

# Enhancing the Analysis of Bullying's Impact on Socio-Emotional Development Among Elementary School Children

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## Abstract

**Keywords:**

Bullying; Socio-emotional; social skills

This research aims to identify the impact of bullying on the socio-emotional development of elementary school children so that readers can anticipate or take action if they encounter such behavior. The main focus is on the causes of bullying and its relationship to children's socio-emotional well-being. This research is a qualitative study using a literature review method. The study findings show that bullying can affect children's mental health, both as perpetrators and victims. Therefore, among the consequences of bullying for children who are perpetrators are a tendency to have low awareness and suboptimal social skills, and often exhibit deviant behavior. For example, showing excessive activity in their surroundings. In addition, bullies are also at risk of experiencing psychological disorders such as emotional instability and others. Meanwhile, the impact of bullying on children who are victims includes physical and non-physical violence, such as feeling socially isolated, having no close friends, disharmonious relationships with parents, and a decline in mental health. The most serious impact is the emergence of depression that can lead to suicide. The implication is the need for collaboration between schools, teachers, and families to address bullying against children.

## Abstrak

**Kata kunci:**  
Bullying; Sosial-emosional;  
Keterampilan sosial

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Zakat memiliki potensi besar sebagai instrumen pembangunan ekonomi umat, khususnya dalam mengurangi ketimpangan sosial akibat distribusi pendapatan yang tidak merata. Dalam praktiknya, pendistribusian zakat melibatkan banyak pihak dan memerlukan pendekatan yang tepat agar tepat sasaran dan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji implementasi distribusi dana zakat produktif oleh LAZISNU Kota Metro dan menilai kesesuaianya dengan teori *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* menurut Imam Al-Shatibi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi lapangan, dan data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, serta dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendistribusian zakat produktif dilakukan melalui program beasiswa pendidikan, bantuan modal usaha, dan program kambing bergulir, yang secara langsung ditujukan untuk pemberdayaan ekonomi mustahik. Program-program ini mencerminkan pencapaian tujuan *maqāṣid al-shari'ah*, terutama dalam menjaga harta (*al-Māl*), kehidupan (*al-Nafs*), dan akal (*al-'Aql*). Kebaruan dari penelitian ini terletak pada penguatan pemahaman zakat produktif dalam konteks lokal – yakni di Kota Metro – dengan tetap berlandaskan pada kerangka filosofis dan normatif Islam. Secara praktis, temuan ini dapat menjadi acuan bagi lembaga zakat dalam merancang program yang tidak hanya bersifat karitatif tetapi juga transformatif, serta mendorong pengembangan kebijakan zakat yang berorientasi pada pemberdayaan ekonomi dan kemandirian mustahik menuju muzakki.

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's society, social problems often portray children as the most disadvantaged group in news coverage. Bullying is one of the most concerning social issues that children face. This phenomenon is especially alarming as it occurs in environments that should be safe and nurturing for children. This aligns with Law Number 23 of 2002 on Child Protection, which states that every child has the right to live, grow, and develop according to human values, and to be protected from acts of violence and discriminatory treatment (Desri Oktaviani, 2023). Unfortunately, cases of bullying continue to rise in educational settings. According to the International Center for Research on Women, a nonprofit organization focused on research and program development to promote gender equality, the prevalence of bullying in Indonesian schools is statistically 84% higher compared to other Asian countries (Nadia Sintia, 2024).

Bullying is not only a local issue but also a global concern. For instance, research in Colombia revealed that school violence was linked to decades of armed conflict between guerrillas, paramilitaries, and government forces. The study showed that, at the urban level, armed conflict predicted bullying among fifth-grade students, while inequality in land ownership was a predictor of bullying among ninth graders. Interestingly, poverty, population density, and homicide rates were not significant predictors (Enrique Chaux, 2009). These findings demonstrate that bullying is shaped by various structural and societal factors, extending beyond the school walls and into broader socio-political dynamics.

For students who are in the critical phase of education, the school environment plays a significant role in shaping their character. In other words, a student's personality and behavior are deeply influenced by their experiences in school. Therefore, it is crucial for parents and teachers to monitor children's activities closely, both in academic and social contexts. Randall defines bullying as a deliberate act of aggression aimed at causing physical or mental suffering to another person, making it a form of dominance exercised by one individual over another (Kariman, 2021). Similarly, Nadhira and Salwa Rofiah (2023) revealed in their study that victims of bullying often experience severe mental health challenges, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Approximately 40% of participants reported experiencing PTSD in the past academic year, while about 25% showed symptoms indicating the likelihood of this condition.

The consequences of bullying are far-reaching. It negatively affects children's social skills, making them feel isolated, withdrawn from their surroundings, and unable to build meaningful relationships. Academically, victims of bullying often suffer from declining performance due to lack of

concentration, reduced motivation, and feelings of discomfort at school (Eka, 2024). In more severe cases, bullying may cause direct physical harm such as swelling, bruises, or even serious injuries. Beyond the physical, the psychological toll can linger much longer, leading to persistent anxiety, deep sadness, and trauma. If not addressed promptly, bullying has the potential to disrupt both mental and physical well-being in lasting ways.

Given the numerous harmful consequences associated with bullying, both in immediate and long-term contexts, it is essential to raise awareness from an early age. Schools, parents, and communities must work together to instill values of empathy, respect, and non-violence in children. In addition, campaigns, workshops, and educational programs should be consistently implemented to provide young people with the knowledge and resilience to confront bullying. As Alia (2024) emphasizes, building early understanding among children the nation's future generation is a crucial step toward minimizing and ultimately preventing bullying in educational and social environments.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this study is the literature review method. A literature review is a crucial part of the initial stages of research, as it is conducted in almost all types of studies, whether based on descriptive or numerical paradigms (Sulistyawati, 2023). According to Bordens and Abbott, a literature review is a stage in which a researcher locates, accesses, examines, and evaluates various research sources related to the topic of interest. In this study, the researcher collects facts and information from a variety of literature sources such as books, scientific journals, academic papers, and other references related to the impact of bullying on the social and emotional development of elementary school students. Thus, this research does not involve the collection of primary data from the field but instead focuses on secondary data.

The data analysis technique used in this study follows four stages: collecting data, identifying data, describing data, and drawing conclusions (Arif, M., 2025; Umar Sidiq, 2019). In addition, the analysis in this research applies the Miles and Huberman model. The steps in the Miles and Huberman model (as cited in Sugiyono, 2016) include: Data Reduction, which is the initial step aimed at simplifying and clarifying the data collected; Data Display, which in qualitative research is generally presented descriptively in narrative text; and Verification, which refers to the gradual process of drawing conclusions from the analyzed data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Impact of Bullying on the Socio-Emotional Development of Elementary School Children: A Literature Review

#### Verbal Violence and Its Emotional Impact on Children

Bullying at the elementary school level commonly appears in the form of verbal abuse, such as teasing, stigmatization, and insults. These acts are often perceived as "light" by some adults; however, research demonstrates that they can deeply damage a child's emotional condition. Olweus (1993), a pioneer in bullying research, revealed that repeated teasing leads to feelings of insecurity, excessive anxiety, depression, and reduced motivation to attend school. One student participating in his study stated: "Every day my friends made fun of me because I was overweight, and I didn't want to go to school anymore." This experience illustrates that verbal violence not only affects temporary emotions but also reduces children's engagement in learning activities. Victims of bullying tend to become emotionally exhausted, struggle to concentrate, and withdraw from social interactions.

#### Decline in Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence

Bullying also significantly impacts children's self-esteem. Victims often feel worthless, incapable, and undeserving of acceptance within their environment. Smith (2000) found that verbal remarks such as "you're stupid" or "nobody wants to be your friend" systematically erode children's confidence. A classroom teacher he interviewed explained: "The child who is frequently teased becomes quieter and refuses to raise their hand in class, even though they actually understand the lesson." This proves that bullying affects not only psychological aspects but also hampers academic development. Children who lose confidence avoid active participation in class, even when they have great potential. This impact is long-term, as low self-esteem formed in childhood can persist into adolescence and adulthood.

#### Disruption of Social Relationships

In addition to undermining self-esteem, bullying also damages the quality of children's social relationships. Salmivalli (2010) emphasized that bullying victims often feel isolated, shunned by peers, and deprived of opportunities to build healthy social networks. In many cases, bullies do not act alone but are supported by group dynamics. Derogatory language, such as mocking appearances or family backgrounds, serves as a means of group domination over certain individuals. One informant in Salmivalli's study noted: "If one child starts mocking, others follow. The bullied child ends up sitting alone." This situation

illustrates how bullying creates an exclusive and hostile social climate. Victims not only lose friends but also feel they have no place in the classroom community, putting them at risk of developing withdrawal behaviors or even aggression as a defense mechanism.

### **Risk of Long-Term Mental Health Problems**

The impact of bullying does not stop in childhood but may continue into adolescence and adulthood. Copeland et al. (2013), through a longitudinal study, demonstrated that children consistently exposed to teasing or intimidation are at greater risk of long-term mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic anxiety, depression, and even self-harm tendencies. One respondent confessed: "I still vividly remember being called cruel names in elementary school, and it still hurts to this day." This testimony shows that childhood bullying experiences can leave profound psychological scars (Arif, M., et al: 2024). These mental wounds can last for years, influencing interpersonal relationships, career development, and emotional well-being in adulthood.

### **The Crucial Role of School and Family Environments**

Another important finding highlights the crucial role of school and family environments in preventing and addressing bullying. (Espelage: 2004) showed that teacher and parental interventions significantly reduce bullying cases. Anti-bullying programs that promote positive language and reinforce mutual respect have proven effective in building a healthy social climate. A teacher involved in such a program shared: "When teachers consistently emphasized that every child has strengths, bullying in the classroom drastically decreased." This underscores that character education, empathy building, and positive communication are effective strategies for bullying prevention. Moreover, parental involvement in providing emotional support and supervision is equally vital, ensuring children feel safe both at home and school. With strong collaboration between schools and families, the negative impacts of bullying on children's socio-emotional development can be significantly minimized.

### **Bullying as Interpersonal and Symbolic Violence**

Bullying is a form of interpersonal violence that severely impacts children's development emotionally, socially, and academically. This phenomenon not only harms victims directly through insults and humiliation but also generates broader social implications. Children who experience bullying tend to lose their sense of security, withdraw from social life, and experience decreased learning motivation (Olweus, 1993; Smith, 2000). Therefore, bullying should not be

viewed merely as deviant individual behavior but as a social practice that shapes the order of school and community life.

### **Foucault's Perspective: Bullying as a Practice of Power through Language**

From Foucault's perspective, bullying can be understood as a practice of power reproduced through discourse. Bullies employ language such as ridicule, stigma, and insults as instruments to dominate their victims (Arif et al, 2021; Foucault, 1977/1995). In this context, language is not merely a tool of communication but also a mechanism of power that regulates social relations. For example, calling someone "stupid" or "ugly" not only inflicts psychological harm but also positions the victim as inferior. These power relations are productive in that they shape social identities: bullies are placed as the dominant group, while victims are positioned as weak. Thus, bullying illustrates how power operates at the micro level within classrooms and school environments.

### **Derrida's Deconstruction: Unpacking Binary Oppositions in Bullying**

Derrida's concept of deconstruction helps us understand that bullying reproduces binary oppositions such as strong vs. weak, smart vs. stupid, or popular vs. marginalized (Derrida, 1976/1997). These oppositions are not fixed but are socially constructed and can be questioned. The labels used in bullying create a social reality that appears "natural" but is, in fact, a social construction. For instance, a child mocked as "not smart" does not necessarily lack ability; rather, the label is imposed by the dominant group to exclude them. Through deconstruction, we can see that such categories may be challenged, reversed, and redefined. This opens opportunities for education to dismantle discriminatory language myths that hinder children's development.

### **Bullying as Discourse and Symbolic Violence**

Bullying is not only an individual interaction but also a discursive practice that reinforces social domination. (Arif, M. et al: 2023; Bourdieu: 1991) described this phenomenon as symbolic violence the use of language and symbols to legitimize inequality in society. The derogatory language used by children in schools reflects broader social ideologies in which dominant groups maintain their position by excluding those considered weak. In this sense, bullying in schools mirrors larger social structures, where discrimination and inequality are produced and reproduced through everyday language practices.

### **Implications for Democratic Culture and Education**

If left unaddressed, verbal violence in schools risks perpetuating cultures of exclusion and social hierarchy that contradict democratic principles. Children who grow accustomed to witnessing or experiencing bullying may internalize the norm that belittling others is acceptable. In the long run, this shapes citizens who tolerate inequality and discrimination (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Therefore, elementary education bears a significant responsibility to instill ethical and constructive communication practices. Language education that emphasizes empathy, respect for differences, and dialogic skills is crucial to ensure that younger generations engage in healthy debates without demeaning one another.

### **Language, Symbolic Violence, and the Urgency of Ethical Education**

The language used in bullying reflects a form of symbolic violence within society. Without proper educational interventions, the practice of discriminatory language will continue to be reproduced across generations (Bourdieu, 1991). Thus, ethical language education must be an integral part of elementary school curricula. Programs that encourage students to use positive language, respect peers, and reject hate speech have proven effective in reducing bullying (Espelage, 2004). In this way, schools can become transformative spaces that foster healthy and equitable communication cultures, enabling children not only to be protected from bullying but also to grow as individuals who respect human dignity.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study confirms that bullying significantly affects the socio-emotional development of elementary school children. Victims often experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, while perpetrators tend to display deviant behavior, lack empathy, and show emotional instability. Bullying disrupts social relationships and influences both adaptation processes and academic achievement, reinforcing the understanding that bullying is not merely a deviant act but a long-term psychological and social issue that shapes children's identities and patterns of interaction.

Theoretically, this research contributes by framing bullying as both interpersonal and symbolic violence that affects the broader socio-emotional trajectory of children. It integrates psychological perspectives on child development with critical theories of power, discourse, and symbolic violence, demonstrating how bullying reproduces unequal relations through language and social practices. This perspective enriches existing frameworks by

highlighting that not only victims but also perpetrators and bystanders require psychosocial attention.

Future research should employ longitudinal approaches to trace long-term impacts, conduct cross-cultural comparisons, and include digital contexts such as cyberbullying. Intervention studies that address victims, perpetrators, and bystanders simultaneously would also provide valuable insights. Practically, these findings serve as a foundation for developing character education programs, teacher training, and policy initiatives that foster inclusive and supportive school environments. Policymakers and educators are encouraged to collaborate in implementing systematic anti-bullying strategies to ensure safe and nurturing learning spaces for all children.

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