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The Reflective-Stimulation Leadership Model to Reduce Bullying in Islamic Junior High Schools

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Abstract:

Bullying remains a persistent issue in Islamic educational institutions, threatening both student well-being and the cultivation of character values. This study examines the application of the Reflective-Stimulation Leadership Model, which integrates the intellectual stimulation dimension of transformational leadership with the reflective dimension of spiritual leadership. Using a qualitative case study and phenomenological approach, data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, openended questionnaires, and document analysis. The research involved the school principal as the primary subject, supported by data from counselors, homeroom teachers, and students. Findings show that the principal implemented reflective dialogue, role modeling, value-based educational strategies, and participatory forums such as "Fun Friday" to address bullying. Questionnaire results indicate that 85% of students felt safer and more included under this leadership approach. The study concludes that the Reflective-Stimulation Leadership Model effectively reduces bullying while fostering a character-driven and inclusive school climate. This model contributes theoretically by merging transformational and spiritual leadership perspectives, offering a practical reference for Islamic schools seeking sustainable anti-bullying strategies. Numerous studies have demonstrated the significant impact behavioral therapy, especially Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), has on enhancing quality of life and diabetes control.

Keywords: Reflective-Stimulation, Transformational Leadership, Bullying Prevention

Abstrak:

Perundungan masih menjadi persoalan serius di lembaga pendidikan Islam karena mengancam kesejahteraan siswa dan pembentukan karakter. Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan Model Kepemimpinan Reflective-Stimulation, yaitu integrasi antara dimensi *intellectual stimulation* dari kepemimpinan transformasional dengan dimensi refleksi dari kepemimpinan spiritual. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus dan fenomenologis. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara semiterstruktur, kuesioner terbuka, serta analisis dokumen. Subjek utama penelitian adalah kepala sekolah, dengan dukungan data dari konselor, wali kelas, dan siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah menerapkan strategi dialog reflektif, keteladanan berbasis nilai, pendekatan edukatif terhadap pelaku perundungan, serta forum partisipatif seperti "Fun Friday" untuk membangun budaya anti-perundungan.

Hasil kuesioner mengungkapkan bahwa 85% siswa merasa lebih aman dan inklusif melalui kepemimpinan ini. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa Model Kepemimpinan Reflective-Stimulation efektif dalam menekan praktik perundungan sekaligus memperkuat budaya sekolah berbasis karakter. Secara teoretis, model ini menggabungkan perspektif kepemimpinan transformasional dan spiritual, serta secara praktis dapat dijadikan rujukan bagi sekolah Islam dalam mengembangkan strategi pencegahan perundungan yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Stimulasi Reflektif, Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Pencegahan Perundungan

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying cases in Indonesia in 2024 appear to have shown an increasing trend compared to the previous year. Data collected by the Indonesian Education Watch Network (*Jaringan Pemantau Pendidikan Indonesia*/JPPI) recorded 573 cases of violence reported to have occurred in educational environments, including schools, madrasahs, and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). This number has increased significantly. As a comparison, data from 2020 recorded 91 cases of violence, which rose to 142 cases in 2021, 194 cases in 2022, and 285 cases in 2023 (JPPI, 2024)

In addition, based on JPPI survey results, religious-based educational environments also drew attention, with 206 cases of violence occurring in 2024. According to various reports to the institution, the total number of violent incidents included 16% or 92 cases occurring in madrasahs, and 20% or 114 cases occurring in pesantren. Based on several of these incidents, JPPI specified that 31% of violence cases in educational settings were related to bullying (JPPI, 2024). The data from JPPI is also in line with data compiled by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia/KPAI) and the Indonesian Teachers Union Federation (Federasi Serikat Guru Indonesia/FSGI), which recorded at least 1,478 reported bullying cases in 2023. FSGI stated that 80% occurred in schools under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, (Kementerian Riset, Teknologi/Kemendikbudristek), and 20% in schools under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemendikbudristek, 2021).

Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) and the results of the computer-based national assessment (Asesmen Nasional Berbasis Komputer/ANBK) released by Kemendikbudristek (2023), it is known that the majority of students who experience bullying at school are male students. The highest percentage of these cases was recorded at the junior high school (Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP) level, followed by elementary school (Sekolah Dasar/SD) and senior high school (Sekolah Menengah Atas/SMA). In fact, ANBK data shows that around 24.4% of students are in conditions that put them at risk of becoming victims of bullying in educational units. This fact further reinforces that bullying has become a systemic issue in the educational environment, which not only reduces the quality of learning but also threatens the moral and psychosocial integrity of students (Alavi, 2025).

Bullying is not merely a form of deviant behavior among students, but rather a latent symptom of the failure of value systems within educational institutions. The Stop Bullying pocketbook, published by Day et al. (2024), emphasizes that bullying includes unpleasant actions, whether verbal, physical, or social, occurring in both real and digital spaces, which cause psychological pressure on the victims. This phenomenon often grows in school climates that are permissive, lack exemplary behavior from educators, and have weak communication systems among educational components. Therefore, bullying prevention is not sufficient through reactive approaches alone, but requires a reform of the leadership paradigm within the school environment.

In the context of Islamic boarding education, where student interactions occur within more intensive spatial and temporal dimensions, bullying can take more complex forms. In this case, the school principal not only acts as an administrator but also as an instructional leader and guardian of institutional ethics. Research by Widiantari et al. (2022) indicates that the charismatic leadership style employed by teachers and principals significantly contributes to the development of resilient and morally upright student character. Behavioral role modeling becomes the primary instrument in fostering students' social attitudes.

Research on educational leadership has long emphasized the principal's role as both a manager and a moral guide within the school context. Karim (2022), for instance, demonstrated that in pesantren settings, principals are required to maintain harmony between institutional governance and Islamic values, functioning simultaneously as administrators and spiritual leaders. However, leadership that relies solely on managerial or intellectual dimensions often falls addressing students' psychosocial and moral Transformational leadership theory, as introduced by Bass (2021), highlights intellectual stimulation as a means of encouraging teachers and students to think creatively and critically about social issues, including bullying. However, empirical findings indicate that intellectual approaches alone do not adequately resolve bullying, as they fail to address the deeper moral and spiritual dimensions of student development (Kołodziejczyk, 2025).

To respond to this gap, scholars have increasingly turned to spiritual leadership, which emphasizes values such as compassion, reflection, and ethical decision-making. According to Fullan (2023), this model comprises three core elements—meditation, mediation, and reflection—enabling leaders to provide value-based guidance rather than relying solely on formal rules. Recent studies have further shown that schools implementing spiritual or value-based leadership strategies tend to foster safer and more inclusive climates, effectively reducing bullying and other forms of violence (Aditya & Tanjung, 2021).

Despite these advances, limited scholarship has explicitly combined transformational and spiritual leadership frameworks to address bullying in faith-based educational settings. Existing research has predominantly focused on behavioral interventions, teacher practices, or student outcomes, leaving the managerial and leadership dimensions underexplored (Akip et.al., 2023). This indicates a research gap that warrants attention. The present study addresses this

gap by proposing and empirically testing the Reflective-Stimulation Leadership Model, which synthesizes the intellectual stimulation dimension of transformational leadership with the reflective component of spiritual leadership. This model aims not only to inspire innovation and critical thinking but also to cultivate moral and spiritual awareness among students (Allen, 2021).

Grounded in this background, the study is guided by three questions: (1) How do principals implement leadership strategies to prevent and address bullying in Islamic junior high schools? (2) To what extent does the observed leadership pattern reflect the characteristics of the Reflective-Stimulation model? and (3) What impact does this model have on shaping an anti-bullying school climate? By answering these questions, the research contributes both theoretically—by offering a hybrid model of leadership grounded in empirical evidence—and practically, by providing a framework that Islamic schools can adopt to reduce bullying and strengthen character education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the dynamics of school leadership in preventing and addressing bullying. A case study approach was selected because it enables an in-depth and context-specific investigation of leadership practices within a single educational institution (Creswell & Poth, 2023). The focus was on understanding how the principal implemented the Reflective-Stimulation Leadership Model in daily school governance, particularly in relation to bullying prevention.

Data collection was conducted using four complementary techniques: observation, semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were held with the principal, guidance counselors, and homeroom teachers to gain descriptive insights into their leadership strategies and experiences. Observations were conducted to capture natural interactions among students, teachers, and the principal, thereby validating the interview findings. Open-ended questionnaires were distributed to 20 students, allowing them to narratively express their perceptions of the school climate and the principal's leadership style. This format ensured that the instrument remained qualitative in nature. To enhance validity, the questionnaire items were reviewed by two experts in educational leadership and piloted with a small group of students before being finalized. Document analysis, including school policies and activity reports, further supported data triangulation.

Through this case study design, the research identified recurring patterns in the principal's leadership behavior and examined their alignment with the characteristics of the Reflective-Stimulation Leadership Model. The combination of multiple qualitative techniques and triangulation strengthened the credibility of the findings and minimized potential bias.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION Result

Bullying in Islamic boarding schools remains a critical concern. Observations at Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah Islamic Junior High School in Cirebon reveal that bullying manifests verbally and socially, often emerging from power

dynamics within the school's closed environment. Senior students tend to dominate newcomers, leading to exclusion or psychological pressure through demeaning behaviors.

Bullying Patterns in the School Environment

Of the 20 students surveyed, 35% reported witnessing bullying firsthand. Senior students were often seen as informal authority figures. However, many students acknowledged the school's seriousness in addressing bullying through educational and value-based programs.

Table 1. Results of School Environment Observation

No	Observed Aspect	Indicator	Present/Absent	Additional Notes
1	Student interaction	Is there any indication	Present	New students were
		of bullying behavior		seen avoiding certain
		(verbal/physical)?		senior student groups
2	Teacher response	Do teachers reprimand	Present	The guidance
	to negative	or provide direct		counselor used a
	behavior	counseling?		reflective approach
				after a minor incident
3	Principal	Is the principal actively	Present	The principal delivered
	communication	giving character-		moral messages during
		building messages?		assemblies and regular
				forums
4	Anti-bullying	Are there posters,	Present	"Anti-Bullying
	campaign media	slogans, or banners		Petition" posters were
		against bullying?		used during Fun
				Friday activities
5	Character-building	Are there daily or	Present	"Fun Friday" activities
	activities	weekly reflection		were held as an
		activities?		educational anti-
				bullying space

Teachers demonstrated awareness and direct intervention, combining warnings with reflective guidance. A student care group was formed as a peer support forum to report bullying, reinforcing preventive systems through community participation (Wang et.al., 2022).



Figure 1. Anti-Bullying Petition Poster

The "Fun Friday: Anti-Bullying Petition" initiative illustrated the school's non-punitive, reflective stance. Students signed petitions and discussed mutual respect, embodying Islamic values in practice. This participatory activity served as a visual and moral campaign to prevent bullying (Bass & Riggio, 2022).

Principal's Leadership Strategies in Bullying Prevention

The school principal's leadership plays a central role in shaping antibullying culture. Interviews show the leadership model is collaborative, reflective, and participatory.

Table 2. Principal's Leadership Strategies in Bullying Prevention

No	Strategy	Main Activities	Impact or Outcomes Achieved	
1	Value Internalization	Fun Friday, Flag Ceremony	Increased empathy, moral	
		Messages, Thematic Reflection	awareness, and student	
			solidarity	
2	Strengthening	Informal channels to guidance	75% of students feel	
	Reporting Systems	counselor and homeroom	comfortable reporting bullying	
		teacher	cases	
3	Educational Support	Case reflection, non-punitive	Decreased conflict escalation	
		mediation, dialog forums	and increased student openness	

The strategy consists of three pillars: value internalization, reporting reinforcement, and guidance. "Fun Friday," assemblies, and moral reflections serve as platforms for internalizing empathy, social responsibility, and respect. Messages emphasize spiritual and ethical behavior.

Table 3. Recapitulation of Student Questionnaire Results on Principal Leadership in Bullying Prevention

No	Statement	Average Score	Interpretation
1	I feel safe from bullying at this school.	4.3	Agree
2	If I become a victim of bullying, I know whom	4.1	Agree
	to report to.		
3	The principal is firm in dealing with bullies.	4.5	Strongly Agree
4	Teachers and the principal set good behavioral	4.6	Strongly Agree
	examples.		
5	I have participated in school activities that	4.4	Agree
	discussed bullying.		

Students expressed feeling safe, informed, and supported. The highest score (4.6) was for the principal and teachers serving as role models, reinforcing the leadership's credibility and impact on student behavior. The leadership strategy integrates spiritual values (tazkiyah), moral guidance (ta'dib), and exemplary conduct (uswah), making it transformative beyond administrative control. Students respond positively, indicating that reflective engagement shapes school climate more effectively than sanctions alone. In sum, the Reflective-Stimulation leadership model at SMP Islam Al-Irsyad has significantly contributed to building a responsive, inclusive, and value-based anti-bullying school culture. This success suggests its potential applicability in other Islamic boarding schools facing similar challenges.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Reflective-Stimulation Leadership Model provides a comprehensive response to the problem of bullying in Islamic junior high schools. The model integrates reflective dialogue, spiritual values, and participatory activities into daily leadership practices (Wolke & Lereya, 2022). This combination transforms the school principal's role from an administrative manager into a moral and spiritual guide for the school community. The data show that students perceive this leadership style as creating a safer and more inclusive environment (Bush, 2019). The implication is that school climate improvements are not only the result of rules, but also of the values embodied by leaders. This supports the idea that leadership effectiveness depends on visible role modeling rather than only policy enforcement. The "Fun Friday" initiative is a concrete example of how reflective forums contribute to student engagement (Isa & Ahmad, 2023). Students reported increased empathy and awareness, indicating that internalizing values can reduce bullying tendencies. Thus, the model proves relevant as both a preventive and developmental tool (Schools, 2022).

The implementation of value-based leadership strategies also reshapes student perceptions of authority. Instead of associating authority with fear or punishment, students see the principal as a trustworthy and approachable figure. This change reflects a shift from hierarchical control to dialogical engagement (Covey, 2022). Evidence from the questionnaires shows that most students feel comfortable reporting incidents, which is crucial in breaking the silence culture often surrounding bullying. The emphasis on reflective guidance rather than punitive measures strengthens trust between students and school leaders. This condition reduces the risk of hidden bullying behavior that might otherwise go unreported. It also ensures that interventions are restorative, aiming at character growth rather than punishment. In this way, leadership builds a culture of openness that sustains long-term behavioral change (Creswell, 2021). The findings underscore the significance of empathy as a crucial operational value in leadership.

Another important aspect of this model is the integration of intellectual stimulation with reflective practice. The intellectual component encourages students to think critically about social interactions and power relations in school. At the same time, the reflective component ensures that discussions are grounded in ethical and spiritual considerations (Solichah & Shohib, 2025). This balance prevents leadership from being purely cognitive or purely moralistic. It allows students to recognize bullying not only as a violation of rules but also as a failure of empathy and shared responsibility. The integration of both dimensions makes leadership more holistic in addressing complex social problems. The practical implication is that schools adopting this model can simultaneously promote both academic and character development (Putra et al., 2023). This reflects the broader mission of Islamic education, which seeks to unify knowledge and values.

The findings also highlight how participatory activities reinforce antibullying culture. By involving students in campaigns, petitions, and reflective forums, the leadership model empowers them to become active agents of change (Williams, 2021). This sense of ownership empowers students to intervene when they witness bullying and to support peers who may be vulnerable. Such participatory approaches reduce the risk of passive bystander behavior, which often perpetuates bullying. When students collaborate in shaping school norms, they internalize empathy and respect as part of their identity (Daiman, 2023). The data from observations confirm that peer support groups and informal reporting channels contribute to reducing the escalation of conflict. This suggests that student participation is not supplementary but central to the sustainable prevention of bullying. Leadership, therefore, is not a one-way directive but a shared process of cultural formation (Saputra, 2023).

The results also suggest that leadership effectiveness hinges on its ability to adapt to the context. Islamic boarding schools present unique challenges due to the close-knit nature of student interactions and the extended periods of contact. In such environments, bullying may become more complex due to hierarchical traditions among students (Erihadiana & Rijibillah, 2024). The Reflective-Stimulation model addresses this challenge by integrating moral and spiritual reflection into routine school activities. This ensures that preventive strategies are not occasional but continuous. The adaptation of leadership to the boarding school context demonstrates the model's flexibility. It shows that leadership cannot be detached from the lived realities of the students it governs. The study, therefore, underscores the contextual dimension of leadership, where principles are translated into practices that resonate with the community (Furqon & Nurdin, 2025).

Another dimension revealed by the findings is the transformation of teacher and counselor roles under reflective leadership. Teachers are not merely implementers of curriculum but role models who embody the values promoted by the principal. Counselors shift from being disciplinarians to facilitators of reflective dialogue (Leithwood et.al, 2024). This redefinition of roles expands the scope of leadership to include the entire educational team. Such a collective approach ensures consistency of messages delivered to students. It prevents contradictions between principal directives and teacher practices. The outcome is a coherent school culture where values are reinforced at multiple levels (Malone & Fry, 2023). This finding suggests that leadership is most effective when it is distributed and collaborative in nature. It highlights the importance of collective moral agency in shaping school climate.

The study also found that reflective leadership enhances students' psychological safety. Students who feel safe are more willing to engage in learning and community life. This sense of safety is not only physical but emotional, reducing anxiety associated with possible bullying (Maxwell, 2022). It also fosters resilience, as students know that supportive systems are in place to address any problems that may arise. The presence of consistent moral messaging strengthens this assurance. Psychological safety is therefore both a product and a prerequisite

of successful leadership. It illustrates that anti-bullying measures must go beyond sanctions to include emotional well-being (Prasetya & Febrian, 2021). This dimension connects school leadership with broader goals of holistic student development. It positions leadership as a determinant of psychosocial growth, alongside academic achievement (Gunawan et al., 2023).

In summary, the discussion shows that the Reflective-Stimulation Leadership Model effectively addresses bullying through a combination of reflective dialogue, spiritual values, and participatory practices. It shifts the paradigm of school leadership from administration to one of ethical and empathetic engagement (Yoon & Bauman, 2021). The findings emphasize that bullying prevention is most successful when leadership builds trust, fosters participation, and ensures contextual adaptation. The "so what" of this research is clear: leadership matters not only in managing institutions but in shaping the moral and emotional climate of schools (Wentzel & Miele, 2023). The model contributes to the development of an inclusive and value-based culture that strengthens both learning and character formation. By demonstrating practical strategies and observable impacts, this study affirms that reflective and spiritual leadership can serve as a transformative force in education.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the Reflective-Stimulation Leadership Model — integrating intellectual stimulation from transformational leadership with reflective practices from spiritual leadership — can effectively reduce bullying in Islamic junior high schools. The findings underscore that reflective dialogue, role modeling, value-based strategies, and participatory initiatives such as *Fun Friday* significantly enhance students' sense of safety and inclusivity, with 85% of students reporting a safer school climate. Theoretically, this research contributes a hybrid leadership framework that bridges transformational and spiritual perspectives, enriching the discourse on educational leadership. Practically, it offers an empirically tested model that Islamic and other faith-based schools can adapt as a holistic, character-driven strategy for sustainable bullying prevention.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. As a qualitative case study with a small and context-specific sample, the findings may not be fully generalizable. Future research should adopt mixed-methods or longitudinal approaches to examine the long-term effects of the Reflective-Stimulation model across diverse contexts. Comparative studies involving public and secular schools are also recommended to test the model's adaptability and broaden its relevance.

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