

# HIDDEN CURRICULUM AND RELIGIOUS-EMPATHIC CHARACTER FORMATION: PREVENTING MICRO-BULLYING IN ISLAMIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Taufikin**

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kudus, Indonesia

Email: [taufikin@uinsuku.ac.id](mailto:taufikin@uinsuku.ac.id)

**Lina Indana Zulfah**

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kudus, Indonesia

Email: [linaindanazulfah03@gmail.com](mailto:linaindanazulfah03@gmail.com)

## **ABSTRACT**

*The normalization of micro-bullying in elementary schools often appears through teasing, joking, and subtle social exclusion. This study investigates how religion-based character education at MI Tarbiyatusy Syubban, Pati, Central Java, operates as a hidden curriculum to foster empathy and prevent bullying. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that verbal and social bullying are frequently perceived as harmless jokes, shaped by low student empathy, inconsistent values between home and school, and limited emotional reflection in character education practices. In response, religious education functions not merely as normative instruction but as an implicit process of empathy internalization through teacher exemplarity, social habituation, and a spiritual school environment. This study introduces the concept of the religious-empathic hidden curriculum, referring to the implicit transmission of spiritual values that shape students' social behavior and emotional sensitivity. The findings extend the theories of Lickona and Bandura by emphasizing the transcendental dimension of empathy formation in children.*

**Keywords:** *Micro-Bullying, Religious Character Education, Empathic Internalisation, Hidden Curriculum*

**How to Cite** Taufikin, T., & Zulfah, L. I. (2026). Hidden Curriculum and Religious-Empathic Character Formation: Preventing Micro-Bullying in Islamic Elementary School. *Al-Mubtadi: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 3(2), 474–491.  
<https://doi.org/10.58988/almubtadi.v3i2.1157>

## INTRODUCTION

Bullying in elementary education remains a persistent global problem (Lickona, 2016; Malisiova & Folia, 2024). This continues despite policy interventions in many countries. Bullying affects short-term mental health and can lead to depression, lower academic achievement, and school disengagement later (Desai et al., 2023; Han et al., 2025; Le Menestrel, 2020). In elementary education, bullying becomes more subtle. It does not always appear as obvious physical violence. Instead, it emerges in daily interactions such as teasing, negative labeling, and social exclusion. These are often seen as “normal” child behavior. Micro-bullying, as used here, means mild, repeated, and covert social aggression. Though subtle, it can build up and harm a child’s psychological well-being (Borualogo & Casas, 2021; Sharma, 2026; Swearer & Hymel, 2015; Wolke & Lereya, 2015). The primary issue of micro-bullying lies not in the intensity of the aggression itself, but in the normalization of such behavior within everyday educational routines.

Research on bullying has been dominated by psychological and social-ecological approaches. The psychological approach highlights empathy, self-regulation, and moral disengagement as determinants of aggressive behavior (Concha-Salgado et al., 2022; Falla et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2025). The social-ecological approach emphasizes layered interactions among individuals, families, schools, and cultures (Stokols, 2024; Sutton & Anderson, 2023; Tomasetti, 2016). Although both approaches provide a strong analytical foundation, character education practices in schools often remain limited to cognitive and normative dimensions. As a result, empathy values formally taught in the classroom are not always internalized into students’ social behavior.

This condition can be understood through Albert Bandura’s social learning theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn

through observation and imitation of dominant social models within their environment (Bandura, 1977; Rumjaun & Narod, 2025). In the school context, learning occurs not only through the explicit curriculum but also through the hidden curriculum, which refers to the implicit values, norms, and habits embedded in school culture. Teachers and peers become central actors in shaping students' standards of social behavior (Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Sutherland et al., 2020; Vitaro et al., 2022). However, a pedagogical paradox emerges when schools formally teach empathy and respect while implicitly tolerating degrading teasing and humiliating jokes. In this context, the hidden curriculum not only contributes to positive character formation but also has the potential to reproduce microbullying through uncorrected social norms.

On the other hand, the religious dimension of empathy formation remains relatively underexplored in bullying research. Most studies primarily focus on social-emotional learning, psychological interventions, or school policy approaches. Nevertheless, several studies have indicated that religiosity is associated with higher levels of empathy and lower levels of aggressive behavior. In Islamic education, values such as compassion, brotherhood, and justice are not merely taught conceptually, but are also internalized through daily practices and the school's spiritual culture. However, the role of religious values as part of the hidden curriculum in bullying prevention has not yet been extensively examined.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to answer the following key questions: What are the forms and dynamics of microbullying hidden within students' social interactions in madrasahs? What factors mediate the emergence of micro-bullying in the context of religious education? How do religious character education practices operate as a hidden curriculum in shaping students' empathy? To what extent does the mechanism of religious-empathic internalization contribute to bullying prevention? This study also introduces the concept of the religious-empathic hidden curriculum, defined as the process of empathy internalization through religious practices, teacher exemplarity, and the school's moral atmosphere operating implicitly within everyday life. Through a case study at MI Tarbiyatusy Syubban, this research demonstrates that bullying

prevention depends not only on formal interventions but also on the internalization of spiritual values that shape students' social sensitivity and empathic behavior.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative, interpretive case study (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; de Vries, 2020). It examines how microbullying is understood and managed in religious character education. This approach fits the study because microbullying is not always visible. It often appears in subtle acts seen as normal. Epistemologically, this research adopts an interpretive perspective, prioritizing participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2026). The setting is Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Tarbiyatusy Syubban in Pati Regency, Central Java. This school was chosen because it integrates religious character-building into daily life. Here, the madrasah is seen as a culture that produces values through daily interactions, rather than merely as a formal institution.

There were nine research informants: one madrasah principal, three teachers, and five students. The principal served as the key informant representing the institution's policies and value orientation, while the teachers were selected to capture pedagogical practices and exemplary behavior as forms of modeling in social learning. Five students were purposively selected to represent direct experiences related to social dynamics, including observations, experiences, and reflections on micro-bullying practices. The selection of informants followed the principles of information richness and data saturation, in which data collection was halted once recurring patterns emerged. This composition enabled the actors to triangulate their perspectives to better understand the phenomenon.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, informal observation, and document analysis. Each interview lasted approximately 15–30 minutes and was conducted during a three-month fieldwork period from September to November 2025. Observations were carried out repeatedly during classroom activities, religious routines, and informal student interactions to capture naturally occurring social behavior. Interviews explored informants' subjective experiences and meanings. Observation captured social practices that are not always

stated, especially hidden micro-bullying in daily interactions (Knott et al., 2022; Morgan, 2022; Walsh, 2020).

Documentary analysis was used to examine the institutionalized values embedded in school policies and programs. Data were analyzed thematically and interactively through iterative stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion-drawing (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2025; Miles et al., 2014). The coding process involved open coding to identify initial categories, followed by axial coding to connect emerging themes related to empathy formation, religious practices, and micro-bullying dynamics. Credibility was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods as well as limited member checking (Denzin & Lincoln, 2026). To ensure ethical integrity, informed consent was obtained from all participants and the students' guardians, while participant identities were anonymized to maintain confidentiality. This approach enabled an in-depth examination of how religious values function as a hidden curriculum to foster empathy and reduce bullying.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **RESULT**

#### **Forms and Dynamics of Micro-Bullying**

*Micro-bullying* in madrasahs does not manifest as explicit aggressive acts but operates through subtle, repetitive social interactions that are often normalized as jokes. This pattern manifests through mild teasing, nicknames, and symbolic exclusion during play or learning activities. Empirically, these practices do not occur as isolated incidents but as relational processes that shape the informal social structure among students. One student stated, "They said it was only a joke, but I felt embarrassed when my friends laughed at me in class." Students who are targeted tend to experience emotional distress that is not always expressed verbally. At the same time, teachers often interpret these interactions as part of children's social dynamics, leading to minimal, non-reflective pedagogical responses. A teacher acknowledged, "Sometimes we only ask them to stop joking without discussing how their words affect others." This situation indicates that micro-bullying operates in a gray area between social norms and deviance, making it difficult to identify as a serious issue despite its tangible impact.

**Table 1.** Micro-Bullying Patterns and Social Dynamics

No	Theme	Findings	Empirical Data
1	Verbal Taunts	Insults normalized as jokes	Repeated teasing in class interactions
2	Social Exclusion	Subtle exclusion in group activities	Students ignored in games/discussions
3	Negative Nicknames	Labels based on appearance/ability	Stigmatizing peer nicknames
4	Limited Intervention	Superficial teacher response	Verbal warnings without reflection
5	Hidden Emotional Impact	Silent emotional distress	Sadness, insecurity, fear of reporting

Source: Thematic analysis of primary data by the researcher

The findings indicate that micro-bullying in madrasahs functions as a latent social practice legitimized through everyday interactions and informal peer culture. The strength of these findings lies in revealing forms of bullying that are subtle yet systemic. This study therefore expands the discourse on bullying beyond explicit aggression by emphasizing the presence of symbolic violence embedded within routine social interactions.

**Social and Psychological Determinants of Micro-Bullying**

The emergence of micro-bullying in madrasahs cannot be explained by a single factor but is the result of a complex interaction between individual, cultural, and structural factors. At the individual level, low levels of empathy and self-control prevent students from reflecting on the emotional impact of their actions. One student explained, “We often tease friends without realizing that they may feel hurt or ashamed.” At the cultural level, there is a dissonance between the normatively taught religious values and the daily social practices, leading students to experience moral ambiguity. Meanwhile, at the structural level, pedagogical mechanisms have not fully integrated emotional reflection into character education, so interventions regarding deviant behavior tend to be reactive and superficial. A teacher stated, “Students are usually told not to repeat the behavior, but deeper discussions about feelings and empathy are still limited.” The combination of these three layers creates an ecosystem that indirectly reproduces micro-bullying as a latent yet recurring social practice.

**Table 2.** Determinants of Micro-Bullying in a Religious School Context

No.	Factor	Empirical Data
1	Low Empathy	Teasing seen as harmless humor
2	Family Influence	Harsh communication from home
3	Teasing Culture	Collective laughter normalizes ridicule
4	Weak Reflection	Reprimand without dialogue
5	Digital Media	Imitation of toxic online language
6	Religious Dissonance	Gap between values and practice

Source: Thematic analysis of primary data by the researcher

These findings demonstrate that micro-bullying is not merely an individual behavioral deviation, but a product of interconnected psychological, cultural, and structural conditions. The analytical strength of these findings lies in integrating multiple dimensions within a single explanatory framework. This study therefore extends conventional bullying perspectives by emphasizing that effective prevention requires ecosystem transformation rather than solely focusing on individual behavioral control.

### **Religious-Character Practices as a Hidden Curriculum of Empathic Formation**

Religious character education in madrasahs does not stop at the formal curriculum but operates as a *hidden curriculum* that quietly yet consistently structures students' affective experiences. Values such as *rahmah*, politeness, and respect are not merely conveyed as knowledge but are embodied through repeated practices: morning greetings, communal prayers, the 5S routine, and the ways teachers reprimand and respond to conflicts. In this space, empathy is not taught declaratively but is learned through experience, observation, feeling, and imitation. One student explained, "We are used to greeting and respecting each other every morning, so it feels uncomfortable if we hurt our friends." However, findings also indicate that the operation of the *hidden curriculum* tends to produce behavioral compliance more quickly than reflective emotional internalization. In other words, students are able to "behave well" because of norms, but are not always able to "feel appropriately" when faced with the suffering of others. A teacher similarly noted, "Students can follow the rules, but sometimes they still laugh when their friends are embarrassed." These finding highlights that the religious hidden curriculum functions strongly as a cultural

mechanism but still requires reflective reinforcement to develop stable empathic awareness.

**Table 3.** Hidden Curriculum Mechanisms in Religious Character Education

No.	Mechanism	Empirical Data
1	5S Habituation	Greeting, smiling, polite language
2	Teacher Modeling	Calm and empathetic communication
3	Religious Rituals	Prayer, Qur'an recitation, studies
4	Non-Repressive Response	Guidance over punishment
5	Social Activities	Sharing and mutual assistance
6	Weak Emotional Reflection	No reflective dialogue sessions

Source: Thematic analysis of primary data by the researcher

These findings confirm that the religious hidden curriculum possesses substantial formative power in creating a polite and relatively harmonious social environment. Its primary strength lies in the repetition of practices and the consistency of exemplary behavior, which shape a “shared sense” of what is considered good. However, the findings also suggest that without reflective mechanisms such as emotional dialogue, guided reflection, or role-playing activities, empathy may remain at the level of behavioral habit rather than emotional consciousness. Therefore, this study proposes an expansion from the *hidden curriculum* toward *religious-empathic internalization*, namely a process in which religious values are not merely practiced but internalized as an emotional awareness capable of preventing and reducing *micro-bullying* at a latent level.

**Effects and Transformation: From Habituation to Internalization**

The mechanism of *religious-empathic internalization* produces two layers of effects: (1) a direct effect in the form of the stabilization of prosocial behavior, and (2) a slower transformational effect in the form of a shift in moral consciousness. In the first layer, religious habituation practices and teacher modeling reduce open conflict, increase politeness, and strengthen social cohesion. In the second layer, some students begin to develop sensitivity to others’ feelings, though this is not yet uniform. This transformation is not linear; it

moves from normative compliance toward reflective awareness through repeated social experiences. However, the findings also highlight a limitation: without structured reflective interventions, changes tend to remain at the level of surface behavior and have not fully penetrated the latent practice of *micro-bullying*. Thus, the effects of religious character education are tangible but partial, and require pedagogical designs that encourage emotional reflection to achieve deeper transformation.

**Table 4.** Effects and Transformation Pathways of Religious-Empathic Internalization

No.	Effect/Transformation	Empirical Data
1	Conflict Reduction	Fewer verbal and physical conflicts
2	Improved Politeness	More respectful language
3	Social Cohesion	Increased cooperation and sharing
4	Caring Attitudes	Helping sick or weak peers
5	Persistent Micro-Bullying	Teasing still appeared
6	Weak Emotional Reflection	No emotional processing sessions
7	External Control Dependence	Obedience under supervision

Source: Thematic analysis of primary data by researcher

These findings position *religious-empathic internalization* as an effective mechanism for building an orderly and prosocial social order, but it is not yet fully transformative at the level of consciousness. Its primary strength lies in its ability to reduce open conflict and consistently foster good habits. However, this finding is also critical: the transformation toward reflective empathy requires a pedagogical bridge in the form of emotional dialogue, *guided reflection*, and *perspective-taking* practices. Without these, character education risks stopping at *behavioral compliance*. Therefore, this study proposes a tiered transformation pathway: from habit formation, to modeling, toward internalization, and finally to reflection (critical empathy) as a prerequisite for reducing *micro-bullying* at the latent level.

## DISCUSSION

This study positions micro-bullying as a latent phenomenon operating in the gray area between social norms and behavioral deviation. Cross-thematic findings indicate that bullying does not

always manifest as explicit aggressive acts, but rather as symbolic practices legitimized by everyday culture. One teacher explained that students often consider teasing as normal interaction, even when it emotionally hurts their classmates. This perspective aligns with recent studies emphasizing the importance of recognizing subtle aggression in children's social interactions (Acland et al., 2024; Noten et al., 2019; Runions et al., 2017; Yeager et al., 2022). Thus, an initial contribution of this research is to expand the bullying framework from overt aggression toward hidden yet systemic symbolic aggression.

The integration of findings from RQ1 and RQ2 indicates that micro-bullying emerges from a multi-level configuration involving psychological, cultural, and structural factors. These findings reinforce contemporary social-ecological approaches that view behavior as the result of cross-system interactions (Bradshaw et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2025). However, this study goes further by identifying a dissonance between normative values and social practices as a mechanism for reproducing behavior. This dissonance creates moral ambiguity, allowing students to normalize mild aggression without reflective awareness. These findings enrich recent literature highlighting moral disengagement as a key mediator in bullying behavior (de Oliveira et al., 2021; Gómez-Tabares & Restrepo, 2026).

At this point, this study critiques character education approaches that tend to be normative and cognitive. Although empathy is explicitly taught, its internalization does not occur automatically. This is consistent with recent research findings showing a gap between moral cognition and moral behavior in character education (Berkowitz, 2022; Nucci, 2015). The findings suggest that value transmission without emotional engagement tends to produce behavioral compliance rather than deep character transformation.

The most significant conceptual contribution emerges from the findings of RQ3, namely the role of the religious hidden curriculum as a mechanism for empathy formation. This study demonstrates that religious values function as a cultural structure that shapes habits and social relationships through repeated practice. A student stated that they learn kindness not only from lessons, but

from how teachers speak and treat us every day. This aligns with recent studies that position the hidden curriculum as a powerful medium in the formation of students' moral identity (Margolis, 2020). However, this research expands that perspective by adding a religious dimension as a source of moral affect and meaning.

Nevertheless, this study also identifies the limitations of the hidden curriculum. While repeated habituation effectively shapes behavior, it does not necessarily lead to reflective awareness. These findings align with critiques in recent literature that character education often stops at behavioral compliance, failing to achieve deep moral internalization (Arthur, 2020; Kristjánsson, 2015). Therefore, this study proposes the concept of *religious-empathic internalization* as a theoretical extension emphasizing empathy as both an affective and transcendental process.

The findings of RQ4 reinforce this argument by showing that the effects of religious character education are real but partial. The reduction in overt conflict and the increase in prosocial behavior confirm the effectiveness of value-based approaches (Taylor et al., 2017). However, the persistence of latent micro-bullying indicates that behavioral changes have not been accompanied by a transformation of consciousness. In other words, students may learn socially acceptable behavior while still lacking deeper emotional sensitivity toward others' suffering.

Based on the integration of these findings, this study proposes a staged transformation model:



**Figure 1.** Staged Transformation for Social Behavior

This staged model (figure 1) enriches the character education framework by positioning reflective empathy as the culmination of moral formation rather than mere behavioral habituation. This approach aligns with recent trends in social-emotional learning that emphasize the importance of perspective-taking and self-reflection in fostering deep empathy (Deljanin-Hudelist, 2025; Immordino-Yang, 2016).

Furthermore, this study expands the discourse on the hidden curriculum by demonstrating that, in the madrasah context, the religious dimension offers greater transformative potential than in secular contexts. Spiritual values not only regulate behavior but also shape students' existential orientation toward others. These findings enrich the global literature on the relationship between religiosity and prosociality, which indicates a positive correlation between the two (Fauth et al., 2019; King & Boyatzis, 2015).

The theoretical implications of this study are strategic. First, this research challenges reductionist approaches in bullying studies by offering a cultural-integrative perspective. Second, this research enriches character education theory by incorporating the transcendental dimension as a source of empathy. Third, this research offers a new conceptual framework that integrates the hidden curriculum, religiosity, and empathy into a single analytical model.

Practically, these findings underscore the importance of pedagogical designs that combine habituation and reflection. Teachers must not merely serve as behavioral models but also act as facilitators of emotional experiences. Strategies such as reflective dialogue, role-playing, and empathetic narration are crucial for bridging the gap between norms and awareness. Furthermore, consistency in values between school and family is a key factor in strengthening internalization.

Thus, this study confirms that preventing micro-bullying requires an integrative, reflective, and values-based approach. The concept of *religious-empathic internalization* proposed in this study offers a theoretical contribution by explaining how religious values can be transformed into sustainable empathic awareness within students' social relationships.

## CONCLUSION

Micro-bullying in madrasahs does not merely appear as overt aggression but also as a latent social practice embedded within everyday interactions. This study's primary contribution lies in strengthening the concept of religious-empathic internalization, which demonstrates that religious values function not only as moral norms but also as affective mechanisms shaping empathy through

the hidden curriculum. The findings indicate that religious habituation and teacher role modeling significantly influence students' social behavior, although they do not always foster deep emotional awareness. Accordingly, bullying prevention requires not only behavioral regulation but also reflective and emotionally meaningful experiences grounded in spiritual values. In this regard, the study expands character education discourse by repositioning empathy as a transcendental and lived social consciousness rather than merely a normative concept.

Practically, these findings highlight the importance of pedagogical approaches that integrate habituation, emotional reflection, and empathetic dialogue within religious education. Teachers are therefore positioned not only as moral exemplars but also as facilitators of students' emotional and social awareness. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on bullying prevention, hidden curriculum, and character education by integrating religiosity and empathy into a single analytical framework. However, this research is limited to a single-case context and does not examine the longitudinal development of empathy. Future studies are encouraged to employ broader educational settings and mixed-methods approaches to further examine the applicability of the religious-empathic internalization model.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Authors give more appreciation to Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kudus for facilitating the completion of this research.

## **REFERENCES**

- Acland, E. L., Peplak, J., Suri, A., & Malti, T. (2024). Emotion recognition links to reactive and proactive aggression across childhood: A multi-study design. *Development and Psychopathology*, 36(3), 1122–1133. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579423000342>
- Arthur, J. (Ed.). (2020). *Educating for a characterful society: Responsibility and the public good*. Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003107811>

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. Prentice-Hall.  
<https://www.amazon.com/Social-Learning-Theory-Albert-Bandura/dp/0138167443>
- Berkowitz, M. W. (2022). Implementing and Assessing Evidence-Based Character Education. *Journal of Education*, 202(2), 191–197. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220574211026908>
- Blazar, D., & Kraft, M. A. (2017). Teacher and Teaching Effects on Students' Attitudes and Behaviors. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(1), 146–170. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373716670260>
- Borualogo, I. S., & Casas, F. (2021). Subjective Well-Being of Bullied Children in Indonesia. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 16(2), 753–773. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-019-09778-1>
- Bradshaw, C. P., Cohen, J., Espelage, D. L., & Nation, M. (2021). Addressing School Safety Through Comprehensive School Climate Approaches. *School Psychology Review*, 50(2–3), 221–236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2021.1926321>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2025). Reporting Guidelines for Qualitative Research: A Values-based Approach. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 22(2), 399–438. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2024.2382244>
- Concha-Salgado, A., Ramírez, A., Pérez, B., Pérez-Luco, R., & García-Cueto, E. (2022). Moral Disengagement as a Self-Regulatory Cognitive Process of Transgressions: Psychometric Evidence of the Bandura Scale in Chilean Adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(19). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191912249>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). *Research Design*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/research-design/book270550>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. SAGE Publications.

- de Oliveira, W. A., da Silva, J. L., Risk, E. N., Komatsu, A. V., Silva, M. A. L., & dos Santos, M. A. (2021). BULLYING AND MECHANISMS OF MORAL DISENGAGEMENT: SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW WITH META-ANALYSIS. *Psicologia Escolar e Educacional*, 25, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2175-35392021223346>
- de Vries, K. (2020). Case Study Methodology. In K. Aranda (Ed.), *Critical Qualitative Health Research: Exploring Philosophies, Politics and Practices* (pp. 41–52). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429432774-2>
- Deljanin-Hudelist, J. (2025). Social inequality and doing difference in schools—The influence of school culture on interactions. *Osterreichische Zeitschrift fur Soziologie*, 50(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11614-025-00622-5>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2026). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications Inc. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-research/book242504>
- Desai, S., Vadukapuram, R., Trivedi, C., Xavier, S., & Mansuri, Z. (2023). Bullying Victimization Among Children With Mental Emotional, Developmental, or Behavioral Problems: A US Population-Based Study. *Primary Care Companion for CNS Disorders*, 25(4). <https://doi.org/10.4088/PCC.22br03406>
- Falla, D., Romera, E. M., & Ortega-Ruiz, R. (2021). Aggression, Moral Disengagement and Empathy. A Longitudinal Study Within the Interpersonal Dynamics of Bullying. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.703468>
- Fauth, B., Decristan, J., Decker, A.-T., Büttner, G., Hardy, I., Klieme, E., & Kunter, M. (2019). The effects of teacher competence on student outcomes in elementary science education: The mediating role of teaching quality. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102882>
- Gómez-Tabares, A. S., & Restrepo, J. E. (2026). Do parenting styles influence bullying through moral disengagement? Evidence from psychosocially at-risk Colombian adolescents. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450128.2026.2618819>

- Han, Z.-Y., Ye, Z.-Y., & Zhong, B.-L. (2025). School bullying and mental health among adolescents: A narrative review. *Translational Pediatrics*, 14(3), 463–472. <https://doi.org/10.21037/tp-2024-512>
- Immordino-Yang, M. H. (2016). Emotions, learning, and the brain: Exploring the educational implications of affective neuroscience (p. 208). W. W. Norton & Company.
- King, P. E., & Boyatzis, C. J. (2015). Religious and Spiritual Development. In *Handbook of Child Psychology and Developmental Science* (pp. 1–48). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118963418.childpsy323>
- Knott, E., Rao, A. H., Summers, K., & Teeger, C. (2022). Interviews in The Social Sciences. *Nature Reviews Methods Primers*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43586-022-00150-6>
- Kristjánsson, K. (2015). Aristotelian character education. Taylor and Francis Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315752747>
- Le Menestrel, S. (2020). Preventing bullying: Consequences, prevention, and intervention. *Journal of Youth Development*, 15(3), 8–26. <https://doi.org/10.5195/JYD.2020.945>
- Lickona, T. (2016). Bullying in schools: A critical problem in need of a new approach. *Psychology and Education*, 53(1–2), 1–12.
- Ma, Q., Wang, X., & Liu, L. (2025). The impact of self-control on aggressive behavior: The chained mediating role of hostile attribution bias and positive/negative implicit affect. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1638323>
- Malisiova, A., & Folia, V. (2024). Practical interventions to address bullying and support students with special educational needs. In S. Siddiqui & M. Kamran (Eds.), *Preventing Bullying Among Children With Special Educational Needs* (pp. 249–278). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-5315-8.ch009>
- Margolis, A. A. (2020). Zone of Proximal Development, Scaffolding and Teaching Practice. *Cultural-Historical Psychology*, 16(3), 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2020160303>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. SAGE.
- Morgan, H. (2022). Conducting a Qualitative Document Analysis. *Qualitative Report*, 27(1), 64–77. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5044>

- Noten, M. M. P. G., Van der Heijden, K. B., Huijbregts, S. C. J., Van Goozen, S. H. M., & Swaab, H. (2019). Indicators of affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and social attention during emotional clips in relation to aggression in 3-year-olds. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 185, 35–50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2019.04.012>
- Nucci, L. (2015). Moral Development and Education. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences: Second Edition* (pp. 775–780). Elsevier Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.92152-4>
- Rumjaun, A., & Narod, F. (2025). Social Learning Theory—Albert Bandura. In B. Akpan & T. J. Kennedy (Eds.), *Science Education in Theory and Practice: An Introductory Guide to Learning Theory* (pp. 65–82). Springer Nature Switzerland. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-81351-1\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-81351-1_5)
- Runions, K. C., Bak, M., & Shaw, T. (2017). Disentangling functions of online aggression: The Cyber-Aggression Typology Questionnaire (CATQ). *Aggressive Behavior*, 43(1), 74–84. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21663>
- Sharma, S. (2026). Silent struggles: The untold story of bullying among girls. *BJPsych Advances*, 32(1), 8–16. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bja.2025.10119>
- Shi, Y., Recinos Brizuela, S. S., Hein, T., Funk, A., & Kimmich, C. (2025). The dynamics of linked social–ecological action situations reveal governance changes in the Austrian Danube. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 395. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2025.127662>
- Stokols, D. (2024). Social ecology. In F. Darbellay (Ed.), *Elgar Encyclopedia of Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity* (pp. 477–482). Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035317967.ch105>
- Sutherland, K. S., Conroy, M. A., McLeod, B. D., Granger, K., Broda, M., & Kunemund, R. (2020). Preliminary Study of the Effects of BEST in CLASS–Elementary on Outcomes of Elementary Students With Problem Behavior. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 22(4), 220–233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300719900318>

- Sutton, M. Q., & Anderson, E. N. (2023). Cultural Ecology. In E. Nikita & T. Rehren (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Archaeology* (pp. 457–457). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-90799-6.00148-8>
- Swearer, S. M., & Hymel, S. (2015). Understanding the psychology of bullying: Moving toward a social-ecological diathesis–stress model. *American Psychologist*, 70(4), 344–353. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038929>
- Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-Up Effects. *Child Development*, 88(4), 1156–1171. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12864>
- Tomasetti, D. C. (2016). Ecological Approach. In C. L. Shehan (Ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Family Studies* (pp. 1–6). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119085621.wbefs214>
- Vitro, F., Colpin, H., Tieskens, J., & van Lier, P. A. C. (2022). How Peers and Teachers Shape Elementary School Children’s Academic and Socioemotional Development. In P. A. C. van Lier & K. Deater-Deckard (Eds.), *Biosocial Interplay During Elementary School: Pathways Toward Maladaptation in Young Children* (pp. 31–71). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-07109-6\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-07109-6_3)
- Walsh, K. (2020). Participant Observation. In A. Kobayashi (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Second Edition) (pp. 39–42). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102295-5.10205-7>
- Wolke, D., & Lereya, S. T. (2015). Long-term effects of bullying. <https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2014-306667>
- Yeager, D. S., Bryan, C. J., Gross, J. J., Murray, J. S., Krettek Cobb, D., H. F. Santos, P., Gravelding, H., Johnson, M., & Jamieson, J. P. (2022). A synergistic mindsets intervention protects adolescents from stress. *Nature*, 607(7919), 512–520. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-022-04907-7>