



MAGIC FOUR-WORD HABIT MODELS FOR PREVENTING BULLYING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

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In Indonesia, up to 50% of youngsters have been bullied. Among 78 countries, Indonesia is in the top five for the greatest rate of bullying in high schools. The goal of this study is to discover whether a four-word habituation model influences bullying behavior in elementary school students. A quasi-experimental pre-post test design with a control group was the method employed in the research design. The 44 participants in total, 22 for the intervention group and 22 for the control group, were selected using a purposive sampling procedure. The habituation model is presented using a poster with four magical words and the method of singing four magic phrases. For two weeks, the intervention and control groups received the same course of treatment twice a week. The instrument included a respondent's characteristic sheet, a respectful questionnaire sheet, a poster for four-word magic, and a song about magic. The independent t-test was applied for data analysis. The habituation model of four magic words produced results with a p-value ($0,013 < 0,05$). It was expected that kids would be able to use the habit model of the four magic words in their daily lives.

Keywords: Bullying, Behavior, Habits, Magic Words

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a term that is no longer unfamiliar to the Indonesian public. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in 2021, there were 42,540 confirmed cases of bullying worldwide, with 2,790 cases occurring in Asia. Bullying incidents have been reported in 40 countries, including Indonesia, which has the highest number of bullying incidents among ASEAN countries, with a rate of 84% (Novitasari et al., 2023).

Bullying frequently occurs, especially in school environments. Data from the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2021 revealed that out of 100,000 children in 18 countries, 67% had experienced bullying: 25% were bullied because of their physical appearance, 25% because of their gender, 25% due to their race, and the rest for other reasons (Yosep et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, 50% of children have experienced bullying. Many bullying victims are affected by several factors, including school environment, family, and peer relationships. Children and adolescents tend to express their emotional turmoil in negative ways—one of which is bullying—if these three environments are not supportive (Yosep et al., 2022). Indonesia ranks fifth out of 78 countries with the highest prevalence of bullying in schools. Based on this information, it is clear that special attention must be given to bullying in schools. Therefore, schools must serve as the front line in preventing the spread of bullying behavior (Umar, 2022).

Bengkulu Province is one of the provinces with the highest rate of bullying among 8 other provinces in Indonesia (Anugra, 2020). Data from the Center for Education and Empowerment of Women and Children in Bengkulu City in 2021 reported 49 cases of bullying among school-aged children, occurring in both play and school environments. Around 79% of bullying cases go unreported, especially in elementary schools, where cases are not reported to teachers or parents (Novitasari et al., 2023). Based on an interview with an official from the Department of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control, and Family Planning (P3AP2KB) in Bengkulu City, in 2023, there were 47 bullying cases reported in school environments. The bullying was mostly verbal, such as mocking a child's social status, their parents' occupation, or their physical appearance. These incidents have led to some children requiring psychological counseling.

According to Cloroso, as cited in Pahlevi et al. (2021), bullying is an act done intentionally to hurt or threaten, based on a power imbalance and persistent oppression. It is usually carried out by individuals or groups who are stronger, irresponsible, and often repeat the behavior with a sense of enjoyment. According to Armitage (2021), factors that influence bullying include gender, age, physical appearance, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, school environment, and parental education levels. The impacts of bullying, according to Carter and Spencer as cited in Emilda (2022), include: stress in victims, a negative self-image due to feeling unaccepted by peers, the possibility of victims becoming future bullies and developing more aggressive behavior, mental health disorders such as anxiety, permanent physical disability, and even death in cases of physical bullying. It may also lead to social withdrawal, emotional disturbances, and suicidal thoughts.

Given the many negative effects of bullying, it is crucial to raise awareness among various parties, including parents, teachers, healthcare workers (as educators), the community, and the children themselves (Yosep et al., 2022). One preventive effort that can be made is character education, which includes teaching children to practice using four “magic words”. A study titled “Analysis of Decline in Character Education from the Perspective of Ki Hadjar Dewantara” found that the erosion of habits

involving the use of three magic words (“sorry,” “please,” and “thank you”) contributes to the increasing presence of bullying among children and adolescents. Therefore, it is necessary to reintroduce the habit of saying these magic words in family, school, and community environments (Mulyana et al., 2022).

A study conducted by Aulia et al. (2022) on the implementation of three magic words (“sorry,” “please,” and “thank you”) in shaping character among students at SDIT Al-Azhar showed positive impacts. The children became more patient (able to control emotions and forgive during conflicts), more helpful, and more grateful when receiving something by saying “thank you.” Based on this study, the researchers became interested in teaching elementary school children to practice using four magic words and in examining the impact of these words on bullying behavior, which is still commonly found in schools.

This kind of practice is referred to as the habituation model. A simple habituation model involves teaching children to regularly say the four magic words. This practice can be carried out by singing songs about the four magic words and putting up posters in the classroom corners so that children can see them every day. Singing is one of the methods used to deliver messages. Through singing, children can build self-confidence, enhance creativity, and better understand the material, and it can be done anywhere and anytime (Stevanie et al., 2020).

The habituation model of four magic words using singing will be applied to first-grade elementary school students. First graders belong to the lower grade group and fall within the early childhood age range of 6–8 years old. Early childhood is a short but very crucial period in a child's development. It is the right time to provide character education. The habituation model of four magic words using the singing method is especially effective when given to lower-grade students (Kawuryan, 2022).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is a quantitative study. The method used is quasi-experimental with a pre-post test with a control group design. The population of this study consisted of first-grade students from SD Negeri 38 and SD Negeri 44 in Bengkulu City. A total of 44 students were selected as samples using a purposive sampling technique. The sample was divided into an intervention group and a control group, with 22 students in each group.

The intervention group received treatment in the form of singing the four magic words song and exposure to a poster of the four magic words, while the control group was only given the treatment of singing the four magic words song.

The research instruments included a questionnaire on polite speech behavior, which had passed validity and reliability tests, and an observation sheet containing respondent characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, parents' education, occupation, and income).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Respondent Characteristics

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Group		p-value
	Intervention	Control	
Age			
Mean	7,09	7,14	
Min	6	6	0,320
Max	8	8	
SD	0,526	0,468	
CI	6,86-7,32	6,93-7,34	
Sex			
Male			
Female	9(40,9%) 13(59,1%)	12(54,5%) 10(45,5%)	0,365
Ethnicity			
Serawai	4(18,2%)	8(36,4%)	
Lembak	2(9,1%)	3(13,6%)	0,600
Rejang	5(22,7%)	4(18,2%)	
Minang	5(22,7%)	4(18,2%)	
Jawa	6(27,3%)	3(13,6%)	
Parent Education			
Elementary school	1(4,5%)	4(18,2%)	
Junior High School	1(4,5%)	4(18,2%)	0,194
Senior High School	15(68,2%)	11(50%)	
Bachelor	5(22,7%)	3(13,6%)	
Pekerjaan Orang tua			
Civil Servant	0	1(4,5%)	
Army/Police	3(13,6%)	3(13,6%)	,440
Enterpreneur	3(13,6%)	4(18,2%)	
Private servant	6(27,3%)	10(45,5%)	
Laborer	6(27,3%)	2(9,1%)	
Others			
Parental Income			
≥2.500.000	7(31,8%)	12(54,5%)	
<2.500.000	15(68,2%)	10(45,5%)	,128

Based on Table 1 above, the average age of children in the intervention group was 7.09 years, with a standard deviation of 0.256. From the interval estimation, it can be concluded with 95% confidence that the average age of respondents is between 6.86 and 7.32 years. More than half of the children were female (59.1%). Nearly one-third of the children were of Javanese ethnicity (27%). More than half of the students' parents had a senior high school level of education (68.2%). Nearly one-third of the parents worked as laborers or housewives (27.3%). More than half of the parents had a monthly income of less than IDR 2,500,000 (68.2%).

Meanwhile, the analysis of the control group showed that the average age of respondents was 7.14 years, with a standard deviation of 0.468. The interval estimation suggests that with 95% confidence, the average age of respondents ranges between 6.93 and 7.34 years. More than half of the children were male (54%). Nearly one-third of the students were of Serawai ethnicity (36.4%). Half of the students' parents had completed senior high school (SMA) (50%). Nearly half of the parents worked as laborers (45.5%). More than half of the parents (54%) had a monthly income of more than IDR 2,500,000

Overview of the Habituation of Using the Four Magic Words (Sorry, Please, Thank You, and Excuse Me) After the Intervention

Table 2. Overview of the Habituation of Using the Four Magic Words

Habit	Mean	SD	Sig(2-tailed)
Say Apology("Maaf")			
Intervention	6,82	1,259	0,001
Control	5,36	1,329	
Say Please("Tolong")			
Intervention	6,55	1,371	0,037
Control	5,77	0,973	
Say Thank you("Terimakasih")			
Intervention	6,64	1,364	0,74
Control	5,91	1,269	
Say Excuse("Permisi")			
Intervention	6,45	1,057	0,60
Control	5,77	1,270	

Based on the table above, the results of the paired t-test show that in the intervention group, the p-value was $0.000 \leq \alpha 0.05$, which means there is a significant difference in behavior scores before and after the intervention. Meanwhile, in the control group, the p-value was $0.001 \leq \alpha 0.05$, which also indicates a significant difference in behavior scores before and after the intervention.

The difference in average behavioral scores between the intervention group and the control group

Table 3. Difference in average behavioral values

Group	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention		<i>p</i> -value
	Min-Max	Mean± SD	Min-Max	Mean± SD	
Intervention	50-95	66,09±11.237	61-95	75,55±8,980	0,000
Control	43-73	61,60±7,479	61-82	69,95±5,907	0,001

Based on the table above, the results of the paired t-test in the intervention group show a p-value of $0.000 \leq \alpha < 0.05$, which indicates a significant difference in behavior scores before and after the intervention. Meanwhile, in the control group, the p-value is $0.001 \leq \alpha < 0.05$, which also indicates a significant difference in behavior scores before and after the intervention.

The influence of the four magic words habituation model on preventing bullying behavior in elementary school-aged children.

Table 4. The influence of the four magic words habituation model

Group	n	Mean	SD	Sig(2-tailed)
Intervention	22	75,55	8,980	0,013
Control	22	69,68	5,694	

Based on the results of statistical analysis using the Independent T-Test, a p-value of $0.013 \leq \alpha < 0.05$ was obtained. This indicates a significant difference in the average behavior scores between the intervention group and the control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, meaning that there is an effect of the Four Magic Words Habituation Model on the Prevention of Bullying Behavior in Elementary School Children in Bengkulu City in 2024.

The study results show that the average age of respondents in the intervention group was 7.09 years, while in the control group, the average age was 7.14 years. According to Kawuryan (2022), children in the 6–8-year-old range are considered early childhood, which is a brief yet critical period in development and an ideal time to instill character education, such as in this study, where children were taught the habituation model of using the four magic words (sorry, please, thank you, and excuse me).

In terms of gender, the intervention group consisted mostly of female students, while the control group was predominantly male students. Gender can indirectly influence whether a child experiences

or engages in bullying. However, the type of bullying differs between boys and girls—girls are more likely to experience verbal bullying, while boys are more often subjected to physical bullying, and boys are generally more frequent victims. This is in line with research by Rohman (2020), which found that of 81 respondents, 60% of bullying victims and perpetrators were male, while 32% were female. Ni'mah (2024) also reported that male students experience more bullying than female students across all education levels.

Regarding ethnic background, most students in the intervention group were Javanese, while in the control group, the majority were Serawai. However, the difference in numbers was not significant compared to students of Lembak, Rejang, and Minangkabau descent in both schools. A study by Demmrich & Akgül (2020) in Turkey stated that ethnic minorities are more vulnerable to becoming bullying victims.

In terms of parental education, most parents in the intervention group had completed senior high school (68.2%), and in the control group, 50% had the same level. Research by Horoz et al. (2022) concluded that parents with lower educational backgrounds tend to lack effective parenting strategies, and lower education is linked to the development of maladaptive behavior in children.

For parental occupation, in both groups, many parents worked as laborers. The majority of parents in the intervention group had a monthly income of less than IDR 2,500,000 (68.2%), while in the control group, the majority earned IDR 2,500,000 or more (54.5%). Socioeconomic status is a key factor influencing bullying behavior. This is supported by Laini (2021), who found that socioeconomic status and parental involvement can affect children's bullying behavior. Children from lower socioeconomic families with high parental involvement can be better controlled and prevented from bullying. However, these children may also become targets of bullying from peers of higher social status, as children from wealthier backgrounds often feel more dominant.

The study found a significant effect of the habituation model of the four magic words on the use of "sorry" and "please", with $p\text{-value} \leq \alpha 0.05$. However, there was no significant effect on the use of "thank you" and "excuse me", with $p\text{-value} \geq \alpha 0.05$. According to Averina & Widagda (2021), parents play an important role in moral development through the habitual use of the words sorry, please, and thank you. Factors influencing this habituation include parental support and a positive environment, while parental busyness and lack of attention are inhibiting factors.

The average behavior score in the intervention group before treatment was 66.09, and after treatment, it increased to 75.55. In the control group, the average score before treatment was 61.68, and 69.68 after. This aligns with Dianti (2024), who found that the magic words song method (please, sorry, and thank you) is effective in shaping children's character. A study by Setiawan (2024) concluded that poster media can help prevent and reduce bullying behavior, as shown by improved student understanding of bullying, from 30% in the first cycle to 65% in the second.

The findings of this study show a significant effect of the four magic words habituation model on preventing bullying behavior in elementary school 38 and 44 in Bengkulu City ($p = 0.013$). This is consistent with research by Nst et al. (2023) at the elementary school Medan Sunggal, where the implementation of the four magic words was effective through presentations, animated videos, and songs. According to Aprily (2023), character development in children can be instilled by habitually using the four magic words. In a study by Mawarda & Ummaya (2024), after two sessions of teaching three magic words, students showed increased knowledge in using them properly.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, the intervention group that received both the four magic words song and the poster showed a greater increase in average behavior scores than the control group, which only received the song. Statistical analysis confirms that the four magic words habituation model significantly influences the prevention of bullying behavior among elementary school-aged children. It is recommended that the habit of using the four magic words be consistently encouraged among students at school, at home, and within the broader community.

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