

## Psychoeducational Program on Anti-Bullying for Elementary School Students in Cimahi City

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### Abstract

Bullying remains a critical issue in Indonesian elementary schools, yet culturally adapted preventive interventions are still limited. This study aimed to implement and evaluate an anti-bullying psychoeducation program for elementary students in Cimahi City. Using a quasi-experimental pre-post design, the program was delivered to 40 students in grades 3 and 4 across two public schools. The intervention integrated cognitive instruction, emotional awareness activities, discussions, video demonstrations, and roleplay simulations, adapted from the Take A Stand framework. Data were collected through pre-post questionnaires measuring knowledge, empathy, and assertive bystander intentions, supported by qualitative observations and student reflections. Results showed substantial improvements across all domains: knowledge increased by 36.4%, empathy by 28.6%, and assertive intentions by 36.3%. Qualitative findings revealed enhanced emotional expression, stronger peer support, and greater willingness to seek help from trusted adults. The novelty of this study lies in its culturally contextualized, participatory psychoeducation model implemented within a semi-urban Indonesian setting. The program demonstrates that brief, SEL-based interventions can effectively enhance children's cognitive and emotional competencies related to bullying. These findings highlight the importance of early psychological education and suggest that culturally tailored psychoeducation can serve as a scalable approach to fostering safer, more inclusive school environments.

**Keywords:** Bullying, Education, Elementary School, Students, Psychoeducational

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### INTRODUCTION

Bullying remains one of the most persistent social problems affecting children at various educational levels, including elementary schools. It not only threatens victims' physical and mental health but also disrupts the overall learning atmosphere, reduces motivation, and damages the social climate within classrooms. Bullying behavior often stems from an imbalance of power whether physical, emotional, or social and tends to occur repeatedly toward individuals perceived as weaker by their peers (Pepler et al., 2008; Gaffney et al., 2019). Numerous studies

have shown that victims of bullying frequently experience negative psychological consequences such as depression, anxiety, trauma symptoms, and lower academic achievement (Ledwell & King, 2015; Wolke & Lereya, 2015; Kwan et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, bullying continues to be a serious concern in the education sector. According to data from the The Indonesian Child Protection Commission also known as Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia (KPAI) and the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI), hundreds of bullying cases are reported every year, with elementary school students being the most frequent victims. The forms of bullying reported include physical aggression (55.5%), verbal abuse (29.3%), and psychological intimidation (15.2%). This indicates that preventive mechanisms in primary education remain insufficient, particularly in shaping students' empathy and conflict-resolution skills (Shetgiri, 2017; Purba et al., 2024). Cities such as Cimahi, located in West Java, exhibit similar challenges, particularly in high-density urban areas where diverse social backgrounds shape children's interactions (Low & Van Ryzin, 2014).

Bullying in elementary schools can take many forms, such as physical violence, verbal insults, social exclusion, and, more recently, cyberbullying (Wang et al., 2009; Modecki et al., 2014; Johansson & Englund, 2021). These behaviors are influenced by multiple factors, including children's temperament, parenting styles, peer interactions, media exposure, and the broader school environment (Edwards et al., 2016; Agustin et al., 2024). When left unaddressed, bullying may lead to long-term emotional damage and can foster antisocial behaviors that persist into adolescence or adulthood (Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Gaffney et al., 2019).

Various studies have attempted to design and implement school-based interventions to prevent bullying. Meta-analytic evidence suggests that psychoeducational approaches and social-emotional learning (SEL) programs can effectively reduce bullying incidents while improving students' empathy and prosocial behavior (Durlak et al., 2011; Evans et al., 2014; Taylor et al., 2017). The KiVa anti-bullying program developed in Finland is one of the most well-established interventions, showing strong evidence of reducing both bullying and victimization rates through whole-school strategies (Salmivalli & Poskiparta, 2012; Kärnä et al., 2013). Similar results have been observed in other large-scale analyses indicating that structured psychoeducation helps enhance students' awareness of bullying, increase bystander intervention, and promote mutual respect (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Gaffney et al., 2019; Nickerson et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, the majority of these studies have been conducted in Western contexts, where educational systems and cultural norms differ considerably from those in Indonesia. There is still limited empirical evidence on how anti-bullying psychoeducation can be adapted and implemented effectively within Indonesian elementary schools, especially in semi-urban contexts like Cimahi City. Existing local efforts often emphasize disciplinary actions rather than preventive or educational interventions (Agustin et al., 2024). This represents a significant research gap concerning context-sensitive and culturally appropriate psychoeducational models.

To address this issue, the present study introduces a contextually adapted anti-bullying psychoeducation program that integrates local cultural values emphasizing empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect among students. The program involves lecturers and psychology students as facilitators through community engagement initiatives, ensuring that psychological principles are applied in real educational settings. The novelty of this

approach lies in its participatory learning design encouraging active student reflection, role-playing, and discussion to strengthen emotional awareness and peer support networks.

Therefore, this study aims to implement and evaluate an anti-bullying psychoeducation program among elementary school students in Cimahi City. Specifically, it seeks to analyze how the program influences students' knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions toward bullying. By providing empirical evidence from a semi-urban Indonesian context, this research contributes to expanding the literature on culturally responsive bullying prevention and highlights the importance of early psychological education in promoting safe and inclusive school environments.

## **METHODS**

### ***Design Approach***

This community engagement project employed a quasi-experimental pre-post design using a psychoeducational intervention model. The program aimed to increase students' knowledge, empathy, and prosocial responses toward bullying incidents through a structured learning experience. The design adopted a participatory, experiential learning approach, integrating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components an approach widely recommended for school-based bullying prevention programs (Durlak et al., 2011; Evans et al., 2014).

The psychoeducation program was adapted from *Take A Stand: Preventing Bullying, Interpersonal Conflict and Violence* and modified to fit Indonesian cultural and linguistic contexts. The content emphasized the identification of bullying, emotional recognition, appropriate assertive responses, and strategies to seek help reflecting the social-emotional learning (SEL) framework that has proven effective in improving empathy and reducing aggressive behaviors among children (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Nickerson et al., 2019).

### ***Procedure***

The intervention was conducted on January 21–22, 2025, in two public elementary schools (SDN) in Cimahi City which were SDN Cibabat Mandiri 1 and SDN Cibabat Mandiri 3 over two consecutive days at each school. Each daily session lasted three to four hours, comprising interactive lectures, discussions, video demonstrations, and role-play simulations.

The program began with ice-breaking and trust-building activities to create a psychologically safe atmosphere. Facilitators then presented the material using visual slides and stories, followed by the screening of short educational videos illustrating types of bullying physical, verbal, relational, and cyber (Wang et al., 2009; Johansson & Englund, 2021).

The psychoeducation program was organized into four main modules implemented sequentially across the two-day period.

1. The first module, *Understanding and Identifying Bullying*, introduced the concept, forms, and impact of bullying, helping students recognize bullying behaviors within their school environment.

2. The second module, Recognizing Emotions Associated with Bullying, guided students in identifying and labeling feelings such as fear, sadness, and anger through storytelling and emotion-based discussions.
3. The third module, Responding to Bullying Behavior, taught students assertive strategies to say “no” to bullying and encouraged positive bystander behaviors (Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Gaffney et al., 2019).
4. Finally, the fourth module, Seeking Help and Building Empathy, emphasized how and where to seek help from peers, teachers, or parents and the importance of supporting others experiencing bullying (Salmivalli & Poskiparta, 2012; Goldberg et al., 2019).

Students were subsequently divided into small groups for role-play sessions, enacting the roles of the bully, the victim, and the bystander. These experiential activities encouraged emotional engagement and empathy development. Reflection and group discussion followed each session to help students internalize the lessons learned and relate them to real-life school experiences. The program concluded with a group evaluation and short written quiz assessing understanding and perceived learning outcomes.

Throughout the program, facilitators maintained a participatory and developmentally appropriate learning atmosphere. Activities combined verbal explanation, visual learning, and experiential practice, which aligns with evidence suggesting that multi-modal interventions are most effective in promoting behavioral change and emotional understanding among children (Durlak et al., 2011; Huitsing et al., 2020). The integration of knowledge, emotion, and behavior aimed to create a holistic anti-bullying learning experience, fostering empathy, self-awareness, and respect for others.

Overall, the two-day anti-bullying psychoeducation program in Cimahi City was designed not only as an educational intervention but also as a community-based preventive effort. By involving university lecturers and psychology students, the program bridged academic knowledge with social impact, in line with recommendations for evidence-based, context-sensitive anti-bullying strategies (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Gaffney et al., 2019).

### **Participants**

The participants consisted of approximately 40 elementary students in grades 3 and 4 from SDN Cibabat Mandiri 1 and SDN Cibabat Mandiri 3. Both schools were selected through purposive sampling based on accessibility and willingness to collaborate in community engagement programs.

The facilitators were lecturers from the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Jenderal Achmad Yani (UNJANI), supported by psychology students as co-facilitators. The lecturers were responsible for delivering psychoeducational content and managing group dynamics, while the students assisted with observation, coordination, and documentation. The inclusion of co-facilitators aligns with evidence emphasizing the value of peer-assisted learning in fostering effective social-emotional interventions (Taylor et al., 2017; Lawson et al., 2019).

### **Data Collection**

- Data were collected using a mixed-methods approach consisting of quantitative and qualitative techniques.
1. Quantitative data were gathered through pre- and post-test questionnaires administered to students before and after the psychoeducation sessions. The instrument measured three domains knowledge about bullying,

empathy toward victims, and behavioral intentions to respond assertively. The questionnaire contained both multiple-choice items and Likert-type statements appropriate for children's cognitive levels.

2. Qualitative data were obtained through facilitator observations and brief open-ended reflections from students during discussions and role-plays. Observers noted verbal expressions, emotional responses, cooperation levels, and spontaneous problem-solving behaviors.

This combination of data types followed recommendations for evaluating SEL and bullying prevention programs using both attitudinal and behavioral indicators (Gaffney et al., 2019; Goldberg et al., 2019).

### **Data Analysis**

The quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to assess changes in students' understanding and attitudes between pre- and post-tests. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed for each measured variable (knowledge, empathy, and behavioral intention). Changes were presented as mean differences to illustrate the magnitude of improvement.

Qualitative data from facilitator notes were analyzed using content-based thematic categorization, identifying recurring themes such as awareness of consequences, empathy toward victims, and readiness to intervene. The integration of both data types allowed for triangulation, enhancing the validity of findings and aligning with standard evaluation models in educational psychology (Durlak et al., 2011; Evans et al., 2014).

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the process. Parental consent and school approval were obtained prior to the implementation, and all activities were conducted in developmentally appropriate and non-stigmatizing ways.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

The results of the program were obtained from quantitative pre-post assessments and qualitative observations conducted throughout the two-day intervention. Consistent with the quasi-experimental pre-post design, quantitative data captured changes in students' knowledge, empathy, and behavioral intentions, while qualitative data provided deeper insights into students' emotional engagement and behavioral responses during learning activities (See Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Students participating in the psychoeducation activity

A total of 40 students from grades 3 and 4 participated in the intervention at SDN Cibabat Mandiri 1 and SDN Cibabat Mandiri 3. The pre–post evaluation revealed clear improvement across all three measured domains. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive findings (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Pre- and Post-Test Results (n = 40)

| Variable                       | Pre-Test Mean (SD) | Post-Test Mean (SD) | Mean  | % Increase |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------|------------|
| Knowledge of bullying          | 62.5 (12.4)        | 85.3 (9.8)          | +22.8 | +36.4%     |
| Empathy toward victims         | 65.8 (11.2)        | 84.6 (10.1)         | +18.8 | +28.6%     |
| Assertive/bystander intentions | 59.7 (13.5)        | 81.4 (11.6)         | +21.7 | +36.3%     |

These results indicate substantial improvement in students' conceptual understanding of bullying, their emotional awareness toward victims, and their readiness to respond assertively when witnessing bullying. Students performed especially well in Module 4 (help-seeking strategies), with observations showing that most participants were able to correctly identify safe adults and appropriate reporting steps.

These outcomes are consistent with previous studies reporting that structured school-based interventions significantly enhance children's awareness of bullying and empathy toward peers (Evans et al., 2014; Gaffney et al., 2019). Students also demonstrated a clearer differentiation between playful teasing and harmful bullying, as well as an increased ability to identify safe actions when witnessing bullying incidents.

Qualitative data, gathered from facilitator observations and student reflections, revealed notable changes in students' engagement, emotional expression, and interpersonal interactions throughout the intervention. At the outset, many students appeared quiet, hesitant to participate, and unsure how to articulate their thoughts about bullying. However, as the sessions progressed particularly after watching videos and discussing relatable school scenarios they began sharing experiences more openly. Several students reported realizing that behaviors they previously considered "normal joking" could actually be harmful.

Emotional participation deepened during roleplay activities. When portraying victims, students frequently expressed sadness, fear, or discomfort, indicating increased emotional understanding and perspective-taking. Some mentioned feeling "scared if that happened to me," demonstrating a genuine connection to the victim's experience. Conversely, when playing the role of bystanders, students reflected on how witnessing someone being bullied "felt wrong," showing heightened moral sensitivity and social responsibility.

By the second day, facilitators observed stronger cooperation, with students encouraging quieter peers to contribute ideas during group discussions. This shift suggests the emergence of positive peer norms, a key indicator of effective social emotional learning. Students also articulated increased willingness to help peers experiencing bullying, commonly expressing intentions such as "I would tell the teacher," "I would help my friend," or "I would not stay quiet."

One of the most important qualitative findings was the transformation in students' attitudes toward help-seeking. Initially, several students stated that they were reluctant to report bullying because they feared being perceived as "complainers." After Module 4, however, many indicated greater confidence in approaching teachers

or parents, reflecting a meaningful shift in their perception of responsible action. Collectively, these qualitative patterns support the themes identified in the thematic analysis heightened awareness, empathy development, moral responsibility, and increased readiness to seek help.

### **Discussion**

The combined quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrate that the anti-bullying psychoeducation program was effective in enhancing students' knowledge, emotional awareness, and prosocial behavioral intentions. The improvements observed align closely with the program's SEL-based design and multi-modal instructional approach.

The marked increase in students' knowledge scores suggests that the structured lectures, visual slides, and video materials successfully clarified the definition and forms of bullying. This aligns with prior research showing that cognitive clarity is a foundational component of effective bullying prevention (Durlak et al., 2011; Evans et al., 2014; Hymel & Swearer, 2015). Students' recognition of verbal and relational bullying, previously overlooked indicates meaningful conceptual internalization.

Qualitative findings highlight substantial emotional engagement, particularly during roleplay activities. Students demonstrated an ability to identify and articulate emotions such as fear, sadness, and embarrassment. This aligns with evidence that experiential learning enhances empathy and moral reasoning (Barińska et al., 2013; Olweus, 2013). The significant increase in empathy scores further supports the effectiveness of this learning component. Empathy is a key protective factor that reduces aggression and promotes peer support (Zych et al., 2017).

Post-test gains in assertive bystander intentions, paired with qualitative reflections, indicate that students felt more confident intervening or seeking help when witnessing bullying. This result is consistent with meta-analytic findings showing that explicit training in bystander intervention significantly reduces bullying prevalence (Polanin et al., 2012; Salmivalli, 2010). Students expressed readiness to defend peers or report incidents represents a positive shift in peer norms.

As detailed in the Method section, the program utilized a combination of lectures, videos, discussions, and roleplay an approach shown to yield strong outcomes in school-based interventions (Taylor et al., 2017; Goldberg et al., 2019). The adaptation of materials from *Take A Stand* to local Indonesian contexts further improved comprehension and emotional connection, consistent with cross-cultural education research emphasizing contextual relevance (Rubin et al., 1997).

The involvement of trained facilitators and the presence of teachers created a supportive environment that fostered trust and participation. Teachers' growing awareness of subtle bullying cues and their willingness to reinforce anti-bullying norms strengthen the ecological validity of the intervention, echoing findings from whole-school approach frameworks (Wang et al., 2009; Gaffney et al., 2019).

Although the program achieved significant short-term gains, long-term sustainability remains unknown due to the absence of follow-up data. Consistent with previous evaluations, incorporating booster sessions and continued teacher reinforcement may be necessary to maintain behavioral changes. Nevertheless, the immediate

improvements observed indicate that even brief, well-structured psychoeducation can meaningfully shape students' socialemotional awareness.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings support the conclusion that the anti-bullying psychoeducation program effectively enhanced students' cognitive understanding, emotional empathy, and prosocial behavioral intentions. The strong alignment between the program's design, implementation procedures, and measured outcomes demonstrates that culturally adapted, multi-modal psychoeducation is a promising approach to bullying prevention in Indonesian elementary schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a culturally adapted, multi-modal psychoeducation program in enhancing elementary school students' knowledge, empathy, and assertive bystander intentions related to bullying. The findings demonstrate that the intervention successfully met its objectives: students showed substantial increases in conceptual understanding of bullying, deeper emotional awareness of victims' experiences, and stronger intentions to intervene or seek help when witnessing bullying. These outcomes were supported not only by quantitative improvements but also by rich qualitative shifts in student engagement, emotional expression, and peer interactions.

Beyond achieving its immediate goals, this work advances the current field of bullying prevention by providing empirical evidence from an Indonesian elementary school context an area where research remains limited. The study demonstrates that SEL-based psychoeducation, when adapted to cultural and developmental needs, can meaningfully influence children's social-emotional competencies in a short time frame. This contributes to global discussions on how early preventive interventions can shape safer and more supportive school climates, especially in settings where structured anti-bullying programs are not yet systematically implemented.

The program also highlights the practical value of integrating cognitive instruction with experiential components such as video modeling and roleplay. These methods helped students internalize empathy and develop prosocial strategies, reinforcing findings from international research while extending them to a new cultural context. The involvement of university facilitators and classroom teachers further illustrates how school-university partnerships can strengthen community-based interventions and improve ecological validity.

While the program yielded meaningful short-term gains, long-term behavioral outcomes remain unknown. Future studies should incorporate follow-up assessments to examine the retention of knowledge and the stability of prosocial behaviors over time. Additional research could also explore parent involvement, teacher-led reinforcement, or digital modules to enhance sustainability. Expanding the program to wider grade levels, other regions, or different school systems would further enrich understanding of its generalizability. Experimental comparisons between psychoeducation alone and whole-school approaches would also help clarify which components most effectively reduce bullying incidents.

Overall, this study provides strong preliminary evidence that structured, culturally grounded psychoeducation can contribute to safer and more inclusive school environments. With further refinement and long-

term evaluation, the program has the potential to serve as a scalable model for bullying prevention in Indonesian schools and beyond.

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## DECLARATIONS

- Author Contribution : AFA: Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft, Editing and Visualization;  
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