Cultivating Compassion: Rohis as a Strategic Medium for Internalizing Islamic Values and Constructing Anti-Bullying Behavior in Indonesian Public Schools

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Abstract. Bullying remains a pervasive pathology within secondary education, necessitating interventions that transcend punitive measures and address the root moral vacuity. This study investigates the role of Islamic Spiritual Activities (Rohis) as a strategic medium for internalizing Islamic values to construct anti-bullying behaviors at SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang and SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The study reveals that Rohis functions not merely as an extracurricular entity but as a dynamic ecosystem for moral conditioning. The findings indicate a tripartite mechanism of internalization: (1) cognitive enlightenment through theological literacy, (2) affective engagement through spiritual mentorship, and (3) conative actualization through social advocacy. The integration of values such as empathy (ta'awun) and mutual respect significantly reduces aggressive tendencies. The study concludes that Rohis serves as a vital subsystem in school ecology, transforming religious rituals into social ethics, thereby creating a compassionate shield against peer violence. These findings advocate for the elevation of spiritual organizations from peripheral activities to central pillars of character education policy.

Keywords: Rohis, Internalization of Values, Anti-Bullying, Character Education, Islamic Pedagogy.

1   Introduction

The contemporary landscape of secondary education is increasingly marred by the phenomenon of bullying, a form of aggressive behavior that manifests as a persistent abuse of power in peer relationships. Globally, schools are intended to be sanctuaries of learning, yet for many students, they have transformed into arenas of psychological and physical vulnerability. The impact of bullying transcends immediate physical harm; it corrodes the psychosocial well-being of victims, leading to long-term trauma, academic decline, and social withdrawal [1]. In the Indonesian context, despite various regulatory frameworks emphasizing child protection, the incidence of bullying in Junior High Schools (SMP) remains alarmingly high. Conventional approaches to mitigating this crisis have predominantly relied on punitive measures—suspensions, verbal reprimands, and strict surveillance. However, these behaviorist strategies often address

only the symptoms of aggression without penetrating the underlying moral deficit that fuels such behavior.

To address this lacuna, there is a growing academic and pedagogical imperative to explore value-based interventions. Within the framework of Indonesian national education, which explicitly aims to develop students who are faithful and pious to God Almighty and possess noble character, religious extracurricular activities present a potent, yet underutilized, resource. Specifically, Islamic Spiritual Activities, commonly known as *Rohis* (*Rohani Islam*), occupy a strategic position in public schools. Unlike the formal Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, which is often constrained by time and academic targets, *Rohis* offers a flexible, immersive, and peer-centric environment. It serves as a moral laboratory where theological concepts are not just memorized but lived [2], [3].

However, existing literature on *Rohis* has predominantly focused on its role in counter-radicalism or general piety [4], [5]. There is a scarcity of empirical research that specifically examines the mechanism of *Rohis* as an instrument for preventing interpersonal violence and bullying in the context of public junior high schools. This study posits that the internalization of Islamic values—specifically *Akhlakul Karimah* (noble character)—serves as the most effective inner police or self-regulating mechanism against aggressive impulses.

This research aligns with the philosophical synthesis proposed by Anwar [6] which views education as a practice of liberation. In this context, religious education liberates the student from the tyranny of the ego and the impulse to dominate others (bullying), guiding them toward an emancipatory consciousness rooted in compassion. Furthermore, the study draws upon the Kindness-Based Leadership framework [7], hypothesizing that when student leaders in *Rohis* model empathetic behavior, it creates a ripple effect that alters the social fabric of the school.

The urgency of this research is amplified by the specific contexts of SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang and SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur. These institutions represent a microcosm of the broader educational challenges in West Java, balancing traditional values with the pressures of modern adolescent subcultures. By investigating how *Rohis* operates within these schools, this study aims to dismantle the dichotomy between ritual piety and social ethics. The primary objective is to describe and analyze the ecosystem of value internalization within *Rohis* and how this process specifically constructs anti-bullying behaviors. This study offers a novel contribution by detailing the psychosocial transition from theological understanding to the active defense of vulnerable peers, thereby proposing a replicable model for character education in the digital age [8], [9].

2 Method

Research Design This study employs a qualitative case study approach, designed to provide a holistic and in-depth understanding of the internalization of Islamic values within a bounded system. The case study method was selected to capture the complex social interactions and nuanced cultural specificities of *Rohis* activities at SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang and SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur.

Participants and Sampling Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure high-quality, information-rich data. Key informants included *Rohis*

supervisors (*Pembina*), who provided insights into the pedagogical design; student administrators (*Pengurus*), who represented the agents of peer influence; and general members, who reflected the recipients of the internalization process. A total of 25 participants across both schools were involved in the study.

Data Collection Data were triangulated through three primary techniques:

a.   In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the subjects' perceptions of bullying and their experiences within *Rohis*.
b.   Participant Observation: The researchers immersed themselves in *Rohis* activities (weekly mentoring, *Grand Islamic Gathering*, and social service events) to observe real-time interactions and behavioral manifestations of the values taught.
c.   Documentation: Analysis of *Rohis* syllabi, work programs, school disciplinary records, and anti-bullying policy documents.

Data Analysis Data analysis followed the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The analysis focused on identifying thematic patterns related to the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of value internalization. Validity was ensured through source triangulation and prolonged engagement in the field.

3   Result

The investigation into the internal dynamics of SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang and SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur reveals that the internalization of Islamic values through *Rohis* (Islamic Spiritual Activities) is not a peripheral educational supplement, but rather a central, structural phenomenon. The data indicates that *Rohis* operates as a comprehensive moral ecosystem that actively competes with and dismantles the subcultures of aggression typically associated with bullying. The findings are detailed in three extensive thematic streams below: The Architecture of Ethical Leadership, The Ritualization of Empathy, and The Psychosocial Mechanism of Transformation.

3.1. The Architecture of Ethical Leadership (*Uswah Hasanah*): From Hierarchy to Servitude

The first and perhaps most foundational finding of this study is the establishment of a unique leadership architecture within the *Rohis* ecosystem, which fundamentally alters the power dynamics traditionally found in junior high school environments. In the context of school bullying, power is often synonymous with dominance, physical strength, or social exclusion. However, at SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang and SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur, the *Rohis* program effectively redefines power through the concept of *Uswah Hasanah* (Exemplary Leadership), shifting the paradigm from power over others to power for others. This structural shift is spearheaded by the *Pembina* (Supervisors) and operationalized by the *Pengurus* (Student Administrators), creating a cascade of ethical modeling that permeates the student body.

At SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang, the architecture of leadership is built upon the Guardian Brother/Sister (*Kakak Asuh*) model. The research data indicates that the *Pembina* does not function merely as an administrative overseer but as a spiritual anchor.

Interviews revealed that the *Pembina* actively practices what describe as Kindness-Based Leadership. This is not a passive or soft approach; rather, it is a strategic deployment of empathy [7]. For instance, observational data captured a specific routine where the *Pembina* would stand at the mosque entrance not to inspect uniforms, but to shake hands and ask specific questions about the students' well-being. This behavior sets a tone of validation. When student leaders (*Pengurus*) witness this, they replicate it. The study found that senior *Rohis* members began to adopt these mannerisms, creating a welcoming committee for younger students. This effectively neutralizes the freshman hazing culture often prevalent in schools. By replacing the fear of seniors with the safety of mentorship, the *Rohis* ecosystem removes the initial anxiety that often drives younger students to join aggressive cliques for protection.

Furthermore, the selection process for *Rohis* leadership in both schools defies conventional logic. Typically, student organizations recruit the most academically accomplished or visibly disciplined students. However, implementing a strategic approach akin to the SWOT analysis recommended by Anwar and Sulaeman [10], the school administration actively identifies students who possess high energy but low direction—often those labeled as troublemakers or potential bullies. These students are invited into the *Rohis* structure not as passive participants, but as functionaries with specific responsibilities, such as the Mosque Security Team or Logistics Coordinators. This is a profound psychological intervention. A student who previously sought validation through physical dominance in the cafeteria is now given validation through the protection of the prayer space. The study observed one specific case in SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur where a student, previously known for verbal aggression, was tasked with managing the sound system for Friday prayers. The responsibility and the visible trust placed in him by the *Pembina* transformed his self-identity. He no longer needed to belittle others to feel important; his importance was anchored in his service to the collective. This validates the theory that leadership in Islamic education must be transformative and inclusive, turning potential negative energy into positive organizational capital.

The architecture also extends to the democratization of spiritual authority. In many bullying scenarios, the aggressor relies on a rigid social hierarchy. *Rohis* disrupts this by rotating leadership roles in religious rituals. A junior student might be asked to recite the Adhan (call to prayer) while a senior student cleans the prayer mats. This rotation enforces the Islamic principle that superiority is determined solely by piety (*Taqwa*), not by seniority or physical stature. The observational data confirms that this fluidity in roles creates a status ambiguity in the best possible sense—students cannot easily categorize each other as rulers and subjects, which is the prerequisite binary for bullying to occur. The environment becomes one of mutual dependence rather than competition.

Moreover, the *Rohis* leadership structure incorporates a rigorous peer-monitoring system that functions without the punitive surveillance of typical school discipline. This is referred to by the participants as *Tawasau Bil Haq* (mutual advice in truth). In SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang, the *Rohis* administrators manage a care-group system on WhatsApp. If a student is absent or rumored to be involved in a conflict, the *Pengurus* does not report them to the guidance counselor immediately but visits them or messages them personally. This intervention is perceived as care rather than policing. The narrative data highlights several instances where potential fights were de-escalated because a *Rohis* senior intervened as a neutral brother rather than an authority figure. This aligns

with the findings of Anwar [11] regarding education as a practice of liberation; the students are liberating their peers from the cycle of violence through dialogue and presence. The leadership architecture, therefore, acts as a human shield or an immune system within the school body, identifying pathogens (conflict) and neutralizing them through antibodies (mentorship and mediation) before they manifest as full-blown bullying incidents. The consistency of this leadership model, maintained through weekly *LDK* (Basic Leadership Training) that integrates Prophetic history with modern conflict resolution, ensures that the values of compassion are not just taught conceptually but are embedded in the very bone structure of the student organization.

3.2. The Ritualization of Empathy: From Theology to Sociology

The second major finding delves into the sophisticated methodology by which *Rohis* transforms abstract theological concepts into concrete sociological behaviors, specifically empathy and non-violence. In secular educational settings, rituals are often viewed as detached from social ethics. However, at SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang and SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur, the study found that religious rituals are engineered to serve as Empathy Gymnasiums—spaces where the muscle of compassion is repetitively trained until it becomes a reflex. This process, termed here as the Ritualization of Empathy, bridges the gap between the vertical relationship with God (*Hablum Minallah*) and the horizontal relationship with humans (*Hablum Minannas*) [12], [13].

The primary vehicle for this ritualization is the *Halaqah* or mentoring circle. Unlike the traditional classroom arrangement where students sit in rows facing the back of another student's head—a formation that emphasizes individualism and hierarchy—the *Halaqah* requires students to sit in a circle on the floor. This physical reconfiguration is not merely aesthetic; it is deeply pedagogical. In the circle, every student has equal visual access to every other student. The study observed that this arrangement forces eye contact and physical proximity, which are powerful deterrents to dehumanization. It is psychologically difficult to bully someone whose eyes you have met in a moment of vulnerability. During these sessions, the curriculum often focuses on *Sirah Nabawiyah* (The Biography of the Prophet), specifically highlighting narratives of how the Prophet responded to insults and aggression with patience and prayer. However, the transmission is not just distinct in content but in method. The mentors encourage storytelling where students share their own struggles. The vulnerability displayed in these circles creates a bond of Shared Fragility. When a popular student admits to feeling lonely or pressured, the power dynamic that sustains bullying collapses. The victim realizes the bully is human; the bully realizes the victim is a mirror of their own insecurities.

A critical component of this thematic stream is the concept of Ecopedagogy of the Soul. Drawing on the framework, which integrates Monotheism (*Tauhid*) with environmental awareness, *Rohis* extends this to the social environment. Students are taught that just as polluting the river is a sin against God's creation, polluting the school atmosphere with harsh words or physical violence is a spiritual transgression [14], [15]. The study found that *Rohis* at SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur implements a program called Clean Tongue, Clean Heart (*Lisan Terjaga, Hati Mulia*). This program frames verbal bullying (name-calling, sarcasm) not just as rule-breaking but as *Najasah* (impurity) of the soul. This theological framing adds a metaphysical weight to anti-bullying efforts. A student might risk detention to look cool in front of friends, but the risk of spiritual impurity

carries a heavier internal consequence for a religiously conscious adolescent. The data shows that this effectively internalizes the locus of control; students stop bullying not because a teacher is watching, but because they believe God is watching (*Muraqabah*).

Furthermore, the ritualization extends to the *Mabit* (Night of Faith and Piety) activities. These overnight events are pivotal in breaking down social barriers. Students sleep in the same mosque hall, share meals from the same large platters (*Nasi Liwet*), and wake up for night prayers (*Qiyamul Lail*) together. The shared physiological experiences—hunger during fasting, fatigue during night prayers, and the cold of the morning—create a physiological bond known as kinesthetic empathy. The observation notes describe scenes where students from vastly different social cliques—the wealthy and the poor, the athletic and the academic—assist each other in preparing suhoor meals or folding carpets. This shared labor dissolves the In-Group vs. Out-Group mentality that fuels bullying. The *Muhasabah* (introspection) sessions, often held in the dark with emotional guidance from the *Pembina*, allow for a collective catharsis. Students are guided to reflect on their treatment of others. The sound of weeping is common, and the study recorded numerous instances of spontaneous apologies occurring immediately after the lights were turned on. These moments of reconciliation are not staged; they are the organic result of a carefully curated spiritual atmosphere that prizes tenderness over toughness.

Finally, the study highlights the role of *Bakti Sosial* (Social Service) as a ritual of perspective-taking. Students are taken out of the school context to visit orphanages or distribute aid to disaster-stricken areas. This exposure to genuine suffering recalibrates their scale of problems. The petty grievances or power struggles that motivate school bullying seem trivial in the face of real poverty and loss. For the students of SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur, who come from diverse backgrounds, seeing the universality of human suffering fosters a sense of universal brotherhood (*Ukhuwah Insaniyah*). They return to school with a heightened sensitivity to the pain of others. A student who has just washed the dishes for an orphan is less likely to shove a classmate in the hallway. The ritual of service transforms their energy from dominance-seeking to service-seeking. Thus, *Rohis* succeeds in ritualizing empathy by embedding it in the daily, weekly, and semesterly rhythm of the students' lives, making kindness a habit rather than an exception.

3.3. The Psychosocial Mechanism: Cognitive, Affective, and Conative Transformation

The third thematic finding offers a granular analysis of the psychosocial mechanism by which the internalization of values translates into anti-bullying behavior. The study posits that *Rohis* facilitates a linear yet complex progression through three psychological domains: Cognitive (Knowing), Affective (Feeling), and Conative (Acting). This progression ensures that the anti-bullying stance is not merely a superficial compliance with school rules but a deeply held conviction.

The Cognitive Phase: Reframing the Vocabulary of Violence. The entry point for transformation in both schools is cognitive restructuring. Students often enter junior high school with a normalized view of aggression—viewing it as just joking or toughening up. *Rohis* dismantles this by providing a new vocabulary derived from Islamic jurisprudence and ethics. Through *Kajian* (study circles), students learn the precise definitions of *Ghibah* (backbiting), *Namimah* (playing people against each other), and

Sakhriyah (mockery). By naming these behaviors using religious terminology, *Rohis* removes the ambiguity. Just joking is reclassified as *Sakhriyah*, which is strictly forbidden in the Qur'an (Surah Al-Hujurat: 11). This cognitive clarity is crucial. As supported by the work of Ulfah and Anwar [16] on digital innovation, this cognitive phase is reinforced through digital means. The *Rohis* administrators create digital posters and WhatsApp stickers that cite these concepts. When a student sees a bullying meme in a class group chat, the cognitive training kicks in; they recognize it not as humor, but as a violation of specific ethical codes they have studied. This intellectual awareness acts as the first line of defense, creating a cognitive dissonance whenever they witness or are tempted to participate in bullying.

The Affective Phase: The Awakening of *Qalb Salim*. Knowledge alone is often insufficient to curb impulsive adolescent behavior. The study found that the secret sauce of *Rohis* is its ability to engage the affective domain—the emotions. This occurs primarily through the cultivation of *Qalb Salim* (a sound/peaceful heart). Through the regular practice of *Zikr* (remembrance) and *Doa Rabithah* (prayers for connection), students are guided to develop emotional sensitivity. The research interviews were replete with students describing a softening of their hearts. One respondent described it as feeling a prick in the chest when they saw someone sitting alone in the cafeteria. This physiological emotional response is the result of the *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (purification of the soul) curriculum. By constantly emphasizing that God is Most Merciful (*Ar-Rahman*), students are encouraged to mirror that attribute. The affective transformation is also driven by the peer support network. In the safe space of *Rohis*, students experience being listened to without judgment. Having received empathy, they become capable of giving it. The affective mechanism works by raising the emotional cost of bullying; the guilt felt by a *Rohis* student after making a mean comment becomes unbearable, prompting immediate reparation.

The Conative Phase: From Bystander to Upstander. The final and most critical phase is the transition to conative action—the will to act. The study found that *Rohis* members consistently move from being passive bystanders to active Upstanders. This is not accidental but trained. The leadership training (*LDK*) includes role-playing scenarios on how to intervene in a fight without using violence, how to comfort a victim, and how to report incidents effectively. This validates synthesis of Habermasian emancipatory consciousness; the students become active agents of their social reality [6]. In SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang, this is manifested in the Stop-Bullying Patrols informally conducted by *Rohis* members during recess. They do not act as police, but as distractors—engaging potential victims in conversation or inviting isolated students to join their circle. In SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur, the conative action takes a digital form, with students flooding negative social media threads with positive comments, effectively drowning out cyberbullying.

Contextual Nuances: Local Wisdom vs. Urban Adaptation. The psychosocial mechanism is further nuanced by the specific sociodemographic contexts of the two schools. In SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang, which is situated in a more rural, communal setting, the mechanism leverages Communal Shame and Filial Piety. The *Rohis* narratives here link bullying to bringing shame upon one's family and village. The internal restraint is built on the desire to be a good child and a good neighbor. The *Rohis* activities are deeply integrated with local traditions, reinforcing respect for elders (teachers)

and the sanctity of the community. Bullying is framed as a betrayal of this communal harmony.

Conversely, in SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur, an urban school with a heterogeneous population and higher exposure to global youth culture, the mechanism relies on Cosmopolitan Tolerance. Here, *Rohis* emphasizes the Islamic values of *Tasamuh* (tolerance) and the universality of Islam as *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* (a mercy to all worlds). The diversity of the student body (different ethnicities and economic backgrounds) is celebrated as God's design. The anti-bullying narrative is framed around Human Rights and Modern Civility compatible with Islam. The *Rohis* here is more adaptive, utilizing pop-culture references and social media trends to make the anti-bullying message cool and relevant. This adaptability ensures that the values are not seen as archaic but as essential tools for navigating modern life.

In summary, the psychosocial mechanism of *Rohis* is a comprehensive engine that intakes raw adolescent energy and processes it through cognitive definition, affective softening, and conative empowerment, outputting a student body that is not only non-violent but actively protective of the vulnerable. This mechanism confirms that religious education, when pedagogically sound and contextually aware, is a potent solution to the crisis of school violence.

4   Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the efficacy of religious extracurricular activities in mitigating school violence, offering a counter-narrative to the purely secular models of character education. The success of *Rohis* in SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang and SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur lies in its ability to bridge the gap between knowing the good (moral knowing) and doing the good (moral action), a distinction emphasized by Lickona [17].

The mechanism observed aligns with Social Learning Theory [18], where *Rohis* seniors serve as modeled behavior. However, it extends beyond simple imitation. The integration of spiritual accountability—the belief that God is the ultimate witness to bullying—adds a layer of self-regulation that secular observation cannot provide. This resonates with the concept of *Muraqabah* (mindfulness of God) in Islamic psychology.

Furthermore, the study validates the work of Anwar [6] regarding education as a practice of liberation. Bullying is often an expression of oppression and a cycle of victimization. *Rohis* interrupts this cycle by liberating the bully from their need for dominance and liberating the victim from their fear through social support. The environment created within *Rohis* mirrors the ideal speech situation proposed by Habermas (as synthesized by Anwar), where communication is free from coercion, allowing for genuine human connection.

The integration of *Ecopedagogy* and *Tauhid* also finds relevance here. Just as students are taught not to harm the environment, they are taught not to harm the social environment. The pollution of the school climate through bullying is treated with the same severity as physical pollution. This holistic approach suggests that character education cannot be compartmentalized; the values that prevent a student from littering are the same values that prevent them from mocking a peer—a reverence for creation.

However, the study also highlights a critical challenge: the Digital Paradox. [7] While *Rohis* is effective in physical spaces, the digital realm remains a contested battleground. As Ulfah and Anwar [16], [19] note, digital innovation in Islamic education is crucial. *Rohis* needs to further expand its digital footprint to combat cyberbullying effectively, moving from passive WhatsApp groups to active digital content creation that promotes positive narratives.

5 Conclusion

This study concludes that *Rohis* (Islamic Spiritual Activities) at SMP Negeri 1 Lemahabang and SMP Negeri 2 Karawang Timur operates as a sophisticated, multidimensional medium for internalizing Islamic values, effectively serving as a bulwark against bullying. It is not merely a religious supplement but a core pedagogical strategy that cultivates the Architecture of the Soul.

The internalization process moves through a trajectory from cognitive understanding of religious ethics, to affective awakening through spiritual reflection, and finally to conative action through social advocacy and peer protection. The research confirms that when Islamic values are methodologically integrated into student organizations, they foster a school culture defined by empathy (*Ta'awun*) rather than dominance.

Implications and Recommendations: Policymakers and school administrators must cease viewing *Rohis* as a peripheral activity. It should be integrated into the central strategy for school safety and character building. Support should be provided in the form of training for *Rohis* mentors to handle psychological issues (basic counseling) and the provision of resources for digital anti-bullying campaigns. Future research should explore the longitudinal impact of *Rohis* alumni in high school environments to measure the sustainability of these anti-bullying behaviors.

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