



Instilling Character Education Through the Essence of Behavioral Development in Overcoming Bullying in Kindergarten

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Abstract

Bullying is a problem that can arise from an early age, including in kindergartens. This behavior can negatively impact a child's social and emotional development if not handled appropriately. This research/study aims to describe the instillation of character education through the essence of behavioral coaching as an effort to overcome bullying in early childhood. The method used is a qualitative approach with observation techniques, interviews, and documentation studies in kindergarten environments. The results of the study indicate that instilling character values such as empathy, honesty, responsibility, and tolerance through habituation, role modeling, and positive reinforcement can reduce bullying behavior. In addition, the role of teachers as role models and mentors, as well as parental involvement in supporting behavioral coaching at home are important factors in the success of these efforts. Seen from habituation in fostering empathy, role modeling in developing self-control, positive reinforcement forming an attitude of mutual respect and mentoring in managing emotions.

INTRODUCTION

In the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003, it is stated that national education functions to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of the nation that are useful in order to enlighten the life of the nation (Ramli & Mawaddah, 2022). It aims to develop the potential of students to become people who believe in, fear God Almighty, have noble morals, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent and become democratic and responsible citizens (Sukriyatun, 2022).

Character education in early childhood deals with many dimensions, including honesty, compassion, loyalty, trust, and responsibility. These dimensions can be practiced through parents' scaffolding, assisting, and instructing in children's daily life experiences such as play, music, stories, visual aids, and pictures (Retnaningrum & Hazhari, 2024).

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Character education is an effort that is deliberately designed to improve the character of students (Nofrizal et al., 2025). Character education aims to help students experience, acquire, and possess the desired strong character, including character values that include religiousness, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love of the homeland, appreciation of achievement, communication, love of learning, love of reading, care for the environment, care for society, and responsibility (S. A. F. Putri & Wiranata, 2025). Character education is one of the soft skills (V. M. Putri & Yaswinda, 2022), namely the process of guiding students to become complete human beings with character in the dimensions of heart, mind, body, and feeling and will (Fatimah et al., 2024). The principle of character education itself is a process of internalization or instilling positive values in students so that they have good character that is referenced from religion, culture, and national philosophy (Widaningtyas, 2022).

Bullying is a form of oppression or violence intentionally perpetrated by a more powerful individual or group, with the aim of repeatedly hurting others. Types of bullying behavior can be divided into verbal and non-verbal (PUTRI, 2023). Nonverbal bullying often involves threats or physical violence, while verbal bullying involves the use of harsh words or spreading slander about the victim (Malik et al., 2026). Some forms of bullying include manipulation of friendships, exclusion, neglect, sending hate messages, and behavior that leaves someone feeling isolated (Pradana, 2024).

Bullying is common at all ages, from elementary school to secondary school, and even higher education. Bullying is perpetrated by both boys and girls and often occurs in school settings. Schools and parents often fail to recognize the dangers of bullying in children, assuming that fighting, teasing, and teasing are common behaviors in the school environment and not threatening (V. M. Putri & Suryana, 2022). Impact. This school condition, which appears indifferent and discriminatory, certainly threatens the character formation of students in the school environment (Arden et al., 2025).

Bullying has negative physical and psychological impacts on its victims. The impact of bullying during childhood can have lifelong consequences for both the victims and the perpetrators. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) recorded 37,381 complaints of violence against children over a nine-year period, from 2011 to 2019. Bullying in education and social media reached 2,473 reports and continues to increase (Ardhiyanti et al., 2025).

A bullying case that occurred in Malang City in February 2020 that affected a junior high school student required him to undergo surgery to amputate the middle finger of his right hand. MS was allegedly bullied by seven of his schoolmates who lifted MS's body in a group and then threw the victim on the paving floor by his friends. The perpetrator admitted to having committed the violent act even though the motive was joking (Ningtyas & Sumarsono, 2023). Bullying behavior has five basic components consisting of intention to harm, bullying actions aim to hurt the victim. Harmful outcome, bullying often takes the form of actions that can injure the victim. Direct or indirect acts, bullying actions can be carried out directly (hitting, kicking) or indirectly (ostracizing, spreading gossip). Repetition, bullying behavior tends to be done repeatedly. Unequal power, bullying is usually carried out by one or a group of people who feel more powerful (Setiowati, 2025).

This study aims to determine how character education, with the essence of behavioral coaching, can fundamentally address bullying in schools by changing behavioral patterns, instilling empathy, and building positive character in students. Through this coaching, student perpetrators will change their behavior, victims will recover and increase their self-confidence, and the entire school community will become safer, more comfortable, and more supportive for growth and development

without fear (Rahmi et al., 2025). In line with this, obstacles to the implementation of education are still encountered that tarnish efforts to improve the quality of education (Fitri et al., 2025). There are many types of deviant behavior or disrespectful, characterless actions exhibited by children, from elementary school students, junior high school students, high school students, college students, the community, and even respected lawyers and members of parliament. These disrespectful behaviors are demonstrated in the form of fights, brawls, arguments, and other negative actions (Mahyuddin et al., n.d.).

This study discusses the importance of behavioral coaching in addressing bullying, which can be found in a more comprehensive approach that focuses on the root of the problem, such as through character education that instills empathy and social values, as well as the use of technology such as online monitoring to prevent digital bullying (Atika. cucu et all, 2023). Furthermore, the study also emphasizes the importance of active involvement of all school elements, including teachers, students, parents, and even the community, as well as the existence of a continuous empathetic communication program and measurable evaluation to create a safe and supportive learning environment. Based on Kompas.com discourse, bullying victims at the student level are rampant, resulting in mental victims and even fatalities (Rahmi & Muchlisin, 2022).

Based on the background and problem formulation above, the problem can be defined as the instillation of character education with the essence of behavior method in preventing bullying which is the center of attention as teachers and educational institutions for victim prevention. Then the definition of the problem is the problem-solving approach, namely the instillation of character education with the essence of behavioral coaching can overcome bullying in schools fundamentally changing behavioral patterns, instilling empathy, and building positive character in students (Yudelnilastia et al., 2025). Through behavioral coaching, it is hoped that student perpetrators will change their behavior. Based on the background of the problem above, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "Instilling Character Education Through the Essence of Behavioral Coaching in Overcoming Bullying in Kindergarten."

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is the process of collecting data in a scientific setting, using natural methods, and conducted by individuals or researchers who are naturally interested (Sugiyono, 2020). This type of research is a descriptive case study. Case studies involve data collected in the form of words, images, and not numbers. This is due to the application of qualitative methods (Creswell, 2021). Furthermore, all collected data is likely to be key to what has been studied (muri yusuf, 2020). This research is presented descriptively in the form of words and language, in a specific, natural context. By utilizing various natural methods, researchers gain an understanding of phenomena in the field in the development of science. Case studies are used to examine a phenomenon in depth and comprehensively in a specific context (Arikunto, 2020). The research flow can be seen in the following figure:

Figure 1. Research Flow



A qualitative case study was chosen because this research focuses on an educational institution, ABA Mustika Jaya Kindergarten in Bekasi City. This can be seen in the following research design:

Figure 2 Research Design



In this study, the indicators used include: (1) habituation in developing empathy, which is reflected in the individual's ability to understand and feel the conditions of others and show concern in social interactions; (2) role models in developing self-control, which is demonstrated through an attitude of self-restraint, patience, and the ability to make wise decisions in various situations; (3) positive reinforcement in forming an attitude of mutual respect, which is seen from the existence of behavior of mutual respect, respect for differences, and giving appreciation to others; and (4) assistance in managing emotions, which is manifested through the individual's ability to recognize, understand, and control emotions appropriately so that adaptive and constructive behavior is created. These four indicators are used to see the process of character formation taking place effectively in the context of this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings in the field regarding the instillation of character education through the essence of behavioral development in overcoming bullying in kindergarten. Viewed from 1) habituation in fostering empathy, 2) role models in developing self-control, 3) positive reinforcement in forming an attitude of mutual respect and 4) mentoring in managing emotions. Using qualitative data collection techniques, namely through observation, interviews, and documentation, the following results were obtained:

Habits in Cultivating Empathy

Instilling character education through the essential behavioral coaching method in addressing bullying by teachers involves providing children with the habit of developing empathy. This involves understanding and feeling what others are experiencing. Children are trained through daily habits, such as teachers practicing listening to others. Listening attentively without interrupting helps us understand others' feelings and perspectives (V. M. Putri & Eliza, 2021). Teachers then instill in children emotional management skills, enabling them to understand others' feelings and calm down when angry. Teachers also encourage children to use kind words like "sorry," "please," and "thank you." Furthermore, teachers also provide appreciation to children, fostering greater sensitivity to their surroundings.

Role Model in Developing Self-Control

Based on the results of observations, researchers observed that teachers' strategies for instilling role models to develop self-control in early childhood are carried out consistently, concretely, and in accordance with the child's developmental stage. At an early age, children learn primarily through imitation (modeling), so the role of teachers is very important as direct examples. It can be seen that in providing role models, teachers demonstrate self-control behavior in everyday life, such as speaking calmly, not getting angry easily, and then providing examples of how to solve problems patiently so that children will imitate these attitudes in interactions (V. M. Putri & Eliza, 2022). The teacher's strategy is to use simple and positive language. Observations show that teachers guide children with easy-to-understand sentences, such as "Let's wait our turn," "If we're angry, let's take a breath first," which helps children recognize and manage their emotions. Teachers also practice routines and rules in their learning. This allows children to learn discipline and self-control, such as schedules for play, study, and eating, rules for queuing, sharing, and tidying up toys. In their learning, teachers consistently apply these rules to their children.

Positive Reinforcement Builds Mutual Respect

Based on the results of observations, researchers saw that the teacher's strategy in instilling positive reinforcement to form an attitude of mutual respect in early childhood was carried out consistently and in accordance with the characteristics of child development (Yuli et al., 2025). Like teachers, they act as facilitators and role models for children, learning through direct experience. This can be seen in the way teachers give sincere praise; they don't just say "good," but also explain the behavior that is valued. For example, "Thank you for waiting your turn to speak, that's a sign of respect for friends" (V. M. Putri, 2020). Then, be a role model in showing respect. Teachers directly demonstrate mutual respect by listening to children when they speak, not interrupting, and using polite language so that children imitate the teacher's actions. Then, teachers also use simple and educational rewards such as stickers or stars, as well as award points (V. M. Putri & Yaswinda, 2022).

Guidance in Managing Emotions

Based on observations, teachers' strategies for assisting early childhood children in managing their emotions are evident, with teachers training children to recognize, express, and control their emotions. This support helps children develop into emotionally stable individuals, enabling them to interact effectively (D. N. Putri et al., 2025). Teachers build warm, safe relationships and create a loving atmosphere so children feel comfortable expressing their emotions. As seen, teachers greet children in a friendly manner, then listen without judgment and give them their full attention.

Thus, it can be concluded that instilling character education through the essence of behavioral coaching in addressing bullying in kindergarten relies on role models, consistency, and a compassionate approach. Teachers not only act as instructors but also as guides who provide concrete examples of emotional control, use positive reinforcement to shape good behavior, and help children recognize and express emotions appropriately, while creating a safe, comfortable, and supportive environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted by the researcher, namely on the Instilling of Character Education Through the Essence of Behavioral Guidance in Overcoming Bullying in Kindergarten, it shows that the instilling of character education from an early age has a very important role in preventing and overcoming bullying behavior. Through consistent behavioral guidance, children are introduced

to values such as empathy, mutual respect, honesty, and responsibility. Teachers act as primary role models by providing examples of positive behavior, guiding children in managing emotions, and applying positive reinforcement for good attitudes shown by children. In addition, the implementation of clear rules, play-based learning activities, and effective communication between teachers and parents also support the formation of a safe and conducive environment. In this environment, children learn to understand the feelings of others, avoid hurtful actions, and resolve conflicts peacefully. Thus, the essence of behavioral guidance integrated into character education has proven effective in reducing and preventing bullying in kindergarten, as well as helping shape children into individuals with good morals, caring, and able to socialize positively.

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