

Original Article

Implementing the KiVA Program to Prevent Bullying: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study in Indonesian Elementary Schools



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ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Submit : August 23, 2025
Accepted : October 30, 2025
Published : November 7, 2025

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Citation:

M.Noer, R., Agusthia, M., Dasaryandi, K. R., & Wulandari, Y. . (2025). Implementing the KiVA Program to Prevent Bullying: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study in Indonesian Elementary Schools. *Journal of Applied Nursing and Health*, 7(3), 561–581. <https://doi.org/10.55018/janh.v7i3.400>

ABSTRACT

Background: Bullying in Indonesian schools remains a major issue affecting children's psychological, social, and academic well-being. Reports from KPAI and UNICEF indicate that prevention at the elementary level remains inadequate. While most studies focus on punishment and counseling, research on community-based programs such as the KiVA Method—promoting awareness, empathy, and conflict management—is limited, underscoring the need to explore their application in Indonesia's socio-cultural context.

Methods: This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the experiences of teachers, counselors, students, and parents in implementing the KiVA Method. Participants were selected purposively, including those actively involved in or experienced with the program for at least one semester. Individuals who were not actively participating or had communication barriers were excluded. Of 30 invited participants, 25 met the criteria and agreed to join, while 5 declined due to time, unwillingness, or health issues. Data were gathered through 45–60-minute interviews and field observations, with official approval from the Education Office and the school. Thematic analysis using NVivo 12 followed COREQ guidelines to ensure research transparency and credibility.

Results: Of the 25 participants, consisting of 8 teachers, 4 counselors, 10 students, and 3 parents, it was found that implementing the KiVA Method increased school community awareness of bullying behavior, strengthened social empathy, and encouraged positive student interactions. Teachers and counselors reported a significant decrease in bullying incidents, while students felt safer and more supported in an inclusive learning environment. Thematic analysis revealed four main themes: increased social-emotional literacy, changes in classroom communication patterns, strengthening teachers' roles as empathetic facilitators, and parental support for implementing anti-bullying values.

Conclusion: The research results indicate that the KiVA Method positively contributes to building collective awareness of bullying, strengthening empathy among school members, and creating a supportive and inclusive learning climate. However, the program's long-term effectiveness requires further research with a longitudinal design and a cross-school comparative approach to assess its sustainability in Indonesia's primary education context.

Keywords: Bullying; Empathy; School Health Services; Elementary School Students; Qualitative Research



Implications for Practice:

- The KiVA Method equips teachers and educational staff with practical tools to identify early signs of bullying and apply systematic prevention strategies, helping to create a safer and more conducive learning environment through proactive classroom management and early intervention.
- The program promotes active student involvement in fostering a culture of mutual respect, encouraging them to become agents of change, develop empathy, and discourage bullying behaviors while emphasizing character education as an integral part of the school curriculum.
- Implementing the KiVA Method in a limited setting or low- and middle-income country like Indonesia demonstrates its adaptability to resource-constrained environments and provides guidance for school administrators and policymakers to develop sustainable, evidence-based bullying prevention while strengthening collaboration among teachers, students, and parents.

Introduction

Bullying in schools is a crucial issue in modern education, encompassing physical, verbal, social, and digital violence, with serious psychological and academic impacts. In Indonesia, although awareness of bullying is increasing, there is still a gap in the implementation of structured, evidence-based prevention strategies. The KiVA program, grounded in social learning theory and empathy building, has proven effective in various countries in reducing bullying through awareness education and conflict management approaches. However, its effectiveness in the Indonesian socio-cultural context has not been widely explored ([Salimi et al., 2021](#)). Therefore, this study aims to understand the experiences of students, teachers, and counselors in implementing the KiVA Program in Indonesian elementary schools through a qualitative phenomenological approach to provide a theoretical and practical basis for more contextual bullying prevention strategies ([Axford et al., 2020](#)).

Schools have the primary responsibility to create a safe and inclusive environment, yet in Indonesia, bullying prevention efforts tend to be reactive, limited to imposing sanctions after an incident occurs. This approach fails to address the root causes or prevent bullying sustainably. Yet, international literature emphasizes the importance of proactive, evidence-based strategies that emphasize early detection,

character building, and the development of social-emotional skills through the involvement of the entire school community ([Kalina et al., 2024](#)). One relevant framework is the KiVA Program, which is grounded in social learning theory and fosters empathy to reduce bullying through collective awareness and conflict management. Despite its effectiveness in various countries, research on the application of KiVA in the Indonesian socio-cultural context remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to explore the experiences of students, teachers, and counselors implementing the KiVA Program in Indonesian elementary schools to assess its potential as a contextual and sustainable bullying prevention strategy ([Suratno et al., 2022](#)).

The KiVA method, developed in Finland, is a social-emotional education-based intervention that emphasizes strengthening empathy, social awareness, and conflict resolution skills as a bullying prevention strategy. This program has been proven effective in creating an inclusive school culture and supporting the active involvement of the entire school community in reducing aggressive behavior ([Yanti & Allo, 2025](#)). However, bullying prevention efforts in Indonesia still focus largely on a reactive approach, while research on the application of the KiVA framework in local socio-cultural contexts is still very limited. Based on social learning theory and the

development of social-emotional skills, this study aims to explore the experiences of teachers, counselors, and students in implementing the KiVA Program in Indonesian elementary schools, in order to assess its potential as a contextually relevant bullying prevention strategy ([Borualogo et al., 2022](#)).

Various international studies have shown that consistent implementation of the KiVA Method can significantly reduce bullying rates through the integration of character education and strengthening social-emotional competencies. However, the program's effectiveness is heavily influenced by the school's social, cultural, and organizational context, so positive results in other countries may not be immediately applicable in Indonesia ([Yosep et al., 2022](#)). In practice, differences in norms, values, and interaction patterns in Indonesian schools create a research gap, particularly regarding the adaptation of intervention strategies to suit local needs. Based on theories of social learning and social-emotional skills development, this study aims to explore the implementation of the KiVA Method in Indonesian elementary schools, by assessing how teachers, counselors, and students experience it, and the extent to which the program is relevant in building a safe, inclusive school climate that supports students' social-emotional well-being ([Tas'adi et al., 2023](#)).

Elementary school is a critical phase in a child's social-emotional development, when interpersonal skills, self-identity, and emotional regulation begin to form. Bullying at this stage not only has short-term impacts but also has the potential to foster maladaptive behavior patterns that persist into adulthood. In Indonesia, preventive interventions are still limited and tend to be reactive, thus failing to effectively support children's early developmental needs ([Hussein et al., 2020](#)). The KiVA Program framework, grounded in

social learning theory and empathy-building, offers a systematic approach to understanding risks, developing preventative mechanisms, and fostering a safe and inclusive school climate. Therefore, this study aims to explore the implementation of the KiVA Program in Indonesian elementary schools through a qualitative phenomenological approach to assess its relevance and potential adaptation in local contexts ([Suriah et al., 2024](#)).

Bullying can be explained through the perspective of developmental psychology and social-emotional theory, which emphasize the role of social interactions in the formation of children's identity and emotional skills. According to Piaget, children begin to understand others' perspectives, while Erikson emphasized the importance of social experiences in the formation of self-confidence and identity. Victims of bullying are at risk of experiencing disruptions in these developments, including low self-esteem and potential long-term emotional problems ([A Malek, 2024](#)). In Indonesia, prevention strategies are still limited and tend to be reactive, thus not optimally supporting children's developmental needs. The KiVA program, grounded in social learning theory and empathy-enhancing strategies, offers a systematic framework for bullying prevention while simultaneously strengthening social-emotional skills. Therefore, this study aims to explore the implementation of the KiVA program in Indonesian elementary schools to assess its relevance and potential adaptation to local contexts ([Zahid, 2024](#)).

A qualitative method was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of children's experiences and social interactions during the KiVA program. Interviews, observations, and document analysis were used to understand bullying management strategies, classroom

dynamics, and program success factors ([Abdurrohim et al., 2024](#)). In Indonesia, research on bullying prevention is still scarce and generally fails to consider the comprehensive socio-cultural dimensions of schools. Yet, social-emotional development theory emphasizes that effective interventions must align with social norms, school values, and student relationships. Therefore, this study aims to examine the implementation of the KiVA Program in Indonesian elementary schools to identify patterns, barriers, and best practices, thereby providing contextual recommendations for more relevant anti-bullying interventions ([Sukmawati et al., 2024](#)).

A qualitative approach is considered relevant for understanding the complex relationships between teachers, students, and parents in building a safe and inclusive school culture. Factors such as teacher engagement, parent participation, and the norms and values that shape the school climate contribute significantly to the effectiveness of anti-bullying interventions ([Ilmi et al., 2024](#)). However, in Indonesia, research on bullying prevention is generally limited to descriptive aspects, without in-depth examination of the psychosocial mechanisms underlying student behavior. However, theories of character education, child developmental psychology, and social-emotional intervention theory emphasize that the success of prevention programs depends heavily on the integration of school values and the participation of all stakeholders. Therefore, this study aims to examine the implementation of the KiVA Program in Indonesian elementary schools by highlighting the contributions of teachers, students, and parents, while also exploring the social dynamics that influence the program's success, thereby generating practical recommendations tailored to the local context ([Mohamed Ahmed Omar et al., 2024](#)).

The KiVA method emphasizes strengthening character education and developing empathy as key strategies for bullying prevention through the development of social-emotional skills, such as self-regulation, positive communication, and the ability to understand others' perspectives. This theoretical framework demonstrates that bullying prevention is not simply about suppressing negative behavior, but also about building children's emotional and social capacities in a sustainable manner ([Eko Setiawan & Sri Wahyuni, 2024](#)). However, in Indonesia, research on anti-bullying interventions is still limited, particularly regarding the implementation of developmental theory-based programs and character education in elementary school contexts. Therefore, this study aims to examine the implementation of the KiVA Program in Indonesian elementary schools by exploring the experiences of students, teachers, and parents, to understand how this strategy can be adapted to local social and cultural norms to create a safe and inclusive school environment ([Amani et al., 2024](#)).

In many countries, education policies have emphasized the importance of character development, student safety, and well-being through regulations integrated into the school curriculum. Programs like KiVA align well with this policy framework, providing practical strategies for teachers and encouraging parental and school community involvement in creating a safe and inclusive learning environment ([Zhou et al., 2024](#)). However, in Indonesia, anti-bullying policies are still limited to the normative level and rarely followed by scientifically tested, program-based implementation in elementary schools. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the implementation of the KiVA Program in a local context, to assess how this approach can support education policy while strengthening pedagogical practices and

stakeholder participation in bullying prevention ([Munifah et al., 2024](#)).

Beyond its practical value, this research contributes to the limited academic literature on anti-bullying interventions in Indonesia, particularly regarding the adaptation of international programs to local contexts. Most studies on bullying prevention have focused on global practices, while empirical research assessing the effectiveness of implementing evidence-based programs in Indonesian elementary schools is still rare ([Xiong, 2023](#)). This study places the KiVA Method within a theoretical framework of social-emotional interventions, focusing on contextual factors such as teacher support, parental involvement, and school culture. With this approach, the research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how adapting KiVA can strengthen education policies and practices in Indonesia, while also offering a theoretical and empirical basis for developing more effective, inclusive, and sustainable bullying prevention strategies ([Sainz & Martin-Moya, 2023](#)).

The results of this study are expected to provide practical recommendations for teachers, counselors, and school administrators in designing more systematic and sustainable bullying prevention strategies. Although various national regulations have emphasized the importance of character education and student safety, the implementation of evidence-based strategies in Indonesian elementary schools remains limited and inconsistent. Within the framework of social-emotional intervention theory, this study emphasizes the critical role of teacher training, parent involvement, and strengthening school culture as key factors in the successful adaptation of the KiVA Program. Therefore, this study aims to explore the experiences and dynamics of the program's implementation in the local

context, to provide a theoretical basis and empirical recommendations that can strengthen bullying prevention policies and practices in Indonesia ([Setiawan et al., 2023](#)).

This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the KiVA Program in preventing bullying in Indonesian elementary schools by highlighting the experiences of teachers, counselors, and students. Although national education regulations have emphasized the importance of bullying prevention, evidence-based intervention strategies are rarely consistently adapted in local contexts ([Faujian et al., 2025](#)). Based on a theoretical framework of social-emotional interventions, this study focuses on identifying factors that support and hinder implementation, including the role of teachers, parental involvement, school culture, and student social dynamics. Thus, this study not only fills an empirical gap in Indonesia but also provides theoretical and practical contributions to the development of more effective, inclusive, and sustainable prevention policies and programs ([Herkama et al., 2022](#)).

In Indonesia, bullying prevention efforts in elementary schools still face gaps due to the limited availability of evidence-based intervention models that are appropriate to local cultural contexts. The KiVA program, grounded in social-emotional intervention theory and school-community collaboration, offers a systematic framework for creating safe and inclusive learning environments ([Jonathan Trijadi & Novita Putri, 2025](#)). This study aims to explore the experiences of teachers, students, and parents in implementing the program, in order to understand the factors that support and hinder success, while also providing an empirical contribution to the development of more effective anti-bullying educational practices and policies in Indonesia ([Kawakita & Kanai, 2023](#)).

Methods

Study Design

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological design to deeply explore stakeholders' experiences, views, and understandings regarding implementing the KiVA Program in preventing bullying in elementary schools. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it is oriented towards understanding the meaning of participants' lived experiences as emphasized by Edmund Husserl through the principle of "zu den Sachen selbst" (returning to the phenomenon itself) to reveal the essence of authentic experience. Martin Heidegger's thinking expands on this foundation by emphasizing the concept of being-in-the-world or human existence in its social context, which is relevant to understanding the role of teachers, counselors, and students in building a bullying-free school culture. Alfred Schutz adds that social meaning is formed through everyday interactions, so KiVA practices need to be seen as a social phenomenon rooted in the dynamics of the school community. Meanwhile, Moustakas emphasizes the importance of phenomenological descriptions in uncovering the structure of experience, and van Manen highlights the reflective value of phenomenology as a pedagogical approach aimed at understanding human experience in the educational context. With this theoretical framework, the research focused on exploring the subjective and intersubjective meanings of stakeholder engagement, identifying supporting and inhibiting factors in KiVA implementation, and understanding the socio-emotional dynamics that developed during the program's implementation. All stages of the research, from planning and data collection to analysis and reporting, were conducted in accordance with the Consolidated

Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) qualitative reporting guidelines to ensure transparency, credibility, and validity of the findings ([Alviana et al., 2023](#)).

Research Team and Reflexivity

The research team for this study consisted of three academics with complementary backgrounds in elementary education, child developmental psychology, and qualitative research methodology. Two of the researchers are full-time lecturers in education and child psychology, while the other is a doctoral candidate focusing on phenomenology and thematic analysis in the context of elementary education. Before the study, no personal, professional, or hierarchical relationships existed between the researchers and the participants, including teachers, students, counselors, or school administrators, so interactions were conducted completely professionally. To ensure transparency and mitigate bias, the researchers applied the principle of reflexivity by maintaining a reflexive journal throughout the research phase to record assumptions, initial perceptions, and emotional responses that might influence data interpretation. Furthermore, the team conducted regular peer debriefings to test the consistency of data interpretation and maintain the objectivity of the analysis. An audit trail procedure was also implemented, systematically recording each step of the research, including methodological decisions, data reduction processes, and team discussions, to allow for independent traceability and verification of the analysis. This reflexive and auditive approach ensures that research results are based on credible empirical data, free from the researcher's personal bias, and can be scientifically accounted for ([Swastikaningsih et al., 2023](#)).

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of four main groups: teachers, school counselors, fourth- to sixth-grade elementary school students, and parents who had participated in the KiVA Program. Participant selection was conducted through purposive sampling to ensure the involvement of individuals with direct and relevant experience in program implementation. Inclusion criteria included: (1) teachers and counselors who had actively participated in the planning, implementation, or evaluation of the KiVA Program; and (2) students and parents who had participated in the program for at least one semester and were able to verbally reflect on their social experiences. Exclusion criteria applied to individuals who did not actively participate in program activities or students with communication barriers that could interfere with the interview process. The recruitment process was conducted collaboratively between the researchers and the KiVA Program coordinator at the school, who extended formal invitations to 30 potential participants. Of these, 25 individuals expressed their willingness and met the inclusion criteria, while 5 individuals declined due to time constraints (3 teachers), unwillingness to be interviewed (1 parent), and health conditions (1 student). Ultimately, the active participants consisted of 8 teachers, 4 counselors, 10 students, and 3 parents. All participants signed consent forms after receiving an explanation of the research objectives and procedures. No financial compensation was provided, but the school granted exemption from class hours to the interviewed students so that participation would not disrupt the teaching and learning process. This recruitment strategy was designed to ensure transparency, credibility, and depth of data, by involving participants with authentic experience with the implementation of the KiVA Program in

bullying prevention efforts in elementary schools ([Maryaeni et al., 2025](#)).

Data Collection

Data collection for this study was conducted during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year at two elementary schools in Indonesia that have implemented the KiVA Program. All research activities were conducted within the school environment to maintain the natural context and authenticity of participants' experiences. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with teachers, counselors, students, and school officials, focus group discussions with students, and direct observation of learning activities and the implementation of the bullying prevention program in the classroom. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, with an average duration of 45–60 minutes per session, using a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore participants' subjective experiences. Examples of questions asked included: "How do you understand the main objectives of the KiVA Program in this school?", "What challenges did you face in implementing it in the classroom?", "How has student behavior changed since the program was implemented?", and "To what extent has school and parental support influenced the program's success?". All interviews were recorded with the participants' written consent, then transcribed verbatim and double-checked to ensure accuracy. Member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review and confirm the transcripts and the researcher's initial interpretations to ensure the meanings aligned with their original experiences. Data saturation was reached after 22 individual interviews and two focus group discussions, during which no new themes emerged from the participants' narratives, and all thematic categories demonstrated consistent

repetition of meaning. Thus, the collected data were deemed sufficiently in-depth and representative to comprehensively describe the experience of implementing the KiVA Program in the context of bullying prevention in elementary schools ([Abou El yazied et al.](#), 2024).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted using a systematic and reflective thematic analysis approach to identify, organize, and interpret patterns of meaning that emerged from participants' experiences related to the implementation of the KiVA Program in preventing bullying in elementary schools. The analysis process was carried out through five main stages, namely: (1) verbatim transcription of all interview results and field observation notes, (2) repeated readings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the context of the data, (3) open coding to identify significant units of meaning, (4) grouping codes into subthemes through axial coding based on the interconnectedness of meaning, and (5) developing main themes through selective coding that represent the essence of participants' experiences. The choice of thematic analysis compared to traditional phenomenological approaches such as Colaizzi or van Manen was based on the research objective which not only focuses on describing the essence of individual experiences, but also on identifying thematic patterns across participants that illustrate the social-emotional dynamics in program implementation in the school context. Thus, thematic analysis is seen as more flexible and relevant for exploring variations in experiences while discovering universal themes related to changes in behavior and social interactions in elementary education environments. The analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 software to facilitate the process of

organizing, coding, and tracing relationships between data categories. Two independent researchers conducted the coding process separately to maintain objectivity, and any differences in interpretation were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. The validity of the findings was strengthened through peer debriefing with colleagues and triangulation between data sources (interviews, observations, and documents), while the analysis process was carried out iteratively with repeated revisions of themes until stability, depth, and credibility of the interpretations were achieved ([Bowes et al.](#), 2024).

Trustworthiness and Rigor

To ensure the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research results, a series of validation strategies were implemented, encompassing credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods, comparing data from interviews, observations, and school documents to ensure consistency of meaning, and through member checking, in which participants were given the opportunity to review transcripts and initial interpretations to ensure they aligned with their actual experiences. Dependability was strengthened through the development of a systematically documented audit trail, documenting all stages of the research, from planning and data collection to coding and final theme formation, allowing external parties to track the logic of the analysis. Additional validation was conducted through peer debriefing with two external researchers experienced in qualitative methodology and educational psychology, who provided critical feedback on data interpretations to test the consistency and accuracy of the analysis. Confirmability was maintained through the use of reflexive

journals to record the researchers' assumptions and reflections throughout the research process, as well as internal team discussions to minimize personal bias. Meanwhile, transferability is strengthened by presenting thick descriptions of the school context, participant characteristics, and the dynamics of KiVA Program implementation, so readers can assess the relevance and potential application of the findings to other similar educational contexts.

Ethical Consideration

This research has obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Awal Bros University, Pekanbaru, Indonesia, with approval number No. 025/UAB1.04/SPK-PPM/KL/04.2022, which confirms that all research procedures were carried out in accordance with the ethical principles of social and educational research. Furthermore, the Pekanbaru City Education Office and the school where the research was conducted officially granted permission to conduct the research. Written consent was obtained from teachers, counselors, and parents, while students provided consent based on an assent form written in simple language appropriate to their level of understanding. Before the data collection process began, the researcher explained in detail the purpose of the study, the implementation procedure, the participants' right to withdraw at any time without consequence, and the potential

benefits and minimal risks that may arise during participation. To maintain data confidentiality and security, each participant was assigned an anonymous identification code that was used in all transcripts, field notes, and research reports. Digital data were stored in encrypted files on the principal researcher's personal computer with double password protection, while physical copies, such as consent forms, were stored in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to the principal researcher. Anonymized interview transcripts were uploaded to the university's online repository with restricted access to support ethical audits, if necessary. The researchers ensured that all interviews and observations were conducted in a safe and comfortable environment, and that no psychological or social harm occurred to participants during their participation in the study ([Niken Yuniar Sari et al., 2024](#)).

Results

Table 1 describes the demographic characteristics of the study participants, consisting of teachers, counselors, students, and parents. Data include the number of participants (n), percentage (%), mean age with standard deviation (mean $\pm$ SD), age range, and gender distribution (M/F). Results indicate that students were the group with the largest number of participants, followed by teachers, counselors, and parents.

Tabel 1. Research Participant Demographics

Participants	n	%	Age (mean $\pm$ SD, range)	Gender (M/F)
Teacher	8	32	35 $\pm$ 4.2 (29–42)	3-May
Counselor	4	16	38 $\pm$ 3.5 (34–42)	1-Mar
Student	10	40	11 $\pm$ 0.9 (10–12)	5-May
Parent	3	12	40 $\pm$ 5.1 (35–45)	1-Feb
Total	25	100	–	–

Table 2. Impact of the KiVA Program on the Reduction of Bullying Cases

Role	Quotation
Teacher	"After KiVA, the children often remind their friends, 'Don't tease, that's not nice.' I can see real changes in how they respond to inappropriate classroom behavior."
Counselor	"I've noticed that many students now come directly to me if a friend is being bullied. They're no longer afraid to report it, and some even help to calm the victim."
Student	"I used to stay quiet when people made fun of me, but now my friends stand up for me. We've become more united and look out for each other so no one gets bullied anymore."
Parent	"My child told me that the school now has stricter rules and classmates are more caring. I feel relieved because the school environment has become more positive."

Findings indicate a significant decrease in bullying cases after implementing the KiVA Program (**Table 2**). Teachers and counselors reported that students were

more willing to confront peers who engaged in bullying behavior and showed empathy for the victims ([Sharma, 2024](#)).

Table 3. The KiVA Program and Patterns of Open and Inclusive Communication

Role	Quotation
Student	"If there's any bullying, I immediately report it to the teacher. Many of my friends also help. We feel braver because the teachers support us."
Teacher	"Students now prefer group discussions, and there are no more exclusive cliques. They learn to appreciate differences and express their opinions more openly."
Counselor	"The use of harsh language has decreased, and students are getting used to speaking politely. They seem more aware that the way they talk affects the classroom atmosphere."
Parent	"My child is now more open in sharing stories about school activities. He also often reminds his younger sibling to speak politely. I think this is a positive impact of the KiVA program."

The KiVA program encourages more open and inclusive communication patterns (**Table 3**). Students are more active in reporting cases, supporting victims, and

using more respectful language ([Garandeau et al., 2022](#)).

Table 4. Synergy Between Teachers and Counselors in the Implementation of the KiVA Program

Role	Quotation
Teacher	"I use role-playing activities to show the impact of bullying, and students become more understanding. Through these activities, they can directly experience what it feels like to be both the victim and the perpetrator."
Counselor	"We usually conduct small-group counseling sessions for students involved in bullying cases. Through this approach, we can help them understand the causes of their behavior and find solutions together."
Teacher	"Teachers and counselors collaborate closely, which makes this program feel more integrated. We often discuss the most appropriate intervention steps for each student."
Parent	"I've noticed that teachers and school counselors now coordinate more frequently. My child also feels more cared for because their approach seems more comprehensive."

Teachers act as facilitators of social-emotional learning through simulations and discussions, while counselors provide individual and group case support (**Table**

4). This synergy has proven crucial to KiVA's success ([Wibowo et al., 2022](#)).

Table 5. Barriers to the Implementation of the KiVA Program

Role	Quotation
Teacher	"One hour per week is not enough to cover all the modules. We often run out of time to discuss cases or conduct reflections with students."
Counselor	"Some children understand quickly, but others need repeated explanations. Differences in background and ability make the mentoring process more challenging."
Student	"I'm still confused—sometimes I don't know whether joking counts as bullying or not. Some of my friends say it's just a joke."
Parent	"In my opinion, the program duration is still too short. Some children may need more examples and practice to truly understand the meaning of respecting others."

Limited implementation time and varying levels of student understanding are major obstacles (Table 5). Some students

from diverse backgrounds still require additional guidance (Johander et al., 2021).

Table 6. Contribution of the KiVA Program to a Safe and Inclusive School Climate

Role	Quotation
Principal	"Parents now often attend school meetings about bullying. We regularly hold monthly discussion forums to talk about students' behavioral development."
Teacher	"The school environment feels more comfortable, and the children are more confident. They know that everyone, including teachers and parents, is ready to support them."
Parent	"I'm glad to have discussions with the school about ways to prevent bullying. Now we feel more involved in maintaining a comfortable environment for the children."
Student	"School feels safer now. If there's a problem, teachers and parents immediately help solve it without getting angry."

The KiVA program contributes to building a safer, more inclusive, and more parent-involved school climate (Table 6).

Discussions between stakeholders are becoming more regular (Young et al., 2022).

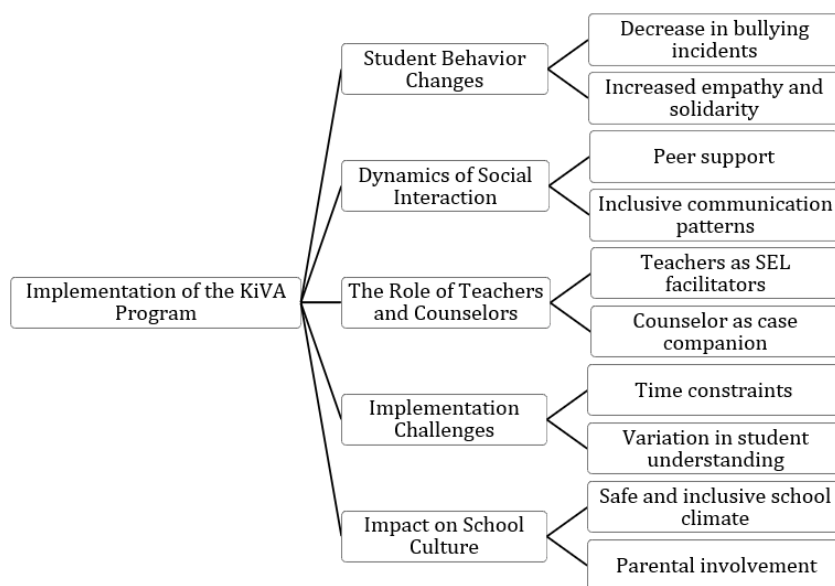


Figure 1. Code tree diagram (thematic structure)

The conceptual mapping of findings illustrates that the KiVA Program leads to a sequence of interconnected outcomes: changes in student behavior, improved social interaction dynamics, enhanced teacher and counselor support, recognition of implementation challenges, and the development of an inclusive school culture. This model demonstrates that the effectiveness of KiVA extends beyond individual students, fostering positive social relationships, empowering educators, and promoting a safer, more supportive school environment.

Discussion

The discussion of this study indicates that implementing the KiVA Program in elementary schools positively contributed positively to bullying prevention, with participants experiencing changes in student behavior, increased empathy, and creating a safer and more inclusive school climate. Although it cannot be claimed to be fully "proven effective" given the limited research context. These results align with the literature on character education, which emphasizes the importance of internalizing the values of empathy, social skills, and moral awareness. In addition to student behavior, the dynamics of social interactions also improved, marked by increased peer support and more open communication patterns. The role of teachers and counselors appeared strategic as facilitators and case companions, while parental involvement, while positive, still needs to be strengthened to achieve a more comprehensive synergy in bullying prevention. Furthermore, challenges related to implementation time and variations in student understanding indicate that this program still requires contextual adaptation. Limitations of this study include the limited number of participants, the lack of diversity in schools from different regions, and the possibility of

social bias in participant responses, making the results not yet widely generalizable ([Garandeanu et al., 2022](#)).

The discussion of this study indicates that the implementation of the KiVA Method is perceived to bring positive changes, particularly in increasing students' social empathy, as reflected in teacher and counselor interviews that highlighted students' initiative in providing emotional support to victims of bullying and their courage in reprimanding peers who behave negatively, although claims of its full effectiveness need to be moderated. This finding is consistent with international literature, including research in Finland, which confirms that KiVA can foster sensitivity to the suffering of others, and is also in line with character education theory that emphasizes the importance of developing empathy, solidarity, and social skills. Furthermore, this study also indicates a positive dynamic in peer interactions, more open student communication, and the significant role of teachers and counselors in facilitating social-emotional learning. However, parental involvement is still underdeveloped and needs to be strengthened to optimize the synergy in bullying prevention. Limitations of this study include the limited school context in one region, differences in students' understanding of the material, and the possibility of social bias in participants' responses, so generalization of the results should be done with caution ([Jantzer et al., 2025](#)).

The discussion of this study indicates that the implementation of the KiVA Method is perceived to have a positive influence not only on individual aspects, but also on the dynamics of relationships between students, as seen from classroom observations that showed increased student participation in providing moral support, including the formation of peer groups that support friends who are victims

of bullying, although claims of overall effectiveness need to be moderated. This finding is relevant to Bronfenbrenner's social ecology theory, which emphasizes the important role of the social environment in shaping children's behavior, so that student involvement as agents of change can be seen as one indicator of the program's success in building a more supportive school climate. On the other hand, parental involvement is still relatively underdeveloped, so the potential for collaboration between schools and families needs to be strengthened to create more comprehensive support. Limitations of this study include the limited location coverage, variations in student participation levels between classes, and the less-than-optimal parental involvement, so the results of the study should be interpreted with caution and not generalized widely ([Zhorokpayeva et al., 2025](#)).

The discussion of this study confirms that the role of teachers is considered crucial in implementing the KiVA Method, particularly as facilitators who integrate the material into learning through discussions, simulations, and role-playing, so that students not only understand the impact of bullying cognitively but also experience it affectively and emotionally, although claims of the program's overall effectiveness need to be moderated. This strategy aligns with the principles of active learning that place students at the center of the learning process, while collaboration between teachers and counselors in individual and group counseling services strengthens implementation, especially in cases of bullying that has already occurred. However, the findings also indicate that parental involvement is not optimal, even though family support has the potential to expand the program's impact beyond the school environment. Limitations of this study include the limited scope of schools studied, variation in teaching strategies

among teachers, and minimal documentation of parental involvement. Therefore, the results of this study should be understood as a preliminary overview that still needs to be developed through further research ([Clarkson et al., 2022](#)).

The discussion of this research indicates that the involvement of school counselors is perceived as an important complement to the role of teachers in supporting the implementation of the KiVA Method, as counselors not only provide emotional support to student victims but also guidance to perpetrators to better understand the consequences of their behavior, although claims of the effectiveness of this intervention should be interpreted with caution. The dual nature of the intervention, which provides protection for victims and rehabilitation for perpetrators, aligns with the perspective of educational psychology, which emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach in creating a healthy learning environment. Furthermore, the involvement of students as peer supporters also strengthens the program's social impact, although limitations remain in the underdeveloped parental involvement, so the potential synergy between schools and families has not been fully realized. Limitations of this research include the unevenness of parental involvement, variations in counselor capacity across schools, and limitations in the scope of the research context. Therefore, these findings are more appropriately viewed as an initial overview that needs to be deepened in further research ([Johansson et al., 2022](#)).

The discussion of this research shows that the implementation of the KiVA Method in elementary schools faces several challenges perceived by teachers and students, including limited weekly time allocation, which is often considered insufficient to review all module materials in depth, and differences in students' social

and academic backgrounds, which lead to variations in understanding of the concepts of empathy and anti-bullying. Some students reportedly require additional explanations to optimally internalize the values taught. Therefore, the success of the program appears to depend not only on the quality of the materials provided but also on contextual factors such as institutional support, student readiness, and parental involvement, which, in this finding, are still underdeveloped. This is in line with Bronfenbrenner's social ecology theory, which emphasizes the importance of interactions between various environmental layers in influencing child development, including family and school. The limitations of this research lie in the less-than-optimal parental involvement, limited time for implementation, and variations in student backgrounds that influence the results. Therefore, these findings should be understood as initial reflections that require further study with a broader context ([Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021](#)).

The discussion of this study also highlights the important role of parents in supporting the implementation of the KiVA Method, where principals and teachers observed increased parental participation in school activities as well as more structured communication between teachers, counselors, and families. This involvement indicates a positive synergy in creating a more conducive learning environment, although it is not evenly distributed across all students because some parents are still limited in their contributions due to busyness or limited understanding. This confirms that bullying prevention cannot rely solely on school interventions, but requires support from the family as a child's first social environment, in line with the social ecological perspective that places the family as the primary foundation for behavioral

development. A limitation of this study is the inconsistent participation of parents, so the results obtained are more reflective of the experiences of a specific group and require further research to explore more effective strategies for increasing family involvement comprehensively ([Sullivan et al., 2021](#)).

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the KiVA Method contributed to a change in school culture that is more inclusive and responsive to the issue of bullying, where several teachers, counselors, and students felt a decrease in reported cases and an increased sense of safety in the learning environment. Furthermore, teachers and counselors appeared better prepared to handle emerging issues, although implementation was still influenced by contextual factors such as school management support and consistent parental involvement. These findings align with literature that emphasizes the importance of consistency in building a healthy school culture, as bullying prevention is not sufficient through short-term interventions but requires the ongoing implementation of anti-bullying values. A limitation of this study is that the observed decrease in cases was subjective based on teacher and counselor reports, so further research is needed with quantitative data and a longer observation period to assess the extent to which changes in school culture can be sustained in the long term ([Chen, 2022](#)).

From a methodological perspective, the use of a qualitative approach through interviews, observations, and document analysis provides a richer picture of the impact of implementing the KiVA Method, particularly in understanding the process of student behavior change and the dynamics of social interactions in schools. The data obtained indicate that some participants experienced positive changes in empathy and awareness of bullying, although

students' levels of understanding varied, and parental involvement was not yet fully integrated. These findings align with the literature emphasizing the advantages of qualitative approaches in uncovering complex phenomena that are difficult to capture with quantitative data alone, thus making an important contribution to the study of bullying prevention in elementary schools. A limitation of this study is that the findings are more contextual and subjective, so generalization to schools with different backgrounds requires caution and further study using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods ([Lestari & Koto, 2020](#)).

This research provides a conceptual contribution to understanding the implementation of bullying prevention programs in the context of primary education in Indonesia. Theoretically, the results of this study enrich the literature on the effectiveness of a phenomenological approach in exploring the experiences of students, teachers, and parents in adopting social values-based programs. These findings also emphasize the important role of the educational ecosystem, schools, families, and communities in shaping an anti-bullying culture, while also opening up space for further research on the adaptation of international programs such as KiVA in educational systems with different socio-cultural characteristics.

However, this study has limitations that require consideration. First, because it is qualitative and focused on a specific school context, the results cannot be generalized to all elementary schools in Indonesia. Second, although KiVA was developed in Finland, its cultural adaptation in Indonesia still requires further study to ensure the program aligns with local norms, differing parental perceptions, and school social dynamics. Therefore, further research with a broader scope and mixed methods is needed to assess the program's

sustainability and effectiveness across diverse cultural and regional contexts.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the implementation of the KiVA Method is perceived as making a positive contribution to bullying prevention efforts in elementary schools, particularly through strengthening empathy and solidarity among students, and increasing collaboration between teachers, counselors, and parents. Although some teachers and students reported perceived changes in the school's social climate, the program's effectiveness remains influenced by contextual factors such as limited implementation time, differences in students' understanding levels, and suboptimal parental involvement in supporting program sustainability. These findings align with theory and literature that emphasize the importance of a collaborative approach between schools and families in bullying prevention, as well as the need to adapt interventions to suit local needs. A limitation of this study is that the results are contextual to the schools studied, making them difficult to generalize broadly without further study. Further exploration of the role of parents and program sustainability strategies across various educational settings is warranted ([Gabrielli et al., 2021](#)).

Implications and limitations

This research is significant for the development of science, particularly in the fields of education and child psychology, as it provides an in-depth understanding of the experience of implementing the KiVA Program as a bullying prevention model in Indonesian elementary schools. The findings of this study enrich the theory on the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs by highlighting the contextual, cultural, and social dynamics within the elementary school environment that influence their implementation. Furthermore, the results of

this study can serve as a conceptual foundation for further research exploring the adaptation of the KiVA program in various educational contexts in Indonesia, as well as contributing to the development of educational policies that are more sensitive to the issue of child bullying in schools.

However, this study has limitations, particularly the relatively small sample size and limited representation due to the involvement of only a few elementary schools. Therefore, the results cannot be broadly generalized to all educational contexts in Indonesia. Furthermore, the limited participation of teachers, students, and school officials also prevented the full representation of the perspectives of parents and policymakers. These limitations open up opportunities for future research with a more diverse range of participants and a wider range of locations to strengthen the external validity of the findings.

Relevance to Practice

The implementation of the KiVA program has strong practical relevance for teachers, counselors, and policymakers in bullying prevention efforts in elementary schools. Teachers can be involved through specialized training to improve their skills in recognizing and responding appropriately to bullying cases, while school counselors can utilize the KiVA modules to guide psychosocial interventions targeting both victims and perpetrators. Furthermore, parental involvement needs to be strengthened through regular outreach to ensure prevention strategies are implemented at home. From a policy perspective, this study recommends adapting KiVA into the national school program by adjusting the curriculum and school discipline guidelines, so that bullying prevention can be

implemented systematically and sustainably.

Conclusion

This study shows that the implementation of the KiVA Program positively contributes to preventing bullying in Indonesian elementary schools by fostering a safer, more empathetic, and more inclusive school culture. Key impacts identified include increased student sense of safety, strengthened peer solidarity, and the involvement of teachers, counselors, and parents in supporting prevention strategies. However, the program's effectiveness is still affected by time constraints, differences in student understanding, and varying institutional support. These findings underscore the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration and contextual adaptation for KiVA to be implemented more broadly and sustainably in the Indonesian education system.

Funding

This research was funded by Universitas Awal Bros under Grant No. 025/UAB1.04/SPK-PPM/KL/ 04.2022. The funding body had no role in the study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or manuscript writing.

CrediT Authorship Contributions Statement

Rachmawaty M. Noer: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft
Mira Agusthia: Investigation, Data Curation
Kiki Rizki Dasaryandi: Formal Analysis, Writing – Review & Editing
Yulianti Wulandari: Visualization, Writing – Review & Editing

Conflicts of Interest

This study was funded by an internal research grant from Universitas Awal Bros.

The funding body had no role in the design of the study, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or manuscript writing.

Acknowledgments

The authors express their deep gratitude to Universitas Awal Bros, the students, teachers, school counselors, and parents who participated and shared their experiences, enabling the data obtained to comprehensively reflect the dynamics of program implementation in the school environment. Thanks are also extended to the school for providing permission, facilities, and opportunities, enabling the successful data collection process. Furthermore, appreciation is extended to the supervising lecturers and colleagues who provided guidance, critical input, academic supervision, and methodological suggestions that contributed to the refinement of this research. Equally important, the authors also acknowledge the moral support and motivation from family and friends who provided encouragement throughout the research process. Therefore, the success of this research is the result of the collective contributions of various parties, and this recognition is expected to serve as a form of respect and gratitude for the collaboration that has been established in efforts to realize bullying prevention through the implementation of the KiVA Method in schools.

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