

Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Barat, Padang, West Sumatera, Indonesia

Ruhama: Islamic Education Journal

p-ISSN:2615-2304, e-ISSN:2654-8437// Vol. 8 No. 2 October 2025, pp. 133-149

<https://doi.org/10.31869/ruhama.v8i2.7534>

Integrating Islamic Educational Values into REBT-Based Group Counseling to Reduce Students' Bullying Behavior

Muharleni^{a, 1}, Zadrian Ardi^{b, 2}, Hari Suriadi^{c, 3}^{ab}Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia^cUniversitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Barat, Indonesia¹muharleni.s.pdi@gmail.com, ²zadrianardi@unp.ac.id, ³suriadihari6@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 2025-12-16

Revised: 2025-09-08

Accepted: 2025-09-09

Published: 2025-09-09

*Corresponding

Author:

Name: Muharleni

Email:

muharleni.s.pdi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Bullying remains a significant behavioral and psychosocial concern among adolescents and requires interventions addressing both maladaptive cognitions and moral development. This study examined changes in students' bullying behavior following REBT-based group counseling integrated with Islamic educational values. A quantitative one-group pretest–posttest design was employed with 25 students selected purposively from 115 screened students at SMKN 2 Painan, West Sumatera, Indonesia. Participants received six group counseling sessions based on the REBT ABCDEF framework, integrated with Islamic values including *ukhuwah*, *rahmah*, *'adl*, *amanah*, and *akhlāq al-karīmah*. Bullying behavior was assessed using a 32-item scale covering physical, verbal, and relational dimensions. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro–Wilk test, paired-samples *t*-tests, and Cohen's *dz*. The mean overall bullying score decreased from 125.84 (SD = 2.23) at pretest to 95.16 (SD = 5.63) at posttest, representing a 30.68-point reduction. The difference was statistically significant, $t(24) = 28.42$, $p < .001$, with a very large within-group effect ($dz = 5.68$). Significant reductions were also observed in physical, verbal, and relational bullying. The integrated counseling approach was associated with substantial reductions in bullying behavior and shows promise as a contextually responsive school counseling intervention. Controlled and longitudinal studies are needed to establish causal effectiveness and sustainability.

Keyword

Bullying behavior; REBT; group counseling; Islamic educational values; adolescents

Abstrak

Bullying merupakan salah satu permasalahan perilaku dan psikososial yang penting pada remaja, sehingga memerlukan intervensi yang tidak hanya menangani kognisi maladaptif, tetapi juga mengembangkan moral. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis perubahan perilaku bullying siswa setelah mengikuti konseling kelompok berbasis REBT yang diintegrasikan dengan nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam. Penelitian menggunakan desain kuantitatif *one-group pretest–posttest* dengan 25 siswa yang dipilih secara purposive dari 115 siswa yang menjalani skrining di SMKN 2 Painan, Sumatera Barat. Peserta mengikuti enam sesi konseling kelompok berdasarkan kerangka ABCDEF REBT yang diintegrasikan dengan nilai *ukhuwah*, *rahmah*, *'adl*, *amanah*, dan *akhlāq al-karīmah*. Perilaku bullying diukur menggunakan skala 32 item yang mencakup dimensi fisik, verbal, dan relasional. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, uji

Shapiro–Wilk, *paired-samples t-test*, dan Cohen's *dz*. Rata-rata skor bullying menurun dari 125,84 (SD = 2,23) menjadi 95,16 (SD = 5,63), dengan penurunan sebesar 30,68 poin. Perubahan tersebut signifikan, $t(24) = 28,42$, $p < 0,001$, dengan efek dalam kelompok yang sangat besar ($dz = 5,68$). Penurunan signifikan juga ditemukan pada bullying fisik, verbal, dan relasional. Pendekatan konseling terintegrasi berkaitan dengan penurunan perilaku bullying yang substansial dan berpotensi menjadi pendekatan konseling sekolah yang responsif terhadap konteks. Penelitian terkontrol dan longitudinal diperlukan untuk menguji efektivitas kausal dan keberlanjutan perubahan.

Kata Kunci

Perilaku bullying; REBT; konseling kelompok; nilai pendidikan Islam; remaja

INTRODUCTION

Bullying remains one of the most persistent and complex challenges confronting contemporary education systems because it simultaneously threatens students' psychological well-being, academic development, and the quality of the school climate (Arslan et al., 2020; Nurmaya & Wasliman, 2025; Mustofa et al., 2025). Rather than being merely an act of interpersonal aggression, bullying has increasingly been recognized as a multidimensional educational problem involving cognitive, emotional, social, and moral dysfunctions. Contemporary literature defines bullying as intentional, repetitive aggressive behavior characterized by an imbalance of power between perpetrators and victims (Han et al., 2025; Dey & Srivastava, 2025). It manifests in physical, verbal, relational, sexual, and cyber forms, with verbal bullying consistently reported as the most prevalent type across school settings (Han et al., 2025; Reed et al., 2024; Dey & Srivastava, 2025). This phenomenon extends beyond victimization, affecting perpetrators and bystanders alike through increased risks of anxiety, depression, substance misuse, suicidal ideation, diminished self-esteem, and maladaptive cognitive-behavioral development (Han et al., 2025; Reed et al., 2024; Dey & Srivastava, 2025). Furthermore, bullying disrupts students' concentration, increases academic stress, lowers educational achievement, and weakens the sense of safety necessary for effective learning, thereby undermining the overall educational mission of schools (Arslan et al., 2020; Dey & Srivastava, 2025).

Within the Indonesian educational context, bullying remains one of the most frequently reported forms of violence occurring across public schools, madrasahs, and Islamic boarding schools (Azharo & Rusman, 2025). The rapid expansion of digital communication has further transformed bullying into cyber environments, extending its temporal and psychological consequences beyond school boundaries (Han et al., 2025; Azharo & Rusman, 2025). Consequently, bullying can no longer be adequately addressed through disciplinary sanctions alone. Instead, contemporary educational scholarship emphasizes that effective prevention requires multidimensional interventions integrating psychological, pedagogical, familial, and sociocultural approaches capable of transforming students' beliefs, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and moral reasoning (Han et al., 2025; Reed et al., 2024).

From the perspective of Islamic education, bullying represents not only a behavioral deviation but also a violation of the fundamental objectives of Islamic educational

philosophy, which seeks to develop intellectually competent individuals possessing noble character (*akhlāq al-karīmah*), compassion (*rahmah*), justice (*'adl*), empathy, and social responsibility. Islamic educational values emphasize harmonious relationships among individuals through the cultivation of moral consciousness and accountability before God and society. The Qur'an explicitly prohibits ridicule, humiliation, and social exclusion (Q.S. Al-Hujurāt [49]:11), while the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized that a true believer is one from whose words and actions others remain safe. Recent empirical studies demonstrate that integrating *aqidah*, *akhlāq*, *ihsān*, and multicultural Islamic values into educational practice contributes significantly to strengthening empathy, prosocial behavior, tolerance, and anti-bullying attitudes among students (Mappanyompa et al., 2026; Mustofa et al., 2025). Likewise, the implementation of *akhlāq*-based Al-Islam learning, exemplary teacher behavior, moral habituation, and school counseling grounded in Islamic values has been shown to reduce verbal and non-verbal bullying while fostering a safer and more religious educational environment (Zulkarnaini & Purwidiyanto, 2026). Moreover, Islamic character education models incorporating emotional intelligence have been reported to strengthen ethical reasoning, empathy, and prosocial behavior while simultaneously reducing bullying tendencies (Alfarezel, 2025).

These findings imply that guidance and counseling services within Islamic educational institutions should extend beyond their conventional remedial function toward becoming strategic mechanisms for internalizing moral and spiritual values that support students' psychological adjustment and character development (Mustofa et al., 2025). Recent intervention studies consistently indicate that group counseling, peer counseling, and emotional intelligence-based counseling programs contribute to reducing bullying behavior, improving self-esteem, strengthening peer relationships, and enhancing classroom climate (Han et al., 2025; Prayoga & Manurung, 2025; Misbah, 2026; Alyana et al., 2026). Nevertheless, many existing interventions remain predominantly psychological in orientation, emphasizing behavioral modification without explicitly integrating students' religious and moral value systems into structured counseling processes.

One evidence-based counseling approach that has consistently demonstrated effectiveness in addressing adolescent maladaptive behavior is Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). Grounded in Ellis's cognitive-behavioral framework, REBT proposes that emotional and behavioral disturbances originate primarily from irrational beliefs rather than external events, making cognitive restructuring the principal mechanism for behavioral change (Putri et al., 2019; Athina & Pudjiati, 2024; Augustine et al., 2026). Empirical findings indicate that REBT effectively reduces aggression, enhances anger regulation, improves self-awareness, and promotes more adaptive emotional responses among adolescents (Putri et al., 2019; Athina & Pudjiati, 2024; Augustine et al., 2026; Tumbol et al., 2026). Within school settings, group counseling further strengthens these outcomes by providing opportunities for cognitive reflection, peer feedback, perspective-taking, and mutual social support, thereby facilitating meaningful behavioral transformation related to bullying prevention (Azharo & Rusman, 2025; Prayoga & Manurung, 2025).

Despite these advances, two important gaps remain evident in the literature. First, empirical studies on REBT predominantly examine cognitive restructuring, aggression reduction, anger management, or emotional regulation, while giving limited attention to the integration of religious or educational values into structured counseling interventions (Athina & Pudjiati, 2024; Agustine et al., 2026; Tumbol et al., 2026). Second, studies in Islamic education have extensively discussed *akhlāq*, Islamic character education, and religious instruction as preventive strategies against bullying, yet rarely connect these values with evidence-based cognitive-behavioral counseling approaches capable of producing measurable behavioral change (Mappanyompa et al., 2026; Mustofa et al., 2025; Zulkarnaini & Purwidiyanto, 2026). Consequently, the integration of Islamic educational values within REBT-based group counseling remains theoretically underdeveloped and empirically underexplored, despite both paradigms sharing complementary goals of transforming cognition, strengthening self-control, cultivating empathy, and fostering socially responsible behavior (Alfarezel, 2025; Mustofa et al., 2025).

Conceptually, integrating Islamic educational values into REBT-based group counseling offers a more holistic intervention framework than employing either approach independently. While REBT facilitates the restructuring of irrational beliefs through the A-B-C-D-E cognitive process, Islamic education reinforces this transformation through *tazkiyat al-nafs* (self-purification), *muhāsabah* (self-reflection), *ihsān* (moral excellence), and *akhlāq al-karīmah* (noble character). The convergence of these perspectives enables counseling interventions to address not only cognitive distortions but also students' moral awareness, spiritual responsibility, and ethical decision-making, thereby strengthening the sustainability of behavioral change.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of integrating Islamic educational values into REBT-based group counseling services in reducing students' bullying behavior. The novelty of this study lies in proposing and empirically testing an integrative counseling framework that combines evidence-based cognitive restructuring with the systematic internalization of Islamic educational values. Unlike previous studies that examined REBT primarily as a psychological intervention or Islamic education as moral instruction, this research positions both perspectives within a unified counseling model designed to simultaneously foster rational thinking, moral consciousness, spiritual responsibility, and prosocial behavior. This integrative perspective is expected to contribute not only to the advancement of school counseling practices but also to the development of a more holistic paradigm of Islamic education in addressing contemporary student behavioral problems.

METHOD

Research Design and Participants

This study employed a quantitative one-group pretest–posttest design to examine changes in students' bullying behavior following a group counseling intervention based on

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) integrated with Islamic educational values. The study was conducted at SMKN 2 Painan. The study involved 25 students selected through purposive sampling from an initial screening of 115 students. Participants were students who met the predetermined eligibility criteria for elevated bullying behavior and completed both the pretest and posttest. The final participants consisted of 13 females (52.0%) and 12 males (48.0%). The intervention was delivered in six group counseling sessions, each lasting approximately 90 minutes.

The study design followed the sequence:

$O1 \rightarrow X \rightarrow O2$ $O_1 \rightarrow X \rightarrow O_2$

where $O1$ represents the pretest, X represents the REBT-based group counseling intervention integrated with Islamic educational values, and $O2$ represents the posttest.

Intervention

The intervention consisted of six structured group counseling sessions based on the REBT ABCDEF framework. The counseling process focused on helping students identify bullying-related activating events, recognize irrational beliefs, examine their emotional and behavioral consequences, dispute maladaptive beliefs, and develop more rational and constructive responses. Islamic educational values were integrated into the cognitive restructuring process through contextual reflection on *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), *amanah* (responsibility), and *akhlāq al-kaṛimah* (noble character). These values were used to strengthen empathy, self-control, responsibility, and prosocial behavior without replacing the core REBT procedures.

Table 1. Intervention Structure

Session	Focus	Main Activities
1	Group formation and orientation	Building trust, group norms, and introduction to intervention goals
2	Identification of bullying experiences	Exploring triggering situations and behavioral consequences
3	Identification of irrational beliefs	Recognizing maladaptive thoughts and self-reflection
4	Cognitive disputation	Challenging irrational beliefs through discussion and role-play
5	Development of rational responses	Formulating rational beliefs and prosocial behavioral strategies
6	Consolidation and commitment	Reviewing progress, behavioral commitment, and follow-up planning

Instrument and Scoring

Bullying behavior was measured using a 32-item Bullying Behavior Scale covering three dimensions: physical, verbal, and relational bullying. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*), with higher scores indicating

higher levels of bullying behavior. The items were organized into physical bullying (Items 1–11), verbal bullying (Items 12–22), and relational bullying (Items 23–32). Items 11, 22, 28, and 29 were reverse-scored before calculating dimension and total scores using the transformation: $XR=6-X$. The final total score was obtained by summing all 32 scored items, producing a theoretical range of 32–160. Content validity was assessed by three experts, with reported Aiken's V coefficients ranging from 0.82 to 0.91, while internal consistency was reported at Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through three stages: pretest administration, implementation of the six-session intervention, and posttest administration using the same instrument. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participant identities were kept confidential, and data were analyzed in aggregate form.

Descriptive statistics were calculated using the mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, and individual change scores. For inferential analysis, the normality of the pretest–posttest difference scores was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test. Because the difference scores did not significantly deviate from normality, a paired-samples t -test was used to examine changes in overall bullying behavior and its three dimensions. The mean difference and 95% confidence interval were reported together with the t statistic, degrees of freedom, and p -value. Cohen's d was calculated to estimate the magnitude of within-participant change. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$, and analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Participant Selection and Characteristics

A total of 115 students were screened for bullying behavior. Based on the predetermined eligibility criteria, 25 students met the inclusion criteria and participated in the intervention. All 25 participants completed the pretest, six-session group counseling intervention, and posttest assessment; consequently, no cases were excluded from the final analysis. The final sample consisted of 13 female students (52.0%) and 12 male students (48.0%). Regarding age, 11 participants (44.0%) were 16 years old, 8 (32.0%) were 17 years old, and 6 (24.0%) were 18 years old. Participants were distributed across three classes: X ($n = 10$, 40.0%), XI ($n = 8$, 32.0%), and XII ($n = 7$, 28.0%).

Table 2. Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	13	52.0
	Male	12	48.0
Age	16 years	11	44.0
	17 years	8	32.0
	18 years	6	24.0

Class	X	10	28.0
	XI	8	32.0
	XII	7	40.0
Total		25	100.0

The relatively balanced distribution by gender and the concentration of participants within the 16–18 year age range indicate that the intervention was evaluated within a relatively homogeneous adolescent school population. However, because participants were drawn from a single school and selected purposively, the findings should be interpreted within the contextual boundaries of the study sample.

Descriptive Changes in Bullying Behavior

Bullying behavior was assessed using a 32-item scale comprising physical, verbal, and relational dimensions. Before calculating the total scores, Items 11, 22, 28, and 29 were reverse-scored according to the instrument's scoring procedure. The final score was obtained by summing the 32 scored items, with higher scores indicating a higher level of bullying behavior.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Overall Bullying Behavior

Measurement	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Pretest	25	125.84	2.23	122	131
Posttest	25	95.16	5.63	83	107
Difference	25	30.68	5.40	20	51

The mean total bullying score decreased from 125.84 (SD = 2.23) at pretest to 95.16 (SD = 5.63) at posttest. The mean reduction was 30.68 points (SD = 5.40), representing an approximately 24.39% reduction relative to the pretest mean. The range of scores also shifted downward, from 122–131 at pretest to 83–107 at posttest. Notably, all 25 participants (100%) demonstrated a lower total bullying score at posttest than at pretest, with individual reductions ranging from 20 to 51 points. This descriptive pattern indicates that the observed change was not attributable to only a small number of participants with substantial improvement; rather, a reduction was observed consistently across the entire intervention group.

Distribution and Individual Change

To provide a more transparent representation of the intervention-related change, individual pretest and posttest scores were examined in addition to group-level descriptive statistics.

Table 4. Individual Change in Total Bullying Scores

Change status	n	%
Decreased	25	100.0
Unchanged	0	0.0

Increased	0	0.0
Total	25	100.0

All participants showed a reduction in their total bullying scores after the intervention. The consistency of the direction of change strengthens the descriptive evidence for improvement within the intervention group. Nevertheless, because the study used a one-group pretest–posttest design, this pattern should not be interpreted as definitive evidence of a causal intervention effect. Without a comparison group, alternative explanations such as maturation, history, testing effects, or regression to the mean cannot be completely excluded.

Assumption Testing

Because the primary inferential analysis compared two measurements obtained from the same participants, normality was assessed on the difference scores (Pretest – Posttest) rather than on the pretest and posttest distributions separately. The Shapiro–Wilk test indicated that the distribution of the total difference scores did not significantly depart from normality:

$$W = 0.926, p = .072$$

Since $p > .05$, the normality assumption for the paired-samples t -test was considered acceptable.

Table 5. Normality Test for Difference Scores

Variable	Shapiro–Wilk W	p	Decision
Pretest – Posttest total score	0.926	.072	No significant deviation from normality

Accordingly, a paired-samples t -test was used as the primary inferential procedure.

Effect of the Intervention on Overall Bullying Behavior

A paired-samples t -test was conducted to examine whether the mean reduction in bullying behavior was statistically significant.

Table 6. Paired-Samples t -Test for Overall Bullying Behavior

Comparison	Mean Difference	SD Difference	95% CI	t	df	p
Pretest – Posttest	30.68	5.40	28.45–32.91	28.42	24	< .001

The analysis demonstrated a statistically significant reduction in bullying behavior following the intervention, $t(24) = 28.42, p < .001$. The estimated mean reduction was 30.68 points, and the 95% confidence interval indicated that the population mean reduction compatible with the observed sample was approximately 28.45 to 32.91 points. To assess

the practical magnitude of the observed change, Cohen's dz was calculated using the mean difference divided by the standard deviation of the paired differences.

Cohen's $dz = 5.68$

The magnitude of the standardized within-group change was therefore very large.

Table 7. Magnitude of the Observed Change

Indicator	Result
Pretest mean	125.84
Posttest mean	95.16
Mean reduction	30.68
Relative reduction	24.39%
95% CI	28.45–32.91
Cohen's dz	5.68

The combination of a statistically significant paired difference, a 24.39% reduction in the mean score, and a very large within-group standardized effect indicates a substantial pretest–posttest change in bullying behavior among the participating students.

Changes in Physical, Verbal, and Relational Bullying

The analysis was further conducted separately for the three dimensions of bullying behavior. The same scoring procedure was applied to the relevant items, including reverse scoring where applicable.

Table 8. Pretest–Posttest Changes by Bullying Dimension

Dimension	Pretest M	Pretest SD	Posttest M	Posttest SD	Mean Reduction	$t(24)$	p	Cohen's dz
Physical	43.64	1.35	32.32	2.72	11.32	25.16	< .001	5.03
Verbal	44.64	2.08	33.00	3.27	11.64	24.65	< .001	4.93
Relational	37.56	1.26	29.84	3.42	7.72	12.84	< .001	2.57

The results demonstrate statistically significant reductions in all three dimensions.

Physical bullying decreased from 43.64 (SD = 1.35) to 32.32 (SD = 2.72), representing a mean reduction of 11.32 points, $t(24) = 25.16$, $p < .001$, with a very large effect ($dz = 5.03$). Verbal bullying decreased from 44.64 (SD = 2.08) to 33.00 (SD = 3.27), corresponding to a mean reduction of 11.64 points, $t(24) = 24.65$, $p < .001$, and a very large effect ($dz = 4.93$). Relational bullying decreased from 37.56 (SD = 1.26) to 29.84 (SD = 3.42). The mean reduction of 7.72 points was statistically significant, $t(24) = 12.84$, $p < .001$, with a very large within-group effect ($dz = 2.57$). Thus, the intervention was

associated with significant reductions not only in the overall bullying score but also in each of the three behavioral dimensions assessed.

Relative Reduction Across Dimensions

Because the dimensions have different score ranges and baseline means, the magnitude of change was also examined proportionally.

Table 9. Relative Reduction by Bullying Dimension

Dimension	Pretest M	Mean Reduction	Relative Reduction
Physical	43.64	11.32	25.94%
Verbal	44.64	11.64	26.08%
Relational	37.56	7.72	20.55%
Overall	125.84	30.68	24.39%

The largest proportional reduction was observed in verbal bullying (26.08%), followed closely by physical bullying (25.94%). Relational bullying showed a somewhat smaller proportional reduction (20.55%). Despite this difference in magnitude, all three dimensions demonstrated statistically significant pretest–posttest reductions.

Integrated Summary of Findings

Table 10. Summary of the Main Findings

Outcome	Pretest M	Posttest M	Reduction	Statistical Test	Effect
Overall bullying	125.84	95.16	30.68	$t(24) = 28.42, p < .001$	$dz = 5.68$
Physical	43.64	32.32	11.32	$t(24) = 25.16, p < .001$	$dz = 5.03$
Verbal	44.64	33.00	11.64	$t(24) = 24.65, p < .001$	$dz = 4.93$
Relational	37.56	29.84	7.72	$t(24) = 12.84, p < .001$	$dz = 2.57$

Overall, the findings demonstrate a substantial reduction in students' bullying behavior following participation in the REBT-based group counseling intervention integrated with Islamic educational values. The total bullying score declined by 30.68 points, and all participants demonstrated lower posttest scores than their corresponding pretest scores. The paired-samples *t*-test confirmed that the observed reduction was statistically significant, while the very large Cohen's *dz* indicates a substantial magnitude of within-group change. Importantly, significant reductions were also observed across physical, verbal, and relational bullying, suggesting that the observed change was not limited to a single form of bullying behavior.

Discussion

The present study found a substantial reduction in students' bullying behavior following participation in REBT-based group counseling integrated with Islamic educational values. The mean total bullying score decreased from 125.84 (SD = 2.23) at pretest to 95.16 (SD = 5.63) at posttest, representing a mean reduction of 30.68 points (24.39%). The paired-samples *t*-test confirmed that this reduction was statistically significant, $t(24) = 28.42$, $p < .001$, with a very large within-participant effect size ($d_z = 5.68$). Importantly, all 25 participants demonstrated lower bullying scores at posttest than at pretest. This consistency of change suggests that the intervention was associated with substantial behavioral improvement across the participating students. However, because the study employed a one-group pretest–posttest design, this finding should be interpreted as evidence of a significant pretest–posttest change rather than definitive proof of a causal intervention effect.

The observed change is theoretically consistent with the central proposition of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy that maladaptive emotional and behavioral responses are influenced by the beliefs individuals hold about particular events rather than being determined exclusively by the events themselves (Ellis & Dryden, 2007; David et al., 2009). In the context of bullying, interpersonal conflict, perceived rejection, criticism, humiliation, or competition may function as activating events, while irrational beliefs concerning status, entitlement, retaliation, or the need to dominate others may contribute to aggressive responses. REBT addresses this process by helping individuals identify activating events, examine the beliefs attached to those events, recognize their emotional and behavioral consequences, dispute irrational beliefs, and formulate more rational and constructive philosophies. The substantial reduction observed in the present study is therefore compatible with the theoretical mechanism through which cognitive restructuring may alter the way adolescents interpret interpersonal situations and subsequently respond to them.

The finding is also broadly consistent with previous research concerning REBT and adolescent behavioral problems. Research cited in the present manuscript indicates that REBT-based counseling can contribute to improvements in emotional regulation, reduction of aggressive tendencies, and modification of maladaptive thinking among adolescents (Putri et al., 2019; Athina & Pudjiati, 2024; Agustine et al., 2026; Tumbol et al., 2026). Similarly, evidence from bullying intervention research indicates that effective prevention requires attention to the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and interpersonal processes underlying bullying rather than relying exclusively on disciplinary responses (Gaffney et al., 2019; Zych et al., 2019; Han et al., 2025). The present findings extend this line of research by applying a structured cognitive-behavioral counseling approach within an Islamic educational context.

The integration of Islamic educational values represents an important contextual dimension of the intervention. In this study, values such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), *amanah* (responsibility), *ihsan* (benevolence), and *akhlāq al-karīmah* (noble character) were incorporated into the cognitive restructuring process. The integration was not intended to replace the psychological mechanisms of REBT but to provide an ethical framework through which students could evaluate their thoughts, emotions, and behavioral choices. This approach is consistent with the educational perspective of Al-Attas (1980), which emphasizes *adab* and appropriate conduct as essential dimensions of education, as well as Langgulgung's (1991) emphasis on the development of intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of the learner. From this perspective, bullying is not merely a behavioral problem requiring correction but also reflects

difficulties in empathy, interpersonal responsibility, self-control, and respect for the dignity of others.

The combination of cognitive restructuring and moral reflection may be particularly relevant in adolescent counseling. REBT enables students to question whether a belief is rational, realistic, and constructive, while Islamic educational values provide an additional framework for evaluating whether the resulting response is ethically appropriate. For example, a student who interprets peer disagreement as an intolerable threat can be guided to dispute the irrational belief that disagreement must be answered through aggression. The student can then consider alternative responses based on self-control, compassion, justice, and respect for others. In this sense, the intervention operates through complementary cognitive and moral processes: REBT addresses the rationality of beliefs, while Islamic values strengthen the ethical orientation of behavior. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing the role of Islamic character education, emotional intelligence, and moral development in promoting prosocial behavior and reducing bullying-related tendencies (Alfarezel, 2025; Mustofa et al., 2025; Mappanyompa et al., 2026; Zulkarnaini & Purwidiyanto, 2026).

The findings can also be interpreted from a social-cognitive perspective. Bandura (1986) argues that behavior develops through reciprocal interactions among cognition, behavior, and the social environment. Group counseling provides an interpersonal setting in which students can observe alternative responses, receive feedback, practice new ways of communicating, and reconsider their interpretations of social situations. This process may be particularly important because bullying frequently occurs within peer contexts in which aggression can be reinforced through attention, status, acceptance, or group approval. The counseling group potentially provides an alternative social environment in which empathy, reflection, emotional regulation, and constructive communication are reinforced. This interpretation is compatible with evidence emphasizing peer relationships, school belonging, emotional regulation, and positive school environments as important factors in bullying prevention (Arslan et al., 2020, 2021; OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

The dimension-specific findings provide additional insight into the pattern of behavioral change. Significant reductions were observed in physical, verbal, and relational bullying, although the magnitude of change differed across dimensions. Physical bullying decreased from 43.64 (SD = 1.35) to 32.32 (SD = 2.72), with a mean reduction of 11.32 points and a very large effect ($d_z = 5.03$). Verbal bullying decreased from 44.64 (SD = 2.08) to 33.00 (SD = 3.27), representing a reduction of 11.64 points and a very large effect ($d_z = 4.93$). Relational bullying decreased from 37.56 (SD = 1.26) to 29.84 (SD = 3.42), corresponding to a reduction of 7.72 points and an effect size of $d_z = 2.57$. Thus, although all three forms of bullying showed substantial improvement, relational bullying demonstrated the smallest proportional reduction.

The relatively large reduction in physical bullying may be related to the observable and concrete nature of this form of aggression. Physical behaviors are generally easier for students to identify, discuss, challenge, and replace through behavioral rehearsal. In REBT-based counseling, students can explicitly identify the triggering event, examine the belief that justifies aggression, evaluate its consequences, and practice alternative responses. Verbal bullying showed the largest proportional reduction, decreasing by 26.08%, which may reflect the relevance of cognitive restructuring to emotionally reactive communication. Adolescents are particularly sensitive to peer evaluation and interpersonal status, and perceived disrespect or rejection may readily activate irrational interpretations and hostile verbal responses (Steinberg, 2023). The counseling process

may therefore help students recognize that hostile communication is not an inevitable response to frustration, criticism, or disagreement.

Relational bullying, however, decreased by 20.55%, suggesting that this form of behavior may be more resistant to short-term individual cognitive intervention. Relational bullying is often embedded within peer relationships, social status, exclusion processes, and group norms. Consequently, although students may change their personal beliefs and intentions, the broader social conditions that sustain relational aggression may remain. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of peer and school-level factors in bullying behavior (Arslan et al., 2020, 2021; Zych et al., 2019). The finding therefore suggests that counseling at the individual or small-group level may need to be complemented by classroom-level and school-wide strategies, including peer interventions, restorative practices, positive school climate initiatives, and systematic character education. Such an ecological approach is also consistent with broader recommendations concerning comprehensive bullying prevention (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

The consistency of improvement across all participants is another noteworthy finding. All 25 students demonstrated lower total bullying scores at posttest, indicating that the direction of change was not restricted to a small subgroup of participants. Nevertheless, this consistency should not be interpreted as evidence that all students experienced the same psychological process. The present study did not collect qualitative process data capable of identifying whether cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation, peer interaction, moral reflection, or other intervention components represented the primary mechanism of change for individual students. Future research could therefore combine quantitative measurement with interviews, counseling-session observations, or qualitative analysis of students' reflections to examine how behavioral change develops during the intervention.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the emerging integration of evidence-based counseling and Islamic educational approaches. Existing research in the present bibliography has generally emphasized either REBT and cognitive-behavioral mechanisms or Islamic character and moral education as separate approaches (Al-Attas, 1980; Langgulgung, 1991; David et al., 2009). The present intervention brings these perspectives together by using REBT as the primary psychological framework while positioning Islamic educational values as a contextual and ethical resource. The resulting model can be understood as a complementary process in which cognitive restructuring helps students reconsider irrational interpretations, while Islamic values provide meaningful standards for empathy, responsibility, justice, and respectful interpersonal conduct. However, the current design does not allow the independent contribution of the Islamic component to be estimated because REBT and the Islamic values were delivered simultaneously. Therefore, the findings should be regarded as preliminary evidence supporting the feasibility and potential of the integrated approach rather than proof that the Islamic component independently enhances the effectiveness of REBT.

The findings also have practical implications for school counseling. The results suggest that bullying intervention can benefit from moving beyond purely punitive responses toward structured counseling that addresses the beliefs and emotional processes underlying aggressive behavior. REBT provides counselors with a practical sequence for identifying triggers, challenging irrational beliefs, regulating emotional responses, and developing alternative behaviors. Within Islamic educational settings, integrating relevant moral values may further increase contextual relevance by connecting psychological reflection with students' existing moral and religious

frameworks. Nevertheless, the dimension-specific findings indicate that counseling should be complemented by broader preventive strategies, particularly for relational bullying, which may depend more strongly on peer-group dynamics and school climate.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the one-group pretest–posttest design does not include a control or comparison group, so maturation, testing effects, regression to the mean, and other contextual factors cannot be ruled out as alternative explanations for the observed change. Second, the sample consisted of only 25 students from a single school, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other populations and educational settings. Third, bullying behavior was assessed through self-report, which may be influenced by social desirability or participants' awareness of the intervention objectives. Fourth, the posttest was conducted immediately after the intervention, so the durability of the observed changes remains unknown. Finally, because REBT and Islamic educational values were implemented together, the study cannot determine whether the integrated model provides an incremental benefit over REBT alone. Future research should therefore employ controlled and preferably randomized designs, involve larger samples across multiple schools, incorporate multiple sources of behavioral assessment, and include follow-up measurements. Comparative studies examining REBT alone, REBT integrated with Islamic educational values, and control conditions would be particularly valuable for establishing the specific contribution of the integrated approach.

Overall, the findings indicate that REBT-based group counseling integrated with Islamic educational values was associated with a substantial reduction in bullying behavior among the participating students. The improvement occurred across physical, verbal, and relational dimensions, with particularly pronounced reductions in physical and verbal bullying and a comparatively smaller, although still substantial, reduction in relational bullying. The findings support the potential of combining cognitive restructuring with culturally and religiously meaningful educational values in school counseling. At the same time, the methodological limitations require the findings to be interpreted as preliminary evidence of substantial within-group change, rather than definitive evidence of causal effectiveness. The study consequently provides a useful foundation for subsequent controlled and longitudinal investigations of culturally responsive counseling interventions for bullying prevention.

CONCLUSIONS

This study indicates that REBT-based group counseling integrated with Islamic educational values was associated with a substantial reduction in students' bullying behavior. Following the six-session intervention, the mean overall bullying score decreased from 125.84 to 95.16, with a mean reduction of 30.68 points. The pretest–posttest difference was statistically significant, $t(24) = 28.42$, $p < .001$, with a very large within-group effect size ($d_z = 5.68$). Significant reductions were also observed across physical, verbal, and relational bullying, indicating that the observed improvement extended across the three behavioral dimensions assessed.

The findings suggest that integrating REBT-based cognitive restructuring with Islamic educational values may provide a contextually relevant approach for addressing bullying behavior in school counseling. REBT facilitates the identification and modification of irrational beliefs underlying maladaptive responses, while values such as

ukhuwah, rahmah, 'adl, amanah, and akhlāq al-karīmah provide an ethical framework for developing empathy, self-control, responsibility, and respectful interpersonal behavior. The approach therefore has potential to support both behavioral change and character development within Islamic educational contexts.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted as preliminary evidence of substantial within-group change, rather than definitive evidence of causal effectiveness, because the study employed a one-group pretest–posttest design without a control group. Future research should employ controlled or randomized designs, larger and more diverse samples, multiple sources of behavioral assessment, and longitudinal follow-up to examine the sustainability of the observed changes. Comparative studies are also needed to determine whether integrating Islamic educational values provides additional benefits beyond REBT-based counseling alone.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agustine, D. R. A., Maulia, D., & Rakhmawati, E. (2026). Students' Meaning-Making of REBT Counseling in Reducing Aggression. *Journal of Educational, Health & Community Psychology (JEHCP)*, 15(2), 677.
- Al-Attas, M. N. (1980). *The concept of education in Islam* (pp. 19-33). Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia.
- Alfarezel, C. T. (2025). Development of an Islamic character education model based on emotional intelligence to prevent bullying in schools. *Journal on Islamic Studies*, 2(1), 34-42.
- Alyana, A. A., & Agus Basuki. (2026). Group Guidance Service Strategy Using Reframing Techniques to Increase Self-Confidence in Students Experiencing Bullying. *RUBINSTEIN*, 4(2), 133–144. <https://doi.org/10.31253/rubin.v4i2.4633>
- Arslan, G., Allen, K. A., & Ryan, T. (2020). Exploring the Impacts of School Belonging on Youth Wellbeing and Mental Health among Turkish Adolescents: G. Arslan et al. *Child Indicators Research*, 13(5), 1619-1635. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-020-09721-z>
- Arslan, G., Allen, K. A., & Tanhan, A. (2021). School Bullying, Mental Health, and Wellbeing in Adolescents: Mediating Impact of Positive Psychological Orientations: G. Arslan et al. *Child Indicators Research*, 14(3), 1007-1026. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-020-09780-2>
- Athina, N., & Pudjiati, S. R. R. (2024). Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) approach in improving anger emotion regulation in adolescents with a family history of bipolar disorder. *Psikostudia: Jurnal Psikologi*, 13(2), 321-328. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30872/psikostudia.v13i2.15463>
- Azharo, A., & Rusman, A. A. (2025). The Effectiveness Of Group Counseling Services Using Aggression Control Methods To Reduce The Tendency Of Bullying Behavior In Junior High School Students. *Counsnesia Indonesian Journal Of Guidance and Counseling*, 6(1), 77-86. <https://doi.org/10.36728/cijgc.v6i1.4835>

- Bandura, A. (1986). Social foundations of thought and action. *Englewood Cliffs, NJ*, 1986(23-28), 2.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- David, D., Lynn, S. J., & Ellis, A. (2009). *Rational and irrational beliefs: Research, theory, and clinical practice*. Oxford University Press.
- Dey, M., & Srivastava, K. (2025). Impact of Bullying on Academic performance and mental Well-Being Among Female students. *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14, 802-808.
- Ellis, A., & Dryden, W. (2007). *The practice of rational emotive behavior therapy*. Springer Publishing Company.
- Gaffney, H., Farrington, D. P., Espelage, D. L., & Ttofi, M. M. (2019). Are cyberbullying intervention and prevention programs effective? A systematic and meta-analytical review. *Aggression and violent behavior*, 45, 134-153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2018.07.002>
- Han, X., et al. (2025). Cognitive-behavioral interventions for adolescent bullying: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Adolescence*.
- Han, Z. Y., Ye, Z. Y., & Zhong, B. L. (2025). School bullying and mental health among adolescents: a narrative review. *Translational pediatrics*, 14(3), 463. <https://doi.org/10.21037/tp-2024-512>
- Langgulong, H. (1991). *Asas-asas pendidikan Islam*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Mappanyompa, M., Saprun, S., Aqodiah, A., Sahwan, S., & Affandi, S. B. S. (2026). An Islamic framework for character education and bullying prevention: Integrating Aqidah, Akhlak, and multiculturalism into learning. *Indonesian Journal on Learning and Advanced Education (IJOLAE)*. <https://doi.org/10.23917/ijolae.v8i1.9062>
- Misbah, A. A. O. (2026). The Effectiveness of a Counseling Program Based on Emotional Intelligence in Reducing School Bullying Behavior and Improving Classroom Climate among Middle School Students. *Al-imad Journal of Humanities and Applied Sciences (AJHAS)*, 177-189.
- Mustofa, A. S., Subakri, S., & Gunawan, G. (2025). The role of Islamic Religious Education in preventing bullying behavior at school. *Islamic Management: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 8(01), 53-64. <https://doi.org/10.64943/ajhas.2026.020116>
- Mustofa, M., et al. (2025). Religious values and adolescent prosocial behavior: Evidence from Indonesian schools. *Journal of Moral Education*.
- Nurmaya, R., & Wasliman, I. (2025). Systematic Management of Peer Counseling Programs for Bullying Prevention. *Journal of Innovation and Research in Primary Education*, 4(4), 2412-2420. <https://doi.org/10.56916/jirpe.v4i4.2091>
- OECD. (2023). *PISA 2022 results (Volume II): Learning during and from disruption*. OECD Publishing.

- Prayoga, P. A., & Manurung, P. (2025). The Effectiveness of Group Counseling with Constructive Criticism Techniques to Reduce Students' Social Bullying Behavior in Man 1 Deli Serdang. *Journal of General Education and Humanities*, 4(4), 1985-1994. <https://doi.org/10.58421/gehu.v4i4.777>
- Putri, D. A., Yendi, F. M., Taufik, T., & Yuca, V. (2019). Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) guidelines to reduce student aggressiveness. *SCHOULID: Indonesian Journal of School Counseling*, 4(3), 83-88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.23916/08429011>
- Reed, C. N., Liu, Y., & Maltais, N. S. (2024). Do School Bullying and Student-Teacher Relationships Matter for Well-being and Academic Achievement?. *Carleton Undergraduate Journal of Science*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.22215/cujs.v4i1.4736>
- Steinberg, L. (2023). *Adolescence* (13th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Tumbol, J. B., Trifosa, T., Wirawan, E., & Yusuf, E. (2026). The Effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in Managing Anger among Dormitory Students: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY. *Ra'ah: Journal of Pastoral Counseling*, 6(1), 43-59.
- UNESCO. (2024). *Global education monitoring report 2024: Leadership in education*. UNESCO.
- Zulkarnaini, S. N. V., & Purwidiyanto, P. (2026). The Implementation of Akhlak-Based Al-Islam Learning in Developing Students' Anti-bullying Character at SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Jakarta. *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Agama dan Ilmu Pengetahuan*, 23(1), 82-90. [https://doi.org/10.25299/ajaip.2026.vol23\(1\).26859](https://doi.org/10.25299/ajaip.2026.vol23(1).26859)
- Zych, I., Farrington, D. P., & Ttofi, M. M. (2019). Protective factors against bullying and cyberbullying: A systematic review of meta-analyses. *Aggression and violent behavior*, 45, 4-19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2018.06.008>