

Analysis of the Impact of Bullying on Social-Emotional Development in Children Aged 5–6 Years at TK Save The Kids, Banda Aceh City

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Abstract

This study was motivated by the emergence of bullying behavior among early childhood children, which has the potential to hinder their social-emotional development. Bullying among children aged 5–6 years may occur in verbal, physical, and relational forms, affecting children's ability to interact socially and manage their emotions. This study aimed to describe the forms of bullying experienced by children aged 5–6 years, analyze its impact on their social-emotional development, and identify teachers' strategies in preventing and addressing bullying behavior at Save The Kids Kindergarten, Banda Aceh City. This research employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. The research subjects consisted of 23 children in Group B aged 5–6 years and two classroom teachers as informants. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation. The findings revealed that the forms of bullying identified included verbal bullying, such as teasing and giving negative nicknames; physical bullying, such as pushing and taking classmates' toys; and relational bullying, such as social exclusion and rejection from playgroups. The impact of bullying on children's social development was reflected in difficulties interacting with peers, decreased participation in group activities, and a tendency to withdraw from social environments. The emotional impacts included decreased self-confidence, feelings of sadness and anxiety, frequent crying, and emotional instability. Teachers' strategies for preventing and addressing bullying included monitoring children's interactions, providing guidance and advice, fostering mutual respect, developing empathy, and collaborating with parents. Therefore, bullying has a negative impact on the social-emotional development of young children, highlighting the need for continuous prevention and intervention efforts by both teachers and parents.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education plays an important role in supporting children's holistic development, which includes moral, cognitive, language, physical-motor, artistic, and social-emotional aspects. Among these aspects, social-emotional development is a very important foundation because it influences children's ability to interact with peers, manage emotions, develop empathy, and

adapt to their social environment. Children aged 5–6 years are at a crucial stage of development, where social interaction makes a major contribution to the formation of their personality and character.

However, the achievement of optimal social-emotional development is often disrupted by negative experiences occurring in children's social environment, one of which is bullying behavior. Bullying in early childhood is aggressive behavior that is carried out intentionally and repeatedly against a child who is perceived as weaker. In kindergarten settings, bullying commonly appears in the form of verbal teasing, physical actions, as well as relational bullying such as exclusion and rejection within play groups. Although it is often considered a normal conflict between children, bullying can have serious impacts on children's psychological well-being and social adjustment abilities.

The phenomenon of bullying in early childhood has become an increasingly important concern in educational settings. Based on preliminary observations conducted over three months at TK Save The Kids in Banda Aceh City involving 23 children aged 5–6 years, various forms of bullying behavior were found during play and learning activities. The most dominant form was relational bullying, such as exclusion from play groups, rejection by peers, and the formation of exclusive groups. In addition, verbal bullying was also found in the form of teasing, giving negative nicknames, and laughing at peers. Some children who experienced bullying showed signs of withdrawing from the social environment, decreased self-confidence, emotional instability, and reluctance to engage in group activities.

Previous studies have shown that bullying has a negative impact on children's social-emotional development. Lestari (2020) found that children who experience bullying tend to have low self-confidence, difficulty in social interaction, and obstacles in managing emotions. Anti and Amriyah (2024) reported that bullying can cause emotional instability, reduce empathy, and trigger withdrawal from the social environment. Cahyana (2024) also explained that relational bullying has a significant impact on children's psychological condition. Meanwhile, Fitriani (2025) emphasized the important role of teachers and parents in preventing bullying behavior in early childhood.

Although various studies have examined bullying and its impact on child development, most research still focuses on children in general or on prevention efforts carried out by teachers and parents. Research that specifically analyzes the impact of bullying on the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years in kindergarten settings through a case study approach is still limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to address this gap by analyzing the forms of bullying experienced by children and its impact on their social-emotional development at TK Save The Kids in Banda Aceh City.

This study aims to analyze the forms of bullying experienced by children aged 5–6 years, examine the impact of bullying on their social-emotional development, and describe teachers' strategies in preventing and handling bullying behavior in the school environment.

2. METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study research design. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of bullying and its impact on the social-emotional development of early childhood in a real-life context. The study was conducted at TK Save The Kids in Banda Aceh City, specifically in group B consisting of children aged 5–6 years. The

selection of the research site was based on preliminary observations indicating the presence of bullying behavior in children's daily interactions.

The research subjects consisted of 23 children aged 5–6 years as the main data source and 2 classroom teachers as supporting informants. Research data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out directly on children's social interactions during play and learning activities to identify forms of bullying and its impact on social-emotional aspects. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with classroom teachers to obtain information regarding the forms of bullying that occurred, its impact on children's social-emotional development, and teachers' strategies in handling such behavior. In addition, documentation in the form of child development records, teachers' anecdotal notes, and learning activity documentation was used to strengthen the research data.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation, while technique triangulation involved comparing results obtained through different data collection methods to ensure information consistency.

Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and grouping data according to the focus of the study, namely the forms of bullying and its impact on children's social-emotional development. Next, the data were presented in narrative descriptions and tables to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and continuous verification to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the conditions observed in the field.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Banda Aceh City, bullying appears in the forms of verbal bullying, physical bullying, and relational bullying. Based on the results of observations and interviews with teachers, verbal bullying is the most dominant form found in children's daily interactions. These behaviors include teasing related to peers' physical appearance, such as calling friends "black," "ugly," "curly," "smelly," "fat," and "short." In addition, physical bullying was also found, such as grabbing toys during shared play, as well as relational bullying, which is shown through behaviors such as not inviting peers to play, refusing to let friends join a group, and expressing unwillingness to be friends with certain children.

Although the frequency of bullying incidents found is not relatively high and generally occurs only once or twice a week, such behavior still has the potential to affect children's social-emotional development. The impact that emerges is not always the same for every child, as it is influenced by individual characteristics, social experiences, and the child's ability to manage emotions and resolve conflicts.

Impact of Bullying on Children's Emotions

Based on observations and interviews, emotional impact is the most easily observed effect on children who experience bullying. Children who feel teased, rejected, or not accepted by their peer group show noticeable emotional changes. The most common reactions are crying, sadness, disappointment, and discomfort when being in social environments.

The study found that one child showed a stronger emotional impact compared to others. This child often cried when feeling excluded by peers or when close friends played with other children. The child also showed expressions of sadness and disappointment due to feeling no longer accepted in the peer group. This condition indicates that negative social experiences can affect the emotional well-being of early childhood learners.

Theoretically, early childhood emotional development is strongly influenced by the quality of social relationships. At the age of 5–6 years, children begin to build closer friendships and develop a strong need to be accepted by their social group. When this need is not fulfilled, children tend to show emotional responses such as sadness, disappointment, and even anxiety. Therefore, negative treatment from peers can become a meaningful emotional experience for children.

These findings are consistent with Hymel and Swearer (2021), who state that bullying experiences can affect children's emotional conditions and trigger negative reactions such as sadness, fear, anger, and feelings of insecurity. The results also support Anti and Amriyah (2024), who found that bullying in early childhood can cause emotional instability and increase children's vulnerability to social pressure in school environments.

Impact of Bullying on Children's Social Interaction

In addition to emotional effects, bullying also affects children's ability to build social relationships with peers. The findings show that children who experience unpleasant social interactions tend to become quieter and reduce their participation in social activities. After experiencing conflict, children appear reluctant to initiate conversation and prefer to wait for others to engage with them first.

Observations indicate that children who feel excluded often choose to isolate themselves and do not immediately join group play. They need several days to return to normal social interaction after experiencing social conflict. This condition reflects difficulties in social adjustment resulting from negative experiences.

In early childhood, peer relationships play an important role in social development. Through social interaction, children learn cooperation, sharing, conflict resolution, and understanding others' perspectives. When children experience rejection or exclusion, these learning processes may be disrupted, affecting their ability to build healthy social relationships.

These findings are consistent with Runions and Shaw (2021), who explain that children who experience bullying tend to have difficulties in forming social relationships and show lower participation in group activities. OECD (2021) also reports that bullying victimization can reduce children's social engagement and lead to withdrawal from peer environments.

Thus, it can be understood that bullying not only affects children's emotional state but also impacts their ability to interact, cooperate, and build positive relationships with peers.

Impact of Bullying on Children's Self-Confidence

Another impact found in this study is a decrease in children's self-confidence. Based on interviews with teachers, children who experience social conflict appear hesitant to re-engage with peers. They show fear of initiating communication due to concerns about rejection or repeated negative treatment.

This lack of confidence is reflected in children's reluctance to join group play, reduced participation in classroom activities, and dependence on teachers' encouragement to rejoin learning activities. Children also tend to avoid social situations that they perceive as potentially conflictual.

According to social-emotional development theory, self-confidence develops through positive experiences gained from the surrounding environment. When children receive acceptance, appreciation, and support, their confidence develops well. Conversely, repeated rejection, teasing, or negative treatment can lead children to develop a negative self-view.

These findings are in line with Lestari (2020), who states that children who experience bullying tend to have lower self-confidence compared to those who do not. Cahyana (2024) also explains that experiences of rejection and exclusion by peers can make children feel less valuable and doubt their own abilities.

However, the results also show that the decline in self-confidence is not permanent. With emotional support, guidance, and encouragement from teachers, children gradually become more willing to engage in social activities and show improvement in self-confidence.

Overall, the findings indicate that bullying affects the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years, particularly in emotional aspects, social interaction, and self-confidence. The impacts include sadness, crying, feelings of exclusion, social withdrawal, reduced participation, and lower self-esteem. Although most children are able to recover with teacher support, bullying experiences remain a factor that requires serious attention because they can hinder social-emotional development if not properly addressed. Therefore, the roles of teachers and parents are crucial in creating a safe, comfortable, and supportive environment for optimal child development.

4. CONCLUSION

In Banda Aceh City, bullying appears in three main forms, namely verbal bullying, physical bullying, and relational bullying. Verbal bullying is the most dominant form found in children's daily interactions, characterized by teasing or giving nicknames related to peers' physical appearance. In addition, behaviors such as grabbing toys and excluding or rejecting peers from play groups were also found. Although the frequency of these incidents is relatively low and does not occur every day, such behaviors still have the potential to affect children's social-emotional development.

The results of the study show that bullying affects children's emotional aspects, social interaction, and self-confidence. The impacts include children becoming more easily tearful, feeling sad, feeling excluded by peers, becoming quieter, and experiencing difficulties in resuming social interaction after conflicts occur. In addition, some children show a decrease in self-confidence, indicated by hesitation in interacting and participating in group activities. These effects appear to be stronger in children with higher emotional sensitivity. The study also shows that the role of teachers is very important in preventing and addressing bullying through direct supervision, guidance during conflicts, fostering empathy, implementing classroom rules, and collaborating with parents. Therefore, continuous collaboration between schools and families is needed to create a safe, comfortable, and supportive learning environment for optimal social-emotional development of children, so that the risk of bullying behavior can be minimized.

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