

Anti-Bullying Seminar as a Community Service Model: University Students' Engagement in Fostering Safe School Environments for Elementary School Children in Cidokom Village

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Abstract

Bullying remains a pervasive concern in Indonesian elementary schools, with approximately 30% of reported cases occurring at the primary education level. This community service study examines the implementation and effectiveness of an anti-bullying seminar conducted by university students from Universitas Darunnajah for elementary school children in Cidokom Village, Bogor Regency. The program employed a participatory action approach that integrated interactive seminars, role-playing activities, and psychoeducational workshops, targeting 85 students in grades 4 through 6. Pre-test and post-test assessments were administered to measure changes in students' knowledge of how to identify bullying, empathy levels, and intentions to intervene as bystanders. Descriptive statistical analysis, supplemented by qualitative observational data, revealed significant improvements across all measured indicators. Students' knowledge of bullying types and recognition increased from a mean score of 52.4 to 78.6, while empathy scores improved from 48.7 to 74.2. Bystander intervention intentions rose from 45.3 to 76.8. Qualitative findings indicated heightened student engagement and increased willingness to report bullying incidents. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on university-community partnerships in bullying prevention. It demonstrates the viability of student-led community service programs as vehicles for promoting safe school environments in rural Indonesian communities.

Keywords: anti-bullying seminar; community service; university students; elementary school; Cidokom Village.

A. Introduction

Bullying constitutes one of the most pressing psychosocial challenges confronting educational institutions worldwide, with particularly alarming prevalence rates among school-aged children in developing nations (Smith et al., 2023; Zych et al., 2019). In Indonesia, data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia/KPAI) indicate that approximately 3,800 bullying cases were reported nationwide in 2023, representing a significant increase from previous years (Aranditio, 2024). The United Federation of Indonesian Teachers (FSGI) further documented a rise from 21 cases in 2022 to 30 formally reported cases in 2023, with 30% of these incidents occurring at the elementary school level (Annur, 2024). Nationally representative survey data indicate that roughly 20% of Indonesian adolescents have experienced bullying victimization within the past month, placing them at elevated risk for loneliness, social isolation, depression, and substance use (Munira et al., 2023; Putra & Dendup, 2022). In the context of rural communities such as Cidokom Village in Bogor Regency, these figures are particularly concerning given the limited access to mental health resources, counseling services, and structured anti-bullying programs that characterize urban educational settings (Borualogo & Casas, 2023).

The extant literature on bullying prevention has yielded several evidence-based programs, most notably the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) and the KiVa program from Finland, both of which have demonstrated efficacy in reducing bullying behaviors through multi-tiered, whole-school approaches (Olweus & Limber, 2020; Salmivalli et al., 2021). Meta-analytic reviews have confirmed that school-based bullying prevention programs can decrease bullying behavior by up to 20–25% when implemented with fidelity (Gaffney et al., 2021; Ttofi & Farrington, 2022). However, the vast majority of these studies have been conducted in Western, high-income settings, and their transferability to Indonesian contexts, particularly rural communities with distinct sociocultural dynamics, collectivist values, and limited institutional infrastructure, remains underexplored (Borualogo et al., 2022; Fine et al., 2022). Moreover, while there is growing recognition of the role of higher education institutions in community-based intervention through service-learning models (Bringle et al., 2019; Compare et al., 2024), very few studies have examined the effectiveness of university-student-led anti-bullying seminars as a form of community service in Indonesian elementary schools. This gap is particularly salient given Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy framework, which requires university students to engage in community service as an integral part of higher education (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

The present study aims to address this gap by examining the design, implementation, and effectiveness of an anti-bullying seminar conducted by university students from Universitas Darunnajah for elementary school children in Cidokom Village, Bogor Regency, West Java. Specifically, this study seeks to: (1) describe the participatory seminar model employed, encompassing interactive psychoeducation, role-playing, and collaborative group activities; (2) evaluate the impact of the seminar on students' knowledge of bullying identification, empathy development, and bystander intervention intentions; and (3) analyze the qualitative dimensions of student engagement and behavioral change following the intervention. This study is positioned to complement existing literature by offering an empirically grounded account of a university-community partnership model for bullying prevention in a rural Indonesian context, thereby contributing original insights to the fields of community service, educational intervention, and child protection.

The central argument of this study is that structured, participatory anti-bullying seminars delivered by university students can produce measurable improvements in elementary school children's cognitive understanding of bullying, affective empathy toward victims, and behavioral intentions to intervene as prosocial bystanders. This argument draws upon Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that observational learning, modeling, and self-efficacy beliefs are critical mechanisms through which behavioral change occurs. It further integrates Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Ecological Systems Theory, recognizing that bullying prevention must engage multiple layers of the child's social environment, including the community and institutional contexts, to achieve sustainable outcomes. By synthesizing these theoretical foundations with the service-learning framework articulated by Jacoby (2015) and Bringle and Hatcher (2019), this study hypothesizes that the Darunnajah student-led seminar intervention will demonstrate statistically meaningful pre-to-post improvements across all three measured domains, while simultaneously fostering a culture of mutual respect and safety within the school community.

B. Methods

This study employed a participatory action Research design within the framework of community service (*pengabdian kepada masyarakat*), integrating quantitative pre-test and post-test measurements with qualitative observational data to evaluate the effectiveness of an anti-bullying seminar intervention. The Research was conducted at SDN Cidokom 01 and SDN Cidokom 02, two public elementary schools located in Cidokom Village, Kecamatan Gunung Sindur, Kabupaten Bogor, West Java Province, Indonesia. Cidokom Village was selected as the intervention site based

on preliminary needs assessment findings indicating limited prior exposure to structured anti-bullying programming, as well as reports from school administrators and local community leaders regarding increasing concerns about peer aggression and social exclusion among students (Yosep et al., 2022).

The target population consisted of elementary school students enrolled in grades 4, 5, and 6, corresponding to the age range of 9–12 years, a developmental period identified in the literature as particularly vulnerable to the onset and escalation of bullying behaviors (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Volk et al., 2017). A total of 85 students participated in the program, comprising 42 students from SDN Cidokom 01 and 43 students from SDN Cidokom 02. Purposive sampling was employed, with inclusion criteria requiring enrollment in the target grades, parental consent, and willingness to participate in all seminar activities. The intervention team consisted of 20 university students from Universitas Darunnajah who had received prior training in facilitating bullying prevention, child-friendly communication techniques, and participatory workshop methodologies.

The intervention was implemented over two days and structured into four sequential modules. Module 1 (“Understanding Bullying”) provided psychoeducational content on the definitions, types (physical, verbal, social, and cyberbullying), and consequences of bullying, delivered through interactive presentations using age-appropriate visual media and animated videos. Module 2 (“Building Empathy”) used role-playing scenarios in which students alternated among the roles of bully, victim, and bystander, enabling experiential learning about the emotional impact of bullying on all involved (Salmivalli, 2021). Module 3 (“Becoming an Upstander”) focused on developing prosocial bystander skills through collaborative group activities, teaching students concrete strategies for safely intervening when witnessing bullying, including seeking adult assistance, offering verbal support to the victim, and refusing to participate as a passive audience (Polanin et al., 2022). Module 4 (“Creating a Safe School Pledge”) facilitated a collective commitment ceremony in which students and teachers collaboratively developed and signed an anti-bullying pledge specific to their school context.

Data collection instruments included a validated 25-item questionnaire adapted from the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 2020) and the Bullying Prevention Knowledge Assessment (BPKA) developed by the authors, measuring three primary constructs: bullying knowledge (10 items), empathy toward bullying victims (8 items), and bystander intervention intention (7 items). The instrument was translated into Bahasa Indonesia, pilot-tested with 20 students from a non-participating school, and achieved Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients of 0.82, 0.79, and 0.81 for the three respective subscales. The questionnaire was administered as a pre-test one day prior to the seminar and as a post-test one week following the intervention. Additionally, qualitative data were gathered through structured observation checklists completed by two trained Research assistants during each module, focus group discussions with 12 purposively selected student participants, and semi-structured interviews with 4 classroom teachers.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and percentage changes) and paired-sample t-tests to assess the statistical significance of pre-to-post score differences, with a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen’s d to evaluate the practical significance of observed changes (Cohen, 1988). Qualitative data from observations, focus groups, and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2022), which enabled the identification of recurring themes related to student engagement, behavioral shifts, and perceived program value. Ethical clearance for this community service activity was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Darunnajah, and informed consent was secured from parents or guardians of all participating students prior to data collection.

C. Result and Discussion

The quantitative findings of this study are presented according to the three primary constructs measured: bullying knowledge, empathy toward victims, and bystander intervention intention. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-test results for each construct across the pre-test and post-test administrations.

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Comparison of Anti-Bullying Seminar Outcomes (N = 85)

Variable	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
Bullying Knowledge	52.4 (12.3)	78.6 (9.7)	14.82	<0.001	2.36
Empathy Toward Victims	48.7 (14.1)	74.2 (11.5)	12.47	<0.001	1.98
Bystander Intervention Intention	45.3 (13.8)	76.8 (10.2)	16.21	<0.001	2.60

Note: Scores scaled 0–100; SD = Standard Deviation; significance level $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 1, the results indicate statistically significant improvements across all three constructs following the anti-bullying seminar intervention. Bullying knowledge scores increased substantially from a pre-test mean of 52.4 (SD = 12.3) to a post-test mean of 78.6 (SD = 9.7), representing a 50.0% improvement. The paired-sample t-test confirmed that this difference was statistically significant ($t = 14.82$, $p < 0.001$), with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.36$), indicating that the intervention had a practically meaningful impact on students' cognitive understanding of the types, indicators, and consequences of bullying. Prior to the seminar, many students demonstrated limited ability to distinguish between bullying and normal peer conflict, frequently conflating teasing with systematic aggression. Following the intervention, most students accurately identified physical, verbal, social, and cyber forms of bullying, and recognized the roles of perpetrators, victims, and bystanders in bullying dynamics.

Empathy toward bullying victims increased similarly, rising from a pre-test mean of 48.7 (SD = 14.1) to a post-test mean of 74.2 (SD = 11.5), representing a 52.4% increase. This improvement was statistically significant ($t = 12.47$, $p < 0.001$) and accompanied by a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.98$). The role-playing activities in Module 2 were particularly instrumental in cultivating affective empathy, as students who assumed the role of bullying victims reported heightened emotional awareness of the distress, shame, and isolation experienced by those who are bullied. Several students, during post-seminar focus groups, said they had not previously considered how their own words or behaviors might contribute to peers' suffering, indicating a meaningful shift in their perspective-taking.

Bystander intervention intention demonstrated the most pronounced improvement, increasing from a pre-test mean of 45.3 (SD = 13.8) to a post-test mean of 76.8 (SD = 10.2), a 69.5% increase. This construct also yielded the largest effect size among the three measured variables (Cohen's $d = 2.60$), underscoring the intervention's particular effectiveness in transforming passive bystander attitudes into active, prosocial intervention dispositions. The t-test results ($t = 16.21$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed statistical significance at the highest confidence level.

Table 2. Distribution of Bullying Knowledge Categories Pre- and Post-Intervention

Category	Pre-Test n (%)	Post-Test n (%)	Change (%)	Interpretation
High (>75)	8 (9.4%)	52 (61.2%)	+51.8%	Significant increase
Moderate (50–75)	35 (41.2%)	28 (32.9%)	-8.3%	Moderate shift
Low (<50)	42 (49.4%)	5 (5.9%)	-43.5%	Substantial decrease

Table 2 further illustrates the shift in the distribution of bullying knowledge categories. Prior to the intervention, nearly half of the participants (49.4%) fell into the low-knowledge category,

while only 9.4% demonstrated high knowledge. Following the seminar, the proportion of students in the high-knowledge category rose dramatically to 61.2%, while those in the low-knowledge category fell to 5.9%. This categorical redistribution corroborates the mean score improvements and provides additional evidence that the seminar content was accessible and effectively absorbed by the target age group.

Qualitative findings from structured observations, focus group discussions, and teacher interviews yielded four primary themes that complemented the quantitative results. The first theme, “Awakening Awareness,” captured students’ reported realizations that behaviors they had previously considered normal, such as name-calling, social exclusion, and spreading rumors, constituted forms of bullying. One student participant articulated during the focus group: *“I did not know that not including someone in our group was bullying. Now I understand it hurts them.”* The second theme, “Empathic Transformation,” reflected the emotional impact of the role-playing exercises, with several students expressing visible distress when enacting the victim role and subsequently demonstrating increased sensitivity toward peers who appeared isolated or marginalized. The third theme, “Empowerment to Act,” encapsulated students’ newfound confidence in intervening in bullying situations, with several participants stating they would report incidents to teachers rather than remain silent. The fourth theme, “Collective Responsibility,” emerged from the school pledge activity, in which students and teachers collectively articulated their commitment to maintaining a bullying-free environment, fostering a sense of shared ownership over school climate.

Teacher interviews reinforced these findings, with all four interviewed teachers reporting observable changes in student behavior within the week following the seminar. Teachers noted a decrease in verbal aggression during recess, more instances of students defending peers who were being teased, and a rise in voluntary reporting of potential bullying incidents. One teacher remarked, “The students are now more aware. They use the language from the seminar, they talk about being ‘upstanders’ instead of just watching.” These qualitative insights provide important contextual depth to the quantitative improvements documented through the pre-test and post-test assessment.

Analysis/Discussion

The findings of this community service study demonstrate that a structured, participatory anti-bullying seminar delivered by university students can produce meaningful improvements in elementary school children’s knowledge of bullying, empathy toward victims, and intentions to intervene as bystanders. These results directly address the study’s Research questions and provide empirical support for the central hypothesis that university-led community engagement activities can serve as effective vehicles for bullying prevention in underserved rural communities. The discussion that follows situates these findings within the broader theoretical and empirical landscape of bullying prevention Research, drawing upon recent Scopus-indexed and SINTA-accredited literature to contextualize the contributions of this study.

The substantial improvement in bullying knowledge scores (Cohen’s $d = 2.36$) aligns with findings from Gaffney, Ttofi, and Farrington (2021), who conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of 100 independent evaluations of bullying prevention programs and found that psychoeducational interventions consistently produced significant increases in bullying-related knowledge and awareness, particularly among younger participants. Similarly, Husky et al. (2020) reported that elementary school children demonstrated the greatest responsiveness to structured anti-bullying education when content was delivered through age-appropriate, visually engaging, and interactive methods, characteristics that were central to the present intervention’s Module 1 design. The fact that nearly half of the participants transitioned from the low knowledge category to the high category following a brief two-day intervention suggests that the deficit in bullying awareness among Cidokom students was primarily attributable to lack of exposure rather than cognitive barriers, a pattern consistent with Borualogo and Casas’s (2023) finding that Indonesian

children in rural settings exhibit limited conceptual frameworks for distinguishing bullying from normative peer conflict due to the absence of formal prevention programming.

The empathy outcomes (Cohen's $d = 1.98$) are particularly noteworthy given the theoretical framework guiding this study. Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory posits that the development of empathy is facilitated by vicarious experience and emotional arousal, mechanisms that were deliberately activated through the role-playing exercises in Module 2. This finding corroborates the work of van Noorden et al. (2015), who demonstrated through a systematic review that affective empathy, the capacity to share and be moved by others' emotional states, serves as a significant protective factor against bullying perpetration and a strong predictor of prosocial bystander behavior. Moreover, the Indonesian cultural context, characterized by collectivist values of *gotong royong* (communal cooperation) and *kerukunan* (harmony), may have amplified the effectiveness of empathy-focused interventions by leveraging pre-existing cultural dispositions toward interpersonal sensitivity and group cohesion (Lawrence et al., 2023). This finding adds a novel dimension to the cross-cultural bullying prevention literature by suggesting that culturally embedded values can be mobilized as resources for developing empathy within intervention frameworks.

The most pronounced effect size was observed in bystander intervention intention (Cohen's $d = 2.60$), a finding of considerable theoretical and practical significance. Polanin, Espelage, and Pigott (2022) have argued that transforming passive bystanders into active defenders is the most promising leverage point for reducing systemic bullying, as bystanders constitute the largest proportion of actors in any bullying episode and their behavior significantly influences whether bullying persists or desists. The present study's findings are consistent with the bystander intervention model proposed by Salmivalli (2021) and operationalized in the KiVa program, which demonstrated that targeted bystander skill development produced enduring reductions in bullying prevalence when students perceived themselves as having both the competence and the social permission to intervene. University students serving as seminar facilitators may have been particularly effective role models in this regard, as Bandura's theory emphasizes that the credibility and similarity of models influence observational learning outcomes. University students, who are perceived as older and knowledgeable, yet still relationally accessible, may occupy an optimal modeling position for elementary school children: more aspirational than peers and more relatable than adult authority figures.

The qualitative findings further illuminate the mechanisms through which the seminar produced its effects. The "Awakening Awareness" theme reflects what Menesini and Salmivalli (2017) have characterized as the critical first step in bullying prevention: enabling children to accurately label and recognize bullying behaviors that may have been previously normalized within their peer ecology. In the context of Cidokom Village, where students reported that behaviors such as name-calling and social exclusion were commonplace, the seminar functioned as a cognitive reframing intervention, disrupting taken-for-granted social norms and replacing them with a more nuanced understanding of acceptable and unacceptable peer interactions. This finding resonates with the ecological perspective articulated by Bronfenbrenner (2005) and operationalized in the Olweus program, which emphasizes that bullying prevention must address not only individual knowledge and attitudes but also the normative structures that sustain aggressive behaviors within school cultures (Olweus & Limber, 2020).

The "Collective Responsibility" theme, which emerged from the school pledge activity, merits particular attention as it speaks to the community-building dimension of the intervention. Service-learning theory, as articulated by Jacoby (2015) and Bringle and Hatcher (2019), posits that effective community engagement activities produce reciprocal benefits for both the served community and the serving students. In this study, the pledge ceremony served as a ritual of collective commitment that symbolically transformed anti-bullying norms from an externally imposed concept into a shared community value. This finding is consistent with Hong, Choi, and

Espelage's (2024) observation that bullying prevention initiatives are most sustainable when integrated into the existing social fabric of school communities rather than imposed as top-down directives. The involvement of Universitas Darunnajah students as co-creators of this community norm rather than as unidirectional knowledge transmitters aligns with the participatory action paradigm that increasingly characterizes best-practice community service models in Indonesian higher education (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

The present study carries several implications for policy and practice. First, the findings demonstrate the viability of university-student-led anti-bullying seminars as a cost-effective, scalable community-service model that can be replicated across rural Indonesian communities. The MBKM framework provides an enabling policy infrastructure for such initiatives, and institutions of higher education should be encouraged to integrate structured bullying prevention training into their community service curricula. Second, the strong effect sizes observed across all three constructs suggest that even brief, intensive interventions can catalyze significant shifts in knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions when designed around evidence-based principles of psychoeducation, experiential learning, and participatory pedagogy. Third, the qualitative finding that culturally embedded values such as *gotong royong* and *kerukunan* can be leveraged as intervention resources points to the importance of cultural adaptation in translating Western evidence-based programs to Indonesian contexts, a consideration that has been insufficiently addressed in the existing literature (Borualogo et al., 2022).

Several limitations of this study warrant acknowledgment. The absence of a control group precludes attributing observed changes solely to the seminar intervention, as maturation effects, social desirability bias, and testing effects may have contributed to post-test improvements. The relatively short post-test interval (one week) limits conclusions about the durability of the observed changes, and longitudinal follow-up studies are needed to assess whether the improvements in knowledge, empathy, and bystander intentions translate into sustained behavioral changes over time. The sample was drawn from two elementary schools in a single village, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other geographic and demographic contexts. Future studies should employ randomized controlled trials with larger, more diverse samples and longer follow-up periods to strengthen the evidence base for university-led community anti-bullying interventions.

D. Conclusion

This community service study has demonstrated that an anti-bullying seminar conducted by university students from Universitas Darunnajah produced statistically significant and practically meaningful improvements in elementary school children's knowledge of bullying, empathy toward victims, and intentions to intervene as bystanders among 85 students in Cidokom Village, Bogor Regency. The large effect sizes observed across all three constructs (Cohen's *d* ranging from 1.98 to 2.60), combined with corroborating qualitative evidence of behavioral and attitudinal shifts, provide compelling support for the effectiveness of student-led community service programs in preventing bullying in rural Indonesian elementary schools. The study contributes to the scholarly literature by demonstrating the relevance of Social Cognitive Theory and Ecological Systems Theory in informing community-based bullying prevention design, and by highlighting the role of culturally responsive pedagogy in maximizing intervention effectiveness within Indonesia's collectivist sociocultural context. As Indonesia continues to grapple with the pervasive challenge of school bullying, university-community partnerships grounded in evidence-based practice and participatory engagement offer a promising pathway toward creating safe, inclusive, and nurturing educational environments for all children.

E. References

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