

# Bullying Case Analysis: Types, Contributing Factors, Impacts, and Prevention in Junior High School

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## ARTICLE INFO

### *Keywords:*

bullying;  
cyberbullying;  
junior high school;  
qualitative case study;  
restorative practices

### *Article history:*

Received 2025-08-09

Revised 2025-12-03

Accepted 2025-12-14

## ABSTRACT

Bullying in schools remains a critical issue despite the implementation of various prevention programs. The persistent increase in cases suggests that current interventions lack a holistic approach. This study investigates the forms, impacts, and prevention strategies of bullying in a junior high school context. A qualitative descriptive study was conducted using a single-case study design at SMPN 3 Pedan. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and direct observations involving students (victims, perpetrators, witnesses), teachers, and school staff selected via purposive sampling. The Miles and Huberman model guided data analysis, involving data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Four primary types of bullying were identified: verbal, social, mild physical, and cyberbullying, with verbal bullying being the most prevalent. The psychological impacts included anxiety, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal, while physical effects such as sleep disturbances and somatic complaints were also reported. Cyberbullying showed more severe and lasting consequences. Existing school responses were found to be inadequate due to the absence of a clear reporting mechanism, vague disciplinary measures, and limited stakeholder involvement. Findings highlight the urgent need for a comprehensive, restorative approach to address bullying. This includes teacher and staff training, implementation of a confidential reporting system, and integration of character education and digital literacy into the school culture to build a safer and more inclusive environment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying among children in schools is a serious and widespread problem. While knowledge about the nature, extent, and impact of bullying in schools continues to grow, there are still complex areas to understand regarding this form of bullying (Waseem and Nickerson, 2023). On the one hand, although advances in electronic communication technology have provided more opportunities for bullies to

exploit, this is known as cyberbullying. Numerous studies have been conducted and theoretical perspectives on bullying in schools have identified the nature and extent of bullying in schools, as well as its impact on the emotional health and well-being of children and adolescents (Rohmani & Aini, 2024). Another view also states that bullying is a form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes injury or discomfort to another person, and there is an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim (Brimblecombe et al., 2018). Furthermore, there is a view that bullying is an aggressive act carried out intentionally and repeatedly to harm another person (Gaffney et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2021).

Similar events also occur in America, where approximately 20% of adolescents in the United States report experiencing significant social stress due to bullying (Musu et al., 2019). This means that despite prevention programs implemented at various levels, a significant proportion of adolescents still experience significant emotional and social impacts from bullying. This social stress can include feelings of anxiety, isolation, low self-esteem, and even depression, which impact their mental well-being and social development.

While numerous prevention efforts have been undertaken to improve knowledge, attitudes, and self-perceptions regarding bullying, most programs have failed to produce significant changes in actual bullying behavior (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). These efforts include anti-bullying campaigns, training for teachers and parents, and education on the importance of inclusion and empathy in schools. While these campaigns may technically improve knowledge and self-perceptions, the reality is that most prevention programs have failed to produce significant changes in actual bullying behavior. This suggests that although adolescents are now more aware of what bullying is and why it is wrong, they may still engage in bullying behavior due to deeper factors, such as peer pressure, social influences, or a lack of skills to manage conflict constructively.

Although various previous studies have discussed bullying in schools, most still focus on one specific aspect, such as the type of bullying behavior or its impact on students, without comprehensively linking the types of bullying, causal factors, psychological and academic impacts, and effective prevention strategies in the context of Junior High Schools (SMP). Furthermore, many studies have not considered the specific conditions of the school environment, the role of local culture, and the interaction between individual, family, and school factors that contribute to the emergence of bullying. This gap indicates the need for a more comprehensive and contextual case analysis at the SMP level to produce a complete understanding and more relevant and applicable prevention programs for schools.

This phenomenon demonstrates that bullying is not simply a problem that can be solved by changing attitudes and understanding. The problem of bullying is complex and involves psychological, social, cultural, and environmental factors. Therefore, while there is greater awareness of bullying, profound behavioral change requires a more holistic approach, including interventions that address the emotional, social, and cultural aspects of adolescents. A similar situation occurred in Indonesia, where cases of child bullying increased in 2023 (Ahmad et al., 2024; Aranditio, 2023). According to data from the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI), in the first two months of 2023, there were 6 cases of physical violence and 14 cases of sexual violence in educational institutions. To address this phenomenon, a more comprehensive approach is needed, not only increasing supervision and training for teachers and other educational staff in handling bullying, but also changing school culture to be more supportive of justice and the avoidance of violence. This includes education on empathy, good communication, and early conflict resolution.

Several studies have shown that in order to address bullying, all parties need to understand that it is not just an individual issue, but also a social, cultural, and educational one (Yuliyanti & Juliangkary, 2023). A multi-perspective approach allows us to view this issue from various perspectives, such as psychological, sociological, and legal (Irdalisa et al., 2024). In this way, better strategies can be formulated to prevent and address bullying and create a safer and more supportive educational environment for all students. This perspective arises because there is still a gap between existing legal regulations and actual implementation in schools, especially in handling bullying cases. A factor

exacerbating bullying cases is the prevailing culture in some educational institutions that still considers bullying part of the "maturation process" or a "seniority tradition" (Yuliyanti, & Juliangkary, 2023). This is made even more difficult to address due to low public awareness of the importance of bullying prevention and victim protection. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) (2020) reported 2,473 reports of bullying cases in Indonesia, and this trend continues to increase.

The above issues served as the basis for designing this research to examine in more depth the bullying cases that occurred at SMPN 3 Pedan, Klaten Regency. This is also reinforced by research conducted by Lee (2020), which stated an increase in bullying cases from 119 cases in 2020 to 241 cases in 2023, with 50% of cases occurring at the junior high school level. This also became a consideration for why SMPN 3 Pedan was chosen as a case, because there are still cases of bullying in its simplest form, which can be in the form of teasing or verbal insults such as calling friends with derogatory nicknames, mocking someone's physical appearance or shortcomings, insulting their background or family, spreading rumors or slander. These incidents may seem "minor," but verbal bullying can have a major impact on victims, such as reducing self-confidence, causing stress, or even triggering depression.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that bullying is a social phenomenon that occurs in educational environments and has a negative impact on students' psychological and academic development. This study aims to examine in depth the forms of bullying, their impact on students' psychological and social conditions, and prevention strategies that can be implemented effectively in the school environment. Thus, this research question is (1) How are bullying practices enacted and interpreted by students and staff in SMPN 3 Pedan? (2) What psychological/academic impacts do participants attribute to these practices? (3) How do current school responses enable or constrain prevention, including in digital spaces?

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a single-case study design to explore the forms of bullying, their psychological and social impacts, and the effectiveness of prevention strategies within a junior high school context. The case was bounded by location, prevalence, and institutional relevance, focusing on SMPN 3 Pedan. The researcher served as the primary instrument, conducting direct field engagement to collect rich, contextual data.

### 2.2 Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their direct experience or involvement in bullying incidents. The sample included students (victims, perpetrators, and witnesses), teachers, school staff, and parents. The school was chosen for its distinctive characteristics and prevalence of reported bullying cases, providing a relevant setting for in-depth analysis. A total of 16 informants participated in the interviews, consisting of 5 victims, 4 perpetrators, 5 witnesses, and 2 school staff.

### 2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and direct observation. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured guide in the Indonesian language and covered key domains: forms and types of bullying (verbal, physical, social, cyber), causal factors, and the impacts on students. A total of six respondents participated in the interviews. Observations focused on student interactions, bullying incidents, and school responses in various social contexts.

## 2.4 Trustworthiness of Data

To ensure the validity of the findings, the study applied the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability through triangulation, prolonged engagement, thick description, and audit trails.

## 2.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (1984) interactive model, involving three steps:

1. Data Reduction – selecting and condensing relevant data;
2. Data Display – organizing findings into thematic narratives and matrices;
3. Conclusion Drawing – identifying patterns, categories, and meaningful interpretations.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Types of Bullying that Occurred at SMPN 3 Pedan

Based on the results of interviews with victims, witnesses, as well as the guidance and counseling teacher and homeroom teacher of SMPN 3 Pedan, it was found that the bullying that occurred at this school was divided into three main forms, namely verbal, light physical, and cyberbullying.

#### 3.1.1 Bullying verbal

Verbal bullying was the most prevalent form. This was evident in the fact that almost all of the respondents reported experiencing teasing, insults, or negative nicknames. In interviews, when asked about the most frequent forms of bullying, they answered, *"I'm often bullied verbally and socially. They often call me names..."* (Interview with AS). Meanwhile, victim AK said, *"Usually a group of boys... made fun of my different accent..."* (Interview with AK). The same thing happened to victim LM: *"I was called rude names and shunned..."* (Interview with LM). These victims' accounts were confirmed and corroborated by the statements of witnesses interviewed. Witness HS said, *"They made fun of me, called me weird, and laughed at me..."* (Interview with HS). Similarly, witness AM stated, *"I saw the victim often being teased for her speaking style..."* (Interview with AM).

All the perpetrators interviewed also admitted that the most frequent form of bullying they engaged in was verbal bullying, which included teasing, insults, or hurtful comments about the victim's appearance, speech, or social background. Perpetrator JW stated, *"I often made fun of the victim's appearance and deliberately excluded her from group activities."* (Interview with JW). Meanwhile, Perpetrator RM added, *"I often teased her and didn't invite her (the victim) to participate in group activities."* (Interview with RM). Similarly, Perpetrator JS expressed a similar sentiment, stating, *"I often teased her and sometimes deliberately avoided her during group work."* (Interview with JS).

Verbal bullying was the most common form. Witness HS revealed that he witnessed a student being taunted and verbally abused by several boys from a neighboring class during recess. Witness AM made a similar statement, noting that he witnessed a group of female students repeatedly mocking a female classmate's style of dress in public. This verbal bullying was also accompanied by sarcastic and insulting comments, as explained by Witness ASF: *"The victim was often taunted with harsh words and shunned by certain groups."* (Interview with ASF).

These statements indicate that verbal bullying is the most dominant form and is considered "normal" in their social interactions, despite its devastating impact on the victims. Interviews revealed that most students, including perpetrators, victims, and witnesses, have a limited understanding of what constitutes bullying. Some perpetrators claimed they were simply "joking" without realizing how hurtful their actions were. According to the guidance counselor, the most common form of bullying is verbal bullying, such as teasing, derogatory nicknames, and insults about a student's physical

appearance or personal background. The guidance counselor stated, *"The most common type is verbal bullying, such as teasing and calling negative names."* (Interview with GBK). The homeroom teacher echoed this sentiment, confirming, *"Bullying usually takes verbal and social forms that are not immediately obvious. This teasing often occurs in class or during breaks, and is often dismissed as a "joke" by the perpetrator, despite its negative impact on the victim."* (Interview with Homeroom Teacher).

### 3.1.2 Mild Physical Bullying

In addition to the forms of bullying mentioned above, some victims also experienced mild physical bullying. Although not prevalent, mild forms of physical bullying still occurred in some cases, as stated by Victim ZM: *"I was once pushed and scribbled on in my book."* (Interview with ZM). Similarly, Victim AK stated: *"Sometimes they pretended to hit me or throw things."* (Interview with AK). This incident was also observed by Witness HS, who confirmed that *"The perpetrator pushed the victim, took his hat, and threw it."* (Interview with HS).

Although most of the actions were verbal and social, some perpetrators also mentioned minor physical acts such as pushing or taking the victim's belongings. Perpetrator JW stated, *"We usually do it during recess,"* (Interview with JW). Several cases of bullying included minor physical acts, although not explicitly described as serious violence. This type of bullying is generally carried out in a joking atmosphere, but still creates feelings of embarrassment, intimidation, and insecurity for the victim. This physical bullying also occurred, albeit at a low intensity. Witness HS stated that *"The victim was pushed and his hat was thrown"* (Interview with HS). Witness R corroborated this finding by explaining that *his friend was pushed while playing soccer and was not included in the game fairly. This physical action occurred repeatedly during sports activities and during gatherings outside of school hours.* (Interview with Witness R).

### 3.1.3 Cyberbullying

Another form of bullying experienced by the victim was cyberbullying. This bullying was discovered through statements from the victim and witnesses who identified social media as a means of bullying. Victim AK stated,

*"Sometimes they also comment on my social media, including in the class WhatsApp group."* (Interview with AK). Witness RA also expressed this: *"I witnessed bullying directly via social media. There were rude comments in the class group and memes that humiliated the victim."* (Interview with RA). Furthermore, Witness RA also encountered cyberbullying. He stated, *"His friends were victims of rude comments and insults in the class WhatsApp group and through social media posts like Instagram. Some friends made memes and shared screenshots that humiliated the victim."* (Interview with RA).

This cyberbullying then leads to social exclusion of victims in the real world. This situation was also confirmed by the guidance counselor, who added, *"Cyberbullying has also started to increase through WhatsApp groups and social media."* (Interview with GBK). In recent years, cyberbullying has begun to show an increasing trend. The guidance counselor revealed that, *"Cyberbullying has also started to increase through WhatsApp groups and social media."* (Interview with GBK). The homeroom teacher also added that, *"Some bullying takes place on social media, especially through insulting comments or private messages."* (Interview with WK).

Cyberbullying has distinct characteristics because it can occur without time or space constraints and tends to be more difficult to detect because it occurs in the digital realm. Bullying at SMP 3 Pedan is perpetrated by both individuals and groups, often disguised as a joke or a desire for social acceptance. This indicates that hurtful comments or sarcasm are also made through social media. While not yet in the form of serious threats or the distribution of sensitive content, it indicates that digital platforms are starting to be used as a means of bullying, which must be addressed immediately. This type of cyberbullying can take the form of teasing in class WhatsApp groups, teasing through statuses or

stories, or the use of memes that mock the victim, all of which create ongoing psychological stress for the victim.

Bullying does not just happen once, but repeatedly over a period of time. All five witnesses stated that these actions occurred repeatedly, almost daily or over a period of weeks. Furthermore, the surrounding community's response to the bullying was minimal. The majority of students chose to remain silent, and some even laughed or watched without intervention. From these results, it can be concluded that bullying at SMPN 3 Pedan occurred in verbal, physical, social, and cyber forms, with repeated intensity and a tendency for social responses to be permissive. These various incidents demonstrate that bullying is not only physical but also attacks the mental state, self-esteem, and psychological well-being of victims on an ongoing basis.

Bullying at SMPN 3 Pedan is more often perpetrated by groups, particularly by students considered dominant in school circles. The guidance counselor stated, *"It's usually done in groups, although sometimes it's done by individuals with strong influence among their peers."* (Interview with GBK). The homeroom teacher added, *"The perpetrators feel more emboldened when they're with their friends to intimidate the victim."* (Interview with WK).

Bullying occurs more frequently outside the classroom, particularly during recess, on the field, or after school. Overall, this study identified verbal and social bullying as the most prevalent forms at SMPN 3 Pedan, followed by cyberbullying, which is on the rise. Physical bullying still occurs, although not as frequently as other forms. Perpetrators often act in groups, and their actions take place in less-monitored school spaces and on social media. These findings underscore the need for increased supervision, digital literacy, and character development that emphasizes empathy, self-control, and awareness of the impact of bullying behavior, both in the real world and online. Furthermore, schools need to strengthen safe and responsive reporting systems so that all forms of bullying can be handled quickly and appropriately.

### **3.2 The Impact of Bullying on Victims at SMPN 3 Pedan, Both Psychologically and Physically**

Based on an analysis of interview transcripts from five respondents who were victims of bullying at SMPN 3 Pedan, it was found that bullying has significant psychological and physical impacts on students. These impacts range from emotional symptoms such as fear, anxiety, and feelings of worthlessness to physical health problems such as headaches, nausea, and difficulty sleeping.

#### **3.2.1 Psychological Impact: Emotional Stress, Low Self-Esteem, and Loss of Motivation**

Most victims experienced decreased self-confidence, persistent fear, and feelings of discomfort in the school environment. For example, Victim AS expressed *"I felt very sad and scared. It felt like there was no safe place at school. I felt inferior and thought I didn't deserve to have friends."* (Interview with Victim AS). Similarly, Victim AK experienced similar feelings. *"I felt inferior and often blamed myself, even though I knew I was right. I was reluctant to speak up during presentations and preferred to sit in the back."* (Interview with AK). The interviews revealed that bullying resulted in decreased self-esteem and emotional distress, which hindered victims' social and academic functioning. Victims also exhibited a tendency to withdraw from social interactions, as Victim LH expressed: *"I felt lonely and unappreciated... I became withdrawn and only became close to two friends I trusted."* (Interview with LH).

One of the most dominant impacts felt by victims in this case was psychological distress, characterized by sadness, crying, fear, and social withdrawal. Regarding this incident, perpetrator RM revealed, *"I only realized it when I saw her crying in class. From then on, I felt guilty and started to distance myself from that behavior."* (Interview with RM). Perpetrator SA expressed a similar sentiment: *"When she became quiet and cried, I felt guilty and wanted to apologize."* (Interview with SA). Ultimately, victims of bullying also experience decreased self-confidence and self-esteem, especially when they are constantly subjected to verbal teasing or ostracized from social groups. Perpetrator JW explained that *"They often*

don't invite the victim to participate in group work and often make fun of the victim's appearance. This treatment makes the victim feel unappreciated and isolated." (Interview with JW). The victim's emotional distress, such as fear, sadness, and prolonged discomfort, was reflected in Witness HS's statement, who observed that "The victim became quieter, often isolated, and didn't talk as much as before." (Interview with HS).

This strengthens the evidence that the emotional impact of bullying is significant in deteriorating students' psychological well-being. Fear, lack of self-confidence, and even social withdrawal were also reported by a guidance counselor. "Victims often become withdrawn, their academic performance declines, and they are reluctant to interact with classmates. Some also exhibit mild symptoms of stress." (Interview with GBK). This shows that bullying not only causes short-term emotional wounds, but also affects the victim's comfort and sense of security in the school environment.

### 3.2.2 Impact on Learning Motivation and Performance

Bullying also negatively impacts students' enthusiasm for learning, resulting in low student participation in school activities. Victim AS stated, "I became lazy about studying because I wasn't motivated and afraid to go to class." (Interview with AS). Similarly, Victim ZM stated, "My grades dropped and I couldn't focus." (Interview with ZM). Meanwhile, Victim LM experienced similar symptoms: "I didn't dare to appear in class and started to withdraw from social interactions." (Interview with LM). This indicates feelings of fear, shame, and isolation that cause students to lose motivation to participate in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, repeated acts of bullying have the potential to disrupt victims' motivation to learn and cause them to lose interest in school activities. This is demonstrated by the statement of Perpetrator SA, who stated, "The victim started to miss school frequently." (Interview with SA).

This absence can be a response to the victim's feelings of insecurity and discomfort in the school environment, as well as a self-protection mechanism against social threats. By not attending school, victims not only miss out on learning opportunities but also increase the social distance between themselves and their peers. This can lead to declining academic performance and apathy towards education. This impacts not only the victims, but also other students, who feel unsafe and psychologically stressed due to the intimidating atmosphere. Students who are victims often lose motivation to study, have difficulty concentrating, and even experience a drop in grades. A guidance counselor explained, "Their grades decline, and they are reluctant to interact with their classmates." (Interview with GBK). This condition shows that bullying not only has psychological and social impacts, but also directly disrupts the learning process and academic success of students.

### 3.3 Bullying Prevention and Protection Strategies at SMPN 3 Pedan

Based on in-depth interviews with victims, witnesses, perpetrators, and schools, it was found that prevention and protection efforts for victims and perpetrators of bullying have not been optimal. Victims expressed the need for concrete steps from schools, teachers, and the social environment to create a firmer, safer, and more victim-friendly system. Therefore, these findings can be used to formulate several effective prevention and protection strategies based on field experience.

#### 3.3.1 Building a Clear, Confidential, and Responsive Reporting System

Most victims stated that they were still hampered in reporting their bullying due to fears of not being taken seriously or even worsening the situation. Victim AK stated, "I told my homeroom teacher, but I'm not sure they'll take it seriously." (Interview with AK). Similarly, victim LH emphasized the importance of a reliable reporting system: "Schools must have a clear and confidential bullying reporting system." (Interview with LH). Based on these findings, a safe and supportive bullying reporting

mechanism is needed, such as a confidential complaint box, regular counseling services, or a reporting app that is easily accessible to students.

In addition to the above information, many students also expressed fear of reporting bullying due to fear of retaliation from the perpetrator. Therefore, a safe, confidential, and intimidation-free reporting system is crucial. Witness R's testimony revealed, *"I've never reported it directly, but I've advised victims to tell their guidance and counseling teacher."* (Interview with R).

Meanwhile, Witness AM chose to tell a senior who was close to the guidance counselor as an alternative route. There are many ways to report this, such as using an anonymous suggestion box, a private digital reporting channel, or through a peer counselor (a trained peer). The school also needs to ensure that both the reporter and the victim receive full protection from further intimidation.

### 3.3.2 Enforcement of Rules and Imposition of Strict Sanctions on Perpetrators

Nearly all victims felt that the perpetrators received no deterrent effect due to the lack of disciplinary action from the school. As stated by victim AS, *"The school must be firmer and not allow the perpetrators to continue to roam unpunished."* (Interview with AS). Similarly, victim ZM offered suggestions when asked about expectations or preventative measures the school should take. She said, *"The school must impose strict sanctions and educate the perpetrators."* (Interview with ZM). This finding highlights the importance of clear rules regarding the consequences of bullying behavior, including transparent enforcement procedures involving the school, parents, and counseling.

### 3.3.3 Improving Social Emotional Literacy and Character Education

To prevent bullying from an early age, it is necessary to develop a curriculum that focuses on empathy, tolerance, and human values. Victim LH emphasized the importance of developing a culture of mutual respect: *"Schools must be able to support high-achieving students without creating excessive envy."* (Interview with LH). This strategy can be implemented through positive habit-building activities, peer-support training, and student-based anti-bullying programs that involve the student council (OSIS) or student forums as agents of change. One key finding of this study was students' poor understanding of the boundaries between joking and bullying. Almost all perpetrators initially did not realize that their actions constituted bullying. As perpetrator JW stated, *"At the time, I thought it was just a joke."* (Interview with JW)

This demonstrates the need for systematic and ongoing social-emotional literacy and empathy programs in schools. Furthermore, literacy related to strengthening empathy and anti-bullying education from an early age is also needed. One recommended strategy is literacy on the importance of instilling empathy and mutual respect from an early age through routine school activities. This was expressed by Witness HS, *"I hope there will be more activities that foster empathy and mutual respect among students."* (Interview with HS). Meanwhile, Witness ASF hopes that schools will *"Hold regular activities that strengthen relationships between students and provide empathy training from an early age."* (Interview with ASF).

These activities can include character training, group discussions on the impact of bullying, cooperative games, and even social value-based projects designed to foster a sense of caring and moral courage within the student community. Bullying cases occur not only in person but also on social media. Therefore, prevention strategies must be extended to the digital world, with social media literacy education and supervision that does not interfere with privacy but can prevent online verbal abuse. This includes developing a digital code of conduct for students and using an educational approach to help students understand the boundaries and ethics of online communication.

### 3.3.4 Building a Friendly, Safe, and Responsive School Environment

Nearly all respondents, especially victims, expressed various hopes that schools would be a comfortable and safe place to learn. Victim AK stated, "I want schools to be friendlier, with teachers who actively maintain and care about the classroom atmosphere." (Interview with AK). Meanwhile, Victim LM added, "Schools must be safe places for everyone." (Interview with LM). Therefore, it is important to create an inclusive school atmosphere, where all students feel valued without discrimination. This can begin with school policies that support students' psychological well-being and the active involvement of the entire school community in creating a positive culture.

In addition to the above, schools must also respond quickly and decisively. This is because students feel that the school's handling of bullying has been slow and lacks specificity. Therefore, an effective protection strategy must be based on a swift response from teachers or school staff when bullying occurs, as well as clear sanctions for perpetrators. Findings based on testimony from Witness HS suggest, "Teachers must quickly follow up and make perpetrators realize their mistakes. Don't wait for victims to report the incident repeatedly." (Interview with HS). This shows the need for clear SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) specifically for anti-bullying, as well as the formation of a rapid response team at the school level.

### Discussion

This study at SMPN 3 Pedan identified three prominent forms of bullying: verbal, mild physical, and cyberbullying. Among these, verbal bullying emerged as the most dominant, confirmed consistently through the narratives of victims, witnesses, perpetrators, and school staff. Common verbal bullying behaviors included name-calling, mocking of physical appearance or accents, and the use of derogatory nicknames. These actions are frequently dismissed by students as mere jokes or playful interactions, yet they carry significant psychological consequences for the victims.

This phenomenon reflects a low level of social-emotional literacy among students, particularly in distinguishing between harmless joking and harmful behavior. As Ribeiro et al. (2024) emphasized, verbal bullying is often internalized as part of adolescent social dynamics, especially when not addressed promptly by authority figures. The lack of teacher intervention reinforces this behavior, allowing it to become normalized. Santi and Sukma (2024) found that when educators do not respond to such behavior, students perceive it as acceptable or humorous, thus reinforcing a harmful social culture. Pratiwi et al. (2021) further explained that verbal aggression is often justified as a form of "social independence" among peer groups, particularly in school environments where authority figures are passive.

The psychological impacts of verbal bullying are significant. Nurhalimah et al. (2025) reported that such experiences increase anxiety levels and lower students' self-confidence. In line with this, Rupiah et al. (2025) stressed the importance of establishing social support systems within schools to foster resilience and emotional security.

In addition, mild physical bullying—including pushing, pretend hitting, and tampering with personal belongings—was reported, albeit less frequently. These actions, though not causing serious physical harm, fulfill the core criteria of bullying: repetition, power imbalance, and the intent to cause distress (Smith et al., 2021). However, these behaviors are often misperceived as harmless. Fauzi et al. (2024) found that adolescents commonly interpret such acts as jokes, whereas victims experience embarrassment and emotional discomfort. Davis et al. (2020) highlighted that both victims and educators often normalize such behaviors, resulting in underreporting and a failure to address the issue effectively. This aligns with Espelage and Holt's (2020) concept of the "normalization of violence", where covert aggression becomes part of everyday school life due to lack of recognition and intervention.

Furthermore, cyberbullying has emerged as a growing concern at SMPN 3 Pedan, facilitated by students' access to social media platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram. Forms of cyberbullying identified include abusive comments, dissemination of humiliating memes, and digital exclusion. Ginting and Sahlepi (2024) noted that digital environments have increasingly become the site for adolescent aggression, shifting the nature of violence from visible to hidden yet deeply impactful. Kowalski et al. (2013) explained that cyberbullying's unique features— anonymity, persistence, and broad audience— amplify its psychological consequences. Victims often feel they cannot escape harassment, even outside school hours, leading to anxiety, depression, and social isolation.

This dynamic, often referred to as the "online-to-offline spillover effect", has been documented in previous research (Muhopilah & Tentama, 2019). The effect extends digital victimization into the real-world social environment, exacerbating feelings of exclusion. Wiguna et al. (2021) showed that such exposure, especially during the pandemic, correlates with a heightened risk of non-suicidal self-injurious behavior (NSSI) among adolescents. These findings underscore the urgent need to address cyberbullying as part of broader school safety strategies.

The multidimensional impact of bullying— psychological, academic, and social— is well-evidenced in this study. Victims reported chronic fear, withdrawal, reduced self-esteem, and academic disengagement. Ramdani et al. (2023) found that bullying significantly contributes to depression, social anxiety, and suicidal ideation in adolescents. Supporting this, Zixiang et al. (2023) concluded that victims of bullying are 2.77 times more likely to develop depression, while those who are both bullies and victims face an even greater risk (3.19 times). In the Indonesian context, Yosep et al. (2024) found a significant correlation between bullying and suicide risk among adolescents, especially during the school closures of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bullying also negatively affects academic performance. Victims in this study described reluctance to attend school, difficulty concentrating, and a decline in motivation. Lestari (2016) similarly found that bullying leads to disengagement and reduced intrinsic motivation, particularly in environments where school responses are inadequate.

Despite the seriousness of these issues, SMPN 3 Pedan lacks an integrated anti-bullying system. Victims expressed hesitation in reporting incidents due to fear of retaliation or being ignored. Perpetrators often face minimal or no disciplinary action. These findings highlight the need for clear, firm, but restorative disciplinary frameworks. Mahaputra (2022) argued that restorative justice offers a more educational and humane approach than punitive methods, especially for adolescent perpetrators. Such an approach allows space for reflection, accountability, and behavioral change, rather than simple punishment.

Additionally, the school needs to implement comprehensive digital literacy programs. These programs should include routine education on responsible digital behavior, identification of online harassment, and student mentorship on safe digital engagement. Addressing both in-person and online bullying is essential for creating a safe, inclusive, and responsive school climate.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there are three main types of bullying that occur in schools: verbal bullying, mild physical bullying, and cyberbullying. The impact of bullying on victims is very serious, both psychologically and physically. Victims of bullying tend to experience anxiety, depression, decreased motivation to learn, psychosomatic disorders such as headaches and sleep disorders, and social withdrawal. This research recommends that a restorative approach involving all parties, integrated character education, digital literacy, and the establishment of an inclusive and responsive school culture are needed as a long-term strategy to eradicate bullying comprehensively. Further research is recommended to expand the scope of locations and populations to obtain a more representative picture of bullying patterns across various educational levels and socio-cultural backgrounds. The contribution of this research is to provide direct benefits for schools in developing

policies and bullying prevention programs based on data so that they are more effective and relevant to the needs of students.

**Acknowledgments:** The author expresses gratitude to the lecturers and colleagues who have contributed to shaping and developing their thoughts and ideas.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors report no conflicts of interest.

**Ethical Considerations:** This research was conducted in accordance with ethical standards to protect the rights, privacy, and welfare of all participants. Before any data was gathered, informed consent was secured from each participant. They received both verbal and written explanations detailing the study's purpose, the procedures involved, possible benefits and risks, and their freedom to withdraw at any point without any negative consequences. The consent document clearly stated that participation was entirely voluntary and that all collected data would remain confidential.

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