Social Interaction Among Elementary School Children Who Are Victims Of Bullying

[1]Syarifah Nur Fajrin, [2]Syamsu A. Kamaruddin, [3]Supriadi Torro

[1]*Program Pascasarjana, Program Studi Sosiologi, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia*
[1]*Program Pascasarjana, Program Studi Sosiologi, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia*
[1]*Program Pascasarjana, Program Studi Sosiologi, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia*
Email : syarifahnurfajrin@uim-makassar.ac.id

Abstract

This research is a qualitative study with a case study approach aimed at understanding the social life of children who are victims of bullying at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi, Makassar. The research subjects included four students and one teacher at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi, Makassar. Data collection techniques involved in-depth interviews and documentation. The study utilized the interactive analysis model by Miles and Huberman, which consists of data collection, data condensation, data verification, and conclusion drawing and testing. The findings revealed that the causes of bullying at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi, Makassar, include misinterpretations of intent and communication methods, lack of understanding of cultural expressions such as congratulations, emotional reactions from peers who feel disturbed, stigmas formed after incidents, and insufficient education on managing minor conflicts. The social life of children who are victims of bullying at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi, Makassar, is characterized by dynamics of support and rejection. The handling of bullying at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi, Makassar, tends to be reactive and unstructured. Although there are no specific programs or policies to systematically address bullying, teachers play an active role in mediating conflicts between students. Teachers' efforts to instill values such as respect, mutual assistance, and honesty serve as a foundation for fostering a positive school culture.

Keywords : Interaction; Social; Bullying Victims

Introduction

The government has launched educational programs designed to accommodate various talents and intelligences, aiming to develop better human resources (P. R. Indonesia, 2003). (Djaali, 2023) stated that individuals with personalities aligned with societal norms are more likely to be well-received. Conversely, individuals with personalities that deviate from societal norms may face rejection. Education plays a pivotal role in shaping students' personalities to ensure they are accepted within their communities. While academic success

has traditionally been the primary focus of education, equally important is the success of shaping students' characters.

To achieve educational objectives, several supporting factors are required. These include a conducive school environment, both physically and non-physically. A physically conducive environment encompasses facilities, buildings, and surroundings that support educational success. Meanwhile, a non-physically conducive school refers to the maintenance of a peaceful atmosphere. A school is considered non-physically conducive if it can foster a calm and peaceful environment. Novan Ardy (Wiyani, 2012) identified nine criteria for a peaceful school: free from conflict and violence, tranquility, comfort, safety, attention and affection, cooperation, accommodation, adherence to rules, internalization of religious values, and positive relations with the community. Peaceful conditions are essential for every school. However, cases occur that disrupt the peacefulness of a school environment. The phenomenon of bullying has garnered serious attention since the 1970s, pioneered by Professor Dan Olweus from the University of Bergen in Scandinavia (Wiyani, 2012). Bullying, derived from the term "bully," refers to an aggressor or someone who harasses weaker individuals (Echols, 2005). The term "bully" stems from the word "bull," which conveys a sense of aggression. Thus, bullying can be interpreted as aggressive behavior intentionally and repeatedly directed toward weaker individuals to harm them. School education inherently involves interactions among students. Such interactions often lead to minor conflicts that may escalate into fights. Children prone to bullying are at risk of engaging in violent acts or other risky behaviors later in life.

The number of bullying cases continues to rise annually. In 2015, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) reported that nearly all students in Indonesia had experienced bullying at school. Although the overall child violence rate decreased in 2015, bullying incidents—where students bullied their peers—increased. According to KPAI data in 2022, there were 226 cases of physical and psychological violence, including bullying (Suntoro, Arridho, & Azzahro, 2023). This figure is significant and warrants attention from all relevant parties. A recent bullying case occurred in Herlang District, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi. A fourth-grade student, identified as GU, was abused by an older student. The incident was captured on video and went viral on social media. In the video, GU was slapped and kicked in the stomach by another student. The perpetrator was later identified as a sixth-grade student from the same school. The Head of the Bulukumba Education Office, Andi Buyung, confirmed the incident, which occurred at SD 118 Lembang Tumbu, Gunturu Village, Herlang District, Bulukumba Regency, on Thursday, October 6, 2022. The case was resolved through mediation between both parties, with the perpetrator being transferred to another school. Preliminary observations conducted by the researchers revealed similar incidents among children at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi in Makassar. Bullying in this context includes both physical and non-physical forms, such as fighting, stealing belongings, mocking, damaging property, ostracizing peers, intimidation, and threats. In some instances, these actions escalated to physical altercations causing injuries. Such behavior highlights the urgent need for intervention to prevent further harm and the emergence of new bullies.

During the initial study, a teacher named Fitri was interviewed about the measures taken to address student bullying. According to her, calling parents to school was a common approach. She explained that bullying often resulted from students' inability to control

their emotions. For example, while playing, a student might unintentionally make a mistake, leading another to react with anger and aggression. Children who bully are feared to become individuals prone to brawling or other disruptive behaviors and may later perpetrate domestic violence (DV) as adults. Witnesses to bullying may also become perpetrators or victims in the future. Of greater concern, however, are the victims who may develop trauma and fear. Some victims might even turn into bullies themselves as a form of revenge. Observations at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi revealed that children there often exhibit vengeful tendencies. For instance, if one student accidentally steps on another's foot, the other retaliates, which can lead to conflict. In another case, a student who is mocked retaliates with insults and derogatory remarks. These observations inspired the researchers to investigate this phenomenon in greater depth under the title Social Interaction Among Elementary School Children Who Are Victims of Bullying.

Method and Data

The method used is descriptive qualitative with a case study research approach, aimed at identifying the causes of bullying, analyzing the social life of children who are victims of bullying, and examining strategies to address bullying issues at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi in Makassar. The research subjects consist of four students and one teacher from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi in Makassar. This location was selected to further analyze initial findings related to bullying behavior at the school. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews and documentation. The research employs the interactive analysis model by Miles and Huberman, which involves data collection, data condensation, data verification, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the validity or reliability of the data, the researcher uses source triangulation.

Results

The social life of bullying victims at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi Kota Makassar can be influenced by various factors related to the psychological and behavioral impacts of bullying. Generally, bullying victims often face challenges in their social lives, such as social isolation, decreased self-confidence, and others.

a. Supportive Friends

Based on interviews conducted with students who were victims of bullying at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi Kota Makassar, it was found that there were no significant changes in their activities despite being victims of bullying. This was because the student had a supportive friend who would occasionally help them report the bullying to teachers, preventing them from feeling entirely alone and ostracized at school. The interview revealed the following:

"Iye ada yang paling sering saya temani salsakila itu ji yang paling baik, karena kalau ada yang sakitika pasti dia yang pergi jamma ke ibu guru" (wawancara dengan Nadia, 5 September 2024)

"Yes, Salsakila is my closest friend. She is the nicest because if I am hurt, she will go and tell the teacher." (Interview with Nadia, September 5, 2024)

Nadia explained that amidst the bullying she experienced, there was always a friend who supported and treated her kindly. She mentioned Salsakila as a caring friend who would act immediately by reporting any incidents to the teacher, showing empathy and bravery in helping Nadia. From her story, it is evident that having a caring friend, such as Salsakila, provides comfort and a sense of safety for Nadia amidst the difficult situations she faced at school.

b.   Passive Response to Bullying

Despite being treated harshly by her peers, Nadia never retaliated, as she often remembered her grandmother's advice not to fight back when provoked. Additionally, Nadia noted that no other classmates were targeted by bullying besides herself. When bullying occurred, most classmates would only observe without intervening. Nadia hoped she would no longer be hit by her peers, as she felt she never disturbed anyone. Despite being frequently bullied, she continued to interact and play with her classmates as usual.

"Tidak mau ka melawan karena na marahi ka oma ku, kalau ada pukul ko jangan ko melawan. Saya ji, biasa duduk-duduk jki juga na tarek ki kudung ta. Tidak mauka dipukul karena tidak pernah juga saya ganggu orang. Biasa-biasa ji perasaanku di kelas" (wawancara dengan Nadia, 5 September 2024)

"I don't fight back because my grandmother told me not to. She said, if someone hits you, don't fight back. I usually just sit quietly, even when they pull my hijab. I don't want to get hit because I've never bothered anyone. I feel normal in class." (Interview with Nadia, September 5, 2024)

Nadia explained why she never fought back against her peers' mistreatment. She stated that her grandmother consistently advised her to refrain from retaliating. As a result, Nadia chose to remain silent and did not respond, even though she was often targeted by bullying. Nadia also shared that her classmates frequently pulled her hijab while she was sitting quietly. Although she felt confused and didn't want to be hit, she didn't feel overly upset, considering the situation in class as normal. This narrative illustrates Nadia's passive stance toward the bullying she experienced, shaped by the values instilled by her family. It also highlights her resilience in enduring unjust treatment.

c.   Complex Social Dynamics

In addition to information from the victims, the researcher also interviewed the perpetrators. The interviews revealed that even though the bullies frequently targeted the victim, they continued to play together. The bully, who was also the class leader, maintained friendships with the victim unless the victim caused trouble, in which case the bully would reprimand them. Sometimes, other classmates would gang up on the victim when they felt annoyed by the victim's actions.

"Suka ji ibu tapi kalau bikin ki ulah banyak orang tidak suka ki jadi biasa mi di borongi" (wawancara dengan Zahira, 5 September 2024).

"Yes, I like playing with them, but if they cause trouble, many people don't like it, so sometimes they get ganged up on." (Interview with Zahira, September 5, 2024)

The vice class leader also mentioned that they remained friends with the victim as long as the victim didn't cause any issues. When the victim was ganged up on, the class leader occasionally intervened to mediate. Despite the bullying, the victim continued to socialize

normally once the situation calmed down. The perpetrator did not intend to ostracize the victim but would sometimes bully them if they reported incidents to the teacher.

"Walaupun sudah dipukuli tetapji kembali bermain dengan teman, tidak pernahji menyendiri. Kalau nadia diborongi sama teman, datang Zahira menegur karena dia tidak na suka ki kalau orang di keroyok" (wawancara dengan Siti, 5 September 2024)

"Even after getting hit, Nadia still plays with her friends and doesn't isolate herself. When she gets bullied, Zahira often steps in because she doesn't like seeing people get ganged up on." (Interview with Siti, September 5, 2024)

Siti explained that although Nadia was frequently bullied or hit by her peers, she continued to socialize with them and never chose to isolate herself. Nadia seemed to show no resentment or desire to distance herself despite the unpleasant treatment she received.

Siti also revealed that when Nadia was being bullied, Zahira, one of their friends, would step in to reprimand the perpetrators. Zahira disliked seeing anyone being ganged up on or treated unfairly. Zahira's role as a defender demonstrated solidarity among some friends in supporting Nadia through difficult situations.

d. Social Isolation

The researcher also gathered information from teachers. It was revealed that while student interactions at school generally went well, some students became targets of bullying due to physical differences or other characteristics, leading to social isolation. These students lacked supportive groups, making them vulnerable to both physical and verbal bullying. The social interactions of bullying victims within the classroom were often disrupted, as these students sometimes chose to isolate themselves.

"Kadang siswa korban perundungan menyendiri karena tidak ada teman yang mau duduk didekatnya.

...Siswa korban perundungan ini roknya robek kiri kanan saya sama teman sudah berapa kali jahit roknya itu dikasih mi kerudung, saya kasih kerudung ku karena biasa dia buka kerudung nya baiasa na kasih jadi pel

...Siswa korban perundungan cenderung tidak memiliki teman dekat, mereka terlihat bergaul seperti biasanya hanya saja siswa di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi Kota Makassar ini kadang hal kecil diperbesarkan hingga berujung pertengkaran" (wawancara dengan Guru, 5 September 2024)

"Sometimes, bullying victims isolate themselves because no one wants to sit near them.

.... One victim had their hijab torn on both sides, and I had to sew it several times. I even gave them one of my own hijabs because theirs was used as a rag.

.... Victims of bullying usually don't have close friends, and at times, minor issues are blown out of proportion, leading to conflicts." (Interview with Teacher, September 5, 2024)

The teacher noted that bullying victims often appeared to withdraw from social interactions due to their peers avoiding them. These students often faced challenges in forming close friendships, although they seemed to interact casually with others. The teacher emphasized the need for understanding and support to improve these students' social experiences.

e. Victims' Social Alienation

Some bullying cases at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi Kota Makassar received little attention from parents, often because the parents themselves were abusive. One victim had no friends due to frequently initiating conflicts, such as spitting on peers or touching sensitive areas, causing peers to retaliate.

"Tidak ada karna disini iye rata-rata begitu ada mi yang bapaknya dua, ada mama nya dua, bahkan itu niar banyak mamanya karena itu bapaknya kalau mau bawa perempuan langsung saja na bawa kerumahnya baru na suruh keluar istrinya,

...iye mamanya saja biasa dipukul ki sama suaminya kalau dipukul ki pergi ki tapi kalau di jemput ki datang ki lagi,

...Tidak ada temannya niar karena dia juga sering mulai di temannya,

...sering di Tarik kudungnya sering dijahili, tapi biasa juga ada kelainan dia pegang kelaminnya laki-laki jadi temannya mengadu terus biasa dia ludahi juga temannya, biasa di cubit mi menangis mi, biasa di dorong kayak itu hari waktu hari jum'at di dorong jatuh ki disitu

...iye karena teman-temannya jengkel, karena suka na ludahi temannnya, suka na pegang 6u12un9nya alat kelaminnya laki-laki

...didorong, di cubit, di ludahi balik juga karena dia sering ludahi orang, kasihan kodong karena broken home ki." (wawancara dengan Guru, 5 September 2024)

"Some kids here have two dads or two moms, and others experience violence at home. One student who gets bullied often starts conflicts with others by spitting or touching inappropriate areas, so their peers gang up on them." (Interview with Teacher, September 5, 2024)

This narrative illustrates the complexity of the victims' social lives, shaped by their experiences of bullying and family backgrounds. It underscores the need for targeted interventions to support these children socially and emotionally within the school environment.

Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion

The social life of bullying victims at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi Kota Makassar is described as follows.

For the first victim, there were no changes in activities despite being a victim of bullying. This was because the student still had one friend who occasionally helped report incidents to the teacher, making them feel less isolated or ostracized at school. Support from a single friend willing to report bullying provided a sense of safety and reduced the negative impacts experienced by the victim. The presence of a caring friend is crucial for maintaining the victim's emotional well-being and can be a starting point for fostering positive changes in the school environment.

Peer support is vital in addressing bullying at school. According to (Vygotsky, 1978), peer support facilitates interactions that help victims feel valued and accepted. This reduces the psychological impacts of bullying, such as isolation and low self-esteem. With supportive

peers, victims not only feel safer but also have the opportunity to receive the assistance needed to overcome challenging situations. Therefore, it is essential for schools to encourage positive relationships among students and create an environment where every student feels valued and supported. Raising awareness and empathy among students is an important step in preventing bullying. Some strategies that can be implemented include empathy education, awareness campaigns about the dangers of bullying, parental and community involvement, and using educational books or films (P. Indonesia, 2024).

The Importance of Peer Support in Overcoming Bullying.

Peer support provides victims with a sense of safety. When a student has a friend willing to support and help them report incidents, it can reduce the fear and anxiety often experienced by victims. This aligns with resilience theory, which emphasizes an individual's ability to recover from negative experiences, such as bullying (Ungar, 2011). Peer support can serve as a protective factor that strengthens resilience in bullying victims, helping them develop better coping strategies.

This support instills confidence that they are not alone and that someone cares about their situation. Emotional support from friends can empower victims and boost their confidence in facing difficult situations. A caring friend can also provide a safe space for victims to express their feelings, alleviating the emotional burden caused by bullying.

Positive social relationships can enhance students' mental well-being, helping them feel more connected and supported within the school environment. Friends who show care and take proactive steps to report bullying can set an example for others, encouraging more students to act against bullying. When peer support becomes a norm, it helps create a more inclusive and supportive school culture where bullying is deemed unacceptable. Caring friends can assist victims in preparing reports or conveying issues to teachers or school authorities, enabling quicker and more effective responses to bullying cases. In some cases, friends can act as mediators between victims and perpetrators, helping to defuse tensions and find peaceful solutions.

Contrasting Case: A Victim with Social Isolation

Unlike the first victim, another bullying victim at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi Kota Makassar was perceived to have mental health issues, causing other students to avoid sitting near them. This student became a target of bullying due to frequent aggressive behavior toward peers. The child was suspected of having mental health issues resulting from past abuse. During interviews, the child struggled to even state their own name, and their appearance differed significantly from their peers.

This condition highlights the severe impact of the abuse they endured, which appears to affect their mental health. Inability to recall or state their own name, coupled with a distinct appearance, may be indicative of deep-seated trauma. Psychological support and guidance from professionals are essential to help this child recover and feel safer in the school environment.

It is crucial for schools to recognize that behavior perceived as problematic may indicate underlying mental health issues. By improving understanding of mental health and creating an inclusive environment, schools can help reduce stigma and support the well-being of all

students, including bullying victims. Empathy education and peer support are also vital for fostering a safe and supportive learning environment.

Negative Impacts on Mental Health

Bullying victims often experience negative mental health impacts, such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. They may feel isolated and lack social support. Stigma and ostracism can hinder their ability to build positive relationships with peers, leading to greater social isolation.

According to (Kusumawardani, 2020), mental health stigma remains high in many communities. Ignorance about mental health issues can lead to students perceiving those who are different as strange or unworthy of friendship, exacerbating bullying.

Adverse childhood experiences, such as neglect or domestic violence, can affect children's psychological development, making them more vulnerable to bullying. Children with such backgrounds may exhibit different behaviors, which can make them targets of bullying (Sholihah, 2023).

Complex Social Dynamics of Bullying Victims

The social lives of bullying victims at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi Kota Makassar exhibit complex dynamics. On the one hand, some victims have friends who show care and occasionally help them report bullying to teachers. These supportive friends provide a sense of security and help victims feel less isolated in the school environment.

On the other hand, bullying victims often face stigma or labels, such as being considered "weird" or different, making them vulnerable to repeated bullying. This causes them to be misunderstood and less accepted by their peers. For example, students who frequently report violations to teachers may be labeled as "snitches" and become prime targets for bullying. This condition can hinder their social interactions with other students, narrowing their circle of friends and diminishing their confidence in social interactions.

According to Marx, social conflict is the driving force behind societal change. In this context, the theory emphasizes social inequality, exploitation, and class struggles that result from imbalanced social structures (Ritzer & Yagatich, 2012).

Characteristics of Bullying Victims' Social Lives

1. Social Isolation: Bullying victims often feel alienated from their classmates. They may avoid social interactions and find it difficult to form friendships, leading to loneliness and a lack of social support.

2. Distrust: Experiences of bullying can make victims distrustful of others. They may hesitate to open up to peers or teachers, hindering their ability to build positive relationships.

3. Limited Participation: Victims may feel uncomfortable or lack confidence in participating in group or extracurricular activities, reducing their opportunities for peer interaction.

4. Avoidant Behavior: Some victims may begin avoiding school or other social activities as a way to protect themselves from painful bullying experiences.

5. Emotional Impact: Victims often experience emotional impacts such as anxiety, depression, or low self-esteem, affecting their interactions with others. They may appear quieter or less enthusiastic in social situations.

6. Supportive Friends: On a positive note, having one or two supportive friends can help victims feel safer and provide limited but essential social support.

7. School Environment Influence: A positive and inclusive school environment can help victims feel more accepted. Programs promoting cooperation and mutual respect can improve their social lives.

8. Responses to Stigma: If peers have a good understanding of mental health and inclusion, this can help reduce stigma and facilitate more positive interactions.

Erikson's Theory and the Impact of Bullying

According to Erik Erikson, school-aged children (6–12 years) are in the "Industry vs. Inferiority" stage. During this stage, children strive to build competence and positive social relationships. However, bullying disrupts this development. Bullying victims often feel unworthy or incapable of socializing effectively. Their experiences lead them to withdraw from social activities, fear interactions, and lose confidence (Newman, B. M., & Newman, 2017). Creating a safe and supportive school environment is essential to help bullying victims improve their social lives and regain confidence.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the social life of bullying victims at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Yaspi Kota Makassar is characterized by a dynamic interplay of support and rejection. On one hand, the presence of caring friends who are willing to help report bullying provides victims with a sense of safety, helping them feel not entirely alone and protecting them from complete isolation within the school environment. On the other hand, stigma and certain labels, such as being perceived as "nerdy" or different, make victims vulnerable to repeated bullying. These labels create a distance between the victims and their peers, resulting in their limited acceptance in social interactions.

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