



Teacher Bullying and Emotional Harm: Power, Silence, and Gendered Struggles for Voice in Indonesian Schools

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Abstract

Background: Teacher-to-student bullying in Indonesian schools often operates subtly within hierarchical educational cultures. This study aimed to examine how institutional power dynamics and cultural expectations shape students' perceptions of bullying and their emotional well-being, with the working hypothesis that hierarchical norms and respect for authority influence recognition, reporting, and coping.

Methods: This qualitative study employed Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 12 participants (male students, female students, and teachers) from a senior high school in Indonesia. Discussions examined teacher authority, bullying behaviors, and students' emotional responses. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, involving familiarization, initial coding, and iterative theme development across groups.

Results: Participants described teacher behavior that was considered bullying, causing emotional distress. This study highlights how disciplinary practices, which function as symbolic violence, have become commonplace in institutional dynamics, thereby inhibiting students from complaining or reporting bullying. This research offers a new perspective by linking power structures and gendered emotional responses to the persistence of bullying in educational settings.

Conclusions: Teacher-to-student bullying is intertwined with institutional and cultural hierarchies that shape students' perceptions and coping, contributing to emotional suppression and disengagement. Addressing it requires a comprehensive, culturally attuned approach that strengthens institutional support systems and centers teacher empathy.

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying in schools is not merely an interpersonal dispute; it is embedded in institutional power relations that organize daily life in education. Global debates have typically centered on peer aggression, yet teacher-to-student bullying remains comparatively underexamined, even though it can produce deeper and longer-lasting effects on students' psychological well-being and academic development. Within hierarchical school structures, teachers wield authority over grading, status, and emotional growth. This asymmetry invites scrutiny of how authority operates and can be misused, especially when those charged with care and instruction engage in bullying. In Olweus et al. (1994) terms, bullying consists of repeated aggression by a more powerful actor against someone perceived as weaker. When the aggressor is a teacher, the power gap widens, making it harder for students to resist, report, or even recognize abuse, thereby sustaining a cycle of subordination and silence.

Research on the psychosocial harms of teacher bullying identifies diminished self-esteem, chronic anxiety, and the trauma of feeling unable to disclose or challenge abusive conduct (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Unlike many instances of peer bullying often overt teacher bullying frequently takes subtler yet corrosive forms: humiliation, ridicule, threats, and disproportionate punishment (Twemlow et al., 2006). Recent scholarship indicates these practices compromise mental health and erode motivation and engagement with school (Kowalski et al., 2021). Crucially, such conduct should not be read as isolated lapses. It mirrors structural dynamics of authority within schooling, where misuse of power may go unchallenged and become normalized by institutional culture (Gusfre et al., 2023). From a sociological perspective, teachers benefit from entrenched norms of deference that can insulate them from scrutiny and accountability (Bilecik Karacan & Çınar, 2025). However, deference is not experienced in a socially neutral way; gender norms can shape what forms of emotional expression, resistance, and help-seeking are considered appropriate for girls and boys student (UNGEI, 2019).

Despite the seriousness of these patterns, research centering students perceptions particularly how gendered expectations shape responses to teacher authority remains limited, especially in Indonesia. Much of the literature addresses prevalence, teacher viewpoints, or institutional responses, while students voices can be muted in learning cultures where power asymmetries shape participation and silence (Bahar et al., 2022). In Indonesia, longstanding expectations of obedience and politeness can intensify this silence, positioning mistreatment as an ordinary feature of schooling rather than a problem that warrants disclosure or challenge (Nasution et al., 2025). These expectations may also be gendered in everyday school life, shaping what forms of emotional expression, resistance, and help-seeking are considered acceptable for girls and boys when facing adult authority (Mahendra et al., 2021). Supporting this, qualitative evidence from Indonesian early adolescents shows gendered norms that discourage boys from expressing distress and highlight that bullying at school includes not only peers but also teachers or other adults (Rizkia et al., 2020). Media reporting, such as the alleged case in Rohil, Riau, underscores that teacher bullying is not only an academic concern but also a matter of justice, safety, and institutional trust (KilasRiau.com, 2024).

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach grounded in a constructivist paradigm, which views social reality as subjective and shaped by individual experiences and social interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The choice of this approach stems from its alignment with exploring students' perceptions of ideal teacher behavior, considering that these perceptions are not inherent but instead constructed through their interactions and experiences within the school's cultural context. To gain a deeper understanding of these perceptions, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were selected as the primary data collection method. FGDs offer a rich platform for exploring participants' collective perspectives, providing a dynamic space for discussion that enhances the depth of the data (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

To facilitate this exploration, 12

participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a deliberate focus on individuals who could provide relevant insights about the research objectives. The sample comprised four male students, four female students, and four teachers from the same senior high school, all of whom were recruited after obtaining approval from the school administration. Importantly, students and teachers were not combined in a single discussion. Instead, participants were organized into three separate FGDs: four male students, four female students, and four teachers. This group size aligns with recommended FGD practice, in which 4–6 participants per group is considered adequate for maintaining interaction while allowing each participant sufficient opportunity to contribute. This group size aligns with recommended FGD practice, where 4–6 participants per group is ideal for balanced interaction. (Lestari & Setyawan, 2025) also used small groups of participants with similar characteristics, to emphasize its effectiveness for in-depth discussions. Separating groups by role and student gender was intended to support open disclosure and enable cross-group comparison of perspectives. Teachers were selected based on the criterion of having at least five years of teaching experience, ensuring the inclusion of professionals with significant exposure to classroom dynamics and teacher–student interactions. All participants were fully informed about the research objectives and provided consent prior to participation.

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration prior to recruitment. All participants received an information sheet explaining the study aims, procedures, potential risks, and confidentiality protections. For student participants under 18 years old, written parental/guardian consent and student assent were obtained before participation, and teacher participants provided written informed consent. Participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw at any time without penalty, and they could decline to answer any question. To protect anonymity, identifying information (e.g., names of participants, teachers, and the school) was removed from transcripts and pseudonyms were used in reporting. Audio recordings and

transcripts were stored securely and accessed only by the research team. Because discussing teacher bullying could evoke distressing memories, the researcher monitored signs of discomfort, offered breaks when needed, and conducted a brief debriefing at the end of each session, including referral information to available support services (the school counselor) if participants experienced distress.

The FGDs were held across three separate sessions, each lasting around 60 minutes. These discussions took place in October 2024 and were conducted face-to-face to foster a more natural conversational flow. To mitigate potential biases arising from social status differences, the groups were divided by gender (male students, female students, and teachers). It is ensured that participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts openly. Each session was moderated by the researcher, who guided the discussions using an open-ended question protocol. The questions centered on key topics, including teachers' personalities, teaching methods, and forms of interpersonal interaction that participants considered ideal. All discussions were audio-recorded with the participants' consent, and field notes were taken to supplement the data and provide additional context for the analysis. To enhance credibility, brief summaries of the initial themes were shared with a small group of participants representing each group (male students, female students, and teachers). Participants were invited to comment on whether the themes were relevant to their experiences and to highlight any misunderstandings or points that had been overlooked. Feedback was collected confidentially through brief follow-up conversations, and the themes were refined based on this input while maintaining participant anonymity.

Data from the FGDs were transcribed and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) was employed to identify key patterns, themes, and categories within the transcripts. The analysis process involved several stages, starting with an initial reading of the transcripts to familiarize the researcher with the data. Subsequently, the researcher engaged in manual coding, identifying recurring ideas, phrases, and concepts. These codes were then clustered

into categories, which were analyzed for overarching themes that could provide insights into both students' and teachers' perceptions of ideal teacher behavior. To enhance the validity of the findings, triangulation was employed by comparing the data across the three groups: male students, female students, and teachers. This method allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the commonalities and differences in perspectives. Additionally, the researcher's reflective engagement throughout the analysis process ensured that the social dynamics and cultural contexts shaping participants' views were thoroughly considered.

The findings presented in this study are not intended to be generalizable but rather serve as an exploration of the perceptions held by the participants in this particular school context. This study's methodological framework, which combines open-ended discussions with rigorous thematic analysis, aims to provide insights into the dynamic and

context-specific understandings of ideal teacher behavior, shaped by students' interactions within a particular educational environment. Through this research, we seek to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between teacher-student dynamics and the cultural and institutional factors that influence these perceptions. The results will be of relevance to educators, policymakers, and stakeholders interested in improving the educational environment by addressing power relations, authority dynamics, and how students' perceptions can inform pedagogical practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents findings on how students experience and negotiate teacher authority and disciplinary practices, and how these interactions shape emotional safety, coping, and help-seeking in school.

Tabel 1. Profile of Participants

Groups	Participants*	Gender	Brief experience
Male students	Broto	Male	repeated targeting, public shaming
	Ave	Male	Low-score targeting, cornered
	Wira	Male	Bodyshamed, avoidance coping
	Parta	Male	Interrupted, afraid to report
Female students	Lintang	Female	Unequal treatment, exposure
	Tari	Female	Remedial shaming, parent escalation
	Moka	Female	Coerced leadership
	Maya	Female	Moral labeling, withdrawal
	Sari	Female	Harsh discipline, sanction escalation
Teachers	Ayu	Female	Deadline-driven strictness, point threats
	Surya	Male	Deterrent reprimands, training as aspiration
	Purnama	Male	Private reprimands, policy clarity

*Pseudonyms were used for all participants to ensure anonymity

The analysis draws on Foucault (2008) and Freire et al. (2018) to examine how power operates through routine pedagogical interactions. It also draws on Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence to clarify how practices experienced as harmful can nevertheless be

rendered legitimate as "discipline," "guidance," or "just a joke" within everyday school culture. Table 2 summarises the major themes, condensed subthemes, initial codes, and supporting excerpts, providing an analytic map for the narrative discussion that follows.

Table 2. Themes and Codes

Themes	Subtheme	Initial codes	Interview quote
Teacher behavior and discipline	discipline as duty	<i>discipline as order; deterrence; authority as care; firmness as pedagogy</i>	“Strict discipline is important to maintain order, but it must be delivered in a way that does not demean students.” (Surya, teacher)
	boundary blurring	<i>boundary ambiguity; verbal labeling; demeaning tone; unintended bullying</i>	“Sometimes we slip up, sometimes we give students a nickname briefly, just in that moment.” (Surya, teacher)
	control through repeated targeting and sanctions	<i>repeated calling-out; ‘marked’ student; threat/punishment; discipline book; point deduction</i>	“The teacher kept making me answer question, I got ‘marked’ for almost a whole semester, it almost broke me.” (Broto, male student)
	public humiliation and symbolic shaming in classroom practices	<i>public embarrassment; ridicule; sarcastic remarks; performance exposure</i>	“I often warn students and threaten to deduct points.” (Ayu, teacher) “I was told, ‘ <i>you sit in the front and you still don’t understand?</i> ’—and the teacher stared at me like that.” (Broto, male student)
Bullying perceptions and emotional impact			“When they hand back tests, the teacher announces the scores in front of the class, if mine is the lowest, I feel ashamed.” (Maya, female student)
	moral labeling and gendered shaming	<i>moral labeling (‘holier-than-thou’); masculinity policing (‘boys don’t cry’); identity attack</i>	“The teacher called me ‘holier-than-thou’ and said I should study in the prayer room, not in class.” (Maya, female student)
	emotional distress leading to disengagement	<i>fear; anxiety; shame; demotivation; withdrawal; avoiding interaction</i>	“I cried right there, and the teacher said, ‘ <i>why are you crying? you’re a boy.</i> ’ That made me cry even more.” (Parta, male student) “I just became lazy.” (Broto, male student)
			“I just stay quiet in class, I don’t want to be active because I’m tired and afraid the teacher will say things about me.” (Moka, female student)

Themes	Subtheme	Initial codes	Interview quote
Coping strategies	avoidance strategies	<i>avoidance escape; disengagement; truancy; sleeping in class</i>	<i> coping; selective</i> “I ask to go to the toilet even when I don’t really need to. If I’m not allowed, I just sleep in class.” (Wira, male student)
	proving self through effort and tutoring	<i>overcompensation; proving - worth; private tutoring; self-improvement focus</i>	“I left the class, went to the toilet, and cried.” (Maya, female student) “I joined tutoring and I’m going to prove I can get satisfying grades.” (Broto, male student)
			“In my head, I decided I would prove I could be the best in that teacher’s subject, and I did.” (Moka, female student)
	strategic emotional regulation	<i>emotional downregulation; detachment; normalization; ‘move on’ narrative</i>	“Whatever, just enjoy it.” (Ave, male student) “My mood drops immediately, but after the lesson it goes back to normal because I talk with my friends.” (Parta, male student)

Teacher Behavior and Discipline: Perceptions of Authority

Teacher discipline in these findings is not described as a neutral-pedagogical technique, but as a moral language that legitimises authority. This intent is explicit in Sari's account: "students need to be dealt with harshly so they do not trivialise what teachers say" (Sari). At the same time, teachers recognise how easily firmness slips into interpersonal injury through tone, labels, and emotionally charged remarks. Surya marks the boundary, then admits its fragility: "Firm discipline is important, but it must not be demeaning, sometimes we give students nicknames."

Foucault's notion of disciplinary power becomes analytically sound when it is operationalised through the micro-practices repeatedly named in the data: repeated public questioning ("being marked" or singled out), enforced waiting until a student can answer, moralising commentary attached to failure, and escalation through formal documentation. In such a context, what is considered "necessary discipline" may become indistinguishable from what students experience as bullying, because

expectations of respect and obedience culturally protect authority. As argued by Foucault (2008), power is not only expressed through direct commands; it becomes effective through daily practices of monitoring, correction, and normalization. In the male group, "being marked" appears as routinised exposure: being repeatedly called to answer, then having the incident circulated among peers (e.g., shame carried into break time). In the female group, public disclosure of grades and peer-to-peer "paper swapping" similarly turn evaluation into a social spectacle rather than merely feedback. Lintang's story illustrates how corrections are delivered in a way that makes social competence understandable, "The teacher sometimes says, calling out my name, 'You cannot even do that, even though it is easy.'" This perception aligns with a neoliberal discourse that emphasizes the need for discipline and high performance, which is central to the Indonesian education system. Teachers themselves internalize this logic, perceiving their role as preparing students for competitive futures.

However, as Michel Foucault (2008) argues, power in educational systems is not

merely top-down but is a pervasive force that shapes students' behavior through surveillance and normalization. One fundamental reason why students in Asia feel that teachers can engage in bullying is the hierarchical power structure inherent in Asian school systems, especially in countries influenced by Confucian values. In Asian collective cultures, the main characteristics include respect for authority, obedience, and a prioritization of group harmony over the individual (Kiing et al., 2025; Yoneyama, 2015). The teacher's firm stance may, therefore, be interpreted by students as bullying, especially in contexts where emotional vulnerability is present. Students, in turn, voiced their discomfort with the perceived authoritarian stance of teachers, particularly when it took the form of personal reprimands or public humiliation. One student shared, "sometimes when teachers reprimand us, they do it in front of the whole class. It's embarrassing, and I feel like they are making fun of me." (Tari). It highlights the emotional distress caused by perceived bullying from authority figures. The difference between the teacher's intent (to maintain discipline) and the student's interpretation (feeling humiliated or powerless) underscores the complex power dynamics at play. The repetition of disciplinary actions that isolate or humiliate students may inadvertently reinforce these power imbalances, creating an emotional burden that students find challenging to navigate.

We reflect that some harmful practices are misrecognised as legitimate "education" (*didikan*), "guidance" (*pembinaan*), or "just joking." Symbolic violence works precisely when domination is experienced as normal, deserved, or culturally appropriate. When reprimands are delivered publicly, framed as "for your own good," and protected by expectations of respect toward teachers, students may be pushed to accept pain as pedagogy, even when their emotional experience is closer to bullying.

Bullying Perceptions and Emotional Impact: A Student's View

Students largely recognise bullying not through physical aggression but through symbolic loss: public exposure, degrading remarks, and narratives that tie academic difficulty to moral failure or an unworthy

future self. Tari's story illustrates how a teacher's words can hurt through aspiration and status: "Even if you take remedial classes many times, you still will not pass... 'and you want to apply to medical school?'" The injury here is not simply correction; it is status damage—aspiration is used as a lever, and the student is positioned as inherently inadequate. This helps explain why students may describe teachers' behavior as bullying even when teachers explain it as motivation or discipline. The emotional impact, therefore, is not merely coincidental; it is produced through unequal authority to define who is "capable," "serious," or "worthy." The findings refer to psychological consequences as possible outcomes of repeated humiliation, in line with (ZHAN Wen-hui et al., 2023) discuss, such experiences can lead to long-term emotional distress, particularly when students are unable to effectively process these feelings. The key point is that emotional damage arises from how power is expressed in everyday conversations, especially in front of peers. Maya's experience of being labelled "sok suci" for religious participation ("you should study in the prayer room, not in class") similarly shows how authority can define the student's social identity in ways that are hard to contest. These moments function as symbolic violence because they convert institutional judgment into personal truth, inviting students to see themselves as the problem. At the same time, the legitimacy of the evaluative style remains intact. The emotional consequences reported across groups—shame, sadness, anger, withdrawal—are therefore not incidental side effects; they are produced through unequal power to name, classify, and publicly define "capability," "seriousness," and "worthiness."

The gendered meanings also attach to these harms. Gender here is not introduced as a simple difference between "how men vs. women deal with problems," but rather as a cultural script that regulates which emotions are acceptable under authority. Parta describes crying and being disciplined through masculinity itself: "I once cried in front of my teacher, and the teacher said, 'Why are you crying, you're a boy...'" It is in line with Högberg (2021) in that gender norms can reinforce emotional risk: vulnerability is not only

personally painful but also socially demeaning. At the same time, some students turn sadness into competitive determination. Ave's response is not "open resistance" but rather strategic self-protection in a performance economy, "I'm angry, ma'am... in my heart I think, 'just you wait, I'll show you my good grades.'" This "proof" strategy is important because it shows that emotional damage does not always lead to collapse; sometimes it produces compliance through overachievement, which can appear as resilience while masking wounds.

Coping Strategies: Avoidance and Engagement

Coping emerges as a practical repertoire shaped by power: students reduce risk exposure, seek alternative routes to competence, and manage their emotional display. Avoidance is concrete and embodied. Maya describes leaving class to cry, "I left class, went to the toilet and cried..." Moreover, in the male group, avoidance is transformed into everyday tactics: breaks to the toilet, sleeping, or wandering around the school when class feels unsafe:

"I choose to ask permission to go to the bathroom even though I do not really need to go... if I'm not allowed, then I sleep in class..." (Wira)

These acts read less as laziness than as risk management: attempts to reduce exposure to humiliation and protect dignity when authority feels unsafe to approach. In classic coping terms, this resembles emotion-focused coping—regulating distress without directly changing the power relation that generates it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

On the other hand, engagement emerges through tutoring and goal-oriented compensation. Broto views tutoring as a way to regain control and maintain dignity, "I am taking tutoring and will prove that I can get satisfactory grades." Ave's response similarly turns anger into performance resolve: "Just wait, I'll show you my good grades" (Ave). It is not straightforward resistance; it is adaptation within a performance economy—students seek safety by meeting the very metrics that authorised their shaming. The analytic tension here is important: achievement can function as resilience, but it can also mask injury by converting relational harm into individual self-

improvement. It is consistent with the problem-focused coping (Frydenberg, 2017): students seek strategies that restore a sense of agency. However, the finding also reveals a structural irony: the more the school environment prioritizes measurable performance, the more students may "solve" emotional losses by improving performance, thereby reinforcing the very system that leaves little room for well-being.

Social Support Networks: Trust and Confidentiality

Support is not simply "available" or "unavailable" in our findings; it is conditional and shaped by the politics of confidentiality. Students position BK (counselor teacher) as a trusted party precisely because they feel non-judgmental and protected from leaks. Broto articulates this as the reason he can talk: "I personally feel more comfortable talking to the teacher because there is no chance of it leaking." Moka echoes BK as a practical resource when teacher interactions become too heavy: "sometimes... I invite my friends... to talk to the BK teacher because the one who understands my self best is my BK teacher." Yet this trust is fragile: Ave describes confiding in a trusted teacher, only for it to be shared onward, producing "kapok" (reluctance to disclose again): "I once confided in a teacher I trusted, but they told my other teachers, it put me off." We realized that when confidentiality is unstable, students learn that "seeking help" carries risks, and silence becomes a protective strategy rather than simply passive (Duby et al., 2022).

Reporting routes are also shaped by hierarchy. Parta's statement: "It is impossible to tell the homeroom teacher, because we will definitely be attacked and blamed" (Parta)—shows how students anticipate institutional circulation of information. While students believe disclosure increases discipline rather than care, silence becomes protective rather than passive. Family support is uneven and sometimes feels like an accusation or absence (e.g., being blamed at home, or distance/busyness limiting disclosure). Broto describes being blamed, "I once talked to my family, but I was the one who got blamed." Meanwhile, Ave and Wira cite distance and busyness as barriers:

"Because my family is far away, I rarely talk to them." (Ave).

"My family is busy." (Wira).

Overall, students regulate their voice. They do not simply "choose not to report"; they consider the costs of speaking up in a network that may not protect them.

Institutional Dynamics: Power Structures and Teacher Responsibility

Institutional dynamics emerge not as abstract systemic effects, but as daily pressures that shape teacher behavior and the escalation paths available to schools. Ayu explicitly links a stricter classroom approach to deadline pressure, "When I personally am being chased by tight joint assessment deadlines, then I will implement strength-based learning in the classroom." It supports its claim that accountability demands can produce control-oriented teaching. The systemic pressures can undermine conditions for care — teachers become compliance managers under time constraints (Hodgins et al., 2024). This resonates with scholarship on performativity and audit cultures in education, where teachers are pushed to act as compliance managers under time constraints (Ball, 2003).

Escalation is another institutional mechanism: discipline books, referral systems, and parent calls operate as formal extensions of authority. Sari explains the process clearly, "When I reprimand them three times, and they still repeat the behavior, I write it down in the guidance book, the parents are called to the school." For students, these procedures can narrow safe help-seeking because disclosure may trigger greater surveillance rather than support. Importantly, teachers also articulate repair-oriented institutional solutions, indicating the institution is not monolithic. Surya proposes training in communication and emotional control, "the school could provide training in assertive communication and emotional control." Purnama's call for policy clarity, "It is important to have clear policies, so that we all know the boundaries." Framed this way, reform does not require demonising teachers; it requires adjusting organisational conditions so that discipline is not routinely delivered through symbolic injury, and so

that reporting routes are experienced as care pathways rather than escalation traps.

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991) helps hold this tension ethically: painful practices persist not only because individuals intend harm, but because the institution and its cultural common sense allow harm to appear reasonable—"for discipline," "for guidance," "just joking." The analytic task, then, is not to strip teachers of authority, but to redesign how authority is enacted: shifting from public degradation to private correction, from identity-labelling to behaviour-specific feedback, and from escalation-first procedures to relational repair as the default response.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we explored how students perceive and experience teacher authority and discipline, uncovering the complex dynamics between teachers' intentions and students' emotional experiences. We argued that the power imbalance between teachers and students, deeply embedded within Indonesian school culture, often leads to a disconnect between what teachers intend as discipline and what students perceive as bullying. While teachers frame their strictness as a professional duty to maintain order and academic achievement, students frequently experience it as emotionally harmful, resulting in feelings of humiliation and distress.

We contend that understanding the emotional impact of teacher behavior and school discipline cannot be separated from the broader socio-educational context in which these dynamics operate. We contribute to the existing discourse by integrating Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, which allows us to understand why painful practices can be normalized and framed as "guidance" or "just joking." This symbolic violence emerges in the classroom when teachers' actions, intended as corrective or motivational, instead of contributing to students' emotional vulnerability and self-regulation. Teachers and students, each internalizing these power dynamics, perpetuate a system where discipline becomes indistinguishable from emotional harm.

Our findings suggest that improving educational experience requires addressing these power dynamics in more contextual, culturally relevant ways. We argue that teacher training should move beyond technical skills to include empathetic approaches and strategies for restorative discipline, where firmness does not equate to intimidation. Schools must also create safer, more supportive environments by formalizing systems for student-teacher communication and reinforcing the importance of confidentiality and trust within support networks.

Further research is needed to examine how these dynamics play out across different educational settings, incorporating a broader range of school types, regions, and student backgrounds. We recommend focusing on intervention strategies, such as empathy training for teachers and structured dialogues among teachers, students, and counselors, to ensure that disciplinary actions are not misinterpreted as bullying.

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