

# The Phenomenon of Bullying in Schools as a Basis for Developing Social Studies Learning Materials

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Received: 18/12/2024

Revised: 17/04/2025

Accepted: 18/05/2025

## Abstract

This qualitative research aims to analyze the phenomenon of bullying in schools to develop social sciences learning materials using literature studies and thematic synthesis. The research method includes collecting secondary literature from various indexed and accredited journals (Google Scholar, ISSN, Sinta, and Scopus), research reports, and credible documents published between 2015 and 2025. The thematic synthesis process includes initial coding, theme development, theme validation, theme naming, and compiling a narrative synthesis. This study has divided its findings into two main categories: 1) Development of Social Studies (IPS) learning materials on bullying in schools, which include the history of bullying, factors causing bullying, various forms of bullying, impacts of bullying, and the basis of contemporary social theory to understand the dynamics of bullying. 2) Strategies for developing Social Studies (IPS) learning materials for bullying prevention that can be implemented through Problem-Based Learning (PBL), strengthening social behavior, integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and the application of proposed social learning theories to encourage critical reflection and development of student empathy. This study's results provide a reference for Social Studies teachers, curriculum developers, researchers, and policymakers aiming to reduce and prevent bullying through an anti-bullying-focused Social Studies curriculum.

## Keywords

Bullying in Schools; Bullying Prevention; Social Studies Curriculum; Social Studies Learning Materials; Social Studies Learning

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying is one of the serious problems faced by schools around the world, including in Indonesia. Bullying occurs at all levels of schools in Indonesia, with varying degrees of severity from mild to severe, with most cases being categorized as mild, but the impact remains significant for the victims (Borualogo et al., 2020; Kapile et al., 2023; Wicaksono et al., 2021). This bullying phenomenon can cause feelings of insecurity at school, trauma, excessive stress, and even the risk of suicide (Abdelaziz & Abu-Snieneh, 2022; Esquivel et al., 2023; Yosep et al., 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to develop educational materials for Social Studies (IPS) classes in schools and enhance the training for Social Studies (IPS) teachers. Such development is done as a step for socialization, preventive efforts, and identifying bullying in schools.



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Bullying involves actions that are intended to harm the victim, either physically, verbally, socially, or psychologically (Jeffrey & Stuart, 2020; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Thomas et al., 2015). Bullying is any form of oppression or violence carried out intentionally by a stronger person or group to intimidate or dominate others who are considered weaker (Karimah et al., 2024). This social problem not only affects the victim but also the perpetrators and witnesses of bullying. Bullies tend to have lower levels of empathy and problems with emotional regulation and are likely to experience psychological maladaptation, such as stress and low life satisfaction (Averbuch et al., 2021; Carretero Bermejo et al., 2022; Carvalho et al., 2021; Estévez et al., 2019). Witnessing bullying also has negative impacts, such as increased psychological stress, physical complaints, decreased job/ school satisfaction, and risk of mental disorders (Chatziioannidis et al., 2018; Tsuno et al., 2022).

Systematic studies of bullying in schools began more than 40 years ago, initially defined as deliberate, repeated aggressive actions by an individual or group against a victim who is unable to defend himself, with three main criteria: repetition, intentionality, and power imbalance (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). History shows that violence against children, including bullying, was considered normal in the past. However, since the 20th century, there has been a major change with the recognition of children's rights and legal protection against bullying (Prikhodko, 2021). In some countries, such as Ukraine, administrative responsibility for bullying was only legally regulated in the 21st century, marking an era of stronger recognition and protection of children (Prikhodko, 2021).

What is the current state of bullying in Indonesia? Reported by Kompas TV (Christie, 2024) There were around 3,800 cases of bullying that occurred in Indonesia in 2023. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia/ KPAI) shows that almost half of this bullying transpired within educational institutions; the remaining cases also involved Islamic boarding schools. Data in Indonesia shows an increase in bullying cases in schools, with the majority of victims being elementary, middle, and high school students. The most common types of bullying are physical (55.5%), verbal (29.3%), and psychological (15.2%) (Putri et al., 2024). Remarkably, Trans7, 2023, ranked Indonesia as the fifth country in the world with the highest number of bullying cases (Trans7, 2024). The official Trans7 website, along with research by Munira et al. (2023), reports that around 41% of 15-year-old students in Indonesia experience bullying cases (Munira et al., 2023). This study investigates the experiences of adolescents with mental disorders in Indonesia, as well as the psychological trauma caused by bullying.

One of the high school bullying cases that went viral in Indonesia in 2024 was the Bina Nusantara Serpong High School (SMA Binus Serpong) case. Reported by BBC News Indonesia, the extreme bullying case occurred at Binus Serpong High School involving the GT (Geng Tai) group, which is known for committing physical violence in the process of recruiting new members (BBC News Indonesia, 2024). In February 2024, the victim (17 years old) reported the violence she experienced to the police, namely being beaten, strangled, and set on fire by the perpetrator. The perpetrators of this case consisted of 12 people. The "GT" youth group, which has been active for 8 years, consists of around 40 members and is known for its tradition of violence. This case went even more viral because one of the perpetrators was suspected of being the child of a public figure, thus attracting greater attention and expanding discussion in society (Chan & Saragih, 2024).

Additionally, bullying cases are reported in vocational schools. Based on news from detik.com (2024), a student with the initials NFN (18 years old) from West Bandung experienced bullying by her school friend with the initials A since she was in grade X (Detik of West Java, 2024). The bully did not commit physical violence, but in the form of insults and orders to do assignments and carry her friend. The school discovered this incident after NFN fell ill in May 2023. The bullying at Rajawali Health Vocational School (SMK Kesehatan Rajawali) lasted for 3 years, until the victim experienced severe frustration and finally died on May 30, 2024. Bullying contributes to the emergence of depression, anxiety, mental disorders, and self-harm behavior, all of which are major risk factors for suicide in adolescents (Azúa Fuentes et al., 2020; Holt et al., 2015; Stewart et al., 2018; Wahyuni et al., 2024).

Depression is often a mediator between bullying experiences and suicidal behavior (Azúa Fuentes et al., 2020).

Several previous studies have highlighted various aspects of the bullying phenomenon in schools. Research by Wati et al. showed that the implementation of Social Studies learning based on Problem-Based learning (PBL) was significantly able to reduce bullying behavior because students were involved in solving real problems related to bullying (Wati et al., 2023). Divecha and Brackett highlighted the importance of systemic integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in school programs, as well as encouraging a shift in approaches from mere prevention to developing a positive school climate (Divecha & Brackett, 2020). Research by Thornberg and Delby revealed that middle school students explained bullying as a way to gain social status, with victims often constructed as “different” or “wrong” (Thornberg & Delby, 2019). In another study, Thornberg used a grounded theory approach to show that social norms, group identities, and power dynamics play an important role in the “misfitting” process that triggers bullying in schools (Thornberg, 2018). Meanwhile, Bravo-Cedeño and Ávila-Rosales found that bullying hurts students' learning achievement and emphasized the importance of teacher and parent readiness in handling bullying cases (Bravo-Cedeño & Avila-Rosales, 2022).

From the five studies, the main focus appears to be more on learning strategies or methods such as PBL and SEL to prevent bullying, their impact on the learning process, and understanding of student perspectives and the social dynamics behind the phenomenon. However, there is still a research gap in developing Social Studies teaching materials that explicitly raise the issue of bullying as a current learning content and main learning topic. Until now, little research has produced products like modules, teaching materials, or Social Studies learning resources that are integrated with the theme of bullying so they can be used directly in the classroom. By linking Social Studies material to the problem of bullying, students are invited to analyze the causes, impacts, and solutions so that bullying behavior can be prevented and minimized in the school environment (Morcom, 2015; Wati et al., 2023). Bullying materials help students understand real problems in the school environment and society, making them more sensitive to social issues around them (Divecha & Brackett, 2020; Morcom, 2015; Wati et al., 2023). Thus, this study makes a real contribution to developing relevant and contextual curriculum and learning materials and providing new alternatives to prevent bullying in the school environment.

This study aims to provide an understanding to Social Studies teachers, curriculum developers, further researchers, and education policymakers about the dynamics and complexity of the bullying phenomenon that occurs in schools, while also exploring more deeply the history and root causes, various forms, and impacts, analyzing them through contemporary social theories, and how this research becomes the development of Social Studies learning materials to prevent bullying. Social Studies learning that raises the issue of bullying can instill the values of empathy, tolerance, and social concern, as well as build prosocial behavior among students (Divecha & Brackett, 2020; Morcom, 2015). The results of this understanding are expected to be the basis for compiling Social Studies learning materials that are contextual, sensitive to social issues, and able to facilitate the creation of a school culture that is mutually respectful, tolerant, and free from bullying. Contextual Social Studies materials need to highlight group dynamics, social theory, and the impact of bullying so that students understand and can prevent it (Bäker et al., 2023; Hamsah et al., 2024; Papamichalaki, 2021). This knowledge is all done as a basis for preventing, overcoming, maintaining, protecting, developing, and improving the quality of human resources in the future through Social Studies learning.

## 2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative research approach with a literature review. Literature review is a research method that collects, reads, analyzes, and synthesizes data or written sources relevant to the studied topic (Berasa, 2020; Chigbu et al., 2023). The literature study aims to find, examine, and combine findings from earlier research about bullying in schools and how it relates to creating Social Studies

learning materials. The main data sources are secondary literature in scientific journal articles, research reports, and other relevant documents that discuss bullying in schools, anti-bullying interventions, social theory, and the development of Social Studies learning materials (Silva et al., 2017). The literature was taken from various scientific databases such as Google Scholar, journals with ISSN, Sinta, and Scopus-accredited journals, conference papers, and other credible sources, over the period 2015-2025, and with certain inclusion criteria according to research needs.

We systematically searched for relevant keywords to collect data for this study. For example, "bullying in schools," "bullying as Social Studies learning materials," "bullying in Social Studies learning," "social theory for bullying," and "Social Studies learning material development." The following are the main steps in conducting this literature study research, including 1) determining the topic and formulating research questions, 2) compiling a search protocol and strategy, 3) selecting and organizing literature, 4) analyzing and synthesizing literature, 5) writing and reporting the results of the review, and 6) revising and validating (Ibrahim & Jusoh, 2023; Visic, 2022). This study employed thematic synthesis for data analysis. Thematic synthesis is a careful method of looking at, organizing, and combining qualitative data from different studies, then bringing together the main ideas that reflect the key points of the data analyzed. The steps include 1) reading and initial coding, 2) finding and developing themes, 3) reviewing and validating themes, 4) defining and naming themes, and 5) developing a narrative synthesis (Campbell et al., 2021; Forsberg, 2021; Lochmiller, 2021).

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Findings

##### *Development of Social Studies (IPS) Learning Materials on Bullying in Schools: History of Bullying*

Research on bullying in schools began to develop in the 1970s, pioneered by Norwegian psychologist Dan Olweus as the first figure to highlight bullying as a serious problem in educational environments; then he defined it as an aggressive act carried out repeatedly and intentionally against victims who have difficulty defending themselves (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Prendes Espinosa, 2018). Olweus also established three main criteria that define bullying, namely repetition, intention to hurt, and an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Prendes Espinosa, 2018).

In the last four decades, scientific studies on bullying in schools have grown rapidly, expanding their definition and covering aspects of prevalence, forms of bullying, and the psychological and social impacts it causes (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Li et al., 2021). This phenomenon is recognized as one of the most common forms of peer violence during school and is of global concern due to its serious impact on mental health and children's right to a safe education (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Prendes Espinosa, 2018).

Initially, bullying was often considered individual deviant behavior. However, contemporary approaches see it as a complex social phenomenon influenced by norms, power structures, and group dynamics in the school environment (Thornberg, 2018). Therefore, researchers now stress the importance of comprehensive interventions involving all school community elements, including teachers, students, staff, and parents (Ruslan & Rezkiyani, 2023). From the 1970s to the present, various countries have developed anti-bullying policies and programs at the local, national, and international levels to create a safe, inclusive, and violence-free learning environment (Li et al., 2021; Prendes Espinosa, 2018; Z. Zhang, 2022). These efforts are also encouraged by international institutions such as UNESCO and the European Commission, which actively promote the prevention and handling of bullying in the school environment (Prendes Espinosa, 2018).

In addition to traditional forms (physical and verbal), technological advances have given rise to

cyberbullying as a new form of bullying (Armitage, 2021). Cyberbullying emerged along with advances in digital technology, such as social media, instant messaging platforms, and mobile devices. This phenomenon has begun to receive widespread attention in the past two decades, especially due to the increasing access of children and adolescents to cyberspace (Mitsu & Dawood, 2022; Mogunova, 2022; Tregubova, 2021). Cyberbullying has unique characteristics compared to traditional bullying, including the ability to occur at any time, its anonymity, and the potential for rapid spread (M. et al., 2024; Mogunova, 2022; Tregubova, 2021). Cyberbullying can take the form of verbal violence, visuals, character impersonation, and online exclusion. Terms such as flaming, harassment, denigration, outing, and cyberstalking have been used to describe these various forms of behavior (Mogunova, 2022; W. Zhang et al., 2022). Playing violent video games is the strongest moderating factor between psychopathic personality and bullying behavior in problematic smartphone users (Miran et al., 2023). Global studies have indicated that the prevalence of cyberbullying has increased significantly in the past five years, with victimization rates varying from 13.99% to 57.5% across countries (M. et al., 2024; Zhu et al., 2021).

School bullying has become a global issue since Dan Olweus pioneered it in the 1970s, when he defined it as repeated aggressive acts with an imbalance of power (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Prendes Espinosa, 2018). Over time, the understanding of bullying has evolved from individual behavior to a complex social phenomenon that requires a systemic and collaborative approach (Ruslan & Rezkiani, 2023; Thornberg, 2018). In the past two decades, technological advances have also given rise to a new form of bullying, namely cyberbullying, which is anonymous, widespread, and has a significant impact on the mental health of children and adolescents (M. et al., 2024; Mogunova, 2022; Tregubova, 2021).

#### a. Factors Causing Bullying in Schools

There are various causes of bullying in educational or school environments. Diao et al. stated in their research that the causes of bullying in schools can be classified into three major categories: differences in victims, inappropriate peer culture, and a lack of education in schools and families (Diao et al., 2023). Bullying behavior in educational environments can also be caused by unwritten social hierarchies, so that children who are popular or powerful are more likely to show it (Maharani, 2024). In addition, the results of Mołnika's study inform us that the causes of bullying in schools include physical deficiencies of peers, gender, social inequality, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, and gender identity (Mołnika, 2023).

School bullying is a complex phenomenon caused by various interrelated factors. From an individual perspective, boys tend to be more frequently involved in bullying than girls (Bokhove et al., 2022; Fink et al., 2018; Sabramani et al., 2021; Y.-J. Wang & Chen, 2023). In addition, children from low socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds are more vulnerable to being victims (Alonso et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2024; Y.-J. Wang & Chen, 2023), especially if they have certain physical characteristics such as wearing glasses, bad breath, or a face shape that is considered different (Alonso et al., 2024). Mental health factors such as psychological stress, loneliness, anxiety, and risky behaviors such as smoking or getting into fights are also correlated with involvement in bullying (Neupane et al., 2020; Sabramani et al., 2021). In addition, student behavior such as frequent truancy, arriving late, or repeating classes also increases the likelihood of becoming a victim (Sabramani et al., 2021; Y.-J. Wang & Chen, 2023).

School environmental factors also play an important role. Unsupportive school climate, low discipline, and high levels of competition increase the risk of bullying (Chen et al., 2024; Fink et al., 2018; Martínez Sánchez et al., 2019; Y.-J. Wang & Chen, 2023). Schools located in areas with high levels of deprivation, especially those with economic disparities among students, are also more prone to bullying (Fink et al., 2018). In addition, poor peer group culture, deviant social norms, and lack of solidarity among peers exacerbate bullying behavior (Chen et al., 2024; Diao et al., 2023; Sabramani et al., 2021). Lack of social support from teachers and friends, as well as low social acceptance in the school environment, further increases students' vulnerability to bullying (Martínez Sánchez et al., 2019;

Sabramani et al., 2021; Y.-J. Wang & Chen, 2023).

Family factors are also important. Conflicts within the family, poor economic conditions, and unsupportive parenting patterns can trigger bullying as perpetrators and victims (Chen et al., 2024; Diao et al., 2023; Sabramani et al., 2021). In addition, the lack of education about positive social behavior in the family environment also worsens the situation (Chen et al., 2024; Diao et al., 2023). Meanwhile, other contextual factors such as school and state policies did not show a strong relationship to the level of bullying; effective interventions lie more in the individual and school environment (Bokhove et al., 2022). On the other hand, a high duration of social media use, especially on weekends, is also associated with increased involvement in bullying (Sabramani et al., 2021). Understanding these factors is important for developing relevant and contextual Social Studies learning materials so that students can understand and prevent bullying behavior early on (Dahlena & Mulyana, 2022). Effective interventions to address this problem need to actively involve the entire school community and family, with a focus on improving school climate and strengthening social support (Chen et al., 2024; Diao et al., 2023; Martínez Sánchez et al., 2019).

#### b. Forms of Bullying in Schools

Bullying in schools comes in many forms. Physical bullying involves direct acts of violence such as hitting, kicking, pushing, or damaging the victim's property (Ahmed, 2022; Pishchenko & Solovey, 2022; Rahayu, 2024; Vedernikova, 2021). And is often easily recognizable because it leaves physical marks or wounds on the victim's body (Rahayu, 2024; Vedernikova, 2021). Verbal bullying includes teasing, insults, derogatory name-calling, threats, or abusive language (Ahmed, 2022; Pishchenko & Solovey, 2022; Rahayu, 2024; Vedernikova, 2021), which usually occurs repeatedly and can damage the victim's self-esteem and mental health (Rahayu, 2024). Psychological or social bullying includes acts of exclusion, spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, or attempts to make the victim feel unwelcome in the school environment (Ahmed, 2022; Pishchenko & Solovey, 2022; Vedernikova, 2021). This form tends to occur in secret and has long-term impacts on the emotional well-being of the victim (Vedernikova, 2021).

Meanwhile, cyberbullying occurs through electronic media such as social media, text messages, or email (Pishchenko & Solovey, 2022), with forms such as insults, threats, distribution of photos or videos without permission, and online harassment (Vedernikova, 2021). Another form is economic bullying, which involves taking, destroying, or extorting money and belongings from the victim (Pishchenko & Solovey, 2022) and often occurs in conjunction with other forms of bullying (Vedernikova, 2021). Sexual bullying includes comments or actions with sexual content toward the victim (Pishchenko & Solovey, 2022; Vedernikova, 2021) and can be done both physically and verbally (Vedernikova, 2021). Finally, homophobic bullying targets students who are perceived to have a different sexual orientation through teasing, exclusion, or violence, which can affect academic achievement, attendance, and sense of belonging to the school environment (Moyano & Sánchez-Fuentes, 2020). Each form of bullying can have serious impacts on victims, both physically, mentally, and socially, so prevention and handling must be carried out comprehensively and continuously (Ahmed, 2022; Moyano & Sánchez-Fuentes, 2020; Pishchenko & Solovey, 2022; Rahayu, 2024; Vedernikova, 2021).

#### c. Impacts of Bullying in Schools

Bullying in schools has a significant impact on various aspects of students' lives. One of the visible impacts is the mental and emotional health disorders experienced by victims. Research shows that bullying increases the risk of mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, psychotic symptoms, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), behavioral disorders, and even suicide attempts (Fraguas et al., 2021; Veronica, 2022; J. Wang, 2023; Y. Zhang, 2024). These negative effects not only impact the victims but can also impact the perpetrators, leading to psychological consequences that may persist into adulthood (J. Wang, 2023; Y. Zhang, 2024). In addition, the impact of bullying is also felt in students' academic achievement, where victims of bullying tend to experience decreased achievement,

often repeating grades, being absent for more than 11 days, and being less involved in school activities (Al-Raqad et al., 2017; Bravo-Cedeño & Avila-Rosales, 2022; Sh et al., 2023; Vadukapuram et al., 2022; Q. Wang, 2023). Disturbed psychological conditions due to bullying affect students' learning processes, causing a decrease in the quality of academic engagement (Bravo-Cedeño & Avila-Rosales, 2022; Sh et al., 2023).

The social and behavioral impacts of bullying are also very real, where victims often experience social isolation, difficulty building relationships with peers, and decreased self-confidence (J. Wang, 2023; Y. Zhang, 2024). Both victims and perpetrators of bullying are at higher risk of engaging in deviant behavior such as substance abuse, crime, and juvenile delinquency (Q. Wang, 2023). These impacts are not only limited to school but also continue in the long term. Bullying can affect an individual's ability to adapt to society and establish healthy social relationships (Q. Wang, 2023; Y. Zhang, 2024). In addition, bullying also worsens the school climate, creates an unsafe and uncomfortable environment, and hinders the creation of a positive learning environment (Fraguas et al., 2021; Y.-J. Wang & Chen, 2023; Y. Zhang, 2024). Therefore, developing Social Studies learning materials in schools necessitates comprehensive prevention and intervention to safeguard student welfare.

#### d. Analysis of Contemporary Social Theories

Various contemporary social theories offer systemic and contextual understandings of bullying in schools. Pierre Bourdieu's symbolic violence theory views bullying as a form of social violence institutionalized through norms, institutions, and social relations that normalize injustice and oppression, making it a product of social structures, not just individual behavior (Lohmeyer & Threadgold, 2023). Henri Tajfel and John Turner's Social Identity Theory explains that bullying arises because of an individual's drive to strengthen their group identity through social hierarchy, dominance norms, and intergroup competition, where egalitarian groups tend to be more inclusive (Hamsah et al., 2024). Travis Hirschi's Social Control Theory emphasizes that bullying occurs due to weak social ties and a lack of institutional supervision in schools (Hamsah et al., 2024; T. Wang et al., 2017). Albert Bandura, through Social Learning Theory, states that bullying is a behavior that is learned through observation and imitation of the social environment, including peers and authority figures (Bochaver, 2024).

Furthermore, Howard Becker, in Labeling Theory, shows that individuals who are labeled "different" or "deviant" by society are more vulnerable to becoming victims of bullying because the label reinforces their marginal position (T. Wang et al., 2017). The Broken Windows Theory by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling explains that bullying can grow in situations of weak enforcement of rules and social supervision that allow deviant behavior to develop without limits (T. Wang et al., 2017). Michel Foucault, through Power Theory, highlights that bullying is closely related to the practice of power that is carried out and maintained in the social structure of the school, not just domination between individuals (Horton, 2019). Finally, the Sociocultural Theory from Lev Vygotsky's approach emphasizes that bullying behavior is influenced by the social context, interpersonal relationships, and the specific environment in which the interaction takes place (Manullang, 2024).

We can use these various theories to develop Social Studies learning materials. Bullying in schools cannot be understood only as an individual problem, but as a manifestation of the dynamics of social structures and power relations (Horton, 2019; Lohmeyer & Threadgold, 2023). Various theories, ranging from Symbolic Violence to Sociocultural Theory, show that norms, group identities, social control, and labeling processes interact to create an environment that facilitates aggressive behavior (Hamsah et al., 2024; T. Wang et al., 2017). Understanding social learning mechanisms and weak rule enforcement is also key to designing effective interventions (Bandura, in Bochaver, 2024; Wilson & Kelling in T. Wang et al., 2017). Therefore, analyzing these contemporary social theories is useful for developing Social Studies learning materials so that teachers and students can understand that bullying is not just an individual act but a social phenomenon that arises from complex interactions in the dynamics of society.

### ***Strategies for Developing Social Studies (IPS) Learning Materials for Bullying Prevention***

Social Studies learning can be developed to prevent bullying through several approaches, including Problem-Based Learning (Wati et al., 2023), Strengthening social behavior (Dahlana & Mulyana, 2022), the Social and Emotional Learning approach (Amadori et al., 2023; Divecha & Brackett, 2020; Kimura & Koizumi, 2020), and the application of social learning theory (Joseph, 2021). In research on Problem-Based Learning (PBL), teachers orient students to real problems in the form of bullying, organize group discussions, guide problem-solving, and evaluate discussion results (Wati et al., 2023). This research has proven the effectiveness of this approach in reducing bullying behavior, including verbal, relational, and physical forms. Social Studies material needs to accommodate students' understanding of bullying, for example, through student consultation or open discussion, so prevention is more contextual and effective (Thornberg & Delby, 2019). To strengthen social behavior, Social Studies materials can instill the values of empathy, sympathy, and caring between students as part of strengthening 21st-century character and social skills (Dahlana & Mulyana, 2022). Social Studies teachers are important in building a collaborative and supportive learning environment and instilling social values that prevent bullying (Dahlana & Mulyana, 2022; Wati et al., 2023).

The strategies for developing Social Studies materials for bullying prevention can also be carried out through the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) approach, namely, integrating social-emotional skills. In Social Studies learning, research through this approach can increase social awareness, build positive relationships, and create a safe school climate, but a comprehensive approach at the school level is still needed for bullying prevention to be more effective (Amadori et al., 2023; Divecha & Brackett, 2020). Students who participate in learning programs with a social and emotional approach show increased self-efficacy to stop bullying, decreased tendencies to bully, and increased anti-bullying norms, although the long-term effects need further strengthening (Kimura & Koizumi, 2020). Additionally, by applying social learning theory, Social Studies materials can emphasize the consequences of bullying and promote prosocial behavior (Joseph, 2021). Material development should emphasize the importance of social skills, empathy, and awareness of the impact of bullying on individuals and the school community (Amadori et al., 2023; Dahlana & Mulyana, 2022; Divecha & Brackett, 2020). Bullying can be used as contextual material in Social Studies to teach social values, strengthen character, build 21st-century skills with a problem-based approach, strengthen social behavior, integrate social-emotional skills, and apply social learning theory.

### **Discussion**

This discussion presents the research findings descriptively to emphasize new contributions and differentiate this research from previous studies. The two main findings elaborated are: 1) Development of Social Studies (IPS) learning materials that raise the theme of bullying in schools, including the history of bullying, factors that cause bullying, various forms of bullying, the impacts of bullying, and analysis of contemporary social theories on bullying. 2) Strategies for developing Social Studies (IPS) learning materials to prevent bullying in schools, including through Problem-Based Learning (PBL), strengthening social behavior, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and the application of social learning theory.

Previous literature has focused heavily on bullying prevention approaches, such as PBL by Wati et al. (2023) and SEL integration by Divecha & Brackett (2020). Still, it has rarely produced Social Studies teaching materials or modules that explicitly include all aspects of bullying as the main content. In this thematic synthesis, Social Studies learning materials about bullying in schools are created to provide a complete and current understanding, starting from Dan Olweus' research in the 1970s, which described bullying as repeated aggressive actions where one person has more power, to modern definitions that now cover physical, verbal, psychological, cyber, economic, sexual, and homophobic aspects. Each part of the material includes real data about how common bullying is and its effects, such as causing mental health issues like depression and anxiety, as well as leading to lower school performance and a higher



chance of getting into trouble.

The uniqueness of this Social Studies learning material lies in integrating contemporary social theory as a complete conceptual foundation. Rather than just mentioning theories incidentally, this learning material positions Symbolic Violence Theory (Bourdieu), Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner), and Power Theory (Foucault) as analytical lenses to understand how norms, power structures, and group dynamics shape bullying behavior (Horton, 2019; Lohmeyer & Threadgold, 2023). Likewise, the Labeling Theory (Becker) and Broken Windows Theory (Wilson & Kelling) approaches are used to dissect the labeling mechanism and weak social supervision in schools (T. Wang et al., 2017). Additionally, bullying can be better understood by looking at other modern social theories, like Social Control Theory (Hirschi), Social Learning Theory (Bandura), and Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky), to gain different viewpoints. Thus, students learn historical facts and statistics and are invited to understand the sociological roots that trigger bullying so that learning becomes more reflective and critical. Material that raises real cases of bullying among students makes learning more meaningful and helps students understand the impacts and solutions to bullying directly (Rahma et al., 2023; Wati et al., 2023).

The results of this synthesis recommend strategies for developing hybrid and sustainable Social Studies materials. This material development strategy can be carried out through Problem-Based Learning (Wati et al., 2023) to encourage students' active involvement in solving real bullying cases, then continued with strengthening social behavior through empathy and simulation activities, as directed by Dahlena & Mulyana (2022). Additionally, including Social and Emotional Learning helps students understand themselves and build good relationships, and then using Bandura's Social Learning Theory shows how aggressive behavior is copied and kept going in friend groups.

A comparative review with previous studies reveals important distinctions. Unlike Joseph's (2021) Research, which only focused on one theory, this Social Studies learning material development strategy combines multiple theories in a complementary framework. Not only that, each strategy is accompanied by a collective reflection phase, an element that has not been prominent in the literature (Thornberg & Delby, 2019). So that the transfer of knowledge in the classroom is directly directed at changing attitudes and preventive actions in the school environment. Updated Social Studies material that is linked to everyday life makes learning more meaningful and easier for students to understand (Irwansyah Abbas, 2023; Syafruddin, Qahairatul, et al., 2024; Syafruddin, Ramadani, et al., 2024).

Implicatively, the combination of bullying thematic content and Social Studies learning material development strategies provides a roadmap for Social Studies teachers, curriculum developers, further researchers, and policymakers. The development of Social Studies learning materials is informative and transformative. That is, uniting the historical traces of bullying, empirical findings, and theoretical frameworks into a contextual and applicable whole. Transformative learning equips students to become agents of change in the school and community environment (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016; Bergersen & Muleya, 2019; Yee et al., 2019). Thus, this study has succeeded in closing the research gap regarding the lack of Social Studies learning materials in the current Social Studies curriculum regarding bullying, but also offers an alternative strategy for preventing bullying that is more comprehensive and sustainable in schools through Social Studies learning material development strategies. Bullying prevention reduces bullying rates and has a positive impact on students' mental health, such as reducing anxiety and depression (Díaz-Caneja et al., 2021; Fraguas et al., 2021; Rawlings & Stoddard, 2019).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that bullying in schools is a complex and multidimensional social issue requiring a contextual and transformative Social Studies (IPS) learning approach. Based on a synthesis of literature from various studies between 2015 and 2025, the Social Studies (IPS) learning material that

raises the theme of bullying has successfully mapped: 1) The historical development of bullying to become cyberbullying. 2) Factors that cause individuals, the school environment, and families. 3) Various forms of bullying—physical, verbal, psychological, cyber, economic, sexual, and homophobic. 4) Short-term and long-term negative impacts on mental health and academic achievement. 5) The basis of contemporary social theories such as Symbolic Violence (Pierre Bourdieu), Social Identity Theory (Henri Tajfel and John Turner), Social Control Theory (Travis Hirschi), Social Learning Theory (Albert Bandura), Labeling Theory (Howard Becker), Broken Windows Theory (James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling), Power Theory (Michel Foucault), and Sociocultural Theory (Lev Vygotsky), which provide an in-depth analytical framework.

Furthermore, the strategies for developing Social Studies (IPS) learning materials for bullying prevention can be designed through: 1) Problem-Based Learning (PBL), which places students as real problem solvers of bullying. 2) Strengthening social behavior through empathy and simulation activities. 3) Integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) to build self-awareness and social awareness. 4) Application of Bandura's Social Learning Theory to understand the mechanism of imitation of aggressive behavior. This hybrid approach presents factual content and facilitates critical reflection through discussions of real cases so that students understand the theory and are motivated to become agents of change in their school environment.

The main contribution of this research lies in developing a Social Studies material module that explicitly and systematically raises the issue of bullying as the core of learning. By combining the latest empirical data, a solid theoretical framework, and participatory pedagogical strategies, this teaching material closes the gap in previous research that has focused less on ready-to-use teaching products. Implementing this contextual and action-oriented material is expected to reduce bullying incidents, strengthen an inclusive school climate, and sustainably improve students' psychosocial well-being.

As a recommendation, further research needs to be conducted or a pilot testing of the bullying theme Social Studies module at various school levels to measure its effectiveness and adaptability. Continuous evaluation with quantitative and qualitative instruments will enrich the understanding of the impact of learning on changes in students' attitudes and behavior. Thus, developing Social Studies learning materials positively contributes to the Social Studies curriculum and forms a school culture that respects children's rights, fosters empathy, and frees the younger generation from bullying.

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