# Language Politeness Training for Verbal Bullying Prevention: A Pre-Post Intervention Study at Muhammadiyah 3 Plus High School, Bandung

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## ABSTRACT

Verbal bullying remains a serious issue in Indonesian schools, negatively impacting students' mental health and academic performance. Low awareness and skills in polite communication have been identified as contributing factors. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a language politeness training program in preventing verbal bullying among high school students. A pre-post intervention design was conducted involving 61 students from Muhammadiyah 3 Plus High School, Bandung City. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire assessing students' knowledge and awareness of language politeness. A pre-test was administered before the intervention, followed by a structured training session, and a post-test. Data were analyzed using a paired-samples t-test. The average pre-test score was 56.13 (SD = 8.42), and the post-test score increased to 74.03 (SD = 7.95), yielding a mean improvement of 31.90% ($t(60)$ = 12.47, $p < 0.001$). Students also expressed enthusiasm and provided positive feedback about the training, indicating increased awareness of verbal bullying. The conclusion from this community service is that language politeness training significantly improved students' communication skills and awareness of verbal bullying. Schools are recommended to integrate such training into ongoing anti-bullying programs. Future studies should incorporate control groups, larger samples, and longitudinal follow-up to strengthen generalizability.

## ARTICLE INFO

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# INTRODUCTION

Bullying is not just fiction. According to UNICEF data from 2020, the rate of violence among students reached 41 percent, and cyberbullying reached 45 percent. Bullying is also a concerning issue in Indonesia. According to Andriansyah (2023), citing data from the Indonesian Teachers' Union Federation (FSGI), the rate of bullying in Indonesia is relatively high, especially among students. Data collected in July 2023 showed that bullying is prevalent at the elementary school (SD) level, at 25 percent, at the junior high school (SMP) level, at the senior high school (SMA), at 18.75 percent, at the vocational high school (SMK) level, at 6.25 percent, at the Islamic junior high school (MTs), and at the Islamic boarding school (Islamic boarding school) at 6.25 percent (Permatasari, 2023). Based on survey data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), bullying is increasingly prevalent in the education sector. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) reports that 41% of 15-year-old students experience bullying at least several times a month.

Bullying can occur in physical, verbal, or psychological forms. Verbal bullying is the initial level of bullying that can trigger other forms of bullying. Verbal bullying involves deliberate actions and sometimes cruel language to demean, hurt, or intimidate the victim, often targeting the victim's emotions and self-esteem. Although verbal bullying is non-physical, its impact can devastate the victim (Cregan & Kelloway, 2021).

Verbal bullying has a significant impact on students' mental and emotional health. Research shows that students who are victims of verbal bullying often experience decreased self-confidence, increased anxiety, and depression, which can be self-defeating (Barasuol et al., 2017). The impact of verbal bullying can extend to academic performance, sleep disturbances, and even manifest as physical symptoms, such as headaches. The emotional impact of verbal bullying has serious consequences for the victim's well-being, leading to psychological distress such as stress, anxiety, and depression (Ayu et al., 2022). Verbal bullying occurs when words, considered neutral by some, have a harsh or hurtful meaning for the victim (Chekan et al., 2024). In more extreme cases, research has shown that verbal bullying can lead to social isolation and, in the long term, chronic psychological trauma, eating disorders, and even suicidal thoughts (Ozada Nazim & Duyan, 2021). Therefore, addressing the problem of verbal bullying is crucial to creating safe and conducive schools for student development.

One of the causes of verbal bullying is low awareness and skills in polite communication (language politeness). Language politeness is a person's ethics in socializing, using good language and diction, and paying attention to when, where, and to whom to speak, both in the real world and cyberspace. Speech is considered polite if the speaker does not sound pushy or arrogant. Speech will be polite if the speaker pays attention to the words and language spoken to the interlocutor (Anggraini et al., 2019). Other research examines language politeness, where pragmatics plays a crucial role in preventing misunderstandings, and there must be a reciprocal balance between the speaker and the listener (Sudar et al., 2025).

Previous studies suggest that language politeness enhances classroom interaction, teacher-student relationships, and parental involvement in moral education (Mayrita, Balkist, et al., 2023). However, there is limited empirical research on structured training interventions that integrate language politeness as a preventive strategy for bullying, particularly in Indonesian high schools

Muhammadiyah 3 Plus Senior High School (SMA) Bandung is a private school under the Muhammadiyah charity of Bandung City and has been accredited A, located at Jl. Banteng Dalam No. 6,

Turangga, Lengkong District, Bandung City, West Java Province. Muhammadiyah 3 Senior High School, Bandung City, has six classes with 111 students and 16 teachers. The age range of students is 16 to 19 years old, which is adolescence. The results of a preliminary study conducted by researchers on 18 students at Muhammadiyah 3 Senior High School, Bandung, showed that two students potentially experienced verbal bullying.

Muhammadiyah 3 Plus Bandung High School welcomes all student innovation and improvement. The school consistently provides facilities and infrastructure for student activities. A reward and punishment program is also in place, facilitating the implementation of this community service activity.

Based on the situation analysis outlined above and coordination with the school, we identified the problem. The primary issue prioritized for students is their lack of adequate language politeness skills in everyday conversation. Therefore, language politeness training is needed for students to prevent verbal bullying.

The objectives of language politeness training for students in order to prevent verbal bullying at SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Plus Bandung City are: 1) To broaden students' horizons so they can differentiate the meaning of bullying from excessive joking in everyday life; 2) To train students' speaking skills by applying language politeness; 3) To train students to promote language politeness as an anti-bullying movement at school.

This program collaborates with Aisyiyah University Bandung and Muhammadiyah 3 Plus Senior High School in Bandung. The benefits for Aisyiyah University Bandung include: 1) Implementation of the Tridharma of Higher Education for lecturers and students of Aisyiyah University Bandung; 2) Achievement of the Main Performance Indicators of Higher Education in the framework of Independent Learning Independent Campus (MBKM) by involving students in learning off-campus; 3) Increasing partnerships between Higher Education Institutions; 4) Supporting the implementation of the research and community service roadmap on improving language skills for students and the community.

The benefits for Muhammadiyah 3 Plus Senior High School, Bandung City include: 1) Material for policy-making on the importance of language politeness for students as an anti-bullying movement in schools; 2) increasing partnerships with universities.

## METHOD

This community service activity is implemented in the following stages: 1. Planning stage: includes the following stages: a. Coordination with SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Plus Bandung City; b. An analysis must be conducted by conducting an audience with SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Plus Bandung City. Preparing material on language politeness through Microsoft PowerPoint. 2. Implementation stage: this program is carried out with training, which took place in the Hall of SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Plus Bandung City on April 25, 2025, with the following stages: a. Giving a pretest, participants are given pretest questions before giving the material, b. Presentation of material, giving material on language politeness in order to promote the anti-verbal bullying movement, c. Posttest, after giving the material, participants are given posttest questions. Evaluation: To evaluate changes in the level of knowledge by

comparing the average pretest score with the average posttest score. 3. Monitoring stage: The team periodically monitors the community service results. A 20-item questionnaire was used to assess students' understanding of language politeness and verbal bullying. Content validity was reviewed by two linguistics experts, and internal consistency reliability was acceptable (Cronbach's $\alpha$ = 0.81). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic data. A paired-samples t-test compared pre-

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and post-test mean scores. A significance level of p < 0.05 was applied.

## RESULTS

In this community service activity, the main target was 61 students of Muhammadiyah 3 Plus High School, Bandung City. The demographic characteristics of the participants, including gender and age distribution, are summarized to provide a clearer understanding of the sample's background, which is essential for interpreting the research findings. See Table 1 for the demographic details of the participants.

**TABLE 1.** Percentage distribution by item (community users, N= 50)

| Variable | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Gender (Male) | 27 | 44.3 |
| Gender (Female) | 34 | 55.7 |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100 |
| Age 16–17 | 36 | 59.0 |
| Age 18–19 | 25 | 41.0 |
| TOTAL | 61 | 100 |

Based on the demographic characteristics of the participants (Table 1), the majority of respondents were female, accounting for 34 individuals (55.7%), while males comprised 27 individuals (44.3%). In terms of age, most respondents were within the 16–17 age group, with 36 individuals (59.0%), whereas the remaining 25 individuals (41.0%) were in the 18–19 age group. These findings indicate that the study participants were predominantly female adolescents aged 16–17 years, which is an important group for examining language politeness behavior.

The results of the pretest and posttest scores present the changes in participants' language politeness performance before and after the intervention. These findings highlight the statistical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the intervention program. See Table 2 for the results of the pretest and posttest analysis.

**TABLE 2**. Pretest and posttest results

| Measure | Pre-test (M ± SD) | Post-test (M ± SD) | % Increase | t(60) | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Language Politeness | 56.13 ± 8.42 | 74.03 ± 7.95 | 31.90% | 12.47 | <0.001 |

Based on Table 2, revealed a marked improvement in language politeness scores following the intervention. The mean pretest score was 56.13 (SD = 8.42), which increased to 74.03 (SD = 7.95) in the posttest, reflecting a 31.90% improvement. The paired t-test indicated t(60) = 12.47 with p < 0.001, demonstrating a highly significant difference between pretest and posttest scores. Thus, it can be concluded that the intervention applied in this study was effective in significantly enhancing the participants' language politeness.

## DISCUSSION

Students are reminded that in implementing language politeness, six principles refer to Leech (2014)

opinion. This principle of language politeness is important to maintain social harmony and avoid conflict. The principles are: 1) Tact Maxim (Tact): avoiding actions that harm others; 2) Generosity Maxim (Generosity): showing a humble attitude in communication; 3) Approbation Maxim (Appreciation): giving respect to the person you are talking to; 4) Modesty Maxim (Simplicity): not glorifying yourself; 5) Agreement Maxim (Agreement): finding common ground when there are differences of opinion; 6) Sympathy Maxim (Sympathy): showing concern and empathy for others. Crystal in Yualita, (2025) states that language politeness, as part of language, plays an important role in building identity and maintaining social relationships. Language politeness also plays a role in the whole language approach, which emphasizes holistic and contextual learning (Yualita, 2025b). Language politeness can also help in intercultural communication (Handriani et al., 2025).

In her research, Sari et al., (2025) demonstrated that language politeness and language skills influence the communication etiquette between students and teachers during school learning. Mayrita et al (2023) also demonstrated in her research that language politeness is crucial in education at school and home because parents play a key role in shaping language politeness. Therefore, anti-verbal bullying movements must involve the entire school community, including students' parents, as a comprehensive effort to address bullying.

The results of this community service demonstrate increased students' knowledge of language politeness. These results align with those of Yualita et al. (2023), who demonstrated an increase in participants' ability to paraphrase language politely. Yualita et al.(2025) also emphasized the importance of language skills in promoting something. One such initiative is an anti-verbal bullying movement for students.

The author assumes that the results of community service with increased language politeness are because SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Plus Kota Bandung has been well managed for a long time. Hence, the school community's awareness of increasing language politeness is excellent.

## CONCLUSION

Language politeness in the context of preventing verbal bullying at SMA Muhammadiyah 3 Plus Bandung City is important for increasing students' knowledge and promoting the anti-bullying movement, especially verbal bullying. Language politeness is needed starting from opening students' insights to distinguish the meaning of bullying with excessive joking in everyday life, training students' speaking skills by applying language politeness, and training students to promote language politeness as an anti-bullying movement in schools. Thus, this activity needs to be carried out continuously to support the anti-bullying movement as a whole. Future studies should examine cost-effectiveness and long-term impact using controlled designs.

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# ATTACHMENT



**FIGURE 1**. Coordination with Muhammadiyah 3 Plus High School, Bandung City



**FIGURE 2**. Greetings from the Principal of Muhammadiyah 3 Plus High School, Bandung City



**FIGURE 3**. Implementation of Pre-Test



**FIGURE 4**. Language Politeness Education for anti-verbal bullying

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**FIGURE 5**. Post-test Implementation



**FIGURE 6**. Prizes for the 10 most active students



**FIGURE 7**. Final Monitoring and Evaluation with the Principal and BP Teachers