

Bullying Prevention and Intervention in Schools: Implications of Participatory Action Research



Dyah Astorini Wulandari¹, Tri Na'imah², Retno Dwiyaniti³

^{1,2,3} Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Indonesia

ABSTRACT: This activity was motivated by the phenomenon of violence in schools, both by students and by teachers. Symptoms of bullying behaviors such as verbal, physical, social, and cyberbullying can be found in junior and senior high schools in Purwokerto, Indonesia. This Participatory Action Research aims to establish preventive and intervention programs against student bullying. Before empowering students and teachers, it begins with mapping the problem of bullying, building relationships with stakeholders, planning preventive and curative actions. Community change is accomplished through workshops on bullying prevention and treatments, the formation of anti-bullying agents, and focus group discussions. The results of this activity are shown by the increase in knowledge of bullying in students, the construction of anti-bullying agents, preventive actions in the form of anti-bullying campaigns with poster media, the preparation of standard operating procedures for bullying intervention programs.

KEYWORDS: Bullying; Prevention; Intervention; Participatory Action Research

I. INTRODUCTION

The ideal school is one that allows children to interact with their friends and teachers to construct new knowledge and experiences [1]. However, some students experience unpleasant conditions, harassment or violence at school, which interferes with the learning process and children's growth and development [2]. Bullying is defined as an aggressive action committed by individuals either directly or indirectly, in the form of physical, verbal, or relational aggression [3].

The Indonesian Child Protection Commission identified 50 cases of bullying from 2011-to 2016. In 2016 the number of victims of bullying in the school environment reached 81. A large number of bullies compared to the number of victims of bullying indicates that bullying is committed by several people with victims who are not comparable to the bullying group.

The study results in Banyumas showed several types of bullying cases in schools, including beatings, ridicule, disrespectful words, bullying, inappropriate nicknames, dirty words, ostracism, and fights [4]. In 2020 there was also a case of bullying against a Muhammadiyah Junior High School student, Purworejo, Central Java

(<https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/02/17/15470781/>). The incident went viral after the video was shared on various social media, indicating that cases of bullying need to be the attention of teachers, principals, parents, and students.

The impact of bullying is not only on victims but also on the perpetrators of bullying. Research conducted by Skrzypiec et al. [5] found the adverse effects of bullying on victims, perpetrators, and victims of bullying. Perpetrators experience abnormal, hyperactive, and pro-social behavior problems when involved in social interaction. Both empathy and strange behavior, hyperactive behavior, and pro-social behavior are closely related to the perpetrator's response when engaged with the surrounding social environment. In contrast to the victims of bullying, their mental health disorders are more significant than the perpetrators and victims of bullying.

Happiness is essential for students in school life because it indicates their mental health. Students who have been bullied have lower level of happiness than other students who have not been bullied [6]. The results of this empirical study prove that the conditions of students at school are empirically different from ideal psychological conditions. Ideally, students at school always feel safe and happy [7].

Previous research on bullying used quantitative [8] [9] [10] and qualitative [11] [12] research approaches. However, this study uses a participatory action research approach, so previous research has a methodological gap. In PRA research, researchers collect the data and involve research subjects in problem solving. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to empower teachers, parents, and students to play an active role in preventive activities and to deal with cases of bullying in schools in an integrative way.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention in Schools: Implications of Participatory Action Research

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of bullying has been studied from several theories, including Social Cognition Theory, Dominance Theory of Bullying [13], social-ecological theory, and systems theory [14]. Each approach is explained below:

Social Cognition Theory

The main idea of this theory is learning to imitate and learning by observing [15]. If a “model” exists in the student environment, the student learning process will occur through paying attention to the model. According to this theory, bullying behavior can occur because individuals learn to be violent through observational learning and reinforcement. The cognitive aspect will provide students’ beliefs about the positive and negative impacts of their behavior [16]. Students who grow up in a violent family or social environment will observe and tend to imitate the violent behavior. But if students think that acts of violence are not good, then students are less likely to imitate. Attitudes have cognitive, affective, and behavioral components and they affect the likelihood that students will engage in certain behaviors. As a result, students who advocate for bullying attitude tend to be involved in bullying cases [16]. So, Bauman & Yoon [14] recommend Cognitive-behavioral therapy for intervention in bullying problems that stem from wrong thinking about bullying.

Dominance Theory of Bullying

This theory shows that individuals believe in inequality between group members due a mechanism. This theory assumes that individuals oppress others to gain social status and become famous in their environment [13]. For example, a case of bullying occurs because students expect all students to respect it. Sometimes, students with leadership traits may use their dominating ability to gain social status.

Social-Ecological Theory

The ecological theory is divided into five microsystem, mesosystems, ecosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems [17]. According to ecological theory, bullying can occur in the environment in the context of peer groups, schools, families, neighborhoods, communities, and countries [17]. Social ecology also includes the school environment, so students will be involved in bullying if the climate is pro bullying. We need a social control that affects families and schools and students’ social environment to accomplish this [18]. Bullying intervention programs also need to pay attention to the components of the social-ecological systems of students.

Systems theory

Systems theory focuses on reciprocity and mutual influence in the family. In the bullying process, this theory shows how the dynamics of relationships in the family affect children’s behavior towards peers and understand how family patterns affect bullying behavior [14]. In other words, bullying is defined as suppressive or violent behavior directed at others by one or a group of more substantial or more potent, with the intent to hurt and carried out continuously. Based on this theory, efforts to deal with bullying can comprehensively involve the child’s social environment.

III. METHOD

The participants of this study were 20 junior high school students and 20 Islamic-based high school students in Purwokerto, Indonesia. 4 teachers, four parents, and two psychologists were involved in this research. Data collection method include open questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions.

The Participatory Action Research approach is used in this activity because it makes the class more interactive, more productive, and meaningful for teachers and students [19] to be comprehensively involved in bullying prevention efforts. PRA procedures in this study are:

1. Using interview techniques in initial mapping in order to understand the conditions of schools, students, and teachers so that researchers can easily understand the reality of problems and social relations.
2. Building relationships with stakeholders to solve everyday problems. At this stage, students, teachers, and researchers can unite into a symbiotic mutualism to conduct research, learn about bullying and how to deal with it and work together to solve the problem.
3. Developing a movement strategy to overcome the problem, namely determining systematic steps, determining the parties involved, formulating the possibility of success and failure of the planned program, and finding a way out if there are obstacles hindering the success of the program.
4. Carrying out community change actions, namely:
 - a. A Workshop on bullying handling for students. During this phase, students are trained to be anti-bullying agents whose job is to represent the school as a mediator between teachers and the perpetrators and victims of bullying. During the implementation of the workshop, the group was divided into two groups, namely a group of junior high school students and a group of high school students. The evaluation was carried out by giving a questionnaire to determine students’

Bullying Prevention and Intervention in Schools: Implications of Participatory Action Research

knowledge about bullying and the forms of bullying in schools. Students are also invited to case studies and discussions about cases of bullying and report them at the end of the workshop session.

- b. Focusing group discussions involving teachers, parents, and educational psychologists to formulate operational procedures for handling bullying in schools
- c. Making media posters for the anti-bullying campaign

5. Activities are evaluated using reaction analysis, the learning process, and behavior change [20].

IV. RESULT

The results of Participatory Action Research activities are explained below:

1. Bullying problem mapping results

The results of the study revealed the following types of bullying at school: 1) verbal (calling parents bad names, giving bad nicknames, cheering for other people's mistakes), 2) physical (kicking, throwing objects), 3) social (excommunicating, spreading lies), 4) Cyberbullying (slandering on social media, insulting on WhatsApp groups).

Although various forms of bullying occur in schools, the teacher's treatment of the perpetrators and victims of bullying has not been comprehensive. School counselors offer incidental counseling to perpetrators and victims of bullying without involving students and parents. Thus, the anti-bullying program has not become the main program in schools.

The problems faced by schools in the intervention program and in dealing with bullying are described below:

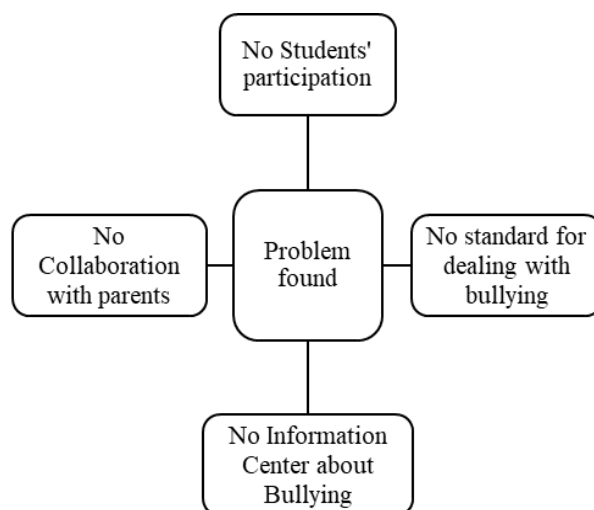


Figure 1. The results of the analysis of the problem of bullying

2. Creating good relationships with stakeholders

Researchers collaborated with teachers and parents to share the same view on bullying and to plan a joint intervention program. Teachers and parents can exchange information about the symptoms of bullying because not all children want to tell their case to the teacher. On the other hand, parents also need information on bullying because often, parents do not realize that their children are victims or perpetrators of bullying. Parents do not have a path to deal with their children's cases directly, so parents must cooperate with teachers.

Researchers also collaborate with students as potential anti-bullying agents because they are in a strategic position to identify symptoms of bullying behavior in their friends. Although teachers have a central role in bullying cases, these anti-bullying agents have emotional and social closeness to both bullying victims and perpetrators. Based on this collaboration, the researchers designed a school bullying prevention and intervention program.

3. Prevention and intervention programs to address the problem of bullying

The types of the bullying prevention and intervention program are described in table 1:

Table 1. Bullying prevention and intervention programs

School-level program	Community partnership program
Having focus group discussions with teachers and parents	Collaboration between schools and parents
Developing standard operating procedures	Collaboration between schools and experts

Bullying Prevention and Intervention in Schools: Implications of Participatory Action Research

Establishing an anti-bullying agent	
Developing an information center on bullying	
Conducting training for prospective anti-bullying agents	
Organizing a bullying workshop for teachers	

The bullying management workshop was conducted with student participants as prospective anti-bullying agents. The participants involved were 20 junior high school students and 20 high school students. The results of the workshop are shown by an increase in students' knowledge about bullying, which can be seen in Figure 1:

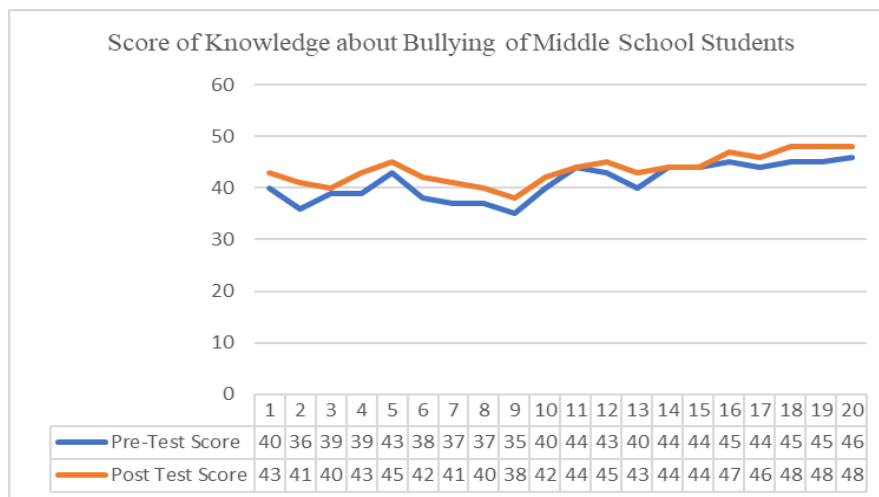


Figure 1. Results of pre-test and post-test of junior high school students

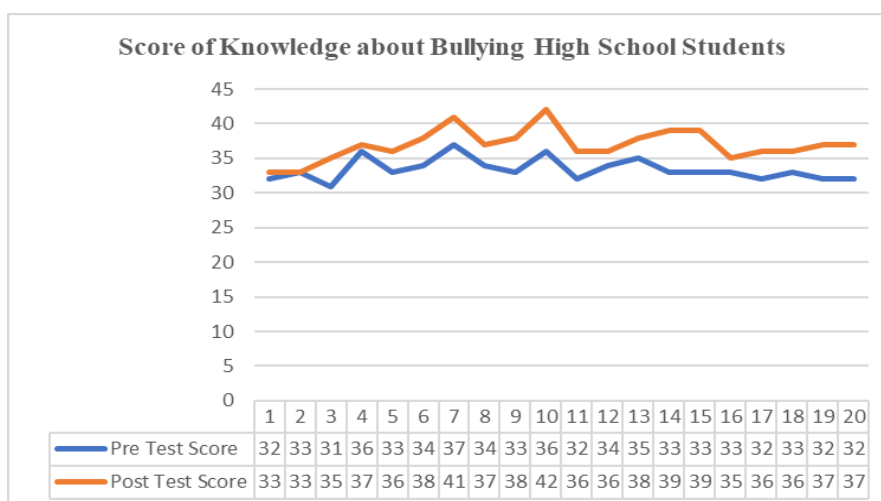


Figure 2. Results of pre-test and post-test of high school students

Based on the table, there is an increase in knowledge scores about bullying among junior high and high school students. The average pre-test score of junior high school students was 41.2, and the post-test score was 43.6. Meanwhile, the average pre-test score for high school students was 33.4, and the average post-test score was 36.9.

Furthermore, the student was named an anti-bullying agent whose existence was supported by teachers, school principals, and parents. These agents were chosen because they interact the most with both victims and perpetrators of bullying. Based on the results of the FGD, anti-bullying agents can motivate students to 1) be open to fellow friends if they become victims of bullying, 2) dare to have an opinion about bullying issues, 3) dare to remind when they see bullying cases, 4) appreciate the strengths and weaknesses friends, 5) learn self-defense, 6) report to the teacher if there is a case of bullying.

Furthermore, they are tasked with identifying problems in schools, designing, implementing, and evaluating bullying solutions. Anti-bullying agents also create anti-bullying campaigns in schools to change their friends' attitudes. In this activity, the anti-bullying agent designed a poster for the anti-bullying movement. The following are examples of the posters



Figure 3. Anti-Bullying Poster

The posters invite people to establish healthy friendships without hurting each other. The posters also tries to provide education so that students can use social media by preventing them from making kinds of calls that are not good for fellow friends. Furthermore, the results of the FGD involving anti-bullying agents, parents, teachers, and school principals produced output in the form of Standard Operating Procedures for dealing with bullying problems, namely the flow of handling bullying problems in schools.

Table 2. Standard Operating Procedures for handling bullying problems

Activity	Parties involved		
	anti-bullying agent	Parent	Teacher
Victims of bullying report cases to anti-bullying agents and parents with supporting evidence	v	v	
Parents/anti-bullying agents report to the homeroom of victims and perpetrators with supporting evidence	v	v	
Teachers seek information through whistleblowers and anti-bullying agents	v		v
The teacher clarifies the case to the perpetrators, victims, and witnesses of bullying as well as their respective parents		v	v
Coordination between teachers and parents		v	v
The teacher provides counseling for perpetrators and victims			v
If a severe case is found, coordination is carried out with professional parties and related agencies (police, hospitals, psychologists)		v	v

At the end of the activity, the entire program was evaluated based on the reaction component, learning component, and behavioral component. The evaluation results are explained as follows: 1) The reaction component: students are anti-bullying agents, teachers, and parents positively respond to all activities. Anti-bullying agents participate in making anti-bullying media campaigns, while teachers actively participate in workshops and FGDs in developing standard operating procedures for handling bullying; 2) Learning component: The evaluation results show an increase in students’ knowledge of anti-bullying agents about bullying, while teachers and parents are increasingly aware of the importance of prevention and intervention programs for victims and perpetrators of bullying; 3) Behavioral component: behavioral changes are seen in skills in designing anti-bullying campaign media and standard operating procedures for handling bullying.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention in Schools: Implications of Participatory Action Research

V. DISCUSSION

This activity results in intervention programs and the handling of bullying in schools. This activity supports the findings of a previous study by Fekkes [21], which found that anti-bullying school policies can reduce bullying behavior. For this reason, it is necessary to have a continuous counseling program for victims and perpetrators so that the program can continue for a long time. Pujiati and Wulandari [22] recommended the need for the implementation of an internal and external improvement program. Internal teacher improvements are made to respect for others, pay attention and respond to students. The teacher will be willing to accept criticism about himself/herself, will not bully students or fellow teachers.

This activity succeeded in forming an anti-bullying agent consisting of selected students representing all students in the school. The establishment of an anti-bullying agent is considered adequate for handling bullying cases, according to the results of Cowie & Olafsson's research [23] which proves that peers are very effective in protecting victims of violence in schools. Peer support can foster a sense of security for victims of bullying. Peer groups dynamics have the power to fight bullying, give hope and increase students' confidence to resolve conflicts among friends [24].

The output in the form of Standard Operating Procedures for handling bullying problems is the flow of bullying problems in schools involving anti-bullying agents, parents, teachers, and parents. The results of Chen & Chen's research [25] show that the school program that is considered adequate for overcoming the problem of bullying is the existence of standard operating procedures in the intervention. Therefore, it is essential for teachers, parents, and experts to work together to address bullying cases.

The limitation of this study is that it does not differentiate the bullying intervention program for female students and male students. Andreou's research findings [24] recommended that gender differences in bullying management programs be considered because girls tend to have more anti-bullying attitudes and are more supportive of victims than boys. So, students need to be given the skills of peer conflict resolution, social skills, and emotional management. Furthermore, it is necessary to conduct longitudinal research because the intervention program and bullying handling should be continuously carried out. A mixed-method research approach will be more beneficial in exploring the psychological effects of bullying and its intervention efforts.

IV. CONCLUSION

This Participatory Action Research activity has proven to be helpful in dealing with bullying problems. Preventive and curative programs that involve students, teachers, and parents must be implemented. Anti-bullying agents are peer mediators who assist victims and perpetrators of bullying. Anti-bullying campaign activities can be carried out utilizing posters or other social media. This program can be more effective if the handling process follows standard operating procedures for bullying.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

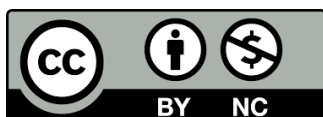
The author would like to thank Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, Riset, dan Teknologi Indonesia for the funding assistance in the Free Policy Research Program for Learning Independent Campus and Community Service Based on PTS Research Resulted in 2021.

REFERENCES

- 1) C. A. Ekemezie and S. Chinasa, "Child-Friendly Pedagogy for Sustainable Human Capacity Development in Nigerian Primary Schools," *J. Emerg. Trends Educ. Res. Policy Stud.*, vol. 6, no. 7, pp. 217–224, 2015.
- 2) T. Na'imah, Y. Widyasari, and H. Herdian, "Implementasi Sekolah Ramah Anak untuk Membangun Nilai-Nilai Karakter Anak Usia Dini," *J. Obs. J. Pendidik. Anak Usia Dini*, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 747, 2020, doi: 10.31004/obsesi.v4i2.283.
- 3) L. Hellström and A. Lundberg, "Understanding bullying from young people's perspectives: An exploratory study," *Educ. Res.*, vol. 62, no. 4, pp. 414–433, 2020, doi: 10.1080/00131881.2020.1821388.
- 4) M. Muhammad, "Aspek Perlindungan Anak Dalam Tindak Kekerasan (Bullying) Terhadap Siswa Korban Kekerasan Di Sekolah (Studi Kasus di SMK Kabupaten Banyumas)," *J. Din. Huk.*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 230–236, 2009, doi: 10.20884/1.jdh.2009.9.3.234.
- 5) G. Skrzypiec, P. T. Slee, H. Askill-Williams, and M. J. Lawson, "Associations between types of involvement in bullying, friendships, and mental health status," *Emot. Behav. Difficulties*, vol. 17, no. 3–4, pp. 259–272, 2012, doi: 10.1080/13632752.2012.704312.
- 6) A. Aunampai, A. Widyastari, S. Chuanwan, and P. Katewongsa, "Association of bullying on happiness at school: evidence from Thailand's national school-based survey," *Int. J. Adolesc. Youth*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 72–84, 2022, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2021.2025117>.
- 7) N. Hidayat and T. Na'imah, "Kebutuhan Akan Rasa Aman Dan Happiness Pada Peserta Didik," in *University Research Colloquium*, 2016, pp. 83–89.
- 8) M. Chodijah, "Bullying Behavior Among Elementary School Students In East Bandung Region," *Indig. J. Ilm. Psikol.*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 51–56, 2019, doi: 10.23917/indigenus.v3i2.6057.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention in Schools: Implications of Participatory Action Research

- 9) E. Landstedt and S. Persson, "Bullying, cyberbullying, and mental health in young people," *Scand. J. Public Health*, vol. 42, no. 4, pp. 393–399, 2014, doi: 10.1177/1403494814525004.
- 10) R. Navarro, R. Ruiz-Oliva, E. Larrañaga, and S. Yubero, "The Impact of Cyberbullying and Social Bullying on Optimism, Global and School-Related Happiness and Life Satisfaction Among 10-12-year-old Schoolchildren," *Appl. Res. Qual. Life*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 15–36, 2015, doi: 10.1007/s11482-013-9292-0.
- 11) N. R. Galabo, "Campus bullying in the senior high school: A qualitative case study," *Int. J. Sci. Technol. Res.*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 167–173, 2019.
- 12) H. N. Sikhakhane, N. Muthukrishna, and M. Martin, "The geographies of bullying in a secondary school context," *South African J. Educ.*, vol. 38, no. October, pp. 1–11, 2018, doi: 10.15700/saje.v38ns1a1589.
- 13) K. Kumari and P. Subedi, "Theoretical Perspective of Bullying," *Int. J. Heal. Sci. Res.*, vol. 10, no. 8, pp. 83–89, 2020.
- 14) S. Bauman and J. Yoon, "This Issue: Theories of Bullying and Cyberbullying," *Theory Pract.*, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 253–256, 2014, doi: 10.1080/00405841.2014.947215.
- 15) A. Bandura, "Social cognitive theory," in *Annals of child development*, vol. 6, Greenwich: JAI Press, 1989, pp. 1–60.
- 16) S. M. Swearer, C. Wang, B. Berry, and Z. R. Myers, "Reducing Bullying: Application of Social Cognitive Theory," *Theory Into Pract. Pract.*, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 271–277, 2014, doi: 10.1080/00405841.2014.947221.
- 17) U. Bronfenbrenner, "Ecological Models of Human Development," in *International Encyclopedia of Education*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Elsevier Ltd, 1994, pp. 37–43.
- 18) C. D. C. Analisah and S. Indartono, "Ecological Theory: Preventing Student Bullying to Promote Culture of Peace," in *International Conference on Social Science and Character Educations*, 2019, vol. 323, no. ICoSSCE 2018, pp. 239–244, doi: 10.2991/icossce-icsmc-18.2019.44.
- 19) M. P. E. Morales, "Participatory action research (PAR) cum action research (AR) in teacher professional development: A literature review," *Int. J. Res. Educ. Sci.*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 156–165, 2016, doi: 10.21890/ijres.01395.
- 20) T. Na'imah and R. Dwiyantri, "Participatory Action Research in Teachers : Designing Lessons to Fulfill Children's Rights," *Int. J. Arts Soc. Sci.*, vol. 3, no. 6, pp. 212–216, 2020.
- 21) M. Fekkes, F. I. M. Pijpers, and S. P. Verloove-Vanhorick, "Effects of anti-bullying school program on bullying and health complaints," *Arch. Pediatr. Adolesc. Med.*, vol. 160, no. 6, pp. 638–644, 2006, doi: 10.1001/archpedi.160.6.638.
- 22) D. Pujiati and D. A. Wulandari, "Respect Education Bagi Guru Sebagai Upaya Pencegahan Bullying di TK Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal Kebanggan Banyumas 2020," in *Seminar Nasional LPPM Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto*, 2020, pp. 307–311.
- 23) H. Cowie and R. Olafsson, "The Role of Peer Support in Helping the Victims of Bullying in a School with High Levels of Aggression," *Sch. Psychol. Int.*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 79–95, 2000, doi: 10.1177/0143034300211006.
- 24) E. Andreou, E. Didaskalou, and A. Vlachou, "Evaluating the effectiveness of a curriculum-based anti-bullying intervention program in Greek primary schools," *Educ. Psychol.*, vol. 27, no. 5, pp. 693–711, 2007, doi: 10.1080/01443410601159993.
- 25) L. M. Chen and J. K. Chen, "Implementation and perceived effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies among teachers in Taiwan," *Educ. Psychol.*, vol. 38, no. 9, pp. 1185–1200, 2018, doi: 10.1080/01443410.2018.1482410.



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.