

Between Jokes and Harm : Investigating Elementary Students' Perceptions of Bullying in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the views of elementary school students regarding bullying behavior in the school area, as well as to find out the types, effects, and responses of students to bullying incidents. The technique applied is a qualitative approach with a case study type, which is carried out on 5th grade students of SD Negeri Arjowilangun 05. Information was obtained through semi-structured interviews, , and observations. The results indicate that students' understanding of bullying still varies, especially in distinguishing between jokes and hurtful acts. Many students consider ridicule or jokes to be commonplace, until the effect becomes painful. The types of bullying that are often encountered are verbal, relational, and physical bullying, as well as on a smaller scale such as cyberbullying. Fear embarrassment, and low trust in teachers are the main reasons why students are hesitant to report. Students suggested increased supervision from teachers, education about bullying, and the creation of safe places to report. The study emphasizes the significance of education, active participation of schools, and the creation of a supportive environment to prevent and address bullying in the first place.

1. Introduction

Elementary schools often have bullying incidents. Elementary School (SD) is the most basic level of education in formal education in Indonesia which has a role in the sustainability of the next educational process. This is in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 23 of 2006 which states that basic education has the purpose of laying the foundation of intelligence, knowledge, personality, noble morals and skills to live independently, and follow further education. Based on the above quote, it is known that the purpose of basic education in Indonesia is to lay the foundation of intelligence, knowledge, personality, noble morals and skills in each child. Something fundamental can be likened to a foundation, where this foundation will later support and support everything that is on it. Bullying in the school environment is a topic that often appears and is discussed in the world of education. Especially in elementary school.

Recently, news about bullying in the school environment has begun to emerge, not only from secondary schools, but also from the elementary school environment (Putri, 2023). Bullying is a negative behavior pattern that is carried out repeatedly and has negative goals (Lulu, 2024). Bullying affects not only the victims, but also the learning environment, social relationships, and intellectual development of children in general. Unfortunately, many cases of bullying go unreported because they are considered normal or because of a lack of awareness by students and educators about the long-term impact of these behaviors. Students' understanding of bullying behavior is essential for prevention and treatment. Their perspective can reveal how the act is perceived: whether it is perceived as a casual joke, as a form of violence, or even as something unconscious. By understanding the way students view bullying, schools can design interventions and education that are more targeted. This can be prevented by increasing supervision of negative associations from children and friends, starting from setting examples of good things, filtering out children's friends that have a positive effect (Desry, 2023) Personal experiences of bullying often leave their mark and can shape students' perceptions of their school or social environment. Many students who are victims of bullying feel afraid and have no choice but to hide, especially when they face threats from the perpetrator. There are many instances of students who experience bullying who are afraid to tell their experiences to teachers, adults or peers because they are afraid of being treated even worse, such as more and more bullying. These forms of bullying vary, including verbal,

physical, relational, and cyberbullying, each of which can leave a different emotional trail on the student who is the victim.

This highlights the importance of understanding the hands-on experience of students to create a safer and more supportive environment. There are still many elementary school students who cannot distinguish between joking behavior and bullying behavior. This low level of awareness means that some bad behavior can be considered normal or just a joke by elementary school students. In addition, students' lack of courage to report poor behavior from students suggests that their perceptions of bullying need to be examined more deeply.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. A qualitative approach was chosen to deeply explore the perspectives of elementary school students on bullying behavior in their school environment. The case study was chosen to focus the research on a specific context, i.e. students in one or more elementary schools that are relevant to the issue of bullying. The subject of this study is a 5th grade elementary school student from SD Negeri Arjowilangun 05. The selection of students from high grades in primary school is based on the assumption that they have a more mature experience and understanding of social interactions in the school environment, including the potential for bullying. The number of participants will be determined based on the principle of data saturation, where data collection is stopped when significant new information is no longer discovered

3. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are presented based on the main themes that emerged from the analysis of semi-structured interview data, focused group discussions (FGD), and observations at SD Negeri Arjowilangun 05. Students' understanding of bullying the majority of students show an initial understanding of bullying as an act of hurting or harassing a friend. However, a deeper understanding of the intentional, repetitive, and power imbalance aspects still varies. Bullying according to 5th graders Students defined bullying as "annoying a friend," "hitting," or "saying bad things." For example, a student in class V said, "Bullying is when a friend is mean to us, like being pinched or ridiculed". The difference between jokes and bullying according to grade 5 students Around students it is difficult to distinguish between jokes and bullying. They tend to consider light-hearted ridicule or "teasing" each other as normal in friendships. A 5th grade student said, "If you only get ridiculed once, it's normal, the name is also a friend. But if you are ridiculed every day, it's just not good". Effects of bullying experiences students who have been victims of or witnessed bullying have a more sensitive and in-depth understanding of its negative impacts. They are better able to identify behaviors that were previously considered "normal" as a form of bullying. A 5th grade student who admitted that he was once made fun of because of his physique said, "I used to think it was just a joke, but it hurt my heart for a long time. It must be bullying". differences in gender perception there is a slight difference in perception between male and female students. Male students tend to focus more on direct physical and verbal bullying, while female students pay more attention to relational bullying such as ostracization and the spread of gossip.

3.1. Students' Experiences Related to Bullying

Most students report experiencing or witnessing at least one type of bullying behavior in the school environment. Forms of Bullying Experienced: The most commonly reported form of bullying is verbal bullying (teasing, unpleasant name-calling), followed by relational bullying (ostracized, gossiped), and physical bullying (pinched, pushed). Some students also mentioned experiences of cyberbullying on a small scale, such as negative comments in online class groups. Frequency and Location: Most reported bullying occurs outside of school hours, such as during breaks on the school yard or in the cafeteria. Some students also mentioned incidents in the classroom when the teacher was not focused. The frequency of the incident varies, from several times to almost daily for some victims. Emotional Impact: Students who are victims of bullying express feelings of sadness, anger, fear, and shame. Some of them withdraw from social interactions and show a decrease in interest in learning. A 5th grader with tears in his eyes said, "If I keep being teased, I feel like I don't want to go to school." Fear of Reporting: The majority of students who are victims admit to not reporting their experiences to teachers or adults. The main reasons are fear of retaliation from the perpetrator,

feeling embarrassed or afraid of being perceived as "whiny", and lack of confidence that their report will be taken seriously.

3.2. The Difference Between Jokes and Bullying in the Eyes of Students

Identify several key factors in distinguishing jokes and bullying in students, Victim's Intentions and Feelings: If the act is done with the intention of hurting or making the victim uncomfortable, and the victim feels hurt, then it is considered bullying. A 5th grader explained, "If a friend is joking but I'm laughing, it's not bullying. But if he keeps talking even though I say I don't like it, it's just bullying". Repetition: Repetitive actions tend to be perceived as bullying, although they may be just a joke at first. Balance of Power: The presence of an imbalance of power, both physical and social (for example, carried out by a group against one person), is a strong indicator of bullying for students. Impact on the Victim: If the "joke" makes the victim feel isolated, afraid, or lose confidence, then students are more likely to classify it as bullying.

3.3. Reasons for Not Being Afraid to Report

Some of the main reasons students expressed why they did not dare to report bullying were: Fear of Retaliation: This is the most dominant reason. Students are worried that the perpetrator will get angry and take worse actions if they are reported. Shame and Unpleasantness: Some students feel embarrassed or uncomfortable to share their experiences, especially when it comes to ridicule about themselves. Lack of Trust in Teachers: Some students have the perception that teachers or schools may not take effective action or even blame the victim. Friend rules: The existence of a rule among peers that considers reporting bullying as an act of "complaining" or "being unfaithful to friends" is also a barrier.

3.4. Students' Perspectives on Bullying Prevention and Handling

Students provide some advice regarding the prevention and handling of bullying: Increased Teacher Supervision: They expect teachers to be more active in supervising student interactions in various areas of the school, especially during break hours. Education about Bullying: Students suggest more frequent and engaging socialization or learning about what bullying is, its impact, and how to report it. Strict Action Against Perpetrators: Students hope that the school will provide clear and fair sanctions for the perpetrators of bullying so that they do not repeat it. Creating a Safe Space to Report: They need reassurance that they will be safe and listened to if they report bullying, without fear of being judged or ignored.

Based on the findings of the research obtained from interviews and observations at SD Negeri Arjowilangun 05, it can be seen that students' knowledge about bullying is still very low. Most students can recognize bullying in its real form, such as physical violence or repeated insults, but still have difficulty distinguishing between jokes and hurtful actions in a subtle or intentional way. Shows that support from schools is still very much needed, especially to raise students' awareness of the invisible signs of bullying, such as social exclusion or the spread of rumors. It was also found that individual experiences are a significant element in influencing students' views on bullying. Students who have experienced bullying show higher sensitivity to the effects of the behavior, while students who have never experienced the same tend to underestimate or take the behavior as normal in social interactions. Actors that make students reluctant to report bullying, such as fear, embarrassment, and low trust in the school, indicate structural and cultural obstacles in efforts to prevent and handle bullying in elementary schools. A safe reporting system and a transparent attitude from teachers and school staff are crucial to implement. In the aspect of prevention, students show an understanding of the importance of supervision from teachers and education about bullying. This shows the potential for cooperation between students and the school to create a safer and more supportive environment.

3.5. Conclusion

This study indicates that elementary school students have an early understanding of bullying, but still need to deepen, especially in distinguishing between jokes and bullying and recognizing types of bullying that are not physically visible. Individual experiences have a huge impact in shaping students' sensitivity to bullying. Most students admit to having experienced or seen acts of bullying, but are hesitant to report because they feel scared, embarrassed, or believe that the school will not take them seriously. It emphasizes how important a support system and safe space in schools is for

students to feel safe. Bullying prevention and countermeasures must involve a comprehensive approach, including continuous education, increased supervision by teachers, and the application of strict sanctions for bullying perpetrators. The construction of a school culture that fosters empathy, mutual respect, and the courage to speak up is also very important.

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