

STRENGTHENING SPIRITUAL MENTALITY THROUGH POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS: THE PREVENTIVE ROLE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION TEACHERS IN ADDRESSING BULLYING

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Abstract

Bullying among students in Indonesia has become a pervasive issue, as evidenced by various government reports and official data. This article explores the role of educators, particularly those responsible for fostering social competence, in preventing bullying. Specifically, the study examines the experiences of 18 Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in elementary and junior high schools in providing positive affirmations to students. A phenomenological design was employed to investigate these experiences, focusing on two dimensions of positive affirmation: self-acceptance and the prevention of bullying. Data were collected through a closed questionnaire and analyzed using an inductive content analysis approach. The findings reveal that IRE teachers' integration of spiritual values significantly influences the positive affirmations provided to students. These affirmations promote qualities such as self-acceptance, honesty, positivity, independence, respect for diversity, mental resilience, self-confidence, and the creation of a bullying-free school environment. The study highlights the importance of optimizing the role of educators in preventing bullying, emphasizing three critical aspects: the integration of religious-based spiritual values, the creation of a safe and supportive school environment, and the consistent timing and delivery of positive affirmations.

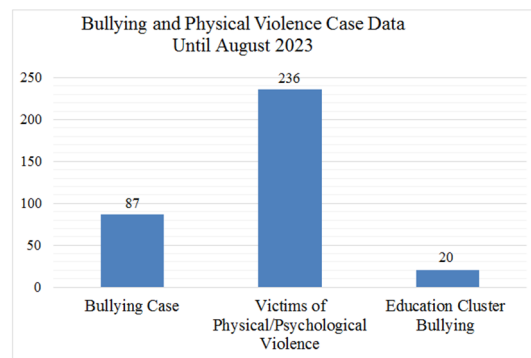
Keywords: *Bullying, Islamic Religious Education Teacher, Positive Affirmation, Students*

INTRODUCTION

Bullying in Indonesia has become a widespread issue that demands immediate attention. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) indicate a troubling trend, with 87 cases of bullying and 236 instances of physical and psychological violence against children and adolescents reported as of August 2023. Alarmingly, the education sector accounts for the highest number of complaints, with some cases resulting in permanent physical trauma, psychological harm, and even fatalities (Astungkoro, 2023). According to Dyah Puparini, the KPAI Commissioner for the Physical/Psychic Cluster, social media plays a significant role in exacerbating bullying cases (Masyrafina, 2023). Furthermore, CNN Indonesia reports that 41% of students in Indonesia have been victims of bullying, surpassing the critical threshold of 23% in the average Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country (Hardiansyah, 2021). The OECD is an international body dedicated to promoting economic cooperation and development. It collaborates with policymakers across various countries, utilizing evidence-based research to devise solutions to social, economic, and environmental challenges (Cormann, 2024).

If these alarming trends are not addressed, they may hinder the achievement of national educational goals. Indonesia's National Education System, as outlined in Law No. 20 of 2003, emphasizes the importance of character development in education (Chapter II, Article 3). Additionally, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) is a key initiative aimed at fostering student character, including personal and social morality, self-regulation, and compassion (Satria et al., 2022). Therefore, the rise in bullying cases, particularly within the education sector, must be treated as a serious concern by education practitioners and policymakers. Moreover, in the context of Society 5.0, characterized by rapid problem-solving through effective solutions, addressing bullying in schools becomes an urgent priority (Hardiansyah, 2021).

Figure 1. Data on Bullying Cases, Victims of Physical/Psychological Violence, and Bullying in the World of Education



Source: KPAI, image processed by researchers

This article posits that optimizing the use of positive affirmations can serve as an effective alternative strategy to strengthen students' mental health, thereby acting as a preventive measure to reduce the incidence of bullying. This perspective is supported by several studies that reinforce the efficacy of this approach. Hertz et al. (2013) assert that positive affirmations hold a strategic position in enhancing students' psychological defenses. From a cognitive perspective, these defenses can be exemplified by a person's ability to refrain from harmful behaviors (Brandrick et al., 2021). Positive affirmations help individuals replace negative thoughts with positive ones, fostering mental resilience and mitigating mental health issues. Regular positive affirmations activate the brain's reward center, responsible for feelings of happiness and well-being. Consequently, positive affirmations can increase self-resilience, improve mental health (Rex, 2014), and help anxious individuals feel calm and secure (Silva & Shatzman, 2022).

Positive affirmations are defined as positive statements or expressions intended to counteract negative thoughts (Moore, 2019). They also promote a positive mindset and outlook, including in interpersonal relationships (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). Furthermore, positive affirmations contribute to self-affirmation. Research supports this idea: self-affirmation can enhance problem-solving abilities during challenging situations (Creswell et al., 2013) and facilitate behavioral change, reducing stress and promoting future-oriented value reflection (Cascio et al., 2016).

In recent years, researchers have focused on the role of positive affirmations in

mental health strengthening. For instance, Jalil et al. (2023) investigated the process and outcomes of using experiential learning techniques in guidance services to enhance students' understanding of bullying. Their classroom action research found that these techniques improved the understanding of bullying among students in class XI IPA 4 at SMAN 2 Jenepono. Similarly, Niman and Subakti (2022) examined efforts to improve self-esteem in a student client affected by family violence and bullying. Through case study research using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, they found that the use of positive affirmations, expressed through care, can enhance clients' self-esteem, promote positive self-perceptions, and empower them to independently reinforce their self-esteem by focusing on their strengths. In a related study, Putri and Afriani (2017) examined the relationship between friendship quality and bullying among junior high school students in Banda Aceh City. Based on a sample of 360 adolescents and utilizing a friendship quality scale, their findings revealed a significant negative correlation between the quality of friendships and the prevalence of bullying. This indicates that strong, positive friendships play a crucial role in reducing instances of bullying among adolescents.

These findings demonstrate that mental strengthening through positive affirmations contributes positively to counteracting negative social behaviors and restoring the mental health of bullying victims. However, there remains a gap in research focusing on the individuals who provide these affirmations, particularly regarding their professional responsibilities. Unlike previous research, this article shifts the focus to Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers as key providers of positive affirmations. Crothers et al. (2006) found that students prefer teachers who proactively assist in resolving bullying-related conflicts. Rahey and Craig (2002) emphasized the role of teachers within the school ecology as central to bullying prevention efforts.

Islamic Religious Education teachers are suitable subjects for this study because their role in providing positive affirmations also aligns with their social competence responsibilities (Firmansyah & Fakhruddin, 2022; Prihastuty et al., 2020). This current study assumes that the teachers' inclusion of spiritual values in their affirmations further

strengthens students' mental resilience. Pargament et al. (2005) suggest that spiritual values, such as compassion and gratitude, guide individual actions and beliefs, leading to greater life satisfaction, resilience, and emotional well-being. Strong spiritual values have been identified as protective factors against mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and delinquency (Koenig, 2012). Additionally, Watkins et al. (2015) found that participants engaged in spiritual practices and positive affirmations reported significantly higher levels of life satisfaction and a more positive outlook. Building on this, the present article contributes to three key aspects: the integration of content, the development of a supportive school environment, and the consistent use of positive affirmations to enhance students' well-being.

In line with the focus of this article, two dimensions of positive affirmation from Aarushi Tewari's theoretical framework are employed: affirmation for self-acceptance and affirmation to prevent bullying (Tewari, 2023). According to Tewari, these two dimensions are closely related to spiritual values, such as honesty, respect, compassion, and the preference for kindness over hostility. Therefore, this article aims to examine the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in implementing positive affirmations to enhance students' mental resilience through self-acceptance and bullying prevention.

Literature Review

Positive affirmations and mental strengthening

According to Moore (2019), positive affirmation is the practice of countering negative thoughts through positive expressions or statements, with the key focus being on the use of positive language. The primary purpose of positive affirmations, as explained by Cohen and Sherman (2014), is to promote a positive mindset and outlook regarding oneself and one's relationships with others. Rex (2014) further notes that fostering positive self-perceptions and healthy social relationships is indicative of good mental health, which results from the successful application of positive affirmations in strengthening self-resilience.

The function of positive affirmation extends to cognitive development, helping individuals cultivate thought patterns that discourage harmful behaviors (Brandrick et

al., 2021). This cognitive building is crucial, as it enhances psychological defenses, ultimately supporting better mental health (Hertz et al., 2013).

A growing body of research highlights the positive impact of affirmations on mental well-being. Silva and Shatzman (2022) emphasize that the use of positive affirmations can help individuals with anxiety feel more calm and secure. Moreover, affirmations contribute to improved mood and emotional regulation, fostering a sense of calm (Wood et al., 2009) and promoting self-acceptance and positive emotions (Lindsay et al., 2018).

The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers

The focus on the role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) Teachers in delivering positive affirmations is supported by several theoretical frameworks. It is essential for IRE teachers to understand that their duties extend beyond instruction; they are responsible for internalizing Islamic values in students, fostering individuals who embrace harmony, peace, and anti-bullying attitudes. This implies that IRE teachers must place religious education within a theoretical framework that facilitates students in learning from religion, positioning religious teachings as a source of values for positive affirmation content. This concept is grounded in the theory of learning from religion (Grimmitt, 1987).

Religious content plays a crucial role in integrating positive affirmations. According to Philip Phenix, religion is part of the synoptic meaning, a framework that integrates all forms of meaning—symbolic, empirical, aesthetic, synoptic, and ethical. Phenix (1964) further argues that religion unites meaning through the concept of ultimate meaning, a process that helps individuals develop a comprehensive, holistic worldview. This holistic perspective is particularly important for students today as it allows them to understand bullying and its detrimental effects on mental health. As a result, students can adopt counter-bullying attitudes, making the provision of positive affirmations essential.

The Relationship Between Positive Affirmations and Bullying Prevention

Multiple studies have demonstrated that bullying behavior arises from a combination of psychological factors, the social environment,

school climate, and technological influences. Cuesta et al. (2021) highlight the role of mental health and low self-esteem as psychological factors that may contribute to bullying, either as perpetrators or victims, due to these factors manifesting as aggressive behavior or social challenges. In terms of the social environment, family harmony and peer relationships are crucial factors influencing bullying behavior. Additionally, a school climate that lacks inclusivity can further exacerbate bullying. Studies by Zakuan and Saian (2022) and Saputra et al. (2021) show that the rise of digital communication has increased opportunities for online bullying and the propagation of violence and hate.

Given these contributing factors, this article posits that psychological factors, particularly mental health, are at the core of bullying behavior. Strengthening mental health is therefore critical. Numerous studies have concluded that positive affirmations are an effective approach for mental strengthening. Positive affirmations foster positive thought patterns and behaviors, reducing the likelihood of harmful actions (Brandrick et al., 2021; Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Patimah et al., 2022). They also promote psychological resilience (Hertz et al., 2013), encourage openness and a future-oriented mindset (Cascio et al., 2016), and help individuals solve problems during difficult experiences (Creswell et al., 2013).

Conceptual Framework

This study employs a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in providing positive affirmations for self-acceptance and bullying prevention (Peterson, 2019). Exploring the roles of Islamic Religious Education teachers is crucial for understanding their commitment to social competence in fostering students' character and mentality, particularly in promoting an anti-bullying culture. This commitment is particularly crucial given the increasing prevalence of bullying in Indonesia, where it has emerged as a widespread and concerning social issue.

The study examines how IRE teachers utilize positive affirmations by integrating spiritual values, presenting a holistic approach that extends beyond mere pedagogical competence to include social competence as religious educators. According to Government

Regulation No. 55 of 2007, Article 5, paragraphs 3, 4, and 5, IRE teachers are responsible for promoting ethical and moral conduct among students, with religion serving as the foundation for encouraging honesty, responsibility, and the maintenance of social harmony at community, national, and state levels (Indonesia, 2015).

The findings of this study are presented descriptively, focusing on the experiences of IRE teachers in providing positive affirmations to support self-acceptance and prevent bullying. The study underscores the implications of enhancing the social competence of IRE teachers, highlighting their role in preventing bullying through the reinforcement of students' mental resilience. This is achieved by integrating spiritual approaches within positive affirmation practices, thereby contributing to the development of moral and ethical character. The results emphasize the need to optimize the social competence of IRE teachers as a critical component of their professional duties, linking effective performance to the moral and ethical education of students.

RESEARCH METHOD

In addressing the research focus, this study employs a qualitative approach using phenomenological methods. Phenomenology is a research method aimed at describing and analyzing the lived experiences of individuals in relation to a specific phenomenon (Peterson, 2019). This method is particularly suitable for the study, as its objective is to explore the experiences of IRE teachers in their role of providing positive affirmations to strengthen students' mentality, specifically in the areas of self-acceptance and bullying prevention.

The choice of the phenomenological method is further justified by the fact that bullying has become not only a national but also a global issue, garnering widespread attention in policy-making, academic seminars, and scientific discussions hosted by various organizations and institutions. It has also attracted considerable research interest, making it a pertinent focus of study.

The study explores two key dimensions of positive affirmation: self-acceptance and affirmation for bullying (Tewari, 2023). Each dimension is further broken down into specific item indicators for detailed analysis.

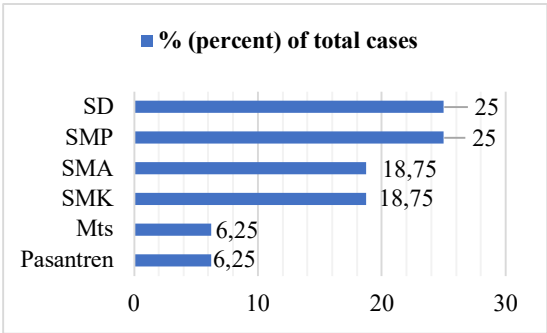
Table 1. Description of Dimensions and Indicators of Positive Affirmation Reinforcement Instrument

The affirmation dimension for self-acceptance	The affirmation dimension for bullying
Indicators:	Indicators:
1. Reinforcement to be true to yourself	1. Reinforcement to be strong and not allow bullying;
2. Reinforcement to choose a healthy environment	2. Reinforcement to resist oppression
3. Reinforcement for the ability to resist negative influences	3. Reinforcement to seek help when oppression occurs
4. Reinforcement for pride of yourself	4. Reinforcement to choose affection over hostility
5. Reinforcement for benefiting others and not hurting	5. Reinforcement not to hurt and oppress others
6. Reinforcement to accept and respect differences	

Source: Adapted from Tewari, 2023

Eighteen IRE teachers from elementary and junior high schools in Bandung City participated in this study in June 2024. These teachers voluntarily completed a closed-ended questionnaire using a Likert scale (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never) administered via the Google Forms application. The study employed a convenience sampling technique, chosen for its flexibility in focusing on participants who meet specific criteria, rather than emphasizing a large sample size (Emerson, 2021). These criteria included the availability of participants within the given time frame for data collection. The primary education level (elementary and junior high schools) was selected based on reports of a high frequency of bullying incidents.

Figure 2. Bullying Cases: January-July 2023



Source: Adapted from Muhamad (2023)

The data collected from 18 IRE teachers on positive affirmations were inductively processed into two dimensions: affirmations for self-acceptance and affirmations to prevent bullying. These dimensions, which serve as the

theoretical framework of the study, were used as key themes in the findings and discussion sections. To analyze how IRE teachers use positive affirmations to strengthen students' mentality, the indicator information from each dimension played a crucial role.

Inductively, the findings related to self-acceptance include affirmations encouraging students to be honest with themselves, choose a healthy environment, reject negative influences, take pride in themselves, contribute positively to others, and accept and respect differences. These reflect the teachers' experiences in fostering spiritual resilience within the dimension of self-acceptance.

Similarly, the findings on bullying prevention affirm that students must be strong and capable of rejecting bullying, express concerns to teachers or parents when facing unpleasant situations, understand that teachers and parents are key protectors, choose compassion over hostility, and avoid harming or oppressing others. These affirmations illustrate how IRE teachers work to strengthen spiritual resilience in the context of bullying prevention. This systematic analysis, grounded in both dimensions, provides insight into the role of IRE teachers in delivering positive affirmations to enhance students' spiritual mentality (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

DISCUSSION

IRE teachers' experience in doing positive affirmations for self-acceptance

In the dimension of IRE Teachers' experience in doing positive affirmation for self-acceptance, this article obtained six statement indicators. The details of the findings are presented in Table 2. below:

Table 2. IRE Teacher's experience in giving positive affirmations for self-acceptance

No	Indicators	Experience Scale				
		A	O	S	R	N
1	Reinforce-ment to be honest with yourself	14/77,78%	4/22,22%	0/0%	0/0%	0/0%
2	Reinforce-ment to choose a healthy environmen t	13/72,22%	5/27,28%	0/0%	0/0%	0/0%
3	Reinforce-ment for the ability to resist	10/55,56%	7/38,89%	1/5,56%	0/0%	0/0%

No	Indicators	Experience Scale				
		A	O	S	R	N
4	negative influences					
	Reinforcement for self-esteem	11/61,11%	6/33,33%	1/5,56%	0/ 0%	0/0%
5	Reinforcement to benefit others and not to harm	13/72,22%	5/27,28%	0/0%	0/ 0%	0/0%
6	Reinforcement to accept and respect differences	13/72,22%	5/27,28%	0/0%	0/ 0%	0/0%

Source: Data Analystist, 2024

Notes: A = Always, O = Often, S = Sometimes, R = Rarely, N = Never

The findings indicate that a significant majority of IRE teachers (77.78%) consistently provide positive affirmations regarding the importance of honesty as a religious commandment, while 22.22% affirm this often. Notably, no respondents reported affirming this quality as sometimes, rarely, or never, demonstrating a strong consensus among IRE teachers on the significance of honesty in shaping students' character. This commitment reflects their concern for the moral and spiritual development of their students.

In terms of promoting a healthy environment, 72.22% of IRE teachers always emphasize this aspect, with 27.28% doing so often. Again, no respondents selected sometimes, rarely, or never, indicating a strong recognition of the positive environment's role in student development. A healthy environment is essential for fostering mental strength and self-acceptance, highlighting the teachers' awareness of external factors influencing student growth.

Regarding the ability to resist negative influences, 55.56% of IRE teachers consistently affirm this capability, while 38.89% do so often, and 5.56% sometimes. No respondents selected rarely or never. Although some teachers provided this affirmation only occasionally, the majority demonstrated a commitment to encouraging students to make sound decisions and avoid harmful influences.

Additionally, 61.11% of IRE teachers always affirm the importance of students being proud of themselves as gifts from God, with 33.33% affirming this often, and 5.56%

sometimes. There were no respondents answered rarely or never. This focus on instilling pride in oneself as a divine gift illustrates the integration of spiritual values in their affirmations, emphasizing the necessity of self-acceptance and mental strengthening.

Moreover, 72.22% of IRE teachers consistently encourage students to be useful and do good for others, with 27.28% affirming this often. No respondents selected sometimes, rarely, or never. This underscores the importance of positive contributions to the community, which can enhance students' self-esteem and sense of acceptance.

Finally, 72.22% of IRE teachers always promote the acceptance and respect for differences among students, while 27.28% do so often. No respondents selected sometimes, rarely, or never. This approach fosters tolerance and respect for diversity, crucial in the context of multicultural Indonesia. Thus, IRE teachers play a vital role in imparting values that support diversity and social harmony.

IRE Teachers' experience in doing positive affirmations for self-acceptance

In the dimension of IRE Teachers' experience of positive affirmation to prevent bullying, this article obtained five indicators. The details of the findings are presented in Table 3. below:

Table 3. Experience of IRE Teachers giving positive affirmations to prevent bullying

No	Indicators	Experience Scale				
		A	O	S	R	N
1	Reinforce-ment to be strong and able to resist bullying	9/ 50%	8/ 33,34%	1/ 5,56%	0 /	0/ 0%
2	Reinforce-ment to tell teachers or parents if experiencing unpleasant things	11/ 61,11%	7/ 38,89%	0/ 0%	0 /	0/ 0%
3	Reinforce-ment that teachers and parents are the right people to protect you when things go wrong	9/ 50%	8/ 33,34%	1/ 5,56%	0 /	0/ 0%

No	Indicators	Experience Scale				
		A	O	S	R	N
4	Reinforce-ment that to choose affection over hostility	9/ 50%	8/ 33,34%	1/ 5,56%	0 /	0/ 0%
5	Reinforce-ment should not hurt and oppress others either physically or psychologi-cally.	11/ 61,11%	7/ 38,89%	0/ 0%	0 /	0/ 0%

Source: Data Analyst, 2024

Notes: A = Always, O = Often, S = Sometimes, R = Rarely, N = Never

In examining IRE teachers' experiences in providing positive affirmations aimed at preventing bullying, the data reveals that 50% of teachers always affirm students' strength to resist bullying, while 33.34% do so often, and 5.56% sometimes. Notably, no respondents selected rarely or never, indicating a strong commitment among IRE teachers to instill courage and resilience in students against bullying.

Furthermore, 61.11% of IRE teachers consistently encourage students to communicate with teachers or parents about unpleasant experiences, with 38.89% affirming this often. There were no respondents answered sometimes, rarely, or never. This high percentage underscores the emphasis IRE teachers place on fostering open communication as a critical strategy for addressing issues, including bullying.

Regarding the role of teachers and parents as protective figures, 50% of IRE teachers always affirm that these adults are the right parties to support students facing challenges, while 33.34% affirm this often, and 5.56% sometimes. No respondents selected rarely or never. This indicates a concerted effort by IRE teachers to build trust in the protective roles of educators and parents, although some inconsistency is evident.

Additionally, 50% of IRE teachers always promote the value of choosing compassion over hostility, with 33.34% affirming this often and 5.56% sometimes. There were no respondents answered rarely or never. This reflects their commitment to instilling values of empathy and non-violence among students, despite the need for greater consistency among some teachers.

A significant 61.11% of IRE teachers consistently advocate for non-violent behavior, emphasizing that students should not harm others, either physically or psychologically. The remaining 38.89% affirm this often, highlighting the strong emphasis placed on respect for others' rights as a fundamental principle in bullying prevention.

The findings related to the first dimension reveal that IRE teachers are committed to fostering students' self-acceptance through consistent positive affirmations. The high percentages of "always" and "often" responses across all indicators demonstrate their dedication to shaping students' character and mentality. The integration of spiritual values within these affirmations reflects a holistic educational approach that prioritizes not only academic development but also character and spiritual growth. This reinforces the notion that positive affirmations are pivotal in cultivating resilience, self-acceptance, and respectfulness among students.

In the second dimension, the data confirms that IRE teachers are actively involved in providing positive affirmations to prevent bullying, as indicated by the high percentages of "always" and "often" answers on all indicators. Their approach goes beyond mere information dissemination; they focus on developing students' mental fortitude and character to confront and reject bullying behavior. The values of compassion, communication, and trust in educators and parents reveal a comprehensive strategy aimed at creating a supportive environment for students.

These findings suggest that Islamic Religious Education Teachers play a vital role in enhancing students' spiritual mentality through positive affirmations. The theoretical implications highlight the potential of integrating religious-based spiritual values to enrich the content of affirmations aimed at strengthening students' mental resilience. Several studies have demonstrated that a spiritual mentality is intrinsically linked to the inner self, manifesting through attitudes, behaviors, and relationships with others (Asli et al., 2022). Individuals with a robust spiritual mentality are guided by their conscience and religious values, which shape their approach to life, encouraging positive attitudes and behavior (Firmansyah, Surahman, et al., 2023;

Misbah & Fahmi, 2021; Shofiyyah, 2022). Consequently, such individuals tend to exhibit commendable character traits (Chalim et al., 2023; Lubis et al., 2018).

Integrating religious-based spiritual values has practical benefits for enhancing students' spiritual mentality. Research supports that cultivating a spiritual mentality from an early age creates a balance between intellectual and socio-emotional attitudes, fostering a moral foundation that guides behavior in line with religious and ethical standards. Spiritual mental development promotes a healthy, calm, and joyful state of mind (Asli et al., 2022), encouraging individuals to demonstrate superior qualities and great attitudes, words, or actions (Khadavi, 2023) and a sense of responsibility (Tahir, 2021). These factors are crucial in preventing bullying among students, as discussed in the literature.

This study emphasizes that IRE teachers play a strategic role in bullying prevention by enhancing students' spiritual mentality through the consistent use of positive affirmations. The findings contribute to the theoretical concept of school ecology, identifying IRE teachers as key stakeholders responsible for cultivating a respectful and supportive environment, consistent with Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 (Rahey & Craig, 2002). Additionally, Crothers et al. (2006) have underscored the importance of active teacher involvement in addressing bullying, advocating for direct and proactive engagement in conflict resolution. Therefore, the practical implications highlight the need for IRE teachers to be adept at utilizing appropriate affirmation strategies and programs that align with the school dynamics. For instance, Islamic Religious Education teachers can promote spiritual mental development by employing a personalized approach (Chalim et al., 2023).

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic Religious Education teachers utilize positive affirmations that embody spiritual values rooted in Islamic teachings. These affirmations include reinforcing honesty as a religious obligation, encouraging students to seek positive and supportive environments, rejecting negative influences, and promoting self-respect as a gift from God. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of being beneficial to others, accepting and respecting differences, exhibiting resilience against

bullying, and encouraging open communication with teachers or parents when facing difficulties. Teachers also stress that compassion should be chosen over hostility, and that no harm—whether physical or psychological—should be inflicted upon others.

These findings have theoretical implications for the integration of spiritual reinforcement within educational content, suggesting that such integration can enhance students' spiritual mentality. Practically, this underscores the need for Islamic Religious Education teachers to draw from Islamic teachings, including the Qur'an, Sunnah, and stories of exemplary Muslims, as well as local wisdom (Firmansyah, Nurdin, et al., 2023; Suhra & Rosita, 2020). For instance, Surah al-Hujurat (Qur'an 49:13) conveys values of acceptance, recognition, respect, and tolerance, which serve as foundational elements for positive affirmations.

The study further reveals that teachers frequently provide these positive affirmations, with a dominant frequency of "always" or "often," underscoring the importance of regularity. This has theoretical implications for the concept of consistency in delivering affirmations, as supported by previous literature that suggests routine use of positive affirmations is key to fostering mindset change (Warnell, 2023). Effective implementation of affirmations can be particularly impactful during specific moments, such as during evaluation sessions, upon unexpected student achievements, or during periods of difficulty. In such situations, affirmations can be delivered through one-on-one meetings, small group discussions, or planned sessions for recognition and encouragement (Lisk, 2001).

Overall, this study builds on previous research on mental resilience through positive affirmations, highlighting the integration of religious values to create a balanced approach that addresses both intellectual and spiritual aspects. Within the framework of school ecology, IRE teachers are tasked with the proactive prevention of bullying. Additionally, consistency and strategic timing are essential components for the effective application of positive affirmations. This research underscores the need for an integrative approach that blends religious values with positive affirmation practices, fosters a proactive school environment, and ensures

consistency in the delivery of affirmations. Future studies should expand the scope to include insights from parents, school management, and students themselves to provide a more comprehensive perspective on the role of positive affirmations in preventing bullying.

CLOSING

The results of this study conclude that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers consistently provide positive affirmations for self-acceptance and bullying prevention, demonstrating their strong commitment to social competence in shaping students' character and mentality. The integration of spiritual values into these affirmations reflects a holistic approach, addressing both academic and spiritual development. These positive affirmations encourage students to accept themselves, develop honesty, positivity, independence, and respect for diversity, while fostering strong mental resilience, self-confidence, and a safe school environment free from bullying.

The findings underscore the importance of optimizing the social competence of IRE teachers as a key factor in preventing bullying. This involves integrating spiritual approaches into affirmation practices, creating safe and supportive school environments, and ensuring consistency in the timing and delivery of affirmations. The study's conclusions align with the goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 on Quality Education and Goal 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, as well as the evolving needs of the digital era and Society 5.0. To address these needs, it is crucial for the government to prioritize programs that enhance the competence of IRE teachers in delivering affirmations grounded in Islamic spiritual values. This can be achieved through workshops, seminars, in-house training, and collaborative programs with partners focused on bullying prevention in educational settings.

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