

BULLYING ON CHILDREN

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Abstract

There is an increase in the number of bullying among children in Indonesia. Bullying occurs not only in adolescents experiencing a search for identity but also in children aged 7 to 12 years or elementary school age. This study aims to identify the forms of bullying experienced by children and the impact of this bullying behavior among children. In addition, to determine children's actions when experiencing or witnessing bullying. This research is descriptive and quantitative. The participant were elementary school students in grades 4, 5, and 6 at SDN 2 Jetak, Pacitan, East Java. This study used printed questionnaires to collect the data. The results of this study show that most elementary school children experience forms of bullying, including social, verbal, and physical. Then the impact of bullying starts from no appetite, and loss of self-confidence, to trauma and depression. Furthermore, children report bullying to teachers, parents, or trusted people as a response to bullying.

Keywords: *Bullying, Children, Elementary School*

Introduction

Children are the hope of the future. As you enter the formative years of education, elementary school becomes a children's foundation for learning and personal growth. The education of elementary school-age children 6 to 12 years is an essential, fundamental, and necessary education (Elihami, 2022). This critical phase sets the stage for academic achievement and shapes social interactions, making it necessary to foster a nurturing environment that promotes positive development. Both home and school play important role in shaping children's characters (Apriyanti, 2021).

The elementary school environment is where children's young minds embark on an educational journey. These institutions provide knowledge and function as the main socialization agents. In this case, students face various challenges and opportunities to interact with peers, teachers, and other school community members. Understanding the subtleties of elementary school life is essential to understanding the complexities of student behavior.

Student behavior in the context of elementary school covers a broad spectrum of actions, reactions, and responses exhibited by children. As children go through this phase of life, some students display positive and pro-social behavior, cultivating healthy relationships with others. On the other hand, some may say negative behaviors, such as aggression or defiance, can impact the overall dynamic of the school community.

Social behavior is vital in shaping interactions and relationships between elementary school children. The social environment within a school can significantly influence how students perceive and interact with one another. Bullying is one of the factors that cause social interaction to be neither good nor bad (Khairul Anwar & Yeni Karneli, 2020). Many acts of violence occur in schools, including elementary schools (Anugraheni, 2018).

Bullying is commonly defined as repeated aggressive behavior in which there is an imbalance of power or strength between the two parties (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993). Bullying is when one is exposed or victimized, repeatedly and over time, by the opposing actions of one or more other students (Olweus 1986 and 1991). Bullying has been defined as a subcategory of interpersonal aggression characterized by intentionality, repetition, and an imbalance of power, with abuse of power being a primary distinction between bullying and other forms of attack (e.g., Smith & Morita, 1999; Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003).

Various types of bullying incidents can occur in an elementary school context, from direct and overt forms to subtle and covert behaviors. Bullying can manifest differently,

encompassing physical acts, verbal abuse, or relational aggression aimed at damaging someone's reputation or interpersonal connections. It manifests itself in various forms of physical, speaking, and psychological aggression (Farrington, 1993), direct or indirect (Rigby, 2003), and overt or covert (Cross et al., 2009; Hemphill et al., 2012).

Researchers have found that bullying can manifest in various ways and forms, such as hitting, direct and indirect aggression, verbal abuse, gestures, threats, and destruction of property (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Furthermore, bullying can occur orally, involving threatening, taunting, teasing, name-calling, or through physical contact, such as hitting, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining others (Olweus, 1993).

Various ways and forms of bullying behavior can have serious repercussions and consequences for victims. They started from psychological issues such as feelings of depression, trauma, and feelings of helplessness, as well as physical health problems and social isolation (Ardi, 2012). Several studies have also shown that victims of bullying can experience long-term effects such as low self-esteem and disruption in social relationships (Smith et al., 2002).

In the elementary school environment, children who experience or witness acts of bullying must take action immediately. The teacher must be a trusted figure to whom children can complain and report the incident. Apart from teachers, parents and friends should also be a place where children feel comfortable sharing their experiences. With support and a good communication platform, it is hoped that victims of bullying can feel supported and avoid the negative impacts that may arise from this experience.

Extensive research over the past five decades has yielded a significant understanding of the factors contributing to bullying behavior. Notably, in recent years, there has been a concerning increase in bullying, particularly among elementary school students. Hence, this study aims to gather comprehensive information regarding bullying among elementary school students and its repercussions on their daily behavior.

Method

This is descriptive quantitative research. The data were collected from 60 students in grades 4, 5, and 6 in SDN 2 Jetak, Pacitan, East Java. Consists of 18 students of grade 4, 25 students of grade 5, and 17 students of grade 6. The research was conducted in June 2023. The chosen method for data collection was through printed questionnaires, which were considered suitable for the target participants, elementary school children. This decision was made because most of the students did not have access to telecommunications equipment and might have difficulty expressing their opinions or arguments effectively. The questionnaire consisted of 10 close-ended questions focusing on various forms of bullying that elementary school children might have encountered, the potential impacts of bullying, and strategies that could employ when facing or witnessing such acts of bullying. Once the questionnaires were collected, the data underwent analysis using the following procedures: calculating the frequency of different forms of bullying, assessing the effects, and identifying the strategies students employed to deal with bullying situations.

Findings and Discussions

The Forms of Bullying Experienced by Elementary School Children

The information regarding the various forms of bullying encountered by elementary school children is derived from the data collected through the administration of printed questionnaires. The categorized data in the table offers a comprehensive overview of the specific types of bullying incidents these students have experienced.

Table 1. The Forms of Bullying Experienced by Elementary School Children

| Form of Bullying | Students |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Social Bullying | |
| Ignored without reason | 23 |
| Humiliated | 22 |
| Rejected when trying to join in play | 13 |
| Excluded | 13 |
| Shunned/Disliked | 28 |
| Verbal Bullying | |
| Mocked for appearance | 24 |
| Called inappropriate names | 31 |
| Threatened | 22 |
| Slandered | 18 |
| Gossiped about | 17 |
| Physical Bullying | |
| Hit/kicked/pinched | 32 |
| Tripped/pushed | 10 |
| Spit on | 10 |
| Asked for snacks/treats | 25 |
| Asked for money | 10 |

In the diagram, it is evident that elementary school children encounter various forms of bullying, which can be categorized as social bullying, verbal bullying, and physical bullying. Social bullying comprises being ignored, humiliated, rejected from participating in games, ostracized, and alienated. Verbal bullying includes instances of being ridiculed for physical attributes, being called inappropriate names, facing threats, being subjected to slander, and becoming the subject of gossip. Similarly, physical bullying entails experiencing acts like being punched, kicked, pinched, tackled, pushed, spat on, and coerced into sharing snacks or money.

Among the participants, 23 reported instances where they were deliberately ignored or excluded by their peers without any apparent reason, causing them to feel marginalized and unacknowledged. Additionally, 22 respondents encountered situations where they were embarrassed or ridiculed by their peers, leading to feelings of humiliation and shame. Furthermore, 13 respondents experienced rejection when attempting to join games or activities with their friends, leaving them feeling unwelcome and lonely. Another group of 13 respondents felt socially isolated and avoided by their peer groups. For 28 respondents, the experience of being shunned or despised by their peers resulted in hurt feelings and loneliness.

Additionally, 24 respondents had encountered teasing or mocking about their physical appearance, such as height, weight, or facial features. Meanwhile, 31 respondents felt offended due to being called inappropriate or demeaning names by others. Furthermore, 22 respondents faced physical or verbal threats, causing them to feel fearful and unsafe. Another group of 18 respondents experienced false accusations and rumors aimed at damaging their reputation. Moreover, 17 respondents became the subject of unpleasant gossip among their peers. The creation and transmission of stories and talk may be more pernicious and damaging than physical violence. (Kieffer, 2013)

The data also revealed that 32 respondents had experienced physical violence, such as being hit, kicked, or pinched by their peers. Additionally, ten respondents encountered deliberate tripping or pushing, possibly while walking or running. Furthermore, ten respondents reported being spat on by their peers, causing distressing situations. Another group of 25

respondents faced instances where they were forced or asked to share snacks with their peers. Lastly, ten respondents experienced pressure to give money to their peers, potentially under threat or coercion.

The Effect of Bullying Felt by Elementary School

The distribution of printed questionnaires assists in identifying the feelings and experiences of elementary school students who have encountered or become victims of bullying. Analyzing the responses allows a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological repercussions of bullying within the school setting.

Table 2. The Effect of Bullying Felt by Elementary School

| Effect of Bullying | Students |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Loss of appetite | 1 |
| Insomnia/Difficulty sleeping | 1 |
| Fearful and reluctant to go to school | 4 |
| Prefers to be alone | 6 |
| Lack of self-confidence | 9 |
| Difficulty concentrating | 5 |
| Trauma | 7 |
| Depression | 1 |
| No response | 2 |

Bullying affects many children and lays the groundwork for long-term risk for psychological, physical, and psychosomatic outcomes (Vanderbilt, D., & Augustyn, M., 2010). The consequences of school bullying, both in the short and long term, can be highly detrimental and distressing for numerous vulnerable individuals. These effects may manifest as intense anxiety, a tendency to isolate oneself from social interactions, and heightened challenges in expressing thoughts verbally (Hugh-Jones, S., & Smith, P. K., 1999).

The findings reveal that elementary school children who are victims of bullying experience a range of emotional and psychological effects. These effects include loss of appetite, sleep difficulties, fear, reluctance to attend school, social withdrawal, diminished self-confidence, difficulty concentrating, trauma, and in some cases, depression. One respondent reported experiencing a loss of appetite due to bullying, illustrating how the stress and pressure from bullying can impact a person's eating habits.

Similarly, another respondent faced sleep difficulties due to bullying, with anxiety and fear disrupting their sleep patterns, leading to sleep problems or insomnia. Four respondents expressed fear and aversion towards going to school due to their bullying experiences, indicating that recurring bullying can create discomfort and hinder their ability to cope with school situations.

Six respondents tended to isolate themselves in response to bullying. They may feel safer and more comfortable when alone, avoiding potential triggers of bullying from others. Additionally, nine respondents suffered from a decline in self-confidence due to bullying. The effect of each form of bullying causes children to feel inferior, lack self-confidence, children become moody, and prefer to be alone (Jelita et al., 2021)

Experiencing humiliation, ridicule, or harassment can severely damage one's self-esteem. Furthermore, five respondents struggled to focus as a consequence of bullying, with feelings of anxiety and stress interfering with their concentration and academic performance.

School problems such as academic failure, social problems, and lack of friends are red flags (Vanderbilt, D., & Augustyn, M., 2010)

The data also showed that seven respondents experienced trauma from prolonged and repetitive bullying, causing lasting emotional effects on the victims. Moreover, one respondent reported experiencing depression due to persistent feelings of isolation, loneliness, and constant belittlement. Interestingly, two respondents did not respond regarding the impact of bullying on them. It is possible that they find it difficult to articulate their feelings or may be unwilling to discuss the matter.

These findings underscore the importance of raising awareness and implementing effective measures to combat bullying, as its consequences can profoundly damage the mental and emotional well-being of the victims. Providing support, understanding, and appropriate interventions is crucial to assisting bullying victims.

The Action Taken by Elementary School Children

The last thing asked in the printed questionnaire was how elementary school children who had experienced bullying or had just witnessed it acted on what happened. This was answered as stated in the table.

Table 3. The Action Taken by Elementary School Children

| Action Taken | Students |
|---|----------|
| Tells (Teacher, Parents, Believed Person) | |
| Yes | 29 |
| No | 30 |
| No Answer | 1 |
| Report (Teacher, Parents) | |
| Yes | 46 |
| No | 13 |
| No Answer | 1 |

Bullying has been assessed via parent, teacher, and peer reports, as well as direct observations. However, most rely on self-report assessments, despite concerns about biases related to social desirability, self-presentation, and fear of retaliation (Pellegrini, 2001). Parents often have limited knowledge of what happens at school, and teachers may not witness bullying (Cornell & Brockenbrough, 2004)

Twenty-nine children shared or witnessed bullying experiences with teachers, parents, friends, or trusted people. On the other hand, 30 children did not disclose the incident. Of the 46 children, they actively reported cases of bullying to their teachers or parents. However, 13 children chose not to report the incident.

The data shows that many children dare to talk about bullying they have encountered or witnessed. They feel comfortable confiding in adults or trusted peers. However, it is essential to note that some children still choose not to report bullying incidents, perhaps for various reasons such as fear, embarrassment, or not being sure whether their report will be taken seriously.

Conclusion

Elementary school is a critical phase in a child's development, where academic achievement and social interactions are shaped in a nurturing environment. Understanding student behavior, especially bullying-related, is crucial in creating a safe and supportive

atmosphere. Bullying remains a widespread problem, occurring both inside and outside of school hours, impacting students' psychological well-being. This study, conducted on 60 elementary school students, highlighted the various forms of bullying they faced, including social, verbal, and physical aspects. The effects of bullying vary, from difficulty sleeping to depression, which can lead to feelings of fear and reluctance to go to school. While some students have bravely reported bullying incidents, others have not shared their experiences. Raising awareness and fostering an environment where students feel empowered to share their experiences is essential to combat bullying effectively. The data underscores the importance of implementing measures to address bullying and prioritizing the well-being of primary school children.

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