

Predicting Bullying Behavior from Victimization Experiences to Strengthen Prevention Management in Islamic Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the predictive relationship between the experience of being a victim of bullying and the tendency to become a perpetrator of bullying in early childhood, as well as to formulate its contribution to strengthening bullying prevention management in Islamic preschools. This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational-predictive design. The study sample included 398 early childhood students in Islamic preschools. Data were collected using the Revised Olweus Bullying/Victimization Questionnaire (OBVQ-R) adapted into Indonesian and completed by teachers based on structured observations. The instrument measures verbal, physical, and relational bullying as victim experiences and perpetrator actions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple multivariate regression. The results showed that the experience of being a victim of bullying predicted children's bullying behavior with an explanatory contribution of approximately 50.2% to 56.4%. Verbal bullying was the most consistent form because it predicted verbal, physical, and relational actions. Experiences of physical bullying most strongly predicted physical actions, while experiences of relational bullying predicted relational actions. This study concludes that children can learn and reproduce bullying behavior from their social experiences. These findings reinforce the importance of behavioral assessment, incident recording, counseling, family involvement, moral development, and safe classroom policies in managing bullying prevention in Islamic early childhood education. Further research is recommended to develop a bullying mitigation model based on an intelligent management system that integrates local Indonesian and Islamic values.

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying in early childhood is a critical issue in education because it involves repeated aggressive behavior, power imbalances, and negative impacts on children's social-emotional development (Cikili-Uytun et al., 2023; Olweus, 2012). In the past five years, studies of preschool bullying have begun to view this behavior not simply as a conflict between children, but as a pattern of interactions that can be recognized through verbal, physical, and relational forms (Rosen et al., 2025; Runions et al., 2018). Verbal bullying is manifested through teasing, insults, threats, or negative labelling of peers (Olweus, 1996; Rosen et al., 2025; Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Physical bullying is manifested through hitting, pushing, kicking, grabbing, or damaging objects belonging to peers (Navarro et al., 2024; Olweus, 1996). Relational bullying manifests through exclusion, refusal to play, the spread of negative stories, and the manipulation of social relationships within peer groups (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Perry & Ostrov, 2023). Bullying in early childhood can be identified through classroom observations, teacher reports, peer assessments, and instruments that differentiate victimization from perpetrator behavior (García-Fernández et al., 2023; Olweus, 1996, 2012; Perry et al., 2021).

However, identifying bullying at an early age still has several methodological and practical limitations (Perry et al., 2021). First, physical bullying is easier for teachers to recognize because it is directly visible, while verbal and relational bullying are often overlooked because they occur in brief conversations, free play, and rapidly changing friendship dynamics (Almaziah et al., 2025; Rosen et al., 2025). Second, children's immature language skills make self-reports less stable, so assessments need to be strengthened through teacher observation, peer reports, and recording of repetitive behaviors (Olweus, 1996; Perry et al., 2024). Third, some studies still separate children as victims or perpetrators, even though children can be in a dual position as both victims and perpetrators (Cho & Park, 2022; Navarro et al., 2024; Perry & Ostrov, 2023). This dual position is important because negative experiences experienced by children can be learned, imitated, and re-emerged as aggressive behavior towards peers (Bandura, 1977; Perry & Ostrov, 2023).

Based on this mapping, the main gap in this research lies in the limited empirical evidence examining the predictive relationship between the experience of being a victim of bullying and the tendency to become a perpetrator of bullying in early childhood in Islamic preschools (Almaziah et al., 2025; Perry & Ostrov, 2023). Many studies have addressed the forms, prevalence, impacts, and interventions of bullying, but few have simultaneously examined how experiences as victims of verbal, physical, and relational bullying can predict verbal, physical, and relational bullying acts perpetrated by children in the classroom (Gaffney et al., 2021; Rosen et al., 2025; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). The novelty of this research lies in testing a cross-domain predictive model between bullying experience and bullying action in early childhood (Navarro et al., 2024; Perry & Ostrov, 2023). This model views victimization not only as a consequence of problematic social relationships but also as a potential source of social learning that can lead children to imitate, repeat, or redirect forms of bullying to peers (Bandura, 1977; Perry & Ostrov, 2023).

This study aims to evaluate the predictive relationship between experiences of being a victim of bullying and bullying perpetrated by early childhood children in an Islamic preschool environment (Olweus, 1996; Perry & Ostrov, 2023). Specifically, this study examines whether experiences of verbal, physical, and relational bullying can predict verbal, physical, and relational bullying behaviors perpetrated by children in the classroom (Navarro et al., 2024; Perry & Ostrov, 2023). The research problem formulation of this study is whether preschool students' experiences as victims of verbal, physical, and relational bullying influence their tendencies to perpetrate verbal, physical, and relational bullying (Olweus, 1996; Rosen et al., 2025). Based on this formulation, this study tests the hypothesis that preschool students' experiences as victims of verbal bullying (BE.V), physical bullying (BE.P), and relational bullying (BE.R) significantly and simultaneously predict their verbal bullying (BA.V),

physical bullying (BA.P), and relational bullying (BA.R) perpetrated in the classroom. (Bandura, 1977; Navarro et al., 2024; Perry & Ostrov, 2023).

This research contributes to the theoretical, empirical, and practical realms. Theoretically, this study strengthens the understanding of early childhood bullying through a predictive model that links the positions of victims and perpetrators in three behavioral domains (Bandura, 1977; Perry & Ostrov, 2023). Empirically, this study provides data on the relationship between bullying experiences and bullying actions in early childhood in Islamic preschools (Almaziyah et al., 2025; Navarro et al., 2024). Practically, this study contributes to the administration of Islamic early childhood education through the development of behavioral assessment systems, bullying reporting procedures, classroom incident recording, child counseling services, social skills programs, family involvement, and Islamic value-based safe classroom policies (Fitriyah et al., 2026; Ghufon et al., 2024). These contributions are relevant for school principals, Islamic PAUD managers, teachers, counselors, and parents in strengthening child protection, moral development, teacher welfare, positive discipline, and a safe, religious, and child-friendly school climate (Fitriyah et al., 2025; Khamida et al., 2026; Machmudah et al., 2024).

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a non-experimental, cross-sectional, correlational-predictive design. The objective of this study was to examine the predictive relationship between the experience of being a victim of bullying and the tendency of young children to engage in bullying in Islamic preschools. (Creswell, 2018). Three forms of bullying experiences, verbal (BE.V), physical (BE.P), and relational (BE.R), were analyzed as predictors of three forms of bullying: verbal (BA.V), physical (BA.P), and relational (BA.R). The study sample included 398 early childhood children in Islamic preschools who were assessed by their respective classroom teachers. Teachers participating as assessors met the following criteria: having at least one year of teaching experience in early childhood education, being the classroom teacher of the children participating in the study, and being willing to follow all research procedures. (Saldana, 2011).

Data were collected using the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire-Revised (OBVQ-R), adapted into Indonesian and adapted to the context of Islamic early childhood education (Gaete et al., 2021; Wulandari & Yunita Putri, 2023). Adaptations were made to ensure the instrument items were appropriate to the characteristics of the preschool environment, children's language abilities, and interaction patterns in classroom activities and play. The first six items measured children's experiences as victims of bullying (BE), while the next six measured bullying actions perpetrated by children (BA). Each variable encompasses three dimensions: verbal bullying, physical bullying, and relational bullying. (Ishtiaq, 2019). Assessments used a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = never to 4 = very often. A summary of the variables, dimensions, indicators, and item numbers for the instrument is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the Adapted OBVQ-R Instrument

Variable	Dimension	Indicator	Item
Bullying Experience (BE)	Verbal (BE.V)	Experience receiving ridicule, insults, threats, or negative labels from peers	1, 2
Bullying Experience (BE)	Physical (BE.P)	Experience receiving physical action such as being hit, pushed, kicked, having one's belongings snatched or damaged	3, 4
Bullying Experience (BE)	Relational (BE.R)	Experiences of being excluded, rejected from play, shunned, or manipulated in friendships	5, 6
Bullying Action (BA)	Verbal (BA.V)	Acts of mocking, insulting, threatening, or giving negative labels to peers	7, 8

Bullying Action (BA)	Physical (BA.P)	The act of hitting, pushing, kicking, grabbing, or damaging a friend's belongings	9, 10
Bullying Action (BA)	Relational (BA.R)	The act of isolating, refusing to play, distancing oneself, or influencing other friends to avoid someone	11, 12

Source: Data Collection, 2026

Data analysis proceeded in several stages. First, preliminary descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the distribution of responses across all variables. Measures of central tendency and variability, including the mean, standard error of the mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation, were calculated to provide a general overview of the data. Additional descriptive results were visualized in graphs to illustrate the distribution of responses on the victimization and perpetration subscales of the OBVQ-R. Linearity was confirmed through scatterplot inspections, while multicollinearity was ruled out with acceptable tolerance values ($> .70$) and variance inflation factors ($VIF < 2$). Homoscedasticity was supported by residual plot patterns. Tests of normality (Shapiro–Wilk and Kolmogorov–Smirnov) indicated deviations from normality. However, given that most assumptions were adequately met and the relatively large sample size ($N = 398$) provides robustness against non-normality, regression analysis was considered appropriate and statistically powerful.

For the main analysis, three multiple regression models were estimated simultaneously. In each model, the three victimization predictors (verbal victimization [BE.V], physical victimization [BE.P], and relational victimization [BE.R]) were entered as independent variables, with one bullying behaviour dimension (verbal bullying [BA.V], physical bullying [BA.P], or relational bullying [BA.R]) serving as the dependent variable:

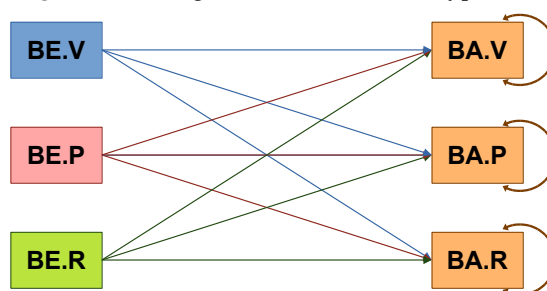
$$BA.V = \beta_1 BE.V + \beta_2 BE.P + \beta_3 BE.R + \varepsilon$$

$$BA.P = \beta_1 BE.V + \beta_2 BE.P + \beta_3 BE.R + \varepsilon$$

$$BA.R = \beta_1 BE.V + \beta_2 BE.P + \beta_3 BE.R + \varepsilon$$

These models are summarized in Figure 1. Standardized regression coefficients (β) were reported to assess the relative strength of each predictor, while R^2 values indicated the proportion of explained variance. Statistical significance was evaluated at the $\alpha = .05$ level, with results categorized as significant ($p < .05$) or nonsignificant ($p \geq .05$).

Figure 1. The Regression Model of the Hypothesis.



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive findings of this study are presented in Table 2, Table 3, and Figure 2. Table 2 describes the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics on bullying in early childhood. Figure 2 displays the profile of bullying experience and bullying action categories for each behavioral dimension.

Table 2. Respondent Demographic Characteristics Data		
Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
5 years	192	49.0%
6 years	206	51.0%
Sex		
Male	207	52.0%
Female	191	48.0%
Family Condition		
Ideal	377	94.7%
Divorce	21	5.3%
Economic Condition		
Lower class	48	12.1%
Middle class	287	72.1%
Upper class	63	15.8%

Source: Data Collection, 2026

Based on Table 2, the distribution of respondents by gender is relatively balanced, with 207 boys (52.0%) and 191 girls (48.0%). The age composition is also relatively balanced, with 192 five-year-olds (49.0%) and 206 six-year-olds (51.0%). Based on family conditions, most respondents came from ideal families (377 children or 94.7%), while 21 children or 5.3% came from divorced families. Based on economic conditions, the majority of respondents came from middle-class families (287 children or 72.1%), followed by upper-class families (63 children or 15.8%) and lower-class families (48 children or 12.1%). The relatively balanced distribution of age and gender strengthens the representativeness of the sample, while the dominance of middle-class families provides an important socio-economic context in understanding bullying behavior in early childhood.

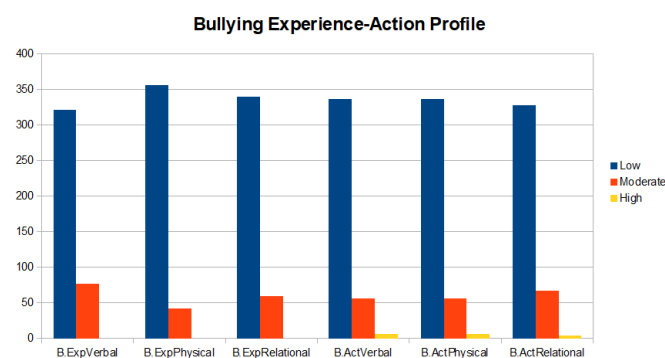


Figure 2. The Descriptive Data of Bullying in Early Childhood

Based on Figure 2, the profiles of bullying experiences and bullying actions show striking differences between the low, medium, and high categories. Across all dimensions, the number of children in the low category far outnumbered the medium and high categories. This difference indicates that the majority of children in the sample had low levels of bullying involvement, either as victims or perpetrators. However, the presence of the medium and high groups remains significant because it indicates a group of children whose bullying experiences or actions are more prominent than those of their peers.

The significant differences in Figure 2 can be explained by the nature of bullying behavior in early childhood, which is generally not evenly distributed across all children. Bullying tends to be concentrated in a small number of children who have negative social experiences, difficulty regulating emotions, impaired social skills, or unhealthy peer interaction patterns. Therefore, the dominance of low scores does not mean bullying is not a problem. Rather, this pattern suggests that interventions need to be more specifically directed at children with medium and high scores, particularly on the verbal and relational dimensions that are more readily encountered in play and everyday communication.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Early Childhood Bullying

Aspects	Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
BE. V	42.47	0.669	13.355	0.314
BE. P	38.968	0.586	11.69	0.3
BE. R	41.394	0.582	11.602	0.28
BA. V	41.002	0.717	14.306	0.349
BA. P	40.366	0.701	13.981	0.346
BA. R	42.227	0.636	12.683	0.3

Source: Data Collection, 2026

Based on Table 3, the average scores for all dimensions range from 38.968 to 42.470. This indicates that bullying experiences and actions in early childhood are moderate. The highest mean score is found in BE.V at 42.470, indicating that being a victim of verbal bullying is the most prominent form of bullying. The mean BA.R score of 42.227 also indicates that relational bullying is a fairly prominent form of bullying in children's interactions. Meanwhile, BE.P has the lowest mean score, at 38.968, indicating that physical bullying experiences are relatively lower than verbal and relational bullying experiences.

The coefficient of variation (CV) across all dimensions is relatively stable and compressed, ranging from 0.280 to 0.349. This range indicates that the distribution of bullying behaviors in the sample is relatively homogeneous. BA.V has the highest CV at 0.349, indicating that verbal bullying shows the greatest individual differences among children. BE.R had the lowest CV of 0.280, indicating that relational bullying experiences were more stable than other dimensions. Furthermore, the standard error of the mean (SEM) values for all constructs were very low, ranging from 0.582 to 0.717. The low SEM values indicate that the sample size of 398 children provides strong statistical precision and minimal estimation error in describing the parameters of the early childhood population.

Multivariate Multiple Regression

Multiple multivariate regression analysis was used to test the predictive relationship between bullying experience and bullying action. Three dimensions of bullying experience, namely BE.V, BE.P, and BE.R, were used as predictors. Three dimensions of bullying action, namely BA.V, BA.P, and BA.R, were used as outcome variables. The results of the analysis are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6, while the model visualization is shown in Figure 3.

Table 4. Regression Analysis of Variate 1

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Intercept	1.93	1.89	–	1.02	.309
BE. V	0.31	0.05	.291	5.80	<.001
BE. P	0.37	0.07	.302	5.41	<.001
BE. R	0.28	0.07	.223	3.72	<.001

Note: Model fit: $R = .735$, $R^2 = .540$, Adj. $R^2 = .537$, $F(3,394) = 154.36$, $p < .001$

Based on Table 4, the regression model for verbal bullying (BA.V) is statistically significant, $F(3,394) = 154.36$; $p < 0.001$. The R^2 value of 0.540 indicates that experiences of verbal, physical, and relational bullying can explain 54.0% of the variation in verbal bullying. BE.P is the strongest predictor of BA.V with a value of $\beta = 0.302$ and $p < 0.001$. This indicates that children who have experienced physical bullying have a higher tendency to carry out verbal bullying. BE.V also has a significant effect on BA.V with a value of $\beta = 0.291$ and $p < 0.001$, so that the experience of being a victim of verbal bullying tends to continue to be verbal bullying. BE.R is also a significant predictor with a value of $\beta = 0.223$ and $p < 0.001$. These findings indicate that verbal bullying is not only influenced by verbal experiences but also by physical and relational experiences.

Table 5. Regression Analysis of Variate 2

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Intercept	4.07	1.93	–	2.11	.036
BE. V	0.17	0.06	.165	3.15	.002
BE. P	0.53	0.07	.441	7.58	<.001
BE. R	0.20	0.08	.168	2.70	.007

Note: Model fit: $R = .708$, $R^2 = .502$, Adj. $R^2 = .498$, $F(3,394) = 132.19$, $p < .001$

Based on Table 5, the regression model for physical bullying (BA.P) was also statistically significant, $F(3,394) = 132.19$; $p < 0.001$. The R^2 value of 0.502 indicates that BE.V, BE.P, and BE.R were able to explain 50.2% of the variation in physical bullying. BE.P was the most dominant predictor with a β value of 0.441 and $p < 0.001$. This means that the experience of being a victim of physical bullying is the strongest factor predicting physical bullying. BE.R also had a significant effect on BA.P with a β value of 0.168 and $p = 0.007$. BE.V had a significant effect with a β value of 0.165 and $p = 0.002$. These findings indicate that physical bullying is most strongly predicted by physical experiences but is still influenced by verbal and relational experiences. This pattern indicates the existence of a direct aggressive behavior reinforcement mechanism in children who have experienced physical violence from peers.

Table 6. Regression analysis of variate 3

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Intercept	7.38	1.64	–	4.51	<.001
BE. V	0.39	0.05	.409	8.37	<.001
BE. P	0.05	0.06	.042	0.76	.447
BE. R	0.40	0.06	.366	6.27	<.001

Note: Model fit: $R = .751$, $R^2 = .564$, Adj. $R^2 = .560$, $F(3,394) = 169.74$, $p < .001$

Based on Table 6, the regression model for relational bullying (BA.R) was statistically significant, $F(3,394) = 169.74$; $p < 0.001$. The R^2 value of 0.564 indicates that BE.V, BE.P, and BE.R were able to explain 56.4% of the variation in relational bullying. BE.V was the strongest predictor with a β value of 0.409 and $p < 0.001$. This indicates that the experience of being a victim of verbal bullying plays a major role in encouraging relational bullying. BE.R was also a significant predictor with a β value of 0.366 and $p < 0.001$, so the experience of being ostracized, rejected, or manipulated in peer relationships can develop into relational actions against other friends. Unlike the two predictors, BE.P did not have a significant effect on BA.R, with a β value of 0.042 and $p = 0.447$. These findings suggest that experiences of physical bullying do not directly predict acts of relational bullying.

Figure 3. The Multivariate Multiple Regression Results

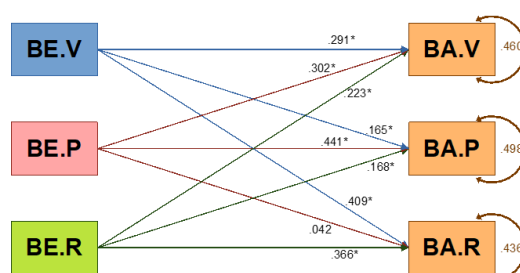


Figure 3 shows that experiences of verbal, physical, and relational bullying explain approximately 50.2% to 56.4% of the variation in bullying behavior in early childhood. This value indicates that the experience of being a victim of bullying has strong predictive power for children's tendency to bully. For verbal bullying, all bullying experiences were significant predictors. For physical bullying, physical bullying was the most dominant predictor. For relational bullying, verbal and relational bullying were significant predictors, while physical bullying was not.

Overall, the regression results indicate a pattern of relationships within the same domain and across domains. Relationships within the same domain are seen in BE.V predicting BA.V, BE.P predicting BA.P, and BE.R predicting BA.R. Cross-domain relationships are seen in BE.V predicting both BA.P and BA.R, and BE.R predicting both BA.V and BA.P. In some children, verbal experiences can transform into relational or physical acts. In other children, physical experiences are more likely to recur as physical or verbal acts. Residual values of 0.436 to 0.498 indicate that other factors outside the model influence children's bullying behavior. These factors may include peer group norms, classroom climate, family parenting patterns, emotional regulation, social skills, and teacher responses to aggressive behavior. Thus, the results of this study confirm that the experience of being a victim of bullying is an important predictor, but not the sole factor shaping bullying behavior in early childhood.

Based on descriptive and regression findings, bullying among early childhood children in Mojokerto Regency, East Java, is at a moderate level with a relatively homogeneous distribution. However, Figure 2 shows that bullying involvement is not evenly distributed across all children. Most children fall into the low category, while a small proportion fall into the medium and high categories. This group should be the primary target for early detection and school intervention. The regression findings reinforce that experiences of being a victim of verbal, physical, and relational bullying can predict children's bullying behavior, both within the same domain and across domains. Therefore, schools need to develop prevention strategies that not only suppress the perpetrator's actions but also pay attention to the victim's experience as a source of risk for the emergence of subsequent bullying behavior.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that early childhood bullying involvement is moderate, with a predominance of the low category across all dimensions of bullying experiences and actions. This finding suggests that early childhood bullying is not evenly distributed across all children, but tends to be concentrated among some children with higher levels of involvement. This pattern aligns with bullying theory, which explains that bullying is repeated aggressive behavior involving power imbalances, not simply a momentary conflict between children (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Olweus, 2012). The predominance of the low category in Figure 2 can also be interpreted as an indication that most children have not yet demonstrated strong bullying involvement, but the medium and high groups still require attention because they have the potential to be risk centers in classroom dynamics. This finding shows that early childhood bullying impacts socio-emotional development, so cases with moderate and high intensity need to be addressed early (Almazyah dkk., 2025).

The striking differences in Figure 2 between the low, medium, and high categories indicate that bullying in early childhood is asymmetrical. Most children fall into the low category, while a small minority show a higher tendency to be victims or perpetrators (Mahmudah dkk., 2024). This pattern can be explained by the developmental characteristics of early childhood, which are still in the developmental stages of emotional regulation, self-control, social skills, and moral understanding. Children with social skills challenges are more susceptible to difficulties in building healthy peer relationships. Machmudah demonstrated that social skills training can improve the emotional intelligence and social skills of preschoolers (Tanrikulu, 2020). Therefore, the profile differences in Figure 2 not only illustrate the numerical variation but also demonstrate the need for

psychopedagogical analysis of the groups of children in the medium and high categories (Mahmudah dkk., 2024; Tanrikulu, 2020).

The descriptive findings in Table 3 indicate that verbal bullying was the most prominent form of bullying experience, while relational bullying also emerged strongly. This is understandable because verbal and relational bullying more easily occur in conversations, free play, and everyday peer interactions (Hogye dkk., 2022). Verbal bullying, such as teasing, calling negative names, or threatening, often occurs in spontaneous communication. Relational bullying, such as rejecting playmates or excluding friends, can occur subtly and be difficult for teachers to detect. These findings support the idea that bullying in preschool needs to be interpreted through children's responses in real social interactions, not just through visible physical actions (Nordahl dkk., 2026). These findings also align with those of Navarro, who explained that aggression and victimization in preschool children are related to the child's immediate social environment (Raney dkk., 2024).

Multivariate regression results indicate that the experience of being a victim of bullying predicts bullying behaviors perpetrated by children. Table 4 shows that experiences of verbal, physical, and relational bullying significantly predict verbal bullying behaviors. The R^2 value of 0.540 indicates that the three forms of bullying experience explain 54.0% of the variation in verbal bullying behaviors. This finding supports Bandura's social learning theory, which states that children can learn behaviors through direct experience, observation, and repetition in their social environment (Rahayu dkk., 2022). Children who have experienced teasing, physical violence, or social rejection can internalize these patterns as a way of responding to peers. In this context, verbal bullying behaviors stem not only from verbal experiences but also from physical and relational experiences. (Raney dkk., 2024).

Overall, the regression results show two main patterns. First, there are predictive patterns within the same domain, such as BE.V versus BA.V, BE.P versus BA.P, and BE.R versus BA.R. Second, there are predictive patterns across domains, particularly BE.V versus BA.P and BA.R (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001). This pattern suggests that the experience of being a victim of bullying does not always result in the same form of bullying. Children may repeat the form of bullying they experience, but they may also transform it into other forms according to the social context of the classroom (Hogye dkk., 2022; Nordahl dkk., 2026). These findings broaden our understanding of the victim-perpetrator relationship in early childhood. In many cases, children cannot be categorized rigidly as victims or perpetrators. Children can find themselves in a dual position as both victims and perpetrators, especially when negative social experiences are not promptly addressed by teachers and schools (Wolke dkk., 2001).

Table 7. Synthesis of the Discussion of the Main Findings

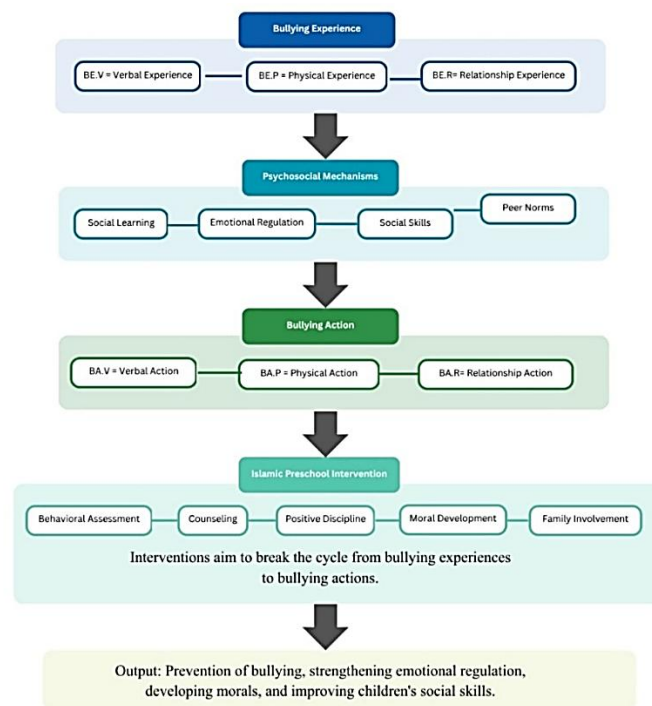
Key Findings	Theoretical Significance	Support from Previous Research	Education Implication
Mayoritas anak The majority of children fall into the low bullying category	Bullying is not evenly distributed, but concentrated in some children	Olweus (1993); Menesini & Salmivalli (2017); Almazyah et al. (2025)	Schools need to conduct early detection in moderate and severe groups
Verbal bullying is the most prominent experience	Verbal aggression easily emerges in children's daily communication	Rosen et al. (2025); Navarro et al. (2024)	Teachers need to monitor children's language during play and interactions
BA.V has the highest CV.	Verbal actions have the greatest individual variation	Machmudah et al. (2024); Perry & Ostrov (2023)	Social skills programs need to be geared toward positive communication
BE.P most strongly predicts BA.P.	Physical experiences can shape the	Bandura (1977); Perry & Ostrov (2023)	Schools need to respond to physical abuse quickly and consistently

	reproduction of direct aggression		
BE.V most strongly predicts BA.R.	Verbal experiences can transform into indirect social aggression	Bandura (1977); Navarro et al. (2024)	Teachers need to address teasing and negative labeling before they escalate into exclusion
Victim experience predicts perpetrator actions	Children can shift roles from victim to perpetrator	Gaffney et al. (2021); Perry & Ostrov (2023)	Interventions should not only punish the perpetrator but also provide rehabilitative support for the victim

Source: Data Collection, 2026

Experiences of verbal, physical, and relational bullying shape children's negative social experiences. These experiences can operate through social learning processes, difficulty regulating emotions, and imitation of peer behavior. These processes then give rise to verbal, physical, or relational bullying. These relationships can occur within the same domain or across domains. In the context of Islamic preschools, these relationships need to be addressed through behavioral assessments, child counseling, moral development, social skills, and teacher-parent collaboration. Conceptually, the interpretive framework of the relationship between bullying experience and bullying action is explained in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Interpretive Framework of the Relationship Between Bullying Experience and Bullying Action



The findings of this study reinforce the importance of school-based interventions in preventing bullying in early childhood. Anti-bullying programs should not simply focus on prohibiting aggressive behavior but should be built as a prevention system that includes early detection, incident recording, fostering communication between children, counseling services, and reinforcing classroom norms. School-based programs have been shown to reduce bullying behavior and the experiences of victims when designed systematically and sustainably (Gaffney et al., 2021). In the Indonesian context, strengthening guidance services is also relevant because group guidance activities through simulation games can increase students' moral values of courage (Hanafi et al., 2025). Symbolic and participatory

approaches are also important, as puppet shows are effective in developing assertive behavior in elementary school students (Utami et al., 2025).

The results of this study also have implications for the administration of early childhood Islamic education. Islamic education administration is not only concerned with curriculum, schedules, teaching staff, or learning resources, but also requires organizing child protection systems, behavioral recording, case reporting, moral development, counseling services, and family involvement. Integrative, holistic services in early childhood education require structured, collaborative, and responsive management practices to meet children's needs (Nisa et al., 2025). The quality of principal service and teacher self-concept also influence preschool teachers' emotional regulation, making both crucial factors in managing safe and supportive classrooms (Agus et al., 2025). These findings are important because successful bullying prevention depends not only on children's behavior but also on the school's managerial capacity and teachers' emotional readiness (Kasheem et al., 2025).

Teacher well-being is also a crucial factor in bullying prevention. Teachers with good psychological well-being tend to be better able to manage their classrooms, respond to conflicts between children, and maintain quality interactions with students. Teacher psychological well-being is influenced by internal factors such as personality, self-efficacy, and stress management, as well as external factors such as the work environment, administrative burden, and policy support (Azizah, 2025; Ghufroon et al., 2026; Izzati, Hidayah, et al., 2026; Izzati, Winingsih, et al., 2026). These findings are relevant to this research because teachers are the ones who observe, assess, and respond to bullying behavior in the classroom. Detection of verbal and relational bullying can be less than optimal if teachers experience high work pressure and lack adequate institutional support.

In the context of Islamic education, bullying prevention needs to be linked to the development of morals, moderation, compassion, justice, and social responsibility. (Hiyatma et al., 2025). This perspective is relevant to Islamic preschools because bullying prevention needs to be built through an ecosystem involving teachers, parents, school culture, and institutional policies. Cross-cultural guidance and counseling studies also support the importance of interventions that are close to the child's world. Group counseling using sociodrama techniques based on folklore can increase students' anti-bullying awareness (Ba Habsy & Hn Lailia, 2026). Folklore-based bibliocounseling can also be a strategy to reduce aggressive behavior in students. Although both studies were conducted at a higher level, the intervention principles remain relevant for early childhood because they utilize stories, roles, symbols, and cultural values as a medium for social learning. In Islamic preschools, a similar approach can be developed through role-playing, puppet shows, songs, role-model stories, and the promotion of prosocial behavior (Hamza et al., 2026).

Thus, this discussion confirms that the experience of being a victim of bullying is a significant predictor of bullying behavior in early childhood. These findings support social learning theory and broaden understanding of victim-perpetrator dynamics in the context of Islamic preschools (Bandura, 1977). The results also indicate that verbal bullying needs to be a primary focus because it plays a strong role in shaping verbal, physical, and relational actions. The practical implication of these findings is the need to develop a data-driven bullying prevention system that is integrated into school administration and supported by teachers who are psychologically prepared.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the experience of being a victim of bullying has a strong predictive relationship with early childhood tendencies to become perpetrators of bullying in Islamic preschools. Using an adapted OBVQ-R completed by teachers based on structured observations, the study found that experiences of verbal, physical, and relational bullying predicted children's bullying behavior, with a clear contribution of approximately 50.2% to 56.4%. This finding addresses the research focus that children are not always in a fixed position as victims or perpetrators. Children can learn, imitate, and reproduce bullying behavior from the social experiences they encounter in peer interactions. Verbal bullying was the most consistent form in the predictive model, predicting verbal, physical, and

relational bullying. Experiences of physical bullying most strongly predicted physical acts, while experiences of relational bullying predicted relational acts. This pattern suggests that experiences of victimization can develop within the same domain or transform into other forms of bullying. Therefore, verbal bullying needs to be a primary focus in early detection because it frequently appears in children's daily communication and can develop into other aggressive acts.

Practically, this study contributes to strengthening bullying prevention management in Islamic preschools through behavioral assessment, incident recording, reporting procedures, counseling services, family involvement, moral development, and safe classroom policies. This study has limitations because the data were obtained through teacher observations, so the findings may be influenced by the subjectivity of the observations and the context of the Islamic preschool institution studied. Therefore, further research is recommended to develop an intelligent system-based early childhood bullying mitigation model that integrates local approaches, such as the value of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, to help children understand and accept differences as key to bullying prevention, as well as integrating Islamic values. This model is important for strengthening early detection, school response, family involvement, and sustainable child protection governance in Islamic preschools. Islamic preschools are also recommended to not only act against children who bully but also pay serious attention to children who have experienced victimization. T

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