



Exploration of child bullying cases and school-based anti-bullying interventions and community empowerment in Semarang City

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ABSTRACT

Background: Education plays a crucial role in shaping the success of a nation, both in academic aspects and character development. This research explores the factors contributing to bullying, encompassing individual, family, school, and social environment aspects. **Methods:** Using a qualitative approach through literature review, data were collected from various sources related to bullying in Indonesia, such as scientific journals, books, and official documents. The sample was purposively selected to represent the bullying conditions in Indonesia. Content analysis was used to identify patterns and trends. **Findings:** The findings indicate a weak correlation between age and bullying potential, highlighting the importance of a holistic approach involving the entire school community. Collaborative-based intervention methods were identified as effective intervention strategies. This study also provides insights into verbal bullying and body shaming. **Conclusion:** the research lies in its in-depth exploration of the bullying phenomenon among Indonesian teenagers, particularly at the junior and senior high school levels, considering the unique cultural and social context. **Novelty/Originality of this Study:** this research includes elementary school levels, offering a comprehensive analysis of the influence of social media and family dynamics, and providing unique insights for the development of policies and intervention programs in Indonesia.

KEYWORDS: children; bullying; schools; community empowerment.

1. Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the success of a nation. It is the initial stage in transforming the mindset and behaviors of individuals and groups towards maturity in self-values. Education encompasses not only academic aspects but also involves physical and mental learning. Thus, education is not just about imparting knowledge but also about shaping strong character and personality (Lord, 2022). Learners also receive non-academic education, such as religious teachings according to their beliefs, aimed at developing creativity, independence, democratic attitudes, experience, skills, and responsibility. Education plays a very important role in human life because through education, human development can move towards a more modern and creative direction (Purnaningtias et al., 2020). Moreover, education occurs not only in formal institutions but also in non-formal organizations. The primary goal of education is to enhance human intelligence and

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encourage them to become better individuals. In other words, intellectually capable individuals have greater potential to develop themselves positively compared to those who are less intelligent (Adam, 2020). Education has two objectives: to help humans become innovative and to encourage them to become better. This means advancing human intelligence is easier than improving their goodness. Therefore, moral issues are fundamental in human life, always relevant everywhere, especially among children as the nation's future generation (Heragu et al., 2019).

Moving forward, it is crucial for children to receive quality education and support their growth to become suitable successors for Indonesia. Therefore, protecting children's rights from any harmful actions that may harm them physically or mentally is urgent for every Indonesian citizen. In the context of child protection, Article 1 paragraph 2 of Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection explains that Child Protection involves all activities to ensure and protect children and their rights so that they can live, grow, develop, and participate optimally in accordance with human dignity, and receive protection from violence and discrimination.

One recent phenomenon affecting the education sector is bullying or harassment. This violence occurs in various places, ranging from schools, playgrounds, homes, streets, to entertainment venues, whether perpetrated by teachers towards students or among students themselves (Canales, 2023). Such violence can be physical and psychological, causing disturbances in children. However, the impacts on children who are victims of bullying are sometimes unnoticed, and are likely to be long-lasting until they reach adulthood (Meng et al., 2023). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of what bullying is and how it occurs is needed by various parties to prevent unwanted consequences.

Bullying behavior is an aggressive act aimed at demeaning, intimidating, and causing suffering, both physically and mentally, to victims perceived as weaker by the perpetrators who feel empowered. Bullying behavior can take the form of verbal bullying such as taunts, insults, slander, harsh criticism, and even sexual harassment. Nonverbal bullying includes sighing, mocking laughter, demeaning body language, neglect, ostracism, physical violence, and property damage (Kellij et al., 2022). Moreover, oppression can also manifest as physical or relational aggression, where a child or adolescent exerts negative influence over other students, educators, school administrators, and parents (Nedumpully et al., 2024).

Perpetrators of bullying typically emerge due to pressures they experience, often channeling their negative emotions towards individuals they perceive as weaker or vulnerable. Characteristics of bullies include feeling empowered over others, experiencing emotional instability such as depression, stress, or lack of affection, desiring popularity among peers, harboring resentment, or fearing oppression from others. Consequently, bullies often target weaker peers for ridicule (Nabila et al., 2022).

On the other hand, bullying victims typically exhibit characteristics such as differing perceptions or views from their surroundings, generally different physical appearances, being perceived as weak or powerless, thus unable to defend themselves. They tend to be shy, introverted, with low self-confidence, and may be unpopular or have few to no friends (Febriana and Hariyadi, 2023). When bullying occurs in school environments, guidance from teachers through education and counseling is essential to reduce bullying incidents (Canales, 2023). Teachers play a crucial role in bullying prevention at schools by deeply understanding students' psychological aspects, including their self-care abilities, environmental awareness, information retention, critical thinking, adherence to social norms, development of positive attitudes, pursuit of constructive interests, and fostering creative imagination (Veenstra et al., 2014). With this profound understanding, teachers can help create a safe and conducive school environment for all students, facilitating positive peer relationships (O'Brien et al., 2023).

Previous research has investigated cases of bullying in schools. A study by Saptono (2022) identified five main causes of bullying in elementary schools. Firstly, bullying is perpetrated by children who feel more powerful at school. Secondly, bullying occurs because victims are perceived as very weak, making them potential targets for bullying by other children. Thirdly, bullying arises from feelings of inferiority in children who become

bullying victims. Fourthly, bullying stems from physical differences. Lastly, bullying occurs due to disadvantaged economic conditions of the victims. Findings from this research confirm that bullying in elementary schools is triggered by power imbalances, where perpetrators exert dominance over less capable victims. The study recommends that schools, teachers, parents, and the community pay attention to inappropriate and unacceptable behaviors among children, reminding them of school-level anti-bullying rules and guidelines. Children need assistance in understanding the reasons behind bullying behavior (such as home issues, lack of attention, previous bullying experiences, etc.). Showing empathy and care by sharing the feelings of bullied children is crucial. Recognizing and acknowledging any positive behavioral changes, including addressing mistakes, is important. Implementing specific consequences to help children learn from bullying situations should be respectful, logical, and acceptable to teach children to behave better.

Other findings from Källmén and Hallgren (2021) indicate that mental health issues have increased among Swedish adolescents between 2014 and 2020, while the prevalence of bullying in schools has remained stable, except for a 2.5% increase among female students in grade 11. This finding aligns with previous research showing that mental health problems are more common among older female adolescents. The study also reveals that boys who have experienced bullying at school report a four-fold higher prevalence of mental health problems compared to boys who have not been bullied. Meanwhile, girls who are bullied have a 2.5 times higher prevalence of mental health issues compared to girls who have not experienced bullying. These findings suggest that boys may be more vulnerable to the negative impacts of bullying or that boys may experience more frequent victimization, potentially leading to worse mental health problems. Social support can also play a crucial role; female adolescents tend to have stronger social networks and are more likely to share bullying experiences, which can provide protective support. Other studies also indicate that inherited traits, such as a tendency to internalize problems and low self-esteem, may be related to becoming bullying victims. Therefore, ongoing research is essential to understand gender differences in stress perception at school and how these differences affect the relationship between bullying and mental health.

Mohan and Bakar (2021) confirmed in their research that bullying is a common occurrence, especially in school environments. Bullying is characterized by a hierarchy of power where some children feel they have higher levels of authority than others, thereby oppressing them in various ways. Bullying is not a one-time occurrence; perpetrators engage in repeated acts of bullying. Bullying can take various forms, including physical aggression, verbal abuse, ostracism, or even cyberbullying. The effects of cyberbullying can be both short-term and long-term, affecting victims, perpetrators, and their peers. Victims suffer physical health disturbances; they may experience anxiety, stress, and depression, leading to anger or withdrawal. They also live in fear, diverting their attention from lessons and possibly developing hatred towards school, resulting in poor academic performance. In extreme cases, victims contemplate suicide, and some may act upon it. Bullies tend not to cease their behavior, contributing to a disruptive society as they disturb their colleagues and engage in abusive relationships. Additionally, their peers present during bullying incidents may fear being at school, feeling powerless to defend their friends from bullying.

Based on these phenomena and previous research, the aim of this study is to explore factors contributing to bullying, including individual, familial, school, and social environmental factors. This research will identify key risk factors influencing bullying behavior, such as family dynamics, peer interactions, and social media influence. Another goal of this study includes assessing the impacts of bullying on children's mental, physical, and academic health. The research will examine various short-term and long-term effects of bullying and explore how these impacts affect overall child development. This study is expected to provide significant benefits in several aspects. Academically, it aims to expand knowledge and literature on bullying in Indonesia and address existing research gaps. Thus, it will contribute significantly to academic understanding of bullying, particularly in the Indonesian context. Practically, the study is expected to offer policy recommendations applicable to governments, schools, and non-governmental organizations to reduce bullying

cases. These recommendations are anticipated to aid in developing more effective intervention programs and comprehensive policies to address bullying in Indonesian schools. Lastly, socially, the study aims to raise public awareness about the dangers of bullying and the importance of creating a safe environment for children. Therefore, this research will promote broader discussions on bullying and motivate the community to take more proactive actions against it.

While bullying research has been extensive, significant research gaps remain to be filled. First, specific risk factors contributing to bullying in Indonesia, such as the role of social media and family dynamics, have not been deeply explored in previous research. Second, research evaluating the effectiveness of bullying intervention programs in Indonesia is limited, necessitating more in-depth, long-term research to evaluate the success of these programs. Lastly, most studies have focused solely on the short-term impacts of bullying, highlighting the need for long-term research to understand the long-term consequences for bullying victims. By addressing these research gaps, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the bullying phenomenon and develop more effective intervention strategies in Indonesia.

2. Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach (Hennink et al., 2020). The data collection technique involves a literature review to assist in categorizing studies on bullying cases in schools in Indonesia. The population to be studied comprises various literature sources related to bullying in Indonesia, such as scholarly journals, books, and official documents related to education and health. Samples will be purposively selected based on relevance and representativeness in depicting the bullying conditions in Indonesia. The analysis technique to be utilized is content analysis, where data from the literature review will be deeply analyzed to identify patterns, trends, and findings relevant to the research topic (Faggiano, 2023).

This study will use a qualitative exploratory research design to investigate the nature and prevalence of child bullying cases, the effectiveness of school-based anti-bullying interventions, and the role of community empowerment in addressing bullying issues in Semarang City. The design is aimed at gathering in-depth understanding from both school settings and community perspectives to identify key challenges and possible solutions. The case study approach will be employed as it allows for a thorough examination of bullying incidents in specific school environments, while also capturing community engagement efforts. This approach will also enable researchers to gather rich, contextual data on bullying behaviors, intervention programs, and community responses.

A purposive sampling strategy will be used to select participants. The following groups will be targeted: (1) students (aged 10-18) who have either been victims, witnesses, or perpetrators of bullying, in various schools in Semarang; (2) teachers and school counselors involved in anti-bullying programs; (3) parents of students who are involved in or affected by bullying; and (4) community leaders and representatives of local organizations that participate in community empowerment programs. A total of 10-12 schools will be selected for this study, representing a mix of public and private institutions. Within each school, 4-5 students will be chosen, alongside teachers and parents.

The Data Collection Methods of this research are (1) In-depth interviews will be conducted with students, teachers, and parents. Questions will focus on experiences related to bullying, school intervention strategies, and parental involvement; (2) FGDs will be held with community members, school administrators, and representatives of local organizations involved in the anti-bullying campaign. This will allow for diverse opinions and insights into the community-based approach; (3) school policies and official documents related to the anti-bullying program will be reviewed to understand the formal mechanisms in place; and (4) observations will be conducted during school visits to record interactions between students, the atmosphere in the school, and the implementation of visible anti-bullying strategies.

Thematic analysis will be used to analyze the data collected from interviews, FGDs, and observational notes. NVivo software will be employed to code the transcripts and identify patterns or themes that emerge across different sources of data. The analysis will focus on: types and frequency of bullying reported, the effectiveness of school-based anti-bullying interventions and community involvement in addressing bullying and the perceived impact of community empowerment efforts.

Given the sensitive nature of bullying, special care will be taken to ensure ethical standards are upheld. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and anonymity will be guaranteed. For child participants, parental consent will be required. The research will also comply with local and institutional ethical guidelines.

This study will focus only on a limited number of schools in Semarang City, and the findings may not be generalizable to all schools in Indonesia. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the study means that the findings will be largely interpretive and cannot be used to infer causality. The study is expected to provide insights into the extent of bullying in Semarang schools, the effectiveness of current interventions, and the role of community-based programs. It aims to recommend improvements to anti-bullying strategies and encourage community engagement for long-term bullying prevention.

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the five articles used as data sources for this research reveals that, out of these, three articles were structured based on a survey approach. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data gathered in this study is relatively abundant and involves extensive participation (Table 1). The findings from the literature analysis involving five sources reveal various aspects of bullying among adolescents, particularly in middle school (SMP) and high school (SMA) settings.

The research indicates that the age of 13 is the most vulnerable range for both victims and perpetrators of bullying, with a majority in the 8th grade. However, there is a weak correlation between age and being a bullying victim, suggesting other factors may be more influential. Adolescents in schools also show tendencies towards smoking, vaping, and low-level alcohol misuse. Additionally, they tend to spend 1-3 hours on social media daily. Interestingly, the prevalence of cyber-bullying victimization is relatively lower compared to depression and traditional bullying victimization. This suggests that while social media serves as a potential platform for cyber-bullying, its intensity is not yet comparable to other forms of bullying.

To address bullying, a holistic approach involving the entire school community is necessary. It cannot be solved solely through individual efforts by teachers. Stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents, need a deep understanding of bullying dynamics, including its relationship with aggression and its harmful effects on students. Monthly seminars at schools can help staff better understand bullying issues. One effective approach is the 'Five-Track' method, which includes: supporting victims, coaching perpetrators, involving observers in interventions, educating teachers about the nature of bullying, and engaging parents in prevention efforts. Parental involvement has proven to enhance the effectiveness of school efforts in tackling bullying.

The study also identifies that bullying in elementary schools can stem from two main themes: intimidation and discrimination. Bullies often feel superior, while victims often feel powerless or unable to fight back. Interviews also reveal that bullies often perceive victims as less intelligent or physically attractive. Victims tend to respond silently and feel pressured during bullying incidents. Other findings indicate that most verbal bullying behaviors and body shaming fall into moderate categories, while a significant number of high school students have low self-confidence. There is a low correlation between verbal bullying, body shaming, and self-confidence, indicating that while bullying affects students' self-confidence, other factors also play a role.

Table 1. Literature review findings

| Author (Year) | Title | Method/ Research design | Findings |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------------|--|
| Limawan et al. (2016) | The association between age, gender, and bullying experience among secondary high school students in Jakarta, Indonesia | Cross-sectional | The age of 13 years old is the most common age range for both victims and perpetrators of bullying, with the majority of them in 8th grade. Additionally, there is a weak correlation between age and being a victim of bullying. |
| Juliansen et al. (2024) | Mental health issues and quality of life amongst school-based adolescents in Indonesia | Cross-sectional | Adolescents in schools tend to smoke, use vapes, and misuse alcohol in small amounts. They also tend to spend 1-3 hours on social media. However, cyber-bullying victimization has a lower prevalence, followed by depression and traditional bullying victimization. |
| Kaliampos et al. (2022) | Aggression and bullying: A literature review examining their relationship and effective anti-bullying practice in schools | Literature review | A community-wide approach involving all school stakeholders is needed to address bullying. Bullying cannot be tackled through individual teacher techniques alone. Stakeholders need to be informed about the dynamics of bullying, including its relationship with aggression and its detrimental effects on students. Monthly seminars in schools to enhance staff understanding of bullying issues are also necessary. One recommended approach is the 'Five-Track' method, which involves supporting victims, coaching perpetrators, involving observers in interventions, educating teachers about the nature of bullying, and engaging parents in prevention efforts. Involving parents can enhance school effectiveness in addressing bullying. |
| Asiyah (2020) | The bullying experience in high school students by the teacher is reviewed from psychological theory | Observation and interview | This study revealed that bullying in elementary schools can arise from several factors. Bullying behavior emerges from two main themes: intimidation and discrimination. Findings indicate that bullies often feel stronger or superior, while victims often feel powerless or unable to fight back. Interviews also showed that bullies often perceive victims as less intelligent or physically attractive. During bullying incidents, victims tend to respond silently and feel pressured. |
| Ayu et al. (2022) | Verbal bullying body shaming behavior and self-confidence among teenage students in Indonesia | Cross-sectional | A significant finding from this study is that most verbal bullying behaviors and body shaming fall into the moderate category, while a majority of high school students have low self-confidence. There is a low correlation between verbal bullying behavior, body shaming, and self-confidence. |

The occurrence of bullying behavior among adolescents is significantly influenced by peer pressure, where peers actively or passively propagate the notion that bullying is not a significant issue and is acceptable. This creates an environment where bullying is normalized, potentially escalating incidents among teenagers. According to Milenkova and Nakova (2023), adolescents seek independence from their families and begin to seek support and security from peer groups, contributing to conformity pressures and the occurrence of bullying. Four common types of oppression are generally identified (Cregan

and Kelloway, 2021). First, verbal oppression includes actions like speaking or writing derogatory words. Verbal intimidation can involve sarcasm, threats, inappropriate sexual comments, mockery, and threats that can harm the victim's well-being. Second, social oppression includes deliberate exclusion, encouraging others not to socialize with someone, spreading damaging rumors, or publicly humiliating someone's dignity. Third, physical oppression involves actions such as hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting, pushing, taking or damaging someone's belongings, and other forms of physical violence. Lastly, cyberbullying, defined legally, involves using information and communication technology to repeatedly engage in hostile actions aimed at hurting or harming others. This can include internet use, websites, and social media platforms to harass, threaten, or harm others.

In bullying activities, students play various roles, including as perpetrators, victims, bystanders, and uninvolved students (Menesini and Salmivalli, 2017). While victims are the most directly affected by bullying, in some cases, victims can also play a role as perpetrators or become targets of bullying by others. Students who were initially uninvolved in bullying at the elementary school level may later become victims of bullying at the middle or high school levels, or even become bystanders (Saptono, 2022). Interestingly, individuals initially uninvolved in elementary school bullying may later become severe bullying victims in middle school (SMP) or high school (SMA), or even observers of such bullying. Therefore, every child and adolescent directly involved (whether as a perpetrator or victim), indirectly involved, or not involved at all, has the potential to experience bullying (Ghofur et al., 2022).

One factor contributing to the increase in bullying cases among children and adolescents is the inability of most victims to report their experiences to authorities capable of stopping such behavior, such as schools and families. Typically, victims tend to keep their bullying experiences to themselves out of fear of further consequences from the perpetrators. As a result, victims' inability or fear to report their bullying experiences serves as a barrier to bullying prevention efforts. Schools and families may also lack awareness of bullying issues among students, allowing bullying behavior to persist or even intensify before being addressed by authorities.

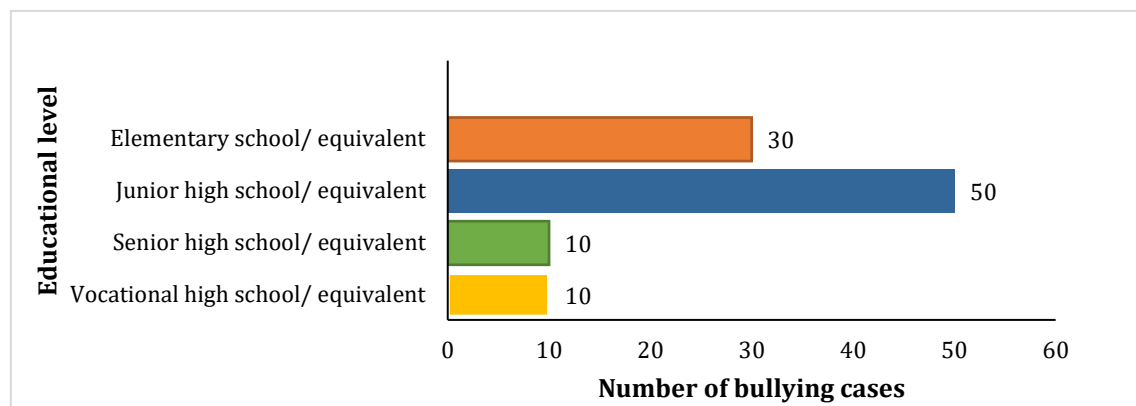


Fig. 1. Bullying cases data among school children in Indonesia (Annur, 2024)

Figure 1 depicts the findings reported by the Indonesian Teachers Union Federation (FSGI), indicating a significant increase in bullying cases in Indonesian schools in 2023. Throughout that year, there were 30 reported cases of bullying, up from 21 cases the previous year. The majority (80%) of these cases occurred in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), while the remaining 20% occurred in schools under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Further analysis reveals that bullying most commonly occurred at the junior high school level, accounting for 50% of the total cases. Meanwhile, 30% occurred at the elementary school level, 10% at the senior high school level, and 10% at the vocational high school (SMK). These bullying cases not only cause emotional and psychological trauma but have also claimed lives. Two bullying cases in 2023 resulted in the deaths of victims: one at an elementary school (SDN) in Sukabumi

Regency and one at a junior high school (MTs) in Blitar. Additionally, one bullying case at the elementary school level strongly suspected to have triggered a suicide, although Retno emphasizes that the causes of suicide are never singular.

These bullying cases were distributed across 12 provinces and encompassed 24 districts/cities in Indonesia, including the following regions: East Java (Gresik Regency, Pasuruan, Lamongan, Banyuwangi, and Blitar), West Java (Bogor Regency, Garut, Bekasi, Bandung City, Bandung Regency, Sukabumi, and Cianjur), Central Java (Temanggung Regency and Cilacap), DKI Jakarta (South Jakarta), South Kalimantan (Banjarmasin City), Central Kalimantan (Palangkaraya City), East Kalimantan (Samarinda City), Bengkulu (Bengkulu City and Rejang Lebong Regency), North Sumatra (Samosir Regency), South Sumatra (Palembang), North Maluku (South Halmahera Regency), and Southeast Sulawesi (Muna Regency). Retno notes that the distribution of bullying incidents increased from the previous year, which covered only 11 provinces with 18 districts or cities. At the beginning of 2024, bullying issues again came to public attention following a bullying case at an international high school in Serpong, South Tangerang. This case drew attention because one of the perpetrators was allegedly a celebrity's child, sparking widespread media discussion.

The occurrence of bullying is influenced by several contributing factors. Firstly, the negative influence of technology and information plays a dominant role. Children exposed to age-inappropriate or violent content in digital media tend to mimic such behavior in real life. Access to technology is just one factor among several that may affect the prevalence of bullying, and this appears to vary with age. Access to mobile phones and digital technology during adolescence is related to victim availability and the prevalence of cyberbullying itself (Englander, 2019). Secondly, socio-cultural permissiveness also contributes to violence. Environments that are permissive towards violence or have norms supporting aggressive behavior can encourage children to engage in or become victims of violence. Poor parenting styles have negative impacts on children, such as being easily offended, feeling sad, fearful, unhappy, easily influenced, vulnerable to stress, lacking clear future goals, and being unfriendly. Considering the crucial role of parenting in shaping youth aggression, parents have a responsibility to implement ideal parenting styles for their children. Consequently, children will feel more valued within the family environment, potentially reducing their aggression levels (Hidayati and Damaiyanti, 2021).

Next, family poverty becomes an economic factor that cannot be overlooked. Economic constraints often lead to excessive stress on parents, which subsequently impacts parenting patterns and increases the risk of domestic violence. Consequently, this creates children who exhibit similar, or even worse, characteristics. Childhood bullying experiences are also linked to higher social costs related to employment for males and higher healthcare service costs for females. Therefore, this underscores the importance of preventing bullying from childhood due to its long-lasting and wide-ranging effects. Hence, support for individuals still experiencing its negative impacts in the following decades is crucial (Brimblecombe et al., 2018). Finally, unfriendly living conditions or housing environments also affect children. Unsafe, overcrowded living environments lacking facilities that support child development can increase the risk of physical or psychological violence. Indirectly, these conditions imprint on children's memories and may foster unfriendly behaviors such as bullying beyond their immediate surroundings (Zakiyah et al., 2019). Overall, these factors highlight that violence against children is a multifaceted issue requiring a comprehensive approach from various parties for prevention and intervention.

3.1 In-depth anti-bullying intervention programs

As policymakers, the government has instructed the establishment of a child participation platform called the Children's Forum (Figure 2). Its aim is to involve children in the development process and absorb their aspirations and perspectives in policymaking that affects their lives (Ministerial Regulation PPPA, 2019). So far, many local governments have developed Children's Forums down to the village or neighborhood level, aiming to

ensure that every policy adopted is more effective and targeted. Through the Children's Forum, interventions for children and adolescents become more accessible, employing evidence-based early intervention models comprehensively designed to address various issues faced by children across different contexts.



Fig. 2. Agenda of the National Children's Forum Meeting 2023
(Accurate Central Java, 2023)

This intervention activity involves collaboration among the government, universities, youth, and community groups to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding. Such collaboration enables various stakeholders to share knowledge, experiences, and resources to create more effective intervention programs tailored to children's needs. Scientific evidence obtained from academic research serves as the basis for designing targeted interventions that can be measured for effectiveness. Active participation of children in this process is crucial as it gives them the opportunity to voice their own needs, perspectives, and experiences. Therefore, the interventions developed are not only based on theory and empirical data but also reflect the realities and actual needs experienced by children. This ensures that the resulting intervention programs are more relevant, inclusive, sustainable, and capable of delivering long-term positive impacts on the well-being of children and adolescents. Furthermore, the Children's Forum plays a key role as a 2P (Pioneer and Reporter), meaning that children are not only encouraged to report cases of violence against them, including bullying, but also become agents of change in addressing violence in their surroundings.

Aligned with government programs aimed at reducing bullying rates, UNICEF, an organization dedicated to the fulfillment of children's rights and protection, also participates in various campaigns (Figure 3). One effort to combat bullying in schools is the Roots Indonesia program (UNICEF, 2019). The implementation of school-based bullying prevention programs requires comprehensive and participatory strategies to ensure long-term success. First, building strong relationships with schools is a crucial step. Involvement of school principals from the beginning to the end of the intervention program is key. Additionally, enhancing teachers' capacity regarding the importance of meaningful youth participation must be an integral part of teacher training programs. Teachers appointed to support facilitators and strengthen school relationships will greatly assist in creating an environment supportive of such programs.



Fig. 3. Agenda of the National Children's Forum Meeting 2023
(UNICEF, 2019)

The selection of Change Agents among students should be based on social networking theory and peer nominations. While not commonly practiced by teachers, this method is crucial for developing student-led activities. Each class should have at least two Change Agents to ensure diversity and program effectiveness. Thirdly, improving communication skills and other soft skills for Change Agents need to be tailored to students' levels and understanding. Skills such as public speaking should be strengthened to ensure all Change Agents start from the same skill level.

Fourthly, meeting schedules should be adjusted to accommodate school and student group needs. If meetings are held outside school hours, transportation needs for students should be considered to avoid hindering their participation. Lastly, sustainability of the program after formal interventions end should be considered. Some students express sadness after programs conclude, so informal meetings or relaxed activities without formal facilitation from the start can provide long-term positive benefits. This program should be designed not only to create change during the intervention period but also to build a strong foundation for sustainability and long-term positive impact for students and their school environment.

3.2 GEBER SEPTI program innovation in Semarang City

Semarang City, as one of the Child-friendly cities in Indonesia, has shown strong commitment to creating a safe and conducive environment for children's development. One significant effort is addressing bullying cases in schools through the GEBER SEPTI program, or "Joint Movement of Schools Caring and Responding to Bullying." This program is designed to combat bullying through structured and comprehensive prevention and handling actions. This article will delve into the GEBER SEPTI program, its action models applied, and its effectiveness in creating a bullying-free school environment.

The program focuses on two main action models: prevention and handling. In the prevention model, there are two primary activities emphasized: socialization and training. First, psychoeducational socialization activities are a key component of the program. These activities aim to provide deep understanding to the entire school community, including students, teachers, and school staff, about the dangers of bullying and the importance of creating a safe and supportive school environment. Psychoeducation is delivered through various methods such as seminars, workshops, and distribution of educational materials.

This approach is expected to increase awareness and knowledge about bullying, thus preventing bullying incidents early on.

Further, there are training activities in the form of leadership training, brief counseling, motivation, and others, which constitute the second prevention activity implemented in the GEBER SEPTI program (Figure 4). This training is primarily aimed at Guidance and Counseling (BK) Teachers, who play a central role in addressing bullying issues in schools. Through this training, teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to detect, prevent, and effectively address bullying. The training includes leadership development, counseling techniques, and motivation strategies that can be applied in daily interactions with students. In addition to prevention measures, the GEBER SEPTI program also includes a handling action model focused on psychological interventions for both victims and perpetrators of bullying. There are four key activities in this model: psychological support, mediation, curation, and rehabilitation.

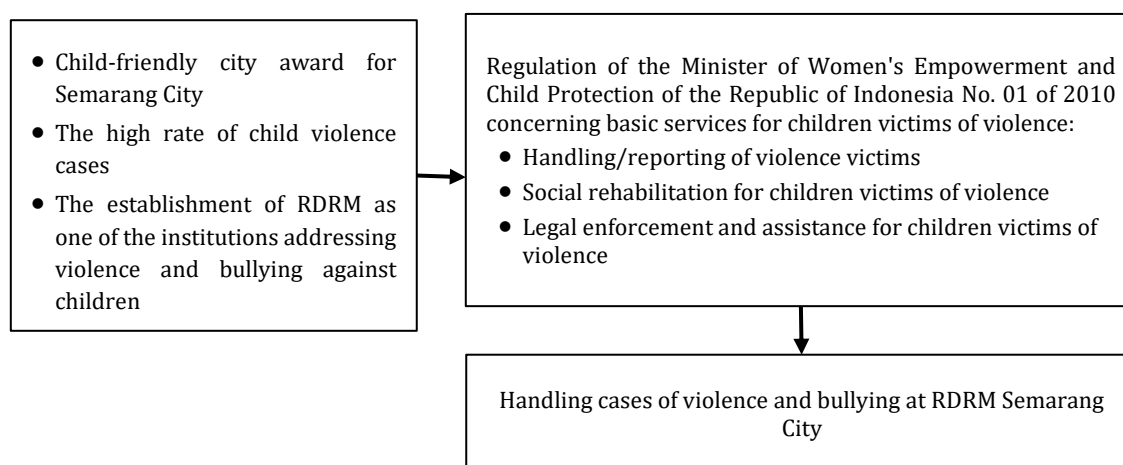


Fig. 4. Pre-innovation roadmap of GEBER SEPTI (Hidayatika, 2019)

Psychological support is the first key activity in the handling action model. This activity involves providing emotional and psychological support to both victims and perpetrators of bullying. School psychologists or trained counselors work with students involved in bullying cases to help them overcome trauma and emotional issues caused by bullying. The goal of this support is to restore the psychological well-being of students and help them reintegrate into the school environment more effectively. Next, mediation between the victim and the perpetrator of bullying is a crucial step in the handling process. This mediation involves both parties, including their families, in an effort to achieve mutual understanding and constructive solutions. Through mediation, open and honest dialogue is hoped to be established, allowing conflicts to be resolved peacefully and effectively. Mediation also aims to rebuild positive relationships between the victim and the perpetrator and create a more harmonious school environment.

Moreover, curation activities involve counseling interventions and behavior modification techniques, both for perpetrators and victims of bullying. Counseling interventions are aimed at helping students understand the root causes of bullying behavior and developing strategies to change such negative behaviors. Behavior modification techniques, such as positive reinforcement and appropriate consequences, are used to promote positive behavior changes and prevent the recurrence of bullying in the future. This curation is a crucial step to ensure that both parties receive the necessary support for sustainable change.

Rehabilitation is the final stage in the handling action model, encompassing recommendations to restore the psychology of both bullying perpetrators and victims. This rehabilitation may include long-term programs designed to help students rebuild self-confidence, improve social skills, and develop healthy coping mechanisms. Recommendations provided by counselors or psychologists may involve participation in

support groups, individual therapy, or extracurricular activities that help students develop their interests and talents.

The GEBER SEPTI program has proven to be an effective solution in addressing bullying cases in schools in Semarang City. Through a holistic approach involving the entire school community, the program has been able to create a comfortable and supportive climate for students. Psychoeducation and training provided to BK Teachers have enhanced their ability to detect and effectively address bullying. Additionally, the psychological interventions, mediation, curation, and rehabilitation applied in the handling action model have helped bullying victims and perpetrators overcome their issues and reintegrate into the school environment normally.

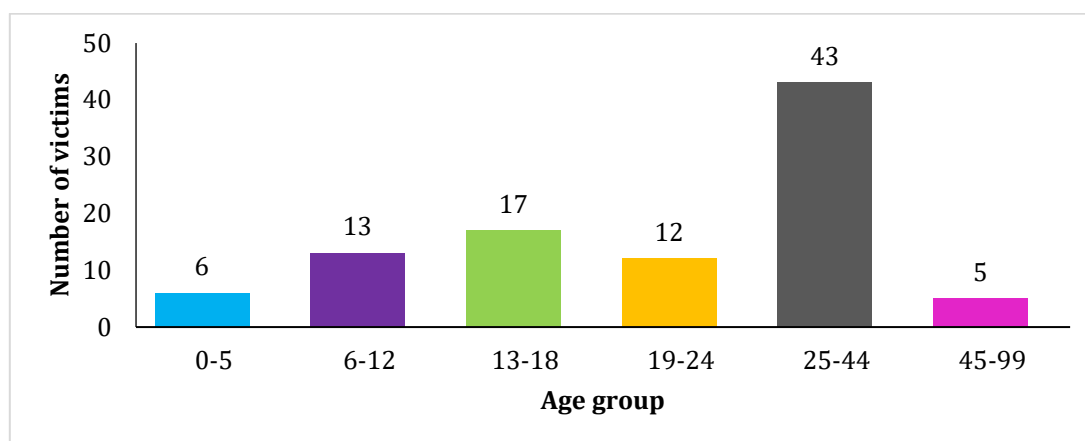


Fig. 5. Number of victims based on age groups
(ASIKK PAK – Violence data of Semarang City January 1, 2024 – May 20, 2024)

Addressing bullying cases in schools is a complex challenge that requires a comprehensive and structured approach. Figure 5 shows the number of victims by age group. Meanwhile, Figure 6 shows the number of victims based on education level. The GEBER SEPTI program in Semarang City has demonstrated that with active involvement from the entire school community, prevention and handling of bullying can be effectively achieved. The prevention action model, which includes psychoeducation and training, along with the handling action model involving psychological support, mediation, curation, and rehabilitation, has proven capable of creating a safer and more supportive school environment for students. This program can serve as an example for other cities in Indonesia striving to create bullying-free schools and support the healthy and happy development of children.

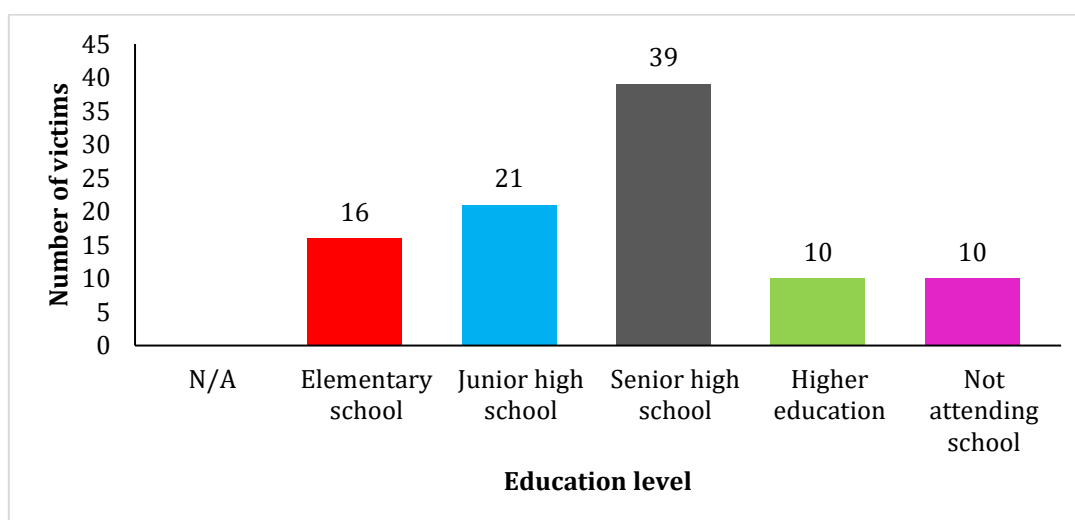


Fig. 6. Number of victims based on education level
(ASIKK PAK – Violence data of Semarang City January 1, 2024 – May 20, 2024)

In addition to the GEBER SEPTI innovation, the Semarang City Government's efforts to enhance awareness about bullying prevention include programs initiated by government agencies such as the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of Semarang City. These programs mandate all sub-districts to conduct educational and awareness activities related to bullying, targeting both parents and children. Local cadres are involved in disseminating this information during community events. The Semarang City Health Office also runs a youth integrated health post (*posyandu remaja*), which includes counseling activities specifically targeting adolescents aged 10 to 19 years old (Figure 7).



Fig. 7 (a) Adolescent counseling in schools (Documentation from Lamper Tengah Community Health Center); (b) Adolescent education with the theme of bullying in schools; (c) Adolescent education at adolescent integrated health service post with the theme of 'bullying' (Documentation from Lamper Tengah Health Center); (d) Child bullying awareness training for community leaders (Kader, RT RW) (Documentation from Peterongan Sub-district).

4. Conclusions

Bullying among school-age children in Indonesia has become an increasingly complex issue that demands a broader and more comprehensive approach. Based on data analysis and research, bullying in children is not solely caused by internal factors such as improper parenting or family poverty, but also by external factors like negative influences from technology and information, permissive socio-cultural environments, and unfriendly housing conditions. In recent years, bullying cases in Indonesia have significantly increased, with 30 reported cases in 2023, up from 21 cases the previous year. This data indicates that bullying occurs not only in middle schools but also in elementary and high schools. Furthermore, these cases of bullying not only cause emotional and psychological trauma but have also claimed lives.

The factors influencing bullying among children are highly complex and involve various aspects, including negative influences from technology and information, permissive socio-cultural environments, and unfriendly housing conditions. Therefore, preventing and addressing bullying among children requires a broader and more comprehensive approach

involving various stakeholders, including the government, schools, families, and the community.

The research recommends enhancing collaboration between the government, schools, and the community to prevent and address bullying. The government should continue supporting programs that actively involve children, such as Children's Forums, aimed at engaging children in development processes and policymaking affecting their lives. Additionally, deep interventions against bullying programs are essential, including training for parents and teachers, as well as public awareness campaigns about the importance of child protection. Responsible use of information technology and strengthening socio-cultural values that support a safe and child-friendly environment should also be prioritized.

However, this research has several limitations. Firstly, the data used may not encompass all bullying cases due to underreporting by victims. Secondly, the research primarily emphasizes external factors, potentially overlooking significant contributions from internal factors towards bullying. Thirdly, the study has not fully explored regional differences in bullying prevalence and types, which could provide deeper insights into local contexts influencing bullying. Lastly, the research relies on reports from various sources that may have biases or inaccuracies in reporting bullying cases.

Overall, bullying among school-age children in Indonesia is a complex issue requiring a broader and more comprehensive approach. Governments, schools, families, and communities must collaborate to prevent and address bullying among children and provide support for individuals still affected by its negative impacts in the decades to come. With a comprehensive and data-driven approach, children can grow up safer and more balanced, with better opportunities to develop their potential.

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Author Contribution

LBM conceived the study, conducted all research activities, analyzed the data, wrote the manuscript, and is responsible for the final content. The author approves the final version and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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