

The Role of Teachers in Creating a Bullying Free Zone in Primary Schools

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Abstract: *This study was conducted to determine how much teachers do in preventing and handling bullying in elementary schools. Bullying is an action that aims to hurt others and can cause physical and psychological problems for the victim. This study aims to dig deeper into the problem of bullying that can hurt others and cause physical and psychological problems for the victim. The study uses a literature study method where researchers will review various articles that are closely related to bullying cases. The results of this study can be concluded that bullying in schools is very dangerous and can have a major impact on child development. So it is hoped that teachers can overcome, prevent and create an environment free from bullying so that children can develop properly.*

Keywords : *Bullying, Child Development, School Environment, Teacher's Role*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui seberapa besar yang dilakukan oleh guru dalam upaya mencegah dan menangani bullying di sekolah dasar. Bullying merupakan suatu tindakan yang bertujuan untuk menyakiti orang lain dan dapat menyebabkan masalah pada fisik dan psikologis korban. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali lebih dalam mengenai permasalahan bullying yang dapat menyakiti orang lain sehingga menyebabkan masalah pada fisik dan psikologis korban. Penelitian menggunakan metode *studi literature* yang dimana peneliti akan mengkaji berbagai artikel yang memiliki hubungan erat dengan kasus bullying. Hasil dari penelitian ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa bullying di sekolah ternyata sangat berbahaya dan dapat berdampak besar pada perkembangan anak. Sehingga diharapkan para guru dapat mengatasi, mencegah dan menciptakan lingkungan yang bebas bullying sehingga anak dapat berkembang dengan baik.

Kata kunci: Perundungan, Perkembangan anak, Sekolah, Peran Guru

Introduction

Education is a crucial part of building a great nation. Without education, a nation will struggle to compete. In Indonesia, education consists of two types: formal education and non-formal education. Formal education is structured, clear, and follows a tiered system, including primary, secondary, and higher education. Meanwhile, non-formal education is education conducted outside the formal system (Junindra, 2022). According to Law No. 20 of 2003, education must be equitable, democratic, and free of discrimination.

To achieve educational goals optimally, education must be carefully planned. Educational programs encompass all activities that are well planned and subsequently implemented in educational environments, such as in schools, by the principal. Teachers are critical in the field of education because they interact most frequently with students. Teachers are individuals who help students to develop better, whether in formal or non-formal education. Teachers not only teach but also educate students so that the educational goals can be achieved.

Everyone, including teachers as the implementers of learning and character education for students, should collaborate. Character education helps students understand themselves in ways that are beneficial for others. In other words, character involves the daily habits reflecting students' thoughts on right and wrong. Education is responsible for shaping students' character. Through character education, students develop not only intellectual intelligence but also emotional intelligence, equipping them to solve problems wisely without harming themselves or others. According to Nahrul Faidin, there are 18 character values in the 2013 curriculum, including religious devotion, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, patriotism, appreciation for achievement, friendliness and communicativeness, love of reading, environmental appreciation, social responsibility, and empathy (Faidin, 2019).

Bullying is an action committed by an individual or group with the intention of hurting others who are their targets. Diana explains that those who commit acts of bullying are referred to as "bullies." Bullies may be individuals or groups and have the power to exert any form of violent pressure on the victims (Diana et al., 2023). Bullying is a very serious issue in Indonesia. It has a significant negative impact on the development of young people in Indonesia, especially on children in primary school. Typically, children who become bullying victims are those who appear weak, have difficulty socializing, or come from troubled families. Bullying can hinder a child's growth and development socially, emotionally, and academically, impacting their lives in later stages like middle school, high school, college, and even in the workplace. Moreover, children who become bullies may grow up lacking empathy toward others and exhibit destructive behavior. Rachmah suggests that parents and teachers often ignore bullying behavior in young children, with a misconception that young children

cannot yet distinguish right from wrong, and therefore such behavior is seen as normal. Despite the significant impact bullying has, especially for victims who may experience depression, low self-esteem, shyness, isolation, decreased academic performance, and even suicidal thoughts if it persists, bullying also has a negative impact on children's character development, affecting both the victims and perpetrators (Rachmah et al., 2022).

Therefore, the role of the teacher is crucial here. Teachers are expected to create a safe, peaceful, and supportive learning environment, free from bullying. The urgency of this research lies in understanding how teachers can address and prevent behaviors that lead to bullying at the primary school level. Teachers must have the skills to foster a bullying-free environment so that children can grow and develop well.

According to Wisriani, the act of bullying or child abuse is fundamentally regulated under Law No. 35 of 2014, Article 76C, which states that "every Indonesian citizen is prohibited from committing, allowing, ordering, or participating in acts of violence, especially against children." Students at the primary education level (SD/MI) are in the developmental stage of childhood and early adolescence. In primary school, they are expected to acquire knowledge that is deemed essential for their education at the next level. To achieve this goal, a conducive learning environment, free from violence or discomfort, is essential (Wisriani, 2023).

Research Methods

This research uses a literature study method, where researchers collect and analyze various relevant reference sources, including books, journals, articles, and other research reports containing information related to this article. According to Linnenluecke's perspective on the literature study method, this approach allows us to systematically evaluate collective evidence in a specific field through literature reviews, enabling researchers to synthesize and summarize current knowledge—an essential process for identifying gaps and guiding future research (Linnenluecke et al., 2019).

Linnenluecke also states that one of the primary advantages of systematic literature reviews is that they provide a comprehensive and replicable synthesis of the existing body of knowledge. This can facilitate future research by making it easier for researchers to identify patterns, gaps, and trends in a specific field (Linnenluecke et al., 2019). Leenaars adds that systematic literature reviews are essential for synthesizing existing knowledge, preventing redundant research, and enhancing the reliability and relevance of new studies by providing information for experimental design. These reviews can even answer research questions using available data, making them highly valuable for researchers (Leenaars et al., 2020).

Results and Discussion

Teachers are one of many public service roles. Public service involves activities carried out to meet the needs of society, whether in goods or services, and public service providers must act fairly, diligently, reliably, and professionally (Nurchotimah, 2021). In this context, the discussion will focus on the role of teachers in addressing bullying, especially in elementary schools.

Bullying is generally an aggressive act where the perpetrator targets the victim to harm individuals or groups perceived as inferior. This behavior can occur anywhere and anytime, with substantial harm to the individual or group targeted. According to Dutta, bullying is an intentional act of aggression meant to disturb and harm individuals or weaker groups by those who are stronger, aiming to inflict physical, social, or psychological harm. This behavior leaves weaker victims disadvantaged and hurt. Bullying can be direct or indirect, including manipulating the social environment of the victim or group (Dutta et al., 2021).

Bullying fundamentally violates Pancasila, particularly its second principle, which emphasizes justice and morality among Indonesian citizens. According to Sariyatun, bullying violates the meaning of the second principle, as it is essential to respect one another as fellow human beings. Actions that harm others should not be done to create a harmonious environment (Sariyatun, 2021).

There are many types of bullying: some target psychological harm, others cause physical injury, disrupt the social environment, and with technological advancements, cyberbullying has emerged, occurring over the internet, such as on social media. Torkos and Anwer assert that bullying comes in many forms, including physical harm, verbal abuse, and emotional disruption. In the past, bullying often involved physical or verbal violence, while social bullying involved manipulating the victim's social environment, leading to ostracism. Cyberbullying, a more recent form, occurs in virtual spaces, typically on social media, text messaging, or other digital platforms, causing victims long-term shame and harm, as digital traces are challenging to erase (Torkos & Anwer, 2022). Often, these behaviors stem from children not receiving education about bullying or growing up in an environment where bullying is prevalent, particularly in elementary school. According to Saptono, bullying can occur because stronger children exploit the weakness of others, making bullying in elementary school common. Differences in physical appearance or unfavorable financial situations also contribute. These findings underscore the importance of early intervention to address this issue (Saptono, 2022).

Additionally, at times, the high socioeconomic status of bullying perpetrators in elementary schools can make teachers reluctant to intervene, leading them to ignore the behavior. A study from Ukraine indicates that the social and economic status of bullying perpetrators can influence how teachers handle the situation. Teachers may overlook bullying by students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds due to the social power or influence of the

perpetrator's family (Shevchenko, 2021). Other research suggests that teachers may be unwilling or unprepared to address bullying, especially when students have a strong economic or influential background, causing teachers to ignore bullying out of fear or lack of confidence in their authority (Krylova et al., 2022).

Teachers sometimes even have close relationships with bullying perpetrators or their parents, leading them to side with the bully. A study in Italy found that students involved in bullying often have a good relationship with teachers, which can provide them with support from teachers. This shows that conflict or tension in teacher-student relationships is closely related to the occurrence of bullying (Marengo et al., 2021). This is unfortunate because teachers should be the frontline in addressing bullying and creating a bullying-free environment in elementary schools, not supporters. A study on teachers' roles in Medan, Indonesia, found that teachers should play a vital role as initiators in preventing bullying in elementary schools. Teachers must act as guides and supervisors, actively addressing bullying in schools to create a safe environment for students (Ariga et al., 2019). Thus, teachers must understand how to handle, prevent, and foster a bullying-free learning environment in elementary schools, as bullying can hinder children's development. Research shows that bullying can lead to social and mental health issues in children. Bullying also affects overall mental health, increasing the risk of depression, anxiety, and other health problems in adulthood. The effects of bullying are felt well into adulthood, impacting the victim's physical health and social relationships (Armitage, 2021).

Victims of bullying may also undergo significant personality changes, sometimes becoming bullies themselves, perpetuating the bullying cycle at the elementary education level. Research indicates that bullying victims frequently subjected to mental stress have a high risk of becoming perpetrators in the future. This can occur because they feel oppressed and angry, leading them to take out their frustrations on other students. This is supported by other research showing that many bullying perpetrators were once victims themselves, leading them to repeat the behavior (Nugroho et al., 2021). A European study involving elementary school students found that at least 19% of students involved in bullying were former victims. These students experience more severe mental health issues compared to those who were only perpetrators or victims, resulting in increased aggression and reinforcing the cycle (Husky et al., 2020).

What can elementary school teachers do to prevent such behaviors? The first step teachers should take is to educate themselves about bullying—how to prevent, handle, and respond to it to avoid escalation. Research indicates that teachers' ability to address bullying significantly affects the reduction of bullying cases. Teachers who take their responsibilities seriously play an essential role in this (De Luca et al., 2019).

Following this, teachers can hold awareness sessions for students, helping them understand that bullying is harmful to others and to themselves. Teacher-led

awareness initiatives greatly influence student behavior to discourage bullying. Anti-bullying norms should be emphasized, making the school environment supportive of anti-bullying behavior (Stratiychuk & Chirkina, 2019).

Teachers must also establish clear rules and penalties in this regard to minimize bullying further. They should set up educational sanctions for those who violate these rules so that perpetrators learn from their mistakes and abandon the behavior. A study found that penalties for bullying should be firm but educational. This is crucial, as it helps students realize their mistakes and move away from such behavior (Saifullah, 2022). By doing so, a bullying-free elementary school environment can be achieved, enabling students to learn in safety and comfort. Even if bullying cases still arise, teachers will know how to respond, preventing the issue from spreading or worsening.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings above, it can be concluded that bullying is a form of violence that can harm others, and in the elementary school setting, it can hinder a child's development. This violent behavior can be addressed through character education. Bullying involves aggressive and negative actions taken by someone to hurt and disturb others for personal satisfaction. As a result, this negative behavior has become prevalent in society, leading to discomfort and distress among victims of bullying.

Teachers play a crucial role in guiding children to prevent bullying in elementary schools. The teacher's role in supporting students to prevent bullying in elementary school includes serving as an educator, supervisor, mentor, and advisor. Additionally, teachers have an important and strategic role in creating a safe, bullying-free school environment. They can instill positive values in students regarding the dangers of bullying. By adopting proactive strategies such as supervision, character education, and effective communication with students and parents, teachers can help prevent bullying and foster a better school environment for children's social and emotional development.

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