

SCHOOL CLIMATE AND BULLYING PREVENTION IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE MADRASAHs

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Received: 17th January 2025; Revised: 26th May 2026; Accepted: 28th June 2026

Abstract

School climate is often linked to bullying outcomes, but its relevance to inclusive madrasahs has not been brought together in a focused review. Following PRISMA 2020, we searched Scopus and Google Scholar on 29 March 2025 and used Publish or Perish to retrieve and manage records. Search terms combined “school climate,” “bullying,” “bullying prevention,” “inclusive education,” and “inclusive school.” The search produced 300 records; after removing 42 duplicates, we screened 258 records, assessed 60 full-text articles, and retained 29 studies for thematic synthesis. We appraised each study for clarity of purpose, methodological fit, description of context, adequacy of reporting, and relevance to the review question. Four dimensions appeared repeatedly: teacher–student relationships, peer relationships, perceived school safety, and anti-bullying policies. Supportive relationships, a stronger sense of safety, and policies that were applied consistently tended to accompany lower bullying involvement and better social inclusion. Because most studies were correlational and were conducted in general or inclusive schools rather than madrasahs, the findings do not establish effectiveness in inclusive madrasahs. They instead provide a framework that requires local testing. *Rahmah*, *ukhuwah*, and *adab* offer an ethical vocabulary for connecting the four dimensions with teacher practice, peer support, accessible reporting, and school governance. The evidence favors a whole-school approach over isolated anti-bullying activities.

Keywords: school climate, bullying prevention, inclusive education, inclusive madrasahs, school safety

Abstrak

Iklm sekolah sering dikaitkan dengan hasil perundungan, tetapi relevansinya dalam konteks madrasah inklusif belum banyak dihimpun dalam kajian yang terfokus. Dengan mengikuti pedoman PRISMA 2020, penelitian ini menelusuri artikel melalui Scopus dan Google Scholar pada 29 Maret 2025 serta menggunakan Publish or Perish untuk mengambil dan mengelola data publikasi. Kata kunci pencarian menggabungkan istilah school climate, bullying, bullying prevention, inclusive education, dan inclusive school. Hasil pencarian memperoleh 300 artikel; setelah 42 duplikasi dihapus, sebanyak 258 artikel disaring, 60 artikel teks lengkap dinilai kelayakannya, dan 29 studi dipertahankan untuk sintesis tematik. Setiap studi dinilai berdasarkan kejelasan tujuan, kesesuaian metodologi, deskripsi konteks, kecukupan pelaporan, dan relevansi terhadap pertanyaan kajian. Empat dimensi yang muncul secara berulang adalah hubungan guru–siswa, hubungan antarteman sebaya, persepsi terhadap keamanan sekolah, dan kebijakan anti-perundungan. Hubungan yang suportif, rasa aman yang lebih kuat, serta kebijakan yang diterapkan secara konsisten cenderung berkaitan dengan rendahnya keterlibatan dalam perundungan dan meningkatnya inklusi sosial. Karena sebagian besar studi bersifat korelasional dan dilakukan pada sekolah umum atau sekolah inklusif, bukan secara khusus pada madrasah, temuan ini belum dapat membuktikan efektivitasnya dalam konteks madrasah inklusif. Temuan tersebut lebih tepat dipahami sebagai kerangka awal yang masih memerlukan pengujian lokal. Nilai rahmah, ukhuwah, dan adab menawarkan kosakata etis untuk menghubungkan keempat dimensi tersebut dengan praktik guru, dukungan teman sebaya, pelaporan yang mudah diakses, dan tata kelola sekolah. Bukti yang tersedia lebih mendukung pendekatan menyeluruh berbasis sekolah dibandingkan kegiatan anti-perundungan yang bersifat terpisah atau parsial.

Kata kunci: iklim sekolah, pencegahan perundungan, pendidikan inklusif, madrasah inklusif, keamanan sekolah

How to Cite: Khotimah, S. H., Dulyapit, A., Khotimah, H., Hamid, A. R. T., & Khasanah. (2026). School Climate and Bullying Prevention in Inclusive Education: Implications for Inclusive Madrasahs. *TARBIYA: Journal of Education in Muslim Society*, 13(1), 41-56. doi:10.15408/tjems.v13i1.50620.

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Introduction

Inclusive madrasahs are expected to offer equitable learning opportunities to all students, including those with disabilities and other special educational needs. That commitment requires more than admission: teaching, social interaction, and support arrangements must enable meaningful participation (Ainscow, 2020). In Islamic educational institutions, inclusion also calls for justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity to be visible in daily practice (Afif, 2025; Hilmy et al., 2024). A madrasah is therefore both a place of learning and a social setting in which students encounter and respond to difference.

The presence of diverse learners does not automatically create an inclusive community. Students whose communication, learning patterns, behavior, or physical condition differ from dominant peer expectations may face teasing, rejection, exclusion, or other bullying behaviors. Bullying generally involves repeated aggression within an actual or perceived power imbalance and can be physical, verbal, relational, or online (UNESCO, 2019). Disability-related differences may heighten exposure to stigma and unequal treatment by peers (Badger et al., 2024; Berchiatti et al., 2022; Rose et al., 2018).

Bullying remains a serious educational concern. UNESCO (2019) reported that nearly one-third of students worldwide had experienced peer bullying at school at least once in the previous month. Such experiences are associated with poorer psychological well-being, weaker engagement, reduced confidence, and strained social relationships (Acosta et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2018). In an inclusive setting, these effects are particularly troubling because access to a classroom does not necessarily bring participation, belonging, or protection from discriminatory treatment.

The concept of school climate helps explain why some schools respond to bullying more effectively than others. School climate covers the quality of relationships, shared norms and values, teaching and learning practices, safety, and organizational arrangements (Cohen et al., 2009; Schweig et al., 2019). More positive climates are associated with well-being, engagement, connectedness, and lower levels of aggression (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018; Wang et al., 2020). This perspective places bullying within the everyday operation of the school rather than reducing each incident to a private conflict between students.

Four aspects of school climate are especially relevant to bullying prevention: teacher–student relationships, peer relationships, perceived school safety, and anti-bullying policies. Teacher support affects whether students disclose harm and whether they trust the response. Peer norms can legitimize exclusion or challenge it. Perceived safety reflects students' actual experience of physical, emotional, and social protection. Policies, meanwhile, provide the procedures for prevention, reporting, protection, and follow-up (Bradshaw et al., 2021; Thornberg, Wegmann, et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2021).

Indonesian law recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to quality education across educational pathways and levels through Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities. Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 48 of 2023 further requires reasonable accommodation for learners with disabilities in formal education. Together, these provisions make clear that inclusion involves accessible support, prepared teachers, constructive peer relations, and protection from

discrimination, not admission alone. Madrasahs add a further institutional layer because religious values form part of the curriculum, school culture, and student formation (Afif, 2025; Wahyudi et al., 2026). These two sources provide contextual background only and were not among the 29 studies synthesized.

A religious identity, however, does not by itself guarantee inclusion. Compassion and respect remain rhetorical when they are absent from teacher conduct, peer expectations, reporting procedures, and institutional accountability. Students with disabilities or other visible differences may still encounter stereotypes, microaggressions, rejection, and bullying (Ručman & Šulc, 2025). The relevant question is therefore whether the ethical commitments of a madrasah are experienced by students as acceptance and safety.

In practice, schools often struggle to translate these commitments into consistent action. Teachers may lack preparation for varied communication and learning needs; peer groups may normalize teasing or exclusion; students may distrust reporting channels; and staff may apply written rules unevenly. Studies of inclusive education also show that attitudes, resources, and support structures shape whether placement becomes genuine participation (Bradshaw & Mundia, 2006; Haakma et al., 2021; Paseka & Schwab, 2020). Bullying prevention must consequently address relationships, students' experience of safety, and institutional practice at the same time.

The available evidence is substantial but fragmented. One body of research links school climate with well-being, safety, and bullying (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018; Bradshaw et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020). Another examines bullying among students with special educational needs and disabilities or evaluates prevention approaches designed for these groups (Badger et al., 2024; Berchiatti et al., 2022; Eldred et al., 2025). Studies differ in setting, population, and the school-climate dimension under examination, and few syntheses have considered what the evidence means for Islamic educational institutions. Direct empirical work in inclusive madrasahs remains scarce. Any transfer from the broader literature must therefore be explicit about context and must not be presented as proof of effectiveness in madrasahs.

Against this background, the review brings together evidence on school climate and bullying prevention in inclusive education. It maps the dimensions that recur across studies, weighs the strength and limitations of the evidence, and develops cautious implications for inclusive practice in madrasahs.

Method

We conducted a systematic literature review of school climate and bullying prevention in inclusive education. PRISMA 2020 guided reporting at the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages (Page et al., 2021). The review sought recurring patterns in the evidence and then considered, without assuming direct transferability, how those patterns might inform inclusive madrasahs.

We ran the final search on 29 March 2025 in Scopus and Google Scholar, using Publish or Perish to retrieve and manage records. Search functions differ across the two sources, so the strategy was adjusted accordingly. The core expression was (“school climate”) AND (“bullying” OR “bullying prevention”) AND (“inclusive education” OR “inclusive school”). We limited eligibility

to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English or Indonesian from 2018 through 29 March 2025. Later publications were used only for contextual discussion and were excluded from the systematic synthesis. Scopus returned 95 records and Google Scholar returned 205, giving 300 records before deduplication. The original search logs were not retained; as a result, the exact database fields, the Google Scholar result limit used in Publish or Perish, the sorting procedure, and the software version could not be verified retrospectively.

We retained an article when full text was available, school climate or one of its dimensions was examined, bullying or prevention was addressed, and the context was relevant to general or inclusive schooling. We excluded duplicates, conference proceedings, editorials, non-journal reports, publications outside the date range, and studies without a clear link between school climate and bullying. Removing 42 duplicates left 258 records for title, abstract, document-type, and relevance screening. We assessed 60 full texts, excluded 31 at the eligibility stage, and included 29 studies in the thematic synthesis. Two authors checked the screening decisions and resolved differences through discussion. See figure 1

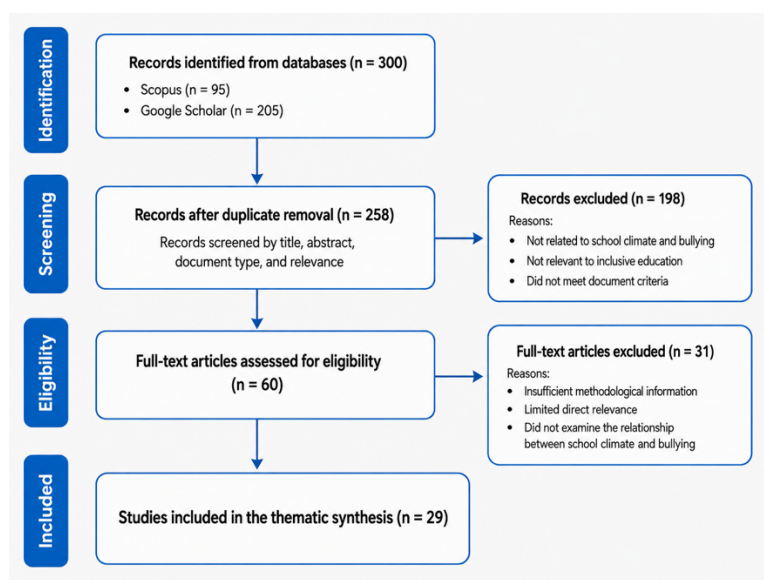


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram

For methodological appraisal, we used a five-criterion checklist developed for this review: clarity of the research objective, appropriateness of the method, adequacy of the context and sample description, clarity of the findings, and relevance to the review question. Each criterion received 0 when reporting was absent, unclear, or inappropriate; 1 when it was partial or had identifiable limitations; and 2 when it was clear and adequate. Total scores ranged from 0 to 10. We classified scores of 8–10 as high quality, 5–7 as moderate, and 0–4 as low. Two authors appraised each study independently and settled differences by consensus. Table 3 reports the article-level scores and categories.

We extracted data on authorship, year, country, research design, participant characteristics, school-climate dimensions, bullying outcomes or prevention strategies, and main findings. Coding combined deductive and inductive procedures. The four school-climate dimensions provided the initial coding frame, while additional challenges and cross-cutting patterns were developed from the findings reported in the studies. Two authors coded the material independently, compared

related codes, and resolved disagreements through discussion. Themes were retained when they were coherent, distinct, and evident across the 29 studies. Rahmah, ukhuwah, and adab were not used as search or coding categories; they were introduced after synthesis to interpret the findings within the context of inclusive madrasahs.

Results and Discussion

Synthesis of Key Challenges Across the Reviewed Studies

Across the 29 studies, bullying prevention was rarely explained by individual behavior alone. Relationships, shared norms, safety, and institutional practice all shaped students' daily experiences (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018; Dietrich & Cohen, 2021; Wang et al., 2020). In inclusive schools, enrolment needs to be accompanied by social support, protection from exclusion, and responses suited to different communication and learning needs (Badger et al., 2024; Haakma et al., 2021; Ručman & Šulc, 2025). Table 1 groups the main challenges identified in the literature.

Table 1. Synthesis of key challenges in developing a school climate that supports bullying prevention

Key challenge	Synthesis of the challenge	Supporting literature
Teacher–student relationships and limited social support	Supportive teacher–student relationships contribute to connectedness, trust, and help-seeking. Limited teacher preparation for diverse learning and communication needs may leave vulnerable students without effective protection.	Aldridge & McChesney (2018); Acosta et al. (2019); Bradshaw et al. (2021); Berchiatti et al. (2022); Thornberg, Wegmann, et al. (2022)
Peer acceptance and social exclusion	Peer relationships determine whether students experience belonging or exclusion. Students with disabilities or other visible differences may be more exposed to rejection, stereotypes, microaggressions, and restricted participation in peer groups.	Rose et al. (2018); Haakma et al. (2021); Berchiatti et al. (2022); Badger et al. (2024); Ručman & Šulc (2025)
Students' perceptions of school safety	Safety includes physical, psychological, emotional, and social protection. Students need to feel respected and able to report harmful experiences without fear of blame, retaliation, or dismissal.	Schweig et al. (2019); Yang et al. (2018); Yang et al. (2021); Bradshaw et al. (2021)
Inconsistent implementation of anti-bullying policies	Written rules do not guarantee safety. Policy effectiveness depends on clear definitions, accessible reporting procedures, consistent responses, monitoring, and participation by the wider school community.	Acosta et al. (2019); Huang et al. (2019); Bradshaw et al. (2021); Thornberg, Wegmann, et al. (2022); Badger et al. (2024)
Limitations in inclusive practices and support systems	Meaningful inclusion requires teacher competence, accessible communication, peer support, family involvement, and institutional commitment. Without these supports, formal placement may coexist with persistent social barriers.	Ainscow (2020); Haakma et al. (2021); Paseka & Schwab (2020); Badger et al. (2024); Eldred et al. (2025)
Limited direct evidence from inclusive madrasahs	Most reviewed studies were conducted in general or non-madrasah inclusive settings. The findings should therefore inform a conceptual framework for madrasahs rather than be treated as direct evidence of effectiveness in that context.	Wang et al. (2020); Badger et al. (2024); Eldred et al. (2025)

These challenges overlap in practice. Teacher support and peer acceptance affect belonging and help-seeking, while students' sense of safety shows whether those relationships are actually experienced as respectful and protective. For learners at risk of marginalization, formal inclusion may coexist with social isolation when relational support is weak (Berchiatti et al., 2022; Rose et al., 2018). Safety is therefore better judged through students' psychological and social experience than through the absence of recorded physical incidents alone (Schweig et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2018).

Formal policies matter, but a written policy does not make a school safe. Credibility depends on clear definitions, accessible reporting, consistent responses, and confidence that disclosure will lead to protection rather than blame or retaliation (Acosta et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2019; Thornberg, Wegmann, et al., 2022). Effective prevention links interpersonal practice, peer norms, and institutional accountability instead of treating them as separate tasks.

An important limitation is contextual. Most studies came from general schools or inclusive settings outside the madrasah sector. The practices identified here may be plausible for inclusive madrasahs, but the review cannot show that they will produce the same outcomes. Adaptation and empirical testing in Islamic educational settings remain necessary.

Quality Assessment of the Reviewed Articles

The methodological appraisal assessed the clarity and appropriateness of each study's objectives, research methods, educational context, reporting of findings, and relevance to the review question. The overall quality classification of the 29 included studies is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Methodological quality classification of the 29 included studies

Quality category	Score range	Number of articles	General interpretation
High quality	8–10	18	Objectives, methods, context, findings, and relevance were generally clear and appropriate.
Moderate quality	5–7	11	Relevant studies with limitations in methodological reporting, context, sample description, or depth of findings.
Low quality	0–4	0	Studies with substantial limitations across several appraisal criteria.
Total		29	

Of the 29 included studies, 18 met the high-quality threshold and 11 were classified as moderate quality, while none fell into the low-quality category. The study-level characteristics, methodological details, thematic findings, and individual appraisal scores are presented in Tables 3 and 4. Overall, research objectives and principal findings were generally reported clearly. However, the level of detail provided regarding educational context, participant characteristics, and methodological limitations was less consistent, particularly among cross-sectional, conceptual, and review-based studies.

Table 3. Characteristics of the 29 Studies Included in the Thematic Synthesis

NO.	STUDY	COUNTRY AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT	RESEARCH DESIGN	SAMPLE / EVIDENCE BASE
1	Aldridge & McChesney (2018)	International; Adolescent school settings	Systematic review	48 studies (2000–2017)
2	Acosta et al. (2019)	USA; Middle schools	Cross-sectional survey; mediation analysis	2,834 students; 14 middle schools
3	Yang et al. (2018)	USA; Elementary–high schools	Multilevel study	25,896 students; Grades 4–12; 114 schools
4	Dietrich & Cohen (2021)	USA; Classroom/school environments	Multilevel structural regression	146,044 students
5	Thornberg, Wegmann, et al. (2022)	Sweden; School classes	Bayesian multilevel analysis	3,578 students in 213 classes
6	Yang et al. (2021)	USA; Middle and high schools	Multilevel study	15,227 students; Grades 6–12; 39 schools
7	Bradshaw et al. (2021)	Primarily USA; Safety/climate-improvement programs	Conceptual review	No primary sample; conceptual synthesis
8	Damayanti et al. (2024)	Indonesia; School climate/civic education	Literature review	Sources from Google Scholar, PubMed, ERIC, and JSTOR; n not reported
9	Berchiatti et al. (2022)	Italy; Primary/secondary; students with SEN/learning difficulties	Cross-sectional study	320 students; seven schools in north-western Italy
10	Badger et al. (2024)	International; School-based approaches for students with SEND	Systematic review; narrative synthesis	15 intervention studies; ages 4–18 years with SEND
11	Dawes et al. (2024)	International; Teachers across school settings	Systematic review; meta-analysis	27 studies; 25 meta-analyzed
12	Haakma et al. (2021)	Netherlands; Mainstream classes including students with PIMD	Qualitative video observation	3 students with PIMD, peers, and teacher assistants
13	Paseka & Schwab (2020)	Germany; Parents and inclusive education	Nationwide survey	2,000 parents
14	Eldred et al. (2025)	International; Violence-prevention interventions; disability	Systematic review of RCTs	13 articles; 10 disability-focused trials
15	van Aalst et al. (2024)	International; Primary-school teachers	Systematic review	75 studies
16	Gallego-Jiménez et al. (2021)	International; Inclusive education and bullying	Systematic review	73 articles
17	Wang et al. (2020)	International; Classroom/school environments	Systematic review; meta-analysis	61 studies; 679 effect sizes; 73,824 participants
18	Waasdorp et al. (2022)	USA; Middle and high schools	Cross-sectional multilevel study	64,670 students; 107 schools
19	Huang et al. (2019)	International; Anti-bullying programs with parent components	Meta-analysis	22 studies; 212,211 K–12 students
20	Hall & Dawes (2019)	USA; K–12 schools in North Carolina	Educator survey	588 educators
21	Kupchik et al. (2022)	USA; Secondary schools	Longitudinal survey; administrative data	4,810 students; 28 schools
22	Thornberg, Pozzoli, & Gini (2022)	Sweden; School bullying situations	Cross-sectional study	907 students
23	Ručman & Šulc (2025)	Slovenia; Disability and inclusive education	Interviews; thematic analysis	13 young people with disabilities
24	Marchante et al. (2022)	Portugal; Primary-to-middle transition	Longitudinal study	671 students; Grade 4–5 transition
25	Zhao et al. (2021)	China; Adolescent secondary education	Cross-sectional moderated mediation	328 adolescents
26	Pearce et al. (2024)	Australia; Whole-school prevention implementation	4-year qualitative multi-site case study	8 schools and implementation teams
27	Hu & Xia (2024)	China; Secondary students; PISA 2018	Secondary analysis	12,058 students
28	Arango et al. (2024)	Spain; Primary and secondary schools in Madrid	Cluster RCT	20 schools and 6,542 students at baseline
29	Ktenidis (2022)	UK; Secondary-school experiences; dwarfism	Narrative qualitative study	19 young people with dwarfism

Abbreviations: PIMD = profound intellectual and multiple disabilities; RCT = randomized controlled trial; SEND = special educational needs and disabilities; SEN = special educational needs.

Table 4. Thematic Findings and Methodological Appraisal

NO.	SCHOOL-CLIMATE DIMENSION(S)	BULLYING OUTCOME / PREVENTION FOCUS	CONCISE PRINCIPAL FINDING	APPRAISAL
1	Teacher–student relationships; peer	Mental health, wellbeing, and protective school	Positive psychosocial climate was consistently linked to better adolescent wellbeing, supporting relationship- and safety-focused prevention.	7/10 (M)

NO.	SCHOOL-CLIMATE DIMENSION(S)	BULLYING OUTCOME / PREVENTION FOCUS	CONCISE PRINCIPAL FINDING	APPRAISAL
2	relationships; perceived school safety	experiences relevant to bullying prevention	Positive school-climate perceptions were associated with less bullying; social-emotional factors partly explained the association.	9/10 (H)
3	Teacher and peer relationships; perceived safety	Physical, emotional, and cyberbullying involvement	Positive climate strengthened engagement and buffered the adverse association between victimization and student engagement.	9/10 (H)
4	Perceived school safety; relationships; connectedness	Bullying victimization and student engagement	Teacher–student and peer relationships shaped classroom bullying climate and mediated several compositional inequalities.	9/10 (H)
5	Teacher–student relationships; peer relationships; teaching quality	Classroom bullying climate	Better student–teacher relationships and supportive peer climates reduced the probability of involvement in bullying roles.	9/10 (H)
6	Teacher–student relationships; peer climate	Bullying roles: victim, bully, bully-victim, and uninvolved	School climate moderated the link between social-emotional competence and cyberbullying victimization.	9/10 (H)
7	School-wide climate; safety; relationships	Cyberbullying victimization	Safety improved when relational, instructional, environmental, and policy components were implemented as an integrated approach.	7/10 (M)
8	Relationships; perceived safety; anti-bullying policy and governance	Comprehensive school-safety and bullying-prevention approaches	Positive climate and civic-education values may jointly support ethical behavior, participation, and school-wide prevention.	6/10 (M)
9	Relationships; perceived safety; school norms and policy	Bullying prevention through school climate and civic education	Teacher support and peer acceptance were protective, while low social status increased vulnerability among students with additional needs.	9/10 (H)
10	Teacher–student relationships; peer status	Bullying victimization and perpetration	Ten of 15 interventions reduced bullying, but evidence quality varied; accessible disability-responsive whole-school approaches remain necessary.	9/10 (H)
11	Peer relationships; inclusive support; anti-bullying programs	Bullying perpetration and victimization among students with SEND	Teachers' appraisal of bullying situations influenced whether and how they intervened, highlighting professional preparation.	9/10 (H)
12	Teacher attitudes and intervention responses	Teacher recognition of and response to bullying	Teacher assistants could enable peer interaction, but over-directive support sometimes restricted spontaneous reciprocal participation.	7/10 (M)
13	Peer relationships; teacher support	Peer participation and risk of social exclusion	Support for inclusion depended on perceived teaching practices, resources, and adequate institutional support.	6/10 (M)
14	Inclusive support; school practices; social acceptance	Acceptance and participation relevant to social exclusion and bullying prevention	Few violence-prevention trials explicitly addressed disability; effectiveness evidence for children with disabilities remained limited.	9/10 (H)
15	Inclusive support; anti-violence policy and programs	School violence and bullying prevention for children with disabilities	Teacher knowledge, attitudes, perceived norms, and self-efficacy influenced bullying identification and intervention.	9/10 (H)
16	Teacher knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, and intervention behavior	Identification, prevention, and reduction of bullying	Effective inclusive prevention requires coordinated action on diversity, participation, school culture, and students' rights.	7/10 (M)
17	Peer inclusion; inclusive support; policy and intervention	Bullying within inclusive educational settings	Positive classroom climate was associated with better academic, motivational, behavioral, and psychological outcomes.	7/10 (M)
18	Classroom relationships; organization; safety and support	Academic and psychological wellbeing relevant to bullying prevention	Stronger engagement and safety climates predicted more defending and less passive or assisting bystander behavior.	9/10 (H)
19	Engagement; environment; safety; student–teacher connectedness	Defending, passive bystanding, and assisting bullying	Programs with parent components produced small but significant reductions in bullying perpetration and victimization.	10/10 (H)
20	Anti-bullying programs; family–school involvement	Bullying perpetration and victimization	Higher policy-implementation fidelity, especially reporting procedures and protected-class knowledge, supported teacher protection and selected outcomes.	7/10 (M)
21	Anti-bullying policy implementation and reporting procedures	Student bullying and teacher protection of students	Several climate dimensions predicted behavioral adjustment, but effects varied by outcome and grade level.	6/10 (M)
22	School climate indicators, including relationships, fairness, and safety	Behavioral adjustment, including skipping and cheating; bullying climate as a school condition	Stronger antibullying class norms promoted defending; moral disengagement increased passive bystanding.	9/10 (H)
23	Peer norms; antibullying class norms	Defending or remaining passive as a bystander	Disability-related vulnerability reflected peer exclusion, inadequate adult responses, and structural barriers in inclusive settings.	7/10 (M)
24	Peer relationships; school safety; inclusive support	Disability-related bullying and victimization	Improved relationships, safety, school liking, and rule fairness predicted more favorable bullying trajectories during school transition.	9/10 (H)
25	Teacher–student relationships; peer relationships; fairness of rules; school safety	Bullying perpetration and victimization	Positive climate predicted lower victimization partly through self-esteem, with effects varying across individuals.	8/10 (H)
26	Overall perceived school climate	Bullying victimization	Sustained whole-school implementation required leadership, staff capacity, resources, structures, and local adaptation.	8/10 (H)
26	Leadership; school systems; anti-bullying policy and implementation	Implementation and sustainability of whole-school prevention		

NO.	SCHOOL-CLIMATE DIMENSION(S)	BULLYING OUTCOME / PREVENTION FOCUS	CONCISE PRINCIPAL FINDING	APPRAISAL
27	Competitive and cooperative school climate	Students' anti-bullying attitudes	Competitive and cooperative climate features were associated with anti-bullying attitudes; personal competitiveness partly mediated the relationship.	8/10 (H)
28	Peer relationships; reporting; whole-school intervention	Peer-reported bullying victimization	LINKlusive reduced primary-school victimization and improved selected outcomes among previously victimized students.	10/10 (H)
29	Peer relationships; perceived safety; inclusive institutional support	Disablist bullying and school violence	Disablist bullying involved physical, cultural, and systemic violence embedded in peer and institutional practices.	7/10 (M)

Note. For review and conceptual studies without primary participants, the evidence-base column reports the number of included studies or indicates that a primary sample was not applicable. Methodological quality was scored on five criteria (0–2 each; maximum = 10): H = high (8–10), M = moderate (5–7), and L = low (0–4).

Dimensions of School Climate in Bullying Prevention

Four dimensions appeared consistently across the evidence: teacher–student relationships, peer relationships, perceived school safety, and anti-bullying policies. They describe relational, experiential, and structural aspects of school life, but they do not operate in isolation. Students' willingness to seek help, for example, depends on both trusted relationships and procedures that work in practice (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018; Bradshaw et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020).

Table 4. Synthesis of school-climate dimensions associated with bullying prevention

SCHOOL-CLIMATE DIMENSION	PATTERN IDENTIFIED IN THE LITERATURE	SUPPORTING LITERATURE	INTERPRETIVE QUALIFICATION
TEACHER–STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS	Teacher support is associated with stronger school connectedness, greater willingness to seek help, and lower bullying involvement.	Aldridge & McChesney (2018); Acosta et al. (2019); Bradshaw et al. (2021); Berchiatti et al. (2022); Thornberg, Wegmann, et al. (2022)	Most studies report associations rather than direct causal effects.
PEER RELATIONSHIPS	Peer acceptance and supportive group norms are associated with social inclusion, while rejection, passive bystanding, and tolerance of exclusion may reinforce bullying.	Rose et al. (2018); Haakma et al. (2021); Berchiatti et al. (2022); Thornberg, Pozzoli, et al. (2022); Ručman & Šulc (2025)	Peer relationships are particularly consequential for students who are vulnerable to exclusion because of disability or perceived difference.
PERCEIVED SCHOOL SAFETY	Physical, psychological, and social safety are associated with engagement, learning comfort, trust in adults, and lower aggressive behavior.	Schweig et al. (2019); Yang et al. (2018); Yang et al. (2021); Bradshaw et al. (2021)	Safety should be assessed through students' experiences, not inferred only from written rules or low reporting rates.
ANTI-BULLYING POLICIES	Clear, accessible, consistently implemented, and monitored policies are associated with safer learning environments.	Acosta et al. (2019); Huang et al. (2019); Bradshaw et al. (2021); Thornberg, Wegmann, et al. (2022)	Policy credibility depends on implementation, reporting access, victim protection, and coordinated participation by the school community.

Table 4 shows how the four dimensions reinforce one another. Teacher support can improve connectedness and reporting; peer norms can either discourage bullying or reward it; perceived

safety reflects trust in the school environment; and policy sets the formal expectations and procedures. Their analytical separation is useful, but students experience them together.

Teacher–student relationships matter because disclosure depends heavily on trust. Students are more likely to seek help when teachers are seen as responsive, fair, and reliable. Such support is associated with stronger school connectedness, a greater sense of safety, and lower bullying involvement (Berchiatti et al., 2022; Bradshaw et al., 2021; Thornberg, Wegmann, et al., 2022). It is especially important for students who face communication barriers or rejection by peers.

Teachers also shape classroom norms through what they notice, ignore, and address. Failure to respond to seemingly minor teasing or exclusion may be read as permission, while a prompt and proportionate response signals that dignity and safety matter. The evidence is mainly correlational or cross-sectional, however. Teacher support is best described as a protective condition associated with lower bullying, not as an independent cause (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018; Thornberg, Wegmann, et al., 2022).

Peers are equally important to social inclusion. Acceptance and support from classmates are associated with belonging and participation, whereas students with disabilities or other perceived differences may encounter stereotypes, rejection, microaggressions, and exclusion (Berchiatti et al., 2022; Rose et al., 2018; Ručman & Šulc, 2025). Sharing a classroom, by itself, does not guarantee membership in the peer community.

At group level, norms determine whether bullying gains social approval. Passive bystanders can reinforce perpetrators through silence, whereas empathy, reporting, and active defence reduce the social rewards attached to bullying (Thornberg, Pozzoli, et al., 2022). Prevention programs therefore need to address peer culture and bystander conduct, not only the individuals labelled as perpetrator or victim.

Students' perceptions of safety form the third dimension. Safety includes freedom from physical harm as well as psychological, emotional, and social security. A school is more likely to be experienced as safe when students feel accepted, can report concerns without blame, and expect a fair and confidential response (Schweig et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2018). Written regulations have limited value when the mechanisms behind them are not trusted.

Policy provides the formal structure for prevention and response. A workable policy defines bullying and prohibited conduct, establishes accessible reporting channels, assigns responsibility, protects targeted students, sets proportionate responses, and requires follow-up. Its credibility rests on consistent implementation and shared participation by leaders, teachers, parents, students, and support personnel (Acosta et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2019; Thornberg, Wegmann, et al., 2022). In inclusive settings, every procedure must also be usable by students with different communication and support needs.

The four dimensions can be grouped into three connected elements: relationships, lived experience, and institutional structure. Teacher and peer relations form the relational element; perceived safety captures experience; and policy and governance provide structure. A weakness in one area can limit progress elsewhere. Consistent rules have little effect when staff responses are uneven, and supportive teachers may struggle when peer norms continue to reward exclusion.

Implications for Inclusive Madrasahs

For inclusive madrasahs, the findings offer a framework for inquiry and development rather than a ready-made intervention. Most of the evidence comes from other school systems, so local adaptation is essential. Evaluation should involve students, teachers, families, school leaders, and personnel responsible for disability support, with attention to how each group experiences existing practice.

Madrasahs may draw on Islamic ethical concepts when interpreting the framework. Rahmah can be expressed through attentive protection, empathetic responses, and support that does not blame the targeted student. Ukhuwah can inform peer solidarity, mutual assistance, and shared responsibility, while adab can guide respectful communication, fair treatment, restraint from humiliation, and teacher modeling. Research on Islamic education links adab and brotherhood with cooperation, equality, care, and social solidarity; studies of bullying prevention in pesantren also point to practical measures such as curriculum content, staff and student training, conflict management, and emotion regulation (Afif, 2025; Arif et al., 2024; Istiyani et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2024). These values become educationally meaningful only when they are visible in classroom interaction, peer support, reporting arrangements, and policy.

Teacher development needs to cover recognition of bullying, sensitive handling of disclosures, non-blaming responses, and communication with learners who have varied needs. Staff should also examine whether labels related to ability, disability, physical condition, language, or learning are limiting participation. Inclusive pedagogy, safeguarding, and referral procedures need to be taught as connected areas of practice.

Peer-focused work can include equitable group tasks, peer support, and preparation for responsible bystander action. Cooperative learning and social-emotional activities may provide space to practise empathy, conflict resolution, and respectful disagreement. Students with disabilities should not be cast only as recipients of help; activities should protect agency, reciprocity, and meaningful participation for everyone (Badger et al., 2024; Haakma et al., 2021).

Safety should be assessed through students' accounts, not inferred from written rules or a small number of reported cases. A safe madrasah combines physical protection with freedom from humiliation and discrimination, confidential reporting, and confidence that complaints will receive fair follow-up (Schweig et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2021). Reporting channels must be understandable and accessible across different communication needs.

A workable anti-bullying policy needs a clear definition of prohibited conduct and a distinction between bullying and ordinary conflict. It should also set out reporting and documentation, assign responsibility, protect the targeted student, specify proportionate responses, and require case review. Leaders, teachers, educational staff, students, parents, counselors, and disability-support personnel all have roles in implementation. Uneven responses across staff quickly weaken trust in the policy (Acosta et al., 2019; Thornberg, Wegmann, et al., 2022).

The central implication is that bullying prevention belongs within madrasah governance and daily culture, not only in the response to individual incidents. Islamic values state the ethical commitment; relationships determine how students encounter it; perceptions of safety reveal

whether it is credible; and policy organizes prevention, protection, and accountability. Claims of effectiveness should wait until the framework has been tested in specific madrasah contexts.

Conclusion

The 29 studies point to four closely related dimensions of bullying prevention: teacher–student relationships, peer relationships, perceived school safety, and anti-bullying policies. Supportive relationships, inclusive peer norms, confidence in school safety, and consistent policy implementation were generally associated with lower bullying involvement and stronger social inclusion. Because the underlying evidence is largely correlational, no single dimension can be treated as an independently proven cause of reduced bullying.

The main contribution of the review is to connect relational, experiential, and structural evidence in a framework relevant to inclusive madrasahs. Rahmah, ukhuwah, and adab can help translate that framework into teacher conduct, peer culture, accessible reporting, and institutional accountability. Yet the evidence comes mainly from general schools and non-madrasah inclusive settings. Research in madrasahs should now examine students' perspectives, validate context-sensitive indicators, and test whether specific school-climate initiatives improve safety and inclusion over time.

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