

# Designing of Bullying Prevention Psychoeducational Intervention for Victims

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**Abstract**—Bullying is a serious problem that affects children's mental health and well-being. The number of bullying cases in Indonesia is among the highest in Asia. However, the bullying prevention programs are limited and have not decreased the number of bullying cases in Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to design the bullying prevention psychoeducational intervention for the victims. This mixed-methods study using internet-based data collection was conducted in Bandung City, West Java, Indonesia. The study participants were elementary students (N = 3, two girls and a boy) aged nine years old who were school bullying victims. Bullying actions were measured by the reported frequency of experiencing being bullied by other children at school. Children also reported their perception of school climate. Two focus group discussions were conducted for needs analysis and discussed the design, which was prepared based on the need analysis results. Results showed that group psychoeducational intervention was needed to assist children from being victimized. Group psychoeducational intervention was designed through two phases of development (conceptual phase and operational phase), where each phase includes three steps. Results were discussed using Furr's model for the design of a structured group psychoeducational program.

**Keywords**—bullying, intervention, mixed-methods, psychoeducational, subjective well-being

## I. INTRODUCTION

Children's Worlds international survey in Indonesia showed that as many 14.4% of elementary students reported having been physically bullied at least twice in the last month at school, and 12.7% of them reported having been physically bullied more than three times [1]. As many 14.0% of elementary students reported having been socially excluded at least twice, and 12.5% of them reported having been socially excluded more than three times in the last month by other children in class [1]. Higher percentages of elementary students reported that they having been verbally bullied at least twice (15.8%) and more than three times (20.9%) in the last month [1]. Results of this survey also showed that Bandung City is among the highest bullying incidents in West Java Province [1].

Although school bullying has become a global problem, the debate on the definition of bullying is still ongoing [2,3]. However, Olweus' definition of bullying is the most commonly used in studies on bullying [2]. Olweus stated "a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" [4]. Regarding Olweus' definition of bullying, researchers agree that bullying emphasizes three characteristics which are (1) someone intentionally and (2) repeatedly harms another person that involves (3) a real or perceived power imbalance [2,5-8]. The current study used this definition of bullying.

Several studies have revealed the effect of bullying on students' mental health and subjective well-being (SWB) [9-13]. Based on these studies, it is essential to prevent bullying incidents and to assist children increasing their SWB.

School bullying incidents frequently happen in Indonesia and very worrying [1,10,11]. The most frequent school bullying incidents in Indonesia is verbal bullying [10,11,14]. Students are bullied because of their physical appearance [14,15]. Parents and teachers were not aware of how seriously verbal bullying affected students' SWB [10]. Boys are more frequently being victimized physically and verbally than girls, while girls are more frequently being left out by other children in class than boys [11]. Belief supporting violence predicts three types of bullying in elementary students in Bandung City: physical, verbal, and psychological [16].

When students experience being victimized at school, they prefer to report to parents rather than teachers [16]. Bullied victims perceived their parents as overprotective with whom they feel safe and positively affect their SWB [9]. Students reported that they feel safe from being victimized when parents care about them, listen to what they say and take that into account [9]. Bullied students also reported that their satisfaction with their relationships with friends contributed to their SWB [15], indicating that having good relationships with friends is essential for bullied students to protect their mental health.

The results of these previous studies on school bullying in Indonesia serve as references for designing bullying prevention programs for victims.

A narrative study revealed that a bullying prevention program should involve all school components: teachers, parents, school system, students who are perpetrators, and victims [17]. Another systematic review and meta-analysis revealed that school-based antibullying programs are effective in reducing bullying perpetration and victimization [18]. Other study also presented the effectiveness of child-centered and psychoeducational groups in increasing social skills [19].

Psychoeducational is one of the intervention programs that has been effectively assisting individuals in decreasing their anxiety and helping them in increasing their mental health [20-21]. A study in China showed that psychoeducational program reducing bullying victimization in Chinese primary school students [22].

Psychoeducation is defined as an intervention using educational techniques, methods, and approaches with systematic, structured, and didactic knowledge transfer for integrating emotional and motivational aspects to aid in the recovery from the disabling effect of stress and enable patients to cope with the mental illness [23].

Although school bullying incidents in Indonesia are among the highest in Asia and the fifth-highest position out of 78 countries [1], there are still limited studies on designing and developing bullying prevention programs. Therefore, this study aims to design the bullying prevention program using the psychoeducational intervention. The process of designing the psychoeducational program follows Furr's guidance [24].

## II. METHODS

### A. Design of the Study

This study used mixed methods. A quantitative method was used in analyzing students' reports on self-administered questionnaires. At the same time, a qualitative method was used in analyzing results from focus groups discussions.

### B. Procedure

Ethical approval was gained from the ethical committee at Nusantara Scientific Psychology Consortium (Konsorsium Psikologi Ilmiah Nusantara; K-PIN).

An elementary school in Bandung City was chosen based on a high rate of bullying incidents. Parents were informed about the study. Written parents' consent was obtained on behalf of the students. The students were also informed that

they were free to participate or not participate in the study and that their data will be treated confidentially.

This study included three steps of data collection. First, all students who agreed to participate were asked to answer self-administered questionnaires to classify whether they were bully-victims or not. Students' answers were scored, and only victims were continuing involving in the second step of the study. In the second step, students participated in a focus group discussion to conduct a needs analysis to prevent them from being victimized again. Based on the need analysis results, the research team designed the bullying prevention psychoeducational intervention for the victims following Furr's guidance [24] that explained further in the next section. In the third step, a focus group discussion was conducted to discuss the program and get feedback for improving the bullying prevention program using the psychoeducational intervention.

### C. Samples

Samples were elementary students in Bandung City who reported had been bullied in the past month. Three students participated in this study (2 girls and a boy) age 9 years old.

### D. Instruments

School bullying were asked using three items from the Children's Worlds project ([www.isciweb.org](http://www.isciweb.org)). These items have been translated into the Indonesian language following guidance from Borualogo et al. [25]. Physical bullying was measured by the frequency of having been hit by other children in school in the last month, verbal bullying was measured by the frequency of have been called unkind names by other children in school in the last month, and psychological bullying was measured by frequency of have been left out by other children in class in the last month [10,11]. These items were scored on a 4-point frequency scale: Never = 0, Once = 1, Twice or three times = 2, and More than three times = 3. The Cronbach's Alpha was .847 [10,11].

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To determine the plans and objectives of the psychoeducational program, the research team first conducted a focus group discussion with students for a needs analysis. Three students from an elementary school in Bandung City who reported having been victimized at school participated in this focus group discussion and shared their thoughts regarding their psychoeducational bullying prevention program needs. Table 1 displays the results of the needs analysis.

TABLE I. THE RESULTS OF THE NEEDS ANALYSIS OF THE VICTIMS

Problems	Needs	Alternative solutions
The victims experienced being bullied physically, verbally, and psychologically.	To have the information about the definition and type of bullying.	Pass this information to teachers and parents as well. It is also necessary to develop an intervention program for parents and teachers.
The bullying incidents happened because of dominant students and a power imbalance between the perpetrators and the victims.	The ability to read the situation that potentially being bullying incidents	Developing the intervention for perpetrators to assist them in stopping their aggressive behavior.
Unable to express their unpleasant feeling while being victims	They need to understand their feelings while being a victim and learn how to express their unpleasant feelings in healthy ways.	It is also essential to develop an intervention for parents to assist their children in expressing their feelings in healthy ways.
The bully-victims did not know why they became bully victims.	They need to find their potential and ability to improve themselves for not being vulnerable.	To involve parents and teachers in the psychoeducational program to facilitate this need.
Reported to teachers about their experiences being bullied at school, but teachers did not take their report seriously.	They need to be able to report properly and find help from teachers when needed.	It is also necessary to develop a psychoeducational program for teachers, to take reports from the victims seriously.

Based on focus group discussion, students reported unpleasant school climate that caused them being victimized. They also reported the importance of having good relationships with other students at school to prevent them from being victimized. These results aligned with findings from studies in Chile that showed the importance of school variables, school climate, and relationships with other students at school to prevent bullying victimization [26-27].

The alternative solutions showed that school bullying prevention must be carried out comprehensively involving all school components. Using an ecological system analysis, it is important to involve all components within the context of microsystem (relationship with other children at school, relationship with teachers, school environment) and mesosystem (teacher involvement and awareness of bullying incidents at school). These results are aligned with a study explained an ecological system analysis in preventing bullying victimization [28-29].

Based on the results presented in Table I, the research team designed the bullying prevention psychoeducational intervention. The procedure for designing a psychoeducational program followed Furr's guidance [24]. There are two phases: the conceptual and operational phases [24], which explain as follows.

#### A. The Conceptual Phase

The conceptual phase includes three steps: statement of purpose, establishing goals, and setting objectives [24].

The statement of purpose of this psychoeducational design is to prevent bullying by increasing the ability of the victims to avoid the possibility of becoming victims again.

Based on the focus group discussion on the needs analysis, two specific objectives were obtained. The First objective is to provide knowledge about bullying, and the second objective is to increase the victims' ability to prevent them from becoming victims of bullying again.

Through this needs analysis, the research team understood what the victims needed information and knowledge to educate them about bullying. The research team also obtained the activity plans to be included in the program.

#### B. The Operational Phase

The operational phase also includes three steps: selection of the content, designing experiential activities, and evaluation [24].

Based on the analysis needs, the research team selected a series of activities to be included in the program. The research team designed to include 40% of education through discussion and question and answer (QnA), 40% of training activities, and 20% was a process for participants to improve their psychological abilities and reduce their vulnerability to becoming victims again.

The experiential activities were designed based on the needs analysis and literature study on bullying [2-17].

The research team designed the evaluation of this psychoeducational program in formative and summative tests. The evaluation was carried out on two predetermined targets by evaluating the process and the results.

The research team designed that the evaluation process was carried out by asking participants to assess the extent to which the targets that have been set can be met through psychoeducational intervention programs. The research team also designed some questions to ask the participants to assess the achievement of the goals, the facilitator's ability to implement the program, and the suitability of the content with the target.

The research team designed the evaluation to determine the increase and change in the behavior of the participants.

To evaluate the results, the research team designed the pre-test and post-test to measure the increase in participants' knowledge. This evaluation was designed as a self-rated participants' ability to prevent themselves being a victim again.

Table II presented the information about the program that the research team has designed.

TABLE II. THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Target of population	Bullying victims
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide knowledge about bullying</li> <li>To increase the ability of the victims to prevent them from becoming a victim of bullying again.</li> </ul>
Content	<p>Knowledge about bullying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definition of bullying.</li> <li>Criteria for behavior categorized as bullying.</li> <li>The differences between bullying and other aggressive actions.</li> <li>Types of bullying.</li> <li>Characteristics of students who are vulnerable to being bullied.</li> <li>Protective factors of bullying.</li> <li>Misinformation regarding bullying.</li> </ul> <p>To increase the ability of the victims to prevent them from becoming a victim of bullying again</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ability to read the situations.</li> <li>The ability to recognize the unpleasant feelings of being a victim.</li> <li>To find their potential.</li> <li>The ability to seek help.</li> </ul>
Format	The group psychoeducational (minimum 6 participants)
Facilitators	The research team
Location	At school
Duration of the program	5 hours

The research team designed all contents of this psychoeducational program in detail, including the name of activities, the goals, the method, the procedure, the duration, the instruments needed, and the evaluation for each activity.

In the last step of data collection, the research team conducted another focus group discussion to get feedback and inputs from the participants of this study. The three students who participated in this study stated their agreement on this designed program.

The research team also has obtained the copyright for the intellectual property rights of this bullying prevention psychoeducational intervention for the victims. The number of copyrights is 000262672, signed on 5 August 2021 by the Indonesian Minister of Law and Human Rights – Director General of Intellectual Property.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This psychoeducational intervention program was design to prevent bullying victimization of elementary students. This

program was designed based on needs analysis of the victims. However, this psychoeducational intervention program has not been tested yet. Future studies shall test this program in elementary students who experienced bullying victimization.

Sample of this study was only three elementary students in Bandung City. Therefore, results of this study are limited and need to further investigate using bigger sample.

Using an ecological system analysis, it is also suggested to develop psychoeducational intervention program for parents and teachers.

Future studies should test this program to investigate the effectiveness in preventing bullying incidents, particularly in the victims.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat (LPPM; Institute for Research and Community Service) Universitas Islam Bandung funded this study through Penelitian Dosen Utama (PDU) Penelitian Terapan research scheme.

The research team thanks students who participated in this study, also to the school and parents.

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