

## A School-Based Intervention to Raise Bullying Awareness Among Primary School Students in Surabaya, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Bullying is a pervasive problem in Indonesian schools, with significant negative consequences for students' well-being and academic performance. This study aimed to assess the prevalence of bullying experiences and improve bullying awareness among primary school students in Surabaya through a school-based intervention. **Methods:** A bullying awareness program was conducted at one of the primary schools in Surabaya, targeting 112 third-grade students. The intervention included an educational session on the definition, types, and management of bullying, followed by a questionnaire assessment using the Revised Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, consisting of 22 statements, to evaluate students' experiences with bullying. **Results:** Prior to the intervention, the questionnaire results revealed that 13.4% of students reported experiencing moderate bullying, and 3.6% reported experiencing severe bullying. Males reported a higher prevalence of both moderate and severe bullying experiences compared to females. The educational intervention led to increased student awareness, as demonstrated by active participation in a Q&A session following the presentation. **Conclusion:** Bullying is present among primary school students in Surabaya. A school-based awareness program can be a valuable tool to educate students about bullying and identify those in need of support. These findings underscore the importance of ongoing bullying prevention and intervention efforts in primary schools.

**Keywords:** bullying; school; school-based intervention; primary school; awareness; psychological well-being; mental health; Indonesia.

### INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a complex social issue with significant detrimental effects on victims, perpetrators, and the overall school environment [1]. It is defined as intentional, repeated aggressive behavior involving an imbalance of power. Bullying manifests in various forms, including physical, verbal, social, and the increasingly prevalent cyberbullying.

Reports indicate that bullying is a widespread concern in Indonesia. According to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 41% of Indonesian students have experienced bullying. A 2015 study by Plan International and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) found that bullying rates in Asian schools reached as high as 70% [2]. In Surabaya, bullying is evident in primary schools, often involving verbal taunts and social exclusion [3] [4].

The consequences of bullying are far-reaching, leading to declining academic performance, mental health issues such as depression, and, in extreme cases, suicide. Addressing bullying requires a collaborative effort from schools, teachers, parents, and the community.

Effective strategies include bullying education, anti-bullying policies, and consistent consequences for perpetrators [5].

This study aimed to implement and evaluate a bullying awareness program for third-grade students at a primary school in Surabaya. The objectives were to: (1) educate students about bullying, (2) assess their knowledge and experiences with bullying using a questionnaire, and (3) provide them with strategies for responding to bullying situations. The study also sought to determine the prevalence of bullying experiences among students at the school.

### METHODS

#### Study Design and Participants

This study employed a pre-and post-intervention design to assess the impact of a bullying awareness program on third-grade students at primary school in Surabaya. All 121 third-grade students were invited to participate; 112 students were present on the day of the intervention and provided consent to participate.

The selection of this primary school was based on prior data indicating potential emotional distress among students, which may be related to bullying experiences. They filled out the Revised Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, consisting of 22 statements.

**Intervention**

The bullying awareness program was conducted on February 12, 2025, and consisted of a single offline session. The session was structured as follows:

• **Educational Presentation:**

A presentation covering the definition of bullying, different types of bullying (verbal, physical, social), and strategies for addressing bullying situations.

• **Questionnaire Administration:**

Students completed the Revised Olweus Bullying Questionnaire to assess their experiences with bullying. The questionnaire was administered after the educational presentation to ensure students had a clear understanding of bullying concepts.

• **Question and Answer Session:**

A Q&A session allowed students to ask questions and clarify any uncertainties regarding bullying.

• **Documentation:**

The session was documented with photographs for educational and reporting purposes.

**Data Collection**

Each student was instructed to fill in their names and classes. Data was collected using the Revised Olweus Bullying Questionnaire.

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to analyze the prevalence of bullying experiences among the students. Data was analyzed to determine the proportion of students who reported experiencing moderate and severe bullying, as well as any gender differences in bullying experiences.

**Ethical Considerations**

We present our letter of the school’s consent (Letter 158/UN3.1.1/KJ.I/S2/II/2025). Informed consent was obtained from all participating students. Participation was voluntary, and students were assured of confidentiality.

**RESULTS**

**Participant Characteristics**

Of the 112 students who participated in the study, 63 (56.25%) were male and 49 (43.75%) were female (Table 1).

**TABLE 1:** Sex and number of participants.

Sex	Number of participants
Male	63 (56.25%)
Female	49 (43.75%)

**Prevalence of Bullying Experiences**

The results of the Revised Olweus Bullying Questionnaire indicated that 15 students (13.4%) reported experiencing moderate bullying, and 4 students (3.6%) reported experiencing severe bullying (Figure 2). Among those who reported moderate bullying, 11 were male and 4 were female. Of the students who reported severe bullying, 3 were male and 1 was female.

**TABLE 2:** Results of Revised Olweus Bullying Questionnaire.

	Normal	Moderate	Severe
Bullying Experience	93 (83%)	15 (13.4%)	4 (3.6%)

**Student Engagement**

Students actively participated in the educational session and the Q&A session. They participated by listening and answering questions asked by the presenter. They showed an enthusiastic attitude throughout the session. Questions raised by students included: "Why should we report bullying to a teacher?" and "What if reporting to a teacher makes the bullying worse?"

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study reveal that bullying is a concern among primary school students at SDN Klampis Ngasem 1 Surabaya. The prevalence of moderate (13.4%) and severe (3.6%) bullying experiences highlights the need for proactive intervention and prevention strategies.

The higher prevalence of bullying experiences among male students aligns with some previous research suggesting gender differences in bullying involvement. This may be due to various factors, including societal expectations and differences in how boys and girls express aggression [6].

The open questions posed by students during the Q&A session demonstrate their engagement with the topic and their need for guidance on how to handle bullying situations effectively. The question regarding reporting to teachers and potential retaliation underscores the importance of creating a safe and supportive school environment where students feel comfortable reporting bullying without fear of further harm. The question ‘Why should we report bullying to school?’ showed their simple thoughts and their unawareness that teachers should know what is happening in the school environment. Also, the second question ‘What if reporting to the teacher makes bullying worse?’ showed that these children had experienced bullying prior to this session, which makes them want to know how they can handle this situation at school.

These findings are consistent with previous research that emphasizes the detrimental effects of bullying. The consequences of bullying extend beyond immediate physical harm; they can lead to long-term psychological issues such as anxiety,

depression, and even suicidal ideation. Victims often report physical symptoms like headaches and stomachaches, which can affect their school attendance and academic performance [7][8]. Bullying in primary schools often takes the form of verbal taunts and physical aggression. Social bullying, such as exclusion, can also have negative impacts, leading to feelings of loneliness [9] [10].

Several factors can contribute to bullying in schools, including a lack of parental involvement, exposure to violence through social media, and a lack of attention at home [11]. Psychological factors play a significant role in bullying behavior. Research indicates that traits such as low self-esteem, aggression, and certain psychiatric disorders can predispose children to engage in bullying. For example, children with behavioral problems are often more likely to be involved in both perpetrating and experiencing bullying [12].

Family dynamics and parenting styles are critical in shaping children's behavior. Authoritarian parenting, characterized by high demands and low responsiveness, has been linked to increased bullying behavior in children. Children raised in environments where physical punishment or verbal aggression is common may internalize these behaviors as acceptable ways to interact with peers. Furthermore, exposure to family violence can normalize aggressive behavior in children, making them more likely to bully others at school [13].

The school climate significantly influences bullying dynamics. Schools that lack effective supervision and have a culture of indifference towards bullying tend to see higher rates of such behavior. Research shows that overcrowded classrooms and schools with inadequate resources contribute to an environment where bullying can thrive [12].

Socioeconomic status (SES) is another important factor influencing bullying. Children from lower SES backgrounds may experience higher levels of stress and instability at home, which can manifest as aggressive behaviors at school [14]. Moreover, economic hardship can limit access to resources that promote healthy social interactions, such as extracurricular activities or counseling services. It concluded that students from impoverished backgrounds are more susceptible to both perpetrating and being victimized by bullying due to their social environment's challenges [15].

Peer relationships are crucial in the context of bullying. The desire for acceptance and recognition among peers can lead some children to engage in bullying behavior as a means of fitting in or gaining status within their social groups. Conversely, a lack of supportive friendships can increase the likelihood of victimization [16] [17].

Preventing bullying requires a comprehensive approach that includes educating students and teachers, promoting positive behaviors at home and

school, as well as fostering a culture of respect and empathy [18]. The school climate plays a crucial role in either mitigating or exacerbating bullying behaviors. A positive school climate characterized by supportive relationships among students and staff can reduce instances of bullying. Conversely, unhealthy environments contribute to higher rates of victimization[19]. Parents have a significant role at home where most of the children's time is spent. It is important for parents to cultivate empathy towards others, so as to make their children aware of their actions' consequences on others. By understanding this principle, children may gain insight and knowledge that their actions, directly or indirectly, impact others [20].

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that bullying is present among primary school students in Surabaya, Indonesia. A school-based awareness program can be a valuable tool for educating students about bullying and identifying those in need of support. The findings underscore the importance of ongoing bullying prevention and intervention efforts in primary schools, including creating a safe reporting environment and addressing the underlying factors that contribute to bullying. Effective strategies must involve collaboration among parents, educators, and the community to create a safe and nurturing environment for all students.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- **Implement Comprehensive Anti-Bullying Programs:**

Schools should implement comprehensive anti-bullying programs that include education for students, teachers, and parents.

- **Create a Safe Reporting Environment:**

Schools should create a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable reporting bullying without fear of retaliation.

- **Promote Parental Involvement:**

Encourage parental involvement in bullying prevention efforts through workshops and communication.

- **Address Underlying Factors:**

Address the underlying factors that contribute to bullying, such as exposure to violence and lack of social-emotional skills.

## LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations. It was conducted at a single school in Surabaya, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study relied on self-report data, which may be subject to recall bias. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples, as well as multiple methods of data collection.

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