

THE IMPACT OF VERBAL BULLYING ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' LEARNING MOTIVATION

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Abstract: Verbal bullying is one of the factors inhibiting student learning motivation. Motivation is the foundation for students to achieve maximum learning outcomes, which in turn serve as the basis for determining the attainment of expected competencies. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the connection between verbal bullying and student motivation for learning. This study aims to explore the impact of verbal bullying on student learning motivation in elementary schools and provide recommendations to mitigate its negative effects on the school environment. Moreover, it creates a positive culture in schools. This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The findings indicate that verbal bullying significantly reduces elementary school students' learning motivation by causing psychological distress, such as low self-confidence, anxiety, and social isolation. These negative effects disrupt students' engagement in the learning process, ultimately hindering their academic performance. Early intervention and consistent anti-bullying measures are essential to prevent long-term educational setbacks. Thus, creating a supportive school environment through collaboration among educators, parents, and policy-makers can help mitigate the impact of verbal bullying and foster positive student development.

Keywords: learning motivation; primary school; verbal bullying

INTRODUCTION

Education represents the initial phase in the development of students' intellectual and character formation. A proper education must be made available to all. Education plays a pivotal role at various stages of life. It offers numerous opportunities to enhance one's standard of living and quality of life. (Muspawi & Lukita, 2023) One of the crucial factors that bolsters success in education is learning motivation, which influences the extent to which a student can actively engage and persevere in the learning process and achieve.

Motivation serves as the foundation for students to achieve optimal learning outcomes, which in turn inform the determination of whether the expected competencies have been attained. (Fernando et al., 2024). Various factors, including the family environment, social interactions, and the role of teachers and peers at school, influence a student's learning motivation. Learning motivation plays a significant role in a student's success (Asvio, 2022; Yu, 2022). Bullying, defined as the use of power to harm a person or group of people, can manifest in various forms, including verbal, physical, or



psychological abuse. This can result in feelings of depression, severe stress, and helplessness (Ejdemyr et al., 2021; Sofyan et al., 2022). Verbal bullying, in particular, has been identified as a key factor hindering student learning motivation.

Verbal bullying is a form of psychological abuse that involves using words or language to insult, belittle, or demean the victim (Sari et al., 2024; Yusri et al., 2025). Such treatment causes the students to feel uncomfortable and to become a burden to themselves. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that verbal bullying is an act of intimidation through words, including taunts, insults, harsh language, and the use of nicknames, aimed at causing harm to the victim (Herliana & Oktaviarini, 2023). In contrast to physical bullying, which is often overt, verbal bullying is frequently more challenging to identify. Nevertheless, its impact can be distressing, particularly for children who are undergoing a period of emotional and social development (Patmawati & Mitra, 2025).

Verbal bullying in elementary schools can manifest in various forms, including name-calling, unkind verbal attacks, and comments that demean a person's physical appearance, such as labeling them as "fat," "short," or "thin" (Utami et al., 2024). Such remarks can have a detrimental impact on students' self-esteem and emotional well-being. The consequences of bullying for victims can be both verbal and physical. Those who are subjected to verbal bullying may develop mental disorders such as low self-esteem and become isolated from their social environment. Meanwhile, victims of physical bullying may experience physical injuries, headaches, abdominal pain, or indigestion, which can

result in unconsciousness or even death.

It is, therefore, essential to understand the relationship between verbal bullying and student motivation for learning. The study of this subject can provide deeper insights into the impact of an unfavourable social environment in elementary schools on learning motivation, as well as methods for establishing a learning and social environment free from bullying, thereby enabling students to learn enthusiastically and optimally. This study aims to investigate the impact of verbal bullying on students' learning motivation in elementary schools and provide recommendations for mitigating its negative effects in the school environment while fostering a positive school culture.

METHOD

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to comprehensively examine the impact of verbal bullying on the learning motivation of elementary school students. The SLR method follows a structured and transparent process to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. The research was conducted in several key stages:

1. Defining the Research Question

The study begins by formulating a central research question: How does verbal bullying affect the motivation to learn of elementary school students, and what strategies can be implemented to mitigate its negative impact? This question guides the selection of relevant literature, ensuring that the review remains focused on the core issue.

2. Identification of Sources

A comprehensive search for academic literature was conducted using well-established databases, including Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Springer, ERIC, and Scopus. These databases were chosen for their extensive collection of peer-reviewed studies, ensuring access to high-quality sources relevant to verbal bullying and learning motivation in elementary education.

3. Selection Criteria

To refine the search results and ensure relevance, specific criteria were applied: (a) Publication Period: Studies published between 2019 and 2024 were included to ensure that the findings reflect the most recent developments and trends in bullying research; (b) Keywords: The search process incorporated combinations of keywords such as verbal bullying, learning motivation, elementary school students, academic performance, psychological effects, and bullying prevention strategies. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to improve search precision; (c) Inclusion Criteria: The study considered peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and official reports that directly address verbal bullying and its psychological or academic impact on elementary school students; and (d) Exclusion Criteria: Research focusing on secondary or higher education, studies unrelated to verbal bullying, opinion pieces, and articles without empirical data were excluded to maintain research integrity.

4. Data Extraction and Analysis

After selecting the most relevant studies, data were extracted systematically. The focus was on

identifying key themes, recurring patterns, and significant findings related to verbal bullying, its psychological effects, learning motivation, and intervention strategies. Data were then categorized based on thematic similarities to facilitate meaningful analysis and discussion.

The extracted data were synthetically sized through thematic analysis to conclude the impact of verbal bullying on students' motivation. This synthesis helped identify gaps in existing research, patterns of student responses to verbal bullying, and best practices for preventing and addressing bullying in schools. The findings were then compiled into a structured report with recommendations aimed at educators, school administrators, policymakers, and parents to foster a supportive and bullying-free learning environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Causes and Supporting Factors of Verbal Bullying

Verbal bullying represents a form of psychological violence that is influenced by a multitude of causes and supporting factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic. One of the primary causes is the individual factor, wherein the perpetrator frequently exhibits emotional and psychological issues, such as low self-confidence, a proclivity for domination, or the influence of a dysfunctional family environment. Children who are raised in families with authoritarian parenting, violence, or a lack of affection tend to adopt aggressive behaviors, including verbal bullying, as a means of expressing their emotions (Susanto et al., 2024).

Environmental factors also exert a considerable influence. In an educational

setting, a lack of supervision from teachers and school staff can create an environment that fosters bullying behavior. When school rules are not consistently enforced or there are no strict sanctions for perpetrators, a permissive culture is created that provides support for the continuation of verbal bullying. Furthermore, less harmonious relationships between students, as well as a lack of empathy, can trigger negative interactions and develop into verbal bullying. Some students may perceive this behavior as a means of increasing their social status in the eyes of their peers (Pappas, 2023).

Furthermore, social and cultural influences are significant contributing factors. In the digital age, social media has become a prominent platform for verbal bullying, particularly in the form of cyberbullying. Students who feel safe due to the anonymity afforded by cyberspace are more likely to engage in insulting or demeaning behavior towards others. Furthermore, certain social norms that tolerate behavior such as mockery or insults as a form of "joke" contribute to the exacerbation of the situation, particularly when society does not perceive such actions as serious and in need of intervention (Ariyanti et al., 2024).

A lack of social support, whether from family, friends, or the broader community, serves to exacerbate the impact of verbal bullying. Those who are subjected to verbal bullying often feel isolated and lack a suitable outlet for expressing their concerns and seeking assistance. In the absence of adequate assistance, victims are more susceptible to adverse psychological consequences, including diminished self-esteem, depression, and even self-harm. The underlying causes and contributing

factors of verbal bullying are intricate and encompass a multifaceted interplay between individual, familial, educational, and socio-cultural influences. To effectively address this issue, a comprehensive approach is essential, necessitating the engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including individuals and families, schools, and the broader community.

The Role of Educators, Educational Institutions, and Parents in Addressing Verbal Bullying

Teachers and schools undoubtedly occupy a pivotal position in addressing verbal bullying, as they bear the primary responsibility for fostering a secure and nurturing environment for their students. One such strategy is to raise awareness among the entire school community, comprising teachers, students, and parents, about the detrimental effects of verbal bullying and the importance of fostering a culture of mutual respect. The incorporation of character education programs into the school curriculum represents a highly effective approach to instilling values of empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences from an early age.

Teachers bear the responsibility of identifying indications of verbal bullying within the classroom setting. Teachers must receive specialized training in early detection techniques and appropriate intervention methods. By fostering an environment of open communication with students, teachers can facilitate a culture where victims feel comfortable reporting bullying cases without fear of negative consequences. Additionally, teachers must demonstrate a balance of firmness and fairness in addressing bullying behaviors, in alignment with school policies, to reinforce that such

actions are unacceptable (Maryani, 2024).

Furthermore, educational institutions must implement a transparent and accessible reporting and management system for bullying incidents. For instance, implementing complaint boxes or anonymous digital platforms for students to report instances of verbal bullying is a viable solution. This approach enables students, whether they are victims or witnesses, to report incidents without fear of being identified. Furthermore, the formation of specialized teams within schools, such as anti-bullying teams comprising teachers, counselors, and student representatives, can facilitate the systematic monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up on bullying reports (Ningrum et al., 2023).

School counselors also play a crucial role in supporting both victims and perpetrators of bullying. For victims, counselors can provide psychological support to restore confidence and overcome the trauma experienced. Meanwhile, for perpetrators, counselors can help identify the causes of their aggressive behavior and provide direction to change their mindset and behavior to be more positive. This counseling-based intervention will be more effective if it involves parents to support changes in children's behavior at home (Saguni et al., 2024).

At the policy level, schools must develop and implement a comprehensive anti-bullying policy. This policy should include prevention measures, reporting systems, intervention mechanisms, and rehabilitation programs for victims and perpetrators. Furthermore, the socialization of this policy must be conducted regularly to the entire school community so that all parties understand their roles and responsibilities in preventing and

handling verbal bullying.

Furthermore, schools may implement training programs to enhance the knowledge and skills of educators, students, and parents regarding bullying and its effective management. By fostering a collaborative approach between these key stakeholders, a positive culture that discourages verbal bullying can be established. This secure and nurturing environment will ultimately enhance the quality of education and emotional well-being of students.

The Role of Character Education in Bullying Prevention

Character education plays a crucial role in promoting positive student behavior and preventing bullying. Based on character education, students will be taught moral and social values that foster empathy, mutual respect, and tolerance. This education is not merely theoretical; it is also practical, with applications in everyday life both within the school environment and beyond. The following are illustrative examples:

1. The inculcation of empathy

One of the primary objectives of character education is cultivating empathy among students. Empathy enables students to empathize with others, thereby fostering sensitivity to the feelings of their peers. This is crucial in preventing bullying, as it allows students to understand the detrimental impact of their words and actions on others. As elucidated in the research of Andrywan et al. (2023), the role of educators is pivotal in guiding students to respect one another and demonstrate empathy toward their classmates.

2. Application of Tolerance and Respect for Differences

Furthermore, character education teaches students the importance of respecting differences, including those based on cultural background, race, religion, or social status. By introducing students to diversity from an early age, they can circumvent bullying actions that often arise due to these differences. According to Ariyanti et al. (2024), instilling tolerance can prevent the emergence of bullying behavior, which is usually rooted in intolerance. Verbal bullying behavior, which is often rooted in stereotypes and prejudices directed at classmates, can also be prevented.

3. Parent and Teacher Involvement in the Character Education Process

Parents and educators must work together to foster children's character development. Teachers serve not only as instructors in the classroom but also as mentors who exemplify polite, fair, and thoughtful conduct. Parent support is also instrumental in complementing the character education process at school, ensuring that children receive consistent attention and guidance in cultivating positive behaviors both at home and at school (Septihani et al., 2024).

4. Enhancing Child-Friendly School Programs

The concept of character education can also be applied in the context of child-friendly school programs. These programs aim to establish a safe and nurturing environment for all students. According to Susanto et al. (2024), enhancing teachers' understanding of the significance of fostering child-friendly schools can be an effective strategy in preventing bullying. In an environment characterized by support

and appreciation, students are more likely to refrain from actions that could potentially harm their peers.

5. Instruction in Social Skills

One aspect of character education is the teaching of effective and polite communication skills. These skills are crucial in preventing bullying because they enable students to express their feelings properly and respectfully, thereby reducing the likelihood of their involvement in conflicts that could potentially lead to bullying (Herliana & Oktaviarini, 2023).

The implementation of character education on a consistent and thorough basis has been demonstrated to reduce and prevent bullying behavior, both verbal and physical, within the school environment. An education system that prioritizes character development can foster the growth of a younger generation that is more concerned about the welfare of others and can cultivate harmonious social relationships.

The Legal and Policy Approaches to Addressing Bullying in Schools

The role of legal and policy approaches in addressing the issue of bullying in the school environment is of significant importance. In the Indonesian context, a variety of regulations and policies exist to protect children and prevent, as well as address, instances of bullying, whether verbal, physical, or emotional. The handling of bullying is a multifaceted issue that extends beyond the school and teacher domains. It also encompasses the involvement of governmental authorities and child protection agencies. The legal and policy approach plays a pivotal role in understanding how the State, through its regulatory and policy frameworks, can

safeguard children in educational settings from the perils of bullying. This is because bullying transcends a mere social concern, affecting not only the psychological well-being of the victim but also violating the fundamental rights of children enshrined in law.

In this context, the legal and policy approach will play a crucial role in establishing a comprehensive and integrated protection system, encompassing clear regulations such as the Child Protection Law, the Child-Friendly School (SRA) program, and fair law enforcement against perpetrators of bullying. Furthermore, school-level policies such as the implementation of character education programs that foster empathy and the application of restorative justice approaches which provide support for efforts to reduce and overcome bullying in schools (Manihuruk et al., 2024) are also relevant.

These observations demonstrate that legal and policy approaches serve not only as tools for addressing bullying after it occurs but also as crucial preventive measures for establishing a secure and supportive environment that fosters children's growth and development. Through collaborative efforts between the government, educational institutions, and the community, it is anticipated that instances of bullying in schools can be reduced, and children's rights under the regulations can be effectively safeguarded.

The prevention, education, and intervention in the handling of bullying in schools

It is evident that prevention education and intervention play a pivotal role in curbing the prevalence of bullying within the school environment. Educational initiatives seek to enhance

the understanding of students, educators, and parents regarding the detrimental consequences of bullying and the significance of empathy, constructive communication, and respect for the rights of others. It is anticipated that a preventive approach, when combined with effective interventions, will foster a safer and more conducive environment for children's development. Prevention education and intervention play a pivotal role in curbing bullying in academic settings. These initiatives aim to impart to students, educators, and parents a deeper understanding of the detrimental impact of bullying and the importance of empathy, constructive communication, and respect for the rights of others. In this context, a comprehensive approach that incorporates preventive measures and efficacious interventions is anticipated to foster a safer and more conducive environment for children's growth and development.

The Child Friendly School (SRA) program, initiated by the government, is an exemplar of an initiative that prioritizes character education and the establishment of a secure school environment. The program's objective is to cultivate a sense of responsibility among all members of the school community to prevent all forms of violence, including bullying, and to provide an environment in which children can flourish without fear. The SRA program should be integrated with training for teachers and students on how to proactively address bullying, as well as communication strategies that can mitigate tensions between students.

In addition to prevention, appropriate intervention is also crucial in addressing instances of bullying that have already occurred. Such intervention can be conducted from a restorative justice

perspective, which prioritizes restoring the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator over merely punishing the perpetrator. The restorative approach aims to assist perpetrators in comprehending their misdeeds while victims are provided with the chance to articulate their emotions and recuperate psychologically.

Educational institutions must implement effective mechanisms for the early identification of bullying and provide suitable interventions. Programs that provide psychological support to victims of bullying and specialized training for teachers on effectively addressing such situations are essential. As evidenced by Saguni et al. research (2024), enhancing the capacity of teachers in this regard can serve as a crucial first line of defense for children in bullying situations. The training encompasses not only academic aspects but also social and emotional skills essential for conflict management in academic settings.

Furthermore, the intervention entails the provision of psychological assistance to children who are victims of bullying. Those who are victims of bullying frequently exhibit psychological effects such as diminished self-confidence and anxiety. Consequently, approaches that incorporate counseling and therapy are vital for facilitating their emotional recovery (Azmi et al., 2021). It is also crucial to implement a collective strategy within educational institutions by engaging the entire community, including students, educators, and parents, in the effort to address bullying. As Kandia (2024) posits, a supportive environment can prevent the emergence of a bullying culture and foster mutual respect among individuals.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that verbal bullying has a notable impact on students' motivation to learn in an elementary school setting. Verbal bullying, despite being more challenging to identify than physical bullying, can inflict psychological damage on victims, including diminished self-confidence, anxiety, and social isolation. These consequences directly impede students' motivation to learn, which should be a primary objective in attaining optimal academic outcomes. Consequently, it is crucial to promptly identify and address verbal bullying incidents to prevent students from losing their motivation to learn.

The causes of verbal bullying are numerous and varied, encompassing a spectrum of factors such as emotional difficulties, the influence of an unsupportive family environment, and a lack of supervision in academic settings. Furthermore, social and cultural factors, such as the normalization of bullying behavior on social media and the lack of social support for victims, contribute to the exacerbation of this issue. Therefore, the handling of verbal bullying necessitates a comprehensive approach that involves the participation of teachers, parents, communities, and relevant stakeholders in creating an environment that fosters the healthy development of students.

The role of educators, educational institutions, and parents is pivotal in addressing and preventing verbal bullying. Schools must implement rigorous anti-bullying policies, engage counselors in supporting victims and addressing perpetrators, and provide a secure and effective reporting system. Furthermore, character education in

schools can play a crucial role in reducing aggressive attitudes and promoting empathy among students.

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