

Voice in Adversity: The Impact of Bullying on Victims' Mental Health (Case Study at SMK PGRI 2 Malang)

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Abstract

Basic education is a place where individuals build knowledge, attitudes, and positive behaviors that are used for future life. However, in reality, there have been many practices that are not for basic education, such as bullying in the school environment. This research aims to reveal the impact of bullying on the mental health of victims who are students of SMK PGRI 2 Malang. This study uses a qualitative case study method involving three students who are victims of bullying as the main informants. Informants were taken through *purposive sampling* techniques. Data were collected through structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. The collected data was analyzed using *the Miles and Huberman* model which consisted of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The process of data validity in this study uses the source triangulation technique. The results of the study showed that bullying had a significant impact on the mental health of the victim, such as anxiety, decreased self-confidence, social exclusion, and prolonged feelings of insecurity. In addition, victims tend to normalize the bullying they experience and are reluctant to report it to the school, especially BK teachers because of a lack of trust in the teacher's abilities and responses. This research highlights the importance of the role of BK teachers in handling bullying cases at school as well as fostering positive relationships and supporting students.

Keywords: Bullying; Mental Health; Vocational School Students

1. Introduction

Vocational High School (SMK) is a form of basic education that is held to prepare students to develop a professional attitude and deepen their skills. This is in line 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. Thus, it can be said that primary education in schools is where individuals build knowledge, attitudes, and positive behaviors that are used for future life. However, in reality, there have been many practices that are not for basic education, such as bullying in the school environment (Dewi, 2020).

Bullying is one of the social issues that involves negative actions that are carried out repeatedly with the aim of disturbing, and causing someone to be unhappy, uncomfortable, and feel hurt. The disorder in question can be physical or psychological (Arif & Novrianda, 2019). In addition, bullying is also defined as a form of violent behavior that involves an individual or group in physical or psychological actions against someone who is in a more vulnerable position. Bullies commonly referred to as bullies can be single individuals or groups of people, who have an awareness of their power to take any action against weaker victims. Victims of

bullying will also feel that they are weak, helpless, and feel threatened by the bully (Adiyono et al., 2022).

The act of bullying itself is divided into several types, namely physical, verbal, and indirect bullying. Physically, bullying can be in the form of hitting, kicking, and taking other people's property. Verbally, bullying can be in the form of making fun of others, insulting others, and saying words that offend others. Meanwhile, bullying can indirectly be in the form of spreading false stories, ostracizing others, or making others the target of embarrassing humor (Bete & Arifin, 2023). According to Nugroho & Nursi (2023), there are three characteristics of bullying actions carried out in schools, namely (1) there is aggressive behavior that gives the perpetrator pleasure to hurt the victim, (2) the action is carried out in an unbalanced manner, causing the victim to feel depressed, and (3) the act makes the perpetrator have the desire to repeat it.

Based on data from the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2017, the number of victims of bullying in schools around the world is estimated to reach 245 million children every year. Meanwhile, based on data from the Indonesia Child Protection Commission (KPAI), it is stated that 1567 cases of bullying occur in the educational environment (Sulistiowati et al., 2022). Then, the World Health Organization (WHO) also stated that the number of victims of bullying by the male gender is larger, namely 42% compared to the female gender, which is 37%. With the large number of bullying cases that occur in the school environment, the values that should be obtained while studying are no longer meaningful (Erina et al., 2023).

Bullying carried out in this school environment has an impact that can affect students' mental health. Mental health itself is defined as the state of an individual who experiences mature physical, intellectual, and emotional development so that the individual can accept responsibility, adjust, and obey social rules in his culture (Fakhriyani, 2019). Thus, mental health is an important aspect in realizing comprehensive individual health. However, this mental health will be disturbed if students become victims of bullying which results in decreased mental functions. Students who are victims of bullying will tend to withdraw from the environment, have prolonged trauma, be socially isolated, have decreased learning outcomes, experience anxiety, and result in depression that triggers suicidal behavior (Lusiana & Siful Arifin, 2022).

In accordance with the theory of human needs put forward by Maslow (1954) that humans have a need for security and love. In addition, humans also have a need to be appreciated by others, because this concerns the self-esteem of the human being. Thus, students who are victims of bullying can be categorized as human beings who have not met the need for security, love, and being appreciated by others. This is because students who are victims of bullying will feel anxious, afraid of being bullied, their presence is not considered, and even ostracized by the surrounding environment. As a result, these students are unlikely to be able to meet the most important basic human needs, namely the need to actualize themselves which is used to foster motivation to always grow and develop (Muazaroh & Subaidi, 2019).

Based on research conducted by Nurlelah & Mukri (2019) entitled "The Impact of Bullying on the Mental Health of Students (Case Study at the Darul Muttaqien Parung Islamic Boarding School)" the results were obtained that students who were victims of bullying

experienced various health problems. These health problems can be reviewed both physically and mentally, such as injuries due to violence, trauma, stress, fear of living in the Islamic boarding school environment, and even resigning from the Islamic boarding school because they are worried about experiencing the bullying case again. Similar research was also conducted by Yulianti et al. (2024) entitled "The Impact of Bullying on Mental Health". From this study, the results were obtained that the impact of bullying is very detrimental to the mental health of the victim. Victims of bullying often experience feelings of sadness, loss of interest in activities, and feelings of hopelessness. In addition, bullying victims also have difficulty sleeping, waking up regularly at night, and experiencing recurring nightmares. This impact will not only affect the mental health of the victim directly but will also have an impact on their overall quality of life.

Everything that has been explained previously is the basis for the researcher to conduct research entitled "Voice in Adversity: The Impact of Bullying on the Mental Health of Victims (Case Study at SMK PGRI 2 Malang)". This research aims to reveal the impact of bullying on the mental health of victims who are students of SMK PGRI 2 Malang. Meanwhile, the urgency of this study is to provide information about bullying in the world of education, so that individuals can be more aware of bullying. In addition, this research is also expected to contribute to the field of Guidance and Counseling as a reference for BK Teachers / Counselors in fostering character and personality education of students, so that students can create good relationships with others and minimize disputes or conflicts between them.

2. Method

This study uses a type of qualitative research in the form of a case study that aims to describe intensively and in detail the occurrence of a case (Rusandi & Rusli, 2021). The location of this research is at SMK PGRI 2 Malang on May 6-7, 2024. Thus, the informants of this research are students of SMK PGRI 2 Malang who have experienced bullying. In determining the informants, the researcher applied a *purposive sampling* technique in which 3 informants were selected by predetermined criteria. These criteria include (1) Students aged 15 - 18 years, (2) Active students of SMK PGRI 2 Malang, (3) Students who have been victims of bullying among students of SMK PGRI 2 Malang.

The procedure in this study consists of (1) the pre-field stage to see the cases that occur and prepare a research design, (2) the fieldwork stage is carried out by collecting research data at the location and informants that have been determined, (3) the data analysis stage, where the researcher analyzes and interprets the research results, and draws conclusions which are included in the data validity process. At the data analysis stage, the techniques used are techniques from *Miles and Huberman* which include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Abdussamad, 2021).

The data validity process in this study uses a source triangulation technique consisting of interviews, observations, and studies from various related journals. The interviews used in this study are structured interviews based on systematic interview guideline instruments. The observation used is direct observation. Meanwhile, the documentary in this study uses written documents and also recorded documents. Written documents in the form of supporting journals and school documents related to research topics, as well as recorded documents in the form of photos taken during the interview process.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Result

3.1.1 The Impact of Bullying Has an Influence on the Victim's Psychology

3.1.1.1 Normalizing Bullying

The results of the study show that at SMK PGRI 2 Malang, bullying is still often carried out by fellow friends, both in the same class and different. Of the three informants, it shows that the three have been victims of *bullying* from their peers. There are interesting findings regarding the response of one of the informants that shows as if *bullying* that occurs in the school environment is a common occurrence

"I was once a victim of *bullying* in the school environment, at first I was afraid but over time I didn't accept it, finally put up a resistance that ended up punching each other. But my assumption when I resisted would definitely stop, but I was still *bullied* which I finally justified because I was lazy and tired when I was constantly being ladenined, as a result I often skipped school", (informant 3)

"Actually, this act of bullying is very self-excruciating, but with a lot of news on TV about bullying plus I felt it myself in school, I became thinking that this *bullying* does happen naturally in the school environment", (informant 1)

3.1.1.2 Anxiety

According to Zulqarnain & Thoha, (2022), it is stated that bullying only produces fear, low self-esteem, and feelings of worthlessness that result in difficulty concentrating at school, socializing, and even not wanting to go to school. Therefore, the act of bullying has a negative impact on a person's mental health which has affected their psychological condition, In this research at SMK PGRI 2 Malang, several impacts were found due to bullying that occurred, the first was the emergence of anxiety.

"Since I was *bullied*, when I was about to go to school, I felt anxious because the bullying treatment I got was always ringing in my head and I was afraid that I would get more severe bullying from my friends", (informant 2)

3.1.1.3 Lack of self-confidence

The impact of the second *act of bullying* felt by the victim at SMK PGRI 2 Malang is the lack of confidence they have. As a result of the *verbal bullying* about her face, the victim felt less confident to show her real face by covering her with a mask.

"Every time I go to school I wear a mask, as well as when I am in class because I feel less confident when I immediately show my face to my classmates. This has happened since the *bullying* treatment I have received", (informant 2)

3.1.1.4 Ostracized

The impact of the third act of *bullying* felt by the victim at SMK PGRI 2 Malang is feeling insecure. The reason for body odor is the main reason why the victim feels shunned and excluded by her classmates, which is included in the form of *indirect bullying* through exclusion from friends.

"When I want to invite friends to rest together or want to join in the conversation carried out by friends, I am not ignored as if no one thinks I exist. I once heard my friend whisper to another friend that I didn't smell good. Therefore, I become insecure when I am close to my friends", (informant 1)

3.1.1.5 Feeling Less Secure

The impact of the fourth act of bullying felt by the victim at SMK PGRI 2 Malang is feeling unsafe when at school which results in frequent absences from school and skipping school for no apparent reason. This feeling of insecurity was felt by the three victims of bullying with different expressions.

"When I was at school, I felt unsafe because of the bullying I had received. I often get anxious and want to go home quickly when the school bell signals that the time to go home has rang", (informant 1)

"I don't feel safe anymore when I'm in the classroom. I felt a lot of eyes looking at me as if they were commenting on my appearance", (informant 2)

"Kalau di sekolah, saya sudah merasa tidak ada kata aman lagi, oleh karena itu saya sering melampiaskannya untuk bolos sekolah, lalu tidak masuk sekolah walaupun saya di rumah pamitnya kepada orang tua saya pergi ke sekolah. Karena saya sudah malas dan capek menghadapinya", (informan 3)

The psychological condition of the three NAM, EP, and BPF informants can be said to be not good, which can be proven by the three informants revealing that they often feel anxious and stressed, which affects the way they behave. This psychological condition reflects the level of mental health experienced by the three NAM, EP, and BPF informants. A person's mental health is related to the psychological condition of each individual which can affect attitudes or behaviors and even a person's character (WHO, 2022).

The results of the research at SMK PGRI 2 Malang obtained are in line with the research of Hopeman, et al. (2020), which shows that the impact of bullying that often occurs is trauma, feelings of inferiority, decreased learning achievement, and self-isolation. In addition, research by Jelita, et al. (2021) also shows that bullying can have a significant psychological impact on victims. These impacts can include loss of confidence, fear, trauma, shame, and anger.

3.1.2 Victim's Strategy in Overcoming the Impact of Bullying on Him

The results showed that the victims of bullying at SMK PGRI 2 Malang overcame bullying by being silent and did not want to report to the school because they felt reluctant. When going to report to the school, especially to the Guidance and Counseling Teacher (BK), the victim felt that the school would not follow up because one of the victims had tried to report but did not produce anything and besides, the victim said that the feeling of lack of trust to tell about the

bullying received to the Guidance and Counseling Teacher (BK) made him uncomfortable and open to reporting.

"I'm not sure if I want to report bullying that occurred at school because I once reported it when I was initially bullied, but the BK teacher was very stupid. I was even told that maybe it was a joke and finally I was told to talk carefully first with my friend who bullied me. Finally, until now I don't believe that I want to report to BK", (informant 3)

"I actually had the intention to report the bullying I got, but I lacked courage because I wasn't sure whether it would be handled or not. I also don't have the courage to report because I have never communicated specifically with the BK teacher, therefore I think that if I report later, I am afraid that I will be the one who will be blamed", (informant 1)

Thus, seeing victims who have begun to normalize bullying and the fear of reporting to the school because they feel less trust and feel that they will not be followed up indicates the need for extra handling from the school. In this case, BK teachers should be more aware and attentive to the condition of their students by starting from small things such as approaching so that students are comfortable communicating and have the courage to pour out their thoughts

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 How the Impact of Bullying Affects the Psychological Condition of Victims

Research at SMK PGRI 2 Malang shows that bullying often occurs among students, both peers and different classes. Informant 3 was initially afraid, but then resisted which ended in violence. However, bullying does not stop, so informants accept bullying as something normal and often skip school. Informant 1 also pointed out that bullying is considered normal because of its frequent occurrence and media exposure. According to Maslow's theory (1954), humans have a need for security, love, and being appreciated by others. When students accept bullying as normal, they fail to meet these basic needs, thus hindering self-actualization (Muazaroh & Subaidi, 2019).

Bullying causes anxiety in the victim. Informant 2 felt anxiety every time he was going to go to school because of the bullying experience that kept ringing in his head. Zulqarnain & Thoha (2022) stated that bullying produces fear, low self-esteem, and feelings of worthlessness that interfere with concentration, social skills, and the desire to go to school. According to Maslow (1954), the need for a sense of security is very important for individuals. When students feel anxious due to bullying, these needs are not met, thus hindering their psychological development.

Bullying also causes victims to feel less confident. Informant 2 felt less confident in showing his face and always covered it with a mask due to verbal bullying about his face. According to Maslow's theory (1954), the need to be valued is essential to build self-esteem. When students feel unappreciated due to bullying, their confidence decreases.

Victims of bullying experience social exclusion. Informant 1 felt shunned by his friends because of body odor, which was considered a form of indirect bullying. Arif & Novrianda

(2019) stated that bullying involves repeated negative actions aimed at disrupting and causing discomfort. Social exclusion prevents students from meeting the need for love and belonging.

Bullying makes victims feel unsafe at school. Informant 1 felt anxious and wanted to go home quickly while at school. Informant 2 was uncomfortable with the many eyes that looked at him as if commenting on his appearance. Informant 3 often skips school because he feels that there is no longer a sense of security at school. According to Maya (2015), mental health is the state of an individual who experiences mature physical, intellectual, and emotional development, so that he can accept responsibility, adjust, and obey social rules. When students feel insecure due to bullying, their mental health is disturbed, hindering the fulfillment of basic human needs according to Maslow (1954).

Research at SMK PGRI 2 Malang found that the psychological condition of the three informants (NAM, EP, and BPF) was not good, indicated by often feeling anxious and stressed that affected their behavior. This condition reflects the level of their mental health being impaired, in line with the research of Hopeman et al. (2020) and Jelita et al. (2021) which showed that the impact of bullying includes trauma, insecurity, decreased learning achievement, and self-isolation.

3.2.2 Victim's Strategy in Overcoming the Impact of Bullying on Him

Research at SMK PGRI 2 Malang shows that bullying victims tend to choose to be silent and not report to the school because they feel reluctant. One of the victims, Informant 3, felt that reporting the bullying case to the Guidance and Counseling Teacher (BK) would not be followed up, because he had reported it before but did not get satisfactory results. This informant also felt less confident to tell the BK teacher, so he felt uncomfortable and was open to reporting. This distrust was exacerbated by the attitude of the BK teacher who was considered not serious in handling bullying reports, by considering it as a joke and suggesting to talk nicely with the bullying perpetrator.

According to Maslow's theory (1954), basic human needs include a sense of security and love, as well as the need to be appreciated by others. When students who are victims of bullying feel that there is no real action from the school and do not receive adequate support, these basic needs are not met, thus hindering their psychological development (Muazaroh & Subaidi, 2019). Informant 1 also stated that he had the intention to report the act of bullying, but lacked courage because he was not sure whether it would be handled or not. This lack of courage is caused by a lack of communication with BK teachers, which raises fears that they will be blamed if they report.

Seeing victims who began to normalize bullying and fear to report to the school because they felt less trust and would not be followed up, shows the need for extra handling from the school. BK teachers should be more aware and attentive to the condition of their students, starting from small things such as approaching students so that they are comfortable communicating and have the courage to pour out their thoughts.

Vocational High Schools (SMK) aim to prepare students to develop their professional attitudes and skills, in line with the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 23 of 2006 which states that basic education aims to lay the foundation for intelligence, knowledge, personality, noble morals, and skills to live independently and follow further

education (Dewi, 2020). However, many practices are not by the goals of basic education, such as bullying in the school environment (Arif & Novrianda, 2019).

Bullying involves negative actions that are carried out repeatedly with the aim of disturbing, causing a person to be unhappy, uncomfortable, and feel hurt, both physically and psychologically (Adiyono et al., 2022). This act of bullying has a significant impact on students' mental health, disrupting their physical, intellectual, and emotional development (Amaliyah et al., 2023). By Maslow's theory, students who are victims of bullying can be categorized as human beings who have not met the need for security, love, and being appreciated by others, so they are unlikely to be able to meet the basic needs of self-actualization that are used to foster motivation to always grow and develop (Muazaroh & Subaidi, 2019).

Penelitian oleh Nurlelah & Mukri (2019) dan Yulianti et al. (2024) menunjukkan bahwa korban bullying mengalami berbagai masalah kesehatan fisik dan mental, seperti luka akibat kekerasan, trauma, stres, rasa takut, menarik diri dari lingkungan, penurunan hasil belajar, kecemasan, hingga depresi yang memicu perilaku bunuh diri (Prihatiningsih dkk, 2023). Dampak ini tidak hanya mempengaruhi kesehatan mental korban secara langsung, tetapi juga berdampak pada kualitas hidup mereka secara keseluruhan.

Dengan demikian, penelitian yang dilakukan di SMK PGRI 2 Malang ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap dampak bullying terhadap kesehatan mental korban dan memberikan informasi mengenai bullying di dunia pendidikan. Diharapkan, hasil penelitian ini dapat memberikan kontribusi dalam bidang Bimbingan dan Konseling, sehingga Guru BK atau Konselor dapat membina pendidikan karakter dan kepribadian siswa, menciptakan hubungan yang baik antar sesama, dan meminimalisir adanya perselisihan atau konflik di antara mereka.

4. Conclusion

Research conducted at SMK PGRI 2 Malang revealed that bullying still often occurs among students, both in their peers and in different classes. The psychological impact caused by bullying is significant, including normalization of bullying, anxiety, lack of confidence, exclusion, and feelings of insecurity. Victims of bullying experience a variety of psychological problems that affect their mental health, hinder psychological development, and hinder the fulfillment of basic human needs such as security, love, and value, according to Maslow's theory (1952).

The handling of bullying at SMK PGRI 2 Malang is still ineffective, shown by the distrust of students to report bullying incidents to the school, especially Guidance and Counseling Teachers (BK). The victim felt that there was no real action and lack of support from the school. Therefore, a more proactive and empathetic approach is needed from BK teachers to support students who are victims of bullying. This research is expected to contribute to the field of Guidance and Counseling, help create a safer and more supportive school environment for students, and minimize conflicts and disputes between them.

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