

# Fostering a Bullying-Free School Environment: The Role of Principals' Spiritual Leadership in Primary Education

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## ABSTRACT

Bullying remains a persistent issue in many schools, negatively impacting student well-being and academic performance. This study explores the role of spiritual leadership in promoting a bullying-free, inclusive school culture that supports effective teaching and learning at SDIT Irsyadur Rahman. A qualitative descriptive method was employed using a case study approach. Participants were selected through purposive sampling and included the principal (as the primary leader), two senior teachers (as co-principals), and two students who experienced the effects of the school's spiritual leadership. Data were collected through structured interviews, observation, and documentation, and validated using triangulation techniques. The data were analyzed using Atlas.ti version 9. Findings revealed that spiritual leadership practiced by the principal played a significant role in fostering a positive school culture. It contributed to a supportive and inclusive environment where bullying was effectively minimized, and respectful social interactions were encouraged. The principal's spiritual leadership fostered values such as empathy, respect, and cooperation among students and staff, which collectively helped in reducing instances of bullying and enhancing the overall school climate. Spiritual leadership is a critical component in establishing a positive, bullying-free school environment. The outcomes of this study can serve as a valuable reference for school leaders aiming to improve social dynamics and support effective educational practices.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A positive school environment is widely recognized as a crucial element in supporting student learning, development, and well-being. When students feel safe, valued, and emotionally connected to their school community, they are more likely to engage meaningfully in academic and social activities (Zysberg & Schwabsky, 2021). In the Indonesian context, which is grounded in Pancasila—the philosophical foundation of the nation that emphasizes noble values such as mutual respect, tolerance, cooperation, and moral integrity—schools are expected to reflect and practice these principles in everyday

interactions. A truly positive school environment is characterized by ethical leadership, mutual compassion among students, and strong moral guidance by educators and school leaders (Velarde et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021).

However, creating such an environment presents numerous challenges. Schools are inherently social institutions composed of individuals from diverse backgrounds, each bringing their own values, experiences, and behaviors. One of the most pressing issues undermining a positive school culture is bullying. Bullying involves repeated aggressive behavior rooted in a power imbalance and can manifest in multiple forms: verbal abuse, physical violence, social exclusion, and cyberbullying (Nasti et al., 2023; Inoue & Tanaka, 2024; Tabares et al., 2024; Johansson et al., 2022). The consequences of bullying are far-reaching and severe, affecting both the victim and perpetrator. Victims often suffer emotional and psychological trauma, which in turn hinders academic achievement, while perpetrators may face social and behavioral repercussions (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2023). Furthermore, bullying contributes to the deterioration of the overall school climate, leading to disengagement, poor student relationships, and long-term mental health concerns (Fu et al., 2024; Ighaede-Edwards et al., 2023; Ahmed et al., 2021).

Recognizing the urgent need to combat bullying in educational institutions, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has classified bullying, sexual violence, and intolerance as the "three major sins in education." In response, the Ministry issued Permendikbudristek Number 46 of 2023, a regulation focused on preventing and addressing violence in educational units. While this policy marks an essential step forward, the effectiveness of anti-bullying initiatives often depends heavily on the quality and style of school leadership.

Several prior studies have suggested programs and strategies for reducing bullying in schools. For example, Fikry et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of assertive communication skills for students and teachers, while Heldie Bramantha & Vidya Pratiwi (2023) highlighted the role of student ambassadors in promoting anti-bullying awareness. While these efforts contribute meaningfully, a significant research gap remains: they do not emphasize the central role of leadership, particularly the school principal, as a moral and behavioral role model.

This study addresses that gap by exploring spiritual leadership as a potentially transformative leadership style in fostering a positive, bullying-free school environment. Spiritual leadership, as conceptualized in organizational studies, centers on intrinsic motivation, ethical values, and creating a sense of meaning and interconnectedness among followers (Hunsaker, 2022). Applied in the school context, it involves the principal actively modeling virtues such as patience, honesty, empathy, and mutual respect while inspiring teachers and students to internalize and embody these values (Yang et al., 2021; Usman et al., 2021; Zhang & Yang, 2021).

In Indonesia, where schools are expected to uphold both educational standards and cultural values, spiritual leadership provides a culturally aligned and ethically grounded approach to addressing behavioral issues such as bullying. A spiritually led principal not only enforces rules but also cultivates an emotional and moral climate that discourages harmful behavior and encourages prosocial interaction. When students see their principal as a figure of integrity and compassion, they are more likely to mirror those behaviors, resulting in healthier peer relationships and improved academic outcomes (Manzano-Sánchez et al., 2021; Alshammari et al., 2022; Long et al., 2021).

Furthermore, research shows that emotionally intelligent school leaders who support their staff contribute to better teacher performance, which directly impacts the quality of education and student behavior (Gümüş et al., 2024; Collie, 2021; Hsieh et al., 2024). A principal who practices spiritual leadership can create a supportive ecosystem in which teachers feel valued, students feel safe, and the overall culture promotes kindness and accountability.

This study aims to explore the role of spiritual leadership in cultivating a positive, inclusive, and bullying-free school environment. It seeks to understand how the principal's leadership style contributes

to shaping student behavior, peer relationships, and the overall atmosphere within the school. By focusing on the daily practices and values embodied by school leaders, the research intends to identify specific aspects of spiritual leadership that are most effective in preventing and addressing bullying, particularly within primary education settings.

To guide this inquiry, the study poses several key research questions. First, it asks how spiritual leadership influences the social and emotional dynamics of a school environment. It also investigates the ways in which a principal's approach to leadership impacts strategies for bullying prevention and intervention. Lastly, it examines the observable outcomes of spiritual leadership on student behavior and the broader school culture, aiming to reveal how leadership grounded in ethical and spiritual values contributes to fostering a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on spiritual leadership—an underexplored yet culturally resonant leadership model—as a means to cultivate a safe and inclusive school environment. While previous studies have tackled anti-bullying programs from a behavioral or psychological standpoint, few have examined the ethical and spiritual dimensions of leadership in addressing bullying. This research not only fills that gap but also introduces a leadership framework that integrates moral education, emotional intelligence, and cultural values in a holistic manner.

The findings from this study are expected to offer valuable insights for school principals, education practitioners, and policymakers. They highlight the importance of value-driven leadership in shaping student attitudes and school culture. Additionally, the study can inform the development of training programs and policy frameworks that incorporate spiritual leadership principles, ultimately contributing to safer and more inclusive school environments across Indonesia and beyond.

By investigating how spiritual leadership impacts bullying and school climate, this research contributes to the growing discourse on character education, school leadership, and student well-being. It positions the school principal not merely as an administrator but as a transformational figure whose values and actions deeply influence the entire school community.

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Research Design and Objects

This study employed a qualitative research method following the framework outlined by John W. Creswell (2018), utilizing a case study approach. The purpose was to explore and describe how spiritual leadership, as demonstrated by the school principal, contributes to the creation of a bullying-free school environment. The case study design allowed for an in-depth examination of this leadership model in practice, offering insights that could serve as a reference for other schools facing similar challenges. The research was conducted on Thursday, October 17, 2024, at SDIT Irsyadur Rahman, located in Kedawung Village, Kedawung District, Cirebon Regency, West Java, Indonesia.

### 2.2 Data Collection

Data for this study were collected using three primary methods: structured interviews, direct observation, and documentation analysis. The structured interview instrument was carefully designed to guide discussions with selected participants, focusing on key aspects such as the understanding of spiritual leadership, anti-bullying strategies, implementation of spiritual values, a culture of respect and harmony, collaborative efforts in handling bullying, school programs related to bullying prevention, evaluation mechanisms, supporting and inhibiting factors, and future expectations. These aspects were chosen to comprehensively explore how spiritual leadership is applied in practice and how it influences

the school environment, particularly in fostering a bullying-free culture. The responses of both teachers and students were analyzed to understand the effectiveness of these practices.

During the 2024/2025 academic year, SDIT Irsyadur Rahman had a total of 165 students, 16 educators, and 4 education staff members. Participants for the study were selected through purposive sampling, allowing the researcher to choose subjects based on specific, relevant criteria. The principal was selected as the primary informant due to his central role in shaping and exemplifying leadership within the school community. Two senior teachers were also chosen: one was a certified "driving teacher" who had undergone extensive training and was recognized as a role model for both teachers and students, and the other was the head of the Violence Prevention and Handling Team, a key figure in managing school safety and discipline. These individuals were deemed highly relevant to the study due to their expertise and active involvement in fostering a safe and respectful school culture.

In addition, two senior students from grades 5 and 6 were included as informants. These students were selected based on their academic performance, communication skills, and positive social interactions, as evidenced by their report card evaluations and commendations from teachers and peers. Their insights provided valuable perspectives on the student experience and the perceived impact of spiritual leadership on the school climate.

The selection of participants and the design of the data collection methods were carefully aligned with the research objectives. Each informant was chosen based on their direct relevance to the study's focus, ensuring that the data collected would offer meaningful insights into the role of spiritual leadership in preventing and addressing bullying. The interconnectedness of the selected subjects and the research focus supports the validity and relevance of the findings. The following is information about the informant:

**Table 1. Informant Identity**

No	Initial	Position	Educational level	Gender
1	CN	Principal	S1	Man
2	NK	Teacher	S1	Women
3	RQ	Head of TPPK	S1	Man
4	NN	Senior Student	Grade 6	Women
5	TS	Senior Student	Grade 5	Women

Source: (Setiadi et al., 2024)

Interviews were conducted one by one on October 16 and 17, 2024. Furthermore, observation is when the researcher makes indirect and direct observations. Through indirect observation, the researcher sees and observes various school activities on its website, and social media such as Facebook and Instagram, namely activities such as the week of manners and morals, Ramadan Islamic boarding schools, and muroja'ah memorization of the Qur'an together. Direct observation is by observing different types of direct social interactions at school. The social interaction in question is the interaction between school residents starting from the arrival in the morning at 06.30 to returning in the afternoon at 16.00. Direct observation includes teaching and learning activities on how a teacher before starting to invite prayers, gives his advice. Fellow students reprimanded each other during the break, followed by the *dhuha* prayer, the *zuhr* and *asar* prayers at the mosque, and during the evaluation activities. In addition, the researcher also observed how principals and teachers solve student problems.

The last is documentation, where the researcher has obtained initial assessment data on Google about this school, then the achievement of receiving the BOS performance award from the Ministry of Education and Culture for the 2022/2023 academic year for the success of becoming one of the schools that achieved the best education report card scores. Furthermore, the researcher also obtained and collected data from the records contained in the incident book, aspects of behavioral scores on student report cards, and

monthly report documents from homeroom teachers and subject teachers. The completeness of the document reinforces this research.

This research has obtained permission from the principal, and other informants, namely 2 senior teachers and 2 students. Where they are given the right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Furthermore, the researchers also maintained their confidentiality by only mentioning the initials in the writing of this article.

### **2.3 Data Analysis**

After all the data was obtained and collected, the researcher analyzed the data through stages, namely coding, categorization, theme development, and interpretation of the meaning of each theme and its relationship (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The data was analyzed using Atlas. The IT software version 9 goes through step by step, namely 1) Encoding the data obtained using the identification process into patterns that are relevant to those that refer to various aspects that have been planned. This is intended so that the data is not biased to carry out the next stage, namely categorization. 2) Categorization, the encoded data is then grouped into categories based on the emerging theme. In this case, the researcher's foresight is improved because it will begin to develop the theme into meaning at this stage. 3) Theme Development, that is, after everything is neat, the researcher develops it by connecting one theme with another, so that it will be a complete connection that can then be interpreted into a deep meaning. 4) Interpretation, the last is that the researcher interprets it into a deep meaning based on interrelated themes to then be able to provide a complete and comprehensive understanding of the condition or phenomenon being studied.

The last step is the validation of the findings, namely data triangulation. According to Creswell (2022), data triangulation is carried out, and interview, observation, and documentation data are carefully examined to ensure accuracy and confidence in the research results. In this study, the results of the interpretation of the interview data are then compared with the results of observations and various documentation obtained so that member-checking techniques can then confirm valid research results and can subsequently be a recommendation for policymakers in the government to be widely applied.

## **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Findings**

#### **3.1.1 The Role of Principals' Spiritual Leadership in Fostering a free-bullying School Environment**

Following the completion of interviews with the informants, the researcher analyzed the data using Creswell's data analysis framework. The process was supported by Atlas.ti version 9 software, which facilitated systematic data organization, coding, and interpretation. Through this process, key themes emerged from the coded data, providing insight into the role of spiritual leadership in fostering a bullying-free school environment. These themes are visually represented in the figure below, illustrating the core patterns and relationships identified during the analysis.

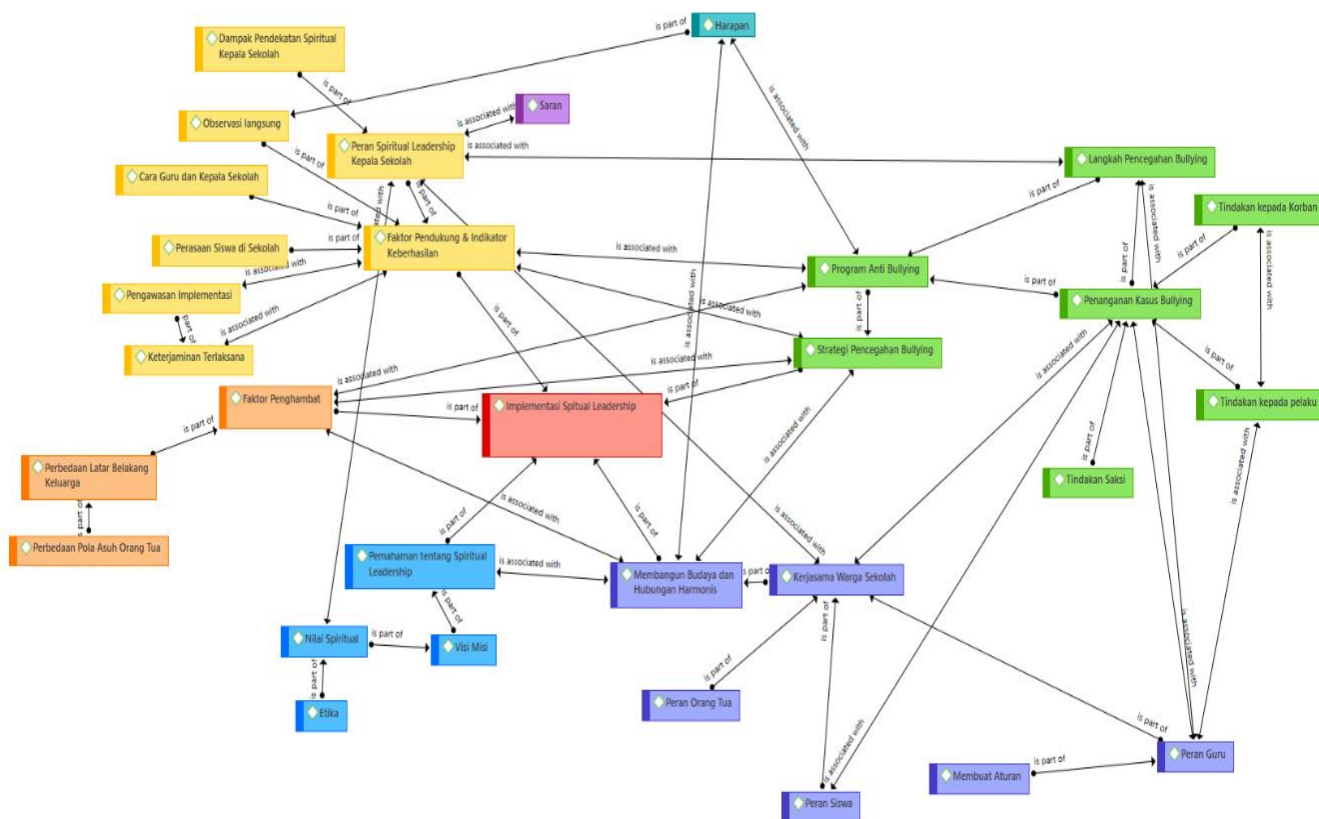


Figure 1. Visualization of research findings using Atlas ti 9th version

The researcher then interpreted the results of his findings, namely fostering a bullying-free school environment through the spiritual leadership role of the principal at SDIT Irsyadur Rahman. First, a school principal must know and understand in advance the concept of spiritual leadership in which there is a vision and mission of self that contains spiritual values, ethics, development of manners, morals, integrity, and example. As conveyed by the principal.

*“... In the concept of spiritual leadership in schools, I understand that several things must be considered; spiritual values, and ethics in the development and management of educational communities. The keys to the three things include a strong Vision and Mission to prepare for all possibilities in the future. The development of Adab and Morals is also integrity and exemplary”.* (CN)

Furthermore, the second is to build a culture of mutual respect and maintain harmonious relationships between school residents. This is so that school residents can cooperate well with each other. In building a culture of mutual respect and maintaining harmonious relationships, the principal integrates character education with the school curriculum, teaches students how to communicate effectively, and invites students to collaborate with the school to prevent and handle bullying.

*“...My strategy for building a culture of mutual respect is to first integrate character education with the school curriculum. Because it will be an obligation that must be carried out together. Then teach students how to communicate effectively and well and encourage student participation in promoting teamwork and collaboration”.* (CN)

Cooperation between school residents is also needed. The principal builds cooperation with teachers and staff using open communication, holding trainings, and workshops, and supporting students emotionally and spiritually using prayer, dhikr, and positive sentences.

*"...Building cooperation with them is building open communication, where teachers and students are active. Furthermore, it is to hold training and workshops as well as collaboration in policy development and all school residents work together to create a safe and inclusive school environment and provide emotional and spiritual support for students by praying and dhikr, giving positive sentences". (CN)*

The principal also invites and builds cooperation through the role of teachers in schools. The role of teachers is to give examples, make clear rules, remind, and reflect with students so that the school environment becomes comfortable and conducive.

*"...I help him by giving everyday examples, making clear rules and not getting bored, always reminded, making reflections with students, creating a comfortable and conducive environment". (NK)*

Then, the third way to foster a bullying-free school environment is for the principal to implement bullying prevention and handling strategies and invite cooperation with teachers and students in implementing them in schools. Among the prevention strategies implemented by school principals is the rollout of anti-bullying programs.

*"...namely Anti-Bullying Campaigns, Workshops and seminars, mentoring programs, namely creating discussion groups, bullying awareness days, and teacher training programs". (CN)*

Then the principal formed TPPK (Violence Prevention and Handling Team) and collaborated with external parties, namely the police, and pasted anti-bullying posters in several corners of the classroom and often provided material on the manners of Muslim children.

*"...Forming an Anti-Bullying Community (TPPK), Making an agenda with several institutions outside the school to become Anti-Bullying speakers. Putting up anti-bullying posters in several corners of the classroom. Providing material on Manners and Morals for Muslim children". (CN)*

In addition, the principal applies spiritual values to the bullying prevention approach, including compassion, empathy, mutual respect, and providing space to express oneself positively.

*"... So this is how to do it by prioritizing the principles of compassion and empathy so that students become happy and feel prioritized. Then emphasized and highlighted the application of the values of mutual respect and appreciation between students. Along with that, it provides space for students to express themselves positively. Finally, of course, it must involve all elements in the school as a form of inseparable unity". (CN)*

At the invitation of the principal, teachers, and students also participated in carrying out the good in their way. Subject teachers (RQ) implement strategies to prevent this, namely often giving advice, direct action to respect each other, recognize uniqueness, and respect each other.

*"By often conveying advice and direct actions to respect each other and recognize the uniqueness of each individual. Emphasizing an attitude of mutual respect". (RQ)*

As a homeroom teacher, NK also implements his prevention strategy. NK implements prevention strategies, namely by building confidence, respecting differences, making agreements on rules, providing an understanding of bullying, being social-emotional, involving students' parents, and being a good role model.

*"...Building confidence and respecting differences (students are given reinforcement that each student has strengths and weaknesses that must be respected and should not be ridiculed), making a comfortable classroom environment for all students, making rules and always reminding them, giving briefings about bullying itself in a language they understand, teaching students about social-emotional, involving students' parents, and be a good example for our students". (NK)*

As for the steps in dealing with bullying in schools, the principal approaches by providing support and listening to the victim, documenting the incident told by the victim, involving the authorities, providing education, and awareness, applying discipline, and evaluating prevention policies. Against Palaku, the principal invited him to give advice and educate him.

*"...I will listen to and support victims, document incidents that have been reported by victims, engage authorities, provide education and awareness, take disciplinary action, and evaluate prevention policies. In addition, I also called the perpetrator and gave advice and educated him". (CN)*

Coordination with teachers and students is also carried out, as RQ does in handling bullying cases, namely with hierarchical procedures.

*"... Bullying cases in schools are handled with a hierarchical procedure, which starts from coordination with homeroom teachers. If the problem is serious, then it will be coordinated with the principal." (RQ)*

In addition, the homeroom teacher will coordinate by providing information to the principal and TPPK to find the best solution.

*"...I coordinate by providing clear information about the problems that occur to the principal and the TPPK (violence prevention and handling team) team in the school to handle the problem and find the best solution to this problem". (NK)*

Then, it is strengthened by the role of students, namely NN and TS who help in handling bullying cases, by reporting to teachers, protecting victims, supporting victims, and advising perpetrators.

*"... I told the ustadzah". (NN)*

*"...I will protect, support, advise those who bully and finally report to the teacher". (TS)*

Good cooperation between teachers and students is a supporting factor for the spiritual leadership role of the principal in fostering a bullying-free school environment.

However, there are obstacles or challenges to its implementation. This was revealed by the chairman of TPPK and one of the subject teachers, Mr. RQ. This is due to differences in family backgrounds and parenting styles among the students.

*"...The biggest challenge comes from differences in family backgrounds and differences in the quality of childcare in the family which ultimately affects their behavior at school". (RQ)*

The homeroom teacher, Mrs. NK, added that, according to her, the challenge arose due to the lack of understanding of students about bullying and some students were still afraid to report it.

*"... Students' understanding of bullying where many students do not understand bullying, there are still students who are afraid to report an incident". (NK)*

Seeing all the obstacles that are challenges, the principal provides a solution, namely by conducting continuous and thorough monitoring and evaluation.

*"...Creating an emotionally and physically safe environment for all students requires continuous and thorough monitoring and evaluation". (CN)*

In addition to the data, researchers have made observations. The researcher did this from morning at 06.30 to 16.00 in the afternoon. The results of the observations that the researcher has made related to spiritual leadership are that they pray before and after studying, then enthusiastically perform dhuha prayers, read the Qur'an, and memorize the Qur'an. All school residents carry out dhuhr and Asar prayers in congregation, dhikir, and pray. After the Asar prayer, the principal gave advice. Subsequently, the halaqah program will be carried out to guide manners and morals. Create groups consisting of approximately 10 students and 1 teacher in each group. This activity contains repeating the memorization of the Qur'an, evaluating activities, advising and forgiving each other, and finally closing with prayers and dhikr in the afternoon. In addition, in terms of security facilities, SDIT Irsyadur Rahman has embedded CCTV in every classroom, teacher, principal, school terrace, and schoolyard.

### 3.1.2 Implications of the Spiritual Leadership Role of School Principals in Fostering a Bullying-Free School Environment

The spiritual leadership role of the principal has good implications for fostering a bullying-free school environment. This has been revealed by RQ as the chairman of TPPK as well as the subject teacher, NK as the homeroom teacher, and TS and NN as students who immediately feel it. The Chairman of TPPK acknowledged that the principal's spiritual leadership has a positive impact. This can be seen from school residents who generally understand the importance of good behavior and the bad impact of bullying.

*"In general, school residents understand the importance of being good and understand that bullying is a bad act". (RQ)*

Furthermore, NK as a homeroom teacher, sees and feels that the spiritual leadership role of the principal has very good implications. This can be seen in the students who grow a sense of concern for their friends so that the school environment becomes conducive and comfortable.

*"...The spiritual approach applied by the principal can have an impact on students' concern for their friends". (NK)*

*"...The school atmosphere will be conducive and comfortable". (NK)*

The implications for students also reaped positive assessments. Students feel comfortable because of the school's supportive facilities for safety.

*"... Yes, because the school already has adequate learning facilities and good security facilities". (TS)*

*"...Yes, I feel comfortable at this school". (NN)*

In addition, they feel firsthand that the school cares about the problem of bullying. This is proven by the anti-bullying program they have participated in and the proper and fair handling of bullying cases.

*"...Yes, I have participated and I feel that I am starting to feel concerned about bullying". (NN)*

*"...Yes, I have, and I feel that this school cares about the problem of bullying". (TS)*

Overall, the results of the research found that the role of school spiritual leadership in fostering a bullying-free school environment has been running well. The researcher presents it in the following table 2:

**Table 2.** Implementation of spiritual leadership in fostering a bullying-free school environment

No	The Role of Spiritual Leadership of the Principal	Findings
1	Understanding Spiritual Leadership	Vision and Mission: Spiritual Values Ethics
2	Building Culture and Harmonious Relationships	School Community Cooperation: Role of teachers Student roles The role of the student's parents
3	Strategies for Implementing a Bullying-Free School Environment	Program Anti Bullying: Preventive measures Handling of bullying cases
4	Supporting Factors	How teachers and principals The active role of students in schools
5	Inhibiting Factors and Solutions	Differences in family background Communication and evaluation

### 3.2 Discussion

#### 3.2.1 The Role of Principals' Spiritual Leadership in Fostering a free-bullying School Environment

This study reveals how the principal at SDIT Irsyadur Rahman has strategically implemented spiritual leadership to foster a bullying-free school environment. Rooted in ethical and spiritual values, this leadership model emphasizes integrity, moral development, and exemplary behavior. The principal's vision and mission are infused with these spiritual principles, which are consistently practiced and integrated into daily school activities. Such integration supports the development of a school culture characterized by mutual respect, harmonious relationships, and character strength, reflecting the idea that spiritual leadership promotes deep relational connectivity and ethical conduct in organizational settings (Bayighomog & Arasli, 2022).

The principal's leadership has cultivated a school culture where values such as respect, honesty, and cooperation are embedded in both formal curriculum and informal social interactions. Students are regularly taught effective communication and moral reasoning, which strengthens collaboration between students, teachers, and school leadership in maintaining a safe and respectful environment. These practices align with the findings by Chen et al. (2022), who argue that vision, ethics, and values are essential components of leadership that positively influence institutional culture and behavior.

To operationalize these values, the principal has facilitated open communication and led regular training sessions and workshops for teachers. These sessions not only disseminate the school's vision and mission but also equip teachers with practical strategies for identifying, preventing, and addressing bullying. Teachers are encouraged to be moral exemplars, promoting a culture where respect and compassion are modelled daily. This holistic approach supports an inclusive and emotionally safe school atmosphere, which enhances both student learning and well-being.

Spiritual leadership has also promoted shared responsibility among school stakeholders—teachers, students, and parents. Teachers are essential in reinforcing the school's values by guiding students, providing emotional support, and creating structured, respectful classroom environments (Keller et al., 2024). Students are taught to respect and defend their peers, report bullying incidents, and actively participate in shaping a kind and inclusive school culture (Welsh et al., 2024). Parents, meanwhile, play a

crucial role by modeling appropriate behavior at home and supporting school initiatives that align with moral development (Berkowitz et al., 2021). This triadic cooperation between home, school, and students ensures consistent reinforcement of anti-bullying messages.

Several strategic initiatives have been implemented to strengthen these efforts. The school formed a Violence Prevention and Handling Team (TPPK) in line with *Permendikbudristek No. 46 of 2023*. Additionally, partnerships with local law enforcement were established to deliver seminars on anti-bullying awareness. Posters emphasizing anti-bullying messages were placed in prominent areas to continuously remind students of appropriate conduct and encourage vigilance. These measures illustrate how spiritual leadership fosters a proactive, preventive approach to bullying, addressing both behavioral and structural factors.

The school also established programs that reinforce moral character, including the *Islamic Manners and Morals Development Program*, where the principal directly teaches students about ethical conduct and emotional regulation. A hierarchical approach is used to manage bullying cases—beginning with the homeroom teacher and escalating to the principal and TPPK for more serious incidents. The handling process is rooted in empathy, rehabilitation, and character development.

When addressing bullying, the school ensures swift and supportive action for victims, emphasizing empathetic listening, psychological support, documentation, and involvement of relevant authorities when necessary. These interventions are designed to reduce trauma and empower victims. For perpetrators, the response is equally restorative. Rather than punitive measures, the school emphasizes educational sanctions and moral guidance to foster empathy and accountability.

Witnesses of bullying are encouraged to take an active role by supporting victims, reporting incidents, and confronting bullying behaviors when safe. This reflects the broader school philosophy that everyone shares responsibility in creating a safe and respectful learning environment.

Despite these successes, the implementation of spiritual leadership in preventing bullying is not without challenges. One major barrier is the varied background of students, particularly differences in parenting styles, which can influence students' understanding of respectful behavior. Younger students in grades 1 and 2 also struggle to comprehend bullying concepts, requiring age-appropriate instruction and increased teacher attention. Additionally, fear of reporting remains a concern for some students.

To address these challenges, the school has adopted the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle (Wiyani, 2020) for continuous evaluation and improvement of its programs. Regular assessments help refine strategies and identify areas for further support. Educational sessions for parents are also provided, featuring expert speakers to reinforce the importance of consistent anti-bullying practices at home.

Key supporting factors for the success of spiritual leadership at SDIT Irsyadur Rahman include strong collaboration among school residents, continuous moral education, and infrastructure improvements. The school has installed CCTV throughout the premises, enhancing supervision and accountability. Additionally, innovative teaching methods and dedicated staff further support a safe and engaging learning environment.

Another notable component is the integration of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) into the curriculum. This initiative fosters moral awareness, tolerance, and empathy, helping students understand the importance of mutual respect regardless of differences. It reinforces the belief that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity, echoing the foundational values of spiritual leadership.

In conclusion, the application of spiritual leadership at SDIT Irsyadur Rahman has proven effective in cultivating a positive school culture and significantly reducing incidents of bullying. By embedding ethical values into every level of school life—through leadership, teaching, student behavior, and parental involvement—the school has created a nurturing environment where respect, empathy, and moral development thrive.

### 3.2.2 The Impact of Spiritual Leadership of School Principals on the School Environment

The implementation of spiritual leadership by the principal of SDIT Irsyadur Rahman has had a profound and positive impact on the school's social and academic environment. By modeling integrity, compassion, and respect, the principal has effectively fostered a culture in which all school members—teachers, students, and staff—recognize the importance of ethical behavior and understand the harmful consequences of bullying. This value-driven leadership has enhanced a sense of shared responsibility and collaboration among school residents in sustaining a bullying-free school atmosphere. As Bayighomog and Arasli (2022) note, spiritual leadership inspires followers to engage ethically and support one another through shared values and a sense of connectedness.

A key outcome of this leadership approach is the growth of empathy and mutual care among students. The spiritual values regularly instilled by the principal have led students to internalize behaviors such as advising one another, standing up for what is right, and showing respect to peers. These values have gradually evolved into daily habits, forming a deep-rooted culture that contributes to a peaceful, cooperative learning environment. According to Keller et al. (2024), such moral and emotional competencies in students are critical for building safe and inclusive school communities.

The leadership of the principal also contributes to students' emotional security and comfort at school. With clear communication of ethical principles and regular moral guidance, students feel supported and safe—key components for effective learning. The presence of supportive facilities, such as surveillance systems and safe classroom environments, further reinforces students' confidence in their surroundings. Chen, Yang, and Zhang (2022) emphasize that ethical school leadership enhances student motivation and engagement by creating a psychologically secure setting.

As a result, students can focus more deeply on their studies, which supports both academic and non-academic growth. The positive school climate has contributed to improved student performance and more harmonious peer interactions, showing how leadership that emphasizes spiritual and moral development can directly influence educational outcomes. This aligns with the view of Leurent, Willis, and Sijbrandij (2021), who argue that strong school cohesion and ethical guidance significantly improve learning environments and student outcomes.

Beyond the classroom, the effects of spiritual leadership extend to parental perception and trust in the school. The school's reputation has strengthened notably since its establishment in 2018, growing from an initial cohort of just 11 students to a total enrollment of 165 students in 2025. This growth reflects increasing parental confidence in the school's ability to provide not only academic excellence but also moral development. Notably, in the 2022/2023 academic year, SDIT Irsyadur Rahman was recognized as one of the best elementary schools in the country based on national education report cards. In 2024, it achieved a Grade A (superior) accreditation.

In conclusion, the principal's spiritual leadership has significantly shaped the school's culture, strengthened student behavior, and earned the trust of the broader community. The case of SDIT Irsyadur Rahman illustrates how value-based leadership can play a central role in fostering a safe, ethical, and high-performing educational environment.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the principal's spiritual leadership at SDIT Irsyadur Rahman has had a significant and positive impact on creating a bullying-free school environment. By consistently promoting values such as compassion, respect, integrity, and cooperation, the principal has built a school culture that encourages collaboration among teachers, students, and staff. This leadership approach has resulted in a supportive, comfortable, and respectful atmosphere, contributing not only to students' emotional well-being but also to their academic and non-academic development. The

findings affirm that spiritual leadership can effectively support the character formation of students and align with the broader goals of national education.

Despite its success, this study has limitations. The research was conducted over a limited timeframe and did not involve the perspectives of parents or the broader school community. These perspectives are crucial to fully understanding the influence of spiritual leadership on school culture. Future studies should, therefore, include a wider range of participants, especially parents, to capture a more holistic view of the school ecosystem.

In light of the findings, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education and Culture consider integrating spiritual leadership principles into school leadership training programs. Furthermore, schools are encouraged to collaborate with families and communities through activities such as workshops to raise awareness about the importance of creating safe, respectful school environments. These strategies will support the vision of Indonesia's Golden Generation 2045 by producing students who are not only academically capable but also morally grounded and socially responsible.

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