

PPKn Teachers' Role in Promoting Integrity to Prevent Bullying at SMK Karya Bakti, Batu Bara

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Abstract

Bullying remains a prevalent issue in many school environments, including vocational institutions, with harmful effects on students' psychological well-being and social development. While previous studies have explored general bullying prevention strategies, limited attention has been given to how integrity-based character education, led explicitly by Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn) teachers, contributes to this effort. Addressing this gap, the present study aimed to describe the role of PPKn teachers in strengthening integrity character education to prevent bullying at SMK Karya Bakti, Batubara Regency. This study used a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The participants consisted of PPKn teachers, homeroom teachers, and selected students who were purposefully chosen based on their involvement in character-building efforts. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, including data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that PPKn teachers played a strategic role in shaping students' integrity, particularly through learning emphasizing honesty, responsibility, and exemplary conduct. Teachers also contributed by fostering an inclusive classroom climate and employing persuasive, educational approaches in addressing bullying behavior. Their involvement extended beyond formal instruction to daily interactions that modeled ethical behavior.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education holds a vital role in shaping not only the intellectual development of individuals but also their character as members of society [1], [2], [3]. This view is grounded in the philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara, the Father of Indonesian National Education, who defined education as guidance in growing children's lives. He emphasized that education must draw out all the natural strengths inherent in children so they can grow into fully developed human beings and responsible members of society, capable of

achieving true happiness and safety. This philosophy resonates strongly with Indonesia's national education goals as enshrined in Law No. 20 of 2003, particularly Article 3, which asserts that education functions to develop the potential of students to become people who believe in and fear God Almighty, are noble in character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and democratic citizens who are responsible and proud of their nation. From this foundation, it is evident that education is not merely about academic instruction but also about instilling character and values that build a dignified civilization [4], [5].

However, character development is not the sole responsibility of formal education in schools. It begins at home, within the family, where parents are the first educators. As highlighted by Palunga [6], the family plays a pivotal role in establishing a child's foundational values. Nevertheless, when children enter the school environment, the task of character formation is transferred, in part, to teachers. Teachers, particularly those responsible for civic and moral instruction, such as PPKn teachers, are tasked with delivering content and guiding and modeling values-based behavior. Moreover, teachers must educate, guide, and provide moral direction, helping students develop into individuals who live according to ethical principles and societal norms [5], [7], [8].

Despite these ideal visions, character formation in schools today faces serious challenges. One persistent and concerning issue is the prevalence of bullying, especially among adolescents. Observational studies conducted at SMK Karya Bakti in Batu Bara Regency reveal that bullying has become a daily reality for some students, particularly those from religious minority backgrounds. Christian students, in particular, have been reported to experience ridicule, exclusion, and verbal harassment from their peers. Such incidents not only violate the personal dignity of these students but also directly oppose the principles of Pancasila, especially the second principle, which emphasizes just and civilized humanity. Bullying behavior—whether physical, verbal, or psychological—harms the educational environment and hinders the formation of a just, inclusive, and respectful student community [9], [10], [11].

The persistence of bullying in schools reflects a more profound crisis in moral development. In an era of rapid social and technological change, respect, empathy, and integrity are increasingly neglected. For this reason, there is an urgent need to reinforce character education, particularly the value of integrity. Integrity is a core character trait that underpins honesty, responsibility, moral consistency, and trustworthiness. According to Widodo (2019), the sub-values of integrity include honesty, loyalty, love of truth, moral commitment, anti-corruption behavior, fairness, responsibility, exemplary conduct, and respect for human dignity. Students who internalize these values are less likely to engage in harmful behaviors such as bullying and more likely to build healthy relationships based on mutual respect [12], [13], [14].

In this context, the role of PPKn teachers becomes increasingly critical. PPKn is not only a subject about civics and national ideology; it is also a vehicle for cultivating the values of Pancasila within students. Through PPKn, students are expected to understand their rights and obligations as citizens, to appreciate differences, and to act according to moral and ethical standards. Teachers of this subject are responsible for shaping students

into individuals who understand civic principles and embody them in daily life. Other researchers have demonstrated that PPKn teachers can be motivators, facilitators, and mediators in dealing with school bullying. They do this by instilling social values, fostering empathy, creating conflict resolution mechanisms, and exemplifying ethical behavior in both word and deed [15], [16], [17].

Nonetheless, previous research often addresses the role of PPKn teachers in general character development or as supervisors of school discipline, without a specific focus on how strengthening the value of integrity can be an effective strategy to prevent bullying. This leaves a notable gap in the existing literature. While much has been written about the moral responsibilities of educators, few studies have directly linked the internalization of integrity as a character trait with the prevention of bullying in a school context, especially in environments where social and religious tensions may exist, as seen in the case of SMK Karya Bakti.

Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze the specific role of PPKn teachers in strengthening the character of integrity among students as a proactive and preventative effort against bullying. It investigates how integrity can be cultivated through classroom instruction, teacher modeling, and value-based interactions, and how these practices contribute to creating a safer and more respectful school climate. Focusing on integrity as a central pillar of character education, this research contributes a more nuanced and targeted approach to addressing bullying, moving beyond disciplinary action to a values-centered solution. In doing so, it seeks to offer practical insights for educators, policymakers, and communities striving to uphold the true purpose of education: to build not only smart but also morally grounded citizens [7], [18].

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, which aims to explore and understand phenomena experienced by research subjects in a natural setting. The qualitative method allows the researcher to describe the role of Civics (PPKn) teachers in strengthening integrity character education as a preventive effort against bullying. The study was conducted at SMK Karya Bakti, in Batu Bara Regency [19], [20].

The research utilizes two types of data sources: primary and secondary. Primary data was obtained through observations and interviews with selected informants, including PPKn teachers, Guidance and Counseling teachers, the school principal, and several students. These informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, where participants were chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives—namely, their experience, role, and understanding of bullying and character education in the school context.

Secondary data was gathered from relevant books, scientific journals, articles, and previous research findings that support the study's theoretical and contextual foundation. These sources were used to triangulate the findings and enrich the analysis. To obtain the data, the researcher used several data collection techniques, namely:

1. Interviews with key stakeholders to gain insight into their roles, perspectives, and strategies for integrity, character education, and bullying prevention.
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2. Observations of teaching and learning activities, peer interactions, and school climate to understand students' actual behavior and social dynamics.
3. Documentation includes lesson plans, school rules, and reports on disciplinary actions or student character-building programs.

For data analysis, the researcher applied the Miles and Huberman model (1994), which consists of three interconnected components:

- Data reduction: Selecting, simplifying, and focusing the raw data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents by filtering out irrelevant information and highlighting the data directly related to the role of PPKn teachers in strengthening students' integrity.
- Data display: Presenting the processed data in narrative form and matrices to facilitate pattern recognition, relationship identification, and thematic analysis.
- Conclusion drawing and verification: Interpreting the meanings of emerging patterns, checking their validity through triangulation of sources, and drawing conclusions aligned with the research focus.

This analytical process was carried out continuously throughout the study, allowing for flexible interpretation and deeper understanding of the social reality under investigation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 RESULT

Understanding the Role of Teachers in Character Formation

The role of teachers in character formation, particularly in strengthening the value of integrity, is central in the school environment. At SMK Karya Bakti, Batu Bara Regency, Civics (PPKn) teachers are responsible for transferring civic knowledge and active agents in shaping student character. As described by Mrs. Ayu, a PPKn teacher interviewed in this study, her subject serves as a vital tool for instilling national values and moral behavior. The focus of her instruction is not limited to theory; instead, it centers on applying values such as honesty, responsibility, and justice in students' daily behavior.

Teachers are also expected to be role models. According to Mrs. Ayu, the key to successful character education lies in demonstration: showing students what integrity looks like in practice. She consciously adopts honest, fair, and consistent behavior in her interactions with students, believing values are more effectively internalized through example than instruction alone.

Character Education Methods Implemented by PPKn Teachers

To embed integrity into students' character, various instructional strategies were employed. These included group discussions, case studies, role-play, problem-based learning, and self-reflection. For instance, students were asked to analyze real-life bullying cases, engage in empathy-building activities through role play, and reflect on their actions at the end of lessons. These participatory methods allow students to relate ethical concepts to authentic experiences, fostering a more profound moral understanding.

In addition, students were encouraged to express their opinions in safe classroom environments where respect and tolerance were emphasized. The teacher provided

practical examples from daily life, particularly highlighting how bullying contradicts the values upheld in Pancasila and the Constitution. This approach aims not only to increase awareness but also to strengthen internal motivation for ethical behavior.

The Guidance Counselor's Role in Supporting Integrity

Complementing the PPKn teacher's efforts, the guidance and counseling (BK) teacher played a critical role in supporting students' emotional and social development. In interviews, the BK teacher explained that one of his core responsibilities was recognizing and addressing early signs of aggressive behavior. Through one-on-one counseling and group sessions, students were taught to manage emotions, develop empathy, and take responsibility for their actions.

The BK teacher emphasized a reflective approach rather than punishment. When bullying behavior is identified, the student involved is reprimanded and guided to reflect on the consequences of their actions. This method promotes behavioral change through awareness and personal growth, not fear.

Factors That Contribute to Bullying

The study found that bullying at school arises from a combination of personal, social, and environmental factors. Lack of warmth, unclear discipline, and permissive or authoritarian parenting styles can lead to aggressive tendencies within the family context. Students exposed to domestic violence or emotional neglect are more prone to display bullying behavior in school.

Media influence also plays a significant role. Teenagers frequently exposed to violent content or unethical behavior on social media platforms often mimic what they see. Many students were found to engage in online bullying through derogatory comments or threatening messages, which sometimes escalated into real-life conflict.

Peer group pressure is another major factor. Adolescents often conform to group norms to gain acceptance or avoid being isolated. In this dynamic, some students bully others to elevate their social standing or avoid being targeted themselves. Ethnic, physical, or economic differences further increase the risk of victimization.

Finally, the school environment itself can either mitigate or exacerbate bullying. Schools that fail to enforce clear behavioral norms or tolerate aggression inadvertently normalize such conduct. Conversely, schools that cultivate a culture of respect and empathy help suppress bullying and create safe spaces for students.

Strategies to Prevent Bullying Through Character Education

Based on interviews and observations, several effective strategies were implemented at SMK Karya Bakti. These include thematic learning on anti-bullying values, reflective assignments, and moral discussions. Students were encouraged to voice their concerns, express empathy, and support needy peers. Teachers and school staff coordinated efforts through regular meetings and collaborative intervention plans involving BK and homeroom teachers.

Through these efforts, students developed a stronger understanding of the consequences of bullying, not only for victims but also for perpetrators and bystanders. Activities such as moral reflection, article writing, and group counseling helped build a collective awareness that bullying is not merely a school discipline issue but a moral violation.

However, some challenges were also noted. A significant number of students were reluctant to report bullying incidents, fearing backlash or shame. Additionally, not all teachers had the necessary training to handle such cases sensitively, and some parents remained uninvolved or unaware of their children's school behavior. Time constraints within the national curriculum also limited the depth and frequency of character-based instruction.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Bullying Prevention

The findings revealed several supporting factors that enabled teachers to handle bullying effectively. Open communication between teachers and students, regular integration of integrity values into PPKn lessons, collaboration among school personnel, and a proactive moral education climate were all key enablers. In some cases, students began to show significant behavioral improvement, and classroom environments became more inclusive.

Conversely, inhibiting factors included difficulties in monitoring students outside the school, limited teacher awareness about the more profound impact of bullying, and the silence of victims who felt too afraid or ashamed to speak up. These challenges underscore the need for ongoing teacher training, stronger family-school partnerships, and systemic support from educational authorities.

The Broader Impact of Bullying and the Need for Ethical Schools

Bullying affects more than just the direct victim. It disrupts the school climate, impacts bystanders psychologically, and can create long-term trauma for perpetrators as well. In extreme cases, the consequences can be severe, including mental health issues, school dropout, and self-harm. These realities stress the urgent need for schools to punish bullying behavior and proactively cultivate ethical, empathetic, and inclusive environments.

Anti-bullying initiatives must be paired with values-based education that empowers students to recognize injustice, defend those who are vulnerable, and practice moral courage in their daily lives. Through the leadership of PPKn and BK teachers, character education rooted in integrity becomes a preventive measure—not just a reactive response—to bullying.

3.2 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal the significant and multifaceted role that teachers, particularly Civics (PPKn) and Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers, play in strengthening students' integrity to prevent bullying within the school environment. At SMK Karya Bakti, Batu Bara Regency, it was found that the PPKn teacher actively

positioned herself as an academic instructor and a moral guide. Her approach to character education strongly emphasized instilling values such as honesty, justice, and responsibility, which together form the core of integrity. She consistently demonstrated these values in her interactions with students, reinforcing the belief that character is best taught through example.

Using various participatory teaching methods, including group discussions, case studies, role-playing, self-reflection, and problem-based learning, the PPKn teacher created a learning atmosphere where ethical concepts could be internalized. For instance, students were encouraged to analyze real-life bullying cases and reflect on their behavior, fostering empathy and critical moral reasoning. The learning environment was designed to be safe and inclusive, allowing students to express their opinions while learning to respect differing perspectives. These strategies effectively bridge the gap between theory and practice, particularly in helping students understand the social and ethical consequences of bullying.

In addition to the efforts of the PPKn teacher, the BK teacher also played a crucial role in supporting students' emotional development. Through individual and group counseling sessions, the BK teacher identified early signs of aggression or deviant behavior and addressed them using a reflective approach. Rather than focusing solely on discipline, the BK teacher guided students to understand the consequences of their actions and encouraged them to make changes based on personal awareness and responsibility. This method promoted behavioral transformation driven not by fear of punishment but internal motivation.

The study also revealed several contributing factors to bullying behavior, including personal, familial, social, and environmental influences. Students who experienced a lack of affection at home, unclear boundaries, or exposure to violence—either physical or verbal—were more likely to exhibit bullying tendencies. Parenting styles, especially authoritarian or overly permissive approaches, were also linked to aggressive behavior. Furthermore, the influence of mass media, particularly social media, was shown to play a role in shaping students' perceptions of acceptable behavior, often normalizing ridicule, harassment, or verbal abuse. Peer group dynamics contributed as well, as some students engaged in bullying to gain social acceptance or avoid isolation. Within the school environment itself, the absence of explicit behavioral norms and weak enforcement contributed to the normalization of bullying in some cases.

In response to these challenges, SMK Karya Bakti implemented various strategies to prevent bullying, many of which were directly tied to character education. These included moral discussions, reflective assignments, and awareness-raising activities integrated into the PPKn curriculum. Teachers and school staff worked collaboratively to detect and respond to bullying incidents, creating intervention plans emphasizing empathy, responsibility, and mutual support. The students, in turn, began to show greater awareness of the moral and emotional impact of bullying, both for victims and for the broader school community.

However, the study also found several challenges that hindered the effectiveness of bullying prevention efforts. Many students were hesitant to report incidents of bullying,

either out of fear, shame, or a sense of hopelessness. Additionally, not all teachers had received sufficient training in conflict resolution or emotional support, which limited their ability to respond appropriately. Parental involvement also varied, with some parents unaware of their children's school behavior or reluctant to engage with the school. Furthermore, limited time within the formal curriculum often prevented teachers from further exploring character education.

Despite these limitations, several supporting factors contributed to the success of the school's anti-bullying efforts. Open and trusting communication between teachers and students allowed early identification of behavioral problems, and the regular integration of integrity-related themes into the PPKn lessons reinforced values consistently across contexts. Collaboration among teachers, counselors, and school leadership helped create a unified front against bullying. Students began to exhibit more positive behavior, and the school climate gradually shifted toward a more respectful and inclusive one.

The findings demonstrate that bullying prevention must go beyond punishment and disciplinary procedures. It requires a holistic approach grounded in ethical education, emotional support, and consistent moral leadership from teachers. When character education is delivered with sincerity and modeled daily through the actions of educators, it becomes a powerful tool in shaping students into individuals who understand right from wrong and are committed to acting with integrity. Through the leadership of PPKn and BK teachers, SMK Karya Bakti has developed a school culture that rejects bullying and uplifts ethical behavior as the foundation of student development.

Several previous studies have laid the groundwork for understanding the strategic role of Civics teachers in preventing bullying through character education. These studies collectively emphasize the importance of integrity as a core value and the role of educators as both moral instructors and role models in the school environment.

Other studies highlighted the significance of Civics teachers in conducting intensive character guidance as a preventative effort against bullying in schools. Their research found that PPKn teachers play an active role in delivering academic content and shaping students' attitudes through structured moral instruction. Teachers are seen as capable of reducing the incidence of bullying by incorporating values-based education and maintaining a close relationship with students. This aligns with the current research focus, which places PPKn teachers at the center of character development, particularly in fostering the value of integrity [21], [22], [23].

Similarly, Saadatul examined the dual function of Civics teachers as motivators and mediators in addressing student bullying behavior. According to this study, PPKn teachers are instrumental in instilling social values and ethics through classroom interaction and facilitating student conflict resolution. The research emphasized the role of teachers in helping students reflect on their behavior and understand the emotional and moral consequences of bullying. This supports the present study's approach, where reflective learning methods are used to raise awareness about the harmful impacts of bullying and promote empathy and justice among students [24], [25], [26].

On a more theoretical level, Thomas Lickona, a pioneer in character education, argued that true moral development consists of three interconnected dimensions: moral

knowing, feeling, and moral action. In his book *Educating for Character*, Lickona emphasized that schools must intentionally approach character education by embedding ethical values into the curriculum. His framework validates the teaching strategies adopted by PPKn teachers, such as role-playing, group discussions, and moral reflection, which are designed to activate both cognitive and emotional responses in students. This theoretical foundation strengthens the rationale for integrating character education—especially integrity—into Civics instruction to prevent bullying.

The relevance of character development during adolescence was also explored by Santrock [27], who focused on how moral education contributes to student behavior regulation. Santrock's work emphasized that adolescence is a critical period during which young people form their identities and internalize social norms. He concluded that structured moral education delivered by teachers can significantly reduce deviant behaviors, including aggression and bullying. His findings support the need for schools to provide consistent and meaningful moral guidance through formal subjects such as Civics, which is consistent with the objectives of the present research.

Lastly, Priyatna [28] examined school-based anti-bullying programs and emphasized the importance of teachers' involvement and school policy in shaping a safe and inclusive learning environment. The study concluded that teachers must react to bullying and proactively build a culture of respect and responsibility through character-building programs. This supports the findings of the current study, in which Civics teachers are shown to collaborate with guidance counselors and other staff in addressing bullying both preventively and responsively.

In summary, these five studies consistently point to the critical role of teachers—particularly those responsible for moral and civic education—in shaping students' character and preventing bullying through cultivating values such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility. The present study builds upon these findings by focusing on the value of integrity and examining how PPKn teachers at SMK Karya Bakti implement character education in real classroom settings as a targeted intervention against bullying behavior.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that PPKn (Civics and Citizenship Education) teachers hold a strategic position in shaping students' character, particularly in cultivating integrity as a preventive measure against bullying. Their role goes beyond delivering cognitive knowledge; they serve as moral educators who consistently instill values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and discipline within their teaching practices.

The formation of integrity is embedded in various learning strategies such as group discussions, case analyses, reflective value exploration, and role modeling. These approaches have proven effective in promoting ethical behavior and discouraging bullying. Furthermore, Civics teachers contribute to shaping students' moral awareness by helping them understand the consequences of bullying and the importance of fostering a respectful and inclusive school climate.

The success of this character-building initiative is also supported by strong collaboration among PPKn teachers, guidance counselors, homeroom teachers, and other educators. Through joint efforts, schools can build an environment that reinforces integrity and encourages students to uphold positive social norms.

However, this study is limited to the perspective of teachers within a single vocational school and does not explore the perceptions or experiences of students directly. Additionally, the research provides only a cross-sectional view without tracking long-term behavioral outcomes. Future studies should include student voices better to understand the impact of integrity-based character education. Longitudinal research could also be beneficial in assessing the sustainability of anti-bullying efforts over time.

In conclusion, PPKn teachers play a vital and irreplaceable role in bullying prevention by embedding integrity values into formal instruction and daily interaction. Their contributions are not only pedagogical but also deeply ethical, and their efforts—when supported by the wider school community—can create a safe, respectful, and morally grounded educational environment.

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