
THE BULLYING PHENOMENON AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW FROM A DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Bullying in elementary schools is a critical issue within the context of global education, as it directly impacts children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. This study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of Scopus-indexed scientific publications from 2014 to 2024 to identify developmental factors associated with bullying in children aged 6–12, the most frequently reported forms of bullying, the resulting psychological impacts, and intervention approaches deemed effective. The review process adhered to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol, utilizing data retrieval via Scopus with keyword combinations related to bullying, elementary school, developmental psychology, and peer relations. Out of 31,494 articles identified in the initial phase, only 32 satisfied all inclusion criteria. The main findings indicate that emotional regulation, empathy, peer group dynamics, and the quality of the school climate are the developmental dimensions most influential in the emergence of bullying behavior. Bullying in elementary schools manifests in various forms, involving physical, verbal, and social aggression, as well as cyberbullying and emotional bullying aimed at harming or dominating other students. The effects of bullying are evident in decreased self-esteem, anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and disrupted social identity formation. This study underscores the necessity of development-based interventions, such as Social Emotional Learning, strengthening the role of teachers, and implementing school-based prevention programs. Furthermore, the findings reveal that physical, verbal, social, and emotional bullying are the most prevalent forms among elementary school children, whereas cyberbullying is less prevalent due to the lower usage of digital devices among this age group. The authors provide theoretical foundations and practical implications for strengthening anti-bullying policies in elementary schools, including Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Bullying, Primary School, Developmental Psychology.

ABSTRAK

Bullying pada tingkat sekolah dasar merupakan persoalan penting dalam konteks pendidikan global karena berpengaruh langsung terhadap perkembangan sosial, emosional, dan kognitif anak. Studi ini menyusun *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) terhadap publikasi ilmiah terindeks Scopus selama periode 2014–2024 untuk mengidentifikasi faktor perkembangan yang berkaitan dengan *bullying* pada anak usia 6–12 tahun, bentuk *bullying* yang paling banyak dilaporkan, dampak psikologis yang ditimbulkan, serta pendekatan intervensi yang dianggap efektif. Proses penelaahan mengikuti protokol PRISMA (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses*), dengan pencarian data melalui Scopus menggunakan kombinasi kata kunci yang terkait dengan *bullying*, sekolah dasar, psikologi perkembangan,

dan relasi sebaya. Dari 31.494 artikel yang ditemukan pada tahap awal, hanya 32 yang memenuhi seluruh kriteria. Temuan utama memperlihatkan bahwa regulasi emosi, empati, dinamika kelompok teman sebaya, dan kualitas iklim sekolah merupakan dimensi perkembangan yang paling berpengaruh terhadap munculnya perilaku *bullying*. *Bullying* yang terjadi di sekolah dasar terdapat berbagai macam perilaku yang melibatkan agresi fisik, verbal, sosial, *cyberbullying*, *bullying* emosional yang bertujuan untuk menyakiti atau mendominasi siswa lain. Efek *bullying* terlihat pada penurunan harga diri, kecemasan, depresi, menarik diri dari pergaulan, serta terganggunya pembentukan identitas sosial. Kajian ini menegaskan perlunya intervensi berbasis perkembangan, seperti *Social Emotional Learning*, penguatan peran guru, dan penerapan program pencegahan berbasis sekolah. Temuan tersebut menyatakan bahwa *bullying* yang paling sering terjadi pada anak sekolah dasar adalah *bullying* fisik, verbal, sosial, emosional. Sementara *cyberbullying* lebih minim karena anak tingkat sekolah dasar masih jarang menggunakan perangkat digital. Penulis menawarkan landasan teoritis dan implikasi praktis dalam penguatan kebijakan anti-*bullying* di sekolah dasar, termasuk lembaga pendidikan Islam.

Kata Kunci: Bullying, Sekolah Dasar, Psikologi Perkembangan.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying within the elementary school setting has increasingly become a matter of serious concern in educational research and developmental psychology. Various international studies indicate that acts of aggression, characterized by repetition and power imbalance, significantly impact children's emotional, social, and academic well-being, both in the short and long term.¹ The age range of 6–12 years is a critical phase for the development of emotional regulation, social skills, and self-identity formation; bullying can hinder the achievement of these developmental tasks.² Its impact is not limited to mental health alone but also affects academic performance and the quality of children's social relationships.³

From an elementary education perspective, this period represents the initial stage of character building and the internalization of social values. Children begin to shift from egocentric thinking patterns toward the ability to understand others' perspectives. Simultaneously, the capacity for empathy, communication, emotional regulation, and social adjustment is developing rapidly. When bullying occurs during this period, children's social-

¹ Lopes da Silva, R, and V.L.T.D. Souza. 2023. "School Memories about Homophobic Bullying: A Study Based on Cultural-Historical Psychology." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20(19). doi:10.3390/ijerph20196810.

² Bouman, T, M van der Meulen, F A Goossens, T Olthof, M M Vermande, and E A Aleva. 2013. "Corrigendum to 'Peer and Self-Reports of Victimization and Bullying: Their Differential Association with Internalizing Problems and Social Adjustment' [*Journal of School Psychology* 50, (2012) 759-774]." *Journal of School Psychology* 51(3): 435. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2013.04.001.

³ Elias, M J, and J E Zins. 2013. "Bullying, Other Forms of Peer Harassment, and Victimization in the Schools: Issues for School Psychology Research and Practice." In *Bullying, Peer Harassment, and Victimization in the Schools: The Next Generation of Prevention*, Taylor and Francis, 1–5. doi:10.1300/J008v19n02_01.

emotional development can suffer serious impediments, impacting their ability to build interpersonal relationships at subsequent educational levels.⁴

The patterns also differ compared to adolescent students. Children in lower grades more frequently exhibit physical aggression, whereas in upper grades, forms of relational or verbal aggression become more dominant.⁵ On the other hand, immature social skills increase children's vulnerability to involvement in imbalanced group dynamics, whether as perpetrators who dominate or as victims who are easily targeted.⁶

Globally, data from UNICEF and WHO indicate that one-third of school-age children have experienced bullying.⁷ In Indonesia, findings from numerous studies also confirm the high prevalence of bullying in elementary schools, encompassing physical, verbal, and relational forms. Family conditions, school atmosphere, the quality of teacher-student interactions, and children's ability to manage emotions are interacting factors that determine the emergence of bullying behavior.⁸

Although there is considerable research regarding bullying, studies specifically highlighting this phenomenon through the perspective of developmental psychology at the elementary school level remain limited.⁹ Furthermore, previous literature reviews have not extensively presented a comprehensive thematic synthesis regarding how developmental factors, peer group dynamics, and school climate work simultaneously to influence bullying behavior. This indicates the need for a systematic review using the SLR approach.¹⁰

⁴ Duenas-Casado, C, D Falla, R Ortega-Ruiz, and E M Romera. 2025. "Correction to: Moral Disengagement in Primary School Children Involved in Cyberbullying, Bullying, and Cybergossip (Social Psychology of Education, (2025), 28, 1, (85), 10.1007/S11218-025-10042-8)." *Social Psychology of Education* 28(1). doi:10.1007/s11218-025-10066-0.

⁵ Burke, J. 2022. "Positive Psychology and School Bullying." In *Applied Positive School Psychology*, Taylor and Francis, 173–79. doi:10.4324/9781003228158-22.

⁶ Jurado, J Q, N M Vásquez, B Caicedo-Velasquez, N C Zuluaga, and D L Espelage. 2021. "Correction to: Association Between School Bullying, Suicidal Ideation, and Eating Disorders Among School-Aged Children from Antioquia, Colombia (Trends in Psychology, (2021), 10.1007/S43076-021-00101-2)." *Trends in Psychology* 29(4): 766. doi:10.1007/s43076-021-00103-0.

⁷ Reid, P, J Mosen, and I Rivers. 2004. "Psychology's Contribution to Understanding and Managing Bullying within Schools." *International Journal of Phytoremediation* 20(3): 241–58. doi:10.1080/0266736042000251817.

⁸ Sullivan, R B, and G Stoner. 2012. "Developmental and Gender Differences in Elementary School Children's Recognition of Bullying." *Pastoral Care in Education* 30(2): 113–25. doi:10.1080/02643944.2012.679952.

⁹ Swearer, S M, and P T Cary. 2014. "Perceptions and Attitudes toward Bullying in Middle School Youth: A Developmental Examination across the Bully/Victim Continuum." In *Bullying, Victimization, and Peer Harassment: A Handbook of Prevention and Intervention*, Taylor and Francis Inc., 67–83. <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85136898382&partnerID=40&md5=4527b5debd66b38e6162cf73d4c8285>

¹⁰ Palmer, S B, and N Abbott. 2018. "Bystander Responses to Bias-Based Bullying in Schools: A Developmental Intergroup Approach." *Child Development Perspectives* 12(1): 39–44. doi:10.1111/cdep.12253.

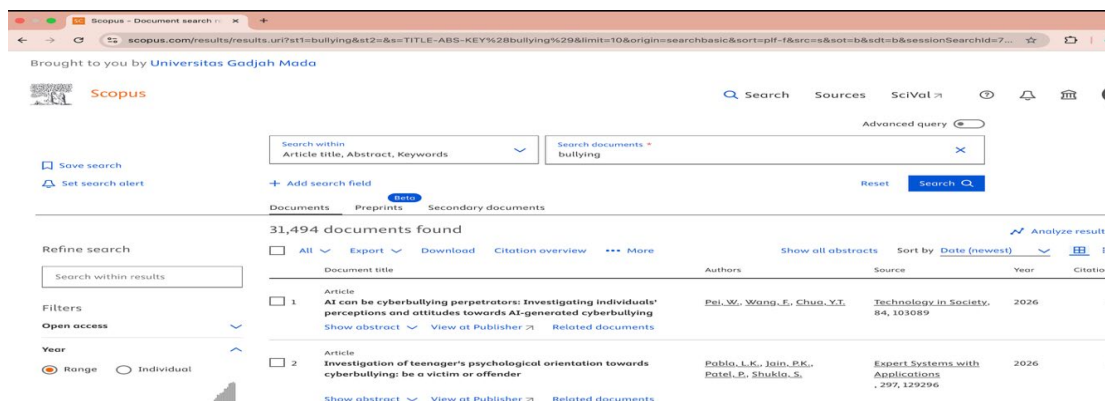
This study aims to fill this gap by conducting a critical review of Scopus-indexed articles to generate an in-depth overview of child developmental factors related to bullying, the dominant variations of bullying forms, the resulting psychological and social impacts, and interventions proven to be effective. Consequently, this study not only enriches the developmental psychology literature but also provides practical recommendations for elementary schools, including Islamic schools, in formulating comprehensive prevention strategies.

METODE PENELITIAN

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design, adhering to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines . This approach was selected due to its capacity to identify, evaluate, and synthesize empirical findings in a structured, transparent, and replicable manner. The review specifically focuses on examining bullying research among elementary school students through the lens of developmental psychology, utilizing Scopus-indexed literature published between 2014-2024. The Article Selection Process begins with the article selection stage, which includes:

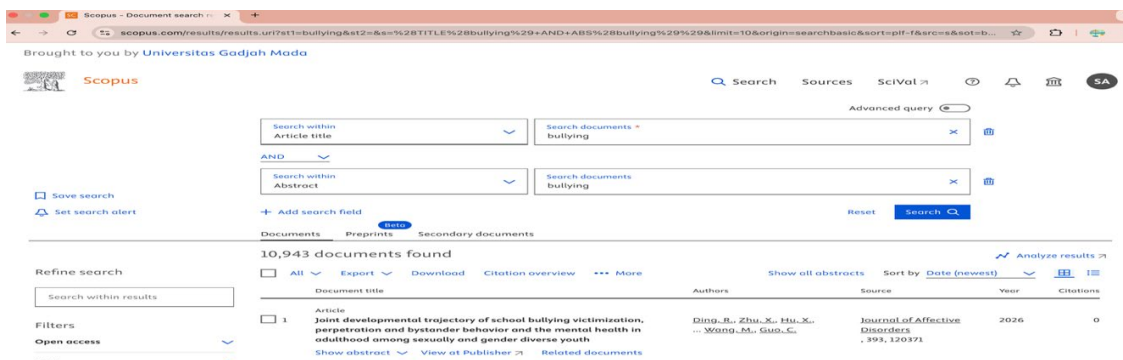
1. Identification:

A total of 31,494 articles were obtained from the Scopus database.



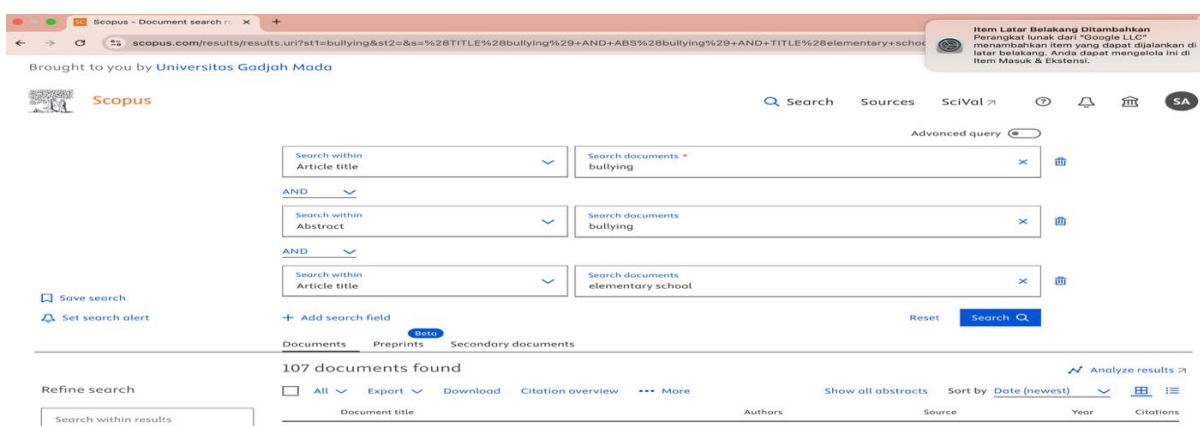
2. Screening of titles and abstracts:

A total of 10,943 articles with titles and abstracts relevant to bullying did not focus on primary school levels or were not related to developmental psychology.



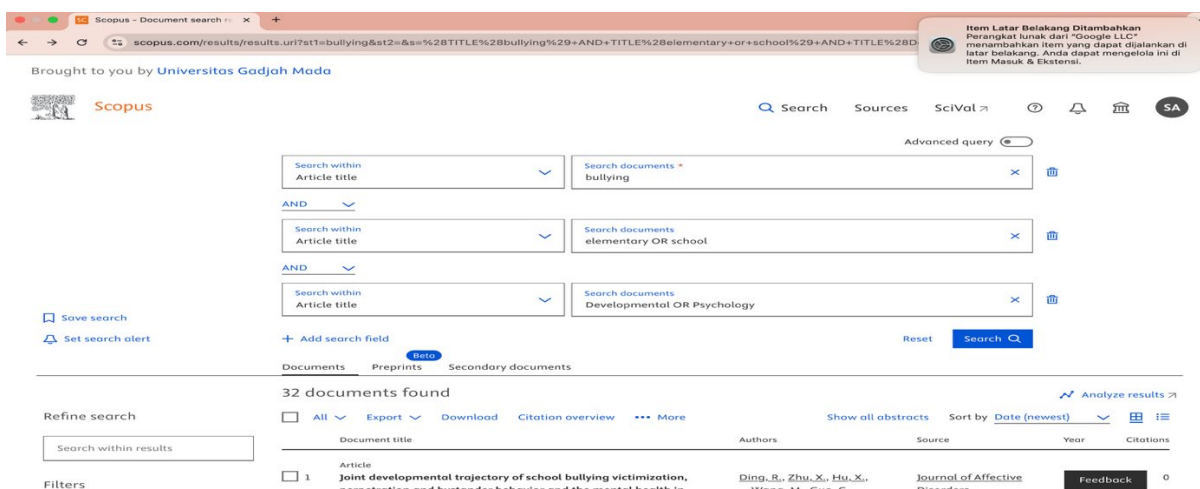
3. Feasibility assessment (full text):

A total of 107 articles relevant to bullying cases and the primary school research population.



4. Inclusion:

A total of 32 articles met all criteria and were included in an in-depth analysis corresponding to cases of bullying involving primary school students from a psychological development perspective.



RESEARCH RESULTS

This section presents the primary findings from the 32 articles indexed in Scopus that satisfied the inclusion criteria. The analysis is organized into three main dimensions: (1) general characteristics of the studies, (2) thematic synthesis across studies, and (3) conceptual integration based on a developmental psychology framework. The 32 selected articles originated from various countries, including Finland, South Korea, Turkey, Spain, the Netherlands, the United States, Australia, Indonesia, and China. This geographic diversity illustrates the varied social and cultural contexts, as well as educational systems, that influence the phenomenon of bullying among elementary school students.¹¹

The majority of the research employed a quantitative approach (61%), followed by mixed methods (22%), and a qualitative approach (17%). Participants in these studies varied significantly, ranging from approximately 120 respondents to over 7,000 students, demonstrating a strong level of representation in understanding the dynamics of bullying in primary education. Thematically, the research focus encompassed various developmental and environmental aspects influencing children's involvement in bullying, such as emotional regulation, aggressive tendencies, peer relationships, empathy, school climate, the role of teachers, gender differences in aggression, and psychological impacts—both short-term and long-term.¹²

Regarding the variables frequently encountered in research on bullying among elementary school students, several key factors were consistently examined. These primary variables include: Emotional Regulation: The student's ability to manage and control their emotions. For instance, children who struggle to regulate their emotions are more prone to involvement in bullying.¹³ Empathy: The ability to sense and understand the feelings of others. Children with high levels of empathy typically exhibit lower involvement in bullying. Prosocial Behavior: Positive attitudes such as helping friends, sharing, and cooperating. Children who frequently demonstrate prosocial behavior are less likely to become either victims or perpetrators of bullying. Peer Group Dominance: Children who seek to be leaders or dominant

¹¹ Richards, A, I Rivers, and J Akhurst. 2008. "A Positive Psychology Approach to Tackling Bullying in Secondary Schools: A Comparative Evaluation." *Educational and Child Psychology* 25(2): 72–81. <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-77950601171&partnerID=40&md5=fd2407e3bebb6650ea3d398f36e3d725>.

¹² Kolbert, J B, and L M Crothers. 2003. "Bullying and Evolutionary Psychology: The Dominance Hierarchy among Students and Implications for School Personnel." *Journal of School Violence* 2(3): 73–91. doi:10.1300/J202v02n03_05.

¹³ Hui, E K P, S K M Tsang, and B C M Law. 2011. "Combating School Bullying through Developmental Guidance for Positive Youth Development and Promoting Harmonious School Culture." *TheScientificWorldJournal* 11: 2266–77. doi:10.1100/2011/705824.

figures within their peer group may engage in bullying to maintain their position. Social Exclusion: When children feel ignored or rejected by the group, this can lead to involvement in bullying, either as perpetrators or victims. School Connectedness: A positive relationship between students and the school can serve as a buffer against involvement in bullying, both as victims and perpetrators. Teacher-Student Relationship: When teachers provide adequate support, students feel valued and protected, which can reduce the likelihood of bullying occurrences.¹⁴

This review encompasses 32 articles from Q1–Q3 Scopus-indexed international journals, selected based on their relevance to the development of elementary school-aged children. Each article provides an empirical perspective that deepens the understanding of bullying from both personal and social standpoints. From this analysis, three major patterns emerged: (1) Good social-emotional competence is negatively associated with bullying involvement, meaning children with strong social-emotional skills tend not to engage in bullying; (2) The role of teachers and school conditions serves as a primary protective factor, where supportive schools and caring teachers function as a shield against bullying [5]; and (3) Social exclusion exerts a deeper psychological impact compared to physical aggression, as children ignored by their peers often experience more profound psychological effects, such as diminished self-esteem and emotional well-being, than those who experience only physical aggression.¹⁵

The synthesis of these various studies yields five major themes describing the complexity of the bullying phenomenon among elementary school students. This indicates that bullying is not merely a physical issue but involves psychological and social factors affecting children's well-being. In Indonesia, bullying in schools remains a significant issue, despite various efforts undertaken by the government and schools to address this phenomenon.¹⁶ For example, in recent years, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) launched the "Sekolah Ramah Anak" (Child-Friendly School) program to create inclusive environments that

¹⁴ Van Schalkwyk, G J. 2020. "From Bullying to Adjustment and Competence to Teacher-Student Relationships: School/Educational Psychology at Work around the Globe." *International Journal of School and Educational Psychology* 8(1): 1–2. doi:10.1080/21683603.2020.1721801

¹⁵ Hudson-Davis, A, P A Bourne, C Sharpe-Pryce, C Francis, I Solan, D Lewis, O Watson-Coleman, J.-A. Blake, and C Donegon. 2015. "The Psychology of the Bullying Phenomenon in Three Jamaican Public Primary Schools: A Need for a Public Health Trust." *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health* 17(2): 406–14. <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85042227114&partnerID=40&md5=5bdd392feef04088eecbdafabf59ab25>.

¹⁶ Nickerson, A B, and D Mele-Taylor. 2015. "Correction to Empathetic Responsiveness, Group Norms, and Prosocial Affiliations in Bullying Roles [School Psychology Quarterly, 29, 1, (2014), 99-109]." *School Psychology Quarterly* 30(2): 211. doi:10.1037/spq0000122.

protect students from all forms of violence, including bullying. However, many challenges persist related to a lack of understanding regarding the importance of emotional regulation, empathy, and the strengthening of positive teacher-student relationships. In some schools, particularly in remote areas, physical violence between students still occurs frequently, and social exclusion is often overlooked as a factor influencing students' psychological conditions. Therefore, it is crucial to further educate teachers and parents on the importance of supporting students' social-emotional competence to reduce the incidence of bullying.¹⁷

Emotional Regulation as a Critical Determinant in Bullying

Emotional regulation is defined as an individual's ability to manage and direct emotions such as anger, frustration, or anxiety in a healthy and adaptive manner. Within the context of bullying, this capability plays a pivotal role in determining whether a child engages in aggressive behavior or becomes a victim. Research indicates that children possessing strong emotional regulation skills are more likely to resolve conflicts without resorting to bullying behaviors, such as verbal taunts or physical violence.¹⁸

In Indonesia, the phenomenon of bullying among elementary school students is frequently influenced by a child's capacity to manage feelings of frustration and anger. In the frequent social interactions occurring within the school environment, disagreements or conflicts can escalate into acts of bullying if they are not mediated by appropriate emotional management. Conversely, children who are able to effectively control their emotions are more likely to avoid engaging in aggressive behaviors.¹⁹

For instance, a study conducted in Jakarta found that students who received training in emotional regulation at school were less frequently involved in bullying behaviors. This training encompassed techniques such as meditation, relaxation, and problem-solving to cope with stress and frustration. The findings demonstrated that schools integrating emotional regulation instruction into their curricula experienced a significant decrease in the incidence of bullying among students.

¹⁷ Ding, R, X Zhu, X Hu, Y Du, X Wang, M Wang, and C Guo. 2026. "Joint Developmental Trajectory of School Bullying Victimization, Perpetration and Bystander Behavior and the Mental Health in Adulthood among Sexually and Gender Diverse Youth." *Journal of Affective Disorders* 393. doi:10.1016/j.jad.2025.120371.

¹⁸ Lawrence, S E, B J McMorris, K A Simon, A L Gower, and M E Eisenberg. 2023. "Bullying Involvement at the Intersection of Gender Identity/Modality, Sexual Identity, Race, Ethnicity, and Disability: Prevalence Disparities and the Role of School-Related Developmental Assets." *LGBT Health* 10: S10–19. doi:10.1089/lgbt.2023.0076.

¹⁹ Yulia Angga Dewi Sekolah Tinggi Agama Hindu Negeri Mpu Kuturan Singaraja, Putu. 2020. "Edukasi: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Perilaku School Bullying Pada Siswa Sekolah Dasar." 1(1): 39–48. <http://jurnal.stahnmpukuturan.ac.id/index.php/edukasi>.

Empirically, robust emotional regulation abilities can reduce a child's propensity to become a bullying perpetrator, whereas the inability to manage emotions effectively increases the likelihood of a child becoming a victim. Furthermore, research indicates that high levels of empathy function as a protective factor against aggressive behavior, as children with empathy are better equipped to understand the feelings of others and tend to refrain from causing them harm.²⁰

Social Competence and Peer Group Hierarchy

Children's empathy and social skills have been proven to play a crucial role in determining their interactions with peers, particularly within the context of bullying. Research indicates that children with low empathy are more inclined to engage in relational aggression, such as spreading gossip or excluding friends. Conversely, children possessing high levels of empathy more frequently exhibit positive behaviors, such as helping and collaborating with peers.²¹

Children with limited or underdeveloped social skills often become targets of aggressive behavior due to their difficulties in interacting with peers. Research zeng further demonstrates that children unable to establish good social relationships or resolve conflicts constructively are more vulnerable to becoming bullying victims, specifically in forms of verbal or social aggression.²²

Within peer groups, particularly between the ages of 10 and 12, a social structure emerges that can either benefit or disadvantage specific individuals. This group dynamic creates social pressure influencing who becomes a leader and who becomes a victim. Research reveals that in this age group, bullying manifests more frequently as relational aggression, such as systematic exclusion and the formation of groups that exclude a specific peer.²³

The phenomenon of relational bullying is also widely encountered in elementary and junior secondary schools in Indonesia. For instance, in some schools, situations exist where

²⁰ Oktaviany, Desri, and Zaka Hadikusuma Ramadan. 2023. "Analisis Dampak Bullying Terhadap Psikologi Siswa Sekolah Dasar." *Jurnal Educatio FKIP UNMA* 9(3): 1245–51. doi:10.31949/educatio.v9i3.5400.

²¹ Sapouna, M, D Wolke, N Vannini, S Watson, S Woods, W Schneider, and R Aylett. 2012. "Erratum: Virtual Learning Intervention to Reduce Bullying Victimization in Primary School: A Controlled Trial (*Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* (2010) 51 (104-112))." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines* 53(3): 332. doi:10.1111/j.1469-7610.2012.02529.x.

²² Zeng, L.-H., Y Hao, J.-C. Hong, and J.-N. Ye. 2023. "Correction to: The Relationship between Teacher Support and Bullying in Schools: The Mediating Role of Emotional Self-Efficacy (*Current Psychology*, (2023), 42, 36, (31853-31862), 10.1007/S12144-022-04052-4)." *Current Psychology* 42(36): 31863. doi:10.1007/s12144-023-04689-9.

²³ Ramadhanti, Ramadhanti, and Muhamad Taufik Hidayat. 2022. "Strategi Guru Dalam Mengatasi Perilaku Bullying Siswa Di Sekolah Dasar." *Jurnal Basicedu* 6(3): 4566–73. doi:10.31004/basicedu.v6i3.2892.

groups of students form alliances to exclude specific peers due to physical or personality differences. Although this does not involve physical violence, such behavior can be highly emotionally damaging to the targeted child.

As a case in point, at a school in Kudus Regency, a new student was frequently ignored and shunned by peers. Despite the absence of physical violence, the student felt isolated because peers formed groups excluding them and spread rumors, resulting in further alienation. This serves as an example of relational bullying commonly occurring among children of this age.²⁴

The Role of School Environment and Teachers as Protective Mechanisms

Research reveals that the school environment and the quality of the teacher-student relationship play a key role in influencing the occurrence of bullying. Several recent studies, such as the one conducted by Trisanti, highlight that a positive and supportive school climate can significantly reduce bullying incidents.²⁵

Factors functioning as protection against bullying include emotional closeness between teachers and students, the teacher's ability to recognize and respond to early signs of bullying, active supervision in high-risk areas, and a school culture emphasizing inclusivity and mutual respect. When teachers are more attuned to students' feelings and responsive to behavioral changes, this can prevent the escalation of bullying.

However, if teachers lack sensitivity or if school management systems are weak, bullying incidents may increase. For instance, in schools lacking clear policies or strict supervision of student behavior, bullying often goes undetected and is not addressed promptly. Approaches involving all school elements, such as the whole-school approach, have been proven more effective in addressing bullying compared to strategies involving only one segment of the school, such as teachers or students in isolation.²⁶

In several schools in Indonesia, particularly at the elementary and junior secondary levels, bullying often occurs due to a lack of teacher responsiveness or inadequate supervision of student interactions. For example, at a school in Bandung, a lack of supervision in areas outside the classroom resulted in several students falling victim to bullying by classmates.

²⁴ Trisanti, Ika, Ana Zumrotun, and Noor Azizah. 2020. 11 *Jurnal Ilmu Keperawatan dan Kebidanan Bullying Dan Efeknya Bagi Siswa Sekolah Dasar Di Kabupaten Kudus*.

²⁵ Ali Sofyan, Fuaddilah, Cherrysa Ariesty Wulandari, Levi Lauren Liza, Lidia Purnama, Rini Wulandari, and Nabilah Maharani. 2022. *Jurnal Multidisipliner KAPALAMADA* |Vol 1 Bentuk Bullying Dan Cara Mengatasi Masalah Bullying Di Sekolah Dasar.

²⁶ Pratiwi, Indah, Gamy Tri Utami, and Fakultas Keperawatan Universitas Riau. 2021. "Gambaran Perilaku Bullying Verbal Pada Siswa Sekolah Dasar : Literature Review." *JKEP* 6(1).

When teachers failed to immediately recognize the signs of bullying, the problem exacerbated. However, after the school enhanced its supervision program and established closer emotional relationships between teachers and students, bullying incidents began to decline. This program engaged the entire school community, from teachers to students, to create a culture that is more inclusive and respectful.²⁷

Sustained Psychological and Social Impacts

Longitudinal research conducted by ida reveals that the experience of bullying during elementary school has not only short-term implications but can also disrupt the development of self-esteem, social identity, and mental health well into adolescence. Victimization experienced at a young age can leave profound effects, influencing how children perceive themselves, interact with others, and establish social relationships in the future.²⁸

The impacts frequently reported by victims of bullying include generalized anxiety, social anxiety, depression, and a tendency to withdraw from social interactions with peers. Victims of bullying also frequently report a diminished sense of school connectedness, leading to reduced motivation and academic engagement. Furthermore, academic performance often declines as a consequence of the emotional distress arising from victimization.

This phenomenon is prevalent in Indonesia, particularly in elementary schools, where children are frequently targeted for bullying due to physical differences or distinct speech patterns. For instance, at a school in Jakarta, a student who was more introverted and physically distinct from their peers frequently became a target of ridicule. After repeated exposure to bullying, the child began to exhibit signs of social anxiety, withdrew from peers, and experienced difficulties in academic performance. This condition was further exacerbated by familial pressure expecting the child to excel academically and maintain successful social relationships.

Effective Interventions in Reducing Bullying

Effective intervention approaches to address bullying consistently incorporate elements focused on children's social-emotional development. One program proven to be effective is Social Emotional Learning (SEL), which plays a pivotal role in enhancing empathy, emotional resilience, and children's skills in constructive conflict resolution. The SEL program assists

²⁷ Studi Psikologi, Program, Fakultas Psikologi, and Ida Ayu Surya Dwipayanti dan Komang Rahayu Indrawati. 2014. "Hubungan Antara Tindakan Bullying Dengan Prestasi Belajar Anak Korban Bullying Pada Tingkat Sekolah Dasar." *Jurnal Psikologi Udayana* 1(2): 251–60.

²⁸ Burke, J. 2022. "Positive Psychology and School Bullying." In *Applied Positive School Psychology*, Taylor and Francis, 173–79. doi:10.4324/9781003228158-22.

children in better understanding and regulating their emotions, increasing empathy toward others, and interacting in a more positive manner.

Furthermore, several other strategies have proven effective, such as the whole-school approach, which engages all school constituents including teachers, students, and parents to collaboratively create a supportive environment. Strengthening teacher self-efficacy, or the confidence of teachers in their ability to handle bullying, is also a crucial factor enabling teachers to be more proactive in identifying and addressing bullying issues. Additionally, peer support-based approaches, which rely on support from peer groups, can aid in preventing bullying by strengthening social bonds among students.

However, isolated interventions are insufficient to address bullying. Intervention success depends on a comprehensive and sustainable approach that encompasses various strategies and involves all stakeholders within the school community.

In Indonesia, a number of schools have begun implementing SEL programs to reduce bullying. For instance, an elementary school in Jakarta implemented an SEL program to assist students in managing emotions and enhancing empathy. This school also adopted a whole-school approach, wherein all parties within the school—teachers, students, and parents—collaborated to establish a positive climate. Following the program's implementation, the frequency of bullying incidents at the school declined, and students reported feeling more connected to their school environment. The program also incorporated peer support, where senior students provided mentorship to younger students, thereby enhancing a sense of solidarity among the student body.

Integration of Findings with Developmental Psychology Frameworks

One of the primary findings of this study is that bullying behavior cannot be comprehended solely through individual actions; rather, it must be understood within the context of child development. Linking these findings with developmental theories, several scholars provide the following explanations: Piaget states that at the concrete operational stage, children begin to understand rules and direct social relationships. However, they lack the capacity to fully comprehend more complex social dynamics, such as abstract feelings and intricate interpersonal relationships.

Vygotsky emphasizes that emotional regulation and prosocial behavior are formed through meaningful social interactions, as well as through guidance from teachers acting as the More Knowledgeable Other. Erikson explains that the failure to establish a sense of

competence during the Industry vs. Inferiority stage can lead to enduring feelings of inadequacy in children, which may subsequently influence their long-term development.

Bronfenbrenner posits that bullying is the result of interactions among various social systems, such as the family, school, and the child's social environment. Consequently, bullying is not merely an individual issue but is influenced by external factors shaping the child's experience. Synthesizing these findings, it is understood that bullying is the outcome of a complex interaction between a child's personal development and their social environment. Therefore, to address bullying effectively, interventions must consider both aspects: the personal (such as emotional regulation and social skills) and the social-environmental (such as support from family and school).

In Indonesia, many schools have begun to recognize the importance of these factors in addressing bullying. For example, in several elementary schools, children are taught to manage their emotions through Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs, which also incorporate the role of teachers in providing guidance. Furthermore, the involvement of parents and the surrounding environment is crucial in supporting children to avoid bullying behaviors, aligning with Bronfenbrenner's theory. These programs have been reported to successfully reduce bullying incidents and increase social awareness among students.

Additionally, the *whole-school approach* which engages all school constituents, including teachers, students, parents, school policies, and social structures within the school environment is highly recommended. Research finds that interventions involving multiple levels, such as the classroom, school, and family, yield more effective results compared to interventions limited solely to the classroom level.²⁹

In Indonesia, particularly within Islamic elementary schools, these development-based interventions can be enriched with religious values, such as *rahmah* (compassion or mercy), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and *mujahadah al-nafs* (self-control). Integrating SEL programs with Islamic pedagogical values has the potential to create a bullying prevention model that is more relevant and effective for elementary school students.

Several Islamic elementary schools in Indonesia have begun integrating SEL programs with religious values to prevent bullying. For instance, in certain schools in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, students receive lessons on emotional management through religious studies and

²⁹ Wang, Y, M Zhang, Z Yang, W Ye, Q Nie, and Z Teng. 2025. "When Push Comes to Shove: Unravelling the Developmental and Longitudinal Dynamic Relationship between Bullying and Empathy in Chinese School Children." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 54(4): 981–96. doi:10.1007/s10964-024-02107-2.

social training. This program, which combines the teachings of *rahmah* and *ukhuwah*, has created a more inclusive and compassionate school environment, successfully reducing bullying incidents among students.

CONCLUSION

This systematic study demonstrates that bullying among elementary school students is a complex issue that cannot be viewed solely as individual aggressive behavior; rather, it is the result of interactions between children's psychological development, peer group dynamics, and school environmental conditions. The results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR), which examined 32 Scopus-indexed articles, confirm that a child's ability to regulate emotions, empathy, social skills, and their standing within peer groups are the primary factors influencing involvement in bullying, whether as perpetrators or victims.

At the elementary school level, the most prevalent forms of bullying include physical violence, verbal taunts, social aggression, and the emergence of cyberbullying among children aged 10 to 12 years. The psychological impacts experienced by students encompass anxiety, depression, withdrawal from social interactions, diminished self-esteem, and reduced *school connectedness*. These impacts are not merely transient but can also influence the development of social identity and competence well into adolescence.

This study also indicates that the most effective interventions are development-based, such as Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs, teacher training in detecting and addressing bullying, and the implementation of a *whole-school approach* engaging all school stakeholders. Within the context of Islamic elementary schools, the reinforcement of religious values such as compassion, justice, and brotherhood (*ukhuwah*) can serve as a fundamental basis for establishing a safe and inclusive school culture.

In Indonesia, the phenomenon of bullying is prevalent in elementary schools, both in public and Islamic educational institutions. For instance, in several schools in Jakarta and Surabaya, numerous children have become victims of physical and verbal bullying due to differences in appearance or personality traits. The psychological impacts arising from this bullying include anxiety and diminished self-esteem. Therefore, it is imperative for elementary schools, including Islamic elementary schools, to develop comprehensive and sustainable bullying prevention programs, as well as to create environments that support students' social and emotional development. Moving forward, further longitudinal research is required in

Indonesia to understand how bullying behavior evolves from childhood to adolescence, in order to formulate more effective educational policies.

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