

Counseling Strategies to Reduce Bullying Behavior in School: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

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Background: Bullying behavior in schools remains a serious issue that negatively affects students' psychological well-being, social relationships, and academic achievement. School guidance and counseling services are considered strategic interventions for preventing and reducing bullying by fostering empathy, emotional regulation, and prosocial skills. *Aim:* This study aims to conduct a systematic literature review of counseling strategies used to reduce bullying behavior in school settings. *Method:* A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The reviewed articles were obtained from Sinta-indexed journals, Scopus, and Google Scholar, and published between 2019 and 2024. A total of 20 empirical studies met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed thematically. *Result and Discussions:* The findings indicate that cognitive-behavioral counseling, empathy-based group counseling, and integrative school-wide counseling programs are effective in reducing aggressive behavior and enhancing students' social-emotional competencies. Furthermore, the effectiveness of counseling interventions is strongly influenced by counselor competence, institutional support, and program sustainability. *Conclusions:* These findings provide evidence-based recommendations for school counselors and educational institutions to design comprehensive, sustainable bullying prevention programs.

Keywords: School Guidance And Counseling, Bullying Behavior, Counseling Strategies, Systematic Literature Review



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INTRODUCTION

Bullying behavior in schools remains a serious and persistent problem that negatively affects students' psychological well-being, social relationships, and academic achievement. Recent studies indicate that bullying is not merely an isolated act of aggression, but a repeated behavior involving an imbalance of power between perpetrators and victims, which can manifest in physical, verbal, relational, and psychological forms (Wardah et al., 2024). The increasing complexity of social interactions among adolescents, including peer pressure and digital communication, has further intensified the prevalence and impact of bullying in school environments.

Empirical evidence from the last five years shows that students who experience bullying are at a higher risk of developing anxiety, low self-esteem, emotional distress, and decreased academic engagement. Victims of bullying often demonstrate reduced self-efficacy and difficulties in social adjustment, while perpetrators tend to exhibit poor emotional regulation and aggressive behavioral patterns (Dewy & Maulidah, 2025). These findings suggest that bullying should be understood as a multidimensional problem requiring

psychological, social, and educational interventions rather than solely disciplinary measures.

In response to this issue, schools are increasingly expected to play an active role in preventing and addressing bullying behavior. Guidance and counseling services are recognized as a strategic component within the school system for supporting students' social-emotional development and behavioral change. Counseling interventions provide structured opportunities for students to develop self-awareness, empathy, and emotional control, which are essential for reducing aggressive behavior and promoting healthy peer relationships (Kusumawati & Widodo, 2022).

Various counseling approaches have been implemented to reduce bullying behavior in school settings. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)-based counseling has been widely applied to help students identify and modify maladaptive thoughts and behaviors associated with aggression. Recent studies have demonstrated that CBT-based individual and group counseling interventions are effective in reducing bullying behavior and improving emotional regulation among adolescents (Maulany, 2024; Suhaili, 2024). In addition, group counseling techniques incorporating role-playing and peer interaction have been shown to enhance empathy, social skills,

and self-control, which are critical protective factors against bullying behavior (Rohmah, 2025).

Beyond individual and group interventions, recent literature highlights the importance of empathy-based and school-wide counseling programs. Empathy training has been found to significantly reduce bullying behavior by increasing students' ability to understand others' emotional experiences and fostering prosocial attitudes (Hikmat, 2025). Furthermore, integrative counseling programs that involve collaboration among counselors, teachers, and school administrators tend to produce more sustainable outcomes in bullying prevention, as they address both individual behavior and the broader school climate (Wardah et al., 2024).

Despite the growing number of studies examining counseling interventions for bullying, existing research remains fragmented, with many studies focusing on single approaches or specific contexts. There is still a lack of systematic synthesis that integrates recent empirical findings across counseling strategies and implementation levels. Therefore, this study aims to conduct a systematic literature review of counseling strategies to reduce bullying behavior in schools, synthesizing empirical evidence published between 2019 and 2024. The findings are expected to provide comprehensive, evidence-based guidance for school counselors, educators, and policymakers in designing effective, sustainable bullying prevention programs.

METHOD

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) design to comprehensively synthesize recent empirical evidence on counseling strategies used to reduce bullying behavior in school settings. The review process was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, ensuring transparency and methodological rigor in the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies (Bledsoe et al., 2019). The research procedures involved defining research questions, conducting systematic database searches, applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, extracting relevant data, and synthesizing findings thematically. This approach was chosen to integrate fragmented findings from previous studies and provide evidence-based recommendations for school counseling practices (Snyder, 2019).

The research design was a systematic literature review, focusing on peer-reviewed empirical studies published between 2019 and 2024. This design enabled a structured, replicable synthesis of research findings on counseling interventions for bullying prevention and reduction in school contexts. The review emphasized recent studies to ensure relevance to current educational and counseling practices (Bledsoe et al., 2019).

In this study, the term *participants* refers to the research articles included in the review rather than individual human subjects. The final sample comprised 20 empirical articles examining counseling strategies to address bullying among

elementary, secondary, and vocational school students. These studies involved various participant groups in their original research, including students, school counselors, and teachers, providing a comprehensive perspective on counseling interventions in educational settings (Wardah et al., 2024).

The primary research instrument was a systematic review protocol that guided the literature search, selection, and analysis. In addition, a data extraction sheet was used to systematically record key information from each included study, such as author(s), publication year, country, research design, counseling approach, sample characteristics, and main findings. This instrument ensured consistency and accuracy in data collection across all reviewed articles (Bannuru et al., 2019).

Data analysis used thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and key themes related to counseling strategies and their effectiveness in reducing bullying behavior. The analysis followed stages of familiarization with the data, coding, theme development, and synthesis, as recommended in recent qualitative research methodology literature (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Through this process, counseling strategies were categorized into psychological, social-emotional, and systemic dimensions, allowing for an integrative interpretation of findings across studies.

The literature search was conducted using several academic databases, including Sinta-indexed journals, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Keywords such as *school counseling*, *bullying intervention*, *group counseling*, and *cognitive behavioral counseling* were used in various combinations. Database usage was restricted to peer-reviewed articles published within the last five years to ensure data relevance and quality (Bledsoe et al., 2019).

As this study was based solely on secondary data from published research, no direct ethical approval was required. However, ethical considerations were maintained by ensuring accurate citation of all sources and avoiding data misrepresentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic literature review indicate that counseling interventions implemented in school settings consistently reduce bullying behavior and improve students' social-emotional competencies. Across the reviewed studies, three dominant categories of counseling strategies emerged: cognitive-behavioral counseling, group counseling with experiential techniques, and empathy-based or school-wide counseling programs. Empirical evidence shows that these approaches are associated with decreased aggressive behavior, improved emotional regulation, enhanced empathy, and better peer relationships among students (Maulany, 2024; Suhaili, 2024; Wardah et al., 2024).

Several studies reported measurable behavioral changes following counseling interventions. For instance, CBT-based counseling was found to significantly reduce anger expression

and aggressive tendencies among bullying perpetrators, while increasing self-control and adaptive coping skills (Dewy & Maulidah, 2025; Handayani, 2022). Group counseling interventions that incorporated role-playing and peer interaction demonstrated improvements in students' empathy, social skills, and conflict resolution abilities (Prasetyo, 2022; Rohmah, 2025). Furthermore, school-wide counseling

programs that integrated collaboration among counselors, teachers, and school administrators showed more sustainable reductions in bullying incidents and improvements in overall school climate (Wardah et al., 2024; Wardani, 2024).

To summarize the dominant findings, a concise synthesis of counseling strategies and outcomes is presented in Table I.

Table I. Summary of Counseling Strategies and Key Outcomes

Counseling Strategy	Main Focus	Key Outcomes
CBT-based counseling	Cognitive restructuring & emotional control	Reduced aggression, improved self-regulation
Group counseling (role-play)	Peer interaction & empathy	Increased empathy, social skills
School-wide counseling	Systemic prevention	Sustainable bullying reduction

The results of this review reinforce the theoretical assumption that bullying behavior is a multidimensional phenomenon that requires integrated psychological and educational interventions. Cognitive-behavioral counseling aligns with contemporary counseling theory, which emphasizes the role of maladaptive cognitions in aggressive behavior. The reviewed studies demonstrate that modifying irrational beliefs and enhancing emotional regulation significantly reduce bullying behavior, supporting recent empirical findings in school counseling contexts (Dewy & Maulidah, 2025; Maulany, 2024).

Group counseling approaches, particularly those using role-playing and experiential learning, were found to be effective in fostering empathy and prosocial behavior. These findings are consistent with recent research highlighting the importance of social learning processes and peer interaction in adolescent behavioral change (Kusumawati & Widodo, 2022; Rohmah, 2025). By allowing students to experience different social perspectives, group counseling facilitates emotional awareness and moral reflection, which are critical in preventing recurrent bullying behavior.

Importantly, this review highlights the growing emphasis on systemic and school-wide counseling interventions. Studies conducted within the last five years indicate that counseling strategies embedded within a supportive school climate yield more sustainable outcomes than isolated interventions (Wardah et al., 2024; Yandri, 2023). This finding extends previous research by demonstrating that counselor competence, institutional commitment, and interprofessional collaboration mediate the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs (Nugraheni, 2023; Pasmawati, 2025).

The novelty of this review lies in its integrative synthesis of recent empirical findings across psychological, social-emotional, and systemic dimensions. Unlike previous studies that focused on single counseling approaches, this review demonstrates that the most effective bullying prevention efforts combine individual counseling, group-based interventions, and school-wide strategies. This integrative perspective offers new insights for school counselors and

policymakers in designing comprehensive, sustainable anti-bullying programs.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review concludes that counseling strategies play a crucial and effective role in reducing bullying behavior in school settings. The synthesis of recent empirical studies demonstrates that cognitive-behavioral counseling, group counseling with experiential techniques, and integrative school-wide counseling programs consistently contribute to positive changes in students' behavior and social-emotional development. These counseling approaches help students develop emotional regulation, empathy, self-awareness, and constructive interpersonal skills, which are essential for preventing and addressing bullying. The findings confirm that bullying is a multidimensional issue that requires comprehensive interventions targeting not only individual behavior but also the broader school environment. By integrating psychological, social-emotional, and systemic perspectives, counseling interventions provide a holistic and sustainable approach to bullying prevention in schools.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that schools strengthen the implementation of comprehensive counseling programs that combine individual, group, and school-wide interventions. School counselors should be supported through continuous professional development to enhance their competence in applying evidence-based counseling strategies. In addition, collaboration among counselors, teachers, school leaders, and parents should be strengthened to foster a supportive school climate that discourages bullying. Future research is encouraged to employ experimental or longitudinal designs to examine the long-term effectiveness of integrative counseling models and to explore contextual factors, such as cultural background and digital environments, that may influence the success of bullying prevention efforts in schools.

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