

# The Implementation of Character Education as a Solution to Prevent Bullying in Schools

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## ABSTRACT

Bullying is a serious problem that persists in schools and negatively impacts students' psychological and social development, as well as their academic achievement. Bullying prevention efforts require a preventative and sustainable approach, one of which is through the implementation of character education. This article aims to examine the application of character education as a solution to preventing bullying in schools. This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method, through a review of various scientific sources such as journals, books, and relevant educational policy documents. The results of the study indicate that character education plays a crucial role in instilling moral values such as empathy, tolerance, responsibility, honesty, and mutual respect, which can significantly reduce bullying behavior. The integrated implementation of character education through classroom learning, school culture, extracurricular activities, and educator role models can create a safe and conducive school climate. Thus, character education can be a strategic and effective solution in efforts to prevent bullying in schools if implemented consistently and sustainably.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Character education has a very important role in shaping a person's personality and morals, especially in dealing with the complexities of modern life. Through character education, individuals are not only taught to understand positive values such as integrity, responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and concern for others, but are also guided to realize these values in real life. Character education is not only limited to the process of cognitive knowledge transfer, but a process of soul formation that trains individuals to have high ethics, empathy, and moral awareness (Lisma Meilia Wijayanti, 2022). With character education, a person is able to develop self-awareness of good values and build the ability to make wise decisions in everyday situations. Values such as tolerance, respect, and empathy will

enable individuals to establish healthy and constructive social relationships, thereby creating a harmonious, inclusive, and supportive environment (Sagala, 2024).

Character education is actually not new, it has been the core of the educational process since thousands of years ago, both in formal form in educational institutions and in informal environments such as family and community. Values such as respecting others, upholding justice, maintaining equality, caring for social welfare, and the spirit of mutual cooperation, are the ideals of a democratic society that can only be realized if character education is consistently instilled from an early age. In the classical understanding, a person who is considered to have good character is usually associated with moral qualities such as integrity, trust, enthusiasm in carrying out duties, and being reliable by others (Triyanto, 2020). Therefore, building the character of students in the digital era is not just a necessity, but a must in shaping the future of a more civilized nation with a strong personality.

Schools are educational institutions that not only function as a place for knowledge transfer, but also as a vehicle for the formation of students' character and personality. In this context, schools have a strategic role in instilling moral, ethical, and social values that are the foundation of student behavior in social life. However, the reality on the ground shows that the school environment has not fully become a safe and comfortable space for all students. One of the serious problems that is still often encountered is the practice of *bullying* or bullying.

In reality, in school there are still many students who do not achieve optimal development. One of the phenomena that has attracted attention in today's world of education is violence (*bullying*) in schools, both by teachers against students, and by students against other students. The rise of brawls and violence carried out by students at school which increasingly adorn the news columns on print and electronic media pages is proof that human values have been uprooted. Of course, these cases of violence not only tarnish the image of education that has been believed by many people as a place where the humanization process takes place, but also raise questions, even lawsuits from various parties that are increasingly critical of questioning the essence of education in schools today (H. M. Purba, Zainuri, Daffa, Nurhafizah, & Azhari, 2024) (Y. A. Purba & Harahap, 2022).

*Bullying* is an act of intimidation by a stronger party against a weaker party that can be directed in various forms. Experts state that *school bullying* may be a form of aggressiveness between students that has the most negative impact on its victims. This is due to an imbalance of power where the perpetrators come from students who feel more senior to take certain actions to the victim, namely students who are more junior and they feel helpless because they cannot resist (Putri, Dimas, & Rohmani, 2022).

*Bullying* in elementary school is a complex problem that continues to evolve, encompassing various forms of aggressive behavior including physical, verbal, social, and cyber. *Physical bullying* includes actions such as hitting, kicking, or physically intimidating. *Verbal bullying* involves insults, ridicule, or threats hurled at the victim. Meanwhile, *social bullying* includes ostracizing, spreading rumors, or manipulating relationships between friends. In today's digital era, *cyber bullying* is also increasingly common, where perpetrators use social media or online platforms to attack victims. These forms of *bullying* can create an uncondusive learning environment, where victims feel unsafe and uncomfortable to learn. This discomfort has an impact on a decrease in motivation to learn, which ultimately affects students' academic achievement (Ummah, Zumrotun, & Muhaimin, 2025). Learning motivation is a key factor in academic success, and *bullying* can be one of the obstacles to increasing student engagement in the learning process. By understanding these forms of *bullying*, schools and communities can be more vigilant in detecting and handling bullying cases, creating a safer and more supportive environment for students.

There are several ways to overcome *bullying*, especially in schools, namely through character education (Yuyarti, 2018), through behavior counseling and the formation of an anti-bullying team in schools (Prasetyo & Fanreza, 2023). The role of teachers is very important in efforts to prevent and handle *bullying* in schools because apart from being educators, teachers are also the ones who directly observe the daily behavior and attitudes of students at school (Firmansyah, 2021). In general, ways to prevent and overcome *bullying* are by: increasing awareness and education, building a safe and

inclusive environment, developing anti-bullying programs, instilling empathy and social skills, enforcing rules and sanctions, and involving parents and the community.

Therefore, efforts are needed to increase social awareness, especially for children, about the importance of preventing bullying from an early age. This bullying prevention effort can be trained from a young age so that it will become a habit that is embedded in students (Wulansari et al., 2023). To educate the public about the dangers of bullying, the government has issued Law Number 35 of 2014 as an amendment to Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning child protection, in the law it is stated that "Child protection is all activities to guarantee and protect children and their rights so that they can live, grow, develop, and participate, optimally in accordance with the dignity and dignity of humanity, and receive protection from violence and discrimination".

Strengthening character education is one of the solutions to overcome this bullying problem. According to Omeri (2015) quoted from Fadilah et al., (2021), "Character education is a system of naming character values that includes the components of knowledge, awareness, and action to carry out these values, both towards the creator, yourself, fellow humans, the living environment, and the homeland" (Fadilah et al., 2021). Character education can help students develop empathy, respect, and responsibility towards others, so they can prevent bullying behavior. This is in line with what Widiyanto (2015) said, "If children are accustomed from childhood to habits of ethical values, respect for themselves and others, responsibility, integrity, and self-discipline, then this will remain imprinted until adulthood.

Based on this description, it is important to examine more deeply how the application of character education can be an effective solution in preventing *bullying* in schools. This study is expected to contribute to the development of educational policies and practices that are oriented towards the formation of students' character.

## 2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method. Literature study or literature research is research based on the analysis of books, papers, articles, journals, and other literature materials that are still relevant (Sugiyono, 2013)(Moleong, 2003)m. This approach was chosen to examine in depth the concept and application of character education as a solution to prevent *bullying* in schools through the study of various relevant scientific sources. Research data were obtained from articles in national journals, reference books, and education policy documents that discuss character education and *bullying* in the school environment. Data collection is carried out through documentation studies, namely by searching, selecting, and reviewing literature that is in accordance with the focus of the research. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques, by reducing data, presenting data in the form of narratives, and drawing conclusions based on the relationship between concepts that discuss character education and bullying in the school environment.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Definition of bullying and forms of bullying in schools

*Bullying* is a psychosocial problem by repeatedly insulting and degrading others which has a negative impact on the perpetrator and victim of *bullying* where the perpetrator has more power than the victim. *Bullying* is an act or treatment aimed at physical, verbal, and emotional forms from a person or group who feels superior to someone who is physically and mentally weaker which aims to provide resistance so that the intended victim suffers physically to his psychological system. *Bullying* is aggressive or manipulative behavior that is carried out deliberately by a person or group of people who feel strong with the aim of hurting or harming a person or group (Hafiqly, Ashrof, Putra, & Jenita, 2025).

Bullying behavior is a negative act in which a person intentionally causes injury or discomfort to another person. This mostly reflects aggressive behavior that involves physical contact, abusive words,

or even insulting facial expressions or body movements. In addition, bullying can also include the deliberate exclusion of a group.

To be classified as *bullying*, there are several criteria that must be met. First, the act must be deliberate and aimed at hurting or scaring the victim. Second, such behavior must occur repeatedly and last for a long period of time, indicating a sustained pattern of oppression or abuse of power. Third, there must be an imbalance in power, where the victim finds it difficult or helpless to defend himself against the perpetrator (Pradana, Nasution, & Dewi, 2024).

This means that this definition of *bullying* emphasizes that the behavior involves deliberate, repetitive, aggressive actions that occur in interpersonal relationships characterized by an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. There are two types of bullying, namely *direct bullying* and *indirect bullying*. *Direct bullying* occurs when the perpetrator performs bullying behavior directly to the victim, such as punching, ridicule, or other aggressive actions directly.

Meanwhile, *indirect bullying* occurs when the perpetrator engages in indirect bullying behavior against the victim, such as by ostracizing or isolating them. Exclusion or exile is an act that aims to isolate or reject a particular individual from his or her social environment (Almira & Marheni, 2021). This can happen through refusal in social interactions, avoiding the victim's presence in certain activities or groups, or even restricting the victim's access to important resources.

Forms of *bullying* can be grouped into three categories, namely:

#### **Physical bullying**

*Physical bullying* involves direct actions that cause physical violence to the victim. Examples include slapping, kicking, stepping on the foot, stumbling, spitting, throwing with objects, or even punishing by making the victim run around the field or do push-ups.

#### **Bullying verbal**

*Verbal bullying* is a type that is detected through the senses of hearing, and involves the use of words or language that hurt or degrade the dignity of the victim. Examples include cursing, insulting, nicknames, yelling, public humiliation, accusing, spreading gossip, and spreading slander.

#### **Mental or psychological bullying**

*This bullying* is often considered the most dangerous because it is often not detected directly by the senses of sight or hearing. This includes behaviors that attack the victim's mental or psychological well-being, such as looking at cynical, committing terror through messages or SMS, humiliating or sneering (Adnan, 2017).

Based on the definition that has been outlined earlier, it can be concluded that *bullying* is behavior that violates social norms, and is intentionally carried out by a stronger or dominant individual against a weaker individual, with the aim of intimidating, intimidating, or making the victim feel unhappy. Therefore, it is important to understand the definition of bullying so that each individual can recognize such actions and take steps to prevent and avoid such behaviors.

#### **The concept of character education in bullying prevention**

The formation of psychological and socio-cultural character in individuals is a function of all human individual potentials (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) in the context of socio-cultural interaction (in the family, educational unit, and society) and lasts throughout life. Character configuration in the context of the totality of psychological and socio-cultural processes is grouped into: *spiritual and emotional development*, *mental development*, *physical and kinesthetic development*, and *affective and creativity development*.

Strengthening character education has been regulated in various laws and regulations. Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning the Strengthening of Character Education, hereinafter abbreviated as PPK, is an education movement under the responsibility of the education unit. To strengthen the character of students, it can be through the harmonization of heart, taste,

thought, and sports with the involvement and cooperation between educational units, families, and the community as part of the National Movement for Mental Revolution (GNRM) (Harijanti, Siswanto, & Sakinah, 2021).

The information that develops today has diverse and destructive values for the growth and development of very complex student characters. Hendarman (2019) explained that the complexity of character values conceptually consists of ethical, logical, aesthetic and kinesthetic values. Ethical values are weighed by good and bad norms, logic with right and wrong norms, aesthetics with beautiful and ugly norms, while kinesthetic values are weighed by the norms of can and tuna (Hendarman, 2019)" This means that character values can be developed through the educational unit path with attitude assessment.

Educational units are effective institutions to shape the character of students and become a center for strengthening character education. Character education that gives birth to noble morals must immediately become a concern for all parties. The rise of moral problems, child crimes in cyberspace, student brawls and bullying that are on the rise make us work hand in hand in shaping the character of students. More than just being concerned about the negative behavior of some students, character education actually wants to foster a spirit of optimism and hope for the achievement of their goals in the future as responsible citizens of the nation and state through various professions that they will get in the future.

Strengthening Character Education in educational units is carried out by applying Pancasila values in character education, especially including religious values, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love of the homeland, respect for achievements, communicative, love of peace, love of reading, caring for the environment, social care, and responsible. These values can be crystallized into five main character values, namely: (1) religious, (2) nationalist, (3) independent, (4) integrity, and (5) mutual cooperation.

Character education is a planned process to instill moral, ethical, and social values in students so that they form individuals with noble and responsible character. Character education is not only oriented to the cognitive aspect, but also touches the affective and psychomotor realms, so that the values learned can be realized in daily attitudes and behaviors. In the context of national education, character education is an important foundation in forming a generation with strong personalities and behaves according to social norms (H. E. Mulyasa, 2023)(E. Mulyasa, 2014).

In relation to bullying prevention, character education has a strategic role because it emphasizes the development of the values of empathy, care, and respect for others. *Bullying* often arises due to the individual's low ability to understand the feelings of others and weak moral control. Through character education, learners are guided to realize that every individual has the same right to be respected and treated fairly.

Character education includes three main components, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These three components are an important foundation in preventing *bullying*, because students not only know that *bullying* is wrong behavior, but also have emotional sensitivity and the willingness to act positively in social life (Lickona, 1991)(Lickona, 2004).

Character values such as tolerance, responsibility, honesty, and mutual respect are very relevant in efforts to prevent *bullying* in schools. Instilling the value of tolerance helps students accept differences in backgrounds, abilities, and peer characters. Meanwhile, the value of responsibility and honesty encourages students to be open and resolve conflicts without violence (Zubaedi, 2013)(Zubaedi, 2011).

Thus, character education not only functions as a means of forming students' personalities, but also as a preventive effort in creating a safe and conducive school climate. Schools that consistently implement character education tend to be able to suppress *bullying* behavior, because moral values have been internalized in school culture and the behavior of school residents as a whole.

### **The application of character education as a solution to *prevent bullying* in schools**

Character education is an approach to instill several character values in students in educational institutions. This approach involves elements of vision, understanding or desire, as well as steps to realize these values, as well as paying attention to relationships with God Almighty, oneself, friends, the environment, and fellow citizens, with the aim of forming a whole and good human being (Aswat, 2022).

The application of character education in general has the goal of creating or producing the character of students so that they can become virtuous, tolerant, and persistent individuals. One of the benefits of implementing character education in schools is that it can shape children's personalities, educate them on how to behave, train discipline, and allow them to be better and directed (Khasanah, Mahrudin, & Suherman, 2024). So it can be concluded that the cultivation of character education in students is very important because with the help of character education students will be able to have good morals, have a sense of empathy, and be able to avoid acts of bullying.

The application of character education as a solution to prevent bullying must be carried out comprehensively and integrated. It is not enough to teach character education conceptually, but needs to be realized in the real practice of school life. In the school environment, character education is an important foundation for building mutual respect, empathy, and social responsibility. These values are very relevant in preventing *bullying*, because bullying behavior basically arises from weak moral control and low concern for others. The application of character education can be done through: *First*, the integration of character values in the learning process in the classroom. Teachers play an important role as facilitators and role models in instilling values such as honesty, discipline, cooperation, and mutual respect. The example of teachers in behaving and interacting with students is the main factor in the success of character education, because students tend to imitate the attitudes and actions they see every day.

*Second*, character education is also applied through school culture and rules. School rules that emphasize the value of non-violence, respect for individual rights, and peaceful conflict resolution can prevent *bullying*. In addition, extracurricular activities and habituation programs are also important means in the implementation of character education. Through religious, social, and leadership activities, students are trained to work together, respect differences, and develop empathy. These activities help students internalize character values more deeply because they are carried out through direct experience and intense social interaction (E. Mulyasa, 2014).

*Third*, the success of the implementation of character education in preventing *bullying* is inseparable from the involvement of all school residents. School principals, teachers, education staff, parents, and the community need to work together in creating an educational environment that supports character building. Synergy between school and family is very important so that the character values instilled in schools can be strengthened and continued in the home environment (Rigby, 2018).

With the consistent and continuous implementation of character education, schools can build a conducive and violence-free climate. Character education does not only function as a curative effort against *bullying* behavior, but rather as a preventive step in forming students with noble character and social personality. Therefore, character education is a strategic solution in preventing *bullying* in schools.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Character education plays an important role in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors through the cultivation of moral values such as empathy, tolerance, responsibility, honesty, and mutual respect. These values are the main foundation in preventing bullying behavior, because it helps students understand and respect the feelings and rights of others. Through character education, students not only know that *bullying* is wrong behavior, but also have the awareness and willingness to be positive in social interactions. The application of character education as a solution to prevent *bullying* needs to be carried out in an integrated manner through the learning process in the classroom, school culture

and rules, extracurricular activities, and the example of educators and education personnel. In addition, the involvement of all school residents, including parents and the community, is needed so that character education can run consistently and continuously. Thus, character education is a strategic and preventive solution in efforts to prevent *bullying* in schools. The implementation of planned, consistent, and sustainable character education is able to create a safe, comfortable, and conducive school climate, as well as form students with noble character and social personality.

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