



## **HANDLING AND PREVENTION OF BULLYING OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS (STUDY AT SMA NEGERI 1 TEMBILAHAN IN 2024)**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze strategies for handling and preventing bullying in the school environment, with a case study at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan. Bullying is still a serious problem in the world of education, not only in the form of physical violence, but also verbal, social, and psychological. The impact not only disrupts the student learning process, but also causes long-term psychological disorders. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving teachers, students, and the school. The results of the study show that the handling of bullying at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan is still reactive, namely actions are only taken after the incident occurs. Schools do not yet have a structured prevention system, including clear reporting procedures, teacher training, and active parental involvement. In addition, the lack of supervision in the school environment and the weak socialization of anti-bullying values also worsened the situation. Despite the efforts of BK teachers and homeroom teachers in handling cases that arise, the approach taken has not touched the root of the problem comprehensively. This study recommends the importance of implementing prevention strategies based on situational approaches, strengthening character education, and cross-stakeholder collaboration to create a safe and bullying-free learning environment.

**Keywords:** *Bullying, prevention strategies, schools, children*

### **A. Introduction**

Bullying or bullying in the educational environment has become a social problem that takes place continuously in Indonesia. Despite various preventive and curative efforts have been made, cases of bullying still occur and have even increased in recent



years. This phenomenon indicates that bullying is not just a momentary incident or a personal conflict between individuals, but reflects the failure of educational institutions to build a safe and inclusive learning climate for all students. In various national and international forums, bullying has been categorized as a form of violence against children that can significantly hinder the psychological, social, and academic development of victims.

The problem of bullying can no longer be taken lightly. This is because the impact is multidimensional, including physical, emotional, psychological, and even social aspects. A number of studies reveal that victims of bullying tend to experience decreased learning motivation, concentration disorders, and excessive fear of the school environment. In the long run, victims can experience deep trauma that affects the development of their personalities and social relationships. There are also many cases where victims of bullying experience severe depression to commit acts of self-harm, even suicide. In this context, bullying not only disrupts the learning process, but also has the potential to eliminate the future of the nation's children.

Ironically, many cases of bullying in schools are not handled properly. Victims often choose to remain silent because they are afraid of retaliation or feel that they will not be heard by the school. On the other hand, perpetrators often do not receive strict sanctions, either because of a lack of evidence or because of a permissive culture in the school environment. The culture of 'normalization of violence' that is often tolerated in the form of jokes, "seniority rituals," or informal forms of power among students actually exacerbates the situation. In certain cases, teachers and schools tend to ignore reports of bullying in order to maintain the image of the institution, even though these actions risk causing heavier long-term psychosocial impacts.

According to Putri (2022), bullying is an aggressive act that is carried out repeatedly against certain individuals or groups who are considered weaker, both physically, emotionally, and socially. The goal is not only to hurt, but also to show dominance and power. This makes bullying closely related to the dynamics of power relations between students. In the school environment, this relationship does not only occur between senior and junior students, but can also occur among classmates, even involving the role of teachers as parties who do not directly protect victims or fail to prevent these actions.

In Indonesia's educational landscape, bullying is also inseparable from the broader social context. A permissive family environment for violence, lack of parental supervision, and high academic pressure can be a trigger as well as a nurturing of a culture of bullying at school. In addition, digital transformation has created a new space for bullying practices in the form of cyberbullying, where perpetrators spread insults, threats, or negative information through social media and instant messaging apps. Unlike

conventional bullying, cyberbullying has a wider impact because of its nature that can spread quickly and take place anonymously.

Data from the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) in 2023 shows that within one year, there were at least 30 cases of bullying that occurred in the school environment. Of this figure, 50% occurs at the junior high school level, 30% in elementary school, 10% in high school, and 10% in vocational schools (Aranditio, 2024). The most dominant types of bullying were physical (55.5%), verbal (29.3%), and psychological (15.2%) (Volunteer School, 2024). This figure is actually just the tip of the iceberg, given that many cases are not officially reported. This fact shows that the reporting and child protection system in schools is still not running optimally.

Extreme cases such as the one that occurred in Riau, where two students were victims of arson by their own colleagues, are a clear example that bullying can develop into a serious crime. In a *TribunNews* report (2024), the perpetrator admitted to acting because he felt hurt and depressed due to being a victim of bullying by the two students. This tragic event underscores that bullying is not just a prank, but can be a source of resentment and subsequent violence that is very destructive. Therefore, there is a need for systematic interventions that not only treat the symptoms, but also touch the root cause of the problem.

The handling of bullying cases so far has often been reactive, where schools only take action after a case that has caused public attention. In fact, the approach needed is a preventive and participatory approach that involves all stakeholders, ranging from students, teachers, parents, to local governments. One approach that can be used is the Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) approach, which emphasizes the importance of changing environmental conditions and reducing the chances of crime occurring through situational modification. In the context of schools, this can be implemented in the form of increased supervision, changes in school layout, transparent reporting systems, and internal policies that are in favor of victims.

SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan in Indragiri Hilir Regency, Riau Province, is a relevant location to be researched because it shows an increase in the number of bullying cases in the last two years. From just one case in 2022, the number has increased to four cases in 2023. Meanwhile, other schools in the same region did not record similar cases in the period. This shows the existence of certain social characteristics that are unique to the school and is important for further research. This research utilizes the availability of data, access to key informants (teachers, students, principals), and the ease of field coordination to conduct in-depth studies.

Taking these conditions into account, this study is directed to explore how bullying prevention strategies can be designed and implemented effectively in the school environment. The key question is: how can a child bullying prevention strategy in schools

be designed and implemented effectively? This focus is important because appropriate and contextual prevention policies not only prevent bullying incidents, but can also shape a healthy, empathetic, and violence-free school culture.

In dealing with the phenomenon of bullying in the school environment, the theoretical approach used in this study is the *Situational Crime Prevention Theory* developed by Ronald V. Clarke. This theory focuses on efforts to prevent deviant acts, including violence or aggressive behavior, by modifying the environmental conditions that allow crime to occur. Unlike traditional approaches that tend to focus on the perpetrator's characteristics or internal factors of the individual, this theory emphasizes that crime can be prevented by creating situations that make the act more difficult, high-risk, or unattractive to the perpetrator.

This theory is very relevant applied in the context of education, especially to analyze and design bullying prevention strategies in schools. In this approach, the physical and social environment of the school is seen as having an important role in creating opportunities or barriers to deviant behavior. Clarke (1997) identified several main strategies in Situational Crime Prevention, namely: increasing the effort required to commit a crime, increasing the risk of being caught, reducing the profit from deviant actions, eliminating provocation, and eliminating justifications for negative actions.

In the context of schools, the application of these principles can be realized through various policies and concrete practices. For example, to increase efforts to commit crimes, schools can design stricter physical surveillance in vulnerable areas such as corridors, bathrooms, and cafeterias. The addition of surveillance cameras or a more regular teacher picket schedule will make students think twice before committing negative actions. Furthermore, an increase in the risk of being caught can be realized by creating a reporting system that is safe, anonymous, and easily accessible to students and teachers, so that bullying acts are detected and followed up more quickly.

The reduction of profits from deviant actions can be done by eliminating social or symbolic incentives that bullies usually get, such as a sense of superiority, group influence, or fear from the victim. Schools can reinforce social norms that reject bullying behavior through anti-bullying campaigns, educational activities, and rewarding positive and inclusive behavior. In this case, building a school culture that favors empathy, justice, and diversity is an integral part of prevention strategies.

Meanwhile, eliminating provocation means creating a learning environment with minimal social pressure, conflict between students, or excessive competition. Collaboration-based learning activities, conflict mediation between students, and social skills training can help reduce tensions that often trigger bullying. Finally, eliminating justifications for deviant behavior can be done through the formation of students' moral

and ethical awareness, so that they understand that no excuse can justify mistreatment of others, even if it is done "just as a joke" or following peer pressure.

In the context of SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan, this theory is used as a conceptual framework to understand the extent to which the current school system and structure can facilitate or even prevent bullying. Based on the results of initial observations, there are still several weaknesses in the supervision system, the lack of reporting channels, and the absence of standard guidelines in handling bullying cases. This shows the importance of intervention at the situational level, not just at the individual level. It is not enough for schools to only nurture students personally, but also to design an environment that systematically suppresses the possibility of violence or intimidation.

Furthermore, Situational Crime Prevention is not only relevant to be applied in the classroom, but also in the school's digital environment. In today's technological age, cyberbullying has become a new form of bullying that is just as dangerous. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy, supervising the use of social media in the school environment, and developing internet ethics among students are also tangible forms of situational crime prevention in cyberspace.

Thus, the theory of Situational Crime Prevention has become very useful in understanding bullying as an action that can be prevented through appropriate environmental, system, and policy engineering. This approach makes an important contribution in designing more comprehensive, concrete, and measurable preventive strategies in creating a safe, healthy, and optimal growth and development oriented educational environment. Its implementation is not only technical, but also requires the commitment of all parties, including teachers, students, parents, and education policy makers, in building a proactive and sustainable protection system.

## **B. Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, which aims to obtain a deep and comprehensive understanding of the bullying phenomenon at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the social context, interaction patterns, and subjective experiences of perpetrators, victims, and schools related to bullying. Thus, this study not only describes the incidence of bullying factually, but also examines the social processes and factors that affect the occurrence of bullying in the school environment.

The research location was purposively chosen at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan, Indragiri Hilir Regency, Riau Province. The selection of this school is based on empirical data showing an increase in bullying cases over the past two years, as well as the ease of access for researchers to informants and relevant supporting documents. This location focus also considers the representation of typical social and cultural conditions, so that

the results of the study can provide an in-depth picture of the bullying situation in high schools in the region.

The theoretical framework used in this study is the theory of Situational Crime Prevention developed by Clarke (1997). This theory emphasizes the importance of interventions in environmental situations and conditions that allow deviant actions, including bullying, to occur. In the context of schools, this theory helps analyze how supervision systems, internal policies, and management of the physical and social environment can be optimized to minimize the chances of bullying occurring.

Data collection was carried out through several techniques, namely in-depth interviews with perpetrators, victims, BK teachers, homeroom teachers, and school management; participatory observation in the school environment to see firsthand the social interaction between students; as well as document studies that include records of bullying cases, school regulations, and official reports related to handling bullying. This multiple data source approach aims to get a holistic and valid picture.

The validity of the data is maintained by applying triangulation techniques, both source triangulation (data obtained from various informants) and triangulation methods (combining interviews, observations, and documentation). This technique is intended to increase the credibility and validity of research findings by comparing and confirming data from various points of view (Wijaya et al., 2025).

Data analysis is carried out qualitatively through three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and thematic conclusion drawn. At the reduction stage, the data obtained is selected and focused according to the research objectives. The data presentation stage is in the form of organizing information in the form of narratives and categories that facilitate understanding of emerging patterns. Furthermore, at the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher interprets the findings to identify the form, causative factors, and effectiveness of the bullying prevention strategies applied.

Overall, this method is designed to enable readers to comprehensively understand the research process, verify the appropriateness of the approaches used, and allow replication in similar research contexts. This approach also contributes to developing bullying prevention strategies that are evidence-based and oriented to real-world conditions in the school environment.

## **C. Finding and Discussion**

### **1. Finding**

Bullying or bullying in the school environment is a complex social phenomenon and is a serious challenge for the education system in various countries, including Indonesia. Despite the fact that a lot of attention has been given, bullying is still often considered a trivial problem or part of the social dynamics of children and adolescents.

In fact, bullying behavior, both physical and non-physical, has a long-term impact that is very detrimental to the psychological, social, and academic development of students.

The results of research at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan show that the practice of bullying often takes place without realizing it as a serious offense, especially when the form does not involve real physical violence. Non-physical forms of bullying such as ridicule, insults, social exclusion, and the spread of gossip and slander can also cause deep psychological trauma for victims. This condition reinforces the importance of acknowledging that bullying is not just about physical violence, but also about verbal and social aggression that can damage students' self-esteem and sense of security at school.

In this context, the perpetrator of bullying is usually a student who occupies a dominant social position in the school environment, which is obtained through age factors, class level, or influence in peer groups. Perpetrators use repeated acts of bullying as a strategy to maintain or improve their social status, while also expressing power over more vulnerable peers. On the other hand, victims of bullying tend to be students who are considered physically weak, mentally, and socially. This condition of vulnerability is exacerbated by the lack of social support and protection from the school and family environment. As a result, many victims choose to remain silent and do not report incidents of bullying for fear of being treated worse or feeling that there is no safe and reliable complaint mechanism.

The psychological impact of bullying is very real and serious. Information from Counseling Guidance (BK) teachers and homeroom teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan revealed that bullying victims experience various psychological disorders, ranging from deep fear, excessive anxiety, to decreased motivation to learn. Some victims even show signs of mild depression, social isolation, and interpersonal relationship disruption. This phenomenon is in line with the findings of Rigby (2017), who asserts that bullying can cause severe mental distress and the risk of developing thoughts of self-harm or even suicide if not treated appropriately.

In addition to psychological impacts, bullying also affects students' academic abilities. Many victims reported difficulty concentrating during the learning process, decreased enthusiasm for learning, and significant behavioral changes such as becoming quiet, introverted, or aggressive. In some cases, students who are victims of bullying prefer to avoid the school environment to avoid unpleasant treatment. Data from BK teachers show a significant increase in absenteeism in students who are victims of bullying, which of course has bad implications for their academic achievement and educational continuity.

As an effort to overcome these problems, SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan has initiated a character education program that aims to instill an empathetic attitude, respect, and morality in students. However, the implementation of this program is still partial and has

not been systematically consistent. Socialization and education about bullying is often done incidentally, without strong integration into the curriculum or school policies. There are no official guidelines or standard procedures that are a reference in the prevention and handling of bullying as a whole.

In comparison, other schools such as SD TQ Al Abidin have successfully implemented a more systematic and structured bullying prevention model. The school uses various approaches, ranging from mediation between students to resolve conflicts, the provision of constructive educational sanctions, to routine counseling services as a form of preventive intervention (Ramadhanti et al., 2022). In addition, they hold character strengthening through regular seminars on manners and positive behavior, so as to form a more inclusive and supportive school culture from an early age.

Collaboration between teachers, parents, and schools is a key factor in creating a safe and bullying-free school environment. However, at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilihan, the involvement of parents in the education process and bullying prevention is still very limited. Teachers stated that there is still a need for training or counseling programs for parents so that they can understand the importance of supervision, open communication with children, and an active role in supporting bullying prevention at home. Without parental participation, school efforts tend to be less effective because the family environment also plays a big role in shaping students' social behavior.

The physical environment of the school also contributes to the emergence of bullying acts. Spaces such as hallways, canteens, and fields with minimal supervision are prone locations for bullying. The supervision system at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilihan is currently not optimal because there is no schedule for teacher pickets who specifically supervise these areas outside of class hours. This lack of supervision allows bullying behavior to go undetected and dealt with quickly.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that although there is awareness about the importance of overcoming bullying, the implementation of prevention programs and policies at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilihan is still not optimal. The absence of written guidelines, lack of training for teachers in dealing with bullying, and limited counseling facilities are the main obstacles in overcoming this problem. In fact, schools have responsibilities that are not only limited to achieving academic achievements, but also ensuring the safety and psychological comfort of students so that they can develop optimally in a healthy and supportive environment.

Seeing this fact, more comprehensive and sustainable strategic steps are needed, including strengthening internal policies, increasing the capacity of teachers and educators, and developing an effective reporting and supervision system. In addition, the establishment of a school culture that respects diversity, rejects violence of any kind, and encourages solidarity and empathy among students must be a top priority. Through this

holistic approach, it is hoped that bullying in the school environment can be significantly suppressed, creating an educational climate that is safe, comfortable, and conducive to the development of all students.

## **2. Discussion**

The results of research at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan show that the bullying prevention strategy implemented by schools is still reactive and has not led to systematic prevention. The handling of bullying cases is carried out after the incident occurs, with steps such as calling the perpetrator and victim to be given coaching or sanctions which are usually carried out by BK teachers or homeroom teachers. However, until now there have been no official guidelines or written procedures that have become a reference in the process of preventing and handling bullying at the school. This condition results in sporadic and inconsistent handling, where the identification of perpetrators and victims still relies on teachers' observations and other student reports that are not always objective and comprehensive.

Treatment that focuses more on moral coaching and verbal reprimands, in the absence of in-depth psychological intervention, is less effective in addressing the root cause of bullying, which is actually a complex social and psychological phenomenon. In this context, it is important to understand bullying not only as a violation of discipline, but as a consequence of damaged social relationships and weak social control in the school environment.

Social control theory provides a relevant framework for understanding and developing bullying prevention strategies. Hirschi (1969) in his theory states that social attachment, involvement in activities, belief in norms, and individual commitment to social groups are the main factors that reduce the likelihood of a person committing deviant behavior, including bullying. In the school environment, students' attachment and involvement with teachers and peers, as well as the internalization of anti-bullying norms, serve as an effective form of informal social control to prevent bullying (Hirschi, 1969; Agnew, 1991).

However, at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan, this informal social control is not optimal due to the lack of strengthening positive social relationships between students and teachers and weak communication between schools and families. In addition, formal social control in the form of clear rules and sanctions and procedures for handling bullying have not been thoroughly designed and have not been implemented consistently. This leads to a lack of students' sense of security and trust in the bullying handling system, so that many victims are reluctant to report because they are afraid of stigma or lack of protection (Warr, 2002).

Another concept that is also relevant is Situational Crime Prevention from Clarke (1997), which emphasizes the importance of managing the physical and social

environment to reduce the chance of crime, including bullying. In the context of schools, this includes strict supervision in bullying-prone areas, an easily accessible and anonymous reporting system, and the creation of social norms that actively reject all forms of violence. At SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan, there has not been a comprehensive monitoring and reporting system like this, so the opportunity for bullying is still open.

Even so, the reactive approach applied by schools by providing sanctions, reprimands, and summoning parents to perpetrators has had a positive impact in the form of a decrease in bullying cases reported in recent months. However, a decrease in the number of reports does not necessarily reflect a decrease in actual cases, as fear factors, social stigma, and lack of trust in the system can discourage victims from reporting (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

Another limitation is the lack of involvement of all school elements, especially homeroom teachers and other teachers outside BK, in dealing with bullying. Responsibilities that are too focused on BK teachers without the active involvement of all educators and parents have the potential to reduce the effectiveness of bullying prevention and handling. Parental involvement is still very minimal, even though their role in supervising and fostering children's morals at home is part of vital external social control (Jeynes, 2012). Many parents are not aware of or receive adequate information about their child's bullying experience, due to a lack of regular communication between school and family.

Furthermore, many of the perpetrators of bullying turned out to be victims of the home environment or had experienced bullying before, emphasizing that bullying is a structural problem that must be seen in the context of broader social interaction and not just a problem of student behavior at school. Therefore, an effective bullying prevention approach must involve psychological, educational, sociological, and public policy aspects in an integrated and multidisciplinary manner (Olweus, 1993).

The data on the increase in bullying cases at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilaan, which increased from one case in 2022 to four cases in 2023, shows the urgency of developing a stronger and more systematic prevention strategy. If not seriously addressed, this trend has the potential to create a less conducive learning environment and threaten students' social-emotional development.

For this reason, several important recommendations need to be implemented immediately, namely: first, the preparation and implementation of a clear and binding Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in the prevention and handling of bullying involving all elements of the school; second, training and capacity building of teachers and educators in detecting and intervening bullying behavior effectively and empathically; third, the development of adequate counseling facilities with the support of professionals for psychological assistance for victims and perpetrators; fourth, student

empowerment through education, active involvement in anti-bullying campaigns, and the establishment of peer support groups to strengthen social control between students; fifth, strengthen partnerships with parents and the community through regular communication forums and the use of information technology to expand the reach of supervision and education (Smith & Sharp, 1994; Farrington & Ttofi, 2009).

This overall effort emphasizes the importance of strengthening formal and informal social control in the school environment as a foundation for preventing and tackling bullying effectively. By building a safe, inclusive, and supportive school climate, it is hoped that SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan can create a conducive learning space for all students, ensure the protection of their rights, and support healthy social and emotional development.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The results of this study show that bullying is still a serious problem in the school environment, including at SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan. Although severe forms of physical bullying are rare, various actions such as verbal, social, and psychological bullying still occur frequently and are considered common by some school residents. This shows that understanding of the negative impact of bullying is still lacking, both among students and educators.

Students who are victims of bullying tend to bear psychological impacts in the long term, such as fear, stress, decreased motivation to learn, and depression. The study also found that many students did not report cases they experienced because of fear, shame, or a belief that reporting would not make a difference. As a result, a number of bullying cases go unrevealed and continue to take place in silence.

On the other hand, the bullying handling strategy implemented by SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan is still reactive. Actions are only taken after an incident has occurred, and have not been based on a structured prevention system. Handling is generally carried out by BK teachers or homeroom teachers individually without any standard guidance or formal policy support from the school. Nevertheless, the steps that have been taken still have a positive impact in reducing several incidents of bullying.

One of the main shortcomings found is the absence of a student-friendly reporting system, limited training for teachers in dealing with social conflicts, and the lack of optimal counseling facilities. In fact, bullying in schools is not just an act of deviance, but also related to complex social, cultural, and psychological conditions. Therefore, the approach to overcoming it must be comprehensive.

The study also underscores the importance of involving all parties—teachers, students, parents, and the community—in efforts to prevent and deal with bullying in schools. Schools must begin to develop clear prevention policies, strengthen character

education, engage students in positive activities, and establish effective communication with parents.

In general, although SMA Negeri 1 Tembilahan does not yet have an ideal bullying prevention system, the initial steps taken show positive results. The decrease in the number of case reports is an indication that rapid handling has an impact, although it does not necessarily solve the root of the problem. Therefore, preventive strategies must be developed immediately so that the school environment becomes a safe, supportive, and supportive process of student growth and development holistically.

This research is expected to be the first foothold for schools and related parties in formulating stronger and more sustainable anti-bullying policies. In addition, the results of this study also open up space for further research that can explore innovative strategies with multidisciplinary approaches—both in terms of education, psychology, law, and technology—in order to create an educational environment that is free from all forms of violence.

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