

Breaking Down the Apathy Barrier: The Effectiveness of an Interactive Anti-Bullying Puzzle in Building Social Awareness among Eighth-Grade Students at SMP Labschool UPI Bandung

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Abstract

Bullying remains a persistent problem in schools and can negatively affect students' social and emotional development, making innovative preventive strategies increasingly important. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of interactive anti-bullying puzzle media in increasing bullying awareness among eighth-grade students at SMP Labschool UPI Bandung. This study employed a quantitative experimental approach using a pretest-posttest control group design. The participants were 40 eighth-grade students, consisting of 20 students in the experimental group and 20 students in the control group, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a 23-item questionnaire measuring students' understanding and attitudes toward bullying. The instrument demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability, with all items meeting the validity criteria and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.814. Data were analyzed using normalized gain scores to compare changes between the experimental and control groups. The results showed an increase in the experimental group's mean score from 46.30 before the intervention to 74.35 after the intervention, with a normalized gain score of 0.62, categorized as moderate. In comparison, the control group increased from 43.55 to 49.60, with a normalized gain score of 0.12, categorized as low. These findings indicate that interactive anti-bullying puzzle media can support the development of students' awareness of bullying and promote active learning through cooperation, reflection, and discussion. The study concludes that puzzle-based media can serve as an innovative strategy for strengthening bullying prevention programs in junior high schools.

Keywords: interactive puzzle media; anti-bullying; bullying awareness; junior high school students.



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Introduction

Bullying is a complex phenomenon defined as aggressive behavior that is carried out repeatedly, both by individuals and groups that have greater power over individuals who are considered weaker, both physically and psychologically (Olweus, 1994). This behavior not only negatively impacts the social-emotional development of students, but also interferes with the learning process and creates an uncondusive school climate (Widodo & Haryanto, 2022). Data from the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) shows a surge in cases of violence in the education environment from 91 cases in 2020 to 641 cases in 2025, with the elementary-high school level dominating 57% of the total cases (Mashabi & Utomo, 2026). These figures indicate that bullying remains a serious national concern requiring systemic and sustained intervention.

Data from the National Adolescent Mental Health Surveys (NAMHS) in 2025 recorded that the prevalence of bullying involvement in Indonesia reached 3.4%, with bullying victims being 3.55 times more likely of experiencing mental disorders than those who were not involved in bullying (Erskine et al., 2025). These findings confirm that bullying is not just a behavioral problem, but a mental health crisis that has a systemic impact on the younger generation. Recent research shows that victims of bullying tend to experience decreased academic achievement, social anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation (Gini et al., 2021; Arseneault, 2023). Further, the traumatic effects of bullying can last into adulthood and significantly affect an individual's quality of life (Takizawa et al., 2021; Wolke et al., 2023).

At the junior high school (SMP) level, bullying cases are still a serious problem that occurs in various forms, both physical, verbal, and social (Nasir, 2018; Yulianti & Juliangkary, 2023). A national survey conducted by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) in 2022 revealed that 26.9% of junior high school students had experienced bullying in the school environment (KPPPA, 2022). Factors that affect the occurrence of bullying include low empathy, lack of parental supervision, negative peer influence, and exposure to violent content on social media (Pratiwi & Nugroho, 2022; Nurhayati & Rahayu, 2023). Students' lack of awareness of the negative impact of bullying is one of the main factors that aggravate this action (Hanum & Syafitri, 2021). Therefore, effective and sustainable educational efforts are needed to increase students' awareness of bullying behavior and the negative consequences it causes (Khasanah & Wulandari, 2022; Susanto et al., 2023).

One of the innovative techniques in group guidance is the use of game media as a means of fun and meaningful learning (Prayitno & Amti, 2023; Suherman & Setiawan, 2022). Group guidance aims to prevent problems from arising in students while developing their potential through interactive group dynamics (Corey et al., 2023; Gazda, 2021). Research by Melamita et al. (2024) shows that information services with puzzle media are effective in increasing students' insights, knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes towards bullying, with students showing increased empathy, courage, and a proactive attitude in preventing and dealing with bullying in the school environment. One of the innovative techniques in group guidance is the use of game media as a means of fun and meaningful learning (Setyaningrum et al., 2018; Rahmawati & Hasanah, 2022). Research on the development of the snake and ladder game by Munawarah et al. (2024) showed good validity with a score percentage of 90% of material experts, 89% of media experts, and 87% of BK practitioners, as well as 89% of small group trials, so that this media is suitable for use in guidance and counseling services for bullying prevention.

Interactive and fun learning media such as puzzles offer a unique approach in delivering educational materials (Marivo, 2017; Aftika, 2020). Puzzles are educational games that consist of pieces

of images or information that must be arranged to form a whole and meaningful unit (Sari, 2021; Mulyani & Purnama, 2022). In the context of education, puzzle media can be adapted to convey learning materials or specific values by combining visual, kinesthetic, and cognitive approaches simultaneously (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2021; Raharjo & Yulianti, 2023). Learning media functions as a tool in the teaching and learning process which has an important role in clarifying information delivery, fostering learning motivation, and increasing the effectiveness of communication between educators and students (Sudjana & Rivai, 2021; Arsyad, 2022). The use of media is also a preventive and curative effort on bullying problems. Papa's research (2019, 2024) shows that handling bullying through the media as an intermediary is more effective and achieves significant results than not using the media. Recent research by Saragi et al. (2025) at SD Negeri 162107 Tebing Tinggi shows that the use of Edpuzzle interactive digital media is effective in increasing awareness of language politeness as an effort to prevent bullying, with the results of the training showing an increase in teacher understanding and high student interest in learning. These findings strengthen the relevance of the use of interactive puzzle media in the context of bullying prevention at the primary and secondary education levels.

Puzzles as an educational medium have the advantage of stimulating cooperation, problem-solving skills, and understanding concepts in a fun way (Ningsih & Wibowo, 2022; Fitriani & Rahmadani, 2023). In the context of anti-bullying, puzzle media is designed by containing images, keywords, and short narratives that describe forms of bullying, its impact, and prevention strategies (Hasanah & Wijaya, 2021; Lestari & Puspita, 2022). Thus, the learning process becomes more interactive and students are invited to think critically and reflect on the behaviors they may encounter in the school environment (Dewi & Saputra, 2023; Fauzi et al., 2024). This approach is in line with constructivist learning theory which emphasizes the importance of direct experience and active involvement in building understanding (Piaget, 1964; Vygotsky, 1978; Suparlan et al., 2023). The use of puzzle media in information services about bullying behavior has been proven to help students understand and avoid acts of bullying (Ruliyatin & Ridhowati, 2021; Nurdin & Amelia, 2022). Research by Andriani et al. (2019) found that information services using puzzle media were effective in reducing bullying behavior in high school students, with the results of data analysis showing a significant influence on reducing bullying behavior. Further studies by Rahayu et al. (2022) confirm that educational game-based interventions are able to increase empathy and reduce aggressiveness in adolescents.

Although various studies have shown the effectiveness of puzzle media in increasing anti-bullying awareness, most of these studies have focused on the high school education level or using a different approach (Handayani & Putra, 2023; Maulana & Sari, 2022; Wijaya & Indriani, 2024). Research on the effectiveness of puzzle media in increasing anti-bullying awareness in junior high school students is still very limited and has not been widely explored. In fact, based on actual case reports, junior high school students are the most victims in bullying cases, such as the bullying incident in Bandung in December 2024 where a junior high school student was beaten by six perpetrators (Rahayu, 2025), as well as the case at SMPN 19 Tangsel which caused the victim to experience a decline in physical condition to the point that he was unable to do activities. This condition shows the urgency of developing targeted interventions for the junior high school student population, considering the characteristics of early adolescent development that are different from high school students, both cognitively, socially, and emotionally.

Based on the description above, there is still a research gap related to the effectiveness of anti-bullying puzzle media in junior high school students. This study seeks to address this gap by examining

the effectiveness of anti-bullying puzzle media in increasing junior high school students' awareness of bullying behavior.. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of guidance and counseling science, especially in media-based bullying prevention strategies, as well as practical contributions in the form of innovative learning media that can be used by guidance and counseling teachers in junior high schools.

Research Method

This study uses an experimental design with an approach that is *pretest-posttest control group design* which is used to test the effectiveness of puzzle media in increasing students' self-awareness of anti-bullying behavior (Pratisti & Yuwono, 2018). The subject of this study is grade VIII students at SMP Lab School UPI Bandung with a total of 40 students selected through *purposive sampling*. The selection of this class is based on the consideration that students at this level are in an early adolescence transition period where their social awareness and empathy begin to develop. The students were then divided into two groups, namely the experimental group (20 students) who were given a puzzle game and the control group (20 students) with conventional learning.

The research activity began with the pretest stage which was used to measure the level of understanding and initial attitude of students towards *bullying* behavior. Furthermore, the experimental group was given learning activities using puzzle media, while the control group learned as usual without additional media. After the learning activities are completed, it is followed by a posttest which aims to measure the level of change in students' understanding and attitude towards *bullying*. The instrument used is a simple questionnaire designed to measure students' level of understanding and attitude about bullying, where the questionnaire includes the definition, types of *bullying*, and responses to situations that have the potential to contain *bullying* (Pama, et al, 2025).

a) Validity Test

The validity test was carried out by correlating the score of each questionnaire item with the total score using Pearson's Product Moment correlation technique at a significance level of 5% with the number of respondents (N) as many as 30, for the media we may see at the figure below,



Figure 1. Anti-Bullying Puzzle Media

Figure 1 above presents Anti-Bullying Puzzle Media. From this media we get the data, an r-table of 0.361 was obtained. Based on the results of the analysis, all 23 questionnaire items obtained r-count values ranging from 0.363 to 0.569, which means it is greater than the r-table (0.361). Thus, all items of the questionnaire in this study are declared valid and can be used for research data collection.

b) Reliability Test

The reliability test in this study uses the Cronbach's Alpha technique with the help of the SPSS program. The data shows the results of the reliability test with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.814 from the number of items as many as 23 items. The value is in the reliable category ($0.70 \leq \alpha < 0.90$), so it can be concluded that the questionnaire instrument in this study has a good level of reliability and is suitable for use as a data collection tool.

Furthermore, the data that has been obtained is analyzed using the N-Gain method which is used to determine the difference in pretest and posttest scores which is used to compare the results between the experimental group and the control group, which is useful to determine whether the puzzle media has a significant influence on students' awareness of *bullying* behavior At SMP Lab School UPI Bandung, a more detailed explanation of the N-Gain test is in the results and discussion section.

Results and Discussion

Based on the results of research that has been conducted at SMP Lab School UPI Bandung involving 40 students as research subjects and divided into two groups consisting of 20 students each. Group A or the experimental group was given learning treatment in the form of puzzle media, while group B or control group, did not receive any treatment.

Table 1. Gender Distribution of Research Participants

No	Gender	N	%
1	Male	14	35%
2	Women	26	65%

Based on Table 1. It can be seen that in terms of student gender, there are 14 male students and 26 female students. Where male students have a percentage of 35% and women have 65%.

Table 2. Pretest analysis of experimental and control groups

Group	N	Value	Average
Experiments	20	926	46.30%
Controls	20	871	43.55%

Based on table 2 above, the average score of the pretest of the experimental group was 46.3 and the average of the control group was 43.55. This shows that before being given treatment, the level of understanding between the exsperm group and the control group can be said to be relatively balanced.

Table 3. Posttest Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Value	Average
Experiments	20	1487	74.35%
Controls	20	992	49.6%

When posttested, the experimental group had an average of 74.35. Meanwhile, the control group had an average of 49.6. A significant increase in the average scores of the experimental group compared to the control group indicated that the treatment given using the puzzle game had a good or positive effect on the measured outcomes. In addition to the statistical data test described above, items were also tested through significance (p-value) at a confidence level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). An item is declared significant if the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is less than 0.05. The data from the analysis of 23 test instrument

items with significance values ranging from 0.001 to 0.048, which means that all of these values are less than 0.05. This shows that the correlation between the score of each item and the total score is statistically significant, thus strengthening the conclusion that all questionnaire items in this study are valid..

Table 4. N-Gain Analysis of the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	N-Gain	N-Gain %
Experiments	20	0,62	62,49%
Controls	20	0,12	12,41%

The results of the N-Gain Test in table 4 show that anti-bullying puzzle media is effective in increasing junior high school students' awareness of bullying behavior, with the experimental group obtaining an N-Gain value of 0.62 (medium category) compared to the control group which only reached 0.12. These findings indicate that puzzle media-based interventions are not only statistically significant but also have a substantive impact in improving students' understanding of the concept of bullying and encouraging behavior change in a more positive direction. The effectiveness of puzzle media can be comprehensively explained through the integration of two main learning theories, namely Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) and Jean Piaget's constructivist perspective (1964), which complement each other in shaping a transformative learning experience for students.

Bandura's social learning theory provides an explanatory framework for how students acquire and internalize knowledge about bullying through observation, imitation, and hands-on experience mechanisms. In the context of anti-bullying puzzle games, students do not just passively receive information, but observe various illustrations, narratives, and bullying scenarios presented in puzzle pieces. This observation process becomes the initial foundation of learning, where students focus attention on anti-bullying content delivered through an engaging and thematic visual design. Furthermore, the activity of compiling puzzles requires students to store information about bullying in memory through repetition and cognitive reinforcement, where the process of matching pieces of information forms a complete narrative about the definition, types, impacts, and bullying prevention strategies.

This retention process is reinforced by the multisensory nature of puzzle media that engages visual, kinesthetic, and cognitive simultaneously, creating layered learning paths that enhance students' memory of the material being delivered. Furthermore, Bandura emphasized the importance of motor reproduction, where students not only understand bullying cognitively but also learn concrete strategies to prevent and deal with bullying through the scenarios presented in the puzzle. Students gain positive reinforcement from successful puzzle solving, appreciation from group friends, and feedback from facilitators, which increases their intrinsic motivation to internalize anti-bullying values. This process is in line with the findings of Dewi et al. (2024) who revealed that educational games can increase awareness of prosocial behavior and emphasize aggressive behavior in the school environment, since games involve direct interaction between students that reinforce the values of empathy and cooperation.

In parallel, Piaget's (1964) theory of constructivism states that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals through interaction with the environment, and students learn more effectively when they engage in fun and meaningful activities. The anti-bullying puzzle media reflects this principle by allowing students to actively construct an understanding of bullying through the process of compiling, discussing, and reflecting on every piece of information they find. In contrast to the passive lecture method, students in the experimental group were directly involved in the process of finding meaning, where they experienced firsthand how pieces of information about bullying interconnected to form a holistic understanding. This explains the significant increase in comprehension scores from pretest (46.30%) to

posttest (74.35%) in the experimental group. Research by Rosarian & Dirgantoro (2020) confirms that the use of game media in learning activities improves understanding and retention of information in students. The principle of learning through play adopted from Piaget's theory is the key to the effectiveness of puzzle media, where students learn without feeling burdened so that the process of internalizing anti-bullying values takes place naturally and meaningfully.

The main advantage of puzzle media lies in the integration of these two theories in one coherent learning activity. Students not only observe and imitate prosocial behavior (Bandura), but also actively construct their own understanding through direct experience (Piaget). Group puzzle activities create a learning environment rich in social interaction, where students communicate, discuss, and share perspectives on bullying. Herdian & Listiana (2024) suggest that group play can strengthen communication, cooperation, and emotional control skills, all of which contribute to bullying prevention. When playing puzzles, students learn to interact with their friends and understand how to resolve conflicts well and become one of the prevention of bullying. Azizah et al. (2024) emphasized that morality-based educational games help students understand the concept of morality, including the importance of respecting peers and avoiding behaviors that can hurt others.

Thus, the effectiveness of anti-bullying puzzle media in addition to providing information, also creates a transformative learning experience that combines the acquisition of cognitive knowledge, the development of social skills, and the internalization of prosocial values in one fun and meaningful activity related to bullying. The puzzle medium serves as a bridge between theoretical understanding and practical application, where students not only know about bullying but also feel its emotional impact and are motivated to act proactively. This finding is strengthened by the argument of Pama (2024) in his research, that handling bullying through the media as an intermediary is more effective and achieves significant results than without the use of media, and is in line with the research of Andriani et al. (2019) which shows the effectiveness of puzzle media in reducing bullying behavior. The practical implication of this study is that the anti-bullying puzzle media can be used as a reliable and enjoyable intervention instrument for guidance and counseling teachers in junior high schools, given the characteristics of early adolescent development that require an active, interactive, and contextual learning approach.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the anti-bullying puzzle media was effective in increasing students' awareness of bullying behavior. The experimental group showed an increase in the mean score from 46.30 in the pretest to 74.35 in the posttest, with an N-Gain value of 0.62, categorized as moderate. In comparison, the control group obtained an N-Gain value of 0.12, categorized as low. These findings indicate that the use of anti-bullying puzzle media resulted in greater improvement in students' understanding and awareness of bullying behavior than conventional instruction.

The findings also suggest that puzzle-based learning can provide opportunities for students to engage in active, interactive, and collaborative learning. Through the puzzle activities, students were encouraged to discuss bullying situations, develop understanding, and practice social skills such as cooperation, self-control, and empathy. These characteristics are consistent with the principles of Bandura's social learning theory and Piaget's constructivist perspective, which emphasize observation, active participation, interaction, and experience in the learning process.

Therefore, anti-bullying puzzle media can serve as an alternative instructional medium for guidance and counseling programs aimed at preventing bullying among junior high school students. Its interactive

and engaging characteristics make it potentially useful for supporting the development of a safe, inclusive, and supportive school environment. Future studies should involve larger samples, longer intervention periods, and additional statistical analyses to further examine the effectiveness of puzzle-based interventions in preventing bullying behavior.

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