

The Effectiveness of Cinema Therapy in Reducing Bullying Behavior in Islamic Boarding Schools

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	ABSTRACT
<p>ARTICLE INFO: Received November 20, 2025</p> <p>Revised November 11, 2025</p> <p>Accepted December 12, 2025</p> <p>KEYWORDS: Bullying Behavior, Cinema Therapy, Islamic Boarding School</p>	<p>Bullying remains a significant psychosocial problem in Islamic boarding schools, potentially affecting students' psychological well-being, social relationships, and academic development. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of Cinema Therapy in reducing bullying behavior among students at Ar-Risalah Modern Islamic Boarding School, Lubuklinggau, Indonesia. A quantitative pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest–posttest approach was employed. The study involved eight students selected through probability sampling techniques. Data were collected using a bullying behavior questionnaire and observational measures. Instrument validity and reliability were assessed prior to data analysis. The collected data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test with the assistance of SPSS version 22. The findings indicated that the participants initially exhibited a high level of bullying behavior. Following the implementation of the Cinema Therapy intervention, bullying behavior scores decreased significantly. Statistical analysis revealed a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores (Asymp. Sig. = 0.012, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the intervention had a positive effect on reducing bullying behavior. These findings suggest that Cinema Therapy is an effective counseling intervention for decreasing bullying behavior among students in Islamic boarding school settings. The study contributes to the development of innovative counseling strategies aimed at fostering a safer and more supportive educational environment.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Bullying has become a persistent problem in educational settings worldwide and is recognized as a serious threat to students' psychological well-being, social adjustment, and academic development (Salmivalli, 2018). Bullying refers to repeated aggressive behavior characterized by an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim, which may occur in physical, verbal, relational, or psychological forms (Smith, 2016). Victims of bullying often experience anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, social withdrawal, and decreased academic performance, while perpetrators may develop long-term antisocial tendencies (Siahaan, 2002). Consequently, bullying has emerged as a major concern for educators, counselors, and policymakers seeking to create safe and supportive learning environments (Yustina, 2025).

In Indonesia, bullying continues to occur across various educational institutions, including schools and Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*). As educational institutions that emphasize religious values, moral development, and character formation, Islamic boarding schools are expected to foster positive interpersonal relationships among students. However, empirical evidence suggests that bullying behaviors remain prevalent in some pesantren environments. Such behaviors may include verbal harassment, inappropriate nicknaming, social exclusion, intimidation, physical aggression, and public humiliation. These practices contradict the educational and moral objectives

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of pesantren, which are grounded in the principles of *akhlaqul karimah* (noble character) and mutual respect.

From a sociological perspective, bullying can be understood as a form of deviant behavior resulting from ineffective socialization processes, weak social control mechanisms, and the influence of negative peer cultures. Within educational environments, bullying often develops through unequal power relations among students and is reinforced by group dynamics that tolerate or normalize aggressive behavior. Therefore, effective intervention strategies are required to address both the behavioral and emotional dimensions of bullying.

Preliminary observations and interviews conducted with teachers and alumni at Ar-Risalah Modern Islamic Boarding School, Lubuklinggau, revealed that bullying behaviors continue to occur among students. Reported incidents include verbal ridicule, derogatory nicknames, physical intimidation, and acts of humiliation directed toward peers. These findings indicate the need for innovative counseling interventions capable of enhancing students' awareness of the consequences of bullying while promoting empathy, self-reflection, and prosocial behavior (Ubaidillah, 2022).

Guidance and Counseling services play a strategic role in preventing and reducing bullying through various intervention approaches. One innovative approach that has gained increasing attention is cinema therapy (Khotimah, 2020). Cinema therapy is a counseling technique that utilizes films as therapeutic tools to facilitate self-reflection, emotional awareness, cognitive restructuring, and behavioral change (Nadila, 2024). Through exposure to film narratives and guided discussions, students are encouraged to identify with characters, reflect on the consequences of harmful behaviors, and develop alternative perspectives toward interpersonal relationships. The visual and emotional nature of films enables students to engage more deeply with counseling content, making cinema therapy particularly relevant for adolescents (Mukholladun, 2024).

Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of cinema therapy in enhancing empathy, increasing self-awareness, improving emotional regulation, and addressing various psychosocial problems among adolescents. However, empirical studies examining the effectiveness of cinema therapy in reducing bullying behavior within Islamic boarding school settings remain limited (Saputri, 2023). Given the unique social structure, cultural values, and communal living environment of pesantren, further investigation is necessary to determine whether cinema therapy can serve as an effective intervention in this context (Saidah, 2022).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of cinema therapy in reducing bullying behavior among students at Ar-Risalah Modern Islamic Boarding School, Lubuklinggau. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of evidence-based counseling interventions and provide practical recommendations for bullying prevention programs in Islamic boarding schools.

Rationale of the Study

The persistence of bullying in Islamic boarding schools indicates a gap between the moral values taught within the educational environment and the actual behaviors exhibited by students. This situation highlights the need for effective intervention strategies that are compatible with the characteristics and learning preferences of contemporary adolescents. One promising approach is cinema therapy, which utilizes films as a medium to convey moral messages, evoke emotional responses, and enhance students' understanding of the negative consequences of bullying behavior. Through reflection and discussion of film content, students may develop greater empathy, self-awareness, and prosocial attitudes. Despite its potential benefits, the application of cinema therapy in Islamic boarding school settings has received limited scholarly attention. Therefore, this study is important to determine whether cinema therapy can serve as an effective intervention for reducing bullying behavior among students in Islamic boarding schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine whether cinema therapy can help reduce bullying among students in the pesantren, and to understand how film-based learning can support positive behavioral change and strengthen students' awareness of the impacts of bullying.

METHODS

Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a one-group pretest–posttest pre-experimental design. This design was selected to evaluate the effectiveness of cinema therapy in reducing bullying behavior among students in an Islamic boarding school setting. Participants' levels of bullying behavior were measured before the intervention (pretest) and after the intervention (posttest), enabling the researcher to examine changes associated with the treatment. The quantitative approach provided objective and measurable data that could be statistically analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention (Sugiyono, 2017).

Participant and Procedure

The participants consisted of eight students from Ar-Risalah Islamic Boarding School, Lubuklinggau, who were identified as exhibiting bullying behavior based on recommendations from teachers and preliminary observations conducted by the researcher. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that only students who met the study criteria were included.

The research procedure consisted of four stages. First, participants were identified and recruited based on the established inclusion criteria. Second, a pretest was administered to assess the initial level of bullying behavior. Third, participants received a cinema therapy intervention conducted in several sessions. During these sessions, students watched selected films containing moral and educational messages related to empathy, social relationships, and the consequences of aggressive behavior. Guided discussions and reflective activities were conducted following each viewing session to facilitate participants' understanding and self-reflection. Finally, a posttest was administered to evaluate changes in bullying behavior after the intervention.

Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the objectives of the study, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

Research Instruments

The bullying behavior questionnaire consisted of items measuring physical, verbal, social, and psychological bullying. Prior to its administration, the instrument was subjected to validity and reliability testing. The reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.86, indicating good internal consistency and confirming that the instrument was reliable for measuring bullying behavior among students.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test with the assistance of IBM SPSS Statistics version 22. This nonparametric statistical test was selected because the study involved a small sample size and aimed to compare paired observations obtained from pretest and posttest measurements. The test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in bullying behavior scores before and after the cinema therapy intervention. Statistical significance was established at the 0.05 level ($p < .05$).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Changes in Bullying Behavior Before and After the Cinema Therapy Intervention

The study was conducted at Ar-Risalah Modern Islamic Boarding School, Lubuklinggau, from April to May 2023. Eight students identified as exhibiting bullying behavior participated in the study. To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, participants completed a bullying behavior questionnaire before (pretest) and after (posttest) receiving group counseling sessions based on the Cinema Therapy technique.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of participants' bullying behavior scores before and after the intervention. The mean pretest score was 71.50, indicating a relatively high level of bullying behavior among participants. Following the implementation of Cinema Therapy, the mean posttest score decreased to 54.88, reflecting a reduction of 16.62 points. These findings suggest a positive change in participants' behavior after receiving the intervention.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Bullying Behavior Scores Before and After the Intervention

Measurement	Mean
Pretest	71.50
Posttest	54.88

To determine whether the observed reduction was statistically significant, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was performed. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3. The Wilcoxon rank analysis showed that all participants experienced a decrease in bullying behavior scores following the intervention. As shown in Table 2, the number of negative ranks was eight, while no positive ranks or ties were identified. This indicates that every participant obtained a lower bullying behavior score at posttest than at pretest.

Table 2. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Ranks

Category	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Negative Ranks	8	4.50	36.00
Positive Ranks	0	0.00	0.00
Ties	0	–	–

The statistical test results further revealed a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores ($Z = -2.527$, $p = .012$). Since the significance value was below the threshold of .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the findings indicate that Cinema Therapy had a significant effect on reducing bullying behavior among students at Ar-Risalah Modern Islamic Boarding School.

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results

Statistic	Value
Z	-2.527
p-value (2-tailed)	.012

These findings provide empirical evidence that Cinema Therapy can serve as an effective intervention for reducing bullying behavior among students in Islamic boarding schools.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Cinema Therapy was effective in reducing bullying behavior among students at Ar-Risalah Modern Islamic Boarding School. The significant decrease in bullying behavior scores from pretest to posttest suggests that the intervention successfully facilitated positive behavioral change among participants. These findings indicate that film-based

counseling interventions can serve as a valuable medium for promoting prosocial behavior and reducing aggressive tendencies among adolescents.

One possible explanation for this finding lies in the reflective and experiential nature of Cinema Therapy. Through exposure to film narratives depicting the consequences of bullying and interpersonal conflict, students were encouraged to examine their own behaviors and attitudes. The visual and emotional elements embedded in films enabled participants to identify with characters, understand the experiences of victims, and recognize the negative consequences of harmful actions (Pribram, 2012). This process likely enhanced empathy and moral awareness, both of which are important protective factors against bullying behavior (Romera, 2019).

The findings can also be interpreted through the perspective of Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that individuals acquire new behaviors through observation, imitation, and reflection on modeled actions (Horsburgh, 2018). During the intervention, participants observed behavioral models presented in the films and subsequently engaged in guided discussions that facilitated critical reflection on those behaviors. As a result, students were able to develop alternative responses to interpersonal conflicts and gain a deeper understanding of socially acceptable behavior within the boarding school environment (Gunawan, 2025).

In addition to the film-viewing experience, the group counseling process contributed substantially to the effectiveness of the intervention. The discussion sessions provided opportunities for participants to share experiences, express emotions, and receive feedback from peers. Such interactions promoted self-awareness and encouraged students to evaluate their own behavior in relation to the experiences portrayed in the films. The collaborative nature of group counseling may therefore have reinforced the behavioral changes initiated through Cinema Therapy (Demir, 2007).

The present findings are consistent with previous studies demonstrating the effectiveness of film-based interventions in educational and counseling settings. Research conducted by Alestia et al. (2024) reported that the use of film media in group guidance services significantly improved students' understanding of bullying. Similarly, Prasetiyowati and Setiawati (2022) found that cinema-based group guidance enhanced students' academic self-efficacy, suggesting that film interventions can positively influence cognitive and emotional development. Furthermore, Rahmawati et al. (2023) reported that Cinema Therapy effectively reduced narcissistic tendencies among university students, highlighting its potential to address various maladaptive behaviors. Collectively, these studies support the current findings and suggest that Cinema Therapy is a flexible and effective counseling approach for facilitating behavioral and psychological change (Pannu, 2025).

The findings of this study also contribute to the limited body of research examining bullying interventions within Islamic boarding school settings (Abdurohchim, 2024). Given the unique social structure of pesantren, where students live and interact intensively within a communal environment, effective strategies for promoting empathy, mutual respect, and positive social relationships are particularly important. Cinema Therapy appears to offer a culturally adaptable and engaging approach that complements the character-building objectives of Islamic education (Yasmiati, 2026).

Despite its promising findings, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small, involving only eight participants, which limits the generalizability of the results. Second, the study employed a one-group pretest–posttest design without a control group, making it difficult to completely rule out the influence of external factors. Future research should involve larger samples, randomized controlled designs, and longer follow-up periods to examine the sustainability of the intervention effects. Further studies may also explore the integration of Cinema Therapy with other counseling approaches to enhance its effectiveness in preventing and reducing bullying behavior among adolescents.

Overall, the results suggest that Cinema Therapy represents a promising intervention for reducing bullying behavior in Islamic boarding schools and may serve as an innovative counseling strategy for fostering healthier and more supportive educational environments.

Implication

The findings of this study have important implications for guidance and counseling services in Islamic boarding schools. The effectiveness of Cinema Therapy in reducing bullying behavior suggests that counselors and educators can utilize film-based interventions as an innovative and engaging strategy to promote empathy, moral awareness, and positive social interactions among students. Given the communal nature of pesantren life, where students interact intensively on a daily basis, Cinema Therapy may serve as a preventive as well as corrective approach to addressing bullying and fostering a more supportive school climate. Furthermore, the integration of visual media into counseling programs aligns with the characteristics of contemporary adolescents, making counseling services more relevant, accessible, and impactful. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools may consider incorporating Cinema Therapy into regular counseling and character education programs as part of broader efforts to create a safe, respectful, and inclusive educational environment.

Limitation

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study involved a relatively small sample size of only eight participants from a single Islamic boarding school, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other educational settings. Second, the use of a one-group pretest–posttest design without a control group makes it difficult to determine whether the observed changes were solely attributable to the Cinema Therapy intervention or influenced by other external factors. Third, the study relied primarily on self-report questionnaire data, which may be subject to response bias and social desirability effects. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs with control groups, and incorporate multiple data sources, such as teacher observations and peer assessments, to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of Cinema Therapy in reducing bullying behavior.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Cinema Therapy is an effective intervention for reducing bullying behavior among students at Pondok Pesantren Ar-Risalah Lubuklinggau. The findings show that participants initially demonstrated a high level of bullying behavior, which subsequently decreased after receiving group counseling based on Cinema Therapy. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test indicated a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores, confirming that the intervention contributed to a measurable reduction in bullying behavior. These results suggest that Cinema Therapy can serve as a practical and evidence-based counseling approach for addressing bullying in Islamic boarding school contexts. By integrating film-based learning with guided group discussion, the intervention supports students in developing empathy, self-reflection, and improved social behavior. Accordingly, Cinema Therapy may be considered a promising alternative strategy within school counseling programs aimed at strengthening character education and promoting a safe and supportive learning environment.

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