

**CONTRIBUTION OF SIPENALI PROGRAM IN CHARACTER  
STRENGTHENING AT SDN BEGAWAT 01, KABUPATEN TEGAL**

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*Received 22 October 2025, Accepted 27 April 2026, Published 30 April 2026*

**Abstract**

Bullying in elementary schools is a manifestation of a serious character crisis, marked by the weakening of core values such as empathy and responsibility. This qualitative research aims to deeply analyze the contribution of the Sipelali Program (System for Bullying Prevention and Management Actions) as a holistic intervention model in the effort to strengthen student character to prevent and manage bullying at SDN Begawat 01. The study's focus is to investigate the extent to which this program successfully cultivates four fundamental characters: empathy, responsibility, courage, and mutual respect. Using an instrumental case study approach with data triangulation techniques (interviews, observation, and documentation) involving the school principal, teachers, students, and parents, the findings show that the implementation of Sipelali successfully and significantly fostered a positive character foundation. The program's contribution is realized through four systematic components: socialization, a reporting application, coaching sessions, and an Anti-Bullying Week. Specifically, the program succeeded in significantly cultivating empathy, courage, responsibility, and mutual respect among students, establishing a new social norm of positive interaction. This success is underpinned by the strong commitment of school leadership and the active participation of the entire community. Despite facing challenges in the form of negative influences from digital media and the need for intensive collaboration with parents, the Sipelali

Program proves to be a fundamental and effective solution in shaping a safe and positive school environment built on character. This research recommends Sipenali as a replicable model for sustainable character strengthening in elementary schools.

**Keywords:** Sipenali Program, Character Strengthening, Bullying, Empathy, Responsibility, Elementary School

### **Abstrak**

Perundungan di sekolah dasar merupakan manifestasi dari krisis karakter yang serius, ditandai dengan melemahnya nilai-nilai inti seperti empati dan tanggung jawab. Penelitian kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara mendalam kontribusi Program Sipenali (Sistem Tindakan Pencegahan dan Pengelolaan Perundungan) sebagai model intervensi holistik dalam upaya memperkuat karakter siswa untuk mencegah dan mengelola perundungan di SDN Begawat 01. Fokus penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki sejauh mana program ini berhasil menumbuhkan empat karakter fundamental: empati, tanggung jawab, keberanian, dan saling menghormati. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus instrumental dengan teknik triangulasi data (wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi) yang melibatkan kepala sekolah, guru, siswa, dan orang tua, temuan menunjukkan bahwa implementasi Sipenali berhasil dan secara signifikan menumbuhkan fondasi karakter yang positif. Kontribusi program ini diwujudkan melalui empat komponen sistematis: sosialisasi, aplikasi pelaporan, sesi pembinaan, dan Pekan Anti-Perundungan. Secara khusus, program ini berhasil secara signifikan menumbuhkan empati, keberanian, tanggung jawab, dan saling menghormati di antara siswa, serta membangun norma sosial baru tentang interaksi positif. Keberhasilan ini didukung oleh komitmen kuat kepemimpinan sekolah dan partisipasi aktif seluruh komunitas. Meskipun menghadapi tantangan berupa pengaruh negatif dari media digital dan kebutuhan akan kolaborasi intensif dengan orang tua, Program Sipenali terbukti menjadi solusi mendasar dan efektif dalam membentuk lingkungan sekolah yang aman dan positif yang dibangun di atas karakter. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan Sipenali sebagai model yang dapat direplikasi untuk penguatan karakter berkelanjutan di sekolah dasar.

**Kata kunci:** Program Sipenali, Penguatan Karakter, Perundungan, Empati, Tanggung Jawab, Sekolah Dasar

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1. The Urgency of the Bullying Crisis in Indonesia's Educational Landscape**

Education is the foundation of a nation's civilization, aiming not only to enhance intellectual life but also to shape the morals and character of future generations. Schools, as formal educational institutions, should be safe and conducive spaces for students to grow and develop. However, this ideal is facing a serious threat from a destructive and deep rooted phenomenon: bullying. Instead of being a refuge, the school environment often becomes an arena where some students are forced to endure insults, mockery, and violence repeatedly, often without a safe place to report. The phenomenon of bullying is no longer just an incidental issue; it has become a serious global problem. Data from UNESCO indicates that about one in three students worldwide experiences bullying at school. The situation in Indonesia shows an even higher level of urgency. Results from the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey revealed the startling fact that 41.1% of students in

Indonesia have experienced bullying. This figure is significantly above the average for developed countries in the OECD. This high prevalence confirms that bullying has become one of the "three great sins" in Indonesian education, demanding a comprehensive and urgent response.

The impact of bullying is multidimensional and fundamentally destructive. Psychologically, victims of bullying not only suffer long-term trauma but also experience decreased self-confidence, mental health disorders, clinical depression, and anxiety. In the educational context, this condition creates a non-conducive learning atmosphere, hinders academic potential, and reduces concentration in studies. Tragically, this impact does not stop at psychological distress; it has claimed physical health and lives. For instance, a stark warning for the nation occurred in Bekasi, where a 6th-grade elementary school student had to have his left leg amputated after being tripped by a friend at school, eventually passing away after being diagnosed with bone cancer due to the injury (KPAI, 2023). This case, supported by data from the Federation of Indonesian Teachers Unions (FSGI) which found that 23% of bullying cases recorded in 2023 occurred at the elementary level, confirms that bullying is not ordinary delinquency. It is a real threat that can derail the potential and positive character development of students.

Fundamentally, bullying is a tangible manifestation of a character crisis. Bullying behavior, which is an aggressive act carried out intentionally and repeatedly by a stronger party against a weaker one, is rooted in the failure to internalize essential moral values. When character education fails to be internalized, various deviant behaviors emerge. For example, verbal and physical bullying directly demonstrate a weakness in the character of empathy and mutual respect. Social or relational bullying operates manipulatively, reflecting a weak sense of social responsibility. Meanwhile, cyberbullying shows a weakness in the courage to be openly accountable for actions in the digital era. From this mapping, four core characters—Empathy, Responsibility, Mutual Respect, and Courage—emerge as the most fundamental foundations for creating a safe school environment.

Various handling efforts have been made, but existing interventions often only scratch the surface. Previous studies have explored different strategies, such as developing a technology-based "Change Agent" E-Module (Ibrahim et al., 2025), emphasizing the central role of teachers in mediation and Civics (PKN) learning (Astuti, 2023; Fadil, 2023), and examining the effectiveness of integrated Character Education Strengthening (PPK) programs (Jumarnis et al., 2023; Wulandari, 2022). Despite being contributory, these approaches still leave significant research gaps. Existing strategies are heavily dependent on adult intervention, lacking a model that systematically empowers students to report independently and safely. Furthermore, innovations tend to focus partially on preventive educational media and have not yet holistically integrated a structured restorative intervention mechanism for both victims and perpetrators.

To fill these gaps and address the root cause of the character crisis, this research introduces the Sipenali Program (System for Bullying Prevention and Management Actions) as a holistic intervention model focused on strengthening character to eradicate bullying in schools. The novelty of Sipenali lies in its comprehensive, systematic, and technology-based approach, which integrates four main components: Anti-Bullying Socialization, a Sipenali Application for reporting, Restorative Coaching, and an Anti-Bullying Week. Based on the 2024 Education Report Card indicating unsatisfactory student character education at SDN Begawat 01, this location serves as a highly relevant locus. Therefore, the main objective of

this article is to deeply analyze the contribution of the Sipelali Program in strengthening four core student characters—empathy, responsibility, mutual respect, and courage—as a sustainable character strengthening model. The success of this program in strengthening character needs to be studied to evaluate its effectiveness as a holistic intervention model, which directly aligns with the objective of exploring its contribution to bullying prevention as reflected in the title.

## 2. Intervention Gaps and the Urgency of a Holistic Model

Although the urgency of character education is recognized, implementation in the field still faces many challenges. Various previous studies have explored different strategies. Research by Ibrahim et al. (2025) focused on developing a technology-based "Change Agent" E-Module. Other studies by Astuti (2023) and Fadil (2023) emphasized the central role of teachers in mediation and Civics (PKN) learning. Meanwhile, Jumarnis et al. (2023) and Wulandari (2022) examined the effectiveness of the integrated Character Education Strengthening (PPK) program.

Despite being contributory, these approaches still leave significant research gaps:

- a. Dependence on Adult Intervention: Existing strategies are still heavily dependent on the proactivity and intervention of teachers. There is no model that systematically empowers students to report independently, safely, and effectively.
- b. Partial Focus (Prevention vs. Handling): Innovations tend to focus on educational media for prevention (preventive), but have not yet addressed a structured post-incident handling system (curative/ restorative).
- c. Lack of a Holistic, Technology-Based Model: There is no model that holistically integrates educational pillars, a child-friendly technology-based reporting system, and structured restorative intervention mechanisms for victims and perpetrators into one unified system.

## 3. The Proposed Solution: The Sipelali Program as a Character Strengthening Model

To fill these gaps and address the root cause of the character crisis, this research analyzes the implementation of the Sipelali Program (System for Bullying Prevention and Management Actions). This program is designed as an intervention model focused on strengthening character to eradicate bullying in schools. Sipelali is based on the diagnosis that a character crisis is the root problem, thus the prevention and handling of bullying become the *result* of successful character strengthening.

The strength of this program lies in its comprehensive, systematic, and technology-based approach, manifested in four main components, each with a specific character-strengthening goal:

- a. Anti-Bullying Socialization: A proactive educational component to build collective awareness. The goal is to cultivate empathy (by explaining the destructive impact of bullying) and strengthen mutual respect as a basic norm of interaction.
- b. Sipelali Application: A technology-based innovation designed to build students' courage and social responsibility. By facilitating safe and anonymous reporting, this application empowers victims and bystanders to act bravely against injustice, overcoming the fear that has long been a barrier.

- c. Coaching (Mentoring): A direct intervention (restorative) aimed at character reformation. For perpetrators, coaching focuses on building responsibility for their actions and cultivating empathy. For victims, the goal is to heal trauma and rebuild courage and resilience.
- d. Anti-Bullying Week: The pinnacle of efforts to institutionalize positive values. Through creative and educational activities, this program actively instills and strengthens mutual respect and tolerance within the school culture.

#### **4. Context and Article Objectives**

This research was conducted using a qualitative case study design at SDN Begawat 01, Bumijawa District, Tegal Regency. This location was not chosen without reason. Based on initial observations, it was found that student interactions were still colored by verbal mockery considered "ordinary jokes". More importantly, the 2024 Education Report Card for SDN Begawat 01 specifically showed unsatisfactory results on the aspect of student character education. This combination of field findings and report data indicates that SDN Begawat 01 is a highly relevant locus for implementing and analyzing a character-strengthening intervention model.

Although the original thesis examined the program's implementation broadly, this article has a sharper focus. Based on the existing research questions, the main objective of this article is to deeply analyze the contribution of the Sipelali Program in strengthening four core student characters: empathy, responsibility, mutual respect, and courage. This research will dissect how each program component qualitatively influences the understanding, attitudes, and behaviors of students related to these four character values, based on the perceptions and participation of students, teachers, the principal, and parents

#### **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen because it aims to deeply understand a social phenomenon in this case, the implementation of the Sipelali Program in its natural setting. The case study design allows the researcher to conduct an intensive, detailed, and in-depth investigation of a program within a real life context, and is highly appropriate for answering "how" and "why" questions about a program's contribution to change. This research is an instrumental single case study, centered on one unique case: the implementation of the Sipelali Program at SDN Begawat 01. This case was chosen not only to understand the case itself but also to gain a broader understanding of a larger issue: how an intervention program can effectively serve as a character-strengthening model at the elementary school level.

This research is focused on analyzing in depth the contribution of the Sipelali Program to the strengthening of four core student characters: empathy, responsibility, courage, and mutual respect. To understand this contribution holistically, the study also describes the program's implementation process, identifies supporting and inhibiting factors, and examines the perceptions and participation of stakeholders. This research was conducted at SDN Begawat 01, Bumijawa District, Tegal Regency, during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year.

The selection of subjects or informants used non-probability sampling, with the primary technique being purposive sampling. Informants were selected based on specific considerations or criteria relevant to the research focus, namely individuals deemed to have the most understanding of and direct involvement in the program's implementation. The study

utilized 15 key informants, consisting of 1 School Principal, 4 Classroom Teachers (including the Islamic Education Teacher and 6th Grade Teacher), 6 Students (from various grades actively involved in the program), and 4 Parents (Wali Murid). This technique was supported by snowball sampling, where the researcher asked for recommendations from initial informants to identify other individuals who might have unique and in-depth insights related to the program.

To obtain rich and in-depth data, this study used triangulation of data collection techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted using a flexible semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide specifically targeted questions regarding stakeholders' understanding of bullying before and after the program, changes in students' responses to peer conflicts, and perceptions of the reporting application's utility. Second, participant observation was employed. The researcher was involved in several program activities to directly observe the implementation process, interactions among school members, and behavioral changes reflecting character development. The observation focused on specific behavioral indicators, such as the frequency of students interrupting others, instances of spontaneous apologies, and the level of student participation during the Anti-Bullying Week activities. Third, documentation involved the study and analysis of relevant documents, including the SDN Begawat 01 Education Report Card, Sipelali Program planning and evaluation documents, and visual documentation of program activities.

Data validity (Qualitative Validity) was tested to ensure the research findings are trustworthy, primarily using source triangulation and technique triangulation. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive data analysis model from Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of this qualitative research confirm that the implementation of the Sipelali Program (System for Bullying Prevention and Management Actions) at SDN Begawat 01 significantly contributed to the strengthening of student character. The program not only acts as a reactive response to incidents but fundamentally instills character values that form the foundation for bullying prevention. This discussion will focus on two main findings: (1) The implementation process of Sipelali as a foundation for character strengthening ; and (2) An in-depth analysis of the program's contribution to the four core characters: empathy, courage, responsibility, and mutual respect.

### **1. The Implementation of the Sipelali Program as a Foundation for Character Strengthening**

The implementation of the Sipelali Program at SDN Begawat 01 was designed as a direct response to the "uncontrolled" bullying condition and the weakness of student character education. The main goal of the program is to strengthen student character (empathy, responsibility, mutual respect, and courage), which is seen as a fundamental solution to create a safe and positive school environment.

This successful implementation was supported by the program's holistic structure and the active participation of all stakeholders:

- a. Systematic Program Components: The program was executed through four main integrated components: Anti-Bullying Socialization, a digital Reporting Application, Coaching sessions, and an Anti-Bullying Week. These activities were designed to be

interactive, such as socialization using videos and digital questionnaires, and an Anti-Bullying Week filled with creative poster and slogan competitions.

- b. The Central Role of Teachers: Teachers played a crucial role as the main pillars of the program. This role was manifested in various forms: The Islamic Education Teacher (Mr. Magfur) proactively inserted religious teachings about tolerance and compassion into coaching sessions. The 6th Grade Teacher (Mrs. Wiwik) acted as a responsive coach and part of the case-handling team. Meanwhile, other teachers (like Mrs. Ima, 3rd grade) focused on daily character building within the classroom.
- c. Parental Involvement: The program involved parents from the beginning through socialization in formal meetings and WhatsApp groups. They were not only given information but were also equipped with knowledge to detect signs of bullying and given access to the reporting application.

## 2. Contribution of the Sipenali Program to Strengthening Core Characters

The research findings show a tangible contribution of the Sipenali Program in fostering and strengthening the four core characters that were the focus of this study.

- a. Strengthening Empathy The Sipenali Program successfully cultivated empathy by changing students' perspectives on bullying. Findings show the program made children "more sensitive". Mr. Magfur, the Islamic Education Teacher, explained that students who "used to think mocking was just joking, now realize it hurts their friends' feelings".
  - 1) Mechanism: This change was achieved through a "moral feeling" approach. Teachers actively invited students to "imagine if they were the ones being mocked". Furthermore, coaching sessions were highly insightful for students regarding "how severe the impact of bullying is on a friend's mental health".
  - 2) Behavioral Manifestation (Moral Acting): This contribution manifested in tangible behavioral changes. Kinanty, a 2nd-grade student, stated, "Yes, now if I see a friend cry, I don't laugh along. I try to ask, why are you sad?". This is evidence of "moral acting" also confirmed by the researcher's observation, where 2nd and 4th-grade students were seen "immediately comforting and accompanying" a crying friend. This indicates that empathy has been internalized and has become a habit (habituation).
- b. Strengthening Courage The program significantly increased students' courage to act against injustice. Mrs. Wiwik (6th Grade Teacher) observed that "Many children who used to just stay silent if they saw their friends being bothered, now they have the courage to act".
  - 1) Mechanism: This increase in courage was driven by the sense of security created by the program. The existence of a safe reporting mechanism (via the application and responsive teachers) successfully overcame the "bystander passivity" that often occurs due to fear of retaliation.
  - 2) Behavioral Manifestation: This courage manifested in two forms:
    - a) Social Courage: Students dared to "intervene, or at least report directly to me or another teacher".
    - b) Moral Courage: Bullying perpetrators also showed the courage to "admit their mistakes" and apologize.

- 3) Additionally, classroom observations showed students were more courageous in expressing their opinions, feeling safe from mockery, which created a supportive learning climate.
- c. Strengthening Responsibility Sipenali successfully instilled the character of responsibility, which is the awareness to understand and accept the consequences of one's actions.
  - 1) Mechanism: The coaching approach in this program is restorative, not merely punitive. Sessions focus on helping perpetrators understand the root problem and the impact of their actions, thereby fostering self-awareness.
  - 2) Behavioral Manifestation: This character of responsibility was clearly manifested in the field findings:
    - a) Spontaneous Action: The researcher observed during a PE class that a student who accidentally hit a friend's face with a ball "spontaneously and reflexively apologized," instead of laughing. This shows an internalized value of responsibility.
    - b) Perpetrator's Behavior: Mrs. Wiwik confirmed that after coaching, "many children who were previously perpetrators, now bravely admit their mistakes and apologize to the teacher".
- d. Strengthening Mutual Respect The most significant finding was Sipenali's success in creating a "new social norm" based on mutual respect. The Principal, Mr. Setiawan, directly felt this impact, stating that the school environment now feels "calmer (adem)" and cases of mockery between students "are rarely heard".
  - 1) Mechanism: The program successfully cultivated a positive character, in line with the philosophical foundation of Pancasila character education, specifically "a just and civilized humanity".
  - 2) Behavioral Manifestation: This new norm materialized in daily interactions.
    - a) In the Classroom: Observations showed students "respect turns to speak more and do not interrupt friends".
    - b) Among Students: A "collective agreement" was formed among students to maintain this norm. Kinanty (Grade 2) testified, "Now friends don't like to mock. If someone is about to mock, someone else will immediately say, 'You can't mock!'".
    - c) Collective Awareness: Students in higher grades, like Akhdan (Grade 5), explicitly stated, "We in 5th grade understand better that we have to respect each other as friends".

### 3. Stakeholder Synergy as the Key to Success

The contribution of the Sipenali Program to character strengthening cannot be separated from the positive perceptions and active participation of all stakeholders.

- a. School Leadership: The Principal had a very positive perception, viewing the program as an effective solution to the previously "uncontrolled" bullying problem. Full support and a "non-rejection" attitude from the leadership provided legitimacy and created a supportive climate for teachers to innovate.
- b. Teacher Participation: Teachers were the "main pillars" who consistently instilled values and collaborated synergistically (e.g., integration of religious values by the Islamic Education Teacher and case handling by the Class Teacher).

- c. Student Enthusiasm: Students showed very positive perceptions and high participation. They found the "Anti-Bullying Week" activities (poster contests, chants) meaningful. Their proactive participation even manifested in the proposal to form "Sipenali Ambassadors" from among the students, indicating a sense of ownership of the program.
- d. Parental Support: Parents viewed this program as a "much-needed innovation". They saw positive character changes in their children at home, such as becoming more independent, sensitive, and willing to share. They also proactively suggested "regular meetings or parenting seminars" to strengthen collaboration.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, the Sipenali Program at SDN Begawat 01 serves as an effective, holistic intervention model that significantly strengthens student character as a foundational effort against bullying. The program successfully addressed the root cause of aggressive behavior by systematically cultivating four core values. It fostered empathy, transforming students into active comforters rather than passive bystanders; increased courage, enabling safe reporting and moral accountability; instilled responsibility, evidenced by spontaneous restorative actions; and established mutual respect as a new, protective social norm. The synergy among school leadership, teachers, students, and parents proved crucial to this success.

The implications of this study suggest that anti-bullying strategies must move beyond punitive measures and adult-dependent interventions. The integration of technology-assisted safe reporting, restorative coaching, and continuous character habituation provides a replicable framework for elementary education. Future research should evaluate the longitudinal impact of the Sipenali Program and explore enhanced parent-school collaboration models to counter external negative influences, particularly from digital media.

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