Mental Imagery Training To Reduce The Impact Of Teenage Bullying During Semester Exams

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ABSTRACT

Bullying in schools has a significant psychological impact on adolescents, including anxiety, concentration difficulties, and decreased motivation to learn. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of mental imagery training in reducing the psychological effects of bullying among students at SMP Negeri 28 Bulukumba. The research employed a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest format and no control group. The subjects were 20 ninth-grade students identified as having experienced psychological distress due to bullying. The intervention consisted of five structured mental imagery training sessions. Pretest and posttest data were analyzed using descriptive and comparative statistical methods. The results revealed a reduction in psychological symptoms after the intervention, such as increased calmness in social situations, enhanced assertive expression, and decreased emotional reactivity. Mental imagery training proved to be an effective strategy in strengthening students' emotional resilience and minimizing the impact of bullying. These findings highlight the importance of implementing both preventive and therapeutic psychological approaches within educational settings.

Keywords: Mental Imagery, Bullying, Adolescents, Psychological Intervention, School

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying is one of the most pervasive psychosocial problems faced by adolescents in school environments. It can manifest in various forms, including verbal, physical, emotional, and social aggression, which are often repeated and intended to harm or demean the victim. Victims of bullying commonly experience anxiety, fear of rejection, academic decline, and social withdrawal (Lusiana, 2022). Adolescence is a transitional period characterized by identity formation, self-exploration, and the development of complex social relationships. When adolescents experience bullying, especially within school—a setting that should ideally be supportive—it can disrupt psychological development and lead to long-term emotional distress (Arifin, 2023). These conditions demand preventive and responsive interventions that support students' psychological well-being and foster a safe learning environment.

Previous studies have shown that bullying can significantly affect adolescents' academic performance, emotional regulation, and social adjustment (Widiastuti, 2022). Techniques such as mental imagery have been proposed as alternative interventions to help students cope with stress and enhance emotional resilience. Mental imagery involves the process of imagining positive scenarios or outcomes to influence emotional and behavioral responses. Research by Moran (2020) and Vealey (2021) emphasizes that mental imagery can strengthen self-confidence and reduce performance anxiety in academic and social settings. Furthermore, Thomas et al. (2018) reported that mental imagery improves students' assertiveness and reduces the psychological impact of negative social experiences. Despite these findings, few studies have applied this technique in the context of bullying, particularly among adolescents in school communities.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of mental imagery training in reducing the psychological impact of bullying among adolescent students in a junior high school setting. Specifically, the study aims to determine whether mental imagery can help students manage stress, improve assertive responses, and minimize anxiety in social interactions.

This research contributes to the growing body of psychological interventions aimed at managing bullying in schools by introducing mental imagery as a structured, low-cost, and adaptable method for students. By focusing on a preventive strategy, this study offers insights into how students can independently strengthen their emotional responses and improve their mental well-being in the face of bullying. The findings are expected to support educational institutions in implementing practical mental health programs within the school curriculum.

METHOD

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest approach. The intervention was conducted without a control group due to ethical considerations and the limited number of participants identified as having experienced psychological distress caused by bullying. This design allowed the researcher to observe the changes in students' psychological conditions before and after the mental imagery training.

The population consisted of ninth-grade students from SMP Negeri 28 Bulukumba in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The sample included 20 students, aged between 14 and 15 years, who were identified by teachers and school counselors as having experienced bullying-related stress. The selection was done purposively based on observed symptoms such as social withdrawal, anxiety, and reduced concentration in class. The majority of the participants were female, reflecting the general demographics of the school.

The assessment was conducted through a combination of methods: observation, structured interviews with teachers and parents, and the administration of a standardized scale measuring the psychological impact of bullying. The intervention consisted of five sessions of mental imagery training delivered over a two-week period. Each session included guided breathing exercises, visualizing assertive responses, and imagining peaceful

social scenarios. The content was based on validated imagery scripts adapted for adolescent learners (Festiawan, 2020; Sapta, 2013).

Pretest and posttest scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics to observe mean differences in bullying impact indicators. Although no inferential statistical tests were conducted due to the small sample size, qualitative feedback from participants and teachers supported the observed outcomes. Changes in behavior, emotional responses, and student interactions were tracked through follow-up observations and interviews.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION
RESEARCH RESULT

Table 1: . Data Visualization

	Pretest Mean Score	Posttest Mean Score
1.Sleep disturbance	4.3	2.1
2. Social withdrawal	4.7	2.6
3. Anxiety in peer interaction	4.5	2.3
4. Emotional reactivity	4.2	2
5. Overall bullying impact score	72.4	55.6

Source: Bullying Rating Scale

Following the five-session mental imagery training, participants showed noticeable changes in psychological indicators associated with bullying. These included increased emotional regulation, reduced social anxiety, and improved ability to express opinions in peer settings. Prior to the intervention, many students reported difficulty sleeping, physical tension during social interactions, and avoidance of group tasks. After the training, participants described feeling calmer, more focused, and better prepared to manage peer-related stress.

Quantitative data from the bullying impact scale showed a reduction in scores across all participants. Pretest average scores were categorized as "moderate to high" impact (M = 72.4), while posttest scores shifted to the "low to moderate" range (M = 55.6), indicating a decrease in bullying-related psychological symptoms.

Observation notes documented behavioral improvements such as increased participation in class discussions and group work. Interview responses from teachers indicated that students appeared more relaxed and willing to engage with peers. Several students reported using the imagery technique independently when faced with stressful situations at school. No adverse effects were noted during or after the training sessions.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that mental imagery training can effectively reduce the psychological impact of bullying among adolescents. Participants demonstrated improvements in emotional regulation, assertiveness, and confidence when facing potentially stressful peer interactions. The decreased posttest scores on the bullying impact scale suggest that students gained better control over anxiety and exhibited fewer

withdrawal behaviors. These outcomes imply that structured mental imagery can serve as a coping tool that empowers students to mentally rehearse positive and safe responses to bullying scenarios.

These findings are consistent with prior research that emphasizes the benefits of mental imagery in improving psychological well-being and performance under pressure. Moran (2020) and Vealey (2021) argue that mental imagery helps individuals build internal confidence by simulating success and mastery in challenging situations. Thomas et al. (2018) further support this by demonstrating that mental imagery can enhance assertiveness and reduce emotional reactivity. Additionally, studies by Gonzalez (2023) and Kosslyn (2022) have shown that imagery practices can improve learning outcomes and emotional stability, particularly in adolescents facing cognitive or social difficulties. The current study aligns with these results and adds to the literature by applying mental imagery specifically to bullying contexts in Indonesian school settings.

This study was limited by its small sample size and lack of a control group, which restricts the generalizability of the results. The use of self-report scales and subjective observations may also introduce response biases. Furthermore, the study only measured short-term outcomes and did not examine whether the benefits of the training were sustained over time. The cultural and religious context of the school, which promotes emotional discipline and respect, may also have influenced students' responsiveness to the intervention.

The findings suggest that mental imagery can be incorporated into school counseling programs as a non-invasive, cost-effective intervention to address bullying-related stress. Teachers and school counselors could be trained to facilitate basic mental imagery sessions, particularly during high-stress periods such as exams or social transitions. Future research should explore long-term effects, compare different imagery protocols, and assess outcomes across diverse school populations.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that mental imagery training is an effective psychological intervention to reduce the impact of bullying among adolescent students. Participants showed notable improvements in emotional regulation, assertive communication, and reduced anxiety in peer interactions. The structured visualization sessions enabled students to mentally rehearse positive social responses, contributing to a safer and more supportive school environment.

Given its practicality and adaptability, mental imagery training should be considered as part of school-based psychological services to support students affected by bullying. Further studies are encouraged to evaluate the long-term impact and scalability of this intervention in broader educational settings.

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