Psychoeducation Programme in Response to Bullying in Primary Schools

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

Bullying behavior at the elementary school level is still frequently encountered and continues to hurt children's emotional and social development. Children aged 8 to 9 years old, such as third-grade students, are still in a stage of emotional development that is not yet fully stable and are learning to recognize and manage their feelings. Therefore, proper guidance and education are essential to help them gain a basic understanding and the necessary social skills. This psychoeducational activity was conducted on June 20, 2025, in the third-grade class at SDN Kalasan Baru to help students recognize various forms of bullying, understand its impact, and learn how to respond in a healthy, assertive way. The methods used included storytelling, watching educational videos, casual discussions, role-playing, and writing positive messages to friends. The results of this activity showed improved understanding of bullying, increased empathy, and greater confidence in expressing their feelings and in helping peers who were being bullied. This activity demonstrates that psychoeducation can be an effective preventive measure in creating a safe school environment that supports children's social development.

Introduction

Bullying in primary schools remains one of the most common forms of violence in educational settings. Olweus (2005) defines bullying as aggressive behaviour deliberately and repeatedly directed towards individuals perceived as weaker. At ages 8–9, children are at a critical stage of cognitive and social development. Based on Piaget's theory of development, children of this age are in the concrete operational stage, a period when they begin to think logically but remain limited to real, concrete situations (Papalia & Feldman, 2012). In this phase, they are not yet fully capable of understanding social abstractions such as deep empathy, so they often do not realise that teasing or pushing behaviour can hurt others.

From an emotional perspective, Erikson (1963) states that school-aged children are in the industry versus inferiority stage. During this period, children begin to compare themselves with their peers and seek recognition from their social environment. If they fail to be accepted or feel socially incompetent, children may feel inferior or experience social

anxiety. Therefore, this period is crucial for developing social-emotional skills, such as recognising their own and others' emotions and learning to handle conflict positively. This intervention integrates cognitive developmental theory (Piaget), psychosocial development (Erikson), and social learning theory (Bandura) within a social-emotional learning framework (CASEL). The underlying assumption is that age-appropriate modelling, experiential activities, and guided reflection enhance children's empathy, moral reasoning, and behavioural self-regulation—core competencies necessary for bullying prevention.

A similar situation was found at Kalasan Baru State Primary School, a partner location in this activity. Based on preliminary observations, interviews with class teachers, and focus group discussions (FGD) with students, behaviours leading to verbal and mild physical bullying were found. One finding was the dominance of more active male groups, while female students tended to be passive and withdrawn. In addition, teachers' responses to bullying cases were not yet optimal. These findings highlight the importance of interventions that strengthen social and emotional skills to foster students' awareness and response to bullying.

This situation is consistent with data from the Yogyakarta City Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection and Population Control (DP3AP2KB), as quoted by Harian Jogja (2024), which recorded 22 children as victims of violence in schools. This data reinforces the fact that bullying is still a real problem and requires systematic efforts to prevent it from primary school age onwards. One practical approach is through psychoeducation, which is not only informative but also actively involves students in the learning process.

Theoretically, this activity is based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which emphasises that children learn through observation and imitation of others' behaviour. In this case, providing positive behavioural models through simulations and visual activities will be more easily accepted and understood by children. In addition, the self-regulation approach is also an important basis for equipping children with the ability to manage their emotions and responses in social situations. Self-regulation includes self-awareness, impulse control, and the ability to adaptively regulate actions.

Through structured psychoeducation tailored to children's developmental stage, it is hoped that students will be able to distinguish bullying behaviour, understand its impact, and form attitudes and actions that support a safe, mutually respectful school environment. Based on this background, the problem formulation in this activity is how psychoeducation can

improve the understanding and skills of third-grade students in dealing with bullying. The objectives of this activity are to increase students' awareness of bullying, shape prosocial responses to bullying, and create a more supportive, child-friendly, and violence-free primary school environment.

Method

The implementation of this community service activity was carried out in several stages involving various methods. The first stage was observation and interviews to analyse existing problems. In the next stage, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held involving selected participants to explore the problems faced in greater depth. After that, psychoeducation in the form of brainstorming, lectures, simulations, and role-plays was conducted for students at SDN Kalasan Baru, located in Glondong, Tirtomartani, Kalasan District, Sleman Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. This activity aimed to provide knowledge and understanding about bullying awareness in primary schools.

This community service activity was carried out three times with the following details:

1. On April 21 2025, observations and interviews were conducted involving the homeroom teacher of class 3B and the Principal of SDN Kalasan Baru.
2. On April 25 2025, a focus group discussion (FGD) was held, attended by eight female students from class 3B at SDN Kalasan Baru.
3. On June 20 2025, psychoeducation was conducted for all students in class 3B, with a total of 28 students participating.

Figure 1. Observation and photo with the children

Figure 2. Interview with the homeroom teacher of class 3B at Kalasan Baru Elementary School

Figure 3. FGD (Focus Group Discussion)

Figure 4. The facilitator explains the poster material and participants take part in the "Good Friend Promise Tree" activity.

The methods used in this activity consisted of:

a. Observation and interviews, which were used to identify initial problems occurring at the school.

b. Focus Group Discussion (FGD), which involved selected participants to explore existing problems and find solutions together.

c. Psychoeducation in the form of lectures, simulations, brainstorming, and role-playing to raise awareness about bullying and provide students with an understanding of the impact of bullying and how to deal with it at school.

Through this activity, it is hoped that students at SDN Kalasan Baru will gain a better understanding of bullying and create a more inclusive and safe school environment for all.

Results and Discussion

A psychoeducational activity on bullying was held on Friday, June 20 2025, in class 3B of SDN Kalasan Baru. This activity consisted of five main sessions and two additional activities designed to build students' understanding and skills in recognising, responding to, and preventing bullying.

The activity began with interactive games and a class contract to create a conducive atmosphere. Next, a verbal pre-test was conducted to measure students' initial understanding of bullying. The pre-test results showed that most students still had limited understanding of the definition, forms, and effects of bullying. Most only mentioned verbal forms, such as teasing, and were unable to distinguish between joking and hurting.

Through a series of activities such as visual presentations, thematic storytelling, watching educational videos, role-playing, and reflection through writing and symbolic pledges, students experienced increased cognitive and affective understanding. Prior to the intervention, only 9 of 28 students identified more than one form of bullying. After the psychoeducation session, 23 students were able to correctly mention three forms of bullying (verbal, physical, and social). In addition, before the intervention, only 7 students could suggest an appropriate response when witnessing bullying. In contrast, after the session, 21 students demonstrated constructive strategies such as reporting to teachers or offering peer support. These findings indicate a substantial improvement in students' descriptive understanding of bullying.

Table 1. Comparison of knowledge before and after psychoeducation

No	Before psychoeducation	After psychoeducation
1	**Understanding bullying** Prior to psychoeducation, most students had only a limited understanding of bullying and found it difficult to clearly explain its definition.	After psychoeducation, students are able to provide a more complete and comprehensive explanation of bullying, including its various forms such as physical, verbal, and social bullying.
2	**Types of bullying** Prior to psychoeducation, most students were only aware of the most common forms of bullying, such as verbal taunts, without knowing about other types.	After psychoeducation, students can name various forms of bullying, including verbal, physical, and social bullying, and understand the differences and their impacts.
3	**Experiences of witnessing or hearing about bullying** Prior to psychoeducation, only a few students responded regarding their experiences of witnessing or hearing about bullying around them.	After psychoeducation, more students were able to respond, with more than half of the class stating that they had seen or heard of bullying incidents.
4	**What to do if you see a friend being bullied.** Prior to psychoeducation, the majority of students did not know what to do when they saw a friend being bullied, and some just remained silent or did not react.	After psychoeducation, more students demonstrated an understanding of the importance of not remaining silent and reporting such incidents or helping friends who are being bullied.
5	**Feelings of bullying victims** Prior to psychoeducation, students could only mention general feelings, such as sadness, without a deeper explanation of the broader psychological impact.	After psychoeducation, students were able to describe the feelings of bullying victims in greater depth, such as feeling depressed, inferior, and afraid, and understand the impact on the victims' mental health.

The comparison table of pre-test and post-test results shows a significant improvement in students' understanding of bullying, including its definition, types, preventive measures, and empathy towards victims. In addition, there has been a positive behavioural change, with students showing the courage to report incidents or to support friends who are being bullied.

This improvement was not solely due to the delivery of information, but rather through an experience-based approach. Approaches such as storytelling, discussion, and role-playing allowed students to learn actively. This aligns with social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which emphasises the importance of observing and imitating behavioural models. In

this activity, the facilitator acted as a positive role model, while students practised social skills directly through role-playing.

This activity also strengthened emotional regulation. According to CASEL (2023), emotional management and empathy are important parts of social-emotional competence in preventing aggressive behaviour. Through reflection and symbolic activities such as writing letters or the 'Good Friend Promise Tree', students showed increased self-awareness and empathy towards their friends. This process is crucial as emotional regulation has been shown to be a key factor in reducing bullying tendencies among primary students (Fitriana et al., 2024).p-p-

However, this activity was not without its challenges. The classroom was located near a main road, which caused noise disturbances, and the lack of a sound system meant some sessions were less than optimal. In addition, the students' attention, especially the boys, was easily distracted by surrounding activities. Nevertheless, in general, the activity remained effective and had a positive impact on changing the students' attitudes and understanding.

The results of the observation also support the success of this intervention. Students who were previously passive began to show initiative in discussions and to express empathy more actively. These findings indicate that psychoeducation tailored to students' age and context can be an effective preventive strategy for shaping a safer, more supportive primary school culture (Farah et al., 2022). The increased willingness of students to report bullying reflects the development of prosocial moral reasoning and emerging assertiveness, which are consistent with Erikson's stage of industry versus inferiority. The intervention may have strengthened students' sense of competence in navigating peer conflicts, which is vital given the severe impact bullying can have on a child's personality development (Lusiana & Arifin, 2022).

This study has several limitations. The intervention was conducted in only one classroom with no control group, limiting generalisability. The evaluation relied primarily on verbal responses and short-term observation without long-term behavioural follow-up. Future research should incorporate validated measurement tools and longitudinal assessment to evaluate sustained impact. This is crucial considering that systemic interventions are needed to mitigate the wide-ranging impacts of bullying on elementary school students (Arinata et al., 2024). For long-term sustainability, this psychoeducation programme may be integrated into the school's social-emotional learning curriculum, supporting the development of a "Child-Friendly School" (Suryani & Affandi, 2025). Training

teachers to facilitate similar sessions and conducting periodic reinforcement activities could help institutionalise anti-bullying norms within the school environment, as teachers play a critical role as supporters and companions in this process (Wulandari et al., 2024).

Conclusion

The psychoeducational activities on bullying conducted for students in class 3B at SDN Kalasan Baru had a positive impact on students' understanding, awareness, and responses to bullying. Students who initially did not clearly understand the meaning of bullying, its forms, and its effects showed a significant improvement after participating in a series of educational sessions. Through participatory approaches such as discussions, role-playing, videos, and reflective activities, the children became better able to recognise hurtful actions and learned to respond positively and assertively.

This intervention also helped foster empathy and a sense of social responsibility among the students. This was evident in the changes in their thinking and in how they expressed their opinions after the activities. Despite some technical obstacles, such as an unfavourable classroom atmosphere and distractions from outside the classroom, the programme was effective overall and was welcomed enthusiastically by the students. This psychoeducation programme proves that concrete, enjoyable, and age-appropriate learning can be an effective way to prevent bullying early on in primary schools.

Recommendations

For long-term effectiveness, it is recommended that psychoeducation programmes be implemented periodically and integrated into primary schools' social-emotional learning curricula. The involvement of teachers and parents as partners in the education process is also important to reinforce the values conveyed during the activities. In addition, the development of follow-up modules is necessary as a continuous effort to foster an anti-bullying school culture. Follow-up evaluations are needed to assess changes in student behaviour after the intervention.

Acknowledgment

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