

Garda Upstander Training: Experience Preventing School Bullying and Developing Students' Prosocial Behavior

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Abstract. The purpose of this article is to explain the experiences of Indonesian junior high school students who participated in the “*Garda Upstander Training/GUP*”. The GUP was designed to promote students' prosocial behavior. Thirty students of an Islamic junior high school in grades 7, 8, and 9 attended the GUP. There were 15 boys and 15 girls which aged 13 until 15 years old who intended to create a safe school environment from bullying. This one-session training program was conducted by a supervised team of master students of Educational Psychology. The training included presentation of materials, group discussion, video screening, role playing, and creation of anti-bullying posters and campaign videos. The data of participants experience was collected through a written open-ended questions form to explore students' experiences and understanding of bullying, the role of the upstander, and the development of empathy and prosocial behavior. The program integrates a cognitive approach through material presentation and an experiential learning approach through interactive activities. Analysis of student reflections revealed a deeper understanding of the types of bullying and an awareness of the importance of the upstander role in preventing bullying. This study provides in-depth insight into the development of a school-based anti-bullying program that emphasizes the development of pro-social behavior.

Keywords: Mental health, bullying, upstander, prosocial behavior, experiential learning.

1 Introduction

Bullying is a serious problem that continues to occur in the school environment with alarming consequences. In Indonesia, the phenomenon of bullying is still a major challenge in education that requires serious attention [1]. Bullying is an aggressive behavior with certain specific characteristics, namely it is carried out intentionally, repeatedly, and there is an imbalance of power [2], and it is carried out with the intention to harm [3]. In Indonesian, bullying is referred to as the process, manner, or act of violence that can be defined as someone using their power to hurt or intimidate people who are weaker than them, usually by forcing the victim to do what

the perpetrator wants [4]. The type of aggression in bullying differs from other aggressions that are more reactive and temporary, such as physical fights [5].

Bullying can occur anywhere, bullying that occurs at home between siblings is called sibling bullying, while bullying that occurs at school is called school bullying. Both occur in Indonesia and each has an impact on the psychological well-being of the victim [4], [6]. The effects of bullying behavior are widespread and can be long-lasting. Bullying incidents at the elementary school level can lead to decreased academic performance, mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, and suicide risk [7]. The impact on adolescent victims of bullying can lead to difficulties in social-emotional adjustment, low self-esteem, and depression [3]. Other research shows that bullying is a serious problem because it affects the subjective well-being of Indonesian children [6], especially physical and verbal bullying, because in a collective society, if someone feels abandoned by others, they will feel not considered in society [4].

Recently, there have been more and more cases of bullying in the school environment. The 2023 Education Year-End Note (Catahu) of the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) shows that the recorded cases of bullying reached 30 cases. 80% of the cases occurred in educational institutions under the Ministry of Science and Technology and 20% of the cases occurred in educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. 50% of the recorded cases occurred at the junior high school level, 30% at the elementary school level, and the rest at the high school/vocational school level [8]. As for 2024, according to FSGI data until September, there were 36 cases. This number increased drastically, because until July 2024, there were only 15 reported cases of bullying. 66.66% occurred in educational institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, and 33.33% occurred in educational institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, but resulted in the death of 4 students. Based on the level of education, most bullying cases came from the junior high school / MTs level as many as 36% of cases, and the rest occurred at the elementary and high school levels [9]. The percentage of cases at the junior high school level decreased, but the number of reported cases increased. Therefore, a planned and sustainable program is needed to reduce bullying cases, create a safe school environment, and maintain the mental health of the nation's next generation.

In an effort to prevent bullying, it is important to know what actions are included in bullying. There are four types of bullying: physical bullying, verbal bullying, actual bullying, and cyberbullying [10]. Physical bullying is bullying in the form of physical actions with the aim of hurting or bullying someone, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, or damaging other people's property. Verbal bullying is the use of words to hurt others, such as insulting, making fun of, or bad-mouthing others. Relational or social bullying, such as excluding someone, spreading rumors, or telling others not to be friends with someone. Meanwhile, cyberbullying is an act of bullying through the Internet such as social media, messaging applications, email and so on.

In addition to the types of bullying, the roles involved in bullying need to be understood in order to prevent and help victims. Smith also explains that in addition to victims there are several roles in bullying, where there are several roles of bullying perpetrators and people who are observers of bullying actions [10], including:

1. Performers
 - a. Ringleader: The person who leads the bullying and initiates the act,
 - b. Assistant: the person who joins the leader in the act of bullying,
 - c. Reinforcer: a person who supports the act of bullying, for example, by laughing at the victim.

2. Victim
 - a. Victim: The student who is the target of bullying.
 - b. Victim and aggressor: the student who first bullies others, then is attacked by the bully or others
3. Bystanders: Students who are aware of the bullying but do not take action to defend either the victim or the bully.
4. Defender/Upstander: A person who is aware of bullying and acts to defend or help the victim.

In response to this problem, several anti-bullying intervention programs have been developed in different countries. The KiVa program in Finland uses a whole-school approach to prevent bullying. In the United States, the STAC program focuses on training students to be active defenders in bullying situations [11]. In Rome, some schools integrate the CEPIDEA program into the curriculum to promote prosocial behavior among adolescents [12], [13]. In Indonesia, the CEPIDEA program was implemented in several sample schools that showed significant results in emotion regulation skills, empathy, communication, self-efficacy, and prosocial behavior [14]. As in pesantren, prevention activities are carried out through education, instilling religious values, teacher training, and improving communication between schools. Students and teachers. While dealing with bullying is done through intervention by teachers or staff, providing counseling and support to victims, and imposing sanctions on perpetrators [15]. In addition, the government, through the Ministry of Education, has issued regulations that focus on creating an inclusive and safe school environment.

Although these programs have shown positive changes, most still focus on perpetrators and victims and ignore the important role of bystanders, individuals who witness bullying in the bullying dynamic [16]. Interventions aimed at turning bystanders into upstanders were effective in reducing bullying among middle school students [17]. Existing programs also tend to use a punitive approach and pay less attention to developing prosocial behavior as a prevention strategy. Therefore, we created a bullying prevention program that focuses on developing prosocial behavior called Garda Upstander (GUP).

This study aims to understand how the GUP program contributes to the development of prosocial behavior among secondary school students by reflecting on their experiences during the training. The description of students' experiences is expected to provide valuable insights for the development of more effective and sustainable anti-bullying programs in Indonesia. This research is crucial given the increasing number of bullying cases in the school environment, which can reduce students' psychological well-being and have an impact on the decline in the quality of Indonesian people in the future.

2 Methods

2.1 Study design

This study describes how students experience the GUP training program, how they understand their role as upstanders, and the challenges they face in campaigning for a peaceful way to deal with bullying in a middle school style. The GUP training was conducted in one session, and in the next session, the participants conducted a campaign using videos and posters to reach all students in the school. This training integrates cognitive approaches through material exposure

and experiential learning to provide real understanding and experience in preventing and peacefully overcoming bullying through guess my expression games and role plays.

The training began with an icebreaker to create a more comfortable and supportive atmosphere and to build intimacy among participants so that they could actively participate during the training. The material presentation discussed the definition of an upstander and the purpose of forming a GUP, then concluded with reflection and discussion on the importance of upstander presence in the school environment. Next, a game that trains students' empathy through the "guess my expression" game, where students are asked to imitate different expressions and other participants guess the expression being imitated. This was followed by a role play that encourages students to develop pro-social behavior with a scenario where students are faced with a bullying situation that participants must resolve in a peaceful manner. Participants were then asked to share their reasons for wanting to become a Garda Upstander, followed by a discussion of their ideas and solutions as a Garda Upstander. The results of the discussion then became their task to campaign to all students in the school on how to prevent and overcome bullying in a peaceful way. The whole activity familiarizes students with working with other GUP members to create team cohesion. The seating during the activity was arranged in a U-shape to create social equality and facilitate interaction between participants and facilitators during the activity.

2.2 Garda Upstander Training

GUP was implemented by changing the role of bystanders to upstanders (defenders). The term "upstander" in this program refers to a group of students who are specially trained to be at the forefront of preventing and addressing bullying in their school. The program offers a holistic approach that combines raising awareness about bullying, developing empathy, and strengthening prosocial behavior through various methods such as group discussions, role-playing, empathy-training games, and creating anti-bullying campaigns through videos and posters. This program was implemented in one of the Madrasah Tsanawiyah in Cimahi because 4 types of bullying occurred in the school. However, the human resources that can prevent and handle bullying are considered insufficient where in the school there are 240 students with 1 counseling teacher.

Table 1. GUP training programme

Order	Activity	Duration
1 st	Opening Introduce the facilitator to the participants to get them involved. Communicate the purpose of the program.	10 minutes
2 nd	Ice Breaking The facilitator invites students to do a Warm Up Game: Jump In Jump Out	10 minutes
3 rd	Guess My Expression This game is useful for practicing empathy by understanding the facial expressions of others, this game not only hones socio-emotional skills, but also cognitive through experiential learning.	25 minutes
4 th	Role Play	30 minutes

Order	Activity	Duration
	<p>The facilitator tells students about bullying situations that often occur, both at school and on social media. The facilitator then reminds students that we can choose to be a bystander (a passive spectator) or an upstander (someone who actively helps stop bullying) and invites students to practice being a creative, funny, and cool upstander in bullying situations.</p> <p>The facilitator explains the bullying situation that some students, willing to play different characters, will try to act out and asks each group to stop the bullying in a peaceful and creative way.</p> <p>This activity can encourage students to develop prosocial behavior through experiential learning.</p>	
5 th	<p>Discussion</p> <p>The facilitator guides the participants in discussing the Garda Upstander Work Program through a series of prompts about their next plans after the training. The work program is developed collaboratively to ensure good cooperation among GUP members.</p>	45 minutes
6 th	<p>Closing</p> <p>The trainer closes the training by summarizing the day's learning and thanking the participants for their active participation.</p>	5 minutes

2.3 Participants

The target participants of this activity are members of the Student Council, Qadi (student organizations that assist teachers in enforcing discipline) and representatives from each class, with a total of 30 participants, male and female. Ages 13-15 years old, representing grades 7, 8 and 9 and student organizations. The participants are students who want to create a school environment that is safe from bullying, as evidenced by their enthusiasm during the training. The program is designed to help each future GUP member understand how to prevent and peacefully address bullying.

The GUP training participants consisted of 15 men and 15 women, with a balanced gender distribution. This composition reflects equitable representation in the program and allows for the active engagement of both gender groups in understanding and practicing the role of an upstander. As shown in the table below.

Table 2. Participant data by gender

Gender	Participant
Male	15 persons
Female	15 persons

The distribution of participants was dominated by students in grades 7 and 8, with a total of 12 each, and students in grade 9, with a total of 6. This shows that the program involves more students in the lower grades to build awareness early on and ensure sustainability of the upstander role in the school environment. As shown in the table below.

Table 3. Participant data by grade

Grade	Participant
7 th	12 persons
8 th	12 persons
9 th	6 persons

Most of the participants were 13 years old (19 individuals), followed by 7 individuals who were 14 years old and 4 individuals who were 15 years old. This age range corresponds to the developmental stage of early adolescence, when students begin to form social awareness and prosocial behavior, so this program is relevant in teaching the values of caring and courage in dealing with bullying. As shown in the table below.

Table 4. Participant data by age

Age	Participant
13 y.o	19 persons
14 y.o	7 persons
15 y.o	4 persons

2.4 Data collection

The data of participants experience was collected through a written open-ended questions form to explore students' experiences and understanding of bullying, the role of the upstander, and the development of empathy and prosocial behavior. The form was distributed to all training participants after all activities were completed. For reflection, participants were asked to share their experiences during the activities, making posters and videos, how to prevent bullying before attending the GUP training and how to prevent bullying after attending the GUP training.

2.5 Data analysis

After the data were collected, the participants' responses were interpreted and grouped into themes that emerged based on the students' responses. This method is used to make the data easier to understand and explain so that patterns can be found between the responses to help analyze the data. The themes that emerged based on the students' responses were not exactly the same, but there were similarities that could be connected.

3 Results and Discussion

Analysis of the reflections and experiences of the 30 GUP trainees revealed meaningful patterns related to the development of prosocial behavior and their understanding of the role of upstanders in preventing and addressing bullying. The thematic analysis revealed four major

interrelated themes in the experiences of the GUP trainees, as shown in Table 4. Each theme provided a deeper understanding of how the program trained empathy and influenced the development of participants' prosocial behavior and their ability to prevent bullying.

Based on the participants' responses, the GUP training has promoted the emergence of students' empathy for bullying situations and the development of students' prosocial behaviors in preventing and overcoming bullying, as evidenced by the students' different responses to bullying situations. Students gave different responses, with 6 people focusing on helping the victim directly, 4 people focusing on choosing to report directly to the teacher. Some participants became more sensitive to the situation around them, where they were more aware of what actions were more likely to lead to bullying, as evidenced by 8 people who rebuked the perpetrators directly when some students were about to engage in verbal bullying. After the GUP training, 2 students tried to take preventive action by telling their friends directly about the dangers of bullying. The other 2 students started bullying prevention from within by trying to maintain attitudes and behaviors that would not hurt others.

Table 5. Emerging themes and behaviors

Main Theme	Behaviors	Number of behaviors that appear
Aware of bullying	Start from yourself	2 persons
	Sensitive to the situation	8 persons
Empathy enhancement	Help the victim	6 persons
Developing bullying prevention	direct reprimand	8 persons
	Report to the teacher	4 persons
	Educating friends	2 persons
Active prevention implementation	Receiving complaints	30 persons
	Solve the problem	30 persons

Participants' awareness of bullying situations comes from their knowledge and understanding of the types of bullying and their effects, as well as their responsibilities as GUPs. As in the study by Midget, et al, where STAC intervention with students is effective in reducing bullying. In this case, students who felt responsible as GUP began to take concrete actions to prevent bullying [11]. C (13 years old, grade 7) began to prevent bullying from himself by not engaging in cyberbullying by not insinuating on social media, and M (13 years old, grade 7) tried to maintain his attitude and behavior by being careful when joking with friends. FNA (14 years old, grade 9) showed a change in her perspective: "More sensitive to the surrounding situation, more serious about bullying cases, and more courageous in preventing bullying cases. This statement reflects the development of awareness about bullying situations and their effects. Another participant, ANK (13 years old, grade 7), revealed "Learning to understand that what is considered a joke can be bullying for others." This means that when students understand the types of bullying, bullying actions can be prevented. WHK (13 years old, grade 8) described her change in attitude: "Now I feel I have a responsibility to protect my friends from being bullied."

This development supports the findings of Borualogo and Casas on the importance of collective awareness in the context of bullying prevention in Indonesia [4].

The second theme is that by increasing empathy in students, bullying can be prevented and victims can be helped more effectively so that the mental health of students can be maintained, where 6 people directly helped victims when bullying occurred. As revealed by the school counselor, after the GUP training was conducted and the school community knew that there was a place that could protect them, more complaints were received and could be resolved more effectively through GUP because peer reprimands were more effective than adult reprimands.

In addition, KH (13 years old, grade 7) stated, "After the training, I am more able to feel what my friends who are being bullied are feeling. The "Guess My Expression" activity played an important role in developing the emotional sensitivity of the participants. RY (12 years old, grade 7) shared her experience, "The expression guessing game made me more sensitive to my friends' feelings. This is consistent with Miftahul Jannah and Djuwita's research on the role of experiential activities in developing empathy [14].

The third prominent theme was the development of bullying prevention, with M (13 years old, 7C) explaining her step-by-step approach: "The way I prevent bullying is to find out the problem first and then report it to the teacher." This strategy reflects the integration of deliberative values in conflict resolution, as recommended [15]. As Indonesian citizens, deliberation is a way to solve problems in a peaceful way. Preventing bullying in a peaceful way was also carried out by R (13 years old, 7th grade), he stated "first know what the problem is, not insinuate on social media". KS (14 years old, 8B) also revealed "Talking to them nicely, trying to understand their reasons and then finding solutions together". Bullying can be prevented through programs that promote prosocial behavior in students [13].

The fourth theme that emerged was the implementation of active prevention, where the students conducted a campaign on how to overcome and prevent bullying in a way that was in the style of junior high school children, where in the campaign the students provided various examples of behavior that included bullying or behavior that was considered a joke but could hurt others. In the campaign, students directly convey to their friends to report bullying incidents by contacting GUP so that they can help solve problems to make the situation and conditions at school safer and more comfortable.

Putting their understanding and skills into action. S (13 years old, 8th grade) expressed his excitement: "It's great to be able to create educational content about bullying for friends. Q (13 years old, 7B) added about the sustainability of the program "We plan to start a discussion group to continue discussing how to prevent bullying." The active implementation of preventive measures does not stop at the individual level. MAA (13 years old, 8D) explained the community approach developed: "We formed small groups in each class to monitor and prevent bullying." This initiative is in line with the findings of McCarty, et al. that the development of peer support systems is effective in preventing bullying [7].

Theoretically, early adolescence is a critical period in moral and social development. According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15 are in a transitional period from the conventional to the postconventional level, where they begin to develop a moral understanding based on social consensus and universal ethical principles [18]. At this stage, adolescents no longer simply follow the rules out of fear of punishment or desire for reward, but rather begin to consider the impact of their actions on others and the larger

community. This makes middle school the right time to develop the upstander role in bullying prevention.

Erikson's social development theory states that during adolescence, 12-18 years of age, a person is in the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage, where they are actively forming their self-identity. At this stage, peer groups have a very significant influence on the formation of identity and social values. The GUP program can be a positive platform for adolescents to develop an identity as an upstander and take a role in creating a safe school environment. This is consistent with research findings that peer problem solving is often more effective than direct adult intervention because adolescents are more receptive to peer influence and input [19].

The GUP program design integrates cognitive and experiential learning approaches, where one of the ways a person learns is through direct experience. One can learn through observation, modeling, or direct experience that enriches one's cognition. This means that prosocial behavior can be learned through observation, modeling, and direct experience. Through role-playing and group discussions, GUP participants not only learn what to do, but also experience and practice appropriate responses to bullying situations. Bandura asserts that observing credible models (in this case, peers playing the role of upstanders) can increase self-efficacy and promote the adoption of prosocial behaviors [20].

The integration of these three theoretical frameworks - Kohlberg's moral development, Erikson's psychosocial development, and Bandura's social learning - provides a strong foundation for the effectiveness of the GUP program. The program not only capitalizes on the dynamics of adolescent moral and social development, but also optimizes the role of peer influence and experiential learning in shaping prosocial behavior. This is consistent with the findings of various effective anti-bullying programs in different countries, such as KiVa in Finland and STAC in the United States, which also leverage peer group dynamics in their intervention programs [11].

4 Conclusion

Thus, the GUP training program shows significant potential in developing students' capacity as effective upstanders in preventing bullying. The emergence of empathy and the development of prosocial behavior in students to prevent and overcome bullying is the success of this program. Learning that integrates cognitive and experiential learning is effective in developing prosocial behavior.

However, there are still limitations of this training program, including the need for a long-term study to measure the effectiveness of this program in the long run because this program was only conducted in one session. Training methods that adapt to cultural values need to be developed so that this program can be applied in different regions of Indonesia with its cultural diversity and customs. In addition, the GUP training method was only implemented at the junior high school level, so the effectiveness of the program at other educational levels is unknown. Overall, however, this program can serve as a foundation for developing a comprehensive and sustainable bullying prevention program by taking into account the local context and specific needs in schools.

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