Fostering Anti-Bullying Awareness: Empowering Elementary School Students Through Education

Musfirah[1]*, Imron Burhan[2], Ainun Najib Alfatih[3], Naufal Qadri Syarif[4], Nur Ilmi[5]

[1,2,3,4,5]Universitas Negeri Makassar, Rappocini, Makassar City, South Sulawesi, 90222, Indonesia

Abstract. Bullying is a critical issue in schools that negatively affects students' emotional, social, and academic well-being. Victims of bullying often experience aggression, frustration, and long-term psychological distress. Efforts to mitigate bullying require educational interventions that promote awareness and empathy. This community service program was conducted at UPTD SD Negeri 5 Parepare to enhance students' understanding of bullying and its impacts. The intervention involved an educational session covering the definition, types of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber, and prejudicial), its consequences, and strategies for prevention and intervention. Interactive discussions were also included to encourage student participation and reflection. The program effectively increased students' awareness of bullying, its negative effects, and the importance of fostering a respectful and inclusive school environment. Participants demonstrated improved understanding and engagement in discussions about preventing bullying. The findings highlight the significance of educational programs in shaping students' attitudes toward bullying prevention. Continued implementation of such initiatives is essential for promoting a school culture that prioritizes empathy, respect, and support among peers. This community service program successfully enhanced students' knowledge of bullying and encouraged positive behavioral changes. Future initiatives should expand the scope and frequency of such activities to ensure long-term sustainability in bullying prevention efforts.

Keywords: Bullying; School environment; Bullying prevention; Educational intervention; Student awareness; Empathy development

1. Introduction

Bullying is a behavior that frequently occurs in various school environments and has a significant impact on students' emotional, social, and academic development (Balluerka et al., 2023; Görzig et al., 2025; Jungert et al., 2025; Wasito & Fauziah, 2023). Other effects of bullying include aggression and increased frustration in children. The long-term effects for bullying victims include a decline in psychological well-being and poor social adjustment (Erkurnia et al., 2024; Nocentini et al., 2015). Bullying behaviors, such as humiliation, physical violence, or social exclusion, often lead to feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, and anxiety in victims. According to Gaffney et al. (2019), bullying in

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elementary schools consists of physical, verbal, and psychological attacks or intimidation designed to cause fear, distress, or harm to the victim. According to (Purba et al., 2024), bullying is a deviant behavior that negatively affects others. Elementary schools, as we know, often become places where bullying occurs, due to the opportunities and vulnerabilities of the victims.

Based on observations and discussions with the school authorities, it was found that bullying cases still occur in various forms at SD Negeri 5 Parepare, including physical, verbal, and social bullying. Some students experience bullying, which results in decreased self-confidence, difficulty in socializing, and disruptions in the learning process (Aljabri et al., 2023). The school has made efforts to address bullying through educational approaches and disciplinary policies. However, several challenges remain, such as limited resources for conducting comprehensive awareness campaigns, a lack of training for teachers in handling bullying cases, and insufficient parental involvement in monitoring children's behavior both in and outside school. Therefore, a more comprehensive and collaborative strategy is needed to address bullying at UPTD SD Negeri 5 Parepare. Through education and bullying prevention programs, it is hoped that students can understand the negative impacts of bullying, increase awareness of the importance of mutual respect, and create a safe and comfortable school environment for all students.

Bullying not only affects the victim but can also have long-term impacts on the perpetrator, such as the development of more aggressive behavior or difficulty interacting with peers. Additionally, bullying can damage the overall school environment, creating a climate that is not conducive to learning and growth. Bullying, also known as "perundungan," refers to various forms of aggressive behavior that are repeated, often demonstrating a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim, making it difficult for the victim to defend themselves (Smith, 2016 in Erkurnia et al., 2024). According to Olweus (2003) (in Wiyani, 2012, in Anindita Widya Ningrum et al., 2015), bullying is a negative behavior that puts someone in an uncomfortable or hurtful situation, typically occurring repeatedly. A child who is a victim of bullying may show signs such as anxiety and low social interaction with their peers due to decreased self-confidence. Decreased self-confidence in an individual can be marked by symptoms such as difficulty concentrating, feelings of inferiority, feeling worthless, and even leading to suicidal thoughts (Aristiani et al., 2021; Saptono, 2022; Sideridis & Alghamdi, 2023; Wicaksono et al., 2022).

The significant advancement in technology and social media has introduced a new dimension to the issue of school bullying, making the spread of harmful messages and harassment more efficient, even extending into students' lives outside of school. Therefore, to address this challenge, it is essential for us to understand the factors influencing the occurrence of school bullying, both in traditional school settings and in the online world (Putri Felita Listiani et al., 2024).

According to Rivers and Smith (1994), bullying commonly experienced by children and adolescents includes physical bullying, this is the easiest type to recognize because the perpetrator uses physical force to harm the victim. Acts such as pushing, tripping, spitting, or hitting fall under this category (Rosander & Nielsen, 2023; Stubbs-Richardson & May, 2021). The impact of physical bullying is not only visible on the victim's body but also affects their mental well-being. Verbal bullying is more difficult to detect as it often occurs when no one else is around. Perpetrators mock, tease, call the victim inappropriate names, insult, or threaten them. Relational bullying is an indirect form of bullying that

often happens behind the victim's back, aiming to degrade them by spreading gossip, highlighting their shortcomings, or damaging their reputation. Cyberbullying (2023; 2022; 2023; 2021) has emerged alongside advancements in information technology and is increasingly common today, with perpetrators often hiding behind anonymous accounts that are difficult to trace. Prejudicial bullying involves actions based on race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, leading to serious consequences, including the provocation of racial crimes.

The importance of preventing bullying in schools is to ensure that students have the right to receive an education in a safe environment free from fear. Preventing bullying in schools also requires the involvement of many parties, including the school, parents, and the community (Marhaely et al., 2024). Schools play a crucial role in children's growth and development, including psychological, social, and emotional development (Healy et al., 2024; Hu et al., 2025; Musfirah et al., 2024; Sovia Ikhwani Putri, 2024). In a school environment, when a child enters a positive social circle, it will have a positive impact on their mental development and protect them from engaging in bullying behavior. Teachers and parents have a very important role in preventing bullying (Swit et al., 2023).

Recently, bullying in elementary education has become a prominent issue. One case reported from Sukabumi involved a student who broke their bone due to being bullied by their peers. There was no clear reason for the bullying. According to the victim's account, they were suddenly pushed and fell, causing the injury. The victim was threatened not to report the incident to teachers or parents (Görzig et al., 2025). The phenomenon of bullying is a serious issue for child development in Indonesia. Bullying cases in Indonesia rank fifth in the world for bullying incidents (Wicaksono et al., 2022).

Bullying behavior that occurs in schools clearly needs to be addressed promptly. Schools have a responsibility in providing education and are tasked with protecting students from intimidation, assault, and violence (Nurfitriyanti et al., 2024). Based on research, bullying prevention can be achieved through several steps, including: a) helping children recognize and understand bullying, b) offering suggestions on how to deal with bullying, c) fostering two-way communication and relationships with children, d) helping children discover their interests and potential, and e) providing examples through actions and behavior (Blomberg et al., 2024; Isaacs, 2018; Pearce et al., 2024). Bullying remains a serious issue in schools and requires special attention from school members, including the principal, teachers, and staff (Mayasari et al., 2019). Preventing bullying in schools is essential to ensure a safe and supportive educational environment for students. Bullying prevention programs aim to cultivate self-awareness and understanding, encouraging proactive approaches rather than merely dictating behavior changes, which can impact children's mental health (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009).

As part of addressing this issue, it is important to educate students about the negative impacts of bullying and the significance of preventing such behavior. Timely and appropriate education can provide students with an understanding that bullying not only harms others but also damages important values that should be instilled in daily life. By teaching students that mutual respect and empathy are the foundations for building healthy relationships, schools can play a role in creating a safer and more welcoming environment among students. Schools serve as an environment where students engage in direct social interactions with their peers and teachers. A child who is a victim of bullying may show several symptoms, such as anxiety and reduced social interactions with peers due to decreased self-confidence. These signs may include difficulty concentrating,

feelings of inferiority, feeling worthless, and even leading to thoughts of suicide (Aristiani et al., 2021).

Building character in elementary education is crucial because children are still in a developmental stage. Values such as honesty, responsibility, and mutual respect need to be instilled early on so they can grow up with a positive attitude. One important aspect to develop is empathy and the ability to respect others in interactions. An effective way to instill these values is through anti-bullying programs in schools. Additionally, creating a comfortable and inclusive learning environment can be achieved through various activities that actively involve students, such as anti-bullying campaigns, discussions, or poster creation. These activities not only raise students' awareness but also encourage them to take part in fostering a more positive school culture.

Through anti-bullying education and awareness-raising programs, it is expected that students at UPTD SD Negeri 5 Parepare will increase their awareness of not engaging in bullying, understand the impact and types of bullying, and realize the importance of being a generation that values respect and creates an atmosphere of mutual support while avoiding behavior that harms others. This step is part of the effort to create a safe, comfortable, and child-friendly school environment while promoting mutual respect and empathy in the community. In this way, the school will not only be a place to learn but also a supportive environment for students' moral and character development to become better individuals.

2. Methods

The method used in this program adopted a service learning approach, where students and lecturers were actively involved in addressing a social issue—bullying prevention in elementary schools. Service learning is not merely about knowledge transfer but also fosters direct engagement between academia and the community to create sustainable social change. In the preparation stage, the team obtained official permission from the school, prepared educational materials in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, and arranged the venue to ensure an effective learning environment. The selection of materials was based on pedagogical principles suitable for elementary school students, ensuring that the messages conveyed were easy to understand and applicable in their daily lives.

The implementation stage served as the core of the activity, involving students, teachers, and the school principal in interactive discussions on bullying. The topics covered included the definition of bullying, its types (physical, verbal, relational, cyber, and prejudicial), its impact on both victims and perpetrators, and strategies for prevention. Beyond traditional presentations, the service learning approach was applied through group discussions and scenario-based simulations to train students in recognizing and addressing bullying incidents in their school environment (Benítez-Sillero et al., 2021; Noboru et al., 2021; Ubudiyah et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2023). In this approach, students were not only passive recipients of information but were also given opportunities to share their experiences and perspectives, enhancing their awareness and empathy toward their peers.

As an integral part of service learning, the reflection stage played a crucial role in assessing the program's effectiveness while reinforcing students' understanding. During this session, students were asked to recall the key lessons they had learned and express how they would respond if they witnessed bullying. This reflection process aimed to instill

anti-bullying values in students, ensuring that their learning extended beyond theoretical knowledge to real-life application. Through reflection, students were expected to become proactive in fostering a safe, respectful, and bullying-free school environment.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Successful Implementation of the Anti-Bullying Education Program

The successful implementation of the anti-bullying education program at UPTD SD Negeri 5 Parepare demonstrated the effectiveness of community service initiatives in fostering awareness and behavioral change among students. The primary objective of this program was to educate students about the different types of bullying—physical, verbal, relational, cyber, and prejudicial—and to highlight the severe impacts it can have on victims, perpetrators, and the school environment. By addressing these critical aspects, the program aimed to cultivate a culture of empathy, respect, and inclusivity among students, teachers, and school administrators.

One of the key indicators of the program's success was the high level of enthusiasm and active participation among the fifth-grade students. The interactive nature of the educational session allowed students to engage in discussions, ask questions, and share their thoughts on bullying-related experiences. This level of engagement suggested that students were not only absorbing the information but were also reflecting on its relevance to their daily lives. Their willingness to participate in discussions indicated a genuine interest in learning about how to prevent bullying and create a safer school environment.

Moreover, the program effectively emphasized the role of mutual respect, not just within the school setting but also in students' families and communities. By encouraging students to practice respect and kindness in all aspects of their lives, the initiative reinforced the idea that bullying prevention is a collective responsibility. Teachers and school staff also played a crucial role in supporting this message, ensuring that the anti-bullying values promoted during the session would be continuously reinforced in the classroom. This collaborative approach strengthened the overall impact of the program, making it more sustainable in the long term.

Figure 1 Providing a Lesson on Bullying

The structured execution of the program, from planning to delivery, also contributed to its overall success. The materials were carefully designed to be accessible and engaging for elementary school students, using age-appropriate language and real-life examples. The program's structure allowed for a smooth transition between the presentation, discussions, and interactive activities, ensuring that students remained engaged throughout. Additionally, the use of visual aids, such as PowerPoint slides and illustrations, helped reinforce key concepts, making it easier for students to grasp and remember the information.

The anti-bullying education program at UPTD SD Negeri 5 Parepare was successfully implemented, achieving its goal of raising awareness and promoting a culture of respect among students. The positive response from students, combined with their active participation and enthusiasm, reflected the program's effectiveness in addressing bullying issues. By instilling values of empathy, kindness, and collective responsibility, the program laid the foundation for long-term behavioral change. Future initiatives should build upon this success by expanding the program to other grade levels and incorporating additional activities that further engage students in bullying prevention efforts.

3.2. Effective Execution of the Learning Session

The effective execution of the learning session in the anti-bullying education program was largely dependent on the meticulous preparation phase. Before the event, the team engaged in thorough coordination with the school management, including obtaining official permission from the principal and aligning the schedule with the school's existing activities. This ensured that the educational session would be seamlessly integrated into the students' routine without disrupting their learning process. Additionally, selecting a suitable classroom setting was a priority to create a conducive environment for interaction and engagement. The arrangement of seating and learning materials was carefully planned to maximize student participation and facilitate smooth communication between presenters and attendees.

One of the most crucial aspects of the preparation phase was designing educational materials that were both informative and accessible to fifth-grade students. The team developed a PowerPoint presentation that visually illustrated key concepts related to bullying, including its various forms, consequences, and strategies for prevention and intervention. By incorporating images, animations, and simple diagrams, the presentation became more engaging and easier for young students to understand. The language used throughout the session was also adjusted to match the cognitive level of the participants, ensuring that they could comprehend the seriousness of bullying without feeling overwhelmed. This thoughtful approach helped sustain students' attention and encouraged them to actively participate in discussions.

The interactive nature of the session further contributed to its effectiveness. Instead of merely delivering a lecture, the facilitators employed a discussion-based method where students were encouraged to express their opinions, ask questions, and share any experiences they had related to bullying. This participatory approach allowed students to internalize the material more effectively, as they were able to relate theoretical concepts to real-life situations. Case examples were also provided to illustrate the different types of bullying, making it easier for students to recognize harmful behaviors and understand the importance of preventing them.

Another key component of the session's success was the emphasis on fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity within the school. The facilitators encouraged students to reflect on their own behaviors and consider how they could contribute to creating a safer and more supportive learning environment. Teachers were also actively involved in reinforcing these messages, ensuring that the values of mutual respect and kindness would continue to be practiced beyond the session. This collective effort between students, facilitators, and teachers strengthened the impact of the learning session and laid the foundation for long-term positive behavioral change.

The learning session in the anti-bullying education program was executed effectively due to careful preparation, engaging instructional materials, and an interactive approach that encouraged student participation. The use of simple language, real-life examples, and visual aids helped students grasp complex concepts, while open discussions fostered a sense of ownership in bullying prevention efforts. By emphasizing the importance of respect and inclusivity, the session not only educated students about bullying but also inspired them to actively promote a positive and supportive school environment. The success of this session highlights the value of well-structured educational initiatives in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors toward social issues.

3.3. Reflection and Student Engagement in Anti-Bullying Advocacy

The reflection phase was a vital component of the anti-bullying education program, providing an opportunity to assess the students' comprehension and internalization of the material. This stage allowed facilitators to gauge the effectiveness of the session by observing how well students understood bullying, its various forms, and its consequences. Through guided discussions, students were encouraged to articulate their thoughts on the importance of preventing bullying and to share personal reflections on how they could contribute to fostering a safer school environment. By engaging in these discussions, students demonstrated their ability to think critically about the issue and apply what they had learned to real-life scenarios.

Figure 2 Conducting a Reflection

One of the primary activities during the reflection phase was the interactive Q&A session, where students were asked thought-provoking questions related to bullying prevention. Questions such as "What would you do if you saw a classmate being bullied?" and "How can you help make your classroom a more respectful place?" prompted students to consider their role in creating a positive school culture. Their responses indicated that they not only understood the theoretical aspects of bullying but also felt a sense of personal responsibility in taking action. Many students expressed their commitment to standing up against bullying, reporting incidents to teachers, and supporting their peers who might be victims of such behavior.

Beyond verbal responses, students also engaged in activities that reinforced their understanding and advocacy for anti-bullying. They participated in small group discussions where they shared personal experiences or observations of bullying and collectively brainstormed strategies to prevent it. Some students even suggested creating class agreements or pledges that emphasized kindness, respect, and inclusivity. These activities helped instill a sense of shared commitment to making their school a safer and more welcoming space. The collaborative nature of these discussions strengthened the impact of the program by making students feel empowered to take collective action.

Teachers and facilitators played a crucial role in guiding the reflection process, ensuring that students felt heard and supported. They encouraged students to think beyond the classroom and consider how bullying prevention efforts could extend into their families and communities. By fostering an open and nonjudgmental environment, facilitators helped students express their concerns and develop meaningful solutions. This approach reinforced the idea that bullying prevention is a continuous effort that requires the active participation of everyone, including teachers, parents, and peers.

The reflection phase successfully reinforced students' engagement in anti-bullying advocacy by encouraging self-awareness, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving. The enthusiasm and proactive attitudes displayed by the students demonstrated that the program had a lasting impact on their perspectives and behaviors. By actively participating in discussions and proposing concrete actions to prevent bullying, students showed that they were not just passive learners but also active agents of change in their school environment. Moving forward, sustaining these reflection activities through periodic discussions and follow-up programs will help ensure that the anti-bullying message remains ingrained in the school's culture.

4. Conclusions

The results of this community service activity highlight the effectiveness of anti-bullying education in raising awareness among elementary school students. The program successfully introduced the concept of bullying, its various forms, and its negative impacts on individuals and the school environment. Through interactive discussions and engaging learning materials, students were able to understand the importance of preventing bullying and fostering a culture of respect and empathy. The community service activity also demonstrated the value of service-learning as an educational approach, where students actively participated in discussions and reflection sessions, reinforcing their commitment to promoting a safe and inclusive school atmosphere.

The discussions held during the program showed that students were highly engaged and responsive to the topic of bullying. Their willingness to share experiences, ask

questions, and propose solutions reflected a strong sense of awareness and responsibility. The interactive nature of the session allowed students to internalize the message and develop a proactive stance against bullying. However, despite the positive outcomes, there were some limitations in the research and implementation of this program. The study focused solely on a single elementary school, with a limited number of participants, which may not fully represent the broader student population. Additionally, the short duration of the program limited the ability to measure long-term behavioral changes among students.

Future research should consider expanding the scope of the study by involving multiple schools and a more diverse group of participants to gain a broader understanding of bullying prevention efforts. Longitudinal studies that assess the sustained impact of anti-bullying education over time would also be beneficial. Furthermore, integrating digital tools and interactive media into bullying prevention programs could enhance student engagement and understanding. By continuously refining and expanding such educational initiatives, schools can create a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to combating bullying and fostering a positive school culture.

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