation scripts and reflective discussions. The Guided Discussions session, lasting 60 minutes, focuses on structured discussions about the causes, impacts, and prevention of bullying through empathy. These discussions are guided by prepared questions and relevant case studies. The Reflective Exercises session, also 60 minutes, encourages participants to individually reflect on their personal experiences with empathy and bullying. They write in a reflection journal and create a personal action plan to practice empathy in their daily interactions.

Secondly, the training is examined through direct observations. This involves systematic observation sessions during the training to record interactions and behaviors of participants in real-time (Alfred et al., 2022; Amarasekera et al., 2022). Observers use a structured checklist to document specific behaviors and reactions to the training exercises, noting any changes in student interactions before and after the sessions. These observations help in understanding how the training is conducted and its immediate effects on the students' behavior. Data from these observations was analyzed using descriptive analysis to outline key trends and patterns that emerge during the training sessions. The indicators included the frequency and nature of positive interactions (e.g., instances of empathy, collaboration, and supportive behavior) and negative interactions (e.g., conflicts, exclusionary behavior, or verbal aggression). Additionally, behavioral changes were tracked by comparing participants' interactions before, during, and after the training sessions, with particular attention to shifts in attitudes, emotional expressions, and peer relationships.

Thirdly, to gather deeper insights into the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the effectiveness of empathy training in mitigating bullying, in-depth interviews are conducted. Participants are selected based on their direct involvement with the training, ensuring a mix of experiences and perspectives (Galily, 2024; Yu et al., 2020). These interviews aim to capture personal reflections, perceived changes in school climate, and the overall acceptability of the training methods. For the

interviews, a thematic analysis was performed, including improved interpersonal relationships, heightened awareness of empathy, and a perceived reduction in bullying incidents, where data was coded and organized into major themes that depict the participants' views on the effectiveness of the training in preventing bullying.

Fourthly, document analysis is employed to review any existing school records, training materials, and policy documents related to anti-bullying efforts (Stickl Haugen et al., 2020; Välimäki et al., 2024). This analysis helps to identify the key components of the training that are documented as effective in school policies and training guidelines. The findings from all three methods—observation, interviews, and document analysis—are triangulated by cross-referencing data to identify consistent patterns, discrepancies, and complementary insights. Specifically, observed behavioral changes during training sessions are compared with participants' reflections from interviews and the documented objectives of training materials to validate outcomes. Indicators of successful triangulation include alignment between observed reductions in bullying behaviors, participants' reported improvements in empathy, and documented training goals, ensuring a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the training's impact on bullying in Islamic boarding schools.

Results and Discussion

The Implementation of ETM in Two Islamic Boardingschools

In an effort to deal with the persistent issue of bullying in Islamic boarding schools, structured empathy training programs have been implemented with an array of strategies designed to foster understanding and empathy among students. These programs, consisting of role-playing, guided discussions, and reflective exercises, aim to directly influence the school's social environment by promoting awareness of the consequences of bullying and enhancing interpersonal relations among students.

Table 2. Comparison of Empathy Training Program between Two Islamic Boardingschools and Its Impacts on Bullying Cases

School	Training Component	Activities Involved	Before Training (Incidents)	After Training (Incidents)	Change in Incidents
Pesantren A	Role-Playing	Students act out scenarios as both victim and bully	30	10	-67%
	Guided Discussions	Facilitated talks about feelings and consequences	30	10	-67%
	Reflective Exercises	Individual reflection on actions and their impact	30	10	-67%
Pesantren B	Role-Playing	Students act out scenarios as both victim and bully	25	5	-80%
	Guided Discussions	Facilitated talks about feelings and consequences	25	5	-80%
	Reflective Exercises	Individual reflection on actions and their impact	25	5	-80%

Table 2 shows that both Pesantren A and Pesantren B implemented the same structured empathy training components, yet Pesantren B achieved a more pronounced reduction in bullying incidents (-80% compared to Pesantren A's -67%). This difference may be attributed to several factors. Pesantren B conducted more frequent training sessions (8 sessions compared to Pesantren A's 5 sessions), and each session had a slightly longer duration (90 minutes in Pesantren B versus 60 minutes in Pesantren A). Additionally, Pesantren B had a smaller student population, allowing for more personalized interactions during training. Differences in student demographics, such as age range and baseline empathy levels, might have also contributed, as Pesantren B's students predominantly consisted of younger participants who showed greater receptivity to training activities.

Despite these differences, the core similarity lies in the effectiveness of the training components across both settings. Role-playing, which directly engages students in the emotional realities of bullying, along with guided discussions and reflective exercises, appears to be universally effective (Bagès et al., 2021). The effectiveness of each training component can be understood through its mechanisms and impacts. Role-Playing allowed students to actively experience both victim and perpetrator perspectives, helping them internalize the emotional consequences of bullying. This hands-on engagement was particularly effective in fostering emotional awareness and reducing impulsive negative behaviors. Guided Discussions provided a safe space for participants to articulate their feelings, reflect on their actions, and understand the broader social impact of bullying. These discussions encouraged open communication and promoted a culture of empathy within the group. Lastly, Reflective Exercises required individual introspection, where participants analyzed their personal behaviors and devised actionable strategies to practice empathy in daily interactions. This component was instrumental in sustaining long-term behavioral changes as participants took ownership of their growth.

These activities collectively help build a robust framework for empathy, crucial in preventing bullying. The uniformity in the decrease in bullying across both schools underscores the potential universality of this approach, suggesting that it could be effectively replicated in other similar environments with expectations of similar outcomes. In essence, while the exact reduction in bullying incidents varies, the overall effectiveness of empathy training in fostering a more supportive and empathetic school environment is evident. This consistency offers a promising outlook for the potential broader application of such programs in Islamic boarding schools and potentially in other educational formats.

The Teacher and Students' Perceptions on ETM in Preventing Bullying

Empathy training management has become a critical component in educational strategies to foster healthier school environments, particularly in Islamic boarding schools where community living and interaction are intense and constant. Understanding the perceptions of students and teachers towards these programs is vital to evaluate their effectiveness and the broader impact on school culture. These perceptions can provide insights into the acceptance and awareness levels generated through empathy training, crucial for shaping behaviors and attitudes towards bullying and interpersonal conflicts.

Table 3. Teachers and Students' Perceptions on Empathy Training Management on the Risk-Bullying Action

Locus	Perception of Empathy Training	Observed Changes	Major Themes
Pesantren A	<p>"It made me understand why someone might act out or bully others." (AL, Student, 22nd)</p> <p>"Now I think more about how my actions affect others before I respond to a situation." (SA, Student, 19th)</p>	More thoughtful in interactions; less reactive to provocations.	Increased emotional awareness and self-regulation

Locus	Perception of Empathy Training	Observed Changes	Major Themes
Pesantren B	“I felt like I learned how to handle my emotions better.” (ZK, Student, 20 th)	Fewer conflicts with my friends during group activities.	Improved peer relationships
	“I don’t get angry as quickly as before, and I try to talk to my friends calmly.” (MB, Student, 15 th)		
	“I’ve seen a noticeable change in how students treat each other.” (IM, Teacher, 36 th)	Increased kindness, reduced conflicts among students.	Positive school climate changes
	“There’s more collaboration in the classroom, and students are more open to sharing.” (MAY, Teacher, 38 th)		
	“The role-playing sessions opened students’ eyes to their peers’ struggles.” (AZ, Teacher, 34 th)	Students started helping one another more frequently.	Enhanced empathy and social responsibility
	“Some students have voluntarily mediated smaller disputes among their peers.” (AF, Teacher, 40 th)		
	“I learned how to handle my anger better and not to hurt others.” (FL, Student, 13 th)	Improved self-regulation and consideration for peers’ feelings.	Increased emotional awareness and self-regulation
	“I now try to pause and reflect before reacting when I feel upset.” (ASP, Student, 15 th)		
	“The discussions helped me realize how my behavior could hurt others.” (SP, Student, 12 th)	I am now more careful with my words and actions.	Improved interpersonal interactions
	“I apologized to a friend after realizing I had hurt their feelings during an argument.” (ZA, Student, 14 th)		
“The training has brought more open conversations about feelings.” (AM, Teacher, 41 st)	Students are more willing to discuss and resolve their conflicts.	Positive school climate changes	
“Students approach us more often to discuss conflicts instead of escalating them.” (HB, Teacher, 29 th)			
“The reflective exercises were the most impactful for long-term changes.” (SAA, Teacher, 40 th)	Students appear more confident in expressing their emotions.	Enhanced empathy and self-awareness	
“Some students have started journaling their emotions voluntarily to track their growth.” (MNF, Teacher, 43 rd)			

Table 3 highlights the positive perceptions of empathy training from both students and teachers in two Islamic boarding schools, Pesantren A and Pesantren B, along with observed behavioral changes. Students across both schools reported an increased understanding of emotions and improved self-

regulation, while teachers noted a decline in conflicts and enhanced student interactions. To strengthen this finding, numerical data from observations and surveys indicate a measurable impact: for example, Pesantren A reported a 40% decrease in conflict incidents after training, while Pesantren B observed a more substantial 50% reduction, as documented in school disciplinary records. Additionally, 75% of participants in Pesantren A and 85% in Pesantren B expressed positive feedback regarding the training's ability to foster empathy and reduce bullying in post-training surveys.

This finding shows that the increased understanding of personal and others' emotions facilitates better conflict management and lessens instances of misunderstandings and aggression (Roth et al., 2019). This improvement is consistent across different individuals and both schools, suggesting a universal benefit of the training programs within the school settings. While both pesantrens achieved positive outcomes, Pesantren B demonstrated slightly better results in terms of reduced conflicts and improved peer interactions. These differences can be attributed to several factors: (a) Frequency and Duration of Training: Pesantren A conducted 5 sessions, each lasting 60 minutes, while Pesantren B implemented 8 sessions, each lasting 90 minutes, allowing for deeper engagement and reinforcement of training principles. (b) Group Size: Pesantren A had larger group sizes (25–30 participants per session), which limited individualized feedback, while Pesantren B had smaller groups (15–20 participants), facilitating more personalized guidance and interaction. (c) Cultural Climate: Pesantren B had an established culture of regular reflection sessions, which might have made students more receptive to the reflective exercises, while Pesantren A relied more on formal lectures, which may have reduced the interactive nature of discussions and role-playing activities.

The positive outcomes of this program can be attributed to the comprehensive nature of the empathy training sessions, which include role-playing, discussions, and reflective exercises. Firstly, role-playing activities had a significant impact by placing students in the perspectives of both victims and perpetrators. For example, in Pesantren B, students simulated scenarios where they practiced conflict resolution as mediators. This hands-on approach helped participants internalize the emotional consequences of bullying, fostering a sense of accountability and empathy. Observations showed that after these sessions, 60% of students in Pesantren A and 75% in Pesantren B demonstrated increased willingness to intervene in bullying situations. Secondly, guided discussions allowed participants to explore feelings and consequences in a safe environment. In Pesantren B, facilitators incorporated real-life case studies and open-ended questions, leading to more candid and meaningful conversations. Teachers observed that students began expressing emotions more constructively, with a 30% increase in peer-to-peer support conversations recorded in post-training observations. Thirdly, reflective exercises were particularly impactful in encouraging introspection. Participants wrote in journals about personal experiences with bullying or empathy, leading to improved self-awareness. For instance, in Pesantren B, 70% of students stated that reflective journaling helped them identify and change negative behavioral patterns, compared to 60% in Pesantren A. The smaller group size in Pesantren B enabled facilitators to provide individualized feedback on these reflections, enhancing the exercise's effectiveness.

These components are designed to foster a deep understanding of empathy by placing participants in others' positions and reflecting on their own emotional responses. The analytical interpretation of this data suggests that when students and teachers actively engage in empathy training, they develop skills that significantly contribute to a positive school culture. This not only decreases bullying but also enhances overall student welfare, suggesting that empathy training should be a fundamental part of educational programs in similar institutions.

Key Components of Effective ETM in Preventing Anti-Bullying in Islamic Boardingschools

Empathy training management programs in Islamic boarding schools have emerged as a significant approach to mitigating bullying by nurturing understanding and compassion among students. These programs are structured around core components that are designed to influence behavior positively and sustainably. Given the communal and closely-knit environment of Islamic boarding schools, where students live and study together, such initiatives are crucial. They not only address incidents of bullying but also aim to foster a culture of mutual respect and empathy, which is aligned with the schools’ educational and ethical values.

Table 4. Key Components of Effective ETM in Islamic Boarding Schools

Component	Activity Description	Impact on Bullying	Observed Results
Role-Playing	Students enact scenarios from both bully and victim perspectives	Enhances understanding of emotional impact of actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students demonstrated a 50% increase in empathetic behavior, such as offering support to peers. • Decreased verbal and physical aggression incidents during group activities.
Guided Discussions	Facilitated dialogue about feelings and consequences of bullying	Increases awareness and promotes open communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observed a 40% improvement in students’ willingness to share their feelings during class discussions. • Peer conflict resolution increased by 35% after discussions.
Reflective Exercises	Students reflect on their behavior and its effects on others	Fosters personal accountability and self-improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students showed a 45% reduction in impulsive reactions during peer interactions. • Journals revealed deeper emotional introspection and acknowledgment of personal faults.
Continuous Feedback	Regular feedback sessions post-training	Ensures long-term behavior change and reinforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-training observations showed a 30% sustained decrease in bullying incidents over 3 months. • Participants reported feeling more supported and motivated to change behavior.

Table 4 categorizes the key components of empathy training that have demonstrated effectiveness in two Islamic boarding schools: role-playing, guided discussions, reflective exercises, and continuous feedback mechanisms. Each component serves a specific purpose in addressing bullying by fostering emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-awareness among students. Role-playing enhances students’ understanding of the emotional impact of their actions, leading to a 50% increase in empathetic behaviors. Guided discussions promote open communication and emotional expression, resulting in a 40% improvement in students’ willingness to share feelings and a 35% increase in peer conflict resolution. Reflective exercises encourage personal accountability, reducing impulsive reactions by 45% and deepening emotional introspection. Lastly, continuous feedback ensures sustained behavior change, evidenced by a 30% sustained decrease in bullying incidents over three months. These components collectively contribute to creating a safer, more inclusive school environment.

This finding shows a structured approach where each component plays a specific role in molding student behavior. Role-playing allows students to step into others’ shoes, directly experiencing the emotional consequences of bullying. Guided discussions facilitate a deeper understanding and processing of these experiences, while reflective exercises encourage students to internalize their

learnings and contemplate their actions (Clough, 2024). Continuous feedback helps maintain these gains by providing ongoing support and adjustments to the training as needed.

It also highlights the effectiveness of a multi-faceted approach in empathy training. The integration of various interactive and reflective components ensures that students are not only taught what empathy is but are also guided in how to practice it in real-life situations. This methodological training helps in breaking down barriers of misunderstanding and insensitivity that lead to bullying. The continuous feedback component is particularly crucial as it helps in reinforcing the learned behaviors and ensuring that the training has a lasting impact. Analyzing this pattern, it's evident that the success of such programs in reducing bullying lies in their comprehensive and immersive nature, which addresses both the symptoms and underlying causes of bullying behaviors. This approach aligns well with the overall educational goals of Islamic boarding schools, which prioritize character development alongside academic achievements.

Further Implications

The implementation of empathy training management in two Islamic boarding schools has demonstrated substantial reductions in bullying incidents, highlighting the significant impact of such interventions on fostering a safer educational environment. In Pesantren A, bullying incidents decreased by 67%, dropping from 30 reported cases before the training to 10 cases afterward. Similarly, Pesantren B experienced an even greater reduction of 80%, with incidents declining from 25 to 5 cases. These outcomes underscore the effectiveness of empathy training in addressing bullying, with measurable improvements in student behavior and interpersonal relationships across both schools. Previous studies have outlined that similar interventions in diverse educational settings have also led to significant behavioral changes among students, with empathy training notably improving interpersonal relationships and reducing conflict (Bochaver, 2024; Karanikola et al., 2018; Limber et al., 2018; Musalem & Castro, 2015). These findings reinforce the importance of empathy training not only as a method to reduce bullying but also as a critical tool in enhancing the overall school climate, making a compelling case for the broader adoption of such programs in educational curricula worldwide.

The observed decrease in bullying incidents following empathy training can be attributed to the program's structure, which focuses on role-playing, guided discussions, and reflective exercises. This comprehensive approach facilitates a deep understanding and internalization of empathy among students. According to the recent studies by Acharya et al., (2019), Fawaid et al., (2024), and Singh et al. (2022), educational programs that incorporate experiential learning components like role-playing are significantly more effective at instilling lasting behavioral changes than those that use traditional didactic methods alone. This structure not only addresses the symptoms of bullying but targets its underlying social and psychological drivers by enhancing students' emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills.

Further implications of the positive perceptions of teachers and students towards empathy training highlight its effectiveness in promoting an inclusive school culture. This is supported by a study on the *Pesantren Ramadan* program, which integrates worship and social activities to foster empathy and social responsibility among students. This research found that participants exhibited enhanced empathy towards peers and a noticeable reduction in bullying incidents, attributed to activities such as communal prayers, *iftar* sharing, and community service, which reinforce values of compassion, mutual respect, and support (Jenuri et al., 2024). This finding suggests that incorporating structured empathy training within pesantren can significantly contribute to creating a safer and more respectful educational environment. Other studies indicate that programs which garner positive perceptions from their participants are more likely to succeed in their objectives (Corbin et al., 2022; Trask-Kerr et al., 2019). In the context of these Islamic boarding schools, the strong endorsement of empathy training by both students and teachers suggests that such programs are well-received and therefore more likely to be

integrated effectively into the schools' regular activities, contributing to sustainable changes in student behavior.

The causal relationship between the positive perceptions of empathy training and its effectiveness in preventing bullying can be explained through the lens of psychological ownership and buy-in from participants. Studies have shown that when teachers and students feel they are part of the conceptualization and implementation of educational programs, there is a stronger commitment to the program's success and a higher likelihood of positive outcomes (Patfield et al., 2023; Shek et al., 2015). This sense of ownership encourages consistent participation and adherence to the program's teachings, deepening its impact on students' behavior and reinforcing its anti-bullying message.

The key components of effective empathy training—such as role-playing, guided discussions, and continuous feedback—are crucial for ensuring the program's success in reducing bullying. As detailed in recent research by Siregar et al. (2024) and Hikmat et al., (2024), these components are not only instrumental in teaching empathy but are also critical in facilitating the ongoing application of these skills in students' daily interactions. This finding suggests that the structured and repetitive nature of these activities embeds essential social skills that are fundamental in preventing bullying, highlighting the necessity of these components in any effective empathy training program.

Lastly, the structure and underlying strategy of the key components of effective empathy training management are foundational in understanding their success in preventing bullying. The integration of continuous feedback mechanisms in empathy training involves post-session surveys, group reflection discussions, and mid-program reviews conducted by facilitators, teachers, and students. Teachers provide observations on behavioral changes, while students share challenges and successes in applying empathy skills, enabling facilitators to refine activities such as role-playing and reflective exercises. This process has led to a 30% sustained decrease in bullying incidents and improved classroom dynamics, with students demonstrating better self-regulation and empathy. By fostering active participation and timely adjustments, continuous feedback ensures the long-term effectiveness and adaptability of the program. As highlighted by Yao et al. (2022) dan Doreille et al. (2021), ongoing assessment and adaptation of educational interventions according to real-time feedback are critical for their sustained effectiveness. This adaptive approach allows schools to tailor interventions to meet the evolving needs of their students, ensuring that empathy training remains relevant and effective in combating bullying within the unique context of Islamic boarding schools.

Conclusion

The findings from the implementation of empathy training in Islamic boarding schools offer valuable insights into the significant impact that structured emotional education can have on reducing bullying. This research has illuminated the profound benefits of incorporating empathy training into school curricula, showcasing its strength not only in decreasing bullying incidents but also in enhancing the overall emotional and social environment of educational institutions. Scientifically, the study contributes by applying a comprehensive methodology that integrates role-playing, guided discussions, and reflective exercises, providing a robust model that can be replicated in other educational settings. This approach has proven effective in deeply embedding empathy among students, renewing perspectives on behavior management in schools and broadening the variables and questions explored in educational psychology.

Despite the promising outcomes, the research has limitations that necessitate further investigation. The study was confined to only two Islamic boarding schools, which may not represent the broader spectrum of school environments where different cultural or organizational contexts might influence the effectiveness of empathy training. Additionally, the long-term sustainability of the positive effects observed remains uncertain without ongoing reinforcement and evaluation. Future research should expand the scope to include a more diverse range of educational institutions and incorporate longitudinal

studies to assess the enduring impacts of empathy training. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of its effectiveness across various environments and help in fine-tuning the program to maximize its benefits.

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