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Bullying Prevention Strategies in Middle Schools: Qualitative Analysis Based on Literature Study of Inclusive Education Practices

Kun Muzayyin Hadiputra [1*], Muhammad Irfan Nur Aziz Siswoko [1], Brian Ardiansyah [1]
[1] Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang, Indonesia
* Author Correspondence

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Abstract
Bullying is still a serious problem in junior high schools (SMP) which has a negative impact on the psychological, social and academic development of students. This condition encourages the need for prevention strategies that not only handle cases, but also build a safe and inclusive learning environment. This research aims to analyze the factors that cause bullying as well as examine prevention strategies based on inclusive education practices at the junior high school level. The method used is qualitative with a literature study approach, where data from various relevant scientific sources is analyzed through reduction, classification, data presentation and drawing conclusions. The results of the study identified several factors that cause bullying, including the influence of peer environment, family conditions, gaps in social status, and misuse of digital technology which gives rise to cyberbullying. In the context of prevention, inclusive education is proven to have a strategic role through establishing a school culture that respects diversity, strengthening social-emotional learning, increasing teacher competency, optimizing guidance and counseling services, as well as collaboration between schools, families and communities. This approach not only supports equal access to education, but also creates a school climate that is friendly and free of discrimination. Thus, inclusive education can be an effective preventive approach in suppressing bullying behavior and strengthening a positive school climate at the junior high school level.

Contact : Corresponding author e-mail: peserta.25736@ppg.belajar.id
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Introduction

Bullying is oppression carried out by someone intentionally and repeatedly, either through physical actions, words, or behavior that can corner the victim. In general, bullying can be defined as a form of oppression or violence deliberately carried out by a stronger individual or group with the aim of repeatedly hurting others (Budie, 2024). In reality, this act of bullying occurs frequently and is often considered normal in our environment. Even the perpetrators of bullying themselves are sometimes unaware that their behavior is deviant and can cause trauma to the victim. Bullying is not only in the form of physical actions, but also in the form of words that corner or demean others. Field in Karyanti & Aminudin (2019) classifies bullying into three types, namely (1) physical bullying (in the form of violent acts related to physical); (2) verbal bullying (in the form of insults, slander, cruel criticism, insults, statements containing sexual harassment, terror and false accusations), and (3) psychological bullying (ignorance, exclusion or avoidance).

In the world of education, bullying is a recurring problem that threatens the future of our generation. Bullying cases are also common in education in Indonesia. According to the 2023 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey, cases of violence and bullying in education in Indonesia have reached a concerning level, making Indonesia the fifth-highest country in the world for bullying cases out of 78 countries (Nugraha & Sirozi, 2025). These bullying cases occur at many levels of our education, including junior high school. In the junior high school environment, bullying occurs not only in physical forms, but also verbally and socially, such as teasing, insults, and social exclusion. These acts of bullying often occur due to a difference between the perpetrator and the victim, with the perpetrator often perpetrating these actions against students who are weaker than them. This is in line with research Diannita et al. (2023) which shows that bullying in junior high schools often occurs due to the imbalance of power between perpetrators and victims, where perpetrators tend to target students who are perceived as weaker. This condition shows that junior high school students are in a vulnerable phase, both as victims and perpetrators. Bullying cases in junior high schools are also greatly influenced by students' interpersonal communication skills. Poor healthy communication skills can trigger verbal bullying, such as teasing, belittling, or embarrassing friends in front of others. Healthy communication skills between students are directly proportional to the likelihood of bullying in the school environment. The better a student's interpersonal communication, the lower the tendency to bully (Maharani & Zen, 2025). This indicates that the problem of bullying in junior high schools is not only a behavioral issue, but also closely related to social skills that have not yet developed optimally.

The reality on the ground shows that bullying in junior high schools is often considered a common occurrence in adolescent social life, similar to excessive teasing or seniority. However, this behavior can have serious impacts on students' psychological and moral well-being. Research shows that victims of bullying in junior high schools can experience fear, depression, loss of self-confidence, and even significant personality changes (Tamamiyah, 2024). These impacts certainly disrupt the learning process and overall student

development. Furthermore, the school environment is also a significant factor in reinforcing or reducing bullying in junior high schools. Lack of supervision, weak enforcement of rules, and the absence of a clear handling system contribute to frequent recurrence of bullying. Research on the phenomenon of bullying in junior high schools shows that this behavior can persist if there is no firm follow-up from the school (Rozzaqyah et al., 2024). Therefore, concrete efforts are needed, such as strengthening character education, increasing the role of guidance counselors, and establishing an inclusive school culture. Based on this, the rampant cases of bullying in junior high schools today are not only an individual problem, but also a systemic issue that requires comprehensive attention.

The causes of bullying are complex and interconnected. Bullying can be triggered by a less harmonious family environment, peer influence, an unconducive school environment, and the unwise use of social media (Musa et al., 2024). This demonstrates that bullying does not simply emerge out of nowhere but is also intertwined with the surrounding social system. Therefore, a comprehensive, non-partisan approach to handling it is crucial. In the context of education, the role of teachers and schools is crucial in preventing and addressing bullying. Schools need to create a positive climate, increase supervision, and implement firm policies against bullies. Furthermore, character education and the instilling of empathy are essential from an early age to foster respect for others. Collaborative efforts between schools, parents, and the community are expected to minimize bullying cases and create a safe and inclusive educational environment for all students.

Inclusive education in junior high schools aims to provide equal learning opportunities for all students without discrimination amidst existing diversity. However, suboptimal implementation of inclusive education can trigger bullying behavior. Students' lack of understanding of diversity and the lack of learning strategies that instill values of tolerance can make it difficult for students to accept differences. Inclusive education essentially emphasizes equal rights for students with special needs to learn together in regular schools, but its implementation still faces various challenges in the field (W. P. Dewi, 2024). Without the support of an inclusive school culture, the potential for bullying can actually increase. Research Brilian Emastin et al. (2025) shows that bullying can hinder the creation of a safe and inclusive educational environment if not addressed systematically through school policies. Therefore, inclusive education is not only about embracing diversity but also a strategic solution to reduce bullying cases in junior high schools. An inclusive school environment will encourage a sense of safety, mutual respect, and togetherness among students, thereby significantly minimizing the potential for bullying.

Research by Wulansari et al. (2023) hows that bullying behavior in junior high school students is influenced by various factors, such as the peer group, the psychological condition of adolescents, and social interactions at school. This study confirms that bullying is a complex problem and is related to students' social conditions. In addition, research by P. F. S. Dewi (2023) shows that empathy training can reduce bullying behavior in junior high school students, so a preventive approach through strengthening social and emotional values is considered important in the educational environment. However, these studies still

focus more on the causes and handling of bullying in general and have not specifically examined bullying prevention strategies based on inclusive education practices in junior high schools through a literature study approach. Therefore, a more comprehensive study is needed to analyze how inclusive education can be integrated as a preventive strategy in creating a safe and bullying-free school environment.

Based on this description, this article, entitled "Bullying Prevention Strategies in Junior High Schools: A Qualitative Analysis Based on Literature Review of Inclusive Education Practices," was written to examine various bullying prevention strategies relevant to the context of inclusive education in junior high schools. Through a literature review approach, this article aims to analyze the concepts, causal factors, and practices of inclusive education that can be integrated as a solution to reduce bullying rates. Thus, the results of this study are expected to contribute in the form of recommendations for effective and applicable strategies in creating a more inclusive, safe school environment that supports the optimal development of all students.

Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature review approach to examine bullying prevention strategies in junior high schools based on inclusive education practices. Qualitative research is used to understand and describe a phenomenon in depth based on descriptive data obtained from various written sources (Sugiyono, 2020). Data collection techniques were carried out through literature studies by collecting relevant sources related to bullying, inclusive education, and bullying prevention strategies in junior high schools. Data analysis techniques were carried out through the stages of data reduction, data classification, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The collected data were then analyzed to find the relationship between the concept of inclusive education and bullying prevention strategies in junior high schools to obtain a comprehensive understanding of efforts to create a safe and inclusive school environment.

Results and Discussion

Results

Bullying can be caused by many factors. Bullying can occur because the perpetrator feels supported by their environment or friends for what they do, making bullying unavoidable. Pradana (2024) stated that factors that cause bullying can occur through the peer environment, family environment, an individual's social status, and rapid technological developments. Based on the results of a literature review, bullying at the junior high school level is influenced by interacting internal and external factors. Internal factors include low empathy, weak emotional control, and the need for recognition within the peer group, while external factors include the social environment, school culture, and the development of digital technology. Empathy and psychological factors have a significant influence on cyberbullying behavior in students. Low empathy contributes to an increased tendency to engage in bullying, especially in the digital environment (Nasywa et al., 2021).

The first factor is the peer environment. The peer environment can be a major factor in current bullying. These actions can occur for several reasons, such as wanting to appear strong among their peers, leading to bullying. Furthermore, the peer environment can also influence someone to act negatively. Peer pressure, such as the urge to tease or mock the victim in order to gain social acceptance or certain rewards, is a major trigger for bullying (Rahmadani et al., 2025). They may feel compelled to do these actions to gain acceptance or fit into a certain group. This demonstrates the powerful influence of the peer environment in shaping children's behavior (Pradana, 2024). To prevent these actions from escalating, schools can organize various activities such as peer counseling, group discussions, and collaborative activities aimed at instilling empathy, tolerance, and mutual respect among students. A positive peer environment will help students better control their behavior and reduce the urge to bully simply to gain recognition from their group. Furthermore, research Sagita et al. (2025) also shows that good social relationships among peers can reduce the likelihood of bullying behavior in adolescents. Bullying prevention can also be achieved through group guidance activities and optimizing the role of peers in building a comfortable and safe school environment for all students. Guidance and counseling teachers can also provide various services such as group counseling, role-playing, and education on the negative impacts of bullying on both victims and perpetrators. Implementing group guidance through role-playing methods can increase students' understanding and awareness of the dangers of bullying and encourage the development of better and more positive social behavior (Putri et al., 2025).

The second factor that can influence children to engage in bullying is the family environment. The family environment is a child's primary and primary focus in growing into a good person (Pradana, 2024). If a child is raised in a negative family environment, this will also influence their future behavior and actions. Families that fail to provide an emotionally safe environment also contribute to the emergence of bullying behavior in schools (Rahmadhanti et al., 2025). Disharmonious families, children who frequently receive punishment and pressure from their parents, and children who experience broken homes can also influence bullying behavior. Children will observe how their parents fight, instilling the mindset that negative actions are acceptable to protect themselves (Al Hamid & Mokoginta, 2023). Addressing bullying originating from the family environment requires a comprehensive approach, starting with changes in parenting patterns. Permissive parenting tends to increase the risk of bullying, while open parenting is more effective in preventing such behavior. By understanding the influence of parenting styles on bullying behavior, it is hoped that parents can be more discerning in implementing parenting styles that support positive child development. Furthermore, the presence of both parents in a harmonious family is important so that they can share roles in raising their children and spend time together, fostering a democratic parenting style, so that children develop positive personalities and avoid bullying (Rachmawati et al., 2023).

The third factor is an individual's social status, which can influence bullying behavior against children. Differences in social status can be a factor in bullying because there is often

an assumption that lower economic status or appearance than the perpetrator will be the subject of bullying. Bullying that occurs due to an individual's social status can take the form of belittling, teasing, ostracizing, and even intimidating children who are perceived as different. Furthermore, children at junior high school age are still emotionally unstable, which can exacerbate bullying, which can exacerbate bullying between students. Research conducted by Setiowati & Astuti Dwiningrum (2020) revealed that bullying behavior is influenced by various factors, such as differences in opinion, physical and psychological conditions, socio-economic background, religion, culture, and gender. One factor that contributes to bullying is differences in economic status, which is related to the family's ability to meet living needs, both material and non-material. Addressing bullying triggered by differences in individual social status requires a comprehensive approach from various parties, especially schools, parents, and the community. The initial step that needs to be taken is through intervention in the school environment by providing consistent counseling and guidance. Efforts to minimize and overcome bullying that occurs due to differences in social aspects, environmental factors, and family background are carried out by schools by providing counseling and guidance, while the role of parents is to provide moral and religious education and an open attitude between children and parents (Diannita et al., 2023).

Another factor influencing bullying is the misuse of today's rapidly evolving technology. As we know, all information is easily accessible via the internet. If children are not provided with initial knowledge on how to use social media wisely, it is possible that bullying, also known as cyberbullying, will occur. Addressing cyberbullying that occurs due to misuse of technology requires efforts that begin with improving digital literacy in children and adolescents. Adolescents with good digital literacy are better able to recognize and address the various risks that may arise when using social media. This is crucial given that a lack of parental supervision and digital literacy skills makes adolescents more vulnerable to the negative impacts of social media use, including cyberbullying. Therefore, providing digital literacy from an early age is the main foundation for children to use technology wisely and responsibly (Yolanda & Pramudyo, 2024). The role of schools and teachers is also crucial in preventing and addressing cyberbullying. Schools need to regularly provide training to students on digital ethics, cyberbullying, and how to address and report such cases. Teachers also play a vital role by supporting anti-cyberbullying programs and integrating these materials into their curriculum to foster a deeper understanding in students. Teachers' roles in preventing cyberbullying include providing counseling to perpetrators, managing student complaint forums, and providing special programs to address cyberbullying cases in schools (Jauza et al., 2024).

Discussion

Inclusive education is a strategic approach to preventing bullying in schools, particularly at the junior high school level, which has diverse student characteristics. This approach emphasizes acceptance of differences and the creation of a fair and non-

discriminatory learning environment. Inclusive education is a special education service that requires children with special needs to receive an equal education in regular classes alongside their peers. Inclusive education is provided to address all the strengths and weaknesses of children with special needs by creating a pleasant, friendly environment that can increase the self-confidence of students with special needs to receive an appropriate education according to their rights, and is supported by collaboration between the government and the community (Sahrudin et al., 2023). Inclusive education essentially places all students as equal members of the learning community regardless of their physical, social, cultural, or academic abilities. The implementation of inclusive education is oriented not only to providing access to education but also to creating a classroom climate that supports participation, a sense of belonging, and respect for diversity. Margas (2023) explains that developing an inclusive classroom climate is the main foundation in building an inclusive school because a positive classroom climate can increase healthy social interactions and reduce various forms of social exclusion in the school environment. Furthermore, Kenny et al. (2023) emphasize that effective inclusive education requires a comprehensive approach that integrates school policies, organizational culture, learning practices, and student support systems so that all students have equal opportunities to develop. These findings are reinforced by (Hunt et al., 2024) who show that an inclusive school climate contributes to the socio-emotional well-being of students, especially students with special needs, by creating a safe, supportive, and discrimination-free learning environment. Thus, inclusive education not only aims to ensure equal access to education but also serves as an important instrument in building a school culture that can prevent marginalization and bullying behavior.

Currently, it is crucial to implement inclusive education in every school. Through inclusive education, every student has the same right to access quality educational services tailored to their needs. The implementation of inclusive education also embodies the principles of justice and equality in education. Each student has different characteristics, abilities, and learning needs. Therefore, inclusive education prioritizes adapting learning methods so that each student receives the assistance needed to achieve success (Andry B, 2023). By providing appropriate support, facilities, and learning strategies, students can develop optimally without experiencing discrimination or exclusion from the school environment. In its implementation, inclusive education requires commitment and collaboration from various parties, such as principals, teachers, parents, education personnel, and the community. Inclusive education involves collaboration between teachers, school staff, parents, and other professionals to plan and implement educational strategies that meet the individual needs of each student (Andry B, 2023). Teachers are required to implement flexible and student-centered learning so that each individual's learning needs can be met. In addition, schools also need to provide

facilities and infrastructure that support and create a school culture that is friendly, safe, and respects diversity.

Implementing inclusive education at various levels of schooling certainly doesn't always run smoothly, especially since teachers must adapt to students with special needs. In teaching and learning activities, the competence and role of teachers significantly influence the quality of learning. Teachers are expected to develop their skills. However, the challenge is that inclusive schools integrate children with special needs (ABK) and regular students in the same classroom. This diverse student population presents a challenge that teachers must address. Therefore, teachers urgently need solutions to address these challenges (Sahrudin et al., 2023).

In addition to teachers, another challenge in implementing inclusive education is the limited availability of facilities and infrastructure, which hinders schools from implementing inclusive education. Although some schools claim to have provided inclusive infrastructure, such as wheelchair-friendly classrooms or hearing aids, in practice, these facilities are not functioning optimally. Some schools also lack dedicated spaces for students with visual or hearing impairments, impacting the quality of their learning process (Tahawali & Haluti, 2025). Overcoming the challenges of implementing inclusive education as a bullying prevention measure requires a strong commitment from the entire school ecosystem. The first step is to build a truly inclusive school culture free from all forms of discrimination. Implementing inclusive education places children with special needs in the same school environment as children their own age, with the aim of preventing discrimination. Therefore, anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies must be strictly implemented to create a safe environment for all students, and learning must be designed to meet the needs and enhance the individual potential of each student, including students with special needs (Surtini & Nenden Ineu Herawati, 2024).

In addition to serving as an educational service system that provides equal learning opportunities for all students, inclusive education can also be an effective preventive strategy in reducing bullying in junior high schools. Inclusive education focuses not only on accepting students with special needs but also on instilling values of respect for diversity, equality, and respect for the rights of every individual. In the context of bullying prevention, inclusive education strives to build a school culture that places differences as normal and positive. When students are accustomed to understanding that each individual has different backgrounds, abilities, characteristics, and needs, the tendency to discriminate, exclude, and bully will be significantly reduced (Sahrudin et al., 2023). Thus, inclusive education is not only oriented towards academic aspects but also serves as a means of developing social character that supports the creation of a safe and welcoming school environment for all students.

The first strategy that can be implemented is building an inclusive school culture by strengthening the values of tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity. School

culture has a significant influence on student behavior because the values developed in the school environment will serve as a reference in daily social interactions. Schools that consistently instill inclusive values will be able to create a positive social climate so that students are accustomed to respecting differences and avoiding discriminatory behavior. Strengthening an inclusive school culture can be done through habituation activities, character-building programs, anti-bullying campaigns, and organizing activities that encourage positive interactions between students from diverse backgrounds. According to Surtini & Nenden Ineu Herawati (2024), a child-friendly and discrimination-free school environment is one of the main foundations in implementing inclusive education. Therefore, developing a school culture that respects diversity needs to be a priority in efforts to prevent bullying in junior high schools.

The second strategy is to integrate social-emotional learning into the learning process. Social-emotional learning plays a crucial role in developing students' abilities to recognize their own emotions, understand the feelings of others, build healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions. Various studies have shown that low empathy is a contributing factor to bullying (Nasywa et al., 2021). Therefore, teachers need to develop learning activities that encourage students to understand others' perspectives and appreciate the diversity of life experiences. Social-emotional learning can be implemented through reflective discussions, case studies, role-playing, collaborative learning, and group problem-solving activities. Through these activities, students not only gain academic knowledge but also develop the social competencies necessary for harmonious coexistence in a diverse environment.

The third strategy is to strengthen the role of teachers as key agents in creating an inclusive and bullying-free learning environment. Teachers hold a strategic position because they interact directly with students in learning activities and daily social interactions. In the context of inclusive education, teachers serve not only as transmitters of learning materials but also as facilitators capable of building positive relationships between students. Teachers need to be competent in recognizing early signs of bullying, intervening appropriately, and creating a safe classroom atmosphere for all students. Furthermore, teachers need to implement differentiated learning strategies that allow each student to receive learning opportunities according to their needs and abilities. Research by Sahrudin et al. (2023) confirms that the success of inclusive education is greatly influenced by teachers' competence in managing student diversity in the classroom. Therefore, increasing teacher capacity through inclusive education training and handling bullying is a crucial step.

The fourth strategy is optimizing guidance and counseling services as a preventive and curative tool against bullying behavior. Guidance and counseling teachers play a crucial role in raising students' awareness of the impacts of bullying and developing positive social skills. Group guidance programs, group counseling, peer counseling, and

sociodrama can be used to enhance empathy, interpersonal communication skills, and constructive conflict resolution skills. Putri et al. (2025) explain that implementing group guidance using sociodrama techniques can increase students' understanding of the negative impacts of bullying and encourage more positive social behavior. Furthermore, counseling services can also help students who are victims or perpetrators of bullying obtain appropriate support.

The fifth strategy is strengthening collaboration between schools, families, and the community to create an inclusive educational ecosystem. Bullying prevention cannot be achieved solely by schools, as student behavior is also influenced by the family and community environment. Parents need to be involved in various educational programs regarding bullying, positive parenting, and the importance of respecting diversity. Furthermore, the community also needs to support the creation of a safe and discrimination-free social environment. This collaborative approach aligns with the social ecological perspective, which positions student development as the result of the interaction of various interconnected environmental systems. When schools, families, and communities share a shared vision for building an inclusive culture, bullying prevention efforts will be more effective and sustainable (Gultom, 2025).

Based on these findings, it is clear that inclusive education is not merely a model for providing education for students with special needs, but rather a comprehensive approach to building a school culture that values diversity and rejects all forms of discrimination. Implementing inclusive education through strengthening school culture, social-emotional learning, improving teacher competency, optimizing guidance and counseling services, and collaborating with families and the community can be an effective preventive strategy in reducing bullying behavior in junior high schools. Thus, inclusive education contributes not only to increasing equal access to education but also to creating a safe and comfortable learning environment that supports the optimal development of all students.

Conclusion

Based on the literature review, bullying in junior high schools is a complex social phenomenon influenced by peer relationships, family circumstances, social status differences, and digital developments, including cyberbullying. The findings indicate that inclusive education has significant potential as a preventive strategy through fostering a school culture that respects diversity, strengthening social-emotional learning, enhancing teachers' competencies, optimizing guidance and counseling services, and promoting collaboration among schools, families, and communities. These efforts can create a safe, equitable, and discrimination-free learning environment while fostering students' empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences. Therefore, integrating inclusive education principles into school policies, institutional culture, and

daily learning practices is essential to preventing bullying systematically and sustainably while improving the overall quality of the school climate.

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Authors' Note

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