

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE APPLICATION OF EMPATHY VALUES IN PANCASILA EDUCATION AND VERBAL BULLYING BEHAVIOR AMONG ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Education in elementary schools aims to build student character, emphasizing values such as empathy to foster positive social interactions. However, verbal bullying remains a prevalent issue among students, often stemming from a lack of emotional awareness and sensitivity toward others. This study aims to determine the relationship between the application of empathy values in Pancasila Education and verbal bullying behavior among fifth-grade students. This research employed a quantitative correlational design. The sample consisted of 30 fifth-grade students selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using valid and reliable Likert-scale questionnaires for both variables, supported by observational data on teacher integration of empathy during learning activities. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, prerequisite tests, and the Pearson Product Moment correlation test utilizing the SPSS application. The descriptive analysis revealed that the application of empathy values is generally well-implemented and actively reflected in students' daily behaviors. Meanwhile, verbal bullying occurrences are still present within daily interactions but at a relatively low intensity. The hypothesis testing demonstrated a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of -0.746 with a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). These results indicate a strong, significant negative correlation between the two variables. It can be concluded that a higher application of empathy values among students directly corresponds to a lower tendency to engage in verbal bullying behavior. Therefore, consistently integrating empathy into the learning process serves as an effective preventive measure against bullying.

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INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia has a strategic role in shaping the character and personality of students as mandated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes that education aims to develop students' potential to become human beings who have faith, noble character, and social and emotional intelligence. Elementary schools serve as the main foundation in shaping students' attitudes and behavior. Character values such as empathy, tolerance, and mutual respect are crucial parts that must be instilled early on (Salmia, 2024). The learning process in elementary schools does not only focus on academic achievement but is also directed at developing the affective and social aspects of students. One character value that needs to be developed is empathy, which is a person's ability to

understand and feel the condition of others. Through empathy, students are expected to be able to build harmonious social relationships and avoid behaviors that can harm or hurt others (Umayah, 2020).

Daniel Goleman (1995) states that empathy is the ability to feel what other people feel as if experiencing the same thing. This ability encompasses the cognitive aspect, namely understanding others' feelings, and the affective aspect, namely providing an appropriate emotional response (Afifah et al., 2024). Howard Gardner (2017) emphasizes that empathy acts as a key in social life and adaptability. Children who have empathy will be able to show an attitude of tolerance towards friends, have compassion, understand the needs of others, and be willing to help friends who are experiencing difficulties (Winangsih, 2020). Taufik (2012) further divides empathy into affective empathy and cognitive empathy. Cuff et al. (2016) state that cognitive empathy relates to the ability to take another person's perspective, while affective empathy relates to emotional involvement or response to others' feelings. Wibowo and Susanto (2021) confirm that both types of empathy complement each other and are equally necessary for building effective social interactions (Nainggolan, 2024).

However, field conditions indicate that not all students are able to implement the value of empathy in everyday life. In social interactions, various negative behaviors are still found, one of which is verbal bullying. Verbal bullying is a form of bullying carried out through speech, such as mocking, insulting, giving inappropriate nicknames, or uttering harsh words that can hurt other people's feelings. This behavior is often considered a mere joke, even though in reality it can cause serious psychological impacts for the victim (Afriani, 2023).

Bullying is a form of abuse of power that occurs repeatedly in a relationship, whether through verbal, physical, or social actions, causing physical and psychological impacts (Tirmidziani et al., 2020). Olweus (1993) defines bullying as an intentional and destructive aggressive behavior that occurs repeatedly in interpersonal relationships (Habsy et al., 2024). Specifically, Santos et al. (2023) state that verbal bullying is a form of aggression carried out through speech or writing to hurt, degrade, or intimidate others. Data from UNICEF (2020) shows that children who are victims of verbal bullying tend to experience a decrease in self-confidence, difficulties in social interaction, and mental health disorders (Azni et al., 2025).

The phenomenon of verbal bullying that still occurs in elementary schools shows a discrepancy between the expected conditions and the reality in the field. Ideally, students are able to be polite, respect each other, and care for others. In practice, there are still students who have not been able to control their speech and behavior, thus triggering actions that can hurt others. The application of the value of empathy plays an important role in suppressing the tendency of verbal bullying behavior. Students who have good empathy are generally able to put themselves in other people's shoes, thus carefully considering the impact of every word spoken. Conversely, low empathy can be a triggering factor for the emergence of bullying behavior due to a lack of sensitivity to the feelings and conditions of others (Nashir, 2026). This discrepancy becomes an important basis for further investigating the relationship between the application of empathy values and verbal bullying behavior.

METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a correlational type. The quantitative approach is chosen because the data obtained is in the form of numbers analyzed using statistical techniques to determine the relationship between variables. The quantitative research method is based on the philosophy of positivism and is used to examine a particular population or sample (Afif, Zihnil, Kustati, 2023). The correlational type is used because this study aims to determine whether or not there is a relationship between the application of empathy values as the independent variable (X) and verbal bullying behavior as the dependent variable (Y). Correlational research is used to determine the relationship and level of relationship between two or more variables without any effort to influence these variables so they cannot be manipulated (Hasbi, 2023). This research was conducted at an Elementary School, located in Sumber District, Cirebon Regency, West Java, during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year.

The population in this study included all 5th-grade students, totaling 40 students. All of these students have characteristics that match the research focus regarding the application of empathy values and verbal bullying behavior. The sample used was 30 students from the total population. The sampling technique used in this research is simple random sampling. This technique provides equal opportunities for each member of the population to be selected as a sample through a randomized selection process (Hilyati, 2023).

The data collection techniques used in this study include questionnaires, observation, and documentation. Questionnaires compiled using a Likert scale were given to students to obtain data regarding the application of empathy

values in Pancasila Education and verbal bullying behavior. Observation was used as a supporting data collection technique to obtain an overview of the application of empathy values in Pancasila Education learning. Documentation is used to complement the data obtained through observation and questionnaires, such as the number of students, learning activities, and proof of research implementation. Before being used for research, the instruments went through a validity test using the Pearson Product Moment correlation and a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha.

The data in this study were analyzed using statistical techniques with the help of the SPSS application. Data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics by calculating the mean score. Before conducting the hypothesis test, analysis prerequisite tests were carried out, namely the normality test to determine if the data is normally distributed, and the linearity test to determine if the relationship between the two variables is linear. After fulfilling the requirements, the analysis was continued using the Pearson Product Moment correlation test to answer the problem formulation regarding whether or not there is a relationship between the application of empathy values and verbal bullying behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Before the instruments were used to collect research data, instrument testing was conducted which included validity and reliability tests involving 30 respondents with the help of the SPSS program. The validity test was conducted by comparing the calculated r-value with the r-table value (0.361), while the reliability test used the Cronbach's Alpha method.

Table 1. Instrument Test Results

Variable	Total Items	Valid Items	Dropped Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
X (Application of Empathy Value)	20	20	0	0.767	Reliable
Y (Verbal Bullying Behavior)	20	20	0	0.742	Reliable

Based on Table 1, all statement items for the Application of Empathy Value (X) and Verbal Bullying Behavior (Y) variables are declared valid because they have a calculated r-value greater than the r-table. Both instruments are also declared reliable because they have a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.60.

Before conducting the hypothesis test, analysis prerequisite tests were carried out, namely the normality test and the linearity test. The normality test aims to determine whether the research data is normally distributed using the Shapiro-Wilk method.

Table 2. Normality Test Results

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Application of Empathy Value	.084	30	.200*	.966	30	.428
Verbal Bullying Behavior	.094	30	.200*	.975	30	.674

Based on Table 2, the Shapiro-Wilk test shows that the Application of Empathy Value variable has a significance value of 0.428, and the Verbal Bullying Behavior variable is 0.674. Both significance values are greater than 0.05, so the data for both variables are normally distributed. Furthermore, the linearity test shows a significance value on Deviation from Linearity of 0.767. This value is greater than 0.05, so there is no deviation from the linear relationship between the Application of Empathy Value and Verbal Bullying Behavior variables.

Data concerning the application of empathy values were gathered through questionnaires distributed to 30 students. All respondents provided positive feedback, signifying that empathy values are reflected in students' behavior within the school environment. The specific score distribution for these responses is visualized in the graph below.

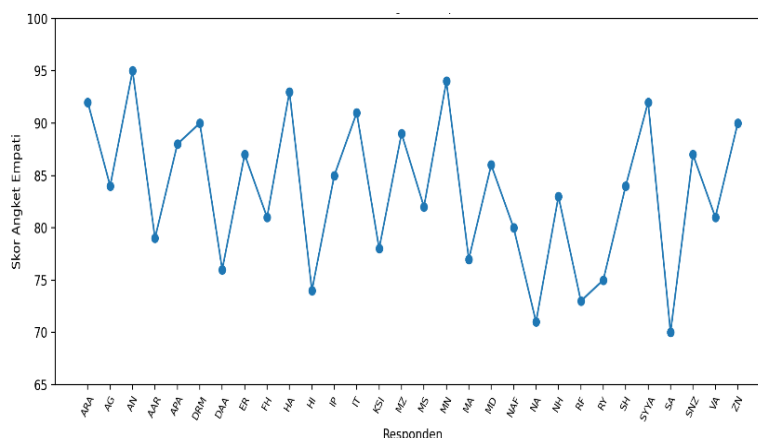


Figure 1. Graph of Empathy Questionnaire Results

Table 3. Observation Results of Empathy Value Implementation

No	Indicator	Total Score	Average
1	Teacher shows care for students	5	5.00
2	Teacher relates students' experiences to the material	4	4.00
3	Teacher uses polite language	5	5.00
4	Teacher relates the material to empathy values	5	5.00
5	Teacher provides opportunities for students to express opinions	4	4.00
6	Teacher respects students' opinions	5	5.00
7	Teacher helps students who experience difficulties	4	4.00
8	Teacher becomes a good listener	5	5.00
9	Teacher gives positive responses	4	4.00
10	Teacher gives examples of empathetic behavior	5	5.00
11	Teacher directs students' behavior	4	4.00
12	Teacher habituates mutual respect	5	5.00
13	Teacher invites students to reflect on the learning	4	4.00
14	Teacher creates a positive atmosphere	5	5.00
Total		64	4.57

Based on Table 3, the observation results obtained a total score of 64 with an average of 4.57 on a 5-point scale. This value indicates that almost all observed aspects have been implemented consistently during the learning process. Meanwhile, the questionnaire results on verbal bullying behavior showed that it is still found among students, although the intensity varies.

Questionnaire results assessing verbal bullying behavior revealed its continued presence among students, varying in intensity. The detailed frequency and spread of these bullying incidents are mapped in the following graph.

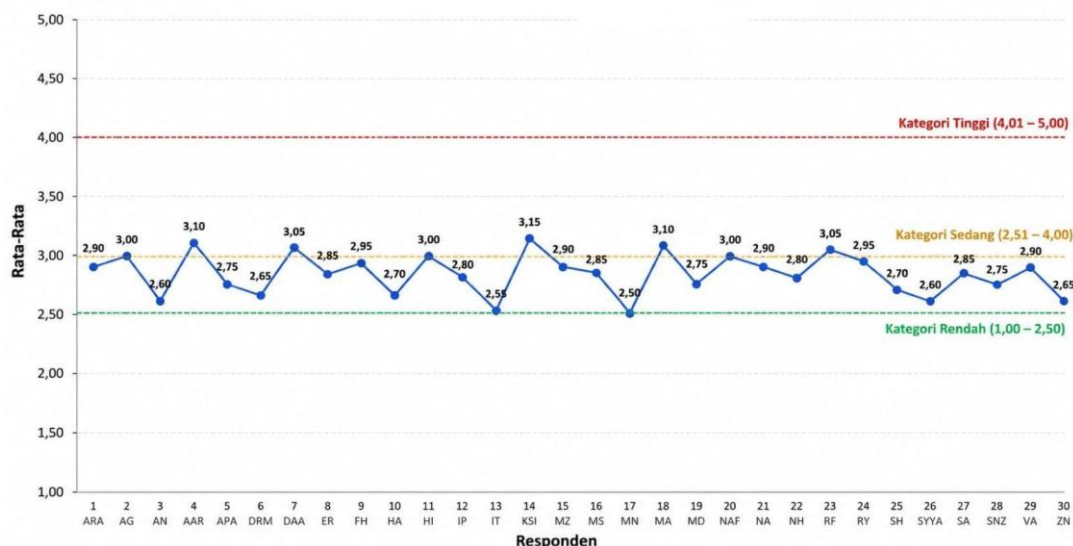


Figure 2. Graph of Verbal Bullying Behavior

To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the application of empathy values and verbal bullying behavior, a Pearson Product Moment correlation test was conducted.

Table 4. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test Results

		Application of Empathy Value	Verbal Bullying Behavior
Application of Empathy Value	Pearson Correlation	1	-.746**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
Verbal Bullying Behavior	Pearson Correlation	-.746**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

Based on Table 4, a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of -0.746 was obtained with a significance value of 0.000 . A significance value smaller than 0.05 indicates that the relationship between the Application of Empathy Value and Verbal Bullying Behavior is significant, so the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. The negative sign on the correlation coefficient indicates an opposite relationship direction, meaning an increase in the application of empathy values is followed by a decrease in verbal bullying behavior.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings indicate that the application of empathy values among fifth-grade students is actively reflected in their daily behavior during learning activities and social interactions within the school environment. The average questionnaire scores ranged from 3.50 to 4.75 on a 5-point scale, indicating that the majority of students had demonstrated relatively strong empathetic attitudes. Students displayed behaviors corresponding to the measured empathy indicators, including sensitivity to others, understanding peers' feelings, willingness to help, openness, relationship building, and polite communication. These findings suggest that empathy is not merely understood as a theoretical moral value but has begun to be manifested through students' observable behaviors in their everyday interactions.

The relatively high empathy scores can be understood as an indication that the school environment has provided opportunities for students to develop affective and social competencies. At the elementary school level, character

development is closely related to students' everyday experiences because values become meaningful when they are repeatedly practiced in authentic social situations. Salmia (2024) explains that character education at the elementary school level plays an important role in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors through the continuous habituation of positive values. Thus, the development of empathy among fifth-grade students should not be viewed as the result of a single learning activity but rather as a cumulative process involving classroom instruction, teacher modeling, peer interaction, and school culture.

Teachers supported this development by consistently integrating empathy into classroom interactions. This was reflected in the use of polite language, opportunities for students to express their opinions, assistance provided to students experiencing difficulties, and the creation of a positive learning atmosphere. Such practices position the teacher not only as an instructor but also as a model of empathetic behavior. Students can learn empathy by observing how teachers respond to mistakes, differences in opinion, and the difficulties experienced by others. Umayah (2020) emphasizes the importance of affective education in the formation of noble character, indicating that education should address not only students' cognitive abilities but also their attitudes, emotions, and moral behavior. Therefore, the teacher's consistent demonstration of respectful and caring behavior becomes an important component in the internalization of empathy values.

The development of empathy is also consistent with the view that empathy can be cultivated through appropriate learning experiences. Afifah et al. (2024) demonstrate that empathy development among elementary-aged students can be supported through learning methods that intentionally integrate moral and affective values. This reinforces the present finding that students' empathetic behavior can emerge when learning provides space for students to recognize others' feelings, respond appropriately to their peers, and practice caring behavior. Empathy consequently develops through repeated social experiences rather than through verbal explanations alone.

In addition, the findings indicate that students' empathetic behavior is closely related to the quality of their interpersonal relationships. Students who are sensitive to their peers' feelings tend to be more capable of establishing positive relationships, communicating politely, and responding appropriately when their friends experience difficulties. Empathy enables students to consider situations from another person's perspective before responding. This ability is particularly important at the elementary school level because students are increasingly engaged in complex peer interactions and are learning to negotiate differences in opinions, personalities, and emotional responses. Winangsih (2020) similarly highlights the importance of providing experiences that stimulate empathy development in children, demonstrating that empathy can be strengthened through appropriate educational approaches and meaningful interactions.

Despite these positive behavioral trends, verbal bullying remains present in students' daily interactions, although its intensity is relatively low. Questionnaire data confirm that some students still engage in mocking, assigning disliked nicknames, speaking harshly, or using offensive language. These findings indicate that the existence of positive character values does not necessarily eliminate all negative social behaviors. Rather, students may simultaneously demonstrate empathetic behavior in certain situations while still engaging in inappropriate verbal interactions in other contexts. This finding is important because character development is a gradual process that requires consistency, reinforcement, and continuous supervision.

The persistence of verbal bullying can partly be attributed to students' incomplete understanding of the emotional consequences of their words. Some students may perceive teasing, mocking, or assigning nicknames as ordinary jokes without recognizing that such behavior can hurt or embarrass their peers. At this developmental stage, students may not always be able to accurately predict how their words will affect another person's emotional condition. Consequently, strengthening empathy is essential because students need to develop the ability to move beyond their own intentions and consider the feelings experienced by the recipient of their words.

Afriani (2023) explains that verbal bullying can occur through expressions such as ridicule, harsh words, insulting language, and other forms of verbal treatment that negatively affect students. This perspective is relevant to the present findings because the forms of verbal bullying identified in the questionnaire correspond to behaviors that may initially be perceived by students as jokes or ordinary peer interactions. However, the impact of these behaviors should not be underestimated. Repeated negative verbal interactions may affect students' emotional well-being, confidence, and social relationships. Therefore, even relatively low-intensity verbal bullying requires educational attention before it develops into a more persistent pattern.

The findings further suggest that verbal bullying is influenced by social and environmental factors. Students' behavior does not develop independently from the environment in which they interact. Peer relationships, classroom culture, family influences, and exposure to media may contribute to how students understand and reproduce certain forms

of communication. Tirmidziani et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of early efforts to prevent bullying by building positive interactions and providing children with an understanding of behaviors that can harm others. This reinforces the need for preventive efforts that begin before bullying becomes deeply established in students' social behavior.

The relationship between empathy and verbal bullying becomes particularly evident in the correlation analysis. The correlation coefficient of **-0.746 ($p < 0.05$)** indicates a **strong and statistically significant negative relationship** between empathy application and verbal bullying behavior. In other words, students with higher levels of empathy tend to demonstrate lower levels of verbal bullying, whereas students with lower levels of empathy tend to show greater tendencies toward verbal bullying. The negative direction of the correlation is theoretically meaningful because empathy involves sensitivity toward other people's emotional conditions, while verbal bullying frequently involves behavior that disregards or negatively affects those emotional conditions.

This finding strengthens the argument that empathy functions as an important protective factor against bullying behavior. Students who are able to recognize sadness, embarrassment, discomfort, or disappointment in their peers are more likely to consider the consequences of their words before speaking. They may also be more willing to apologize, stop inappropriate behavior, and provide support when another student is experiencing difficulties. Conversely, students who have difficulty recognizing or understanding the emotional experiences of others may be less sensitive to the consequences of mocking, name-calling, or harsh language.

The present finding is also consistent with Nashir (2026), whose literature review specifically discusses the role of empathy in preventing bullying in elementary school environments. Empathy provides an emotional and social foundation that enables students to understand the perspectives of others and develop concern for their well-being. From this perspective, bullying prevention should not rely exclusively on sanctions after bullying occurs. Prevention should also strengthen the underlying social-emotional competencies that reduce students' inclination to engage in harmful behavior.

The strong negative correlation found in this study therefore provides empirical support for the importance of integrating empathy into everyday learning. However, the correlation should be interpreted as an association rather than evidence that empathy alone directly causes a reduction in verbal bullying. Other factors may contribute to students' bullying behavior, including peer influence, classroom climate, teacher supervision, family environment, and students' exposure to social and digital media. Nevertheless, the magnitude and direction of the correlation demonstrate that empathy is an important variable that deserves attention in efforts to prevent verbal bullying among elementary school students.

The findings also have implications for classroom practice. Empathy should be integrated into learning activities rather than treated as an additional character lesson that is separated from academic instruction. Teachers can create situations in which students are encouraged to listen to their peers, respect differences of opinion, assist classmates who experience difficulties, and communicate using respectful language. Such habituation can gradually transform empathy from a concept that students know into a behavioral value that students practice. Afifah et al. (2024) support the importance of learning approaches that deliberately facilitate empathy development among elementary school students.

Furthermore, teachers need to establish clear and consistent boundaries regarding verbal behavior. Students should understand that humor is acceptable only when it does not demean, embarrass, or hurt another person. Classroom discussions can be used to help students distinguish between friendly joking and verbal bullying. Teachers can present simple social situations and ask students to consider how each person might feel. This type of reflective activity can help students develop perspective-taking skills and understand that the same words may have different emotional consequences for different people.

The development of empathy should also be accompanied by a positive school culture. Character education becomes more effective when the values promoted in the classroom are consistently reflected in students' broader social environment. Salmia (2024) emphasizes the importance of character education in shaping students' attitudes through continuous educational processes. Thus, preventing verbal bullying should involve not only individual students but also teachers, peers, school leaders, and families. A consistent message regarding respectful communication can create an environment in which students feel safe to express themselves without fear of ridicule or humiliation.

Another important implication concerns the teacher's response to minor verbal bullying. Because the intensity of verbal bullying identified in this study is relatively low, preventive and educational responses may be more appropriate than relying solely on punitive measures. When a student uses a hurtful nickname or makes a mocking comment, the teacher can guide the student to recognize the emotional impact of the behavior, encourage the student to consider the

situation from the victim's perspective, and facilitate an appropriate apology or corrective action. Such an approach transforms a negative incident into an opportunity for character learning.

This approach is consistent with the broader concept of affective education. Umayah (2020) emphasizes that education contributes to the formation of noble character through the development of affective dimensions. Therefore, addressing verbal bullying should not only focus on stopping the undesirable behavior but also on developing the internal values that encourage students to choose respectful behavior voluntarily. In this context, empathy becomes an important bridge between knowing that bullying is wrong and actually choosing not to engage in bullying behavior.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that fifth-grade students have generally shown positive development in empathy, as reflected by their relatively high questionnaire scores and observed interpersonal behaviors. Nevertheless, the continued presence of verbal bullying indicates that empathy development requires sustained reinforcement. The significant negative correlation of -0.746 demonstrates that stronger empathy is associated with lower verbal bullying behavior, highlighting the importance of empathy as an essential component of character education and bullying prevention. These findings reinforce the view that education is not limited to the transmission of academic knowledge but also involves the development of students' personality, social awareness, moral sensitivity, and responsibility toward others (Sutisno & Nurdyanti, 2020).

Therefore, schools should continue to integrate empathy development into daily learning and school culture through teacher modeling, habituation, reflective activities, respectful communication, peer interaction, and preventive education concerning bullying. Such efforts are expected to help students understand that their words and actions have consequences for others. Ultimately, the goal is not merely to reduce the frequency of verbal bullying but to develop students who are capable of understanding others' feelings, respecting differences, communicating appropriately, and taking responsibility for the emotional consequences of their behavior. In this sense, empathy becomes not only an individual psychological capacity but also an important foundation for creating a safe, respectful, and supportive elementary school learning environment.

CONCLUSION

The application of empathy values in fifth-grade students has been reflected in their daily behavior. The questionnaire results show that students are able to show concern for friends, understand other people's feelings, provide help when friends experience difficulties, respect differing opinions, be open, build good social relationships, and communicate politely. The observation results also show that the teacher has integrated empathy values in the learning process through modeling, the use of polite language, appreciation of students' opinions, and the creation of a positive learning atmosphere. However, verbal bullying behavior among the students is still found in daily interactions, although it has not become a dominant behavior. The behaviors that still appear include mocking, giving disliked nicknames, speaking harshly, and making fun of friends. Although the intensity is relatively low, this behavior still requires attention because it has the potential to affect the social and emotional development, as well as the comfort of students in the school environment, requiring character building and habituation of mutual respect continuously.

There is a negative, significant, and strong relationship between the application of empathy values in Pancasila Education and verbal bullying behavior in fifth-grade students. The Pearson Product Moment correlation test results show a correlation coefficient value of -0.746 with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05). These results indicate that the better the application of empathy values possessed by students, the lower their tendency to commit verbal bullying behavior. Thus, strengthening empathy values through Pancasila Education learning can be a preventive effort in reducing verbal bullying behavior and creating a safe, comfortable, and mutually respectful school environment.

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