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Strengthening Lumansari Students: Promoting Awareness to Prevent and Address Bullying Effect

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Abstract. Bullying among students is a serious issue that negatively affects the psychological and social development of students. Therefore, efforts are needed to increase the students' awareness of the impact of bullying and the importance of character education in preventing it. This community service activity aims to increase the awareness of students in Lumansari Village, Gemuh Subdistrict, Kendal Regency, regarding the impact of bullying through a character education approach. The methods used in this activity include socialization, group discussions, and positive character development training. The results of the activity showed a significant increase in students' understanding of the negative impacts of bullying and the importance of values such as empathy, tolerance, and responsibility. It is hoped that this program can become a model that can be applied in other schools to prevent bullying and shape a generation with good character.

Keywords: bullying, character education, student awareness, community service, Lumansari Village.

Abstrak. Bullying di kalangan siswa merupakan masalah serius yang berdampak negatif terhadap perkembangan psikologis dan sosial siswa. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan upaya untuk meningkatkan kesadaran siswa terhadap dampak bullying dan pentingnya karakter pendidikan dalam pencegahannya. Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kesadaran siswa di Desa Lumansari, Kecamatan Gemuh, Kabupaten Kendal, terhadap dampak bullying melalui pendekatan pendidikan karakter. Metode yang digunakan dalam kegiatan ini meliputi sosialisasi, diskusi kelompok, dan pelatihan pengembangan karakter positif. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan pemahaman siswa secara signifikan terhadap dampak negatif bullying dan nilai-nilai pentingnya seperti empati, toleransi, dan tanggung jawab. Diharapkan program ini dapat menjadi model yang dapat diterapkan di sekolah lain untuk mencegah terjadinya bullying dan membentuk generasi yang berkarakter baik.

Kata kunci: bullying, pendidikan karakter, kesadaran siswa, pengabdian masyarakat, Desa Lumansari.

1. BACKGROUND

Bullying, as a social phenomenon that frequently occurs in educational environments, has become a serious issue affecting the mental, physical, and emotional health of students across various educational levels. Bullying impacts not only the victims but also the perpetrators and bystanders, creating an unhealthy school environment that hinders the teaching and learning process. In recent decades, numerous studies have shown that the long-term effects of bullying can lead to anxiety disorders, depression, low self-esteem, and a higher risk of experiencing various psychosocial problems in adulthood. Lumansari Village, located in Gemuh Subdistrict, Kendal Regency, is no exception to this issue, with incidents of bullying reported among elementary and secondary school students. Despite efforts by the government and educational institutions to reduce the incidence of bullying through regulations and educational interventions, students' awareness of the detrimental effects of bullying remains

relatively low. This highlights the need for a more effective and comprehensive approach, one of which is through character education designed to instill strong moral and social values. This approach aims not only to raise awareness of the negative impact of bullying but also to encourage the creation of a safer and more inclusive school environment. This community service program focuses on strengthening character education among students in Lumansari Village, with the hope of increasing their awareness of the impact of bullying and fostering positive behaviors that will reduce or even eliminate bullying practices in schools. Through a series of socialization activities, training, and interactive and participatory discussions, this program aims to create long-term changes in students' mindsets and attitudes, enabling them to grow into responsible, empathetic individuals with the ability to create a harmonious and violence-free social environment.

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2. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at providing a deep and detailed description of the phenomenon of increasing students' awareness of the impact of bullying through character education interventions. This approach was chosen for its flexibility and ability to explore in-depth information about the processes, dynamics, and outcomes of the community service program implemented.

Research Procedure:

The research procedure began with the preparation phase, where the researchers conducted a preliminary survey and observation in Lumansari Village to understand the social and cultural conditions, as well as the level of students' awareness of bullying. After gaining a general overview, coordination with schools and local communities was conducted to plan the implementation of the character education program. The next phase involved the intervention, which was carried out through various activities such as socialization, group discussions, and character training over several months. During each stage of the implementation, participatory observation and documentation were conducted to record interactions, responses, and changes that occurred among the students. After the program's implementation, the final phase was evaluation and data analysis, where the researchers reflected on the successes and challenges faced during the program.

Research Design:

The research design is descriptive-exploratory, focusing on the exploration and in-depth description of how character education can enhance students' awareness of the impact of bullying. The study was designed in several stages, involving the gradual collection of data

from various sources such as students, teachers, and parents. This design also includes the use of data triangulation to increase the validity of findings by comparing information obtained from different sources and data collection techniques. Each stage of this study was designed to understand the process of change occurring among students, as well as ²⁵ the factors that support or ² hinder the success of the intervention.

Data Collection Techniques:

The data collection techniques in this study involved several complementary methods to obtain a comprehensive overview. First, ² in-depth interviews were conducted with students, teachers, and parents to identify their understanding of bullying and character education before and after the intervention. Second, participatory ² observation was conducted during the implementation of character education activities, where the researchers actively engaged and observed changes in students' behavior in various contexts. Third, the researchers also utilized documentation methods by collecting field notes, video recordings, and instructional materials used during the intervention. The data obtained from these three techniques were then thematically analyzed to identify emerging patterns and provide a detailed description of the process of increasing students' awareness of the impact of bullying.

3. THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

This research is based on two main concepts: bullying and character education, which serve as the theoretical foundation for understanding and addressing the social phenomenon faced by students in the school environment.

Bullying

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is repeatedly carried out by an individual or group against a weaker victim, either physically or psychologically. Olweus (1993) defines bullying as a negative action conducted by one or more individuals repeatedly, where the victim experiences difficulty in defending themselves. This behavior can manifest in various forms, including physical (such as hitting or kicking), verbal (such as insults or taunts), social (such as exclusion or spreading rumors), and cyberbullying, which involves the use of technology to harass or intimidate the victim.

The impact of bullying on victims is severe, including low self-esteem, anxiety disorders, depression, and even the risk of suicide. Additionally, perpetrators of bullying also face long-term behavioral issues, such as a tendency to engage in violence or legal problems later in life. ⁶ Therefore, it is crucial to develop effective prevention strategies within the school environment

that not only target victims and perpetrators but also involve ⁶ the entire school community in creating a safe and supportive environment.

⁶ **Character Education**

Character education is an approach designed to help students develop moral and ethical values that serve as a guide for their behavior in various social contexts. Lickona (1991) describes character education as a deliberate effort to instill universal values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect in students, which will help them become individuals of integrity who contribute positively to society.

Character education plays a critical role in preventing bullying because, through the development of strong character, students can cultivate self-awareness, empathy, and the ability to respect others, which are key to creating harmonious social relationships. Character education also ¹⁵ serves as a tool to strengthen an inclusive school culture, where every student feels valued and accepted, and encourages them to act as agents of change in combating bullying.

In the context of this research, character education is viewed as an effective intervention to increase students' awareness of the impact of bullying, with the hope that by reinforcing positive values, students can understand the importance of respectful behavior and contribute to creating a violence-free school environment. The process of internalizing these values focuses not only on the cognitive aspect but also encompasses affective and conative aspects, enabling students to develop the attitudes and skills needed to navigate complex social situations wisely.

By integrating the concepts of bullying and character education, this research aims to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to bullying prevention efforts in schools, particularly in Lumansari Village, Gemuh Subdistrict, Kendal Regency, through a community service program focused on strengthening character values among students.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

¹ Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is an educational process through which individuals acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) identifies five core competencies of SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Integrating SEL into ²⁹the school curriculum can significantly contribute to the prevention of bullying by promoting emotional intelligence, empathy, and conflict resolution skills among students. When students are equipped with SEL competencies, they are more likely to understand the impact of their actions on others, manage their ⁴emotions effectively, and engage in positive interactions with peers. SEL also encourages a supportive and caring school environment where students feel safe, respected, and valued, reducing the likelihood of bullying behaviors.

In the context of this research, SEL is considered a complementary approach to character education in enhancing students' awareness of the impact of bullying. By fostering social-emotional skills alongside moral values, students can develop a holistic understanding of their ¹²role in creating a positive school climate. The integration of SEL in the community service program aims to provide students with practical tools for managing interpersonal conflicts, building healthy relationships, and contributing to a culture of respect and inclusion in their schools.

Through the combination of bullying prevention strategies, character education, and SEL, this research seeks to offer a comprehensive approach to addressing the complex social dynamics within schools. The goal is to empower students in Lumansari Village with the skills and values needed ²⁶to create a safe, supportive, and bullying-free learning environment.

School Climate

³School climate refers to the quality and character of school life, encompassing the physical, social, and academic environment of a school. A positive school climate is ¹³characterized by safety, respect, engagement, and a sense of belonging among all members of the school community, including students, teachers, staff, and parents. ²²Cohen et al. (2009) emphasize that a positive school climate fosters academic achievement, reduces behavioral problems, and enhances student ³well-being.

A positive school climate ³plays a crucial role in preventing bullying, as it creates an ⁴environment where students feel safe, supported, and valued. When the school climate is positive, there is a lower incidence of bullying because ³students are more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors and intervene in bullying situations. Conversely, a negative school climate, where there is a lack of trust, safety, and inclusiveness, can contribute to the perpetuation of bullying behaviors.

¹²In this research, school climate is considered a critical factor influencing the effectiveness of character education and bullying prevention efforts. By assessing and improving the school climate in Lumansari Village, the research aims ²⁴to create a more supportive and inclusive

environment where character education and social-emotional learning can thrive. The goal is to foster a school culture that not only discourages bullying but also promotes positive social interactions and mutual respect among students.

Peer Influence

Peer influence refers to the impact that peers, or individuals of similar age or social status, have on one another's attitudes, behaviors, and values. During adolescence, peer relationships become increasingly important, and peers often serve as role models, shaping each other's behavior through direct interactions and social expectations. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) highlights that individuals learn behaviors through observation and imitation of others, particularly those they consider significant or influential.

Peer influence can either contribute to or help prevent bullying. On the one hand, negative peer pressure can encourage students to engage in or support bullying behaviors to gain acceptance or avoid rejection from their peer group. On the other hand, positive peer influence can discourage bullying and promote prosocial behaviors when students model and reinforce respectful and inclusive conduct.

In the context of this research, peer influence is examined as a factor that can enhance the impact of character education and social-emotional learning. By fostering positive peer relationships and empowering students to act as role models for their peers, the research aims to leverage peer influence as a powerful tool for bullying prevention. Encouraging students to support and uphold the values taught through character education can create a ripple effect, spreading positive behaviors throughout the school community and helping to establish a culture of respect and empathy.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

This community service program was carried out in several stages, including awareness campaigns, character education training, and evaluation of changes in students' awareness regarding the impact of bullying. Data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation indicate a significant increase in students' understanding and awareness of the negative effects of bullying and the importance of character values in daily life.

Increased Student Awareness

After the program implementation, observations and interviews showed a significant increase in students' awareness of the impact of bullying. Prior to the intervention, many students perceived bullying as a normal behavior or just a joke, without understanding its long-

term consequences. However, after participating in a series of character education activities, students began to realize that bullying could cause deep psychological trauma and damage social relationships. Students also demonstrated improved ability to identify bullying behaviors and understand the consequences of such behaviors for both victims and perpetrators.

Changes in Student Attitudes and Behavior

In addition to increased awareness, this program also successfully influenced students' attitudes and behaviors in their interactions with peers. Students who previously tended to be indifferent to bullying incidents around them began to show empathy and the courage to reject or report bullying actions. This was evident from the changes in social interaction patterns in the classroom, where students became more active in maintaining a safe and supportive environment for all their classmates. Students also started to apply the character values taught, such as respect, honesty, and responsibility, in their daily lives.

Challenges in Program Implementation

Although the program showed positive results, several challenges were encountered during implementation, particularly related to initial resistance from some students and lack of support from some parents. Some students initially displayed skeptical and unserious attitudes towards the activities, but with persuasive and participatory approaches, they eventually became more engaged and receptive to the materials presented. Additionally, parental involvement in supporting character education programs needs to be enhanced, given the important role of family in shaping children's character.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this program align with character education theory, which posits that instilling strong moral values can shape positive behavior in students and reduce negative behaviors such as bullying. The significant increase in awareness and attitude change demonstrates that character education is an effective tool in preventing bullying in schools. This confirms that when students are provided with a deep understanding of values such as empathy, responsibility, and respect, they are better equipped to recognize and reject bullying behaviors and are more motivated to create an inclusive and safe social environment.

Furthermore, these findings highlight the importance of a holistic and sustained approach to character education. It is not enough to provide short-term awareness or training; character education needs to be continuously integrated into the school curriculum and supported by the entire school community, including teachers, parents, and the students themselves. Thus, bullying prevention efforts should focus not only on short-term interventions

but also on the long-term establishment of a school culture where character values underpin every social interaction.

The study's results also show that challenges such as initial resistance and lack of parental support can be overcome with appropriate strategies, including actively involving students in the learning process and building strong partnerships with parents and the community. This indicates that the success of character education programs in preventing bullying largely depends on the collaboration between schools, families, and the broader community.

Overall, this program not only successfully increased students' awareness of the impact of bullying but also demonstrated the potential to be adopted by other schools as a model intervention for bullying prevention through character education. The continuous and comprehensive integration of character education into the educational system is expected to create a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also strong in character and capable of contributing positively to society.

5. CONCLUSION

The community service program implemented in Lumansari Village, Gemuh Subdistrict, Kendal Regency, successfully increased students' awareness of the negative effects of bullying through the application of character education. The main conclusion drawn from this research is that character education has proven effective in changing students' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors related to bullying. After participating in the program, students demonstrated a significant improvement in their understanding of the long-term impacts of bullying, as well as in their ability to identify and reject bullying behaviors. Additionally, there was a positive change in students' social interactions, with values such as empathy, responsibility, and respect becoming integrated into their daily lives.

These findings underscore the importance of character education as a holistic and sustainable approach to bullying prevention in schools. Character education not only provides students with knowledge but also shapes attitudes and behaviors that contribute to creating a safe and inclusive school environment. Despite challenges in implementation, such as initial resistance from students and lack of parental support, the program demonstrates that with appropriate strategies, these challenges can be addressed, and the program's objectives can be achieved.

As a recommendation, there is a need for the continuous integration of character education into the school curriculum and the involvement of the entire school community, including teachers, parents, and students, in bullying prevention efforts. It is hoped that this

program model can be adopted by other schools as part of a collective effort to develop a generation that is not only academically successful but also possesses strong character and can make positive contributions to society.

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