



Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Bullying in High Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of bullying in high schools and their responses to bullying cases. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, the study involved 20 students and 10 teachers from two schools in city X, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGD), then analyzed using thematic analysis. The results indicate a difference in perceptions between students and teachers. Students tend to view verbal bullying as part of "normal" social interactions, whereas teachers consider bullying a serious issue that requires immediate intervention. Teachers are particularly concerned about physical and cyberbullying due to its significant impact on students' mental health. Both groups acknowledged the need for school policies and support to handle bullying cases effectively. These findings emphasize the importance of collaboration among students, teachers, and school administrators, as well as the need for anti-bullying educational programs and policies to create a safe and supportive environment for students.

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying in high schools (SMA) is a growing problem and a concern in various countries. Bullying not only affects the mental health of students but also has a negative impact on their social and academic development (Olweus, 1993). In the context of education, bullying involves aggressive and repetitive behavior, and occurs in an unbalanced relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, which often leaves trauma and reduces the victim's self-confidence (Smith & Brain, 2000). In Indonesia, bullying is still a serious issue, with various cases often reported through the mass media and academic research (Setiadi, 2019).

Research on bullying in schools has identified several forms of bullying, such as physical, verbal, social, and cyberbullying, which is increasing with the advancement of digital technology (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Cyberbullying, in particular, has a significant impact because it occurs in the virtual world that can be accessed at any time, making it difficult for schools and parents to control (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010).

Students' and teachers' perceptions of bullying play a significant role in understanding how these two groups view the problem and how they respond to it. According to research by Mishna (2004), teachers and students often have different views on what constitutes bullying, its seriousness, and how best to handle it. While students tend to view bullying as a part of

their social lives that may be unavoidable, teachers view it as behavior that must be intervened and stopped (Thornberg, 2011).

In addition, teachers' perceptions of bullying also affect the effectiveness of the interventions implemented. Teachers who are highly aware of the negative impacts of bullying tend to be more proactive in creating a safe and supportive classroom environment (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Unfortunately, in some high schools in Indonesia, anti-bullying programs are still limited, and many teachers feel inadequately equipped with the knowledge or skills to deal with bullying effectively (Rohmah & Wahyudi, 2021). This study aims to explore the perceptions of students and teachers in high schools about bullying. Through a qualitative approach, this study is expected to provide deeper insights into the differences in perceptions between students and teachers and help schools formulate more appropriate strategies to reduce bullying cases.

METHOD

1. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of bullying in high schools. A qualitative approach was chosen because it can provide an in-depth understanding of students' and teachers' subjective experiences and views regarding bullying (Creswell, 2013). Case studies allow researchers to explore the phenomenon of bullying in a particular context and analyze differences in perception between students and teachers in detail.

2. Research Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 20 students and 10 teachers selected from two high schools in city X. The participant selection technique used purposive sampling, where participating students and teachers were selected based on their experience or knowledge related to bullying in the school environment. The inclusion criteria for students were those who had direct or indirect experience with bullying, while for teachers, the inclusion criteria were those who had handled or witnessed bullying cases in schools.

3. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 students and 5 teachers individually, while another 10 students and 5 teachers participated in FGDs. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they were flexible and allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, while FGDs aimed to stimulate discussion and explore collective perceptions about bullying (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Interviews and FGDs were conducted with a question guide that included an understanding of types of bullying, experiences of being a victim or witness of bullying, and strategies for dealing with bullying in schools.

4. Research Procedures

Before data collection, the researcher asked for permission from the school and ensured that all participants understood the purpose of the study and agreed to participate by signing an informed consent form. Participants were assured that their personal information would be kept confidential, and they could withdraw from the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable.

5. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis method which involves the process of re-reading the data, identifying key themes, and categorizing the data based on those themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first step was the transcription of interview and FGD data. Next, the researcher conducted coding to identify themes that emerged from the data related to students' and teachers' perceptions of bullying, the most common types of bullying, and how they handle or respond to bullying in schools. This thematic analysis allows the researcher to understand the patterns of perception between students and teachers and to find differences or gaps in perception between the two groups.

6. Validity and Reliability

To ensure data validity, researchers used source triangulation, where data from interviews and FGDs were compared and verified with field notes and school policy documents related to bullying (Merriam, 2009). Member checking was also conducted by asking participants to review the transcripts of the interviews to ensure that their opinions were interpreted accurately.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on thematic analysis of data from interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with students and teachers in two high schools, several main themes were found that describe their perceptions of bullying, the most common types of bullying, and their responses to bullying at school.

a. Students' Perceptions of Bullying

Most students consider bullying to be part of everyday social interactions that occur in schools. They tend to view verbal bullying, such as name-calling or name-calling, as "normal" and even consider it a form of friendship between friends. However, some students stated that physical or cyber bullying has a more serious impact, because it involves violence or insults that are widely shared on social media. Interestingly, some students also admitted that they rarely report bullying incidents to the school or teachers. This is due to fear of retaliation from the bully or because they feel that the report will not be responded to seriously by the school.

b. Teachers' Perceptions of Bullying

On the other hand, teachers view bullying as a serious problem that requires immediate action. They expressed concerns about the long-term impact of bullying on students' mental and academic well-being. Teachers identified physical and cyberbullying as the most concerning forms of bullying because they can cause deep psychological trauma to victims. Teachers also indicated that although verbal bullying is often considered normal by students, it can affect victims' self-confidence and social relationships. Teachers felt that schools needed more policies and training to deal with bullying effectively. Some teachers felt they lacked the skills or knowledge to identify bullying, especially in the form of cyberbullying that often occurs outside the school environment.

c. Response to Bullying.

In terms of response, students and teachers showed different approaches. Students often chose to ignore bullying or try to resolve it on their own. They were worried that reporting bullying would make them the next target. On the other hand, teachers felt that bullying should be handled immediately in a more formal way, including involving school counselors or imposing sanctions on the perpetrators. More senior teachers showed more proactive responses to bullying, such as conducting closer supervision in the school environment and reaching out to students who appeared to be having problems. However, teachers also stated that they needed support from the school to implement anti-bullying programs effectively.

Discussion

The results of the study showed differences in perception between students and teachers regarding bullying. Students tend to see bullying as an inevitable part of their social dynamics, especially in the form of verbal bullying, which is often considered as "jokes" between friends. This is in line with Mishna's (2004) findings, where students often tolerate some forms of mild bullying as part of their social relationships. In contrast, teachers have a more serious perception of bullying, especially because they are aware of its negative impact on students' mental well-being (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Teachers understand that although verbal bullying may seem harmless, it can have long-term effects on victims' self-esteem and mental health. This finding supports Thornberg's (2011) research, which shows that teachers are more aware of the negative impacts of bullying and are more likely to try to stop it through intervention.

These differences in perception indicate a gap in understanding between students and teachers, which can affect the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs in schools. If students view bullying as normal, they may not be motivated to report it, so that cases of bullying that occur often go undetected by teachers (Rohmah & Wahyudi, 2021). Teachers who do not receive reports from students tend to have difficulty identifying victims and perpetrators of bullying, especially in the form of cyberbullying, which is more difficult to monitor (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). These findings also emphasize the importance of proactive school policies in preventing and addressing bullying. Training programs aimed at increasing teacher awareness of bullying, especially cyberbullying, are needed so that teachers have sufficient skills to address this issue (Rigby, 2010). In addition, schools need to educate students about the negative impacts of bullying and the importance of reporting such incidents to create a safer and more supportive environment (Setiadi, 2019). Overall, this study highlights the need for collaboration between teachers, students, and schools to address bullying more effectively. By narrowing the perception gap between students and teachers, schools can create a culture that is more caring and responsive to bullying, thereby positively impacting the overall well-being of students.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that there are differences in perception between students and teachers regarding bullying in schools. Students tend to consider bullying, especially in verbal form, as part of "normal" social interactions or just jokes between friends. However, they are aware of the more serious impacts of physical and cyberbullying, although they are often hesitant or afraid to report it due to fear of the perpetrator's reaction or lack of effective follow-up from the school. On the other hand, teachers view bullying as a serious problem that has the potential to harm students' mental and academic well-being. They highlight that all forms of bullying, whether physical, verbal, social, or cyber, need to be identified and addressed appropriately. However, teachers also feel the need for more support and training to deal with bullying cases, especially those that occur in the cyber realm.

These conclusions underscore the need for stronger collaboration between students, teachers, and schools to create a safe and supportive environment in schools. The differences in perception between students and teachers need to be addressed through comprehensive anti-bullying education programs and clear school policies to encourage reporting of bullying cases and provide support for victims. With an inclusive and collaborative approach, it is hoped that schools can create a more caring culture, where bullying is no longer considered a social norm, but as a behavior that needs to be prevented and addressed for the well-being of all students.

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