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Beyond prohibition: transforming Qur'anic ethics into an anti-bullying educational framework

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: to analyze the anti-bullying moral education values derived from Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12 based on Ibn Kathir's interpretation and synthesize them into a conceptual anti-bullying educational framework for Islamic religious education (IRE).
Method: this study used qualitative library research and thematic analysis of Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12, Ibn Kathir's exegesis, and relevant literature to develop a conceptual anti-bullying educational framework.
Findings: identify six Qur'anic ethical values: respect for human dignity, responsible communication, personal identity, fair judgment, privacy protection, and social responsibility. These values are synthesized into an anti-bullying educational framework comprising ethical orientation, learning objectives, pedagogical strategies, behavioral indicators, and three stages: prevention, response, and restoration.
Implications: provide a conceptual foundation for integrating Qur'anic ethics into Islamic religious education through structured pedagogical strategies to foster respectful behavior and prevent bullying.
Originality: lies in transforming Qur'anic ethical prohibitions into an integrated anti-bullying educational framework that connects moral values, learning objectives, pedagogical strategies, behavioral indicators, and the prevention, response, and restoration stages.

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Introduction

Bullying represents a persistent global challenge in education, threatening students' psychological well-being, social relationships, and moral development (Mahmud et al., 2025). Its consequences extend beyond immediate physical or verbal harm, potentially undermining students' sense of safety, belonging, self-worth, and long-

term psychosocial adjustment (Arseneault, 2018; Moore et al., 2017; Schoeler et al., 2018). Evidence from a cross-national study involving adolescents in 64 countries and economies demonstrates an association between bullying victimization and subjective well-being, highlighting the importance of safe and supportive educational environments (Katsantonis et al., 2024). Consequently, bullying prevention should not be understood merely as an institutional responsibility to regulate misconduct or impose disciplinary sanctions. Rather, it requires a comprehensive educational approach that addresses the moral dispositions, interpersonal competencies, and social environments that shape students' behavior. In this regard, education plays a fundamental role not only in preventing harmful actions but also in cultivating empathy, respect, responsibility, and the recognition of human dignity as essential foundations of peaceful social interaction.

Despite increasing attention to school-based prevention programs, bullying remains a complex educational phenomenon that requires responses beyond conventional behavioral supervision. Its manifestations include physical aggression, verbal humiliation, social exclusion, relational aggression, and increasingly, cyberbullying through digital communication platforms. The latter further complicates prevention efforts because harmful interactions can occur beyond school boundaries, reach wider audiences, and persist through digital networks (Erbiçer et al., 2023; Polanin et al., 2022). Moreover, bullying is not determined solely by the relationship between perpetrators and victims; it is also shaped by bystander responses, peer-group dynamics, school climate, and students' ability to recognize and challenge morally harmful behavior (Deng et al., 2021; Waasdorp et al., 2022). The problem becomes particularly significant for students with special educational needs and disabilities, who may experience specific vulnerabilities requiring more responsive and inclusive intervention strategies (Badger et al., 2024). These conditions indicate that bullying is not simply an individual behavioral problem but a broader ethical and relational issue embedded in educational culture. Therefore, effective prevention requires an educational framework that integrates behavioral regulation, moral awareness, interpersonal sensitivity, and collective responsibility.

Within Islamic education, bullying also constitutes a moral and spiritual concern because it contradicts fundamental Qur'anic principles concerning human dignity, mutual respect, brotherhood, and social responsibility. Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12 provides a particularly relevant ethical foundation by prohibiting ridicule, defamation, offensive labeling, negative suspicion, spying, and backbiting. These prohibitions address not only explicitly harmful actions but also the attitudes, judgments, and communication practices that can undermine others' dignity and social integrity. The educational significance of these verses lies in their capacity to establish moral boundaries for interpersonal relationships while encouraging individuals to exercise self-restraint, respect others, and maintain social harmony. Previous studies have identified the relevance of these Qur'anic principles to moral education and bullying prevention in Islamic educational contexts (Aqillah et al., 2025; Firmansyah & Suryana, 2022). Nevertheless, translating Qur'anic prohibitions into educational practice requires more than communicating religious rules or instructing students to avoid particular behaviors. It also requires an educational process that transforms normative knowledge into moral understanding, internalized dispositions, and observable ethical conduct.

Previous research provides several important foundations for this approach. From a bullying-prevention perspective, systematic reviews and meta-analyses have shown that school-based interventions can reduce bullying perpetration and

victimization (Fraguas et al., 2021; Gaffney et al., 2021a). Research has also emphasized the importance of intervention components that strengthen prosocial behavior, improve school climate, and encourage constructive peer relationships (Gaffney et al., 2021b; Moreno & Jurado, 2024). Furthermore, studies on empathy and moral disengagement suggest that students' moral awareness and willingness to defend victims are relevant dimensions in understanding bullying-related behavior (Deng et al., 2021; Killer et al., 2019; Zych et al., 2019). Within Islamic education, Firmansyah & Suryana (2022) examined the moral educational concepts contained in Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–13, while Aqillah et al. (2025) specifically discussed the implications of verses 11–12 for bullying prevention through value internalization, teacher role modeling, and the development of a Qur'anic school culture. More recently, Saputra & Sari (2026) connected Ibn Kathir's interpretation of these verses with bullying prevention in Islamic schools, particularly regarding verbal humiliation, derogatory labeling, and social exclusion. Collectively, these studies establish the relevance of Qur'anic ethics and contemporary educational strategies to bullying prevention.

Although previous studies have linked Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12 to anti-bullying moral education, a key conceptual gap remains in how the ethical principles in these verses can be systematically translated into an integrated educational framework. Existing discussions have mainly emphasized identifying moral values, the implications of Qur'anic prohibitions, teacher role modeling, and general strategies for cultivating an anti-bullying school culture (Aqillah et al., 2025; Firmansyah & Suryana, 2022; Saputra & Sari, 2026). However, further conceptual development is needed to clarify the relationships among Qur'anic ethical principles, educational objectives, internalization strategies, behavioral indicators, and the stages of prevention, response, and restoration. This study addresses this gap by moving beyond identifying prohibited behaviors toward the pedagogical transformation of Qur'anic ethics into a structured anti-bullying educational framework. Its novelty lies in synthesizing the ethical dimensions of Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12, as interpreted through Ibn Kathir's exegesis, into an interconnected conceptual model that links normative foundations with practical educational orientations. Importantly, the proposed framework distinguishes between principles explicitly grounded in the Qur'an and their interpretation by the exegete, on the one hand, and the pedagogical propositions developed by the researchers, on the other.

This study's theoretical foundation integrates Qur'anic ethical principles, Islamic moral education, and contemporary perspectives on bullying prevention. First, Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12 serves as the primary normative foundation for identifying six interconnected ethical dimensions: avoiding ridicule, refraining from defamation, rejecting offensive labeling, avoiding negative suspicion, respecting others' privacy, and refraining from backbiting. These dimensions are examined through Ibn Kathir's interpretation to clarify their moral and social implications within the Qur'anic framework (Kathir, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Second, Islamic moral education offers a pedagogical orientation for transforming religious knowledge into moral understanding, character formation, and responsible social behavior (Firmansyah & Suryana, 2022). Third, contemporary bullying prevention literature provides complementary insights into prosocial behavior, empathy, moral disengagement, peer relationships, and school climate as relevant dimensions of educational intervention (Gaffney et al., 2021b; Killer et al., 2019; Moreno & Jurado, 2024). By bringing these perspectives together, the study conceptualizes anti-bullying education as a process of ethical internalization rather than merely behavioral prohibition. This orientation provides the basis for connecting

Qur'anic moral principles with educational objectives, learning strategies, observable behavioral indicators, and institutional practices within Islamic religious education (IRE).

Based on this conceptual orientation, the study aims to analyze the anti-bullying moral education values in Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12 through Ibn Kathir's interpretation and synthesize them into a conceptual educational framework for Islamic religious education. Specifically, the study addresses two research questions: (RQ1) How are anti-bullying moral education values constructed through Ibn Kathir's interpretation of Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12? and (RQ2) How can the identified Qur'anic ethical principles be synthesized into a conceptual framework for anti-bullying moral education in Islamic religious education? To address these questions, the analysis identifies the ethical categories embedded in the verses, examines their interpretive meanings, and explores their pedagogical implications. The resulting framework is intended to connect ethical foundations with learning objectives, value-internalization strategies, behavioral indicators, and educational responses to bullying. In doing so, the study seeks to establish a coherent conceptual relationship between Qur'anic interpretation and the practical objectives of moral education without assuming that the proposed educational strategies are explicitly prescribed as technical procedures in the Qur'anic text or Ibn Kathir's commentary.

This study's significance lies in its effort to strengthen the role of Islamic religious education as a transformative educational instrument for developing safe, respectful, inclusive, and ethically responsible school environments. Rather than positioning Qur'anic verses solely as sources of prohibition, the study emphasizes their potential as constructive ethical resources for cultivating students' awareness of human dignity, responsible communication, respect for privacy, empathy, and social accountability. The proposed framework is expected to contribute theoretically by extending discussions of Qur'anic moral education from identifying normative values to systematically operationalizing them pedagogically. Practically, it may provide teachers, Islamic education practitioners, and school policymakers with a conceptual reference for designing learning activities, developing behavioral indicators, strengthening teacher role modeling, and integrating anti-bullying values into school culture. Furthermore, the framework may serve as a foundation for future empirical research examining its applicability, implementation, and educational outcomes across different Islamic educational contexts. Ultimately, this study seeks to demonstrate that Qur'anic ethics can function not merely as a moral prohibition against bullying but as a constructive educational foundation for nurturing a culture of dignity, compassion, mutual respect, and social responsibility.

Method

This study used a qualitative library research design to develop a conceptual synthesis of anti-bullying moral education grounded in Qur'anic ethics. Library research was selected because the primary objects of investigation were Qur'anic texts, exegetical interpretations, and relevant academic literature on Islamic moral education and bullying prevention. This design enabled an in-depth examination of normative and interpretive sources, followed by their conceptual integration into an educational framework (Snyder, 2019). Rather than measuring the effectiveness of an existing intervention or collecting empirical data from educational institutions, the study focused on interpreting ethical principles and examining their potential pedagogical applications within Islamic religious education (IRE).

The data sources were classified as primary and supporting. The primary normative source was Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12, which contains ethical prohibitions concerning interpersonal conduct. The primary interpretive source was Tafsir Ibn Kathir's commentary on the two verses, which served as the principal exegetical reference for examining the meanings and moral implications of the Qur'anic prohibitions (Kathir, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Supporting sources included academic publications on Islamic moral education, bullying prevention, prosocial behavior, moral development, and educational intervention strategies. These supporting materials were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research questions and their contribution to understanding the relationship between Qur'anic ethics and contemporary educational concerns. The study did not aim to provide an exhaustive systematic review of all available literature; instead, it prioritized sources that directly supported the research's interpretive and pedagogical objectives.

Data collection was conducted through documentation by examining the Qur'anic text, Ibn Kathir's exegetical explanations, and relevant academic publications. The collected materials were organized according to six ethical categories identified in Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12: *sukhriyah* (ridicule or mockery), *lamz* (defamation or insulting others), *tanabuz bil-alqab* (offensive labeling or derogatory nicknames), negative suspicion (*su' al-zann*), *tajassus* (spying or searching for others' faults), and *ghibah* (backbiting). Each category was examined to identify its textual basis, interpretive meaning, underlying moral principle, and relevance to bullying-related behavior. This categorization provided an analytical foundation for organizing the normative and exegetical data into coherent thematic dimensions.

Data analysis was conducted through a thematic interpretive process informed by the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analytical procedure involved four interconnected stages. First, the relevant Qur'anic passages and exegetical explanations were examined to identify the prohibited behaviors and their associated ethical meanings. Second, the identified meanings were categorized into thematic dimensions representing the moral principles underlying each prohibition. Third, these ethical dimensions were synthesized to formulate a conceptual understanding of anti-bullying moral education. Fourth, the resulting ethical principles were translated into pedagogical propositions by connecting them with learning objectives, value-internalization strategies, observable behavioral indicators, and educational responses. The analysis explicitly distinguished three levels of interpretation: normative principles derived from the Qur'anic text, exegetical explanations provided by Ibn Kathir, and pedagogical implications formulated by the researchers. This distinction was maintained to avoid presenting researcher-developed educational strategies as prescriptions explicitly stated in the Qur'an or its classical commentary.

To address RQ1, the analysis identified and mapped the anti-bullying moral education values contained in Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12 based on Ibn Kathir's interpretation. To address RQ2, the identified values were synthesized into a conceptual educational framework integrating ethical foundations, learning objectives, internalization strategies, behavioral indicators, and three interconnected educational stages: prevention, response, and restoration. The study examined the framework's coherence by tracing relationships among the Qur'anic prohibitions, exegetical explanations, identified moral principles, and proposed pedagogical applications. Nevertheless, this study has methodological limitations. Its interpretive scope was restricted to Ibn Kathir's exegesis and did not involve comparisons with other Qur'anic commentators or empirical observations of educational practices. Furthermore, the

proposed framework represents a conceptual synthesis rather than an empirically validated intervention model. Therefore, further expert evaluation and field-based research are necessary to examine its content validity, practical applicability, and potential educational outcomes in different Islamic educational settings.

Results and discussion

Construction of anti-bullying moral education values (RQ1)

Analysis of Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12, particularly through Ibn Kathir's interpretation, identified six interconnected ethical prohibitions that provide a normative foundation for anti-bullying moral education. Three prohibitions are explicitly addressed in verse 11: *sukhriyah* (ridiculing or mocking others), *lamz* (insulting or finding fault with others), and *tanabuz bil-alqab* (addressing others with offensive or derogatory nicknames). Ibn Kathir explains that ridicule reflects contempt toward others, even when the person being ridiculed has a higher standing before Allah. The prohibition of *lamz* emphasizes that insulting fellow community members contradicts the moral obligations of brotherhood. At the same time, *tanabuz bil-alqab* concerns using names or labels that humiliate and discomfit their recipients (Kathir, n.d.-a). These interpretations indicate that the ethical concerns of verse 11 extend beyond the linguistic form of harmful expressions to the underlying attitudes of superiority, disrespect, and disregard for others' dignity. Accordingly, the first three ethical values constructed from this verse are respect for human dignity, responsible verbal communication, and recognition of personal identity.

The concluding statement of verse 11, which warns against wrongdoing and invites repentance, further suggests that moral education should include both behavioral restraint and a willingness to correct inappropriate conduct. From a pedagogical perspective, the prohibition of *sukhriyah* establishes the principle that students must not evaluate or humiliate others based on physical appearance, academic performance, social background, or perceived differences. The prohibition of *lamz* emphasizes the importance of controlling verbal expression, particularly when delivering criticism or responding to disagreement. Meanwhile, the prohibition of *tanabuz bil-alqab* highlights the significance of respecting personal identity and avoiding labels that undermine an individual's sense of acceptance and belonging. These three dimensions are particularly relevant to bullying prevention because verbal humiliation, derogatory labeling, and the exploitation of personal differences can become mechanisms through which social exclusion and unequal peer relationships are maintained. Nevertheless, these Qur'anic prohibitions should not be equated automatically with the research definition of bullying, which generally involves repeated aggressive behavior and an imbalance of power. A single insulting statement may constitute an ethical violation without necessarily meeting the conceptual criteria for bullying.

The analysis of verse 12 reveals three additional ethical prohibitions: sinful suspicion (*su' al-zann*), *tajassus* (spying or searching for others' private matters and faults), and *ghibah* (speaking about an absent person in a manner that they would dislike). Ibn Kathir explains that the prohibition of suspicion concerns unjustified negative assumptions and accusations, not every form of personal judgment. The prohibition of *tajassus* emphasizes the impropriety of deliberately investigating matters that should remain private. At the same time, *ghibah* concerns violating another person's dignity through harmful speech in their absence (Kathir, n.d.-b). The Qur'anic

analogy comparing backbiting to eating the flesh of one's deceased brother further emphasizes the moral seriousness of violating another person's honor. These interpretations establish three additional educational values: careful, evidence-based judgment; respect for personal privacy; and responsibility in information and communication. Collectively, the six prohibitions demonstrate that anti-bullying moral education must address not only visible verbal and interpersonal behavior but also the internal attitudes and information practices that can facilitate humiliation, stigmatization, and social exclusion.

Taken together, verses 11 and 12 establish two interconnected dimensions of moral responsibility. The first concerns regulating observable interpersonal conduct, including ridicule, insults, derogatory labeling, and harmful speech. The second concerns regulating internal judgments and interpersonal boundaries, particularly suspicion, privacy violations, and the circulation of damaging information. This two-dimensional categorization represents an analytical synthesis developed by the researchers rather than a classification explicitly formulated by Ibn Kathir. Its educational significance lies in demonstrating that bullying-related behavior may develop through a combination of negative perceptions, disrespectful communication, and the social circulation of humiliating information. Therefore, the construction of anti-bullying moral education requires a broader ethical orientation that addresses both the external expression and the internal formation of harmful attitudes.

The six prohibitions and their corresponding educational values are summarized in Table 1. The table also presents preliminary behavioral indicators that the researchers developed to show how the identified Qur'anic principles can be translated into observable educational objectives. These indicators are conceptual pedagogical propositions, not validated instruments for measuring bullying behavior.

Table 1 mapping Qur'anic prohibitions, moral education values, and conceptual behavioral indicators

Qur'anic ethical category	Moral education value	Proposed behavioral indicators
Sukhriyah (ridicule)	Respect for human dignity	Avoiding mockery of peers' physical appearance, abilities, backgrounds, or personal differences.
Lamz (insulting or finding fault)	Responsible verbal communication	Expressing disagreement and criticism without humiliation or personal attacks.
Tanabuz bil-alqab (derogatory labeling)	Respect for personal identity	Using names and forms of address that respect the preferences and dignity of others.
Su' al-zann (unjustified negative suspicion)	Careful and fair judgment	Avoiding unsupported accusations, assumptions, and the circulation of unverified negative judgments.
Tajassus (intrusive investigation)	Respect for personal privacy	Respecting personal boundaries and refraining from searching for or exposing others' private matters.
Ghibah (backbiting)	Responsibility for communication and information	Refusing to spread harmful gossip while using appropriate channels to report misconduct and seek assistance.

Source: secondary data

Synthesis of a Qur'anic-based anti-bullying educational framework (RQ2)

Building on the six ethical categories identified in RQ1, this study synthesizes Qur'anic moral principles into a conceptual anti-bullying educational framework for Islamic religious education (IRE). The framework consists of four interconnected

components: ethical orientation, learning objectives, pedagogical strategies, and behavioral indicators. The first component, ethical orientation, establishes the framework's normative foundation through respect for human dignity, brotherhood, responsible communication, careful judgment, privacy protection, and social accountability. These values are derived from the ethical implications of Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12 and Ibn Kathir's interpretation. Rather than treating the six prohibitions as isolated rules, the framework positions them as interconnected principles governing students' relationships with themselves, their peers, and the wider educational community. This orientation provides the moral direction for developing an educational environment in which students recognize that every individual deserves respect regardless of differences in physical appearance, social background, academic ability, or personal characteristics.

The second component concerns learning objectives, which translate the identified ethical values into moral competencies that students are expected to develop. These competencies include recognizing forms of humiliation and verbal aggression, understanding the consequences of derogatory labeling, distinguishing justified evaluation from harmful suspicion, respecting personal boundaries, and exercising responsibility when communicating information about others. Students are also expected to develop the capacity to recognize bullying-related situations and understand their responsibilities when witnessing harmful peer interactions. These objectives extend beyond cognitive understanding of Qur'anic prohibitions toward the development of ethical judgment and responsible interpersonal conduct. This orientation aligns with contemporary research emphasizing empathy, moral awareness, and prosocial behavior as key dimensions of bullying prevention (Deng et al., 2021; Moreno & Jurado, 2024). Thus, Islamic moral education can function as a process through which religious knowledge is transformed into ethical competencies that guide students' everyday decisions.

The third component includes pedagogical strategies designed to help students internalize these values. The proposed strategies include contextual Qur'anic interpretation, case-based discussions of school interactions, reflection on personal communication practices, simulations of appropriate responses to humiliation, and teacher role modeling. Contextual interpretation helps students connect the meaning of Qur'anic prohibitions with contemporary experiences, including face-to-face humiliation, social exclusion, and harmful digital communication. Case-based discussions provide opportunities to examine the ethical implications of specific situations, while reflective activities encourage students to evaluate their own attitudes and interpersonal behavior. Simulations can build students' ability to respond constructively when they encounter insulting language or witness peers being humiliated. Teacher role modeling is equally important because students' understanding of moral principles is strengthened when teachers consistently demonstrate respectful communication, fairness, and responsibility. These strategies are proposed pedagogical applications developed through the researchers' synthesis; they are not teaching procedures explicitly prescribed in the Qur'anic text or Ibn Kathir's commentary.

The fourth component includes behavioral indicators that show observable expressions of the targeted moral competencies. These include refraining from derogatory nicknames, expressing disagreement without humiliation, avoiding unsupported accusations, respecting personal information, refusing to circulate harmful gossip, and seeking appropriate assistance when witnessing bullying-related incidents. The indicators connect ethical principles with educational assessment by giving teachers

preliminary references for observing students' communication and interpersonal behavior. However, the indicators should not be interpreted as a standardized bullying measurement instrument. They are intended to guide the formulation of reflective questions, classroom observation criteria, and learning assessments that examine the development of moral understanding and responsible conduct. The four components are therefore sequential but mutually reinforcing: Qur'anic ethical values provide the normative orientation, learning objectives define the intended competencies, pedagogical strategies facilitate internalization, and behavioral indicators provide observable expressions of the learning process.

Prevention, response, and restoration as educational stages

Beyond the four educational components, the proposed framework incorporates three interconnected stages: prevention, response, and restoration. These stages are intended to connect moral learning with the practical requirements of a safe educational environment. The preventive stage focuses on cultivating students' awareness before bullying-related incidents occur. Teachers can introduce the six Qur'anic categories through contextual discussions, collaborative classroom agreements, and reflective exercises on respectful communication. Students can examine how ridicule, offensive labeling, negative assumptions, privacy violations, and harmful gossip affect interpersonal relationships. The preventive orientation also includes establishing shared expectations regarding respectful interaction and encouraging students to recognize the importance of intervening safely or seeking assistance when they witness harmful behavior. This approach aligns with school-based prevention research, which emphasizes that effective bullying prevention requires building positive interpersonal relationships and supportive school environments rather than relying exclusively on individual disciplinary measures (Gaffney et al., 2021a; Salmivalli et al., 2021).

The response stage concerns appropriate educational and institutional actions when bullying-related incidents occur. In this stage, teachers and school personnel are expected to stop harmful behavior, listen to affected students without blaming them, assess the circumstances, document relevant information, and activate the school's child-protection procedures when necessary. Students who witness incidents can also be encouraged to support affected peers safely and report misconduct through appropriate channels. These procedures represent contemporary educational and safeguarding applications of the Qur'anic ethical principles rather than technical instructions explicitly contained in the verses. This distinction is important because the moral prohibition of humiliation does not, by itself, establish a complete institutional procedure for handling bullying incidents. The framework therefore connects Qur'anic moral education with established responsibilities for student protection and school-based intervention. In particular, the prohibition of *ghibah* should never be interpreted as preventing victims or witnesses from reporting harmful behavior to trusted teachers or appropriate authorities. Responsible reporting for protection and intervention is fundamentally different from spreading harmful gossip.

The restoration stage emphasizes moral reflection, accountability, and improved interpersonal conduct after an incident. The invitation to repent at the end of verse 11 and the affirmation of Allah's acceptance of repentance in verse 12 provide a normative basis for understanding the possibility of moral correction and behavioral improvement (Kathir, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Within the proposed framework, these principles can inform reflective activities that encourage students who have engaged in harmful conduct to acknowledge their actions, understand their consequences, accept responsibility, and

demonstrate behavioral change. Nevertheless, restoration must not be reduced to an expectation that victims forgive perpetrators or immediately resume relationships. The safety, dignity, and psychological well-being of affected students must remain the primary considerations. Accordingly, restorative educational practices should complement, rather than replace, protective measures and appropriate institutional accountability. This distinction allows the framework to integrate the Qur'anic emphasis on repentance with contemporary safeguarding principles.

The relationship among the four educational components and the three implementation stages produces a conceptual pathway for translating Qur'anic ethics into educational practice. The resulting framework is summarized in Figure 1.

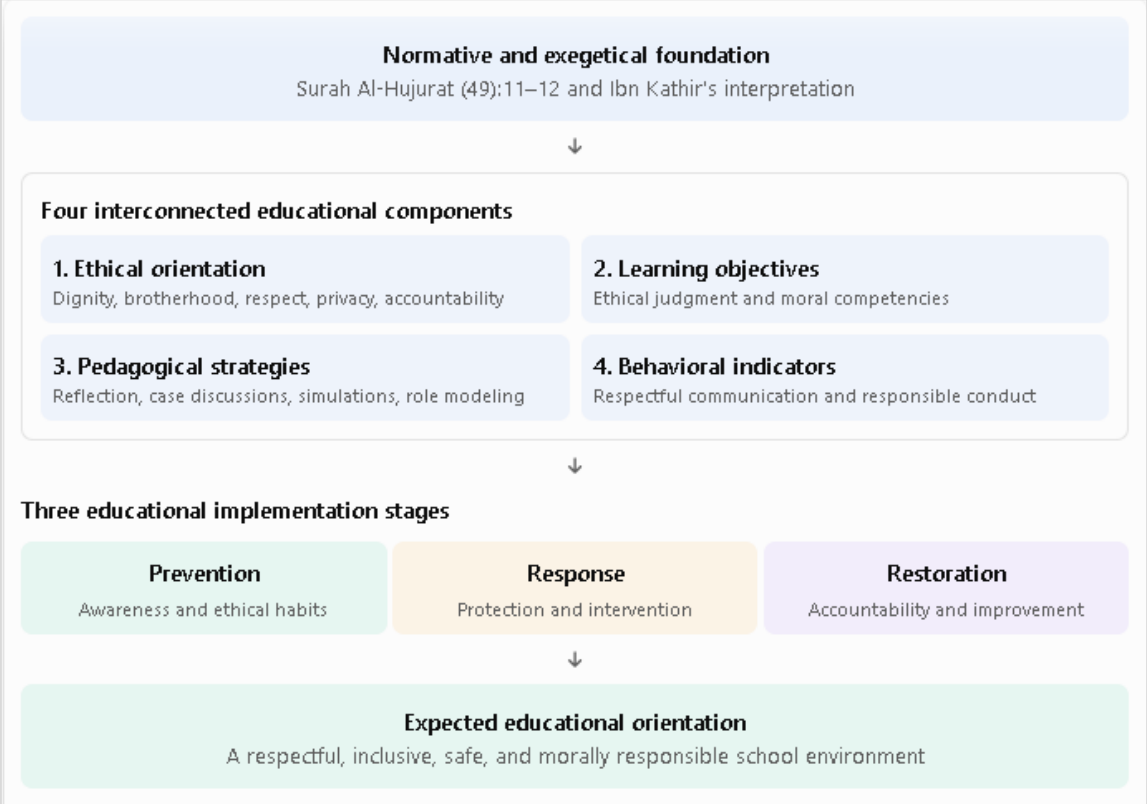

Figure 1 conceptual framework for Qur'anic-based anti-bullying moral education in Islamic religious education
Source: secondary data.

The proposed framework is a conceptual model, not an empirically tested intervention. It aims to establish a structured relationship between Qur'anic ethical principles and educational practices that can later be evaluated through expert validation and field-based research.

Human dignity, moral disengagement, and the prevention of verbal bullying

The study's first major finding is that Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11 establishes human dignity as a fundamental ethical principle for preventing interpersonal humiliation. The prohibitions of *sukhriyah*, *lamz*, and *tanabuz bil-alqab* demonstrate that ridicule, insults, and derogatory labeling are not merely inappropriate communication practices but violations of the moral obligations governing relationships among individuals. Ibn Kathir's interpretation reinforces this principle by emphasizing that

people should not consider themselves superior to others because an individual's moral standing cannot be determined through superficial judgments (Kathir, n.d.-a). In educational contexts, this interpretation challenges the social mechanisms through which students establish hierarchies based on physical appearance, academic achievement, economic circumstances, popularity, or personal differences. Consequently, the educational relevance of verse 11 extends beyond teaching students to avoid offensive expressions; it encourages the development of a moral disposition that recognizes each person's inherent dignity.

This finding can be discussed in relation to the concept of moral disengagement, which explains how individuals justify harmful behavior by cognitively separating their actions from their moral consequences. Killer et al. (2019) identified an association between moral disengagement and different bullying roles among young people, indicating that moral justification can be relevant to understanding participation in bullying. Zhao & Yu (2021) similarly examined the relationship between moral disengagement and cyberbullying, demonstrating the relevance of moral reasoning in digital interactions. From this perspective, derogatory comments may be normalized through justifications such as considering humiliation a joke, assuming that victims are overly sensitive, or believing that certain students deserve negative treatment. The Qur'anic prohibition of ridicule and offensive labeling offers an ethical counterorientation to these justifications by emphasizing accountability for others' dignity and feelings. Accordingly, the proposed educational framework encourages students to critically evaluate not only the words they use but also the moral assumptions that influence their treatment of peers.

The connection between Qur'anic ethics and moral disengagement also provides an important theoretical explanation for why anti-bullying education should address the internal dimensions of moral development. Conventional disciplinary approaches may restrict certain visible behaviors when teachers are present, but they do not necessarily change the beliefs that legitimize humiliation. The ethical orientation in verse 11 seeks to develop internal moral awareness so students recognize the wrongfulness of degrading others independently of external supervision. This interpretation aligns with the broader argument that bullying prevention requires attention to individual attitudes and peer-group norms rather than focusing exclusively on punishing perpetrators. Gaffney et al. (2021a) demonstrated through an updated systematic review and meta-analysis that school-based programs can reduce bullying perpetration and victimization. However, their effectiveness varies across interventions and implementation contexts. The present study complements this evidence by proposing a Qur'anic ethical foundation for cultivating the moral dispositions that may support respectful peer interactions. However, Gaffney et al.'s findings should be understood as evidence about school-based interventions generally, not as empirical confirmation of the effectiveness of the Qur'anic framework developed here.

Moral judgment, privacy, and responsibility in social and digital interactions

A second important finding concerns extending anti-bullying moral education from observable verbal conduct to internal judgments and information-related behavior. The prohibitions of sinful suspicion, *tajassus*, and *ghibah* in Surah Al-Hujurat (49):12 show that preserving human dignity also requires responsible judgment, respect for privacy, and control over communication about others. These principles matter because social humiliation does not always happen through confrontation. Negative assumptions, the deliberate exposure of private information, and the circulation of

damaging stories can gradually undermine an individual's reputation and social acceptance. Ibn Kathir's interpretation of these prohibitions emphasizes protecting the honor of fellow community members and avoiding conduct that damages interpersonal relationships (Kathir, n.d.-b). Therefore, the educational implications of verse 12 include developing students' ability to distinguish evidence from assumption, recognize personal boundaries, and evaluate the consequences of sharing information about others.

These ethical dimensions are particularly significant in contemporary digital environments. Cyberbullying may involve the dissemination of humiliating content, harmful comments, unauthorized exposure of personal information, and the circulation of negative narratives through digital communication platforms. Erbiçer et al. (2023), through their systematic review and meta-analysis concerning children and young people in Türkiye, highlighted cyberbullying as an important issue requiring context-sensitive prevention strategies. Polanin et al. (2022) also examined interventions designed to reduce cyberbullying perpetration and victimization, demonstrating the importance of addressing harmful behavior in digital environments. In relation to these findings, the Qur'anic prohibition of *tajassus* can inform educational discussions about respecting personal information and avoiding intrusive access to others' private matters. In contrast, the prohibition of *ghibah* can provide an ethical basis for reflecting on the circulation of humiliating stories and damaging information. Similarly, the prohibition of sinful suspicion encourages students to avoid making or distributing negative judgments without sufficient evidence.

Nevertheless, the relationship between these Qur'anic concepts and cyberbullying should be understood as an educational and ethical correspondence rather than an exact conceptual equivalence. Not every instance of sharing personal information or discussing another person's behavior constitutes cyberbullying. Reporting misconduct to teachers, school counselors, or appropriate authorities, for example, serves a protective purpose and should not be confused with harmful gossip. The distinction is essential to ensure that the prohibition of *ghibah* is not misinterpreted as a restriction on victims' rights to seek assistance or disclose experiences of abuse. Accordingly, the proposed framework emphasizes responsible communication while maintaining clear safeguarding channels. This approach makes Qur'anic moral education relevant to contemporary digital interactions without weakening the institutional responsibility to protect students from harm.

Empathy, bystander responsibility, and the development of prosocial behavior

Another important implication of the findings is that anti-bullying moral education should extend beyond the behavioral relationship between perpetrators and victims to include the responsibilities of students who witness harmful interactions. The ethical principles of brotherhood, respect, and social responsibility derived from Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12 provide a normative basis for encouraging students not to remain indifferent when others experience humiliation. The prohibition of degrading another individual establishes a shared moral responsibility to protect interpersonal dignity. In contrast, the emphasis on repentance and moral correction encourages reflection on the consequences of harmful conduct. In this context, students are not merely expected to avoid becoming perpetrators; they should also develop the awareness and capacity to respond appropriately when witnessing bullying-related behavior.

This interpretation is supported by research emphasizing the importance of empathy and bystander behavior in bullying prevention. Deng et al. (2021), through a three-level meta-analysis, examined the relationship between adolescent empathy and defending behavior in school bullying. Zych et al. (2019) also reviewed the relationship between empathy, callous-unemotional traits, and different bullying roles. These studies provide a basis for understanding why the ability to recognize and respond to the suffering of others is an important dimension of anti-bullying education. From the perspective of the present study, Qur'anic moral education can strengthen this orientation by linking empathy to religiously grounded responsibilities for human dignity and brotherhood. Students can therefore be encouraged to recognize humiliation as a moral concern rather than treating it as an ordinary form of peer interaction.

School climate further strengthens this argument. Waasdorp et al. (2022) examined the relationship between school climate and bullying bystander responses, highlighting the role of the broader educational environment in shaping students' reactions to bullying. Similarly, Moreno & Jurado (2024) identified the importance of prosocial behavior and supportive interpersonal relationships in bullying prevention programs. These findings suggest that moral education cannot rely exclusively on individual instruction; it must also be supported by classroom practices and institutional cultures that encourage respect, inclusion, and safe peer relationships. Consequently, the proposed framework positions teachers as moral role models and facilitators of constructive social interaction. The educational objective is to create conditions in which defending affected peers, refusing to participate in humiliation, and reporting harmful behavior become socially supported practices. This integration connects Qur'anic ethical instruction with contemporary perspectives on empathy, prosocial development, and supportive school climates.

From moral instruction to a comprehensive educational intervention

This study also distinguishes between teaching moral values and developing an educational framework that guides prevention, response, and restoration. Moral instruction is important for establishing students' understanding of right and wrong, but it does not automatically guarantee appropriate behavior in complex social situations. Therefore, the proposed framework connects ethical knowledge with learning objectives, pedagogical activities, behavioral indicators, and institutional responses. This structure reflects the understanding that bullying prevention requires coordinated educational practices, not isolated classroom messages. Through contextual Qur'anic interpretation, case-based learning, reflective discussion, and teacher role modeling, students are provided with opportunities to understand and apply ethical principles in everyday interactions.

This orientation aligns with evidence on implementing comprehensive school-based interventions. Gaffney et al. (2021b) examined the components associated with effective anti-bullying programs, highlighting the importance of understanding how different intervention elements contribute to program outcomes. Fraguas et al. (2021), through a meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials, provided further evidence concerning the outcomes of school anti-bullying interventions. Bonell et al. (2018), through the Learning Together intervention, examined a whole-school approach that changed the school environment and practices alongside the development of social and emotional competencies. These studies demonstrate that bullying prevention should be considered within the broader context of school organization, interpersonal relationships, and educational implementation. The present study contributes a

complementary perspective by proposing how Qur'anic ethics can provide the normative and moral orientation for such educational processes.

Integrating prevention, response, and restoration matters because bullying requires more than moral reminders or requests for forgiveness. Prevention builds ethical awareness and positive communication practices before harm occurs. Response prioritizes immediately protecting affected students and handling reported incidents appropriately. Restoration focuses on accountability, moral reflection, and behavioral improvement after harm has occurred. The three stages are interconnected but should not be treated as interchangeable. In particular, repentance and forgiveness should never replace student protection, appropriate investigation, or institutional accountability. The Qur'anic emphasis on repentance provides a moral foundation for behavioral correction, whereas contemporary safeguarding principles establish the procedures necessary to protect affected individuals. The combination of these perspectives allows Islamic religious education to contribute to a comprehensive educational response without assuming that religious instruction alone is sufficient to resolve all forms of bullying.

Furthermore, including behavioral indicators provides an important bridge between ethical principles and educational assessment. Teachers may use these indicators to develop classroom observation guidelines, reflective questions, case-based assessments, and learning activities. However, moral understanding and actual reductions in bullying should be assessed separately. A student may know Qur'anic prohibitions without consistently applying them in social interactions. Similarly, a decline in reported incidents does not necessarily indicate improved moral awareness, particularly when reporting practices or institutional responses have changed. Therefore, future evaluation should distinguish cognitive understanding, moral judgment, interpersonal conduct, bystander responses, and bullying incidence. This distinction is necessary to prevent the conceptual framework from being treated as an empirically validated intervention before appropriate assessment has been conducted.

Educational implications and research limitations

This study's findings have several implications for developing Islamic religious education, particularly for strengthening the relationship between Qur'anic interpretation, moral character formation, and bullying prevention. First, the six ethical categories identified in Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12 can serve as a foundation for developing learning materials that address students' interpersonal responsibilities in both conventional and digital environments. Rather than presenting the verses exclusively as religious prohibitions, teachers can contextualize their meanings through situations that students encounter in everyday school life, such as verbal humiliation, offensive nicknames, social exclusion, negative assumptions, privacy violations, and harmful online communication. This approach helps students understand the relevance of Qur'anic ethics to contemporary social challenges and recognize the consequences of their actions for others' dignity and well-being.

Second, the proposed framework provides a reference for designing learning activities that promote moral reflection and behavioral internalization. Teachers can integrate case-based discussions, collaborative learning, reflective writing, role-playing, and simulations of bystander responses into IRE instruction. These activities can encourage students to examine the ethical implications of their decisions, understand affected peers' experiences, and practice appropriate responses to harmful interactions. Teacher role modeling is equally important because internalizing moral values requires

consistency between the ethical principles communicated during instruction and the interpersonal behavior educators demonstrate. Accordingly, the implementation of anti-bullying moral education should involve not only the delivery of Qur'anic knowledge but also the establishment of respectful communication practices and inclusive classroom relationships.

Third, the framework has implications for school-level educational policies and student protection practices. The integration of prevention, response, and restoration indicates that anti-bullying education should be supported by institutional procedures that ensure the safety of affected students, facilitate appropriate reporting, and establish accountability for harmful conduct. IRE teachers can contribute by strengthening students' moral awareness and promoting responsible social behavior, while school administrators, counselors, and child-protection personnel remain responsible for implementing appropriate safeguarding procedures. In this way, Qur'anic moral education can complement broader school-based anti-bullying initiatives rather than function as an independent substitute for institutional intervention.

Despite its conceptual contributions, this study has several limitations. First, its primary interpretive focus was restricted to Ibn Kathir's commentary on Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12. Although this approach provides a consistent exegetical foundation, it does not establish whether other Qur'anic commentators share the identified ethical constructions equally. Future studies could use comparative exegesis to examine classical and contemporary interpretations and identify similarities, differences, and broader conceptual developments in the ethics of interpersonal relationships.

Second, the proposed framework was developed through qualitative textual analysis of a purposively selected body of academic literature, without empirical observations, interviews, or intervention trials in educational institutions. Consequently, its pedagogical components and behavioral indicators have not been empirically validated. Further research should involve experts in Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic education, educational psychology, and child protection to evaluate the framework's conceptual coherence, content validity, and practical relevance. Such evaluation would help determine whether the proposed learning objectives, strategies, and behavioral indicators are appropriate for different educational levels and student characteristics.

Third, the framework requires further development regarding its implementation and assessment. Future empirical research could examine its applicability through classroom-based interventions, teacher training programs, and whole-school educational initiatives. Evaluation should distinguish between students' understanding of Qur'anic ethical principles, their moral reasoning, their interpersonal behavior, their willingness to defend affected peers, and actual changes in bullying perpetration and victimization. Particular attention should also be given to students with special educational needs and disabilities, as well as the specific challenges of cyberbullying. Such investigations would provide a stronger empirical foundation for determining the framework's applicability across different educational contexts. Ultimately, these limitations do not diminish the study's conceptual contribution; rather, they establish a research agenda for transforming Qur'anic ethical principles into an educational framework that can be systematically evaluated and further developed.

Conclusions

This study concludes that Surah Al-Hujurat (49):11–12, as interpreted through Ibn Kathir's exegesis, provides a comprehensive ethical foundation for developing anti-bullying moral education within Islamic religious education (IRE). The analysis

identified six interconnected prohibitions: *sukhriyah* (ridicule), *lamz* (insulting others), *tanabuz bil-alqab* (derogatory labeling), *su' al-zann* (unjustified negative suspicion), *tajassus* (intrusive investigation), and *ghibah* (backbiting). These prohibitions were reconstructed into fundamental educational values encompassing respect for human dignity, responsible verbal communication, recognition of personal identity, fair judgment, privacy protection, and social responsibility. The findings demonstrate that Qur'anic anti-bullying ethics extend beyond regulating observable harmful behavior to addressing the internal attitudes and communication practices that may contribute to humiliation, stigmatization, and social exclusion. Thus, Qur'anic teachings offer not merely a normative prohibition against harmful conduct but also a constructive ethical foundation for cultivating respectful and responsible interpersonal relationships.

This study's main contribution is transforming the identified Qur'anic ethical principles into a conceptual anti-bullying educational framework with four interconnected components: ethical orientation, learning objectives, pedagogical strategies, and behavioral indicators. The framework further incorporates three educational stages: prevention, response, and restoration. Theoretically, this study extends previous discussions of Qur'anic moral education by connecting exegetical interpretations with contemporary perspectives on moral development, prosocial behavior, and school-based bullying prevention. Practically, it offers a conceptual reference for IRE teachers and educational institutions to design contextual learning activities, strengthen moral internalization, develop respectful communication practices, and support safer school environments. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on Ibn Kathir's interpretation, its purposive selection of supporting literature, and the absence of empirical validation. Consequently, the proposed framework should be regarded as a conceptual model rather than a proven intervention for reducing bullying.

Future research should address these limitations through comparative studies involving classical and contemporary Qur'anic commentaries to examine the broader interpretive foundations of anti-bullying ethics. Expert validation by Qur'anic scholars, Islamic education specialists, educational psychologists, and child-protection practitioners is also necessary to assess the proposed framework's conceptual coherence, relevance, and applicability. Furthermore, empirical studies should investigate its implementation through classroom-based learning activities, teacher development programs, and whole-school initiatives across different educational contexts. Such research should evaluate moral understanding, ethical judgment, interpersonal behavior, bystander responses, and bullying perpetration and victimization as distinct but related outcomes. Particular attention should also be given to cyberbullying and students with special educational needs and disabilities. Through these further investigations, the proposed framework can be refined and empirically evaluated, strengthening Qur'anic ethics' contribution to developing a more inclusive, respectful, and bullying-resistant educational environment.

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