

Group Guidance with the Value Clarification Technique to Enhance Empathy among Students Involved in Passive Bullying

Titin. KS^{1*}, Nur Fadhilah Umar¹, M. Amirullah¹, Nurfaidah Ardis¹

[1] Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia;

Abstract

Passive bullying involvement refers to indirect participation in bullying situations, such as remaining silent, laughing, implicitly supporting the aggressor, or failing to assist the victim. Although this behavior is often overlooked in schools, it may reinforce the continuation of bullying and reflect limited empathic sensitivity among students. This study aimed to examine the empathy levels of students involved in passive bullying and to evaluate the effectiveness of group counseling using the Value Clarification Technique in enhancing empathy among eighth-grade students at SMP IT Darul Fikri Makassar. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest nonequivalent control group design was employed. Twenty-four students participated and were assigned to an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received group counseling using the Value Clarification Technique, whereas the control group received lecture-based services. Data were collected using an empathy scale and a passive bullying scale and were analyzed using descriptive statistics, N-gain analysis, and an independent-samples t-test. The results showed that the experimental group achieved a greater increase in empathy than the control group. The experimental group obtained a mean N-gain score of 0.52, categorized as moderate, whereas the control group obtained a mean N-gain score of 0.06, categorized as low. The difference in empathy improvement between the two groups was statistically significant ($p < .001$). Improvements were observed across the dimensions of perspective taking, fantasy, empathic concern, and personal distress. These findings indicate that group counseling using the Value Clarification Technique effectively helps students reflect on the values of care, justice, social responsibility, and moral courage when responding to bullying situations. The intervention can therefore be used by school counselors as a preventive and remedial strategy to enhance empathy and promote prosocial responses to bullying in schools.

Keywords: Passive bullying bystanders; Empathy; Value Clarification Technique; Group Guidance

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(*) Corresponding Author:

Titin. KS, Department of Guidance and Counseling, Universitas Negeri Makassar. Email: kstitin19@gmail.com



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INTRODUCTION

Bullying remains a serious challenge in the Indonesian educational environment due to its negative impact on students' psychological well-being, learning engagement, and academic achievement. Data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 for Indonesia indicate that 25% of female students and 30% of male students experienced bullying at least several times per month, while 17% reported feeling unsafe in school areas outside the classroom (OECD, 2023). Consistent with these findings, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) reported that cases of violence against children in educational settings remain relatively high. In early 2024, 35% of the 114 reported cases of violence against children occurred in educational institutions, while KPAI complaint data from 2023 recorded 329 cases within the education cluster, with bullying being one of the most frequently reported forms of violence (KPAI, 2024).

From a conceptual perspective, bullying is understood as aggressive behavior that is intentionally and repeatedly directed by an individual or group toward a weaker party, whether physically, psychologically, or socially. In the development of bullying research, this phenomenon is recognized as involving not only perpetrators (bullies) and victims but also individuals who witness the incident and may assume various roles within the bullying dynamic. Passive bullies constitute part of the social dynamics of bullying and may contribute to the persistence of such behavior. Within the Participant Role Approach framework, bystanders may act as assistants, reinforcers, defenders, or outsiders (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Salmivalli, 1999). In this study, passive bullies refer to individuals occupying the outsider role, namely those who witness bullying but choose not to become involved. Their behaviors include remaining silent, avoiding involvement, failing to assist the victim, or not expressing disapproval of bullying actions. In some cases, passive responses may also involve allowing social exclusion or the spread of negative information about the victim to continue without intervention (Juraeva, 2023; Thalia et al., 2024). Although they are not directly involved in the bullying act, such passive attitudes may be perceived as a form of social approval that indirectly sustains bullying behavior (Salmivalli et al., 1996).

One psychological factor that plays a crucial role in determining bystanders' responses to bullying is empathy. Empathy enables individuals to understand and share the emotional experiences of victims, thereby increasing their tendency to provide assistance. Conversely, low levels of empathy are associated with a greater likelihood of remaining passive when witnessing bullying. Research has shown that individuals with higher levels of empathy are more likely to engage in defending behavior, whereas those with lower levels of empathy are more likely to maintain their position as passive bystanders.

Empathy is also considered one of the most important predictors of defending behavior, defined as actions taken to help or protect victims of bullying (Steinvik et al.,

2024). Low levels of empathy, both cognitive and affective, have been found to correlate with an increased tendency to engage in bullying-related behaviors (Zych et al., 2019; Forsberg et al., 2023; Sijtsema et al., 2019). These findings highlight the importance of empathy as a protective factor against passive involvement in bullying situations.

Although various intervention programs have been developed to reduce bullying behavior, they generally target different mechanisms. Empathy-based interventions primarily aim to improve individuals' ability to understand and share victims' emotional experiences, while moral disengagement interventions focus on reducing cognitive justifications for aggressive behavior. In contrast, bystander-intervention programs emphasize the skills needed to recognize bullying situations and respond appropriately (Zych et al., 2019; Sijtsema et al., 2019; Steinvik et al., 2024). Although these approaches have shown positive outcomes, they mainly focus on emotional skills, cognitive regulation, or behavioral responses, with limited attention to the internalization of moral values that underlie bystanders' decisions to act or remain passive.

This limitation highlights a research gap in the development of interventions that simultaneously integrate cognitive, affective, and value dimensions. In this context, the Value Clarification Technique (VCT) offers a distinct mechanism through the processes of value reflection, value selection, and value internalization (Raths et al., 1978; Vyskocilová et al., 2015). Rather than merely teaching individuals how to respond to bullying, VCT encourages them to critically examine values such as compassion, social responsibility, and justice and to align their actions with those values. Research by Rafli, Latif, and Umar (2023) further suggests that value-clarification interventions can enhance social awareness, reduce prejudice, and strengthen interpersonal sensitivity.

In the context of passive bullying, this mechanism is particularly relevant because passive bystanders often understand that bullying is harmful yet fail to intervene. Through value reflection and internalization, VCT is expected to strengthen cognitive empathy by promoting perspective-taking and enhance affective empathy by increasing emotional responsiveness to victims' experiences. Consequently, VCT may reduce passive bystander tendencies and foster greater moral commitment to defending victims, offering a complementary approach to existing empathy, moral disengagement, and bystander-intervention programs.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of a value clarification approach within the context of addressing passive bullying, an area that has received relatively limited attention in previous research, particularly at the junior secondary school level in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on empathy as a psychological variable that can be modified through value-based interventions.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the empathy levels of passive bullies and examine the effectiveness of the Value Clarification Technique (VCT) in enhancing empathy among eighth-grade students at SMP IT Darul Fikri Makassar. The research question is: "Do students who receive the VCT intervention demonstrate a greater increase in empathy than students who do not receive the intervention?" In line with this question, the study hypothesizes that the experimental group receiving VCT will exhibit a greater increase in empathy scores from pretest to posttest compared to the control group.

METHOD

Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a *pretest–posttest nonequivalent control group design* (Pandang & Anas, 2019). The study involved two groups: an experimental group that received the *Value Clarification Technique* (VCT) intervention and a control group that received conventional guidance and counseling services without VCT components. The independent variable in this study was the *Value Clarification Technique* (VCT), while the dependent variable was students' empathy. In this study, passive bullying refers to the *outsider* role within the *Participant Role Approach*, namely individuals who witness bullying but choose not to intervene, assist the victim, or report the incident (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Salmivalli, 1999). Empathy was measured based on Davis's (1994) multidimensional model, which includes four dimensions: *perspective taking*, *fantasy*, *empathic concern*, and *personal distress*.

Participants and Setting

The study was conducted at SMP IT Darul Fikri Makassar during the 2024/2025 academic year. The population consisted of all eighth-grade students, totaling 37 participants. Sampling was carried out using a non-probability sampling technique, specifically *purposive sampling* (Sugiyono, 2015). Participant selection was conducted in two stages. First, all students completed the passive bullying scale for screening purposes. Students who met the criteria for passive bullying behavior were then considered eligible participants. The inclusion criteria were: (a) being enrolled in Grade VIII, (b) being identified as a passive bully based on the screening results, and (c) willingness to participate in all stages of the study. The exclusion criteria included students who failed to complete the instruments or did not attend all intervention sessions.

A total of 24 students met these criteria and were selected as research participants. Following the screening process, participants were assigned to an experimental group ($n = 12$) and a control group ($n = 12$). Because individual randomization was not feasible in the school setting, a nonequivalent group design was employed. Pretest results indicated that the experimental group had a slightly lower mean empathy score than the control group. To minimize contamination between groups, intervention sessions were conducted separately, and participants were encouraged not to discuss intervention materials with students from the other group. Furthermore, the relatively short duration of the study was expected to reduce the influence of *history* and *maturation* effects.

Instruments

Passive Bullying Scale Questionnaire

The passive bullying scale questionnaire was developed based on the concept of *passive bystander behavior* in bullying situations. The scale consisted of both favorable and unfavorable statements and was constructed based on indicators of passive bullying behavior proposed by Dan Olweus. The initial instrument comprised 56 items using a five-point Likert response format ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Following expert validation and item analysis, 35 items were retained and used in the study. This scale served as a screening instrument to identify students who exhibited tendencies toward passive bullying behavior.

Empathy Scale Questionnaire

The empathy scale questionnaire was adapted from Davis's (1994) multidimensional empathy model, encompassing the dimensions of *perspective taking*, *fantasy*, *empathic concern*, and *personal distress*. The initial instrument consisted of 32 items using a five-point Likert response format. After validation and item analysis, 20 items were retained for use in the study. Higher scores indicated higher levels of empathy. Negatively worded items were reverse-scored prior to calculating the total empathy score.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was evaluated by two experts in guidance and counseling. Item validity was subsequently assessed using the *Corrected Item–Total Correlation* method. Instrument reliability was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The results indicated that the passive bullying scale demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = .891$) with 35 valid items, whereas the empathy scale showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .781$) with 20 valid items.

Intervention

The experimental group participated in a *Value Clarification Technique* (VCT) intervention delivered through group counseling sessions. The intervention was conducted over five sessions, each lasting approximately 45 minutes, and involved 12 participants. The implementation of VCT followed the primary stages of value clarification: (1) *choosing values*, (2) *prizing values*, and (3) *acting on values* (Raths et al., 1978). Activities included discussions of bullying cases, value-reflection exercises, group discussions, perspective-taking activities, and the development of personal action plans. The intervention was facilitated by the researcher under the supervision of a school guidance and counseling teacher. Participant attendance was recorded during each session, and intervention fidelity was monitored using observation sheets. The control group did not receive the VCT intervention and continued to participate in regular school guidance and counseling services delivered through a lecture-based approach.

Research Procedure

The study began with screening for passive bullying behavior among all eighth-grade students. Students who met the inclusion criteria subsequently completed the empathy scale as a pretest. The experimental group then received the VCT intervention, whereas the control group continued their regular school activities and guidance services using the lecture method. After the completion of all intervention sessions, both groups completed the empathy scale as a posttest. Observations were conducted throughout the intervention period to monitor participant engagement and program implementation.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis included means, standard deviations, minimum scores, maximum scores, and empathy category distributions. Prior to hypothesis testing, normality was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test, and homogeneity of variance was examined using Levene's Test. Empathy improvement was calculated using the *Normalized Gain* (*N-Gain*) formula:

$$N\text{-Gain} = \frac{\text{Posttest Score} - \text{Pretest Score}}{\text{Maximum Score} - \text{Pretest Score}}$$

N-Gain values were interpreted according to the following criteria: low (< 0.30), moderate ($0.30-0.69$), and high (≥ 0.70). Differences in empathy improvement between groups were analyzed using an independent samples *t*-test at a significance level of .05 (Santoso, 2017). To complement statistical significance testing, 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the mean difference and Hedges' *g* effect sizes were calculated using:

$$CI = (\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2) \pm t_{\alpha/2} \times SE$$

and

$$g = J \times \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{S_p}$$

where *J* is the small-sample correction factor and *S_p* is the pooled standard deviation. Effect sizes were interpreted as small (0.20), medium (0.50), and large (0.80) (Cohen, 1988).

Research Ethics

The study was conducted after obtaining permission from SMP IT Darul Fikri Makassar. Participation was voluntary. Prior to data collection, students were informed about the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. All data collected were used solely for research purposes and were treated confidentially.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study aim to examine the effectiveness of the Value Clarification Technique (VCT) in increasing empathy among students who engage in passive bullying at SMP IT Darul Fikri in Makassar. The results were presented in an integrated manner through descriptive and inferential analyses that reflect changes in empathy levels before and after the intervention, as well as differences between the experimental and control groups. The distribution of students' empathy levels before and after the intervention shows very clear changes, particularly in the experimental group, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Empathy Categories and Descriptive Statistics by Group

Interval	Category	Pre-test				Post-Test			
		Experimental Group		Control Group		Experimental Group		Control Group	
		F	P (%)	F	P (%)	F	P (%)	F	P (%)
$X < 40$	Low	12	100	8	66.7	0	0	5	41.7
$40 \leq X < 60$	Medium	0	0	4	33.3	5	41.7	7	58.3
$60 \leq X$	High	0	0	0	0	7	58.3	0	0
	Total	12	100	12	100	12	100	12	100
	Minimum Score	33		35		54		33	
	Maximum Score	39		40		62		46	
	Mean (M)	36.67		38.00		59.25		40.50	
	Standard Deviation (SD)	1.97		1.86		2.34		40.50	

Table 1 presents the continuous descriptive statistics of empathy scores, showing a larger increase in the experimental group than in the control group following the intervention. The category distribution in Table 1 provides a complementary description of this pattern. At pretest, all students in the experimental group and most students in the

control group were classified in the low empathy category, indicating generally low baseline empathy levels among participants. The control group also included a small proportion of students in the moderate category, suggesting some initial differences between groups.

Following the intervention, the category distribution shifted more substantially in the experimental group. No students remained in the low category, and most participants moved to the high category. In contrast, the control group continued to be concentrated in the low and moderate categories, with no students reaching the high category. These descriptive findings are consistent with the continuous score analysis, which showed greater improvements in empathy scores among students who participated in the Value Clarification Technique (VCT) intervention than among those in the control group.

Upon closer examination based on empathy indicators, the baseline findings show that all aspects of empathy were at low to moderate levels, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Empathy Data by Indicator Before the Intervention

Indicator	Category	Experimental Group		Control Group	
		F	P (%)	F	P (%)
Perspective Taking	Low	7	58.3	6	50
	Medium	5	41.7	6	50
	High	0	0	0	0
Fantasy	Low	8	66.7	8	66.7
	Medium	4	33.3	4	33.3
	High	0	0	0	0
Empathic Concern	Low	5	41.7	6	50
	Medium	7	58.3	6	50
	High	0	0	0	0
Personal Distress	Low	10	83.3	4	33.3
	Medium	2	16.7	8	66.7
	High	0	0	0	0

Regarding the perspective-taking indicator, most students are not yet able to fully understand others' points of view. On the "fantasy" indicator, students also demonstrated limitations in imagining others' emotional states. Meanwhile, on the "empathic concern" indicator, although some students fell into the moderate category, they did not yet demonstrate strong concern for others. The lowest scores were observed on the "personal distress" indicator, suggesting that students experience little emotional discomfort when witnessing socially unjust situations.

After the intervention, there was a significant increase in all empathy indicators in the experimental group, as shown in Table 3. Based on the table, the most striking improvement was seen in the "fantasy" and "personal distress" indicators, where the majority of students reached the high category. This indicates that students are beginning to be able to feel and imagine the emotional states of others more deeply. Additionally, improvements in the "perspective taking" and "empathic concern" indicators suggest that students are beginning to understand others' perspectives and demonstrate greater concern for their social environment. These changes reflect a transformation not only in the students' cognitive aspects but also in their affective and behavioral aspects. In contrast, the control group did not show any significant changes. Although there was a slight improvement in several indicators, most students remained in the low and moderate categories. This confirms that without appropriate intervention, the development of empathy tends to proceed slowly and insignificantly.

Table 3. Empathy Data by Indicator After the Intervention

Indicator	Category	Experimental Group		Control Group	
		F	P (%)	F	P (%)
Perspective Taking	Low	0	0	4	33.3
	Medium	10	83.3	8	66.7
	High	2	16.7	0	0
Fantasy	Low	0	0	6	50
	Medium	3	25	6	50
	High	9	75	0	0
Empathic Concern	Low	1	8.3	5	41.7
	Medium	7	58.3	7	58.3
	High	4	33.3	0	0
Personal Distress	Low	0	0	2	16.7
	Medium	2	16.7	10	83.3
	High	10	83.3	0	0

The implementation of the intervention through group counseling services also showed positive results in terms of student engagement, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Participant Engagement During VCT Group Counseling Sessions

Percentage (%)	Criteria	Sessions				
		I	II	III	IV	V
80 – 100	Very High	10	11	12	12	11
60 – 79	High	2	1	-	-	1
40 – 59	Medium	-	-	-	-	-
20 – 39	Low	-	-	-	-	-
0 – 19	Very Low	-	-	-	-	-
Total		12	12	12	12	12

Table 4 indicates that participant engagement remained high throughout the five intervention sessions. Most participants were categorized as having high or very high levels of participation. These findings suggest that the intervention was implemented as intended and that participants were actively involved in the counseling activities. However, these process indicators should not be interpreted as evidence of intervention effectiveness, which was evaluated separately through changes in empathy scores.

The results of the inferential analysis further reinforce these descriptive findings. An independent samples t-test showed that there was a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. A significance value of 0.000 ($\alpha < 0.05$) indicates that the increase in empathy in the experimental group did not occur by chance but was the result of the intervention administered. Furthermore, the significantly higher mean score in the experimental group compared to the control group indicates that VCT has a strong effect on increasing students' empathy. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Pretest, Posttest, and Gain Scores of Empathy by Group

Group	Data Type	Mean Score	Interval	Category	Gain Score
Experimental	Pre-test	36.67	$X < 40$	Low	0.52
	Post-test	59.25	$40 \leq X < 60$	Medium	
Control	Pre-test	38.00	$X < 40$	Low	0.06
	Post-test	40.50	$40 \leq X < 60$	Medium	

The mean difference in empathy gain scores between the experimental and control groups was 20.08 points. An independent-samples t-test indicated a statistically significant

difference, $t(22) = 16.92$, $p < .001$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference was [17.62, 22.54]. Hedges' g was 6.67, indicating a very large effect. Given the relatively small sample size and low within-group variability, this effect size should be interpreted with caution.

Table 5 reveals several noteworthy patterns. Although both groups began the study with relatively low levels of empathy, the experimental group demonstrated a more substantial improvement over the intervention period than the control group. A notable finding is the shift in the experimental group from the low category at pretest to a higher category at posttest, whereas the control group showed only limited movement despite some improvement. This pattern suggests that the changes observed in the experimental group were not merely incremental but reflected a meaningful progression in empathy levels. The larger gain achieved by the experimental group is consistent with the assumption that value-reflection and value-internalization processes promoted through VCT may support empathy development.

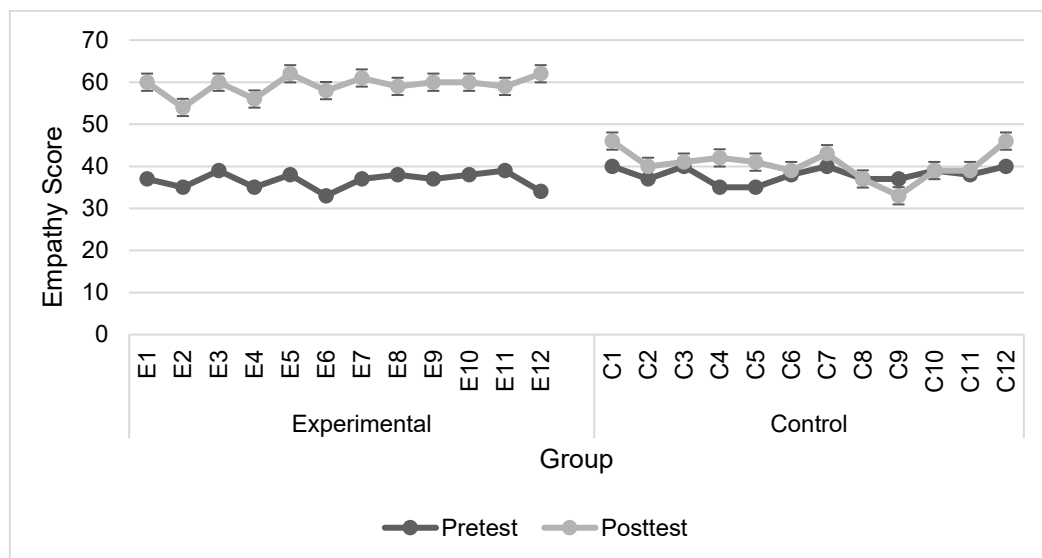


Figure 1. Individual Students' Pretest and Posttest Empathy Scores in the Experimental and Control Groups

Figure 1 complements these findings by illustrating changes at the individual level. Most participants in the experimental group exhibited a clear upward trajectory from pretest to posttest, whereas changes in the control group were generally smaller and more variable. The figure further shows that the improvement in the experimental group was distributed across the majority of participants rather than being driven by only a few individuals. This pattern strengthens the interpretation that the observed increase in empathy was broadly experienced among students who participated in the VCT intervention.

In theory, the increase in empathy that occurs can be explained through the Value Clarification Technique (VCT), which emphasizes the process of value internalization. In this context, empathy is understood not only as a cognitive ability to understand others but also as affective engagement and a readiness to act. This aligns with the concept of empathy proposed by Davis (1994), which highlights four main dimensions of empathy: perspective-taking, fantasy, empathic concern, and personal distress. Improvements across all these indicators suggest that the VCT intervention is able to address the dimensions of empathy holistically. Specifically, improvements in the aspects of personal distress and fantasy indicate that students are beginning to be able to feel and imagine the emotional states of others an area that had previously been a major weakness among passive bullies.

These findings can be interpreted within the framework of Olweus's (1993) theory of bullying behavior, which identifies low empathy as one of the psychological factors associated with involvement in bullying-related behaviors. The increase in empathy observed in this study suggests that the Value Clarification Technique (VCT) may contribute to the development of students' emotional and cognitive understanding of bullying situations. However, because this study measured empathy rather than direct behavioral outcomes, it cannot be concluded that increased empathy resulted in a behavioral shift from passive observers to active responders.

When compared to previous research, the results of this study are consistent with the findings of Zych et al. (2019), who stated that low empathy correlates with high involvement in bullying. Furthermore, these findings are also in line with Forsberg et al. (2023), who explained that individuals with low empathy tend to adopt a passive stance in bullying situations. However, this study offers a new contribution by demonstrating that empathy is not a static variable but can be enhanced through values-based interventions. This expands upon previous understandings which primarily focused on identifying causal factors toward a more practical approach to addressing the issue of passive bullying.

Additionally, the results of this study also support empirical findings indicating that VCT is effective in enhancing awareness of values and prosocial behavior. Studies conducted by Fungkiana et al. (2025) and Utami (2024) show that VCT can significantly strengthen students' character and increase their empathy. The results of this study reinforce these findings by providing quantitative evidence through significant differences in scores between the experimental and control groups. In contrast, the lecture method used in the control group proved to be less effective because it was one-way and did not involve active student participation. This is in line with Hidayat's (2022) view that the lecture method tends to make students passive, thus making it less effective in developing affective aspects.

The implications of these findings can be considered from theoretical and practical perspectives. Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding that empathy among passive bullying bystanders can be supported through a systematic value-based intervention. The findings extend educational psychology perspectives by highlighting the role of value reflection and internalization in integrating cognitive, affective, and moral dimensions of empathy development. This study provides additional evidence that empathy is not only an individual disposition but also a psychological construct that can be strengthened through structured educational and counseling interventions. Practically, this study provides an alternative approach for school counselors in addressing passive bullying through group counseling services based on the Value Clarification Technique (VCT). Counselors may implement VCT through structured activities involving value

exploration, reflection on bullying-related scenarios, discussion of moral choices, and commitment to personally meaningful values such as empathy, social responsibility, and respect for others. To ensure appropriate implementation, school counselors should receive adequate training in VCT principles, facilitation skills, and ethical management of group counseling processes. However, the application of VCT should not be generalized beyond similar contexts without further evidence, particularly to schools with different cultural backgrounds, student characteristics, or institutional conditions. The effectiveness of VCT should be further examined through larger samples, multiple school settings, and stronger research designs before broader implementation is recommended. These findings are also consistent with counseling research conducted within the Guidance and Counseling Department of Universitas Negeri Makassar, which highlights the contribution of counseling interventions in supporting behavioral adjustment, emotional regulation, and positive social development among adolescents (Amirullah, Nurmasari, Permatasari, & Retnaningrum, 2022).

This discussion directly addresses the research hypothesis stating that the Value Clarification Technique influences increased empathy in passive bullies. The research findings not only confirm this hypothesis but also expand our understanding of how this change process occurs. While the introduction identified low empathy as a trigger for passive bullying, this study demonstrates that value clarification-based interventions can serve as an effective solution. Thus, this research has shifted the focus from mere problem identification toward an intervention approach that has been empirically proven to be effective.

Overall, this discussion confirms that the Value Clarification Technique (VCT) is a relevant approach for supporting empathy development among students, particularly those identified as passive bullying bystanders. These findings contribute to existing theoretical perspectives on value-based interventions and provide practical implications for bullying prevention and guidance and counseling services in school settings. Despite these findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study involved a relatively small sample recruited from a single school, which limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the research context. Second, the use of a nonrandomized quasi-experimental design may have introduced potential selection bias due to differences between groups prior to the intervention. Third, empathy was measured using self-report instruments, which may be influenced by social desirability bias and participants' subjective perceptions. Additionally, repeated measurement through pretest and posttest procedures may have introduced potential testing effects. Finally, this study did not include follow-up assessments or direct observations of bystander behavior; therefore, conclusions regarding the long-term effects of VCT and changes in actual bullying-related behaviors should be interpreted cautiously.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the implementation of the Value Clarification Technique (VCT) was associated with greater improvements in empathy in the experimental group compared to the control group among eighth-grade students at SMP IT Darul Fikri Makassar. These findings suggest that VCT has the potential to support empathy development through value reflection and internalization processes, although causal interpretations should be made cautiously due to the use of a nonrandomized quasi-experimental design. The limitations of this study include the limited sample size, possible baseline imbalance between groups,

the use of self-report measures, single-site recruitment, and the absence of follow-up assessments. Future research is recommended to involve larger samples, stronger research designs, and longitudinal measurements to examine the consistency and sustainability of the findings.

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