THE ROLE OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN PREVENTING VERBAL BULLYING BEHAVIOR BETWEEN STUDENTS AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Diana Putri Ariyanti¹, Wulan Sutriyani^{2*}, Syailin Nichla Choirin Attalina³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Islam Nahdlatul Ulama Jepara ¹sutriyani.wulan@unisnu.ac.id

Abstract

This research comes as bullying becomes an increasingly important issue in Indonesia, particularly in education. Indonesia ranks fifth out of 78 countries in terms of bullying cases. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of character education in preventing verbal bullying behavior among students at SDN 4 Bringin. The study employs a descriptive-qualitative approach with data collection methods encompassing observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis process used techniques developed by Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the forms of verbal bullying that often occur in class 3 of SDN 4 Bringin are mocking their friends, calling their parents, and saying harsh words. Factors that influence these actions include children's personality factors, the environment, and mass media. Therefore, the role of character education is important in shaping students' positive attitudes, values, and behaviors. Through the application of values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and tolerance, students can develop a better understanding of the negative impact of verbal bullying behavior. The implementation of character education involves teachers, school parties, and parents to create effective and sustainable character education. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that character education has an important role in preventing verbal bullying behavior at SDN 4 Bringin. The implementation of strong character values and the involvement of teachers and parents will support student development. Therefore, concrete steps need to be taken to strengthen the role of character education in preventing verbal bullying behavior among students in the school environment. Keywords: verbal bullying; character education; character values.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh maraknya isu bullying yang menjadi perhatian di Indonesia, khususnya di dunia pendidikan. Indonesia menempati peringkat kelima dari 78 negara dalam hal kasus bullying. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui peran pendidikan karakter dalam mencegah perilaku verbal bullying antar siswa di SDN 4 Bringin. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Proses analisis data menggunakan teknik yang dikembangkan Miles and Huberman yaitu reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bentuk verbal bullying yang sering terjadi di kelas 3 SDN 4 Bringin yaitu mengejek temannya, memanggil dengan panggilan orang tua, dan mengucapkan kata-kata kasar. Faktor yang memengaruhi tindakan tersebut antara lain faktor kepribadian anak, lingkungan, dan media massa. Oleh karena itu, peran pendidikan karakter menjadi penting dalam membentuk sikap, nilai, dan perilaku positif siswa. Melalui penerapan nilai-nilai seperti kejujuran, tanggung jawab, kerjasama, dan toleransi, siswa dapat mengembangkan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang dampak negatif dari perilaku verbal bullying. Implementasi pendidikan karakter melibatkan guru, pihak sekolah, dan orang tua untuk menciptakan pendidikan karakter yang efektif dan berkelanjutan. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa pendidikan karakter memiliki peran penting dalam mencegah perilaku verbal bullying di SDN 4 Bringin. Implementasi nilai-nilai karakter yang kuat serta keterlibatan guru dan orang tua akan mendukung perkembangan siswa. Oleh karena itu perlu dilakukan langkah konkret untuk memperkuat peran pendidikan karakter dalam mencegah perilaku verbal *bullying* antar siswa di lingkungan sekolah. Kata Kunci: verbal *bullying*; pendidikan karakter; nilai karakter.

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Introduction

Primary school serves as a foundation for formal education, which has an important role in continuing the process of further education (Yuliastri et al., 2022). This is in line with Article 3 of Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 on the National Education System, which stipulates that the main purpose of national education is to develop the potential and shape the character and culture of a dignified nation in order to improve the intellectuality and quality of life of the people. In addition, this goal also includes the formation of students' abilities as individuals who are faithful, devoted to God Almighty, have good morals, are knowledgeable, healthy, creative, competent, independent, and democratic and responsible citizens (Maisaro et al., 2018). Education has a crucial role in shaping children's character and personality through teaching, training, and guidance in an effort to prevent deviant behavior. Conversely, a lack of attention to shaping children's character through education can result in a weak personality and make them more vulnerable to negative impacts such as cases of bullying that often occur between individuals (Dewi, 2020). Bullying is aggressive and manipulative behaviour perpetrated by one or more individuals against others that is often violent and demonstrates an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim (Rahayu & Permana, 2019).

The problem in the current educational environment is the increasing acts of violence that cause concern (Manik & Sinaga, 2022). One form of violence that often occurs is bullying. Bullying is ongoing and is usually measured over a specific frequency (e.g. daily) and period of time (Green et al., 2023). Students who bully, especially younger ones, often lack the realisation that jokes that they consider harmless can be hurtful (Paljakka, 2023). Bullying behaviour has a negative impact on a person's physical and mental health (Chen et al., 2023). In addition, bullying can negatively impact students' academic performance (Rusteholz et al., 2023). One case of bullying occurred at Jiyu 2 Mojokerto State Elementary School, where a female student was the victim of verbal taunts or insults because she was fat, which is commonly known as body shaming. This action is a form of repeated intimidation against the victim, which results in the victim feeling cornered and experiencing psychological impacts such as hunger strikes, health problems, and significant weight loss (Arsali & Sari, 2023). Bullying, especially in verbal form, has become a serious concern among elementary school students. Bullying is not only a serious problem for the victims, but also a significant problem that involves all parties. Individuals who are victims of bullying can potentially become bullying perpetrators in the future (Ani & Nurhayati, 2019). Verbal bullying, which is the act of demeaning, insulting, or intimidating, can have a long-term impact that damages children's emotional and psychological well-being. In fact, the impact can be felt throughout their lives (Pahlevi et al., 2021). However, often verbal bullying behavior is considered less risky because the impact is not physically visible, and the perpetrators tend not to realize that they have committed the act (Fadil, 2023). Therefore, this issue requires serious attention and decisive action.

The phenomenon of bullying in Indonesia is one of the largest in the world and ranks fifth for the incidence of bullying among students (Hidayati, 2023). Research results from the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) show that the level of bullying phenomenon experienced by students in Indonesia is the highest in the world. In Indonesia, 41.1% of students have experienced bullying. When compared to the average member country of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is only 23%,

this figure is much higher (Damaiyanti & Putri, 2021). The latest data from KPAI in 2022 reported 226 cases of bullying with physical and verbal violence that occurred in the school environment, which consisted of 18 cases of cyberbullying (Nugraha, 2023). The Indonesian government has an anti-bullying policy that is regulated in the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 82/2015 on the Prevention and Handling of Violence in Education Units. The aim is to provide protection and intervention to address the social impact of bullying (Kristinawati & Pranoto, 2023). In addition, various initiatives and programmes, such as the positive discipline programme and ROOTS Indonesia intervention model, have been developed to prevent and address bullying in schools (Efianingrum et al., 2023).

Efforts to prevent and deal with the phenomenon of bullying in the school environment require a holistic and serious approach from related parties. One solution for victims and perpetrators of bullying involves preventive and intervention approaches (Waseem & Nickerson, 2023). Preventive approaches include raising awareness in schools, training for educators, and establishing anti-bullying committees (Rusteholz et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the intervention approach involves quick and appropriate action in response to bullying cases, including counselling for victims and perpetrators, as well as sanctions in accordance with regulatory provisions (Fraguas et al., 2021). Nonetheless, challenges remain in the consistent implementation and monitoring of anti-bullying laws and policies. Therefore, sustained efforts are needed to strengthen bullying prevention in schools. Cases of bullying, both at school and through social media, are increasing (Setiowati & Dwiningrum, 2020). The increase in bullying cases shows the importance of character cultivation from an early age. Character education in children can be instilled when they enter elementary school, so that it can form a solid basic foundation (Sutriyani et al., 2022). Therefore, to prevent deviant behavior such as bullying, schools, especially classroom teachers, must implement character education.

Character education is an approach that has received great attention in an effort to prevent verbal bullying behavior in elementary schools (Fika & Maknun, 2023). Character education has an increasingly important role in shaping young people who are empathetic, responsible, and respectful of each other (Larozza et al., 2023). In an era where information and interactions happen so quickly, children must be equipped with knowledge and skills that go beyond academics. Character education produces individuals who have a deep understanding of their identity, form positive character traits, develop creativity, increase sensitivity to others, and develop leadership qualities that are considered the most influential to a country's progress (Aswat et al., 2022). The influence of character education is seen in children's behavior, including in actions, responses, and communication. When children have a good understanding of healthy interaction patterns, they are better able to distinguish between positive and negative, pleasant or harmful behaviors towards others, including bullying actions, which are considered deviant actions that can make people around them feel uncomfortable (Fika & Maknun, 2023).

Education plays an important, effective role and purpose in developing abilities and shaping the structure of human life. In addition, education also serves as a means to develop the personality and character of each individual (Zulela et al., 2022). Implementing character education in schools is very important to shape children's personalities, teach children how to behave, train discipline, and make children better and more directed. Quality character must be developed and applied early, because it is a critical period in the development and application of one's character (Yuwono & Prastowo, 2022). Whether realized or not, the process of character formation affects a person's view of himself and his environment, which is reflected in his daily actions (Harahap, 2021). Without character education, students are prone to moral problems such as disrespectful behavior, frequent harsh words, a lack of empathy for others,

and the possibility of conflict and even bullying (Larozza, 2023). Character education needs to be implemented in schools to prevent problems related to student character.

This research makes an important contribution in responding to the problems that often occur at SDN 4 Bringin related to verbal bullying behaviour between students. By emphasising the need for children's character building, the research shows that verbal bullying behaviour between students is still common, such as mocking their friends, calling their friends parents, and saying harsh words. Verbal bullying behaviour, namely mocking friends, occurs during the learning process, when the teacher asks questions to students and they are unable to provide answers. In addition, during break time when students are playing, they often call their friends' parents and even say harsh words when their friends interfere. This shows that verbal bullying prevention efforts need to be strengthened through a more comprehensive approach. Schools have an important role in bullying prevention efforts and various proactive measures were taken to create a safe and inclusive educational environment. Firstly, schools conduct training for teachers to raise their awareness of the signs of bullying and provide skills in responding to such cases. In addition, the establishment of an effective anti-bullying programme involves students, teachers and parents in addressing bullying behaviour. Regarding socialisation to parents, schools can organise seminars, workshops or regular meetings aimed at providing a deep understanding of the dangers of bullying and the role of parents in preventing it. Therefore, character building for children is more important than ever.

This research is in line with previous research conducted by Fika & Maknun (2023), suggesting that character building is very important to prevent bullying, so it must be trained since childhood. Purnaningtias et al. (2020) suggested that one important alternative to reduce deviant actions such as bullying is to implement student character education in elementary schools. This research is relevant because it discusses and examines the role of character education in preventing verbal bullying behaviour which is then analysed to produce a new statement based on facts. This research provides new information by explaining the importance of character education in preventing bullying behaviour, strengthening its empirical basis by linking it to a concrete case at SDN 4 Bringin. Thus, this study not only identifies the problem and confirms the urgency of character building at the primary level, but also makes a real contribution to the development of a more effective verbal bullying prevention strategy that can be implemented in the school environment. The problem formulations in this study are: (1) what is the verbal bullying behaviour among students that occurs at SDN 4 Bringin; (2) what is the role of character education in preventing verbal bullying behaviour at SDN 4 Bringin? The objectives of this study are: (1) to identify verbal bullying behaviour among students at SDN 4 Bringin; (2) to find out the role of character education in preventing verbal bullying behaviour at SDN 4 Bringin. In addition, the results of this study are expected to be the basis for improving better education policies.

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods to explore the role of character education in preventing verbal bullying behavior between students at SDN 4 Bringin. A qualitative approach is a type of research conducted to understand a certain phenomenon that has been previously studied quantitatively but whose solution has not been fully revealed (Rusli, 2021). This qualitative research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon through descriptions of behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions taken by research subjects (Adiyono et al., 2022). This research seeks to answer the questions "how", "why", and "what" about a phenomenon and provide the subject's perspective on the research problem (L.

Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). The location of this research was SDN 4 Bringin which was conducted in August - November with the research subject being grade 3 students at SDN 4 Bringin. The selection of subjects was carried out based on the consideration that problems often occur in these classes, so that the subjects chosen specifically can provide deeper and more relevant insights related to the focus of the research (Azzahra & Amaliyah, 2022).

The data collection techniques used in the study included interviews, observation, and documentation. Interview is a method where researchers interact with respondents to obtain relevant information related to the research topic (Rifa'i, 2023). The researcher used semistructured interviews and observations. Researchers asked questions to third grade teachers, perpetrators, and victims of bullying based on a prepared interview guide. This interview was conducted face-to-face, resulting in many responses that could be processed as data. Meanwhile, observation is the process of systematically collecting data through observing a research object to obtain information (Fiantika et al., 2022). Observation is done by interpreting what the researcher sees and hears so that the data can be analysed. Researchers recorded, analysed, and concluded about the forms, factors, and impacts of verbal bullying. In addition, the teacher's actions when verbal bullying occurs, the implementation of character education, and strategies carried out by teachers through character education in overcoming verbal bullying (Larozza, 2023). In addition, researchers document what is needed in depth, so that others can understand and provide appropriate explanations. Documentation activities are also used to describe data relevant to the phenomenon of bullying. Documentation activities were also used to describe data related to the condition of grade three students, as well as pictures and videos of activities related to student behaviour and the implementation of character education. The researcher used triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the validity of the data. Triangulation of techniques is done through interviews, observation, and documentation. On the other hand, source triangulation involves teachers and students as interview sources.

The data obtained in this study were then analysed using the Miles and Huberman analysis, which consists of three steps: data reduction, data presentation, and data conclusion drawing and verification (Dewanti, 2021). Data reduction is carried out after researchers collect data (Asipi et al., 2022). In this study, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. All data collected from informants, namely third grade teachers, perpetrators, and victims of bullying, will be recorded in detail. Furthermore, the results of the recording will be summarised and focused on important things so that the results of data reduction provide a clear picture to facilitate drawing conclusions. After the data reduction process is complete, the data is presented in the form of brief descriptions and tables. The data that has been presented will then be drawn conclusions and data verification in the form of narrative text that explains the role of character education in preventing verbal bullying behaviour between students at SDN 4 Bringin.

Results and Discussion

Verbal bullying is a deviant behaviour that is common in primary schools. According to research conducted in the form of observations and interviews, verbal bullying behavior can occur in various forms, both in learning and outside of learning. Problems start from trivial things and motives to disturb, such as when in class students often bother friends who are considered weak when doing assignments, or when a friend who cannot answer questions from the teacher will be ridiculed by his friend. In addition, there are students who call their friends parents and use bad names, which then causes a dispute because the victimized friend does not accept this. What often happens is that there is a form of verbal bullying that arises because of

misunderstandings and offenses between friends, which causes arguments between students. According to an interview with the class teacher, revealed that verbal bullying behavior often occurs at school and has become a habit of students.

No	Statement	frequency
1	Students mock and verbally abuse classmates.	Often
2	Students call their friends by their parents openly.	Always
3	Students use harsh or insulting words towards classmates.	Always
4	Students threaten or bully classmates.	Sometimes
5	Interfering with friends when doing assignments.	Always
6	Laughing at a friend's imperfect physique.	Sometimes

Table 1	Verbal Bully	ying Behaviou	· At Bringin 4	Elementary	v School
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Based on this table, it can be concluded that the forms of verbal bullying that often occur in class 3 of SDN 4 Bringin are disturbing friends when learning, calling friends by nicknames, calling parents' names, and saying harsh words. This study is consistent with previous research by Fadil (2023), which shows that bullying behaviors can consist of a wide range of actions, such as making threats, harassing people, calling names, humiliating them, intimidating them, and spreading negative rumors. This finding is in line with the expression Putra et al. (2023) that verbal bullying is a form of direct verbal bullying, such as mocking, making fun of, insulting, showing displeasure with classmates, calling using derogatory calls, mocking a friend's poor performance, mocking untidy or dirty clothes, being alienated from other friends because of a lack of socialization, or mocking friends who answer the wrong questions. Verbal bullying often occurs, such as mocking parents' names, mocking body odor, and saying harsh words as a form of action to show power, hurt, and even excessive jokes (Tristanti et al., 2020).

Based on observations and interviews, it has been determined that a number of internal and external factors impact the verbal bullying behavior of students in SDN 4 Bringin's class 3. Internal factors are related to the child's personality, including the possibility of a child who tends to be angry and has a personality that is considered low. Meanwhile, external factors are related to the influence of the environment, both at school and around students, as well as within the family. Students can be influenced to imitate the bad behavior or habits of older children in the environment around them. In addition, family factors such as disharmony in the family, broken home families, and the habit of speaking loudly and harshly in front of children also encourage verbal bullying behavior. The family is the place where children learn about behavior and form relationships with others. A child's experiences in the family and parenting can affect his or her relationships with peers and adaptation at school. In addition, children's relationships with family also have the potential to predict bullying behavior (Muhopilah & Tentama, 2019).

According to the results of interviews conducted with teachers, the main factors that cause verbal bullying of students are the surrounding environment and family, such as being a victim of a broken home or hearing the commotion of parents, neighbors, and friends around the house. Another factor is the influence of media such as cellphones, which undeniably has a great influence on the development of children's character. When habituation at home is disrupted, seeing things they should not see can affect the emotional aspects and growth of children. This is then brought to school and ultimately has a negative impact on the learning process at school. This research is reinforced by Ulfah (2020), who argues that family parenting, school environmental conditions, poor children's social environment, and exposure to electronic media such as the internet and television affect children's growth. One of the impacts is the emergence of deviant, aggressive behavior, and the tendency to engage in violence.

Teachers are responsible for providing direction when students are involved in verbal bullying behavior in the classroom. According to the findings of the interviews that were done regarding verbal bullying in the classroom, the first thing a teacher does is give guidance and help the class as a whole understand the benefits and drawbacks of the behavior that one of the students has engaged in. However, if the situation does not improve and the direction in the classroom is not effective, the teacher can call the children involved to the office to be given direction and understanding individually. Furthermore, the teacher not only provides direction and understanding but also motivation for them. The teacher gives appreciation to students who dare to be honest or admit their actions. The teacher gives money to them as a form of appreciation for having the courage to admit mistakes and try to behave better in the future. Through direction, understanding, and motivation, students are expected to understand the negative impact of verbal bullying behavior.

Character education is considered to have the most influential impact on children's behavior because, through the values taught, they gain a moral and ethical foundation that encourages positive attitudes in everyday life. Based on the results of interviews with teachers, it shows that to prevent and handle verbal bullying behavior, the school has implemented character education at school. In learning activities, teachers integrate character education values by involving attitudinal aspects such as religious, honesty, discipline, tolerance, hard work, creativity, democracy, independence, curiosity, love for the country, nationalism spirit, respect for achievement, friendly, peace-loving, communicative, tolerance, love to read, care for the environment, social care, and responsibility. This is expected to create students who are obedient, disciplined, and behave politely in everyday life. Thus, students have strong resilience when facing various problems. According to studies carried out by Utami et al. (2019) on bullying at the elementary school level, the initial role of teachers is to implement character education for students. Character education has an important role in shaping student character, with the aim of becoming students who behave positively both in the school environment and outside school. Providing moral education to students is the second role of teachers in preventing verbal bullying behavior between students. Moreover, integrating character values into the curriculum is a strategic step to ensure that character learning becomes an integral part of the education process.

The implementation of character education at SDN 4 Bringin is carried out through various activities, such as habituation and exemplary behaviour. Habituation through daily practices, such as saying greetings when entering class, praying, reciting asmaul husna before learning begins, and the etiquette of walking in front of elders. In addition, through exemplification, the role of teachers is very important because teachers are expected to be examples and role models for students and show behaviour that is in accordance with the character values taught. Class teachers work together with religion teachers, where they set an example and apply mutual respect to students, at least with classmates. Furthermore, teachers provide supervision by giving reprimands to students who show poor behaviour. Teachers are also in charge of guiding children involved in bullying behaviour, teaching them how to make good friends, and providing examples of positive behaviour. Therefore, a teacher's personality competence is needed to shape positive character in students in accordance with educational goals (Thoyyibah et al., 2022). In developing a positive school environment that promotes character values, a number of creative activities can be implemented. Collaborative projects provide opportunities for students to form small groups and design joint projects that reflect values such as co-operation, friendship and diversity. Furthermore, through role simulation, students can engage in scenarios that require the application of character values such as cooperation, responsibility and fairness. These activities not only increase student engagement in the habituation of character values, but also provide deep and meaningful learning experiences, integrating character concepts in real and relevant contexts. In addition, prevention and intervention approaches to bullying behaviour are in focus, where teachers not only identify problems but also provide solutions and guidance to students involved (Wijayanti & Hidayat, 2022).

Conclusion

Based on the results of research on verbal bullying among students in class 3 of SDN 4 Bringin, it can be concluded that this phenomenon occurs in various forms including disturbing friends while learning, calling friends bad names, and using harsh words. This research shows that there are internal and external factors, such as the child's personality, family environment, and interactions around the child play a role in influencing verbal bullying behaviour. The family environment, especially broken homes and poor parenting, has a significant impact. The teacher's steps in overcoming verbal bullying behaviour between students are by providing direction, understanding, and motivation to students. Character education also plays an important role in shaping students' positive behaviour in the classroom. In an effort to prevent verbal bullying behaviour between students in the classroom, teachers take concrete steps by integrating character values into learning by teaching values such as religious attitudes, honesty, tolerance, discipline, and national spirit. Specific steps may include involving students in social activities that implement character values, special training for teachers to recognise and respond to signs of verbal bullying, and collaborative approaches with parents to support the implementation of character values at home. Thus, it is expected to make a real contribution to creating a safe educational environment that supports students' positive character growth. Future researchers are expected to identify obstacles that may arise in the implementation of character education and provide solutions to overcome these obstacles.

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