



CHARACTER EDUCATION AS A RESPONSE TO THE PHENOMENON OF BULLYING IN THE INDUSTRIAL ERA 4.0 FOR STUDENTS AT SMK TRIDHARMA GORONTALO STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Bullying among students is increasingly complex in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, especially in the form of digital bullying that affects students' mental health and character. This service activity aims to provide character education in response to this phenomenon, so that students are able to build awareness and resilience in facing digital social pressure. The service methods used include interactive lectures, value simulation, and case study-based mentoring. This activity involved 34 students as the main target and 3 resource persons as facilitators. The results of the activity showed an increase in participants' understanding of the form and impact of digital bullying, as well as the growth of concern and proactive attitude to create a safe school environment. Participants also showed improved ability to manage emotions, understand the importance of strong character, and not respond to pressure with aggressive actions. Based on these results, it is recommended that character education based on anti-bullying values continue to be strengthened through continuous habituation and training programs, in order to form a resilient and adaptive young generation in the digital era.

Keywords: Bullying, Industrial Revolution 4.0, Students

Abstrak

Perundungan di kalangan pelajar semakin kompleks di era Revolusi Industri 4.0, terutama dalam bentuk perundungan digital yang memengaruhi kesehatan mental dan karakter peserta didik. Kegiatan pengabdian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pendidikan karakter sebagai respons terhadap fenomena tersebut, agar peserta didik mampu membangun kesadaran dan ketangguhan dalam menghadapi tekanan sosial digital. Metode pengabdian yang digunakan meliputi ceramah interaktif, simulasi nilai, dan pendampingan berbasis studi kasus. Kegiatan ini melibatkan 34 peserta didik sebagai sasaran utama dan 3 narasumber sebagai fasilitator. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman peserta terhadap bentuk dan dampak perundungan digital, serta tumbuhnya kepedulian dan sikap proaktif untuk menciptakan lingkungan sekolah yang aman. Peserta juga menunjukkan peningkatan kemampuan dalam mengelola emosi, memahami pentingnya karakter kuat, dan tidak merespons tekanan dengan tindakan agresif. Berdasarkan hasil tersebut, direkomendasikan agar pendidikan karakter berbasis nilai-



nilai anti-perundungan terus diperkuat melalui program pembiasaan dan pelatihan yang berkelanjutan, guna membentuk generasi muda yang tangguh dan adaptif di era digital.

Kata Kunci: Perundungan, Revolusi Industri 4.0, Peserta Didik

1. INTRODUCTION

In the midst of the rapid pace of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era, Indonesia's young generation lives in a fast-paced and connected digital environment, but is prone to identity crises, weak self-control, and declining social empathy. The phenomenon of bullying, both verbal, physical, and digital, is increasingly prevalent in the educational environment, reflecting the inequality between technological progress and character resilience. At the beginning of 2024, the number of internet users in Indonesia has reached 221,563,479 people out of a total national population of 278,696,200 people in 2023. The internet penetration rate nationally also increased to 79.5%, an increase of 1.4% compared to the previous year. This trend reflects consistent growth in the last five years, showing the positive direction of the development of digital access in Indonesia. Since 2018, internet penetration has continued to increase: from 64.8%, to 73.7% in 2020, then 77.01% in 2022, and 78.19% in 2023. In terms of gender, the distribution of users is relatively even, with the proportion of males at 50.7% and females at 49.1%. Demographically, the Gen Z group (born 1997–2012) dominated internet users with a contribution of 34.40%, followed by the millennial generation (1981–1996) as much as 30.62%, Gen X (1965–1980) as much as 18.98%, and the younger age group, Post Gen Z, by 9.17%. The baby boomers and pre-boomers accounted for 6.58% and 0.24%, respectively. (Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association, 2024).

The progress of digital access shown by the high penetration of the internet does reflect a positive transformation in terms of information and technology, but it also raises serious concerns about the formation of the character of the younger generation. Dependence on the digital world without moral resilience and social empathy exacerbates identity crises, blurs ethical boundaries, and encourages rampant bullying, especially in the educational environment (Tom & Sahi, 2025). For this reason, Gen Z as the largest group of internet users is actually the most vulnerable to digital behavior deviations. This imbalance between technological sophistication and character building risks creating a generation that is digitally capable but ethically and socially poor. In an online space that has no boundaries and minimal consequences, students are encouraged to commit bullying without realizing the psychological impact. This condition emphasizes that education cannot stop at the cognitive aspect alone, but must revitalize its role in building values, identity, and character integrity in the era of digital moral disruption (Ngiu, Rahmatiah & Sahi, 2025).

The revitalization of education in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 must be directed not only to the academic aspect, but also to the strengthening of national character and values rooted in the nation's culture. Education needs to respond to the changing times by integrating relevant applicable content and equipping students with life skills as a whole, both spiritually and emotionally, to be able to face existential questions and manage emotions in a healthy manner. The big challenge that is now faced is the high rate of bullying in the school environment which is a global problem. Based on data *UNICEF Global Databases* (2025), which is sourced from *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Study (HBSC)*, *Global School-based Student Health Surveys (GSHS)*, and various other national surveys, bullying practices are still prevalent with variations in age and regional coverage: data for Tanzania cover only the mainland region; the 2021/2022 HBSC survey was recalculated for the age



group of 13–15 years; Belgian data comes from the combined territories of Wallonia and Flanders; Great Britain data includes England, Scotland, and Wales; The United States used data from the 2009/2010 HBSC because it did not participate in the most recent round; Brazil includes 9th graders with a slightly different definition of bullying than the standard; Mongolia recorded cases of bullying of children aged 13–17 years in schools in the past year; while Niue, the Philippines, Thailand, and Uruguay reported bullying in schools in the same period, as did Malaysia for the 13–17 age group. These facts show that bullying is cross-country and age-wide, so schools must be a safe and inclusive space, where awareness of the importance of respecting differences, upholding tolerance, and rejecting all forms of violence in order to form a generation that is intelligent, characterful, and resilient to the challenges of the times (UNICEF, 2025).

Interestingly, cases of bullying also occur in Indonesia and are a serious concern at various levels of education. This is reflected in the number of news reported by national online media. Based on data from a number of online media, hundreds of cases of bullying have been reported, showing that this issue has become a public spotlight. For example, Detik.com reported 32 cases at the elementary level, 56 cases in junior high school, and 29 cases in high school/vocational school. TribunNews.com recorded 16 cases in elementary schools, 48 in junior high schools, and 11 in high schools/vocational schools. Meanwhile, Kompas.com reported 9 cases in elementary schools, 28 in junior high schools, and 8 in high schools/vocational schools. Other media such as Okezone.com, Liputan6.com, CNNIndonesia.com, Viva.co.id, Kumparan.com, Suara.com, and Jawapos.com also consistently raise news related to bullying at various levels of education, with varying numbers. This data shows that bullying is not only a global issue, but also a real problem in Indonesia that demands serious attention and handling from all parties, especially educational institutions and policy makers (Asyifah et al., 2024). Interestingly, bullying also occurs in the digital world which is not only in the form of verbal or psychological violence, but also manifests in the form of covert sexual exploitation that blurs the boundaries between personal will and social coercion (Kamuli & Sahi, 2024).

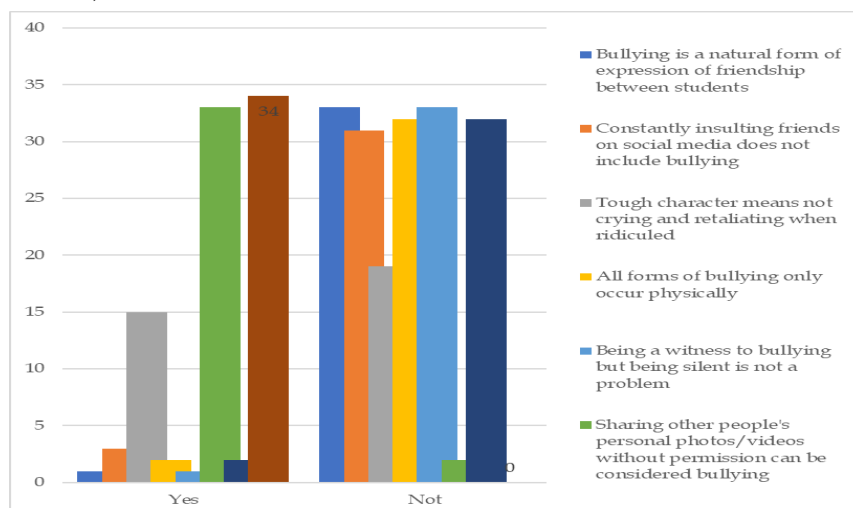
The outbreak of bullying cases in the educational environment cannot be separated from a number of interrelated factors. One of the main factors is the lack of knowledge among students about the sanctions that can be imposed on the perpetrators of bullying, both in terms of law, school discipline, and the social impact it causes. This ignorance makes some students view bullying as a commonplace act or just a form of joke, even though it can cause serious psychological injuries to the victim. In addition, regulations that specifically regulate the prevention and handling of bullying in schools are still not optimal in their implementation. Many educational units do not have a clear mechanism for responding to or handling reports of bullying, so cases that occur are often left out or even covered. On the other hand, socialization efforts about the dangers and impacts of bullying have not been evenly distributed at all levels and areas of education. There are still schools that have not organized systematic education about bullying, both to students, teachers, and parents. This inequality in the dissemination of information results in a low collective awareness of the importance of creating a safe, inclusive, and violence-free school environment.

Therefore, the renewal of character education is a very important step in response to the phenomenon of bullying, considering that character is a fundamental trait that shapes a person's behavior, both positive and negative. Because it contains moral knowledge consisting of six main components that are interrelated. First, moral awareness, which is the ability to recognize the moral dimension in a situation and understand that failure to identify moral issues can lead to ethical



violations. Second, knowledge of moral values, in the form of a deep understanding of universal values such as justice, honesty, and responsibility, as well as the ability to apply them in various life contexts. Third, perspective determination, which is the ability to understand the point of view of others as the basis for acting fairly and empathic. Fourth, moral thinking, which is the process of critical analysis of the reasons behind moral actions, including an understanding of ethical principles such as Kant's categorical imperatives or utilitarianism. Fifth, moral decision-making, in the form of the skill of evaluating action options, considering consequences, and choosing solutions that are in line with moral values. Sixth, self-knowledge, which involves critical reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of personal character, including the tendency to justify unethical behavior. These six components form the cognitive foundation that is essential for the development of healthy moral character (Lickona, 1991).

In this regard, the results of observations made on students through the dissemination of surveys regarding the initial understanding of bullying at SMK Tridharma of Gorontalo State University show that the level of student understanding is still relatively minimal. This is reflected in the results of the initial survey shown in the following graph, which illustrates the low level of students' knowledge regarding the definition of bullying, its forms, and the consequences that can be caused to both perpetrators and victims;



Graph 1. Survey of Basic Knowledge of Bullying of Students at SMK Tridharma Gorontalo State University

Source: Processed Data, (2025)

Based on the results of a survey of 34 students at SMK Tridharma, it is known that the majority of students have a fairly good basic understanding of bullying, although there are still some misconceptions that need to be corrected. When given the statement "Bullying is a normal expression of friendship between students", 33 students (97.1%) answered "No", indicating that they understood that bullying is not justified in social relationships. Similarly, in the statement "Insulting friends constantly on social media does not include bullying", 31 students (91.2%) said "No", indicating awareness of the form of digital bullying. However, there are still 3 students (8.8%) who do not understand this. When asked if "Strong character means not crying and retaliating when ridiculed", 15 students (44.1%) said "Yes", while 19 students (55.9%) answered "No", indicating that almost half of the respondents still have a misunderstanding of the concept of tough character. In the statement "All



forms of bullying only occur physically", as many as 32 students (94.1%) answered "No", indicating that they are aware of the existence of non-physical forms of bullying such as verbal and digital. Furthermore, regarding the statement "Being a witness to bullying but being silent is not a problem", 33 students (97.1%) answered "No", which shows that students understand the importance of not being a bystander in bullying cases.

In the question about "Sharing other people's personal photos/videos without permission can be considered bullying", 33 students (97.1%) answered "Yes", and only 1 student (2.9%) answered "No". Furthermore, when asked if "Strong character includes the ability to control emotions and be assertive", as many as 31 students (91.2%) said "Yes", while 3 students (8.8%) still did not understand this. On the question "Bullying does not have a serious impact on the victim", as many as 32 students (94.1%) answered "No", which indicates that there is awareness of the serious impact of bullying. Meanwhile, in the last two statements, all respondents (100%) agreed that "Preventing bullying is the responsibility of all parties, including students", and that "Anti-bullying education is important in schools", indicating full support for preventive and educational efforts in the educational environment. This data as a whole reflects that the majority of students have understood the concept of bullying essentially, but it is necessary to strengthen the understanding of strong character values and social responsibility in efforts to prevent bullying more comprehensively.

Therefore, as the results of a survey conducted on students at SMK Tridharma Gorontalo State University show that even though a basic understanding of bullying has begun to take shape, there are still a number of misconceptions that need to be corrected, especially related to the meaning of tough character and the active role of students in preventing bullying. Some students still mistakenly understand tough and retaliatory attitudes as the ability to manage emotions positively and assertively. In addition, there are still students who are not fully aware that passive actions against bullying, such as being silent when watching the incident, are also part of the problem. This fact suggests that character reinforcement has not been fully integrated in their understanding, although awareness of the negative impact of bullying has existed. Therefore, a more comprehensive educational intervention is needed to instill character values in its entirety to students. In this context, service activities are directed to strengthen the internalization of character values through an approach themed Revitalization of Character Education as a Response to the Phenomenon of Bullying in the Industrial Era 4.0, which is not only relevant to the challenges of the times, but also a real need in building a safe, inclusive, and civilized school culture.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The service method is a systematic approach designed to bridge academic knowledge with the real needs of the community through a series of structured activities that are transformative, educational, and applicative. Typically, the method not only emphasizes knowledge transfer, but also encourages collaboration between implementers and beneficiaries to create sustainable social change and holistically increase the capacity of individuals and target groups (Wantu et al., 2021; Alhadar, Mahmud, et al., 2022; Alhadar, Latore, et al., 2022; (Alhadar et al., 2024). In this regard, this service method uses interactive lecture methods, value simulation, and case-based mentoring as a form of response to the phenomenon of bullying among students. The service involved 34 students as active participants and 3 resource persons; Prof. Dr. Zulaecha Ngiu, M.Pd, Saleh Al Hamid, S.IP, MA and Yayan Sahi, S.Pd., M.Pd. who have competence in their field. This activity took place at SMK



Tridharma Gorontalo State University, the implementation of the activity began with problem mapping through the deployment of initial survey instruments to determine the level of students' understanding of bullying and relevant character values. Based on these results, an interactive lecture session was held that thoroughly explored various forms of bullying, its psychological and social impacts, and the importance of strengthening character such as empathy, responsibility, and tolerance. This session was enriched with value simulation, which is a hands-on demonstration practice on how to respond to bullying situations positively.

Afterwards, students are divided into small groups to conduct case-based mentoring, dissecting real events related to bullying in order to hone reflective skills and critical attitudes. As part of strengthening the results of the activity, post-activity evaluation was also carried out through post-tests or questionnaires to measure the improvement of students' understanding of the material presented. This evaluation aims to ensure that the knowledge gained can be understood, internalized, and applied in real life. This section serves to deepen students' understanding through case-based mentoring to train reflection and critical attitudes towards bullying. Post-activity evaluation in the form of post-tests or questionnaires is carried out to measure the improvement of knowledge while ensuring that the material provided can be understood, internalized, and applied in daily life (Dotutinggi, Yunus & Sahi 2021).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strengthening Students' Awareness of Bullying in the Era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0

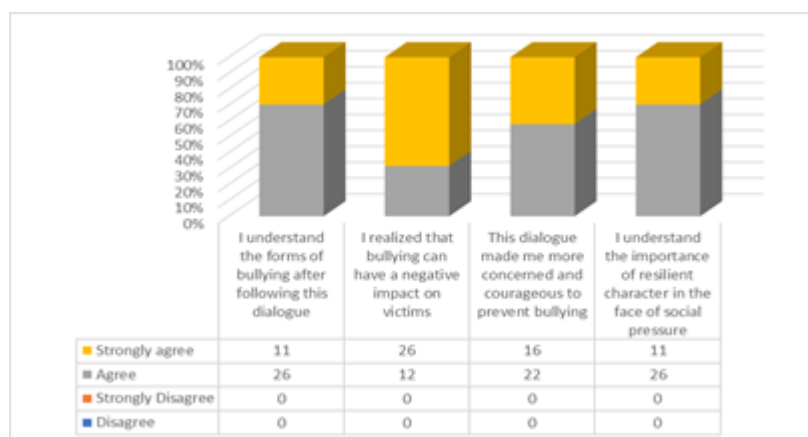
The Industrial Revolution 4.0 is a phase of technological transformation that develops from previous stages. Starting from the use of steam engines (1.0), electricity and mass production (2.0), automation with computers (3.0), to the 4.0 era which is marked by the presence of the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and Big Data. This technology is changing human work patterns from direct interaction to all-digital. Now, we are even entering the era of the Industrial Revolution 5.0 which emphasizes harmony between technology and human values (Tom & Sahi, 2025). Technological advances in the 4.0 Revolution are a serious challenge, especially in the formation of students' characters. Adolescent interaction patterns now occur mostly through social media, which unfortunately also opens up space for the emergence of new forms of bullying, such as *Cyberbullying*. Therefore, strengthening awareness of bullying is very important. Through educational dialogue activities, students are introduced to various forms of verbal, physical, social, and digital bullying that are often unrealized. As a result, students began to understand that bullying is not a trivial thing, but an action that has a negative impact on the victim, such as loss of confidence, emotional disturbances, and prolonged trauma. This awareness encourages the emergence of empathy, courage to behave, and commitment to prevent and fight bullying both in the school environment and in the digital world.

The urgency of strengthening students' awareness of bullying in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 lies in the fact that technological advances not only expand learning spaces, but also expand the potential for psychological violence to occur digitally. Learners now live in a highly connected environment virtually, where bullying is no longer limited to the physical space of the school, but also extends to social media, communication platforms, and online communities. Without strong awareness, students easily become perpetrators, victims, or even allow bullying to happen. Therefore, building awareness about the negative impact of bullying and the importance of being caring and daring to reject these actions is a strategic step in protecting the mental and social integrity of the young generation in the midst of the complexity of the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0.



Figure 1. Dialogue on Strengthening Students' Awareness of Bullying in the Industrial Revolution Era with Students

In the dialogue session themed "Strengthening Students' Awareness of Bullying in the Era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0", this activity was designed with proportional weighting to optimize the process of delivering material and active participation of students. The presentation of material by the resource persons was given a portion of three out of ten parts as a theoretical basis to introduce the concept of bullying, its types, and its impact in social and digital life. The largest portion, which is four out of ten sections, is allocated for interactive discussions and Q&A sessions between learners and resource persons, as these sessions are considered crucial in exploring critical awareness and encouraging active involvement of participants through the exchange of ideas and experiences. Furthermore, individual and group reflection sessions are given a portion of two out of ten parts, which serve to internalize anti-bullying values and form personal conclusions from the dialogue that has taken place. One last part is given for the evaluation of activities through filling out survey instruments or questionnaires that aim to assess the understanding and effectiveness of the implementation of activities. This weighting shows a strong emphasis on student participation in building collective awareness of the dangers of bullying, while affirming the importance of dialogical education in facing social challenges in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. After the delivery of material in this session has been completed, the next stage is the implementation of evaluation through a survey using a form. This evaluation aims to identify participants' responses and measure their increased understanding of Bullying Awareness in the Industrial Revolution Era 4.0, with the following details:



Graph 1. Students' Awareness Response to Bullying in the Industrial Revolution Era with Students



Based on the results of the evaluation survey on the dialogue "*Strengthening Students' Awareness of Bullying in the Era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0*", it can be concluded that the majority of learners show a significant increase in understanding and awareness. A total of 26 participants agreed and 11 strongly agreed that they understood the forms of bullying after participating in this dialogue. In addition, 12 participants agreed and 26 strongly agreed that bullying negatively impacts victims, reflecting increased empathy and awareness of the social impact of such behaviors. A total of 22 participants agreed and 16 strongly agreed that this dialogue made them more concerned and courageous to prevent bullying, which shows the encouragement of a proactive attitude. Finally, the understanding of the importance of resilient character in the face of social pressure was also well obtained, with 26 participants agreeing and 11 strongly agreeing. There were no participants who disagreed or strongly disagreed with all the statements, which indicates that this dialogue is effective in building students' collective awareness of bullying issues in the midst of the challenges of the current digital and social era. This achievement shows that the dialogical approach is able to create a reflective space for students to understand the impact of bullying, while fostering empathy for the differences in social identities around them. Through interactive dialogue, students not only gain cognitive knowledge, but also experience the process of internalizing human values directly (Adjie et al., 2025).

Strengthening Resilient Character to Face Digital Social Pressure

The strengthening material carried out in this session focused on the formation of students' resilient character as a provision in dealing with social pressure in the increasingly complex digital era. A strong character is understood not as an aggressive response to difficult situations, but rather the ability to control oneself, maintain emotions, and act wisely in the face of provocation and bullying, especially in the digital space. The main value that is instilled is the importance of being a person with a strong character, namely being consistent with positive values, not easily influenced by peer pressure, and being able to be assertive without having to retaliate against bad treatment with violence. In addition, emphasis is also placed on the importance of building a sustainable anti-bullying culture in the school environment. This kind of activity should be carried out regularly as part of a character development and violence prevention program. In this context, strengthening character is not only an individual responsibility, but is a joint effort of all school elements in creating a learning environment that is safe, comfortable, and supports the optimal psychosocial growth of students.



Figure 2. Dialogue on Strengthening Resilient Character to Face Digital Social Pressure.

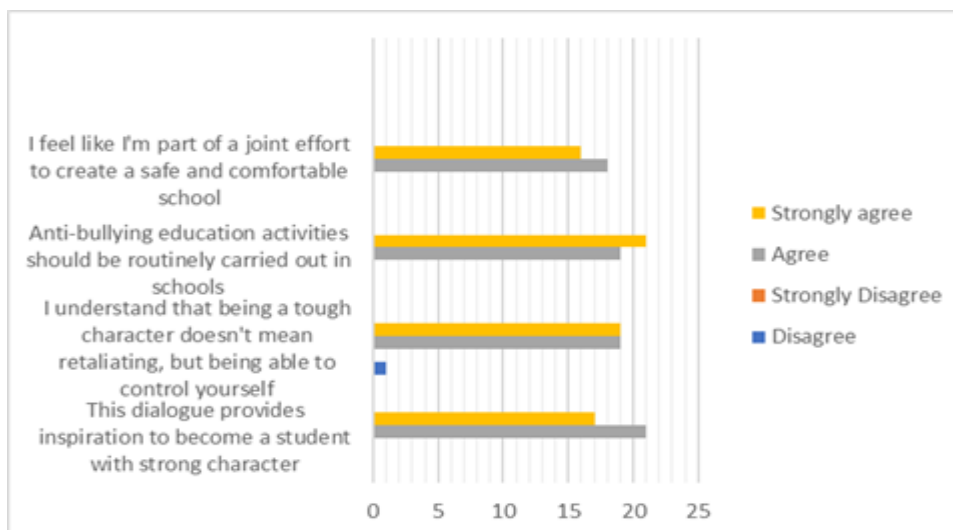
In the face of increasingly complex digital social pressures in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, strengthening the resilient character of students is a fundamental aspect that cannot be ignored in the educational process. The reinforcement material provided in this dialogue is systematically focused on four main dimensions. First, the formation of strong character, namely the ability of students to have a firm stance, be consistent with the values of truth, and be able to resist invitations or pressures that are negative from the social environment and digital media. Strong character is the foundation for students not to be easily swayed by misleading information flows or popular culture that is counterproductive to the formation of identity. Second, the understanding that a strong character does not mean retaliating or fighting aggressively, but rather the ability to control oneself emotionally and respond to situations wisely. An unreactive attitude, the ability to withstand emotions, and resolve conflicts peacefully are indicators of character resilience that are expected to be embedded in students. Third, this dialogue material also emphasizes the importance of making the anti-bullying movement an integral and sustainable part of school culture.

Anti-bullying should not just be a slogan or a momentary response, but must be realized through routine activities, thematic learning, and the active participation of all school residents in creating collective awareness. Fourth, it is also emphasized that creating a school as a safe and comfortable space is a shared responsibility that must be built through collaboration between students, teachers, education staff, and parents. A supportive school environment that is free from social pressure will allow students to grow into individuals who are not only academically intelligent, but also resilient in the face of social challenges in the digital age. Therefore, strengthening resilient character is not only oriented towards short-term solutions, but is a long-term educational investment to produce a young generation that has integrity, empathy, and adaptability to the dynamics of the times.

Regarding the strengthening of the material that has been delivered in the dialogue *Strengthening Resilient Character to Face Digital Social Pressure*, the next step to be taken is to observe the students' responses. This observation aims to find out the extent of internalization of the values of tough characters that have been introduced during the activity. Participants' responses were observed through survey instruments designed to describe their level of understanding, attitude, and engagement in building resilience to social pressures, particularly in the context of the digital environment. The results of the observations are then presented in the form of the following graph that



illustrates the tendency of participants' responses to the reinforcement of the material that has been given;



Graph 2. Response to Strengthening Students' Resilient Character in the Digital Social Era

Based on the results of observations on the students' responses after participating in the dialogue session Strengthening Resilient Character to Face Digital Social Pressure, it can be concluded that this activity has a positive impact on their understanding and attitude. A total of 21 participants agreed and 17 strongly agreed that this dialogue inspired students to become students with strong character. This shows that the material presented succeeded in fostering internal motivation to strengthen identity. Furthermore, in the statement about understanding that tough character does not mean retaliating, but being able to control oneself, as many as 19 participants agreed and 19 strongly agreed, while only one participant stated that they disagreed. These findings show that most participants are able to understand the meaning of tough character appropriately, namely as the ability to manage emotions and be wise in dealing with pressure. Then, as many as 19 participants agreed and 21 strongly agreed that anti-bullying educational activities need to be carried out regularly in schools, which indicates that there is a collective awareness to prevent bullying as part of the school culture. Finally, related to the feeling of being part of a joint effort to create a safe and comfortable school environment, 18 participants expressed agreement and 16 strongly agreed, which shows that this dialogue has succeeded in fostering a sense of togetherness and social responsibility among students. Overall, the data shows that strengthening resilient character through dialogue is effective in building students' awareness, commitment, and positive attitudes in dealing with social pressures in the digital era.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on a series of service activities carried out at SMK Tridharma State University of Gorontalo, with the theme of *Revitalization of Character Education as a Response to the Phenomenon of Bullying in the Industrial Era 4.0*, it can be concluded that educational interventions through open dialogue have had a significant positive impact on increasing the awareness and resilience of students' character. In the first indicator, namely *Strengthening Students' Awareness of Bullying in the Industrial Revolution Era 4.0*, the data shows that the majority of students understand the forms of bullying and



its negative impact on victims, and show increased concern and courage to prevent bullying. Participants' responses to questions in the post-dialogue survey showed the dominance of answers in the "agree" and "strongly agree" categories, which shows the effectiveness of the delivery of material in building critical awareness and social empathy.

Furthermore, in the second indicator, namely *Strengthening Resilient Character to Face Digital Social Pressure*, students are not only inspired to become individuals with strong character, but also show a deep understanding that resilient character does not mean retaliating against negative actions, but is able to control themselves wisely. In addition, they stated the importance of anti-bullying educational activities being carried out regularly in schools and realizing that creating a safe and comfortable learning environment is a shared responsibility. This fact is reflected in the high percentage of participants who expressed agreement and strongly agreed in all statements submitted in the observation survey. Overall, this service activity not only succeeded in raising awareness of the dangers of bullying and the urgency of its prevention, but also strengthened the capacity of students' character in facing social pressure in the challenging digital era. These results confirm that a dialogical and participatory approach in character education is an effective strategy in forming a young generation that is resilient, with integrity, and ready to face social dynamics in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

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