

Student Empowerment through Character Education: Overcoming Bullying in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Oleh:

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Introduction

Organizational bullying is a serious problem that can affect students' psychological and academic well-being. Bullying at school can occur in various forms, such as physical violence, verbal harassment, intimidation, and social rejection. Bullying is aggressive behavior carried out repeatedly by one or more students against victims who are less able to defend themselves [11]. The impacts of bullying are far-reaching, including reduced academic achievement, mental health problems, and low student self-confidence [12].

In the context of English language teaching (ELT), an inclusive and safe environment is essential to encourage active participation and effective language development. Research shows that students who feel safe and accepted in the classroom environment tend to participate more actively and are more open to trying to use English in everyday communication [14]. However, the presence of bullying can hinder this process, making students afraid to speak and interact, which ultimately hinders their language development.

Empowering students through character education can be a solution to overcoming bullying because it helps create a positive and supportive classroom climate. Character education emphasizes the development of moral and ethical values in students, such as respect, empathy, honesty, and responsibility [1]. By instilling these values, students are expected to demonstrate better behavior and be more supportive of each other, which in turn can reduce bullying incidents at school.

Character education is a deliberate effort to cultivate the virtues that shape good behavior and ethical decision-making [17]. This theory emphasizes the importance of moral integrity and intellectual virtue as the basis of good behavior. Lickona identified ten key values that need to be taught in schools, including respect, responsibility, and justice. Applying this theory in the ELT context can help create a learning environment that is more conducive and freer from bullying.

Methodology

This research was conducted through a literature review which involved qualitative analysis of various academic sources relevant to the topics of character education, bullying, and English language teaching (ELT). This study includes an in-depth review of academic journals, books, and articles that discuss the theory and application of character education, as well as case studies that illustrate anti-bullying strategies in the context of language learning. These sources were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and their academic quality, with a focus on works that have been recognized in the fields of character education and ELT.

The literature analyzed includes major works such as Studios that provide insight into how moral values can be integrated into the ELT curriculum and their impact on student behavior. By combining findings from various literature, this research seeks to develop practical strategies for ELT teachers to empower students through character education and overcome the problem of bullying in schools [20].

Finding and Discussion

❑ A. The Importance of Character Education in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Character education in ELT is important because it helps create a conducive learning environment. Good social interactions are essential in language learning, and positive traits such as respect, empathy, and responsibility can support these interactions [33]. In the context of an English class, students often participate in pair or group activities, and the success of these activities depends on their ability to work together harmoniously. By implementing character education, students learn to appreciate differences and work together well, which are key skills in language acquisition.

Character education involves instilling moral values that help students develop into morally and ethically good individuals [35]. In English learning, these values can be integrated through various activities such as group discussions, role plays, and collaborative projects. For example, when students work in groups to complete a task, they learn the importance of respect and responsibility towards other group members. Effective character education programs can improve classroom climate and strengthen relationships between students [28].

❑ B. Dissecting Bullying Issues in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Bullying in the ELT context can appear in various forms, such as teasing of language abilities, social rejection, and verbal intimidation. Students who are just learning English often feel anxious and vulnerable to criticism from peers, which bullies can exploit to undermine their self-confidence. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is repeated and involves an imbalance of strength or power [35]. In ELT classes, students who are more fluent in English may use their linguistic superiority to denigrate less fluent students.

Finding and Discussion

This bullying can hinder the learning process because it reduces students' self-confidence and active participation in class activities. Students who are victims of bullying often feel embarrassed or afraid to participate in class discussions, which are important in English language learning. Victims of bullying tend to experience decreased self-confidence and increased anxiety, which can hurt their academic performance [26]. In an ELT context, this impact can be more severe because public speaking skills are a key component of language learning.

□ C. Application of Character Education Principles to Overcome Bullying

The application of character education principles such as respect, honesty, and empathy in English classes has great potential to overcome the problem of bullying. Teachers can integrate these principles into daily classroom activities to help students understand the importance of a positive attitude and respect for differences [17].

First of all, the principle of respect can be applied by encouraging students to respect the opinions and feelings of others in the classroom environment. This concept reflects the values of character education, where students are taught to respect the rights and dignity of each individual. Teachers can provide a space for students to share their opinions safely without fear of being ridiculed or belittled by peers. Character education involves developing respect for others as unique individuals [18].

Finding and Discussion

❑ **D. A Multicultural Approach to Involving Bullying in the English Classroom**

A multicultural approach to English language teaching (ELT) is an important strategy in combating bullying in the classroom. Through this approach, students not only learn English but also understand and appreciate the cultural diversity that exists in the world. Teachers can introduce the culture of various English-speaking countries, teach tolerance, and encourage students to share their personal experiences. In this way, students can learn to appreciate differences and develop inclusive attitudes that respect all individuals, thereby reducing the possibility of bullying behavior in the classroom [5].

❑ **E. Integration of Anti-Bullying Concepts in ELT**

Integrating anti-bullying concepts in English language teaching (ELT) has an important role in creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. By incorporating an understanding of bullying into the ELT curriculum, teachers can help students understand the negative impact of this behavior and provide them with the skills necessary to overcome and prevent it [9].

One method that can be used to integrate the concept of anti-bullying in ELT is through role-playing. In role plays, students are asked to play the roles involved in bullying situations, either as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses. Through this game, students can understand other people's perspectives and consider various possible responses in bullying situations. Role-playing can help students develop the empathy and social skills needed to overcome bullying [33].

Finding and Discussion

❑ F. Development of an Integrated Anti-Bullying Program

Developing an anti-bullying program that is integrated into the English curriculum is a holistic and important strategy for dealing with the problem of bullying in the school environment. This program not only focuses on preventing bullying but also includes steps to effectively address the problem if it occurs. Through an integrated approach, this program can ensure that all aspects of school life, including English language learning, support the creation of an environment that is safe, inclusive, and respectful of diversity [15].

❑ G. Challenges and Strategies for Implementing Anti-Bullying Concepts in ELT

The integration of anti-bullying concepts in English language teaching (ELT) offers many benefits, but its implementation is not free from various challenges. One of the main challenges is the limited time and resources available to teachers. In an already dense curriculum, adding character education and anti-bullying elements is often seen as an additional burden. Teachers must be able to juggle available time and learning materials with activities designed to promote awareness and tackle bullying. To overcome this challenge, schools and policymakers need to provide additional support in the form of adequate training and resources to teachers [18].

Character education must be thoroughly integrated into the curriculum to be effective [2]. Therefore, a strategy that can be used is to combine anti-bullying material with existing English learning content. For example, teachers can choose readings or texts that discuss the theme of bullying or insert discussions about character values in grammar and vocabulary lessons. In this way, anti-bullying concepts can be integrated without adding a significant time burden to teachers and students.

Conclusion

Character education is proven to play an essential role in efforts to overcome bullying in the context of English language teaching (ELT). Through the application of moral values such as empathy, honesty, respect, and responsibility, students not only learn languages more effectively but also develop social skills that are important for everyday life. Character education helps create a safe and supportive learning environment, where students feel valued and recognized. This positive environment increases students' self-confidence and encourages their active participation in teaching and learning activities.

Integrating character education in ELT has a significant impact on classroom climate and student well-being. Teachers who apply the principles of character education can guide students to understand and internalize positive values, which in turn reduces bullying incidents. With this approach, students learn to respect differences, work together harmoniously, and constructively handle conflict. Character education also prepares students to face various social challenges outside the school environment, making them more emotionally and socially prepared.

However, the success of integrating character education in ELT cannot be separated from adequate support for teachers. Teachers need continuous professional training and development to enrich their skills and knowledge in managing classrooms that are inclusive and free from bullying. With this support, teachers can be more effective in implementing anti-bullying strategies and building a conducive learning environment. Therefore, collaboration between teachers, schools, and parents is very important to create an educational community that supports the overall character development of students.

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