

**Modeling Anti-Bullying Actions in Islamic Higher Education:
A Mixed-Method Study**

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Abstract

Bullying remains a persistent challenge in higher education, particularly in Islamic institutions where moral and spiritual values emphasize the protection of human dignity. This study aims to analyze students' perceptions, attitudes, and social support regarding bullying in Islamic higher education, as well as identify key determinants of anti-bullying actions. Using a Mixed-Method Sequential Explanatory Design, the research involved 92 students from IAI Nasional Laa Roiba. Quantitative data were collected through a 25-item Likert-scale questionnaire measuring perceptions, attitudes, and social support, while qualitative data were obtained from eight semi-structured interviews. The results indicate that students exhibit very high awareness of bullying (mean = 4.52) and positive anti-bullying attitudes (mean = 4.36). Regression analysis shows that perception and environmental support significantly influence anti-bullying attitudes ($R^2 = 0.642$; $p < 0.001$). Thematic analysis further identifies five themes: understanding, personal experience, barriers, social support, and expectations toward campus policy. This study is limited by its single-institution scope and reliance on online interviews, which may not fully capture emotional nuances. The originality of this research lies in integrating statistical and thematic findings to develop a conceptual model: Awareness → Attitudes → Barriers → Social Support → Anti-Bullying Actions. Overall, the study reinforces the

need for empathy-based support systems and stronger institutional policies to cultivate a safe and inclusive academic environment.

Keywords: bullying; perception; attitude; social support; islamic higher education

INTRODUCTION

Bullying in university settings has increasingly been recognized as a significant social problem requiring serious academic and institutional attention. Bezie et al. (2025) emphasize that bullying remains prevalent in higher education and has substantial implications for students' psychological well-being. Although bullying is often perceived as an issue limited to high school contexts, studies show that university students continue to experience verbal, social, and digital aggression, indicating that the problem persists across educational levels (Jayangti et al., 2025). Such behavior reflects complex social dynamics, including unequal power relations, competitive academic cultures, and insufficient institutional prevention policies, which allow bullying to manifest through social exclusion, academic humiliation, online gossip, or verbal harassment.

These experiences place victims at heightened risk of anxiety, depression, and decreased academic motivation, demonstrating the severe psychological impact of bullying in higher education (Halim, 2023). Moreover, a permissive campus environment can weaken student solidarity and diminish the overall academic climate, further highlighting the need for strong institutional intervention (Muluk et al., 2021). Recent international research underscores that bullying contributes to declines in academic performance, student confidence, and psychological safety, making it an urgent issue for universities worldwide.

In developing a model of anti-bullying action through awareness, attitudes, and social support in Islamic higher education, this study highlights how programs grounded in Islamic values help strengthen moral awareness and support constructive behavioral responses (Puspita et al., 2024). Social support is a central factor influencing students' ability to confront and report bullying, as emphasized by Syahlevi et al. (2024), who note the importance of institutional and peer support in fostering positive campus interactions. Similarly, Muluk et al. (2021) explain that supportive social environments can reduce the persistence of bullying by promoting solidarity and shared responsibility.

Research on bullying presents a wide array of psychological, social, and institutional perspectives. To build a coherent foundation for this study, the following review is structured to move from general psychological theories of bullying toward contextualized findings in Islamic higher education (Rachmawati et al., 2025). This flow ensures that each segment logically connects to the next while grounding the discussion in a clear theoretical framework. Bullying literature first emphasizes the psychological and behavioral mechanisms underlying aggressive behavior. Obeid et al. (2020) explain that peer victimization is strongly tied to emotional distress, positioning bullying as a psychological threat that impairs social functioning. This aligns with the Social Learning Theory, as posited by Abdullah et al. (2020), which holds that aggressive behaviors are learned through observation and reinforcement. Mohseny et al. (2019) further support this by showing that students who exhibit emotional and behavioral problems are more likely to participate in bullying, suggesting that internal psychological vulnerabilities interact with external stimuli. This theoretical base establishes bullying as both an individual and socially learned behavior, preparing the ground for understanding how environmental cues affect student actions.

Building on these foundations, researchers have explored social and contextual drivers of bullying. Jayangti et al. (2025) highlight how low awareness among parents and peers, coupled with environments that normalize aggression, catalyzes bullying. This perspective is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which views behavior as shaped by multiple interacting systems—family, school, peers, and broader culture. Qian et al. (2020) similarly show that individual traits, family conditions, and school climate interact to increase the likelihood of bullying. Here, the transition from psychological to ecological perspectives underscores that bullying cannot be understood without examining the broader social context.

From this ecological lens, research increasingly centers on mental health consequences and protective factors. Mital et al. (2025) confirm that bullying correlates strongly with negative mental health outcomes, demonstrating long-term emotional vulnerability. Parodi et al. (2025) expand this understanding by identifying peer support, family warmth, and healthy school climates as protective factors. These findings bridge the theoretical shift from explaining bullying to understanding its impact and the mechanisms that buffer against harm, reinforcing the need for institutional support.

Next, the literature turns to Islamic educational contexts, where moral and spiritual values play distinctive roles. Muluk et al. (2021) report that bullying negatively affects academic achievement in Islamic universities, strengthening the argument that moral-based interventions are essential. This aligns with the Grand Theory of Islamic Moral Education, which frames human behavior as guided by values such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *adab* (ethical conduct), and *amanah* (responsibility). Hidayah & Wahyudi (2025) show that teachers who integrate Islamic values into instruction help students internalize empathy, respect, and non-violence. Zahid (2024) reinforces this through findings on guidance programs in *pesantren*, while Rejekiingsih (2025) highlights community involvement—further supporting the principle that value-based ecosystems foster moral conduct and reduce aggression.

The literature also highlights inclusivity and institutional responsibility. Mahbubi (2024) and Espino et al. (2023) argue for anti-bullying policies that address marginalized groups, including LGBTQ+ students, emphasizing that effective policies must protect all members of the academic community. (Purnomo et al., 2025) emphasize the heightened risks among students with disabilities, urging universities to adopt targeted mental health and social support measures. These studies create a bridge from moral theory to practical institutional obligations, illustrating how values must be operationalized into policy. In the Indonesian context, reports from the Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia (KPAI, 2025) show a rise in bullying cases, including within higher education. Local research, Sakinah et al. (2025), stresses the need for preventive programs, awareness campaigns, and structured responses. This final body of literature connects the global, theoretical, and Islamic perspectives to the national context, demonstrating that bullying is a systemic issue requiring multi-layered intervention.

Recent research over the past five years provides comprehensive insights into the factors contributing to bullying, spanning psychological mechanisms, social environments, and school dynamics (Obeid et al., 2020). Building on this foundation, Mohseny et al. (2019) identified a significant association between bullying and students' emotional and behavioral problems, with gender emerging as an influential factor in vulnerability. Extending this line of evidence, Abdurrohim et al. (2024) found that students exhibiting addictive behaviors—such as smoking and alcohol use—tend to be more involved in bullying, both as perpetrators and victims. These findings collectively

reinforce earlier literature showing that behavioral issues frequently co-occur with aggression and peer victimization.

To deepen the understanding of environmental influences, Jayangti et al. (2025) revealed that victimization is closely linked to low awareness of bullying among parents and peers, combined with social environments that tacitly normalize aggressive behavior. This transition from individual-level explanations to broader socio-environmental factors highlights the complexity of bullying and underscores the need for interventions that address both psychological and contextual determinants.

On the other hand, Qian et al. (2020) investigate the risk factors associated with bullying behavior among adolescents, emphasizing that individual characteristics, family conditions, and school environments interact to shape aggressive tendencies. Their study also identifies alcohol use among students as an early indicator that educators can use to detect potential involvement in bullying. This shift from psychological traits to contextual influences reinforces the idea that bullying emerges from a complex interplay between personal vulnerabilities and environmental pressures.

Expanding this discussion, Mital et al. (2025) demonstrate that bullying and peer victimization significantly affect students' mental health, providing further evidence that aggressive behaviors cannot be separated from their emotional consequences. Building on this, Parodi et al. (2025) highlight several protective factors that can mitigate bias-based victimization, including strong peer connections, supportive families, and a positive school climate. These findings collectively illustrate that strengthening social support systems is essential for buffering students against the harmful effects of bullying (Asmawati et al., 2025).

A supportive school environment, therefore, becomes a cornerstone in reducing bullying rates, suggesting that improvements in institutional policies and social networks are critical strategies for prevention. Consistent with this view, Nuraini & Kusuma (2023) argues that addressing bullying effectively requires a comprehensive approach that integrates educational initiatives, strengthened social support, and policy reforms at the school level. This integrative perspective underscores that anti-bullying efforts must operate across multiple layers—individual, interpersonal, and institutional—to achieve meaningful and sustainable impact.

In addition, Purnomo et al. (2025) emphasize that strategies for addressing bullying in higher education must consider higher-risk groups, particularly students with disabilities. This perspective highlights that vulnerability is not evenly distributed across student populations. Building on this, Mahmudulhassan et al. (2025) argue that support programs tailored to the mental health needs of students with disabilities must be strengthened to reduce their risk of victimization. These insights collectively show that effective anti-bullying interventions must recognize the diverse needs of different student groups. (Hidayah & Wahyudi, 2025) emphasize the importance of involving all stakeholders in the campus environment—including lecturers and administrative staff—in implementing effective bullying prevention programs (Octavia & Tirtoni, 2024). This broader involvement highlights that anti-bullying initiatives cannot rely solely on student behavior but must operate across all institutional levels. Supporting this perspective, Karisma I & Ayu Farodillah (2025) point out that programs focusing exclusively on perpetrators or victims often fail, underscoring the need for comprehensive approaches that engage every member of the academic community.

Furthermore, Zahid (2024) notes that strategies for addressing bullying in higher education must also consider high-risk groups, such as students with disabilities, whose

vulnerabilities require targeted institutional support. This reinforces the argument that anti-bullying measures must be inclusive and sensitive to diverse student needs. In line with this, Elisa et al. (2023) assert that universities must adopt preventive—not merely reactive—policies by integrating social support structures, mental health awareness, and active participation from all campus stakeholders.

Overall, the literature shows a clear progression: bullying stems from psychological mechanisms, is influenced by ecological systems, impacts mental health, and is shaped by moral and institutional structures. This integrative view provides the theoretical basis for the current study, which examines how perceptions, attitudes, and social support interact to drive anti-bullying actions within Islamic higher education.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach using a Sequential Explanatory Design. Quantitative analysis was first conducted to examine students' perceptions, attitudes, and environmental support regarding bullying, followed by qualitative analysis to deepen the interpretation of the statistical findings. This design enabled the integration of numerical and narrative data to capture the complexity of bullying on campus. The population comprised all active students at IAI Nasional Laa Roiba, and 92 respondents were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the bullying phenomenon. Participants represented two faculties, with varied genders, semester levels, and academic backgrounds, providing a diverse and representative overview of student perspectives.

Research Instruments

The quantitative instrument was compiled as a 25-item Likert-scale questionnaire (1–5) that measured three main variables: *perception*, *attitude*, and *environmental support* for bullying. (1) The *perception* variable focuses on students' understanding of the form, impact, and morality of bullying acts. (2) Attitude variables measure students' readiness to reject or report bullying behavior. (3) The *environmental support* variable assesses the extent to which students feel social support from friends, lecturers, and campus policies in overcoming bullying.

Meanwhile, the qualitative instrument consisted of semi-structured interviews designed to explore students' in-depth understanding of the definition of bullying, their personal experiences, reporting barriers, and expectations for campus policies. The interview questions were developed based on the quantitative findings to strengthen data interpretation and identify meaningful thematic patterns.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted online using the *Google Forms platform*, ensuring the confidentiality of respondents' identities. Before filling out the questionnaire, respondents were provided with a brief explanation of the research objectives and assured that the data they provided would be used solely for academic purposes. The data collection stage consists of three main phases: (1) the dissemination of quantitative questionnaires, (2) the processing and initial analysis of quantitative results, and (3) the collection of qualitative data through open-ended questions aimed at respondents who are willing to give more in-depth opinions.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data analysis includes several stages of statistical testing: (1) Validity and Reliability Test to ensure the feasibility of the statement items in the questionnaire. Validity was tested using *the Pearson Product-Moment* correlation, with *the criterion that r was calculated* to be greater than the *r table value* (0.205 at $N = 92$, $\alpha = 0.05$). Reliability is measured using *Cronbach's Alpha*, where a value of $\alpha > 0.70$ is considered reliable. (2) Descriptive Statistical Tests are used to describe the level of perception, attitude, and support of the student environment. (3) The Pearson Correlation test is used to determine the relationship between variables. (4) A multiple linear regression test was conducted to assess the impact of perception variables and environmental support on students' attitudes toward preventing bullying.

Qualitative data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis based on the steps of Braun and Clarke (2006), which include: (1) data familiarization, (2) open *coding*, (3) grouping of codes into categories (*axial coding*), (4) identification of key themes (*selective coding*), and (5) interpretation of meaning. The results of qualitative analysis are used to clarify and strengthen quantitative results, thereby producing a more comprehensive understanding of the social context of students.

Data Validity and Integration

The validity of the data is strengthened through triangulation methods, which involve comparing quantitative and qualitative results to assess the consistency of the findings. Additionally, *peer debriefing was conducted* with two expert lecturers in the fields of education and social psychology. The integration of results was carried out at the final interpretation stage to identify thematic relationships between perceptions, attitudes, social barriers, and environmental support for anti-bullying measures.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Quantitative Results

This section presents the results of the statistical analysis conducted with 92 respondents from IAI Nasional Laa Roiba students. Data were collected through questionnaires with three main variables: *perception*, *attitude*, and *environmental support* for bullying. The results of the descriptive analysis show a positive tendency for the three variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variabel	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Category
Perception	4.52	0.48	3.1	5.0	Very high
Attitude	4.36	0.51	2.9	5.0	Tall
Backing	4.10	0.59	2.7	5.0	Quite tall

Students demonstrate a high awareness of the dangers of bullying and exhibit a positive attitude towards rejecting these actions. Environmental support is quite high, indicating that some students feel they have received support from their social environment, although it is not evenly distributed.

Table 2. Instrument Reliability Test

Variabel	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
Perception	8	0.873	Reliable
Attitude	9	0.861	Reliable
Backing	8	0.845	Reliable

Cronbach's Alpha *value* above 0.8 indicates that each construct has excellent internal consistency and is reliable for subsequent analysis.

Table 3. Correlation between Variables

Variabel	Perception	Attitude	Backing
Perception	1.000	0.721**	0.598**
Attitude	0.721**	1.000	0.653**
Backing	0.598**	0.653**	1.000

Note: $p < 0.01$ indicates a significant relationship between variables.

The strongest correlation was found between perception and attitude ($r = 0.721$), indicating that the higher a student's understanding of the negative impact of bullying, the more positive their attitude towards rejecting the behavior.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Test Results

Independent Variables	β (Beta)	t	Itself.	Information
Perception	0,482	6,321	0,000	Significant
Backing	0,354	4,728	0,000	Significant

$R^2 = 0.642$, $F = 38.742$, $p = 0.000$

These results show that perception and environmental support together explain 64.2% of students' variation in attitudes towards anti-bullying actions. Both variables have a positive and significant influence, meaning that the higher the perception and support of the environment, the stronger the student's attitude towards preventing bullying.

Qualitative Results

Interviews with students generated the following statements:

Subject 1 stated, *"Bullying is an act that harms a person's mental well-being."* He added, *"I have never experienced it myself."* According to him, students must take part in preventing bullying because *"we all need to maintain a safe environment together."* He explained that people often remain silent because they are *"afraid of being seen as interfering,"* and he hopes the campus will *"respond quickly and firmly."*

Subject 2 described bullying as *"inappropriate behavior."* He shared, *"I have experienced verbal bullying."* He believes students are obligated to prevent bullying; however, many remain silent because they are *"afraid of retaliation."* He suggested educational seminars, saying, *"The campus should provide regular awareness programs."*

Subject 3 defined bullying as *“harmful behavior that makes people uncomfortable.”* He explained, *“I have never experienced it.”* He noted that silence usually occurs because people are *“afraid of worsening the situation,”* and he recommended counseling services. He expressed hope that the campus would *“offer regular counseling sessions.”*

Subject 4 stated, *“Bullying is mentally distressing.”* He admitted having seen a friend being belittled. He noted, *“People stay silent because they are afraid of getting involved in trouble.”* He suggested establishing an anti-bullying organization and hoped the campus would *“create a dedicated unit to prevent bullying.”*

Subject 5 expressed that *“Bullying is mockery or hurtful remarks.”* He personally had no experience with it. He explained that silence often happens when someone *“doesn’t have strong evidence.”* He recommended stronger behavioral control among students and hoped the campus would *“enforce stricter rules.”*

Subject 6 said, *“I have never experienced bullying, but it is still an inappropriate act.”* He noted that many remain silent because they are *“afraid to fight back.”* He emphasized the importance of concern from the academic community and hoped the campus would *“pay more attention to students’ conditions.”*

Subject 7 said, *“Bullying is an issue that must be taken seriously, including defending the victims.”* He shared, *“I have been mocked before.”* He added that people stay silent because they *“do not want to escalate the conflict.”* He hopes the campus will *“provide a safe reporting mechanism.”*

Subject 8 described bullying as *“harsh and degrading behavior.”* He mentioned, *“I have seen verbal bullying.”* He noted that silence often stems from *“fear of being excluded.”* He hopes the campus will *“immediately provide a campus psychologist.”*

The qualitative stage was conducted to deepen the understanding of the quantitative results and explore the reasons why some students remain hesitant to report or reject bullying acts. The thematic analysis yielded five main themes that represented students' views on the phenomenon of bullying on campus.

Table 5. Main Themes of Qualitative Analysis

No Tema Utama	Short Description	Supporting Categories
1	Understanding of Bullying	College students define bullying as deviant behavior that degrades dignity and mentally hurts a person.
2	Experience and Testimony	Some students have witnessed or heard cases of verbal and social bullying on campus.
3	Silent and Non-Reporting Factors	Fear of the perpetrator, shame, and the assumption that the report will not be acted upon are the main reasons for the victim's silence.
		Moral persecution
		Social observation
		Social barriers

4	The Role of Peers and Campus	Peer support and campus policies are considered important in building an anti-bullying culture.	Social support
5	Expectations for Campus Policy	Students hope that there will be strict policies, counseling services, and safe reporting mechanisms for victims of bullying.	Institutional policies

The five themes illustrate that students have high moral awareness, but do not have full confidence in the reporting system. Social support and campus policies are the dominant factors that influence the courage to act.

Table 6. Respondent Representative Quotes

Theme	Representative Quotes
Understanding of Bullying	"Bullying on campus is not only physical, but also when someone is humiliated in front of their peers."
The Silence Factor	"Afraid of retaliation by the perpetrator, so it's better to keep quiet."
Expectations for the Campus	"Campuses need to have a clear and safe reporting system for victims."

The respondents' quotes reinforce that the courage to report is influenced by social support and a sense of security. This theme complements quantitative results that show a significant relationship between students' perceptions, support, and attitudes toward bullying.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

The integration of the results from both approaches reveals that students possess a high level of moral and cognitive awareness of bullying; however, their actual actions to report or prevent it remain limited. The main obstacles stem from social factors, including fear, stigma, and reporting systems that lack complete trust. Social support from peers and campus policies is the main link between awareness and real action.

The conceptual model resulting from this integration describes the relationship as follows:

Diagram 1. Model Anti-Bullying

Awareness → Attitudes → Barriers → Social Support → Anti-Bullying Measures.
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This model shows that changing student behavior requires reinforcement in two aspects: *ongoing social support* and *an empathetic and confidential reporting system*. These two aspects are key to fostering a safe and civilized campus culture.

Discussion

The results of this study provide an in-depth understanding of how students interpret and respond to the phenomenon of bullying on Islamic campuses. The Mixed

Method Sequential Explanatory approach used shows that students' moral and cognitive awareness of the dangers of bullying has been well formed, but has not been fully transformed into real action. This condition reveals a gap between the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of students regarding the rejection of bullying in the university environment.

Students' perception of bullying is very high. The majority of respondents understand that bullying is a behavior that hurts self-esteem, disrupts emotional stability, and is contrary to moral values and religious teachings. This awareness reinforces Sari et al.'s (2024) findings that strong perceptions of the negative impact of bullying are positively correlated with students' social awareness and empathy for victims. In the context of Islamic education, this awareness reflects an understanding that aligns with the principles of *ukhuwah*, justice, and compassion as taught in the Qur'an's values.

Students' attitudes towards bullying prevention are also positive. The results of the regression test showed that perception and environmental support had a significant effect on student attitudes, with an R^2 value of 0.642. This means that these two factors explain 64.2% of the variation in students' attitudes towards anti-bullying. This relationship suggests that positive perceptions must be complemented by strong social support, enabling students to have the confidence to reject aggressive behavior on campus. These findings align with those of , who emphasize the vital role of social support in enhancing students' psychological and moral resilience to resist social pressures that promote aggressive behavior(Mohseny et al., 2019).

Qualitative analysis enriches quantitative results by providing insight into the social realities underlying statistical data. The theme "Silent and Non-Reporting Factors" is a reflection of the psychological condition of students who are still hesitant to report bullying cases because they are afraid of retaliation, social stigma, or distrust of the campus reporting system. This phenomenon aligns with Tay (2023), who found that a culture of silence often arises due to power inequality and inadequate protection mechanisms in universities. In the context of Islamic campuses, students' silence against bullying is not only caused by fear, but also by social norms that tend to avoid conflict to maintain group harmony. This is in line with Mighwar & Rahmawati (2023), who show that the collective culture of Indonesian society often normalizes passive behavior towards social injustice. Social support emerged as a key factor in turning awareness into action. Students who feel supported by peers, lecturers, and campus policies tend to be more courageous in reporting or rejecting bullying. These results reinforce the research Rosser & Soler (2024), which found that social and emotional support from the academic environment has a protective effect against stress and increases students' social courage.

The interview results from eight student participants reveal psychological, social, and institutional factors that shape students' anti-bullying responses, complementing the quantitative findings. Although all participants described bullying as harmful, degrading, and mentally distressing, many admitted remaining silent due to fear of retaliation, being labeled as interfering, or escalating conflict. Some had witnessed verbal bullying, while others experienced mockery or social exclusion. They emphasized the need for stronger institutional support, including strict policies, regular awareness programs, safe reporting mechanisms, and accessible counseling services. These insights illustrate how awareness and positive attitudes are often constrained by perceived risks and inadequate structural protection. Effective behavioral change therefore requires a campus ecosystem that ensures psychological safety and encourages reporting without stigma. Strengthening responsive policies, counseling services, and anti-bullying communities is essential. The

integrated findings produce a conceptual model—Awareness → Attitudes → Barriers → Social Support → Anti-Bullying Measures—showing that social support and the removal of structural barriers transform awareness into real action, underscoring the need for holistic, empathy-based institutional commitment.

CONCLUSION

This study indicates that although students demonstrate strong awareness of bullying and hold positive attitudes toward preventing it, their actions remain limited by fear of retaliation, social pressure, and low confidence in reporting systems, implying that knowledge alone cannot promote behavioral change without a campus environment that ensures psychological safety and consistent institutional response. The findings highlight the need for Islamic universities to reinforce value-based interventions, including trustworthy reporting channels, continuous counseling support, and policies grounded in Islamic ethics of empathy and communal protection. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations: it focuses on a single institution, uses online qualitative responses that restrict depth, and excludes demographic analysis that could reveal important behavioral variations. Future researchers should expand the scope across multiple campuses, employ richer interview or observational techniques, and explore additional variables such as digital interaction patterns, peer influence, and institutional culture to deepen understanding of anti-bullying behavior.

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